

Folly 651

Chapter 651: You've Suffered

"Studying is definitely necessary, but it's about where to study." Mu Shuangshuang said.

The school for the two kids can't be too far.

Too far, like in town, unless Mu Shuangshuang has opened a restaurant in town, rented a house, otherwise this scenario is impossible.

But the time for opening a restaurant is certainly after the kids start school, this cannot be realized.

"Dad, are there any schools in the nearby villages?" Mu Shuangshuang asked.

In modern times, basically every village has an elementary school, but I don't know if it's like this during the Da Ning Dynasty.

"No, there was one before, that was when your uncle was in primary school.

You know, peasant families call the children back to work during summer and autumn harvests, the teaching teacher found it boring, so went to town."

Mu Dashan said the lack of students during harvests is one reason, another is that most peasant families can't afford the gift, teachers also need to eat and wear clothes.

Naturally, people pursue higher grounds for better development.

"This is really troublesome!" Mu Shuangshuang sighed deeply.

Now the matter of the two kids starting school is getting closer, she hasn't even prepared a school, it's killing her.

"Shuangshuang, don't be anxious, there are still a few months, maybe we should wait and see, something might change." Mu Dashan comforted Mu Shuangshuang.

"Alright! Dad, you don't have to busy yourself, it's getting late, take a good rest, Shuangshuang will cook."

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Mu Dalang listened to Mu Shuangshuang and ran all the way, finally catching up to Huang Bitu.

Mu Dalang was already sweating profusely from running.

Looking furious, but at the moment he saw Huang Bitu, his heart finally settled.

Seeing the incredibly shocked Huang Bitu, Mu Dalang directly stepped forward, grabbed her hand, trying to take her away.

Huang Bitu screamed, the three brothers of the Huang family surrounded Mu Dalang.

"Mu Dalang, your mother said those things, did those things, you as a son still dare to come?" Huang Er directly challenged.

"Second Brother Huang, about this, Dalang will explain to you later, right now, I just want to talk to Bitu alone." Mu Dalang was completely sincere.

"Talk, your thoughts are so beautiful, my sister has nothing to do with your Old Mu Family anymore, let go of my sister's hand."

As he said, Second Brother Huang raised his hand, ready to pry open Mu Dalang's hand.

Mu Dalang pulled Huang Bita and dodged, he turned to Huang Big Brother and said, "Big Brother, I truly like Bita, I, Mu Dalang, swear, I will definitely give Bita a fair solution to this matter, Bita is the one I am going to marry!"

Just a teenager, raising his right hand, swearing to the sky.

His gaze was firm, even Huang Big Brother couldn't find a reason to refuse.

"Big Brother, don't listen to his nonsense, if he really had the ability, how could we endure such humiliation, why should Bita bear a nonexistent crime?" Huang Er insisted.

"Old Er, in this matter Miss Shuangshuang is right, the ones who can decide are our Ah Bi and Dalang, if he is sincere to Ah Bi, and Ah Bi is willing, why should we stop them?"

Huang Big Brother said to Huang Er.

"Big Brother..."

"Alright, Old Er, leave this matter alone, let's all listen to Ah Bi!

Dalang, we will wait for you, take Ah Bi to a slightly further place to talk, regardless of the final result, we support you."

Mu Dalang was full of gratitude.

He held Huang Bita's hand and walked towards the shade under the tree not far away.

Huang Big Brother watched the direction Huang Bita left, full of emotion.

After all, she is the sister he has watched grow up, Huang Big Brother loves his sister no less than the other two brothers.

Plus, as the big brother, he has to consider more.

Huang Bitā is already eighteen, if she waits a few more years, after twenty, it will become increasingly difficult to find a spouse.

Moreover, Mu Dalang truly likes his sister.

Huang Big Brother trusts his judgment in people.

Mu Dalang called Huang Bitā to the side, yet didn't know what to say.

After hesitating for a long time, he finally said: "Bitā, you've been wronged..."

Suddenly, Huang Bitā felt like all the grievances she had suffered didn't count as grievances.

She thought she and Dalang had just blown off, and wouldn't see him again.

But the moment Dalang chased after her and grabbed her hand directly, she realized how hard it is to give up someone you like.

When Huang Bitā looked up, her eyes met Mu Dalang's.

In each other's eyes, they saw one another, time seemed to stand still in an instant.

After a long while, Mu Dalang continued:

"I met Shuangshuang at the village entrance, she told me about what my mother did. Bitu, I won't make excuses for my mother, because I know what she did was wrong.

And my grandmother, I should have told you earlier, or if I hadn't gone out recently, it would have been better, if I were home, my grandmother definitely wouldn't have been this excessive..."

Mu Dalang was extremely frustrated, as they say, things that happened can't be changed, just like water spilled can't be retrieved.

Mu Dalang still remembered vividly the words Old Mrs. Mu usually spoke to the fourth branch, and his mother, if not for being suppressed by his grandmother, might have been even more arrogant than his grandmother.

Mu Dalang fully understood the grievances Huang Bitu suffered.

"Dalang, actually how you treat me, doesn't matter, I'm not afraid of hardship with you, nor afraid of being bullied by your mother and grandmother.

But I'm afraid they look down on my brothers, our Huang Family indeed has nothing, but we have at least our dignity.

Our siblings do not steal, do not rob, do not cheat, even if life is hard we find joy within, can you understand this?"

Mu Dalang nodded.

How could he not understand.

Throughout the Old Mu Family, the one he admired most was the third branch.

For dignity, they separated from the Old Mu Family.

Never fawned upon their uncle.

Never bullied anyone.

His third aunt and third uncle, both honest and straightforward people, clearly living better than any branch of the Old Mu Family nowadays, but never showed any contempt for others.

"Bita, I cannot guarantee I will become a rich person in the future, but I want to tell you about my plans for the future..."

Mu Dalang's thoughts were only shared with two people.

One was Mu Shuangshuang, after telling her, he received three taels of silver as collaboration money from Shuangshuang.

The other was Huang Bita, he said these things not to force her to follow him but to let her know that he also has determination and goals.

As long as she is willing, Mu Dalang will endure all hardships for his wife, all tiredness for his wife.

If his parents insist on stopping him, Mu Dalang will choose to separate and live independently, just like the third branch.

"Bita, would you be willing to join me in building our home? In this home, the one who makes the decisions is neither my grandmother nor my mother, it would be you, Huang Bita.

Are you willing...?"

Chapter 652: Make Uncle Bleed

"I do!" Huang Bita nodded heavily.

She stared at Mu Dalang without blinking, her expression was happy, and the look in her eyes was full of hope.

In Huang Bitas view, everything suddenly improved.

Mu Dalang was also in a great mood.

"Bitas, thank you!" he said.

Huang Bitas was equally grateful for Mu Dalangs presence; this man was brave, responsible, and did not evade.

Most importantly, he truly liked her.

When the two appeared hand in hand in front of the Huang Brothers, the three brothers knew that their most cherished sister had already made a decision.

After exchanging opinions, they decided to give their sister absolute freedom this time.

The decision she made, the three brothers would support unconditionally.

"Brothers, Bitas and I have made up our minds; we've chosen each other for life. Bitas is my only wife, in this lifetime!"

"Big Brother, Second Brother, Third Brother, Bitas has also chosen Dalang and will never regret it in this life!"

Huang's eldest brother spoke as a representative: "Dalang, this time we trust you and hand our sister to you. If we ever find out Bitas is mistreated, we will bring Bitas back to our Huang Family, even if she never marries in this life, we won't let her stay with you."

"Mmm! Thank you, brothers, for your trust. What happened today, I will get justice for Bitu!" Mu Dalang gratefully said.

Huang's second brother felt a bit guilty upon hearing Mu Dalang speak in this way.

"Dalang, I previously hit Mu Family's second aunt, you can hit me back, I don't want to make things difficult for you."

"Second Brother, you had your reasons to hit her, I will explain it clearly to my mother when I return."

After some more friendly exchanges, the Huang Family refused Mu Dalang's proposal to take Huang Bitu to the Huang Family Village.

As dusk approached, the roads became too desolate, with harsh winds sweeping through from time to time.

The Huang Brothers were also concerned about Mu Dalang's safety.

After saying goodbye, Mu Dalang returned to Er Gui Village.

