

Folly 691

Chapter 691: Shameless Woman

"What's wrong with my aunt?" Mu Shuangshuang asked.

Mrs. Lin just wanted to speak but suddenly realized that the person in front of her was the third branch's annoying girl she disliked the most.

If she's asking proactively, it must not be for any good reason.

"What's wrong with your aunt, why should I tell you? Can't you just go see for yourself?" Mrs. Lin said testily.

"Oh, come on, Aunt. You've been taking care of my aunt lately, you should know her whereabouts better than anyone else." Mu Shuangshuang said to Mrs. Lin with a grin.

Mrs. Lin became cautious.

These past days, she's been giving Mu Xiangxiang a hard time, sometimes not feeding her, other times forcing porridge mixed with chili water down her throat. Even for bathing, she used chili water.

Mu Xiangxiang had been thoroughly subdued by her, listening better than their family dog.

Mrs. Lin's only worry now was this matter being discovered by the Old Mu Family, then she'd have nothing to vent on.

"Stop talking nonsense, you brat. How fond can you be of your aunt? I'm telling you, if you're up to something, I'll tell your granny and have your skin peeled!"

Mrs. Lin shouted loudly with a hint of bravado.

Mu Shuangshuang grew more suspicious of Mrs. Lin.

To Mu Shuangshuang, Mrs. Lin's words were all lies.

With Mu Xiangxiang's temper, if she knew she was going to be mute for some time, she wouldn't spare Mrs. Lin; why would she obediently listen to her? There's something fishy here.

But Mu Shuangshuang didn't expose it, the trouble Mu Xiangxiang caused in the third branch wasn't any less than Mrs. Lin's, so she had no need to be the good person.

"Fourth Uncle, hurry and make the rice pops. My aunt and cousin are still waiting, don't delay it."

As soon as Mu Shuangshuang finished speaking, she quickly signaled with her eyes to Lu Yuanfeng and Liu Zian who were watching the commotion from the side. They backed away obediently.

Unconsciously, they walked out of the courtyard.

When the fire was lit, Mu Dajiang was enthusiastically anticipating his creation, while Mrs. Lin couldn't stop swallowing.

She couldn't bear to move her eyes even for a moment.

After a moment passed, Mu Dajiang thought it was time to pound the iron pot of rice pop lumps, Mu Shuangshuang quickly said, "Fourth Uncle, the kids at home like rice pops too. I'll split it with Aunt, I'll take the majority, Aunt will take the minority."

Mrs. Lin wasn't pleased to hear this.

"Hey, brat, that's not right. Earlier you said it's for me and your cousin too. Why has it changed to you taking more and me taking less?"

"Aunt, your words are quite greedy. What you see here is all mine anyway, why can't I take a bit more? If you have the guts, guard the rice pop sack yourself!"

"What? Afraid I can't guard it? You're not allowed to eat, get out!" Mrs. Lin bumped her butt into Mu Shuangshuang, causing her to retreat several steps.

Mrs. Lin rushed over, picked up the sack from the ground, and stuck her whole head inside.

Leaving a backside like Donald Duck.

Mu Dajiang looked troubled and discussed with Mrs. Lin.

"Second Sister-in-law, why don't you share some with Shuangshuang? I don't want anything, okay?"

Mu Dajiang, inherently kind-hearted, couldn't argue with Mrs. Lin, so he could only seek peace with her.

"Old Fourth, you heard what the brat said. If I can guard the sack, all rice pops are mine. I'm sticking my head in now, let's see if this brat can snatch from me!"

Mrs. Lin was solely focused on eating and urged Mu Dajiang quickly.

Mu Dajiang steeled himself, gritted his teeth, and hit the iron pot forcefully with the hammer in his hand.

"Bang" a loud noise erupted, followed by Mrs. Lin's sharp scream, while from the sack mouth, a plume of black smoke rose...

Mu Shuangshuang clutched her stomach and laughed heartily.

Never had she seen such stupidity at her age.

Lu Yuanfeng and Liu Zian, who had walked away, returned. They looked at each other for a moment, then simultaneously turned away.

Their faces bore restrained smiles.

Mu Dajiang wasn't as humorous as Mu Shuangshuang. He only heard Mrs. Lin's scream and rushed to pull her out from the sack.

Upon seeing Mrs. Lin's face, Mu Shuangshuang laughed even harder.

Mrs. Lin lay on the ground, rolling her eyes, her hair as if scorched by fire, smoke still emanating. Burnt rice pops coated her entire head.

Her face was so black it was unrecognizable.

Lu Yuanfeng and Liu Zian's shoulders shook even more violently, especially Liu Zian, who had spent less time living with Mu Shuangshuang than Lu Yuanfeng, hence rarely seen such scenes.

He squatted down and almost laughed himself to the floor.

Mu Dashan, who came out upon hearing the noise, first checked their house carefully and found the roof intact, then turned to look at Mu Dajiang.

Seeing Mrs. Lin like this, he didn't laugh but said to Mu Dajiang, "Old Fourth, hurry and call someone to carry Second Sister-in-law back; this might be problematic."

Mu Dajiang finally sobered up, rushed to the Old Mu Family, and called Mu Dazhong and Mu Danian.

Nearly everyone who came would fall to the ground laughing for a while.

After laughing, they'd express sympathy for Mrs. Lin.

By the time Mrs. Lin was truly transported to the Old Mu Family, it had been over an hour, and Mrs. Lin had already recovered from unconsciousness.

She kept ranting that Mu Shuangshuang had set her up.

Cursing Mu Shuangshuang as ungrateful.

She cursed so much that Mr. Mu couldn't bear it anymore.

He scolded Mrs. Lin, "Enough, Second Daughter-in-law, you've done enough embarrassing things. For those who don't know, it's fine to laugh.

But we, who know, can't help but feel shame for you being reduced to this over a bit of food.

Even if you don't consider yourself, think about your brother. Your brother is now a scholar, and his reputation isn't something you have the right to tarnish.

If you continue with these antics, you can forget about coming to the county, or the Capital from now on!"

When Mrs. Lin heard Mr. Mu's words, she realized he intended to abandon her and have the whole family enjoy themselves, which she certainly wouldn't allow.

"Dad, I'm... I'm just thinking of Xiangxiang, she's sick now, hasn't tasted anything fresh. I thought of making some rice pops, mixing them with lard and hot water, letting her have a treat..."

As she spoke, Mrs. Lin looked quite aggrieved.

Mr. Mu glanced at her, his intended words swallowed back.

Now in the family, only the Second Daughter-in-law could care for others, he couldn't curse the Second Daughter-in-law away.

"Xiangxiang doesn't need such things, just ensure her meat porridge is delivered on time each day!"

Talking about Mu Xiangxiang, Mrs. Lin had more to say.

"Dad, Xiangxiang doesn't know what's wrong, eating a big bowl of porridge daily, only to want more after finishing. When I refuse, she hits me; look at my neck scratched with a red mark!"

She said, reaching to undo her clothes, showing Mr. Mu.

Mr. Mu quickly stopped her.

"Second Daughter-in-law, talking is enough. Why undress?"

Chapter 692: Stingy

"Hehe, I'm just anxious you won't believe me, since you trust me now, I don't need to show you the evidence."

"Dad, everything I do is for Xiangxiang's good, otherwise I wouldn't go see that brat in the third branch, looking at her nasty face."

Mu Dazhong, on the side, also started criticizing Mu Shuangshuang.

"Dad, that brat is so stingy, you don't even know. If you ask her to do something, she'll definitely want revenge. This time, she's sure to harm Gou Dan's mother. Just look at Gou Dan's mother's hair and face, all black and dirty—what does that look like?"

"Alright, stop talking about this. Second daughter-in-law, clean yourself up and bring some water to Xiangxiang later. Let me know what Xiangxiang needs!"

After speaking, Mr. Mu headed towards the front yard.

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After Mrs. Lin left, Mu Shuangshuang laughed enough and started tidying up everything. The yard was cleaned up of the dark rice pops too.

Fortunately, the first batch of rice pops she demonstrated making was enough to eat, otherwise, there would only be a pile of ashes.

Mu Shuangshuang shared a little with several kids, then went to deal with the leftover deer meat with Lu Yuanfeng.

Liu Zian saw the two were going out alone, so he spoke up, "Shuangshuang, let me go with you!"

"Liu Zian, we're going to places not just in the village. We might have to visit several villages, quite a few miles away."

