

Folly 67

Chapter 67: Raspberry

Mu Shuangshuang's words carried a slight hint of reproach toward Mu Dashan. Despite Mrs. Jin's obvious bullying, Mu Dashan not only did not resist but wanted to drag his sickly body to accommodate those oddities.

Although Shuangshuang understood in her heart that Mu Dashan's treatment of surrounding relatives wasn't wrong if viewed with ancient thinking. The eldest brother is like a father, the eldest sister-in-law like a mother — what the eldest sister-in-law says is not much different from Old Mrs. Mu's words.

But she, Mu Shuangshuang, was not from ancient times; she couldn't stand seeing her family being bullied and still having to smile. She preferred an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.

"Shuangshuang, don't be angry. Your elder aunt doesn't have any other intentions. She just wants me to finish the chores early so we can quickly get the money from selling the rice. Your uncle is relying on that silver for the Autumn Examination," Mu Dashan comforted Shuangshuang.

Mu Shuangshuang sighed; she felt it was time to say certain things.

"Dad, what do you think about us splitting up and living separately?"

As soon as Mu Shuangshuang spoke, the two people in the room reacted differently. Mu Dashan gasped, while Yu Si Niang looked at her husband with anticipation.

"Shuangshuang, do you know what you're saying? Your grandmother and grandfather aren't dead yet; how can you talk about splitting the family now?"

As the saying goes, when the elders are alive, the family doesn't split. With Old Mrs. Mu and Mr. Mu still alive, there's absolutely no allowing for the siblings to divide the family. Besides, his father's need to save face would never permit such a thing.

"Why not? Didn't Shuangshuang learn cupping yesterday in town by chance? Dad wouldn't be standing here listening to Shuangshuang if not for that."

"This..." Mu Dashan hesitated, but the thoughts he usually adhered to still restrained him. "Shuangshuang, just pretend Dad didn't hear this. Don't mention it again. If your grandmother hears, there's no telling what nasty things she'll say."

Upon hearing her husband's words, Yu Si Niang's bright eyes suddenly lost their shine; so it's no use after all?

Shuangshuang naturally didn't miss Yu Si Niang's expression. In her heart, she knew that perhaps Mu Dashan still held some affection for Old Mu Family's members; otherwise, he wouldn't be so adamant about not discussing splitting the family.

Understanding that they couldn't split the family now, Mu Shuangshuang felt dissatisfied in her heart. Yet, considering Old Mu Family's situation, dividing the family was only a matter of time.

"Dad, Mom, have you had lunch? What did you eat?"

The children can't eat at home, but Mu Dashan and Yu Si Niang are adults, so having lunch at home is possible. However, what they ate couldn't be guaranteed.

"Pretty much the usual. Shuangshuang, what did you eat? Shall I go to the kitchen and get you something?" Yu Si Niang recalled there were still a few buns left from lunch, stored in the cupboard. Giving one to her daughter was no big deal, even if it meant being scolded by Old Mrs. Mu.

As she spoke, Yu Si Niang stepped forward, pulling out a tattered cotton cloth handkerchief from her sleeve to carefully wipe the sweat off her daughter's forehead and face.

"It'll be better if you don't go out on such hot days. Stay home, and I'll save breakfast for you to have as lunch," she said.

Upon hearing this, Shuangshuang felt warmth in her heart and gave Yu Si Niang her brightest smile.

"Thank you, Mom. Little Zhi, Xiao Han, and I have eaten. It's no worse than home. Plus, we brought you some good stuff. Just wait."

Mu Shuangshuang stepped back and walked outside. She first looked carefully around, ensuring neither Old Mrs. Mu nor the people from the second house were nearby. Then she imitated Du Juan's voice and called out — a signal for her and the little ones.

As long as they heard her call like a cuckoo, it meant the old witch wasn't nearby, allowing them to come in boldly. This was the downside of not splitting from the family; if they were separate, she could bring in fish caught and wild vegetables picked without worrying about others' reactions.

Upon hearing the signal, Xiao Han quickly rushed in with a basket, followed by Little Zhi, both panting heavily. Once inside, they were sweating profusely.

"Sister, aren't Xiao Han and I great? We brought the stuff back," Little Zhi said breathlessly.

Earlier, they were resting by the stream when Lu Yuanfeng mentioned he would help her saw the wood to make bed boards.

Coincidentally, Lu Yuanfeng's neighbor, surnamed Chen, known as Chen Gen, was a carpenter who usually helped the villagers make wooden tables and stools while doing his farm work. It was perfect to bring the wood to him.

Seeing Lu Yuanfeng leave, she took the two Little Doudings for a turn around the mountain and discovered a patch of wild raspberries.

Wild raspberries grow in the mountains and resemble strawberries, although much smaller. To rural families who rarely eat fruit, they are a rare treat.

Shuangshuang and the two Little Doudings fiercely picked a large pot full, even gathering some wild vegetables for the family's rabbits. Originally, they intended to catch some fish but decided against it, fearing exposure of their relatively comfortable situation.

When Mu Shuangshuang emptied the basket revealing the big pot of bright red raspberries, even though Mu Dashan and Yu Si Niang had seen them multiple times, along with Little Zhi and Xiao Han, they couldn't help but salivate.

"Shuangshuang, are these mountain raspberries? Something from the mountains? Did you go up the mountain?" Mu Dashan's eyelids twitched, and his voice slightly trembled.

"Shuangshuang, didn't you say you wouldn't go up the mountain?" Yu Si Niang reacted similarly to Mu Dashan, repeatedly telling her daughter not to go to the mountains since Shuangshuang took out wild vegetables.

"Dad, Mom, what are you talking about? Of course, I didn't go up the mountain. These were picked by Lu Yuanfeng, the Lu Family's boy. Last time, I helped him sell mountain goods at the market, so he's returning the favor."

Mu Shuangshuang quickly found an excuse; she knew it wasn't the time to reveal she'd been to the mountains. Otherwise, going out in the future would be difficult.

Yu Si Niang was still worried. She hugged Little Zhi and softly asked, "Little Zhi, tell Mom, did your sister go up the mountain alone?"

"No, sister never went up the mountain alone." Little Zhi shook her head vigorously. "Mom, Little Zhi is good, and sister is good too. She wouldn't dare go to the mountain."

Only then did Yu Si Niang feel relieved, silently telling herself in her heart that it's good they hadn't gone to the mountain.

Shuangshuang secretly winked at Little Zhi, then picked a bright red raspberry and fed it to her. "Is it good?"

Little Zhi nodded, her large, beautiful eyes watching Mu Shuangshuang with a cunning smile, as if saying, "Sister, I'm smart; Mom didn't find out our secret."

Mu Shuangshuang was both amused and helpless, continuing to feed her little raspberries.

"Shuangshuang, why not give some of these raspberries to your grandmother? Since the villagers have stopped going to the mountains, it's been years since they had raspberries; it'll be a nice