The first thing upon returning was not to trouble the Old Mu Family, but to find Mu Shuangshuang to discuss how to handle things.

Mu Dalang arrived at the kitchen of the third branch, just as Mu Shuangshuang finished preparing dinner.

Each rolled mung bean roll wrapped in meat sauce exuded a tempting aroma.

In the kitchen, everyone sat around a table, gnawing on mung bean rolls and chatting.

Mu Dalang suddenly appeared, and Mu Shuangshuang quickly got up to greet him.

She got him food and a seat, forcibly keeping Mu Dalang to have dinner at the third branch.

Mu Dalang felt warm inside; every time he returned, he would head straight for the third branch, and he had the illusion that the third branch was his home.

"Dalang, how did you handle things with Miss Huang?" Mu Dashan couldn't help but be the first to "eat the crab."

The others also looked at Mu Dalang with a gossiping face.

Although judging from Mu Dalang's expression, the crisis was resolved, they all wanted to hear Mu Dalang's confirmation to truly set their minds at ease.

"Third Uncle, the matter is resolved; Huang's brothers agreed not to stop it, but I still have to speak with my mother and grandmother."

Mu Dalang was at a loss.

He was willing to talk, but how to say it effectively was the real trouble.

"I came to the third branch this time, just to ask if Shuangshuang had any ideas."

Back then, it was Mu Shuangshuang who had colluded with Matchmaker Sun to set up the engagement between Mu Dalang and Huang Bitu.

Mu Dalang wasn't as clever as Shuangshuang, but he would seek Shuangshuang's advice.

After Mu Dalang finished speaking, Mu Dashan and Yu Si Niang both looked at Mu Shuangshuang.

They hoped that Mu Shuangshuang would help; Mu Dalang and Huang Bita liked each other, which in the couple's eyes, was reason enough to be together.

Plus, Dalang indeed had a favorable impression of their couple.

People are like this; if someone they like encounters any trouble, they wouldn't regard it as trouble but would think of ways to help.

On the contrary, if they don't like someone, just looking at them feels irritating.

"Shuangshuang, do you have any good ideas?" asked Mu Dashan.

"No good ideas, because this matter can't fundamentally be solved. Sister Huang marrying into the Old Mu Family means she's their daughter-in-law. It's only natural for a mother-in-law to order around her daughter-in-law, and even my grandfather, the head of the household, wouldn't intervene." Mu Shuangshuang replied truthfully.

"Ah, so will Bita suffer once she is married?" Mu Dalang was shocked.

This matter, Yu Si Niang had the most say.

But she didn't know how to respond because what Shuangshuang said was a fact.

Being a daughter-in-law in the Old Mu Family required enduring these hardships.

"This will rely on you, Big Cousin. If you can get my grandfather and grandmother to respect you, Sister Huang's status will also improve.

But most importantly, your own economic independence is crucial. The grandmother oppresses the other branches mainly because she holds the family's lifeline.

If you split the family, they'll give no land, no food, and they'll make you leave empty-handed; a normal person would starve to death.

Instead of starving, it's better to hang on at home; after all, a bad life is better than a good death."

Mu Shuangshuang carefully analyzed these points for Mu Dalang.

Undoubtedly, Mu Shuangshuang had a meticulous mind.

What she said was also the secret of how the Old Mu Family had been maintained over the years.

When the third branch split up, they got nothing, just an acre and a half of land, and it wasn't even good land. For a five-person household in the third branch, it was clearly a plan to starve them to death.

The third branch dared to split up because Mu Shuangshuang had saved up silver; otherwise, they would've had to crawl back to beg Mr. Mu and Old Mrs. Mu.

Similarly, except for the third branch, none of the other branches had this opportunity either.

Unless Mr. Mu and Old Mrs. Mu were willing to distribute land and houses to every branch, only then would splitting be possible.

However, this kind of decentralizing matter, Mr. Mu and Old Mrs. Mu simply wouldn't do.

"Big Cousin, after you return, don't rush to stand up for Sister Huang. The most urgent issue you face should be my grandfather and grandmother. Afterward, we'll take some actions!"

Mu Shuangshuang spoke very vaguely because some things couldn't be heard by Mu Dashan and Yu Si Niang.

She was used to doing mischievous things, but in Mu Dashan and Yu Si Niang's eyes, she was still a good child.

Since Mu Shuangshuang didn't elaborate, Mu Dalang also chose not to delve further.

However, Lu Yuanfeng, who was at the side, knew; he guessed that Shuangshuang planned to target the Mu Family's big branch, and very possibly this person was Shuangshuang's uncle.

Since Huang Bitu belonged to Wang's Mansion, and now that Huang Bitu and Mu Dalang couldn't work out, the first branch should have misfortune.

"Alright, alright, let's eat, let's eat!"

After dinner, Mu Dalang took Mu Shuangshuang aside to ask about what she hadn't said earlier.

"Big Brother Dalang, this matter requires my uncle to shed some blood to solve the problem. When the uncle is in trouble, my grandfather will certainly be anxious. You should remain steady and still, and when the time is right, ask for my grandfather and grandmother's promise..."

Chapter 653: Learn to be Smart

The general method was explained by Mu Shuangshuang to Da Lang, but the specifics were up to Da Lang.

Master guides you to the door, practice lies in oneself.

Da Lang pondered for a moment and returned to the Old Mu Family.

As for Mu Shuangshuang, she called Lu Yuanfeng, and the two went out for a walk.

Emotions between people need constant elevation.

Mu Shuangshuang tried to find some time every day to be alone with Lu Yuanfeng.

Walking side by side on the village path, Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng strolled.

"Fengzi, I really like the current state of life, a happy family without any pressure."

The only downside is the people from the Old Mu Family, like flies, occasionally buzzing around the third branch.

It was already evening, in the sky, a crescent moon hung overhead.

A small animal's cry could be heard nearby.

In this environment, Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng standing together both felt relaxed and mutually attracted.

Lying on the grass, Mu Shuangshuang gazed up at the sky, the starry night as beautiful as ever.

"Fengzi, do you have anything you particularly like?" Mu Shuangshuang asked.

"I do, Shuangshuang!" Lu Yuanfeng replied without hesitation.

Mu Shuangshuang raised her hand and flicked Lu Yuanfeng's head, though not with much force.

"You're talking nonsense again, I meant things, not people!" Mu Shuangshuang explained, blushing.

Lu Yuanfeng chuckled, turned his head, and looked at Shuangshuang beside him.

He gazed at her profile, even seeing just half of her face, he could admire the defined contours and the elegant curve of her raised chin.

Suddenly, Lu Yuanfeng felt a flutter in his heart.

He stared at Shuangshuang wide-eyed and suddenly said, "Shuangshuang, I want to hug you."

Lu Yuanfeng was the simplest man Mu Shuangshuang had ever met, he would always consult her first for any thoughts he had.

Sometimes, even for the smallest things, he showed her the utmost respect.

Mu Shuangshuang had been grateful for this countless times.

"Hmm!" Mu Shuangshuang nodded softly, her face covered in a rosy glow in the darkness.

After waiting a moment, a broad embrace enveloped Mu Shuangshuang.

With a warm feeling surging in Mu Shuangshuang's heart.

For a moment, the two only see each other in their eyes.

Their eyes instantly became incredibly gentle, almost as if they could drip water...

As Mu Shuangshuang was being escorted back, Lu Yuanfeng's face was still flushed.

Despite being the one who suggested the hug, he ended up feeling like Shuangshuang had taken advantage, leaving Lu Yuanfeng amused and helpless.

Under the crescent moon, Lu Yuanfeng delivered Mu Shuangshuang back to the third branch, and as he turned to leave, he ran into Da Lang who was up to no good.

Da Lang had never done anything truly vile, he just wanted a simple payback for his uncle, like throwing some poop at his uncle's door.

Nothing too immoral, Da Lang dared not cross that line.

But such methods were childish, causing no real impact on Mu Dade.

Lu Yuanfeng taught Da Lang a more effective way.

Sneak up to the main house's roof and remove the tiles, by the next day, they'll naturally be scared.

The two quietly moved a ladder, and together removed several tiles from Mu Dade's house, before Lu Yuanfeng returned home.

That night, an autumn rain fell, soaking the rooms of Mu Dade and Mrs. Jin whose tiles had been removed.

The two awoke freezing, drenched from head to toe.

Cold enough for their teeth to chatter.