Mu Shuangshuang didn't directly say not to let Liu Zian go.

After all, he was a guest, and the matter of setting up a school later might need his help.

"Shuangshuang, I have no problem, and at first, you told me that a scholar doesn't shut themselves in to build a car, you need to go out and walk around. If it's your own matter, shouldn't you personally handle it?"

Liu Zian really wanted to tell Shuangshuang because, thanks to his own efforts, he now washes his own clothes, and when his parents cook, he helps with washing vegetables.

Although he always gets pushed away by his mother.

He's striving towards a life where he can live alone.

"Well..." Mu Shuangshuang hesitated and glanced at Lu Yuanfeng.

She couldn't make this decision alone.

"Shuangshuang, since Zian wants to come, let him go, maybe he'll really learn something."

The trio prepared the meat for sale, equipped their weights and scales, and pushed the wheelbarrow out of the village.

A whole deer, not too much, not too little, but selling it all would take some time.

It's still early winter, folks aren't buying dried meat for the New Year yet. It's not until December that they start preparing cured meat and other similar items.

People in the village buy deer meat mostly in small amounts, either two ounces or half a pound, rarely purchasing several pounds at once.

That's why Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng have to visit several villages.

On the road, Liu Zian followed Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng, initially able to chat and laugh together.

But Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng both had good stamina, and after walking through several villages and selling some meat, Liu Zian's pace visibly couldn't keep up.

After walking a stretch, he needed to catch his breath, and he looked increasingly strained.

Moreover, after walking so much for the first time, Liu Zian's feet were covered in blisters, getting more painful with each step.

Mu Shuangshuang didn't notice at first, but later on, she realized.

Her initial plan was to let Liu Zian wait for her and Lu Yuanfeng further down the road.

But Lu Yuanfeng stopped her.

"Shuangshuang, since Zian followed us, he surely doesn't want to be stopped in that way. Also, he's a man, sometimes pride is more important than many things."

"Fengzi, you mean to let him keep dragging his injured leg along? Won't his mother complain to me if she finds out?"

Mu Shuangshuang was a bit worried. Liu Zian's parents seemed to protect him well, keeping him from doing any hard labor, which meant they valued him greatly.

If he came to Er Gui Village and injured his foot, looking so pathetic, it was likely Liu Zian's parents would come and question her, or create trouble for Liu Zian.

"How about this, I'll go ahead to ask the front villages, you walk slower, but... you're not able to stay too close to him, he..."

Lu Yuanfeng didn't finish the sentence. Shuangshuang probably wasn't aware of Liu Zian's intentions towards her.

But he himself knew.

As a friend, he couldn't watch Liu Zian suffer like this, since they had no enmity. However, Shuangshuang was his future wife, and he couldn't let another man have dubious intentions.

"Got it, he's a man, right? Don't worry, I'll maintain a very, very far distance from him, you just go ahead!"

Once the work's done, we'll rest for a day tomorrow, and the day after we'll go to town again."

Mu Shuangshuang didn't think there was anything wrong with what Lu Yuanfeng said.

Just like if she saw Lu Yuanfeng getting too close with other women, she'd be unhappy too.

If Lu Yuanfeng was indifferent to her and Liu Zian, she'd think there was a problem.

"Okay, I'm going now!" Lu Yuanfeng nodded heavily, pushed the wheelbarrow, and went ahead.

Mu Shuangshuang slowed her pace, waiting for Liu Zian to catch up before saying, "Liu Zian, let's wait here for Fengzi to come back. Each household in the front villages has dogs, it's inconvenient for us to go."

Liu Zian looked at his painful feet, understanding Shuangshuang's intention.

Liu Zian said, "Shuangshuang, actually I'm fine, I'm slow but I'll still catch up with you and Fengzi. I don't want people to say I can't even walk a few steps!"

Mu Shuangshuang started comforting Liu Zian, "Liu Zian, remember what I told you last time, handle your matters independently and learn to be self-reliant. But there's more to it: focus on your strengths, don't compare yourself in areas you're not familiar with."

"You're a scholar, what you've done the most is studying and writing. Fengzi and I are farmers, what do we do most often?"

"It's working and walking! Our physical strength has accumulated over time; you're naturally different from us."

"If we compared something else, like writing, you'd be the best. Why deny yourself over one thing?"

After listening to Shuangshuang's words, the discomfort in Liu Zian's heart vanished without a trace.

He earnestly observed the girl in front of him, her petite face always filled with smiles.

Her eyes were large, sparkling, like the brightest stars in the night sky. Whenever she smiles, all unhappiness seems to instantly disappear.

"Do I have something on my face? You're staring at me!"

Perhaps Liu Zian's gaze was too intense, Mu Shuangshuang noticed.

Thick-skinned, she asked.

"No... there's nothing on your face!" Liu Zian's heart nearly jumped out because of nervousness, his face flushed red, speaking with a stutter.

Chapter 693: Greedy Thing

Mu Shuangshuang suddenly felt that something was off with Liu Zian.

Logically speaking, Liu Zian's visit to Er Gui Village was a bit inexplicable.

It seemed like he was just here for show, and Mu Shuangshuang hadn't noticed he had any particular agenda.

"Liu Zian, if there's something you want to say, just say it directly. Don't beat around the bush; it makes me uneasy, like there's something up," Mu Shuangshuang said.

Liu Zian lowered his head; he was still hesitating.

To be honest, Shuangshuang was really the best girl he'd ever met.

Whether it's her character, the things she's said, or the things she's done, she doesn't seem like someone who's never seen the world.

On the contrary, the feeling she gave Liu Zian was that Shuangshuang had a broad perspective, not at all inferior to those official's daughters.

Thinking of these things, Liu Zian finally had the courage to ask, "Shuangshuang, if someone told you that he likes you and thinks you're great, how would you react?"

"Haha, like me? You mean Fengzi? Of course, I'd acknowledge his feelings because I'm already pretty great!"

Mu Shuangshuang laughed brazenly, but this smile was the most glaring in Liu Zian's eyes.

Liu Zian felt a sharp pain in his chest; his face turned pale in an instant, looking completely powerless.

"Liu Zian, are you alright?" Mu Shuangshuang noticed something was wrong with Liu Zian and asked in a low voice.

"I'm fine, just feeling uncomfortable..." Liu Zian replied.

"Ah, could it be that you've walked too much and hurt yourself? I'll go call Fengzi to carry you back!"

Without waiting for Liu Zian to speak, Mu Shuangshuang dashed off toward Lu Yuanfeng's direction.

Liu Zian wanted to speak up to stop her, but she'd already run out of sight.

He kept staring in the direction Shuangshuang left, reluctant to even blink.

After a while, Mu Shuangshuang returned with Lu Yuanfeng.

"Fengzi, hurry..." Mu Shuangshuang's voice gradually approached.

Liu Zian got up from the ground and smiled at the two, "I'm really alright, just tired! Sorry for making Fengzi come back especially; you guys go ahead with your business, don't let me delay you."

"It's alright, Zian, we'll still take you back. Shuangshuang and I discussed that the leftover venison can be turned into jerky and given as gifts when visiting friends and family later."

Liu Zian felt increasingly guilty.

But the more he felt this way, the more weak he became, and it was only with Lu Yuanfeng's help that he was able to get up.

"Fengzi, you help Liu Zian get to the village; if it's really not possible, carry him. I'll watch over things here and slowly push them back."

Mu Shuangshuang had pushed the wheelbarrow many times before, so Lu Yuanfeng felt confident in letting her do it.

The only worry was fearing she might exhaust herself.

Walking and stopping intermittently, by the time they reached the village, the sun had already set.

They just got to the third branch's courtyard door and saw Xue Zheng standing there, looking around. He relaxed when he saw Mu Shuangshuang.

Over these few days, Xue Zheng had improved a lot compared to how he was before.

He would follow Yuanbao and the others around to play and occasionally say a word or two.

Mu Shuangshuang could also leave him for a short period now.

Today, Mu Shuangshuang left after he fell asleep; otherwise, she might have had to take him along.

When he woke up, Xue Zheng didn't make a fuss; instead, he just stood at the courtyard gate, refusing to play with Yuanbao no matter what tricks Yuanbao tried.

Entering the courtyard, Lu Yuanfeng helped Liu Zian to rest on Mu Dashan's kang.

Then he went off to invite Zhang Huai Shu.

Yuanbao started talking to Mu Shuangshuang about this and complained, "Sister Shuangshuang, I think Brother Xiao Zheng doesn't like us. I tried to tease him for so long, but he ignored me!"