Before the next day, the incident made such a stir in the Old Mu Family, it was chaos.

Mr. Mu spent the entire night on edge, and first thing in the morning, he went to find Matchmaker Sun to visit the Huang Family Village.

This wasn't enough, he specially sought out Da Lang to discuss the matter.

The implication was naturally for Da Lang to persuade people to come back, the marriage couldn't be canceled.

Da Lang listened to Mu Shuangshuang's advice and was resolutely unwilling.

"Grandpa, I won't go. This mess you got yourselves into, you clean it up yourselves."

Mr. Mu's hair turned white from worry.

He actually knew, Miss Huang was meant for Wang Laoda, now that the marriage was called off, the tiles on Laoda's roof disappeared overnight.

If this drags on, something big will happen.

"Da Lang, everyone in the family made mistakes, just help Grandpa this time, go apologize, and get her back, okay?"

Mr. Mu had a look of concern.

If the marriage truly falls through, Laoda might be in danger.

"Grandpa, before this happened, you didn't consider Bitu your granddaughter-in-law, you let my grandma and mom bully her away.

Now you want me to go, what will others think of me, Da Lang? I've decided to listen to my mom and not marry Bitu."

"No, you must marry Miss Huang!" Mr. Mu said excitedly, his words almost a shout.

After speaking, he continued.

"Grandpa didn't mean it badly, Grandpa's point is, we chose Miss Huang as our granddaughter-in-law, besides her, no one else suits."

Mr. Mu's explanation was awkward at best, if Da Lang hadn't known the real reason for Mr. Mu's actions earlier, he might have foolishly thought his grandpa genuinely had his best interest at heart.

He could swear, no matter who she was, what she looked like, what kind of person, as long as she could help his uncle, Grandpa would force him to marry.

Grandpa only cared about the main house's family.

"Grandpa, since you and Grandma think she's good, why not treat her brothers kindly? Since you think she's good, why not have my mom accept Bitu? It's not that Da Lang doesn't want to help here.

But Da Lang doesn't want to see a good wife come in only to be chased away by my mom. If you can't solve this, I won't marry in my lifetime."

Da Lang spoke with determination, if he didn't win this time, Huang Bitu in Old Mu Family would basically have no status.

There would definitely be places where things would go wrong.

Mr. Mu was both angry and anxious.

"Let me discuss with your Grandma, and you reconsider!"

Mr. Mu returned to the Old Mu Family and furiously scolded Old Mrs. Mu.

Old Mrs. Mu had also been scared all night, deep down, if anyone in this home were to face trouble, it shouldn't be; if Laoda had problems, the other house branches wouldn't compare to Laoda alone.

"It's all because of you, a crazy woman, trying to save a little on food, now look, it's turned out like this, what do you say we should do?" Mr. Mu asked.

"What can be done? We can only have the second daughter-in-law handle it, she's the mother-in-law, all I did was offend the Huang Brothers, the second daughter-in-law was the one who insulted Miss Huang."

Old Mrs. Mu cleanly shifted the blame.

"You know the second daughter-in-law well, she's all talk and unreliable, she already despises Miss Huang's family situation, just hoping the marriage falls through."

"Hmph, if I, the old lady, didn't agree, what right does she have to decide? Just wait, I will go teach the second daughter-in-law a lesson and make her smarten up!"

Chapter 654: The Old Mu Family Relocates (Part 1)

Old Mrs. Mu wanted to teach Mrs. Lin a lesson, and Mr. Mu didn't stop her. This second daughter-in-law did indeed need some discipline.

Otherwise, once Huang Bitā entered the family, there would be trouble under the hands of the second daughter-in-law.

After a while, from Mrs. Lin's room came the sound of things being smashed, mixed with a woman's miserable screams.

Old Mrs. Mu beat Mrs. Lin half to death and ordered her to go apologize to Huang Bitā at the Huang Family Village early the next morning and restore the marriage arrangement, or she would be divorced.

Mrs. Lin whimpered and sobbed all morning, but no one came to help her.

Not even Mu Dazhong, who initially pushed Mrs. Lin to call off the marriage between Mu Dalang and Huang Bitā, comforted her.

Mu Dalang did want to go see his mother, but thinking of her actions, he decided not to bother for now.

He would wait until his mother came to her senses.

Who would have thought, Mrs. Lin was utterly stubborn, and together with Mu Dazhong, attempted to unite other members of the Old Mu Family in opposition to this marriage.

In a secluded corner of the Old Mu Family home

Mu Dazhong and Mrs. Lin gathered Mu Danian and Mu Dajiang from the fourth house to discuss the marriage between the Huang Family and the Old Mu Family.

"We've discussed this matter before, back when the fourth brother wasn't around, and we didn't reach any useful conclusions. Now that the brothers are all together, let's revisit it.

This marriage for Dalang, I, Mu Dazhong, do not agree. My son Dalang learned his trade in town, and my elder brother is a scholar. If we let him marry a country girl, he'll be a laughing stock.

Don't think this doesn't concern you all; this matter implicates everyone. My son marrying a country girl.

Old Fourth, those proposing for your Xiaxia are probably those big rough men, maybe even a widower who's lost his wife."

Mu Dazhong, in order to gain support from the fourth house, spoke without restraint.

Mu Dajiang was furious, even the honest ones have their breaking point.

With a reddened neck, his head slightly forward, he bluntly asked, "Second brother, what do you mean? Can you talk without involving my daughter?"

"What's wrong with me? I'm just giving an example to get you to support our Dalang not marrying that poor girl from the Huang Family, born from such a small household, why should she marry my son?" Mu Dazhong argued to Mu Dajiang with a look of innocence.

"Second brother, I'm not an idiot. The way you disparage my daughter, our fourth house. Do you not think I'd get upset?"

Mu Dajiang's rebellious words were spoken with perspiration all over his face.

It was always Mu Dajiang who was overlooked, and Mu Dazhong and Mu Danian never believed Mu Dajiang would counter any of their words.

"You're upset; what are you upset about? Let me tell you, your fourth house has the least say. If my son marries an unsuitable wife, your daughter can forget about marrying into a good family."

"You..." Mu Dajiang was about to speak when suddenly Mr. Mu, who had been lying in wait, jumped out to cut him off.

"Why all the arguing? Are you thinking this old man is dead? Old Second, I just told you, Miss Huang must be married into the family. Did you treat my words like wind in your ears?"

Mr. Mu simply did not trust Mu Dazhong.

He had refrained from talking about Huang Bitu and Mu Dalang's marriage affecting Wang's Mansion, just to prevent Mu Dazhong from using this to harm Old Da.

Mr. Mu had been deeply considerate for Mu Dade.

"Father, I just can't understand, what's so good about this Huang Bitu? She's talked about even with Fifth, and she's not from a wealthy household.

I think you are doing this on purpose. Knowing our second house is about to shine, you deliberately suppress us and let Dalang marry a woman who won't benefit him at all."

Mu Dazhong's remarks were enough to make Mr. Mu's mouth crooked with anger.

The dry tobacco he held in his hand smacked onto Mu Dazhong's arm unceremoniously, causing Mu Dazhong to cry out in pain.

"Dad, what are you doing? Did I say anything wrong? If you're not intentionally letting my son face hardship, why insist on doing it?"

Mu Dazhong was determined to get to the bottom of it.

No matter how Mr. Mu explained, he wouldn't listen, and Mr. Mu helplessly opened his mouth: "This matter is my decision with your mother. At first, we thought, having said to Fifth and then saying it to Dalang, if rumors spread, people would laugh at us.

But Matchmaker Sun said that girl from the Huang Family being with Dalang would bring prosperity to Wang's Mansion. And isn't the Eastern place where your elder brother resides?

Initially, we didn't believe it; your elder brother's journey was truly a near-death experience.

Sick midway, documents didn't arrive, but take a look. Ever since agreeing to the marriage with the Huang Family girl, not only did the documents arrive, even now, your elder brother's official position has been secured."

The intention behind Mr. Mu's words was naturally to get the sons to support his decision.

Once the explanation came out, Mu Dazhong's attitude immediately changed.

His mental calculations were clicking in rhythm.

Though the prosperity Huang Bitā and Dalang would bring was for the big house, Dalang was his son, and Huang Bitā would be his daughter-in-law, whatever he said, the two would listen.