"Who says that? Why wouldn't your Brother Xiao Zheng like you? If he didn't like you, would he give you his little quilt? Let you on his kang? You have to know, your Brother Xiao Zheng doesn't allow others on his kang."

Mu Shuangshuang patiently explained to Yuanbao that Xue Zheng was really good to Yuanbao and the other kids. Despite being quiet, his actions showed that he was willing to interact with them.

"Then why doesn't he pay attention to me?"

Yuanbao was still puzzled.

"It's very simple; everyone has a different personality. You're lively and can't sit still and have to talk. Little Zhi's personality is similar to yours, but she can sit still and doesn't talk as much.

As for Xiao Han, when he's not studying, he can go play with you, but once he has to study, will he still pay attention to you?"

Yuanbao shook his head.

"See? Your Brother Xiao Zheng has a reserved personality; he likes quiet environments and doesn't talk much. His personality resembles Xiao Han's when he is studying; with that in mind, do you still think he doesn't like you?"

Yuanbao shook his head again.

"I get it now, Sister Shuangshuang. I won't say anything bad about Brother Xiao Zheng anymore; I'm going to go watch the rabbits with him!"

Last time, Lu Yuanfeng caught some rabbits—a whole litter—and made a rabbit den next to Mu Shuangshuang's house in the room where they stored hay and miscellaneous items.

Initially, the little ones liked them and would feed the rabbits some vegetables every day.

But after a while, they found it boring.

Besides, they had Little Black and Lai Mi at home, so the litter of rabbits didn't get as much attention, but Xue Zheng stuck with it.

Early, midday, and evenings, every meal, even before eating for himself, wouldn't miss feeding the rabbits.

Basically, he'd go see the rabbits whenever he had time.

As soon as Mu Shuangshuang came back, he went to see the rabbits again.

"I'm going too!"

Mu Shuangshuang followed behind Yuanbao to the rabbit den.

Xue Zheng was gazing intently at the rabbits, a subtle smile on his lips.

Mu Shuangshuang arrived, but he didn't notice. It was only when Yuanbao spoke that he turned around.

"Brother Xiao Zheng, did you give names to the little rabbits? Little Black and Lai Mi both have names."

Yuanbao assumed the rabbits were also Xue Zheng's, so naturally, he would let him name them.

Xue Zheng shook his head and looked at Mu Shuangshuang, wanting to ask her opinion.

"Xiao Zheng, Yuanbao is right; you should name the little rabbits. That way, you can call them by their names later, just like Little Black."

Mu Shuangshuang shouted loudly, and Little Black from her house immediately rushed out, Mu Shuangshuang waved a copper coin in front of Little Black.

Little Black immediately raised its paws and saluted in a fawning manner.

A copper coin tossed to the ground, and Little Black grabbed it with its mouth and was gone.

Xue Zheng watched in amazement.

Ever since he came to Mu Shuangshuang's house, he hadn't noticed Little Black; he only knew that before every meal, Little Zhi fed Little Black and Little Black Dog Lai Mi.

"Back then, your Second Uncle wanted to buy my Little Black for fifty taels, but I didn't sell it. It's very intelligent.

If you name the little rabbits, perhaps they can be like Little Black, keeping you company, talking to you about what's in your heart!"

Mu Shuangshuang gently guided Xue Zheng to speak more.

Once he got used to it, Xue Zheng's condition would improve!

Chapter 694: The Honesty Between Rivals in Love

Xue Zheng stared at a bunch of rabbits with different fur colors for a long time. Finally, he pointed at the rabbits on the ground and said one word at a time:

"Little White, Little Grey..." All the little rabbits, including the mother rabbit, were given names.

Mu Shuangshuang was overjoyed.

Because this was the most words Xue Zheng had ever spoken.

Perhaps, if she tried a little harder, Xue Zheng could start communicating with people like a normal child.

"Yuanbao, Xiao Zheng, you two stay here and play with the rabbits. I'm going to check if Grandpa Zhang has arrived."

After giving instructions, Mu Shuangshuang went outside the courtyard to take a look.

She happened to see Lu Yuanfeng, who was leading Zhang Huai Shu this way.

Lu Yuanfeng was carrying Zhang Huai Shu's medicine box, and the two were chatting on the road. To accommodate Zhang Huai Shu, Lu Yuanfeng bent his back slightly so that Zhang Huai Shu wouldn't need to look up when talking to him.

When they reached Mu Shuangshuang, she led Zhang Huai Shu into the house.

While he was taking the pulse, Mu Shuangshuang went to pour tea.

Zhang Huai Shu then explained Liu Zian's condition.

"Young man, you actually aren't sick; you're just burdened with too many worries. As for the weakness you mentioned, that's why. Once you open your heart and think positively, you'll naturally recover without medicine."

"I won't prescribe you any medicine today. A heart ailment needs a heart remedy. Go find what heals your heart!"

Zhang Huai Shu's words were straightforward, and Liu Zian immediately felt deeply ashamed.

Because he knew that Lu Yuanfeng was aware of this matter.

"Grandpa Zhang, could you go see the Fourth Branch of the Old Mu Family? Last time you treated Shuangshuang's fourth aunt, and her fourth uncle said she still can't get out of bed. I'm worried there's a problem, so I'd like to trouble you!"

Zhang Huai Shu nodded without thinking.

"Sure, and coincidentally, I brought the herbs she needs. Take me there!"

Mu Shuangshuang came into the house with tea just in time to hear Zhang Huai Shu's words.

"Grandpa Zhang, let me take you. I'm familiar with Fourth Aunt's place!" Mu Shuangshuang said.

Zhang Huai Shu nodded, "Then lead the way, girl!"

They walked along the Third Branch's courtyard toward the Fourth Branch in the backyard of the Old Mu Family.

At Fourth Branch, Mrs. Liu was home alone, and Mu Dajiang had gone to ask Zhao Queya in the village about moving goods to the town.

Seeing Mu Shuangshuang, Mrs. Liu was astonished and struggled to get up.

Mu Shuangshuang held her up.

"Fourth Aunt, you're sick; don't move! Grandpa Zhang is here today to see you, and once he does and you take your medicine, you'll be better."

Seeing two patients in a row, Zhang Huai Shu wasn't the least bit impatient. On the contrary, because Lu Yuanfeng and Shuangshuang had called him, he was more cautious than ever.

After examining the patient, he routinely discussed the condition.

Since it wasn't a major illness, Zhang Huai Shu didn't need to find a separate place to talk to Mu Shuangshuang alone.

"It's nothing serious, as mentioned before. Take the medicine on time, don't work on the ground, and rest for a few days, and it'll be fine."

Mrs. Liu felt completely relieved.

"Thank you, Uncle Zhang, thank you, Shuangshuang. Without you, Xiaxia's daddy would still be worried."

"Fourth Aunt, take care of yourself. I'll take Grandpa Zhang to my place to rest for a while."

Mu Shuangshuang didn't want Zhang Huai Shu to stay too long at the main house of the Old Mu Family, because if Mr. Mu and the others saw him, they would likely ask him to see Mu Xiangxiang.

Zhang Huai Shu didn't particularly like Mu Xiangxiang and Old Mrs. Mu, not even feeling enthusiastic while treating them.

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Third Branch of the Old Mu Family.

Lu Yuanfeng and Liu Zian were chatting.

The topic was about Mu Shuangshuang.

"Fengzi, you might think I'm being excessive, but it's the truth that Shuangshuang should have a better future.

Rather than always staying with you in the countryside, farming and becoming a countryside woman, dealing with trivial matters every day."

Liu Zian was speaking from his heart and didn't feel at all that there was anything inappropriate about what he was saying.

"What you see is not my and Shuangshuang's future. We're temporarily saving up in the countryside, and will move to town later. If we're capable enough, we'll go to the county.

Liu Zian, you and I both clearly understand your intentions. But forced feelings aren't sweet. If Shuangshuang liked you, she would have realized long ago that you have feelings for her.

The reason she feels nothing is, firstly, you haven't told her your feelings, and secondly, she doesn't have you in her heart.

Shuangshuang isn't someone who values money and positions. She has her own ideas. If I couldn't give Shuangshuang a good life, I wouldn't marry her."

In Lu Yuanfeng's heart, he's the only one who can bring happiness to Shuangshuang.

Apart from him, no one else can make Shuangshuang happy.

"You..." Liu Zian was somewhat angry.

"What do you have to talk about capability? Do you think making some money with Shuangshuang in business means capability? Merchants are always at the bottom of the hierarchy. Shuangshuang will never be exposed to better things in her life."

What Liu Zian was expressing at this moment was all his discontent. He doesn't want Shuangshuang to live as a farmer's wife all her life.

"Shuangshuang has said that there's no hierarchy among professions; they're just different roles. We rely on no one else, just our hands, to save up for what we want.

If you must categorize by status, I can only say Shuangshuang was wrong about you—you aren't suitable to be our friend!"

Liu Zian was still defeated.

The biggest issue between him and Shuangshuang wasn't about social status.

It was about liking and not liking.

But Liu Zian really doesn't want to give up, not at all!

"I won't give up on Shuangshuang. Lu Yuanfeng, I'm formally telling you, I like Shuangshuang. Since you two aren't married yet, the outcome is uncertain.

Even if you get married in the future, I will still like Shuangshuang! I just want to help Shuangshuang with the school matters, which you can't help with."

Liu Zian's meaning was clear: if Lu Yuanfeng and Shuangshuang could develop a relationship, then so could he, and he wouldn't give up.

Liu Zian intended to use the school setup to spend time alone with Shuangshuang.

"Who said I can't help? I'm a carpenter. Building houses and making tables and chairs in the village needs me. Only I can set up the school in the shortest time."

Lu Yuanfeng was confident about this.

When Mu Shuangshuang entered the room, the two were still tense, with neither willing to back down.

As soon as Mu Shuangshuang came in, she felt the atmosphere was off.

Both of them had slightly bloodshot eyes.

It seemed they were just one step away from fighting.

"What's going on with you two? Did you just have a fight? Why are both of you looking so pale?" Mu Shuangshuang asked with a laugh.

Both of them immediately put on smiles and shook their heads simultaneously.

"No, Shuangshuang, where did Grandpa Zhang go? Why didn't he come along?" Lu Yuanfeng asked.

"I invited him to stay, but he said Grandma Cui made him something delicious, so he refused to stay here for a meal."

Chapter 695: The Lion's Greedy Request

"I'm going to cook now. You guys can continue chatting or playing." Mu Shuangshuang said and started heading to the kitchen.

The two men immediately perked up and moved towards her.

"Shuangshuang, let me help you with the chores!"

They both spoke almost simultaneously and, without waiting for Mu Shuangshuang to refuse, they started nudging her towards the kitchen, one on each side.

Once in the kitchen, Liu Zian said, "Shuangshuang, I'll help you wash the vegetables. What are you making for dinner?"

"Shuangshuang, I'll tend the fire!"

"Oh, what's up with you two today? Both of you want to help in the kitchen? Are you planning to use my dinner as a test for your cooking skills?"

Mu Shuangshuang joked.

The two goofballs naturally shook their heads again.

"Alright, you two can leave. Tonight, I'm making dumplings and sauerkraut soup, it's simple enough; I won't need your help. Liu Zian, aren't you feeling unwell? Go rest!

And Fengzi, aren't you tired from pushing the cart for so long? I won't chat with you guys any longer; I still have work to do."

Mu Shuangshuang pushed the two men out of the kitchen and closed the door, keeping herself busy inside.

As soon as dinner was ready, Yu Si Niang hurried into the kitchen.

"Shuangshuang, something's wrong..."

Yu Si Niang shouted loudly.

"What's happening?" Mu Shuangshuang asked.

"Your sixth uncle...your sixth uncle, he..." Yu Si Niang had red eyes, almost crying.

"What's going on? Mom, speak slowly, no need to rush!" Mu Shuangshuang patted Yu Si Niang's back, calming her softly.

"Your sixth aunt and your sixth uncle want to separate; they've gotten someone to write the letter of separation, just waiting for your sixth uncle to seal it."

Mu Shuangshuang was baffled.

"Mom, wasn't everything okay last time? How come they're talking about separating now?" Mu Shuangshuang asked.

"I don't know, it's what the people from Yu Family Village said, and they left right after. I'm really worried; their relationship was so good, how did it come to this?"

The more Yu Si Niang thought, the more unsettled she became.

When she's unsettled, she can't seem to do anything right.

"Shuangshuang, I want to go to Yu Family Village now. If this isn't resolved, I'll be restless and uncomfortable."

Mu Shuangshuang understood Yu Si Niang's feelings; Yu Liulang was practically raised by her, just like her own child.

If anything happened to her children, Yuanbao, or Little Zhi, Yu Si Niang's reaction would be even more pronounced.

"Mom, the weather outside is really cold. Traveling at night might make you catch a cold. My sixth uncle's situation won't change overnight. How about I have Fengzi take you there once the sun comes up tomorrow?"

Yu Si Niang was hesitant.

Mu Shuangshuang continued, "You always say health is more important than anything. Look at this mid-winter night; the wind is so loud, and it's not even a full moon. How will you see the road?"

If my sixth uncle knew, he definitely wouldn't want you to take the risk. So maybe it's better you don't go, okay?"

Mu Shuangshuang knew that telling her this, Yu Si Niang might not be able to sleep tonight.

But if she agreed to let her go, and something happened on the way to Yu Family Village, she'd regret it immensely.

Yu Si Niang had no choice but to go discuss the matter with Mu Dashan.

In the end, Mu Dashan said almost the same thing as Mu Shuangshuang, also advising Yu Si Niang not to go today.

Of course, hearing the same words from Mu Dashan felt very different from hearing them from Mu Shuangshuang.

To Yu Si Niang, Mu Dashan's words were comforting without any sense of dissonance.

Moreover, since Mu Dashan was willing to go back to her family home with her, Yu Si Niang's inner panic finally eased a little.

After dinner, Lu Yuanfeng took Liu Zian home to rest, and Yu Si Niang stayed up talking with Mu Dashan all night.

During the night, the north wind was howling, and the branches and leaves outside were rustling loudly.

From time to time, there were banging sounds, and Mu Shuangshuang also didn't sleep well all night.

The next day, Yu Si Niang and Mu Dashan went to Yu Family Village. Lu Yuanfeng borrowed a bullock cart to take them there and then went directly to Chen Family Village to meet Mu Shuangshuang and Liu Zian.

Mu Shuangshuang followed Liu Zian to Chen Family Village to find Chen Sheng, to see if he would be willing to teach in Er Gui Village.

Chen Family Village is three miles away from Er Gui Village, and walking there takes about the time of two cups of tea.

Liu Zian had never been to Chen Sheng's home, so he had to ask door to door.

Fortunately, perseverance paid off.

They finally found Chen Sheng's home.

As Mu Shuangshuang had suspected, Chen Sheng was not working as a teacher in town, for reasons that were similar to what she had guessed.

The town's teachers needed to be older scholars with some prestige, and Chen Sheng fulfilled none of those requirements, so he was not chosen.

The Chen family was also poor; their house was nearly as dilapidated as a dangerous building.

Over the years, in order to send Chen Sheng to study, the family had sold almost everything, even their only two acres of land.

When Mu Shuangshuang arrived, the Chen family was basically out of food.

Without much thought, Chen Sheng directly agreed.

"But I am not young anymore and also want to get married. The teacher gift in town is typically three to four liang of silver, but I don't need that much, just one liang per child from you, and you don't need to provide anything else.

There's no need to provide meals or anything; I can handle that myself."

Mu Shuangshuang hesitated a bit. She personally didn't mind; she had prepared quite a bit for the initial gift and jerky money.

But the issue was, now with a school being established.

It wouldn't just be Xiao Han and Yuanbao as students, perhaps children from nearby villages would also attend, bringing more students.

Each child paying one liang to Chen Sheng would indeed fill his pockets, but with her building the school and hiring, she wouldn't gain anything.

No matter how you calculate, it was a losing deal.

"Chen Sheng, how much would you earn if you got the teaching job in town?" Mu Shuangshuang asked.

Chen Sheng thought for a moment before replying honestly.

"Five liang of silver a year, and five pieces of jerky."

"Yes, that's the rate in town, but that five liang doesn't all end up in your pocket; you have to rent a place there and buy ink and paper, so you'd only net about four liang."

"But now with me, demanding one liang per child seems a bit steep.

I'm the one establishing the school and managing the canteen. There's no reason for you to take the lion's share, and I don't plan to charge the kids that much for the gift. I want to enroll more kids and make it cheaper."

Mu Shuangshuang spoke almost bluntly.