When the time comes, he'd threaten his elder brother using both of them; if he wanted money, it'd be money.

If he wanted beautiful women, his elder brother would have to provide, without making a peep.

Mu Dazhong felt heaven was truly looking after him; the biggest chip of the Old Mu Family was in his hand.

Mu Dazhong chuckled, "Father, you really are! This marriage with the Huang Family girl and Dalang is for Wang's Mansion, such a big thing you didn't tell me.

If you'd said earlier, I would have agreed, and wouldn't have let Gou Dan's mother create a fuss, leading to family strife now. What can we do?"

Mu Dazhong's change in attitude happened so quickly that even Mu Danian couldn't understand it.

"You don't oppose anymore?" Mr. Mu was full of surprise.

Impossible, when had this second son become so easy to negotiate with?

"Of course, no opposition now! Today, Big Brother is the family's hope; you and Mother have told me about letting Big Brother attend next February's Imperial Examination.

With Bitā, the Imperial Examination is sure to succeed. When that time comes, if he enters the Palace Examination, he'd be the Champion Scholar."

Mr. Mu's facial expression also softened.

Indeed, with Huang Family girl and Dalang, the Mu Family should directly go to the Capital.

"Father, how about we go with Big Brother to take the exam? Once Big Brother becomes a scholar, we don't need to return.

We'll sell the land, gather some travel expenses, then buy a small courtyard in the Capital, settle down directly, and make delicious meals for Big Brother to prepare for the Imperial Examination. What do you think?"

Mu Dazhong's words undoubtedly tempted everyone present.

If Huang Bita truly brought prosperity to Wang's Mansion, once Big Brother passes, it would be a sure thing.

Since that's the case, why hold onto a few acres and a broken house? Of course, they should go to the Capital together.

The Capital is so bustling, isn't it better than the county in Qingshan Town?

Chapter 655: Efforts from All Parties

Mr. Mu was also moved by Mu Dazhong's words about settling down in the Capital.

Indeed, people aspire to greater heights. If the Old Mu Family could go to the Capital, the entire Er Gui Village would elevate the Old Mu Family to the skies.

However, they would need to sell their fields and land to go to the Capital, so Mr. Mu felt that this matter still needed some consideration.

"Second son, let's put this matter aside for now! Let me first discuss it with your eldest brother and see what he has to say."

As soon as Mr. Mu finished speaking, Mu Dazhong and the others felt a wave of disappointment in their hearts.

They thought they could immediately go to the Capital, but it seems they still have to wait.

Mr. Mu quickly headed towards the eldest son's room.

The other brothers of the Old Mu Family went home to daydream.

Although Mr. Mu didn't make a definitive decision at that moment, at least there was now a plan to go to the Capital with the eldest brother after the New Year.

The first thing the second family did when they got back home was to tally up their family assets. Mu Dazhong directly told Mrs. Lin, "Gou Dan's mother, you heard what we discussed today.

We have to marry Huang Bitao, and at the same time, we need to find a way to get some money. I heard that your eldest brother's business has been doing quite well lately, why don't you go back and ask him if he's willing to take us along. If he's willing, we'll take him to the Capital to make a fortune together."

Although Mrs. Lin's family wasn't considered wealthy, they had a smart eldest brother who started doing business a few years ago.

Initially, he lost everything, but later things gradually improved. The first bit of wealth for the second family, which was confiscated by Old Mrs. Mu, was five hundred wen given by Mu Dazhong's brother-in-law.

As time has passed, his brother-in-law's life has been getting better and better, so it's time to help out poor relatives a bit.

"Alright, I'll go this afternoon to Lin Family Village to have a look and bring Gou Dan along. My eldest brother has no sons and has always considered Gou Dan half like his own son."

Mrs. Lin was full of excitement. Being oppressed for so long, the imminent sense of turning the tables and singing in freedom was simply amazing.

Mu Dazhong was also full of excitement.

"Gou Dan's mother, I leave this matter to you!"

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East Wing of the Old Mu Family

Mr. Mu held his old tobacco pipe in one hand, with the other hand behind his back. Every time he visited the eldest son's room, he felt particularly proud.

This was the place Mr. Mu and Old Mrs. Mu used to live, but later they vacated it for the eldest son's reading and studies.

A Taoist who repaired their path early on said this land was a lotus treasure land that would bring success.

Over the years, although the eldest son hadn't had any sons, he at least passed the scholar exam, so the Taoist wasn't wrong.

Mr. Mu stood outside the wing room for a long time, gathering his thoughts before entering the room.

Mu Dade was still reminiscing about the time spent in the county with Ruan Xiao Jiao.

Those were the happiest days of his life.

Mu Dade now had over a hundred taels of silver, eighty of which came from Ruan Xiao Jiao selling all her jewelry and all the wealth County Magistrate Zheng had given over the years.

One could say she placed all her hopes on Mu Dade, as long as he passed as the Champion Scholar, they would be together.

Thinking about Ruan Xiao Jiao's refined and graceful face, a kind of infatuation appeared in Mu Dade's eyes.

Even when Mr. Mu entered, he didn't hide this expression.

"Ahem, eldest!" Mr. Mu didn't know what his son was thinking about, but he had things on his mind that he needed to express.

"Dad, what brings you here?" Mu Dade put down the teacup in his hand and greeted Mr. Mu, but he didn't get up to welcome him.

Mr. Mu didn't notice this small detail; he walked up by himself and sat down beside Mu Dade.

"Eldest, ever since your classmate came by, we haven't really talked. What are you thinking, can you let me know?"

Mu Dade furrowed his brow slightly, seemingly unhappy with Mr. Mu's interference.

But he soon restrained his displeasure and half-truthfully talked about his plans with Mr. Mu.

"Dad, our Old Mu Family has been farmers for generations, and so am I. But now I've passed the imperial exams and become a scholar, life is slowly settling.

I just want to fight for it once more. If I succeed, I can return gloriously, and the family will be respected by the village.

Even if the outcome isn't great, I accept it. After all, having been to the Capital and seen the world, I wouldn't be a frog in the well."

Mr. Mu nodded slightly.

If not for the large expenses of going to the Capital, it indeed would be right to let his son go.

As if he knew what Mr. Mu was thinking, Mu Dade said, "Dad, you and Mom don't have to worry about the travel expenses. The court has given scholars some money and provisions to encourage us to take next year's Imperial Examination.

Moreover, Dan Dan's mother's family has already said they would support us with some more silver taels."

Actually, Mu Dade had reached a point where he didn't really lack silver taels.

Many people wanted to gain some benefit from him.

On the day he returned, even the village head of Er Gui Village sent ten taels of silver, and Mu Dade's classmates each contributed a little. Mr. Mu didn't know about all this.

Upon hearing Mu Dade's words, Mr. Mu suddenly felt uncomfortable all over.

His own son, going for an exam, needed the help of his daughter-in-law's family; would this son still remain close to him in the future?

"Eldest, your mother and I aren't capable of much; we can't produce large sums. Fifth and your younger sister aren't married yet, and we don't even know if Lao Liu Ziran, who's been in the military for so many years, is alive or dead. If he is alive, he hasn't married either.

These are the responsibilities your mother and I should bear. In short, this year's harvest, just like previous years, will be entirely for your travel expenses after taxes and family necessities.

If that's not enough, I'll sell off some of our fertile land to scrounge up some silver taels for emergencies."

Mr. Mu indeed placed Mu Dade's matters at heart.

When Mu Dazhong wanted to go to the Capital and demanded Mr. Mu sell land, Mr. Mu didn't agree and said he'd consider it.

But now, as soon as Mu Dade mentioned travel expenses, Mr. Mu talked about selling land without hesitation.

For Mr. Mu, land was like half his life; he had placed all his hopes in Mu Dade.

A few smiles gradually appeared on Mu Dade's face.

"Dad, I appreciate your intentions, but I don't want to take your land and fields, which are your life. Let's leave this matter aside for now, and if I really need it later, I'll ask you then, alright?"

Chapter 656: Help Again

In the blink of an eye, two more days passed. All of the double-barrelled guns at Shuangshuang's house were complete, and the harvest from the three acres was threshed at the village's threshing ground.

The first thing after finishing was to call Mr. Mu from the Old Mu Family to come weigh it together.

Half of the total harvest would belong to the Old Mu Family.

The work at the Old Mu Family was still in the harvesting phase.

Fortunately, it hadn't rained recently; otherwise, the ripe harvest in their fields would have gone rotten.

Mr. Mu, holding his dry tobacco pipe, walked towards the threshing ground.

On the way, he encountered several villagers, who asked about Mu Dade.

"Uncle Mu, Da De has become a scholar now. Why does your family still need to farm?" The young lad from the Wu Family at the village entrance looked puzzled.

Mr. Mu was about to respond when an older man from the village interrupted:

"You just don't know! It's called self-sufficiency. Isn't Wang San's family well-off too? Yet he's always stayed in the village."

"Wang San was disdained by his family for being too ugly, which is why he wasn't allowed to go to the town. It hardly has to do with self-sufficiency," said the Wu Family lad, casting a suspicious glance at Mr. Mu.

"Uncle Mu, could it be that Brother Dade didn't let you go have a good life, so you're stuck with these few acres of land?"

Mr. Mu shook his head quickly. "No... nothing like that. Our eldest will go to the Capital after the New Year to take the exams, and he asked me to join him."

The crowd just laughed quietly without saying anything.

Once something is spoken, no matter how it's explained, it turns into something wrong.

Mr. Mu forced a smile, exchanged a few pleasantries, and arrived at the threshing ground.

By then, Shuangshuang was already packing.

The grain was packed in burlap sacks, waiting to be weighed, after which the Old Mu Family would take the rice back for processing.

Bag after bag of rice was packed, and Mr. Mu had already reached the area occupied by Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng at the threshing ground.

"Shuang, when did you all start working?" Mr. Mu asked.

The sun had just risen, yet the third branch had done so much work.

Mr. Mu felt somewhat embarrassed looking at it.

"We started before dawn; these rice grains were milled last night. Since you're here, let's start weighing them."

At the threshing ground, sack after sack of rice was stacked together, and Lu Yuanfeng called Da Hu and Brother Da Niu to help carry it for weighing.

It didn't take long to sort out all the rice from the three acres.

The Old Mu Family's rice was all placed in the corner of the threshing ground.

Mr. Mu felt a wave of emotion in his heart. With this half of the rice, the Old Mu Family's three acres of fertile field completely belonged to Lu Yuanfeng now.

That was the wealth Mr. Mu had accumulated in his youth, now given away for free. Mr. Mu couldn't help but ask, "Fengzi, will you ever sell those acres to someone else?"

Mu Shuangshuang, listening nearby, knew Mr. Mu was regretting it.

Of course, it was originally a good second-grade field, but Fu Wu had degraded it to third-grade land, Mr. Mu was naturally dissatisfied.

"Mr. Mu, no matter what, Fengzi's land will not be sold to others. Fengzi had no land before, and now he's finally saved some wealth; he should strive to keep it rather than lose it."

Lu Yuanfeng shook his head firmly.

Back when he sold the land, Lu Yuanfeng had considered that Mr. Mu might want to buy it back.

The argument was something he had long discussed with Shuangshuang.

Mr. Mu felt a surge of disappointment.

He said, "If that's the case, I'll go back and call someone to transport the rice, Shuang... you've worked hard, your third branch."

Mr. Mu's last words left Mu Shuangshuang puzzled.

The old man had been changing too quickly lately.

Yesterday her mother mentioned that the old man greeted her when he saw her on the road.

In the past, Mr. Mu wouldn't bother with such things unless his daughter-in-law called him.

"Grandpa, same to you!"

Lately, Mr. Mu seemed to have trouble sleeping, with heavy dark circles under his eyes, and most noticeably, Mu Shuangshuang observed that his energetic walk wasn't the same as before.

"Grandpa, is the rice at home all harvested? Uncle Fu mentioned the cold wave was coming soon; if not harvested, it could reduce the yield," Mu Shuangshuang asked with concern, looking at his staggered steps.

"Ah?" Mr. Mu was taken aback, seemingly not fully alert.

"We still have seven or eight acres unharvested. The threshing ground here is occupied by villagers, and we haven't found a place; the rice is piled in our yard," Mr. Mu said, making Mu Shuangshuang feel if you don't seek trouble, you won't find trouble.

She felt like the Old Mu Family was about to collapse.

Couldn't they even organize the basic farming tasks like drying the rice?

"Shuang, you always have good ideas, lend Grandpa your ideas again, just consider it as Grandpa begging you once more?"

Mr. Mu was anxious; previously, he had mentioned to wait for villagers to make room before finding a place to sun the rice and then mill it later.

Given the current situation, waiting wasn't feasible!

The old man was indeed pitiful, over fifty years of age, yet worrying about everything.

"Grandpa, it's not supposed to be like this. You are an experienced farmer; you should know better what needs doing and when," Mu Shuangshuang replied.

"Yes, I was muddled, but now that it's reached this point, solving it is crucial. Shuang, what do you think..."

Mu Shuangshuang rolled her eyes internally; she thought the old man had changed, was good to the third branch.

Turns out he still wanted her help.

Logically, these mundane matters had nothing to do with the third branch.

Helping would show her kindness; not helping was her freedom, and no one had the right to criticize her.

But seeing Mr. Mu, she indeed felt pity.

And it might grow worse in the future.

After thinking, Mu Shuangshuang said, "Grandpa, quickly negotiate with villagers who've almost finished milling their rice to let you use some space at the threshing ground.

Hire villagers who've completed their farm work for twelve copper coins a day to help. Or let the family do it; if my Second Uncle and Uncle No. Five don't want to, see who in the family does."

This time, Mu Shuangshuang didn't hold back. She remembered her Fourth Uncle had no work recently at home, and Cousin Da Lang as well—they were both industrious people.

Seven or eight acres would take two or three days to finish.

One person could earn about thirty copper coins.

Having money is always good.

Listening to Mu Shuangshuang's words, Mr. Mu felt immediately troubled.

The family had no silver to hire workers; their savings were spent on the eldest's education.

Mu Shuangshuang also considered this issue; she said, "Grandpa, I heard Sister Dan Dan say the day before yesterday that Big Uncle has quite some money at hand."

Chapter 657: Pies Falling from the Sky (Four More Updates)

Mr. Mu looked surprised; he had no idea the eldest branch had money.

Just as he was about to argue, Mu Shuangshuang continued, "According to Sister Dandan, it seems my uncle is planning to buy a house in the county.

I estimate that a house in the county must cost dozens of taels, right? Asking Uncle to shell out some money should just be like plucking a hair from a cow's back, nothing significant.

After all, in the end, all the grain from these fields will go to my uncle; just consider it a labor fee."

Mu Shuangshuang pointed out the little scheme in Mr. Mu's heart without sparing any face.

Mr. Mu's face turned red, not knowing how to respond.

However, what Shuangshuang said was somewhat shocking to him.

No wonder a few days ago, he asked, and the eldest said he didn't want his money; turns out he had so much at hand.

All of a sudden, Mr. Mu felt a sense of betrayal.

"Shuang girl, I'll head back first."

After saying this, Mr. Mu hurriedly walked towards the Old Mu Family.

The first thing he did when he got back was to tell Old Mrs. Mu about what he had heard from Mu Shuangshuang.

Old Mrs. Mu, upon hearing this, unlike Mr. Mu, didn't feel a sense of crisis; instead, she was quite pleased.

"Old man, this is a good thing! The eldest has money to buy a house, we can go live with them. I must make him leave a room for Xiangxiang, and also let him prepare some dowry for Xiangxiang.

These days, I've asked a matchmaker from the neighboring village to investigate a bit. She said there's a scholar in the town who is just right for our Xiangxiang, said the family has several houses and a few shops too."

Old Mrs. Mu smiled happily, clearly in a good mood.

"What? A scholar? Has a shop? Wants our Xiangxiang?" Mr. Mu doubted his ears, thinking he might have misheard.

"I say, old man, what's your deal? What's wrong with our Xiangxiang? Young and beautiful, and with such a good family background.

Eldest brother is a scholar; whose family wouldn't rush to be in-laws with us? Anyway, the marriage with the Qin Family, I've already agreed to, even received a dowry of five taels of silver."

This shocked Mr. Mu even more.

Qin Family, scholar, house, shop, five taels of dowry, what kind of situation is this?

"Xiangxiang's mother, are you out of your mind? Someone offers five taels of dowry for our Xiangxiang, and you just accepted it?"