She might be a village woman, but that didn't mean she was ignorant. Since she decided to open a school, she needed to organize everything properly.

Mu Shuangshuang had thought about it all last night; she wanted the school to be exemplary, allowing her to earn some money while ensuring more children received an education.

Chapter 696: I Don't Want It Even If It's Free

Mu Shuangshuang's directness was something Chen Sheng hadn't anticipated.

He initially assumed Mu Shuangshuang would be just another easy-to-fool village woman.

Now, the Chen family's resources were exhausted; there was no land, no fields, and Chen Sheng couldn't find any work.

Supporting a family was truly no easy task.

Even if he wanted to attempt the imperial exam, it would still be three years away.

In these three years, he had to ensure he stayed afloat while also saving enough for the expenses of traveling to Qianzhou Prefecture for the exam.

If he could marry a wife, it would be even better.

"So, how much is Miss Shuangshuang offering?" Chen Sheng asked.

"You earn five taels a year in the town; I'll offer you the same. After all, living in town costs significantly more; in the village, you almost have nothing to spend on.

We'll increase the dried meat portion to twelve strips, and as long as there are classes, we'll provide your meals and accommodation!

If you live frugally enough, in three years, saving enough for the exam and marrying a wife won't be any problem at all."

Mu Shuangshuang was completely confident that the salary offered to Chen Sheng was no less than any academy's.

Teaching at her school would absolutely be rewarding for Chen Sheng.

"Allow me to think about it!" Chen Sheng did not immediately give Mu Shuangshuang an answer, still hesitating.

After all, no one had ever opened a school in these villages.

The children had always gone to town for schooling, and if this school were to be established, these village children might all return to study here, raising Mu Shuang's earnings, while he'd lose out significantly.

Mu Shuangshuang noted Chen Sheng's hesitation, and honestly, she began to question his character.

A scholar, yet to start teaching, already so calculating; could he really guide students well?

Moreover, she hadn't yet assessed whether his skills matched the five taels annual "gift" he claimed. How dare he speak such bold words?

Ridiculous!

"Since Mr. Chen is unwilling, there's nothing more to say; I, Shuangshuang, will seek another person," Mu Shuangshuang stated.

Her words seemed to awaken Chen Sheng, who suddenly grinned and said, "Miss Shuangshuang, I still ask for the previous fee, a tael of silver per child.

Apart from me, you won't find anyone else in these nearby villages. Even if you walk out my door now, in the end, you'll still have to come to me, and then I might even charge more!"

Chen Sheng brimmed with confidence.

Mu Shuangshuang felt incredibly awkward, not knowing where his confidence came from.

"Mr. Chen, you think too highly of yourself. In this world, there's never a shortage of people willing to work.

You say no one other than you would come to teach in these villages — well, I, Mu Shuangshuang, refuse to believe it. I will not only find someone, but I'll find the best!"

With these words, Mu Shuangshuang pulled Liu Zian and walked out of the Chen family home.

Liu Zian attempted to console Mu Shuangshuang.

"Shuangshuang, let me discuss with Chen Sheng again, persuade him. We were classmates; he'll listen to me."

Earlier, Liu Zian hadn't spoken because Mu Shuangshuang had told him that apart from introducing them, all discussions about setting up the school were to be handled by her alone.

Liu Zian had long wanted to speak, but having agreed to Shuangshuang, he couldn't.

"Liu Zian, just forget it! Even if he didn't charge money, I wouldn't hire him. As a teacher, character must be upright.

At a time when we need a teacher, he extorts shamelessly, blinded by greed. Today he threatens for money;

in the future, who knows what he might do for money. You should reduce your interactions with him, lest you find yourself being taken advantage of someday."

Mu Shuangshuang spoke not out of anger, but from the impression Chen Sheng left on her.

Once a person's heart turns bad, no words can help.

Liu Zian reflected on what Mu Shuangshuang said and spoke after a while.

"I understand, thank you, Shuangshuang!"

As soon as Mu Shuangshuang and Liu Zian left the Chen family, the Chen family gathered to discuss what had just happened.

Chen Sheng wore a broad scholar's robe, the fabric was good, having cost quite a bit at the time.

However, over the years, it had become worn, with some parts frayed.

"Ah Sheng, why didn't you just accept Miss Shuangshuang's offer? You could teach at the school first." Mrs. Chen was somewhat sensible.

A job paying five taels a year could not be found even by lantern light; how did her foolish son reject that?

"Mother, don't worry, that girl won't find anyone else; in the end, she'll have to ask me!

And there's a reason I did this; think about it, if Mu Shuangshuang charges a child and I earn a tael;

if there are a dozen children, wouldn't I earn more than ten taels a year?

In three years, not only would I have enough for the exam expenses but also enough for marriage and a large house for you!"

Chen Sheng unabashedly revealed his ambitions in front of the Chen family.

The Chen family praised Chen Sheng's foresight, depending on him for their old age, bringing glory to the family, and more.

Yet none of the Chen family thought that whether Mu Shuangshuang came back or not, they were already struggling to make ends meet.

The rice of recent days was borrowed from neighbors; as long as Mu Shuangshuang didn't come, they'd have to keep borrowing.

"Mother, now that Ah Sheng has prospects, our Chen family should celebrate, celebrate, kill the old hen in the backyard for Ah Sheng to nourish himself, what do you think?"

Mrs. Chen asked Mrs. Chen Senior.

Listening to the big promises painted by Chen Sheng, Mrs. Chen Senior didn't hesitate and personally went to the backyard to slaughter the family's only laying hen.

The old hen squawked mournfully as it was bled, the sound soon fading away!

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Failing to find someone, Mu Shuangshuang could only head back, running into Lu Yuanfeng returning with the cart just as she reached Er Gui Village.

Liu Zian felt it inappropriate to visit Mu Shuangshuang's grandmother's house, so he bid farewell at the village entrance and returned alone to Liu Family Village.

Mu Shuangshuang continued her journey with Lu Yuanfeng.

On the way, Mu Shuangshuang recounted everything about her meeting with Chen Sheng to Lu Yuanfeng in detail.

This included Chen Sheng's attitude and what she had said.

"Shuangshuang did wonderfully. If it were me, I'd have left as well." Lu Yuanfeng smiled and gave her a thumbs up.

Mu Shuangshuang lifted her chin slightly, a faint smile gracing her lips.

"It's only natural. It's fortunate I didn't hit him.

You wouldn't believe, when I left, that Chen Sheng still looked so sure that I would be back."

Mu Shuangshuang had already saved enough of the gift money for Xiao Han and Yuanbao, and if in the end she couldn't find a suitable teacher, she, Mu Shuangshuang, would personally buy a carriage and drive the two children to and from school every day.

Meanwhile, she could deal with business in town.

Life never has only one path.

Whatever she, Mu Shuangshuang, wanted to achieve, there would be nothing she couldn't accomplish.

"Shuangshuang, no matter what decision you make, I'll support you!"

Chapter 697: Love in the Haystack

"Fengzi, mere support is not enough, we need to take actual action!" Mu Shuangshuang said.

Lu Yuanfeng was taken aback.

Then he laughed out loud.

"Since it's support, naturally it should be from thought to action, all supportive!"

Mu Shuangshuang had taught Lu Yuanfeng this phrase, she didn't expect this kid to learn so quickly.

"That's good! I think the Da Ning Dynasty has no shortage of those failed scholars.

After all, there are many who read, but few truly become scholars or scholars."

Mu Shuangshuang herself remembers a little story she read before, about Fan Jin becoming a scholar.

It said Fan Jin took the examination from the age of twenty to fifty-four, and finally succeeded.

Thirty-four years of time didn't make him give up, the allure of the imperial examination can be imagined.

However, thinking about it like this, her uncle only took it for over ten years, considered very lucky, just wondering how many years it took him in the Capital's imperial examinations to succeed, hopefully three or four decades, Mu Shuangshuang thought mischievously.

But regardless of how many years, as long as her uncle doesn't make major mistakes, a scholar shouldn't worry about food and drink.

"Fengzi, we can post recruitment notices in nearby villages, just like in town, those shops use big red paper to post recruitment notices at the door."

"If any village has a scholar, naturally they will come to us, we can personally interview them and choose those upright in character and capable scholars, what do you think?" Mu Shuangshuang asked.

Lu Yuanfeng, after listening to Mu Shuangshuang, couldn't think of a point to argue.