Mr. Mu felt hit hard by reality today.

He felt as if in a dream.

However he listened, it seemed like a scam.

"You're the one who's nuts! People hope their daughters marry into good families, but you, suspect your own daughter? What on earth are you thinking?"

Moreover, given such good terms, dowry, clothes, and rouge for Xiangxiang, could I not seize the opportunity?"

Just as Old Mrs. Mu finished speaking, Mu Xiangxiang burst in from outside the main room.

"Mom, I changed into the new clothes, do I look good?"

Mr. Mu followed the voice and looked over, seeing Mu Xiangxiang dressed in a beautiful orange-red silk skirt embroidered with exquisite crabapple flowers.

However, Mu Xiangxiang's face was forever inappropriate.

The glaringly white powder, along with two vivid red blush patches on her cheeks, contrasted with the blood-red lipstick.

Mr. Mu was startled and took two steps back, while Old Mrs. Mu happily went up to greet her.

"Oh, my good daughter, you look so pretty today, let mom have a look..."

The mother and daughter exchanged pleasantries for a while, and Old Mrs. Mu took Mu Xiangxiang outside to show off, spreading the news of Mu Xiangxiang's upcoming marriage, even alarming the third branch.

Mr. Mu's opposition was futile, so he sent a few sons to bring in the rice.

Mu Dazhong, Mu Danian, and Mu Dajiang went to transport the rice from the threshing ground, inevitably facing Mu Shuangshuang.

This face-to-face encounter reminded Mu Dazhong of the previous incident where he sneaked some rice and was caught by Mu Shuangshuang, who then reported him to Mr. Mu.

"Shuang girl, you third branch haven't secretly transported grain back, reducing the total, then took advantage of our Old Mu Family, have you?" Mu Dazhong asked loudly in front of the entire village.

Mu Shuangshuang sneered and replied, "Second Uncle must not be fully awake; our third branch always acts fairly. This rice was harvested separately, and not a single stalk was mixed in with the previous ones. If you want, you can ask others at the threshing ground."

Everyone was working together, so they knew what Mu Shuangshuang said was true and were willing to testify.

"Mu the Second, are you just picking on your niece? Shuangshuang and Fengzi worked here, we all saw it with our own eyes. Your family's rice doesn't have a lower yield per mu than others, so there's no reason for these words."

Aunt Wang, who usually had little contact with Mu Shuangshuang, said this fair word first because Mu Shuangshuang politely greeted her these days.

Occasionally bringing food with her when bringing Fengzi meals, strengthening Aunt Wang's resolve to speak fairly.

Mu Dazhong's face turned awkward immediately.

He thought Mu Shuangshuang couldn't explain it.

Who knew, she had witnesses.

"That can't prove you didn't steal our rice, and you don't know, those three plots of land were deceived from our Old Mu Family through the conniving of this brat and that fool. They originally belonged to our Old Mu Family."

Mu Dazhong shamelessly pushed the limits, leaving Mu Shuangshuang helpless.

"Second Uncle, if you have nothing to do, quickly finish the work and go rest. Shuangshuang doesn't have time to bicker with you."

Mu Shuangshuang's attitude was poor; after urging Mu Dazhong, she ignored him.

Mu Dazhong turned red with anger.

"You brat, make it clear, what do you mean by not having time to bicker? Are you just gonna let the matter of cheating us of our good land alone?"

"Second brother, enough! So many people are waiting to see the joke. You may have no pride, but we do!" said Mu Dajiang, who had remained silent, finally speaking.

His words were in support of Mu Shuangshuang.

Mu Shuangshuang gave him a grateful smile.

It was rare and precious for Mu Dajiang, usually one to avoid trouble, to stand up for someone.

"Fourth brother, what kind of spell has this brat put on you? You used to avoid these matters; what's up? Do you want to stand up for her? Watch me bash you!"

Mu Dazhong raised a fist to strike Mu Dajiang, but before reaching his face, he suddenly found his hand immobilized.

Turning around, he saw Lu Yuanfeng standing behind him, grasping his arm.

A wave of intense pain struck him.

"Let go!" shouted Mu Dazhong.

Lu Yuanfeng grabbed Mu Dazhong's arm and swung it, causing Mu Dazhong to fall to the ground, eating a mouthful of mud and even drawing nosebleed.

Struggling to get up, Lu Yuanfeng pressed him back down.

"Apologize to Shuangshuang!" Lu Yuanfeng said coldly.

"Apologize for what? I did nothing wrong. I'll tell you, I'm the scholar's brother! You dare touch me, I'll tell my elder brother and have you and this brat imprisoned for life!"

Chapter 658: Gossip Knows No Age (1st Update)

As soon as Mu Dazhong finished speaking, Lu Yuanfeng increased the pressure.

He continued to hold down Mu Dazhong, who had already eaten dirt, forcing him to swallow more.

His back felt like it was being hammered, causing Mu Dazhong to scream in pain.

His face was flushed red, full of agony.

"Old Four, help me, it hurts so much..." Mu Dazhong cried out.

He called Mu Dajiang because Mu Dajiang was on good terms with the third branch.

Perhaps Mu Shuangshuang would consider this and let him go.

Mu Dajiang had a kind heart, seeing his second brother cry out like this, he knew he must be in extreme pain.

"Shuangshuang...your second uncle knows he was wrong, you...please let him go."

Mu Shuangshuang remained unmoved.

Mu Dazhong's provocations weren't new, he always thought he could get away with it.

That's why he kept coming back. This time, in front of the entire village, there's a need to teach him a lesson.

"Uncle Four, you don't need to worry about this. My second uncle's unfiltered mouth has finally gotten him in trouble, it's better for family to handle it now than for outsiders to do it later."

As soon as Mu Shuangshuang finished speaking, a few onlookers chimed in:

"The third branch is really poor now, Old Three is bedridden at home, and it's only Si Niang and Shuang holding it together.

The second uncle not only doesn't help but publicly accuses Shuang, clearly wanting the third branch to suffer."

"Feng, don't let go. Stand up for the Third Branch of the Old Mu Family. If Mu the Second wants to complain, all of us can testify that it was the second uncle who insulted Shuang first."

Hearing the villagers' words, Lu Yuanfeng secretly increased the pressure again.

Mu Dazhong's whole face was now buried in the dirt, his fingers scraped to bleeding.

He cried even more pathetically.

"Shuangshuang, please tell Fengzi to let your second uncle go, things will get serious otherwise." Mu Dajiang quietly pleaded.

In Mu Dajiang's heart, although his second brother is lazier and selfish, he's still family; he couldn't just watch him suffer!

Mu Shuangshuang saw Mu Dazhong's cursing grow quieter and realized he was truly hurt. Then, she gestured to Lu Yuanfeng, "Fengzi, let my second uncle go."

Only then did Lu Yuanfeng throw Mu Dazhong out of the threshing field like a rag.

Mu Dazhong crawled up from the ground, several meters away, clutching his bleeding nose, jumping up to curse Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng: "You two damn lovers, wait for me, I won't let you go."

Lu Yuanfeng stepped forward, displeased, and Mu Dazhong became scared and ran away like a rabbit.

Mu Dajian and Mu Dajiang continued to load the Mu family's cart with the crops and transport them back home.

Mu Dajiang lingered in front of Mu Shuangshuang, hesitating for a while before speaking.

"Shuangshuang, thank you for letting him go just now..."

"Uncle Four, Shuangshuang has nothing much to say, just don't overwork yourself."

After speaking, Mu Shuangshuang started sorting the rice, which still needed to be sun-dried for a day before going into storage.

Mu Dajiang pushed the cart in the direction of the Mu family.

Back home, Mu Dazhong made another complaint about Mu Shuangshuang, painting her in the worst light.

Originally hoping Mr. Mu would stand up for him, he was surprised when Mr. Mu not only didn't blame Mu Shuangshuang.

Instead, he scolded Mu Dazhong severely.

This incident buried a grudge in Mu Dazhong's heart; he decided to get money fast and show Mr. Mu his strength.

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In the afternoon, Mr. Mu hired two strong men from the village to work, agreeing on twelve coins per day, including breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

Since they were from the same village, Mr. Mu dared not treat them with poor food, so he specifically checked the kitchen to make sure Mrs. Liu cooked a good meal.

Thus, after two more days, the Mu family's rice was finally all transported from the fields to the threshing grounds.

However, the harvest still wasn't over, as Mr. Mu led his family to continue threshing for another two or three days.

Just as the late rice was stored, a sudden cold wave mixed with autumn rain arrived.

Temperatures dropped sharply, and villagers hardly went outside, staying home peeling rotting cotton.

Mu Shuangshuang, with spare time at home, took the little kids to help Zhao Yun's house peel cotton.

The walls of Zhao Yun's main room were piled high with rotting cotton.

The kids' hands turned black from peeling but, with many hands, they quickly peeled a basket.

Zhao Yun was so happy she couldn't close her mouth.

She laughed, asking: "Shuangshuang, I haven't seen Fengzi today, where did he go?"

Usually, where Shuangshuang was, Fengzi was too.

"He's gone to the mountains, saying now that the harvest is over, all his time must be spent on hunting."

Lu Yuanfeng's main work is hunting, and with farming done, he should return to the mountains.

From now on, he would go into the mountains at least every two days, so that when the snow comes, he knows where the animals are.

"Is that so, Fengzi is really good. The other day, I was carrying water, he didn't hesitate to help carry it back."

Speaking about Lu Yuanfeng filled Zhao Yun's heart with joy.

She even felt like a mother-in-law admiring her son-in-law.

Although Zhao Yun didn't have a daughter, just a son, Da Long, Mu Shuangshuang was like half a daughter to her.

"Haha, really, he didn't mention it." Mu Shuangshuang said with a smile.

"The fact that he didn't say anything shows his good character. Everyone in the village says Shuangshuang and Fengzi are a great match."

When Zhao Yun talked about this, she wouldn't stop.

Zhang Yutou beside her could no longer bear it and reminded Zhao Yun.

"Alright, alright, you've gone on long enough, Shuangshuang's getting red-faced, change the topic."

"I'm just happy about it, alright, let's change the topic." Zhao Yun said.

"Shuangshuang, it's cold now, do you still go to town every few days?" Zhao Yun asked curiously.

"Yes, but it's really uncomfortable." Mu Shuangshuang sighed.

Autumn had arrived, a cold wave struck, and it was extremely chilly, and her mother's cotton clothes weren't made yet.

Yet she couldn't postpone the delivery trip to town every three days, each time the wind cut her face like icy knives.

Fortunately, Mu Shuangshuang's gloves proved helpful, preventing frostbite.

"You must dress warmly then, right, yesterday I heard someone say your little aunt is getting married, do you have any inside gossip?"

Tell Aunt Xiao Yun about it." Zhao Yun looked at Mu Shuangshuang with a gossiping expression.

"What? My little aunt is getting married?"

Mu Shuangshuang was shocked, suspecting she had misheard.

"So you didn't know!" Zhao Yun said disappointedly.

Zhao Yun thought Mu Shuangshuang might know some news, she got excited for gossip.

Chapter 659: Shameless to the Extreme

"Aunt Xiao Yun, do you know anything? Tell Shuangshuang!" Mu Shuangshuang winked at Zhao Yun.

There was no choice, Mu Shuangshuang was curious too. As strange as her little aunt was, who would want her?

Besides, the throat incident hasn't been dealt with yet, and no one knows when it will cause trouble.

Nearby, Yuanbao and Little Zhi held their breaths, staring eagerly at Zhao Yun, just like Mu Shuangshuang, wanting to hear the gossip.

"Oh, this isn't really from me; I heard it from the women in the village.

Your grandmother talked to people, said she found a matchmaker from the neighboring village to arrange a man from town for Xiangxiang, a scholar."

"Pfft~" Mu Shuangshuang couldn't hold back and burst into laughter.

It's not that she looked down on Mu Xiangxiang, but the identity just sounded like a scam.

A scholar from town marrying Mu Xiangxiang, why?

Old Mu Family has no money or power, and someone like Mu Dade, a scholar, is rare even over dozens of villages.

But is it really necessary to sacrifice so much?

"You girl, I haven't finished talking, wait till I'm done, then laugh together." Zhao Yun said dotingly.

"Your grandmother said your future little uncle lives in town, owns several residences, and dozens of shops, and even gave your grandmother five taels of silver.

He also bought your little aunt many beautiful clothes. You tell me, should you trust such a good fortune falling out of the sky?"

Most people in the village treat this as a joke.

Every day, after meals, they bring it up for a laugh.

"I don't see it happening, what kind of ability, what kind of benefits?"

My little aunt is lacking in talent and looks... moreover, in business she's no good, either."

The ancients married wives for virtue; if someone is as smart as Mrs. Jin from the main branch, outsiders who don't know her might think she's a virtuous wife.

But Mu Xiangxiang can't be considered virtuous at all.

"As I've said, but this still seems strange. I've heard that your grandmother has set the date for the engagement.

Said it will be on the eighteenth of the winter month, and that a big family gathering will be held. So I just wanted to ask if you knew any insider news."

Mu Shuangshuang still shook her head.

"I'll ask my fourth aunt later; she surely knows some inside information."

The two women continued chatting and laughing for a while until they finished helping Zhao Yun strip the rotting cotton from the corner of the wall before heading home.

Once home, Mu Shuangshuang saw Yu Si Niang standing at the doorway, looking around.

Yu Si Niang was wearing a thin garment typically worn in summer.

Mu Shuangshuang took a few steps forward and said to Yu Si Niang, "Mom, why are you standing at the door; it's so cold here."

As she spoke, Mu Shuangshuang tightened her clothes.

"Shuangshuang, just now your grandmother was here, she said... she said your little aunt is getting married."

Yu Si Niang's expression didn't look good.

Mu Shuangshuang saw it wasn't good news at a glance.

"Mom, if there's anything, just say it, Shuangshuang will stand by you."

For some reason, hearing this, Yu Si Niang's mood improved immediately.

"Your grandmother said your little aunt is marrying into a distinguished family, we at Old Mu Family can't fall behind.

Every household has to put together five taels of silver as a dowry for your little aunt, or your grandmother will have your father divorce me."

Mu Shuangshuang sneered and continued, "My grandmother is overstepping; divorce or not, she doesn't get to decide, my father does!"

"Besides, the third branch has separated; once little aunt is married, she has nothing to do with us."

"My big brother being a scholar, we never got any benefits from him. When there's something good, they forget about us. But when it's time to spill blood, they think about us?"

Yu Si Niang also felt Shuangshuang made sense, but refusing was no small matter.

"Mom, you don't need to worry about this. Next time grandmother talks, just say the family's money is kept by Shuangshuang. If she wants money, directly find Shuangshuang."

After Mu Shuangshuang finished speaking, she called towards her room: "Little Black, come out!"

Soon, two little black creatures came crawling out of the doghole in her room.

Little Black wobbled around like a meatball in front of Mu Shuangshuang.

Squealing nonstop.

Lai Mi was the same, circling around Mu Shuangshuang.

Mu Shuangshuang squatted down and asked Little Black, "Little Black, my little aunt is getting married. Grandma said she wants the silver you hold. Are you giving it?"

As soon as Mu Shuangshuang finished speaking, the formerly docile Little Black suddenly bared its teeth and jumped around in place.

I could see the anger on its face.

That look, both funny and somewhat magical.

"Mom, did you see? Even our head steward doesn't agree."

Yu Si Niang was amused but all her inner gloom completely faded away.

"Little Black is really a good kid. I'll go cut some meat for her."

Cutting meat for Little Black is the highest reward for her.

Yu Si Niang's words stopped the little creature's angry display.

Mu Shuangshuang petted its head, after a round of praise, Little Black again followed her into the room through the dog hole.

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Old Mu Family

The Qin Family from town sent some more items over, making Mr. Mu feel increasingly uneasy, he felt a twitch in his eyelids a few times each day.

Looking at the room full of items, Mr. Mu's psychological pressure continued to grow.

But others in the family were in high spirits. The harvest was long finished, and several women were working on the cotton at home, managing the important matters of food and clothing.

And now, Mu Xiangxiang, the vampire, is about to get married, how could anyone's mood not be good?

Laughing with joy.

Mrs. Lin leaned in close, looking at one piece of beautiful clothing after another, and whispered flatteringly to Mu Xiangxiang:

"Little Aunt Gou Dan, since the Qin Family gave you so many clothes, let me borrow a few to wear, I promise I won't damage them."