"But I think we can narrow the scope a bit, after all, we can only hire one teacher now.

I think we can ask the village head, he has contacts with village heads in nearby villages, he should know which village has failed scholars.

Moreover, if the village head is involved, the person's character should be more assured."

Mu Shuangshuang added her analysis to Lu Yuanfeng's, the problem could probably be solved.

"Alright! Anyway there is some time before the new year, we are not in a hurry, let's find slowly!"

Mu Shuangshuang was sitting on the ox cart, Lu Yuanfeng was leading the ox in the front.

Her legs hung long, swinging back and forth.

It made her feel very interesting, along the way she played like this until she reached Yu Family Village.

Lu Yuanfeng didn't inquire about Yu Liulang's situation.

Because he sent someone to the entrance of Yu Family Village, then returned to find Mu Shuangshuang.

This was the first time he entered the village today.

"Let's directly go to Aunt Xiaohu's house, she should definitely be at home now!"

Based on Mu Shuangshuang's understanding of Feng Xiaohua, with such a big incident, she would definitely hide in her own home, not return to Old Yu Family's.

Mu Shuangshuang guessed correctly, once she arrived at the Feng Family.

She saw Feng Xiaohua washing clothes under the big banyan tree in the yard.

The large wooden basin was filled with a big pile of clothes, both winter and summer clothes, no idea how long Feng Xiaohua washed.

Mu Shuangshuang saw her washing clothes absent-mindedly.

Like she had lost her soul.

A lame old man beside her was persuading Feng Xiaohua.

That was Feng Xiaohua's father, Feng Quezi.

"Xiaohua, it's not that I'm telling you, if you really like Sixth Son, then listen to me and go back!"

Although in our countryside it's rare for men to have multiple wives, look outside, which man doesn't have three wives and four concubines?

Their backyards are peaceful as well, homes are safe, and Sixth Son truly treats you well.

This time he was confused, even if you don't give him a chance, at least give yourself a chance..."

Feng Quezi genuinely liked Yu Liulang.

Not for anything else, just because he's good to his daughter.

When Yu Liulang proposed to his daughter, Feng Quezi knew this man was his daughter's good match.

But who'd have known his daughter's fate was bad, the one she liked had a previous engagement.

Now Luo Xiu'er and Yu Liulang are winding up together.

Feng Quezi's words made Feng Xiaohua cry painfully.

If she really likes someone, how can she share him with someone else?

If she must, she'd rather suffer lifelong pain than share with others.

"Dad, I don't want it, I can't watch Sixth Son marry Luo Xiu'er, I won't share him with anyone!" Feng Xiaohua shouted, tears streaming.

Mu Shuangshuang heard the conversation between Feng Quezi and Feng Xiaohua outside the yard, vaguely guessed something.

"Aunt Xiaohu, you did nothing wrong, how could you share your beloved with others?"

When Mu Shuangshuang said this, she glanced at Lu Yuanfeng.

If she were in her shoes, if Lu Yuanfeng married someone else, she wouldn't agree either.

If opposition was ineffective, she would, like Feng Xiaohua, give him a letter severing their relationship.

In this life, one can be humble in all things, except for love.

Things money can't measure shouldn't be shared with anyone, regardless of who they are.

Feng Xiaohua saw Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng entering the yard towards her.

For some reason, she suddenly lacked the courage to face Mu Shuangshuang.

She threw down the clothes in her hands, ran into her house, and closed the door.

Feng Quezi recognized Mu Shuangshuang, knowing she had previously arranged the marriage between his daughter and Sixth Son.

Afraid Mu Shuangshuang might misunderstand, he quickly said, "Niece of Sixth Son, our Xiaohu is not an impolite person, just many things happened recently, she's in bad mood!"

"I know, I don't think Aunt Xiaohu did anything wrong at all.

But, great-uncle, can you tell me what happened exactly?" Mu Shuangshuang asked.

Feng Quezi looked at the little girl, barely in her teens, shook his head.

"Niece of Sixth Son, it's not that I won't tell, but this matter is disgraceful, you're a little kid, better not hear it, lest it pollutes your ears!"

"But great-uncle, what we're considering isn't these things, it's how to help Aunt Xiaohu and my Sixth Uncle.

Judging from your previous words, you don't want them separated, but without solving the problem, Aunt Xiaohu won't return."

"Ah, fine, I'll tell you then..."

Mu Shuangshuang learned from Feng Quezi that three days ago, a family in the village early morning went to their haystack for fodder.

Eventually saw two naked bodies, further examination revealed it was Yu Liulang and Luo Xiu'er.

The two were nearly married as engaged couples before, now such a big incident became village gossip.

Luo Xiu'er's reputation was utterly ruined.

Dragging Yu Liulang along.

The Luo Family brought people to Yu Liulang demanding he marry Luo Xiu'er, or they would report and have him arrested.

Yu Liulang insisted he knew nothing about it.

Didn't know how he ended up in the fields.

Refusing to marry Luo Xiu'er, the situation remained at a stalemate.

Until Feng Xiaohua wanted to voluntarily exit, Yu Liulang began to stir.

Chapter 698: Bashing Your Head, Gather Here

Mu Shuangshuang, for the moment, finds it hard to make a definitive call about the specifics of the matter.

She has to go back and ask her uncle first.

"Uncle, I'll go back and ask first. Please don't push Aunt Xiao Hua to make any decisions.

Let's wait until I come back and discuss how to resolve this. Is that okay?"

Feng Quezi nodded repeatedly.

He was really eager for someone to help solve this issue.

With Mu Shuangshuang involved, Feng Quezi was even more hopeful that she would resolve it soon.

"Niece of the Sixth Son, there's something else you need to be careful about. The Luo Family is quite aggressive this time, so be cautious," Feng Quezi reminded Mu Shuangshuang.

"Don't worry, Fengzi's here." Mu Shuangshuang turned her head to look at Lu Yuanfeng.

Lu Yuanfeng said, "Rest assured, as long as I'm here, no one can bully Shuangshuang!"

Only then did Feng Quezi feel at ease as the two headed to the Old Yu Family's home.

The two reached the gate of the Old Yu Family. Lu Yuanfeng positioned Mu Shuangshuang behind him protectively.

He walked ahead, with Mu Shuangshuang following behind.

As soon as they stepped into the courtyard, they heard loud noises coming from the main hall.

Mu Shuangshuang heard someone crying out and the two of them quickly entered the room.

They saw a woman around fifty years old holding a bag of melon seeds, spitting seeds while angrily scolding Luo Xiu'er, who was crying endlessly in the corner.

"Crying, crying, always crying! How did our Old Luo Family end up raising such a useless thing like you?"

Instead of living a good life, you insist on getting involved with someone else's man, Yu Liulang.

Even so, at least find a decent place, but there you are in the haystack. Don't you think that's filthy!"

Luo Xiu'er had red eyes and tears kept falling.

"Mom, it's all my fault, it's not Sixth Son's fault, it's me. Please don't make him marry me. It was my mistake back then, I shouldn't have changed my mind for money and married someone else!"

Luo Xiu'er sobbed as she spoke, causing distress among the Old Yu family members.

Yu Liulang still couldn't believe that such a thing happened to him.

But at this point, he needed to resolve it, otherwise, he and Xiao Hua really wouldn't have a future.

Just as he was about to speak, Mu Shuangshuang came in.

She smiled and asked, "Sixth Uncle, having guests at home? It's so lively!"

Seeing Mu Shuangshuang, Yu Si Niang and Mu Dashan, who had been anxious and worried, immediately felt reassured as if they've taken a tranquilizer, becoming neither anxious nor tense. All eyes focused on Mu Shuangshuang.

Yu Liulang included.

Seeing Mu Shuangshuang, Luo Xiu'er was slightly stunned, furrowing her brow, feeling that the arrival of this person is not a good thing.

Mrs. Li was unhappy too.

In Mrs. Li's heart, Mu Shuangshuang was here to cause trouble; whenever she appeared, there was undoubtedly misfortune for the family.

"Yes, indeed, the house is filled with guests. It's like they're all crowding into the Old Yu Family, can't seem to let go of what's good here, like it's a fragrant cake," Mrs. Li spoke sarcastically, aiming her jab at Third Branch of the Mu Family.

"Second Sister-in-law, what are you talking about? Who's the guest? Who's crowding into the Old Yu Family?" Yu Liulang demanded loudly.

Mrs. Li replied, "Whoever comes, I talk about them!"