Mu Xiangxiang's expression immediately changed, and she loudly rebuked Mrs. Lin.

"Second sister-in-law, how shallow can you be, wanting even two pieces of clothing. If the Qin Family sends money, will you directly grab it?"

Mu Xiangxiang didn't give any face, stepping on Mrs. Lin again.

Just then, Old Mrs. Mu heard Mu Xiangxiang and glaringly looked at Mrs. Lin.

"A piece of trash, you even want your sister's things, deserving a lifetime of poverty."

Mrs. Lin's face turned blue and then white.

"Mom, I just wanted to borrow them for a couple of days, not truly take Xiangxiang's."

"Pah!" Old Mrs. Mu spat some thick phlegm on Mrs. Lin's face. "You're pretending here in front of an old woman, your nature is clear to me."

You lift your butt, and I know what you're about to do. You're used to reaching out, lazy by nature, and want to leech off others."

Mrs. Lin kept retreating, hurriedly wiping her face.

Almost to the point of vomiting in disgust.

"Hmph!" Mu Xiangxiang looked at Mrs. Lin's embarrassing state with disdain.

Mu Dazhong frowned, not intending to bother with Mrs. Lin.

"Dad, since Xiangxiang has found a good family, when are we finding one for Qing? She's about the same age as Xiangxiang."

Chapter 660: Met at the Village Entrance

"Dad, both Da Lang and Xiangxiang have their marriage settled, but I'm the elder and mine isn't settled yet. What should I do about this?"

Mu Danyan didn't want to fall behind and followed up.

Speaking of which, there are too many kids in the Old Mu Family reaching the marrying age.

The eldest two daughters, Mu Dandan and Mu Yingying.

The second branch Mu Dalang and Mu Qingqing.

The third branch Mu Shuangshuang, and the fourth branch Mu Xiaxia.

Then there's Mu Danyan and Mu Xiangxiang. If the Old Mu Family seriously takes care of this matter, they'd have to organize several wedding banquets within a year.

But along with that comes a large sum of money.

Betrothal gifts, dowries, all these expenses combined would be estimated to be several dozens of silver taels.

Mr. Mu took a couple of puffs from his dry tobacco pipe and said calmly.

"The date for Da Lang's marriage is set for the twelfth lunar month, and for Xiangxiang's it's the second. Fifth, you can probably get married after Xiangxiang does.

As for Qing and Xia, they are still young, so let's wait for a while. Once Da Da is confirmed if it's going to be the county or the capital, we can find a matchmaker.

The marriage of the eldest's two daughters will be handled by the eldest's wife, we don't interfere."

Mr. Mu's words sounded quite fair.

The few people present didn't have much opinion, but the biggest issue was the allocation of money.

However, everyone knew this straightforward conversation wouldn't be discussed in front of others, but certainly in private.

"Dad, how much is the Qin Family's betrothal gift?" Mu Dazhong asked Mr. Mu with a fawning expression.

"Exactly, this matter hasn't been discussed with mom either, just mentioning the Qin Family sent five taels of silver, some clothes, and we haven't even seen what the Qin Family boy looks like." Mu Danyan joined in the fuss.

"I haven't seen him either." Mr. Mu admitted frankly.

Not only Mr. Mu but even Old Mrs. Mu hadn't seen him.

Just having heard their conditions are good, with decent looks and being a Scholar, Old Mrs. Mu decided on this marriage.

"Mom, you and Xiangxiang decided on this marriage, when will you take us to the town to have a look, huh? The bride should meet the in-laws. The new son-in-law shouldn't be hidden away, should he?" Mu Dazhong said.

Old Mrs. Mu thought about it and found it reasonable.

A daughter-in-law that she hadn't even seen, saying it out loud might get laughed at.

"Alright, I'll ask Nanny Li to talk to the Qin Family, and we will go to the town looking around, but you have to wait outside, while me and Xiangxiang's father go inside, and Da Da will go to make an impression."

With Old Mrs. Mu saying this, the second branch and Mu Danyan were inevitably disappointed.

But thinking of going to the town to have a big meal wasn't bad either.

"Mom, I probably won't have time, I have to go to the county in a couple of days." Mu Dade stood up.

"You've just come back, why are you going again? Didn't the documents from the government already arrive?" Old Mrs. Mu said surprisedly.

Mrs. Jin also looked surprised, she hadn't heard her husband mentioning going to the county.

Moreover, Mrs. Jin noticed changes in her husband's behavior since he returned.

He no longer discussed things with her, and, most importantly, the plan to make the third branch suffer had no progress.

Mrs. Jin watched Mu Shuangshuang coming and going in the Old Mu Family yard every day, feeling annoyed.

If the third branch doesn't suffer a setback soon, Mrs. Jin might not be able to hold it in any longer.

"Mom, some classmates invited me to the county, saying they'd introduce me to some county gentlemen, as I have quite a chance of getting appointed in the county."

Ruan Xiao Jiao had pulled many strings for Mu Dade, using all her effort to keep the County Magistrate happy.

The County Chief Clerk's position was reserved for Mu Dade temporarily, and if Mu Dade doesn't become a Champion Scholar, he could take the position in the county.

These things were never mentioned to the Old Mu Family, only saying he might be appointed in the county.

Upon hearing it's about career, Old Mrs. Mu immediately fell silent.

"Then hurry up, this matter can't be delayed." Old Mrs. Mu urged.

Mu Xiangxiang saw Old Mrs. Mu change her attitude so quickly, and stomped her foot.

"Mom, you said earlier that big brother would go, now that he's not going, would the Qin Family still approve of us? Xiangxiang just won't go."

Strictly speaking, this was the first rift between Mu Xiangxiang and Mu Dade.

Old Mrs. Mu felt torn.

Heart and flesh on each side, which hurts, she is distressed.

In the end, Mu Dade made a concession.

"Mom, if you can arrange a meeting with the Qin Family tomorrow, I'll go, but if it's not possible tomorrow, forget it."

Mu Dade's words let Old Mrs. Mu know there's room for negotiation.

She thought about it, stood up, and said to everyone: "I'll go find that Nanny Li, wait for my good news."

Old Mrs. Mu rushed to the neighboring village, paid Nanny Li a coin, and took a cow cart to town.

In the evening, the Qin Family suggested having lunch at the First-class Residence Restaurant the following day.

This was great news for the Old Mu Family, as it was rare for the whole Old Mu Family to go to the town.

Everyone took it seriously, even Mrs. Lin bathed, washed her hair, and wore the clothes given by Mrs. Jin worth two taels of silver.

Although when she first tried it on, it tore, so Mrs. Lin patched it up with other fabrics, though it looked a bit mismatched, it still looked high-end overall.

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The next day, the whole Old Mu Family spent five coins renting a cow cart to rush to the town.

They had just reached the village entrance when they saw Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng coming along with a cow cart.

Accompanied by Zhao Yun, Yu Si Niang, and four little kids.

This was something Mu Shuangshuang suddenly wanted to do last night, as the autumn harvest was over, and her mother hadn't gone to town for quite a while.

Yu Si Niang took some mountain products with her for the Zhang Family's Master, considering it a token of appreciation for the support given by the old owner.

"Mom, isn't that Yu Si Niang? Maybe she heard we're going to the county to meet the Qin Family, so she's tagging along for a free meal?"

Mrs. Lin shouted loudly.

"You're blabbering nonsense, my old eyes aren't blind, I can see." Old Mrs. Mu scolded Mrs. Lin angrily.

Mrs. Lin pursed her lips and obediently shut her mouth.

The cow cart came closer, Yu Si Niang greeted the people of the Old Mu Family sheepishly.

"Dad, mom, second brother, second sister-in-law..."

This group didn't include Mu Dade and Mrs. Jin, as they took a separate carriage to town, arranged by Mrs. Jin last night.

Old Mrs. Mu snorted coldly, turned her head to the side, completely ignoring Yu Si Niang's greeting.

"Third daughter-in-law, where are you and Shuang going?" Mr. Mu asked, knowing well.

But no one bothered about it.

"Shuang and Fengzi are going to town to deliver some things, Xiao Yun and I planned to go to town for a stroll, maybe buy something." Yu Si Niang answered honestly.

"I spit, wasteful woman, didn't put in any effort when making money, spends my son's money without blinking an eye."