"Don't go too far. This family includes my Fourth Sister. If you can't tolerate it, then leave!"

Mrs. Li glared, her eyes fierce, staring down Yu Liulang.

"This is my home. Why should I leave? And you, since you got involved with Luo Xiu'er, you ought to marry her.

At least she's still considerate towards you, unlike that traitorous white-eyed wolf who disappears whenever there's a bit of trouble.

Not like our Old Yu Family's daughter-in-law, who's probably at home doing something with some unfamiliar man right now!"

Yu Liulang's face turned red with anger, and he raised his hand and slapped Mrs. Li's face.

"Second Sister-in-law, do you think if my Fourth Sister hadn't helped you through childbirth, you'd be enjoying life like this now?"

"Xiao Hua married into the Old Yu Family. What did she do wrong to you for you to slander her like this?"

Mrs. Li, after being hit, went wild like a rabid dog.

She jumped up, angrily cursing at Yu Er Lang.

"You blind fool! Your wife's been struck, and you just stand there.

Why don't you go die? Surely I'm not something you picked up off the street!"

Yu Er Lang's face turned livid, containing his emotions until now, he finally spoke up: "Enough, this is Sixth Son's personal matter, you woman shouldn't interfere!"

Mrs. Li became even more furious, charging at him, attempting to pull Yu Er Lang's hair.

The couple started to tussle with each other.

The Old Yu Family was chaotic before, now it looks even more chaotic, rivaling the Mu Family.

"What are you all shouting about? We're discussing Sixth Son's matter, everyone shut up.

Second daughter-in-law, if you feel mistreated by the Old Yu Family, you can leave anytime.

Stop crying here; this has nothing to do with you!" Mr. Yu angrily rebuked Mrs. Li.

Mrs. Li opened her mouth, wanting to say something, but was interrupted by Mu Shuangshuang.

"Second Aunt, my grandfather is the authority here. Whatever he says, not just you, even Old Lady Luo has to listen!"

"Hey, you little brat, it's not your place to talk here! Get out of the way!"

Mrs. Li put her hand on her waist, ready to argue with Mu Shuangshuang.

Lu Yuanfeng stepped forward, blocking Mrs. Li.

In such situations, as a man, Lu Yuanfeng found it difficult to interject, but he could ensure Mu Shuangshuang's safety.

Standing nearly six feet tall before Mrs. Li, she felt somewhat intimidated.

She retreated several steps back quietly.

"Alright, you even brought backup. Don't think I'm afraid of you, Li Juhua! I'll tell you, if you've got the guts, then hit me dead! Otherwise, you're admitting defeat."

Mu Shuangshuang looked disdainfully at Li Juhua, who was eager to argue with her yet feared Lu Yuanfeng's presence beside her.

If it wasn't for her aunt, Mu Shuangshuang would've torn her apart long ago.

Waiting until now felt truly frustrating.

"Yu Er, quickly take your wife to the backyard; this matter isn't sorted yet," Mr. Yu said.

Yu Er Lang came forward, grabbed Mrs. Li's hand, and dragged her to the backyard.

In the backyard, Mrs. Li did not let up, grumbling alone.

Her curses were audible to those in the front courtyard room.

Old Lady Luo had been munching on melon seeds for half a bag and exhausted her patience.

"Old Yu Family, how do you plan to handle our daughter's issue?"

We can't let her suffer for nothing, can we? Either you give up the Old Yu Family's tea plantation to our Old Luo Family,

or you have Yu Liulang marry our daughter!"

"Mom, it really has nothing to do with Sixth Son. Please don't pressure Brother Liu Lang," Luo Xiu'er interjected.

This time, Old Lady Luo rushed forward, delivering a round of punches and kicks to Luo Xiu'er.

Chapter 699: Luo Xiu'er Fakes an Accident

Luo Xiu'er's hair was yanked by Old Lady Luo, and her face was slapped a few times.

If it weren't for the people of the Old Yu Family and Mu Dashan and Yu Si Niang stepping forward to pull the two apart.

Luo Xiu'er would have likely been beaten even more severely.

"Old sister, let's not pressure the children on this matter anymore. Our Old Yu Family will certainly give an explanation, okay?"

Old Mrs. Yu couldn't stand it any longer and spoke up.

Old Lady Luo then patted the sunflower seeds shells off her clothes.

She smiled and said, "If you had done this earlier, wouldn't it have been fine! I'm taking my daughter back today; you all can go discuss whether to marry my daughter or bring out the tea garden.

Remember, you must act quickly. The words of those gossipers in the village aren't pleasant to hear. If it ruins my reputation, I won't let it go so easily."

After Ms. Luo finished speaking, she stepped forward, grabbed Luo Xiu'er's arm, and forcefully dragged her out of the Old Yu Family's door.

Mu Shuangshuang exchanged a glance with Lu Yuanfeng.

Lu Yuanfeng immediately followed.

The others didn't understand Mu Shuangshuang's intention, only thinking that Lu Yuanfeng was heading to the outhouse.

Finally, the room quieted down.

Yu Liulang sat in a chair, continuously pulling at his hair, looking very remorseful.

"Shuangshuang, do you have a way to help your Sixth Uncle?" Yu Si Niang asked.

With such a big incident, none is more worried than Yu Si Niang.

Yu Liulang was brought up by her, her own younger brother now facing such a predicament; as a sister, how could she just stand by and watch?

"Mother, this matter is really difficult to say. You and Grandpa and Grandma should go to the backyard to rest. I have a few things to ask my Sixth Uncle."

What Mu Shuangshuang wanted to ask next was something she didn't want more people to know.

To avoid failure at a critical juncture.

"Alright, Mother will go out with Grandpa, Grandma, your First Uncle, and Aunt."

Yu Si Niang communicated with the people present, leaving only Mu Shuangshuang and Yu Liulang in the main room.

Yu Liulang remained in his previous posture, motionless.

"Sixth Uncle, what exactly happened? Can you tell me the whole story?"

Mu Shuangshuang had heard some things from Feng Quezi's mouth, but that was only the result; she didn't know the process and development of the matter.

Yu Liulang raised his head, took a deep breath before saying, "Ever since Luo Xiu'er returned, she has been despised by her parents, either beaten or scolded every day.

Do you remember when she said she wanted to move out and live alone? She actually found an abandoned house in the village, but it leaked whenever it rained.

I refused Luo Xiu'er at that time, but no one in the village helped her. Whenever it rained, she would get soaked."

Yu Liulang fell into deep recollection, speaking of those matters as if they were still vivid.

"So ultimately, it was Sixth Uncle who helped her? Fixed the house for her?" Mu Shuangshuang paused before speaking.

"Yes, but I was afraid Xiao Hua would misunderstand, so I called Xiao Hua over. Unexpectedly, Xiao Hua was angry.

At that time, Luo Xiu'er voluntarily told me not to go anymore; she said even if she got soaked in the rain, it wasn't a big deal.

Upon hearing this, I felt uneasy, so I simply continued helping her with the work, eventually fixing the house's cracks.

The furniture that needed to be added, I also helped carry it in, and Luo Xiu'er invited me for a meal to thank me, which I didn't agree to."

Listening to this, Mu Shuangshuang felt like she was hearing a melodramatic tale of a scheming woman.

This Luo Xiu'er is not easy to deal with.

Pretending to be pitiful in front of men.

Clearly, she could have paid someone to fix the house, yet she deliberately troubled her Sixth Uncle.

And the most crucial part is, she exploited her Sixth Uncle's sympathy and Aunt Xiao Hua's kindness.

"Later, did she use this excuse to bring you some food in front of the whole family?"

Then later, she told you she had genuinely no intentions towards you, that the matchmaker was already arranging a marriage proposal, and she wanted to live well, right?"

Mu Shuangshuang casually made a guess at Yu Liulang, who, to her surprise, opened his eyes wide with shock.

Looking at Mu Shuangshuang with a face full of amazement.

"Shuangshuang, how do you know this so well? Did Xiao Hua tell you?"

Mu Shuangshuang couldn't help but laugh.

These scheming tricks are still the same, really well done.

"No, I guessed. I came to see Aunt Xiao Hua, but hadn't talked yet before she ran into the room."

Mentioning seeing Feng Xiaohua, Yu Liulang's emotions became excited.

"Shuangshuang, how is your aunt? Did she cry?"

"She cried, surely cried. Feeling bad is only natural, but Sixth Uncle, this matter is indeed troubling. When you were with Luo Xiu'er the other night, did you drink or what?"

Mu Shuangshuang, at this point, was almost certain that Luo Xiu'er is responsible for this incident.

And she is likely the instigator of the whole affair.

"We didn't drink. Ever since that incident, Luo Xiu'er has always wanted to be my younger sister.

The night before the incident, she said Matchmaker Zhou found her a marriage proposal, and the man came over for dinner.

But she was afraid, so she wanted me to support her as her elder brother.

After waiting and waiting, Matchmaker Zhou didn't show up, and Xiuxiu told me not to starve and to eat first.

While eating, I began to feel dizzy, and after that, I don't know what happened."

Mu Shuangshuang was genuinely frustrated at this point.

This Luo Xiu'er is truly bold, using a trap to harm her Sixth Uncle.

The food must have had issues, right?

How could a normal person forget everything after just one meal?

"Sixth Uncle, do you remember which dishes Luo Xiu'er ate herself at that time?" Mu Shuangshuang asked.

"She did. At that time, she kept eating vegetables. I asked her to eat some meat, but she refused, saying she needed to maintain her figure, or else she couldn't get married!"

"Sixth Uncle, you were genuinely naïve. When the matchmaker wasn't there, you should have come back!" Mu Shuangshuang exclaimed, a bit exasperated.

Yu Liulang was also somewhat guilty of negligence in this matter.

Considering their previous relationship with Luo Xiu'er, he should have avoided it, making things easier.

Now the matter was seen by village people, jumping into the Yellow River wouldn't clear it.

"I was really foolish at that time, feeling sorry for her. But I swear, I never touched her, absolutely never!"

On this point, Yu Liulang is very certain because he... couldn't.

The follow-up events are pretty clear to Mu Shuangshuang.

The two of them were disgraced in Yu Family Village.

Luo Family demanded Yu Liulang marry Luo Xiu'er.

But this matter is exasperating; Yu Liulang was unfortunately trapped.

"Sixth Uncle, have you told Aunt Xiao Hua about this?" Mu Shuangshuang asked.

"No, the event just happened. She went home and sent someone with the divorce papers..."

Chapter 700: Too Excessive

"So, Aunt Xiao Hua doesn't know about the things you've encountered, or what happened?"

Yu Liulang nodded, feeling deeply ashamed.

Mu Shuangshuang really wanted to slap the person in front of her at that moment.

Communication and trust are most important between a couple.

Her Sixth Uncle didn't even give Aunt Xiao Hua basic communication.

"Sixth Uncle, you must explain these matters clearly to Aunt Xiao Hua, regardless of whether she forgives you or not. We'll talk about the rest later."

Just as Mu Shuangshuang finished speaking, Lu Yuanfeng, who had gone out earlier, returned.

He approached Shuangshuang and said, "I followed the Luo family mother and daughter. When they reached an empty road, Old Lady Luo voluntarily looked at the injury on Luo Xiu'er's face.

But Luo Xiu'er pushed her away. Luo Xiu'er said something, and Old Lady Luo kept nodding, not at all like what we saw at Old Yu Family.

It gives me the impression that Luo Xiu'er is in charge, and Old Lady Luo is just listening to her."

Lu Yuanfeng shared what he saw and his thoughts with Mu Shuangshuang.

His analysis further confirmed that Luo Xiu'er is a swindler.

Moreover, her methods are vile.

Yu Liulang, on the side, completely didn't understand what Lu Yuanfeng said.

He stared at Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng like a fool, full of confusion and incomprehension.

Mu Shuangshuang sighed, her uncle was also a victim. She thought she should tell him what she suspected.

"Uncle, Shuangshuang has to tell you something. After you hear it, don't get excited, and don't go looking for trouble with anyone. What you need to do is gain Aunt Xiao Hua's understanding."

Yu Liulang nodded.

"Shuangshuang, hurry up and say it. What exactly do you and Fengzi know?"

Yu Liulang didn't want anything else now; he just wanted to clear his suspicions.

After all, he truly was innocent.

"Sixth Uncle, you might have been schemed against, and the one who schemed against you could be Luo Xiu'er..."

Mu Shuangshuang shared her suspicions with Yu Liulang.

Yu Liulang was so shocked that he couldn't close his mouth.

He never thought Luo Xiu'er would be the one to ruin his reputation.

Because he couldn't believe that the kind Luo Xiu'er from back then would harm him and disregard her own reputation.

Yu Liulang had experienced the harsh words from the villagers firsthand.

Most people couldn't bear it.

"But why would Luo Xiu'er do this? It doesn't make sense." Yu Liulang was puzzled.

"She probably regrets it. If she hadn't changed her mind and married someone else as a concubine at the time,

she would be the one standing by Sixth Uncle now. Especially seeing Sixth Uncle happy and with someone other than her, she must feel even more unbalanced." Mu Shuangshuang replied.

Yu Liulang let out a long sigh, feeling inexplicably tired.

Right now, Yu Liulang's mind was a mess. He knew Luo Xiuer's motive and her plans.

But he didn't know how to resolve it.

If he had firmly rejected Luo Xiuer's request back then, not sympathized with her, and had no contact with her, would these things not have happened?

"Shuangshuang, there's something I'm unsure whether to share with you and Fengzi since you're children and I'm hesitant to speak about it.

But I'm afraid if I don't clarify it, there will be no more chances for me and your Aunt Xiao Hua."

That difficulty in speaking almost exhausted all of Yu Liulang's strength.

"Sixth Uncle, you can think of Fengzi and me as people helping you solve your problems, and focus on that,"

Yu Liulang then said, "I... I really couldn't have been with Luo Xiu'er, and I'm even more sure that I didn't embrace her in the haystack for that kind of thing."

Yu Liulang's words made him blush bright red.

Lu Yuanfeng also felt a little embarrassed.

As a man, he understood Yu Liulang's meaning better.

In contrast, Mu Shuangshuang remained composed and steady despite the chaos.

Yu Liulang thought Mu Shuangshuang didn't understand and explained again.

"I don't even know what's wrong with me. Last time Luo Xiu'er came, during that period, I just..."

Saying this, Yu Liulang seemed to lay down his last line of defense.

This showed how much he trusted Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng.

"Sixth Uncle, there's no need to say more. Let's put this issue aside for now.

Right now, there's something else you need to take me to do."

Since it was a private issue, Mu Shuangshuang didn't pursue further questions, and this wasn't the time to deal with such matters.

If Luo Xiuer's issues remain unresolved, Old Yu Family won't find peace.

Her parents wouldn't be able to focus on their own matters.

"What is it? Feel free to tell," Yu Liulang slightly calmed his spirit, as Shuangshuang mentioned, he had to resolve the matter.

"Take me to that haystack to have a look."

A few days ago, it rained, and the field should be wet. If someone walked there, footprints would be left.

"Alright, I'll take you!"

This was the first time Yu Liulang went out in days, fortunate it was chilly with everyone staying home, warming themselves by the fire.

Otherwise, he'd have to deal with the villagers quite a bit.

Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng followed Yu Liulang, heading toward the field edge.

Some haystacks were kept at home, while others were left on the field slope, depending on whether the family chose to transport them back.

In the field, it was just as Mu Shuangshuang said, each step left a footprint.

Yet the incident spread widely in the village, and most villagers had gone there.

With footprints coming and going, it wasn't easy to find the useful ones.

Mu Shuangshuang personally searched, examining and excluding various footprints.

She spent a whole hour looking at hundreds of footprints, finally finding a set.

They were very close to the haystack.

Deep and shallow ones, a total of four footprints.

"Look at these four footprints, they are orderly, unlike the villagers' footprints."

Mu Shuangshuang pointed at the footprints she identified.

"One of them is only half a footprint, which should be Sixth Uncle's. Sixth Uncle was unconscious and needed support.

If I'm not mistaken, the remaining three footprints are Old Luo Family's, Old Lady Luo and Old Sir Luo's.

The deepest footprint belongs to Old Sir Luo, as he's the heaviest."

Last time in Er Gui Village for a banquet, Mu Shuangshuang saw Old Sir Luo on the road.

Back then, he had a huge belly, and his walk caused his flesh to wobble.

Such weight, when stepping in the fields, creates these kinds of deep footprints.

Yu Liulang hearing the whole Luo family involved, was infuriated.

"This is outrageous. Luo Xiu'er abandoned me, yet I still provided food for the Luo family every year.

Even when I catch a fish occasionally, I would send it to the Luo family. How could they..."