

Folly 75

Chapter 75: What Others Lack, I Have (Part 1)

Mu Shuangshuang's head was hurting even more now. Green beans cost eight coins per pound, flour five coins per pound, and Yu Si Niang's daily wage was only six or seven coins. Eight coins were rare too, meaning that even after working all day, Yu Si Niang couldn't afford a pound of green beans?

Oh dear, why are coarse grains in ancient times so expensive?

No wonder the silly boy said that the vendors at the market often changed. If you bought some coarse flour to make buns to sell at the town, you'd lose money if you couldn't sell them, working all day and still not having enough to buy raw materials.

"Shuangshuang, what's wrong? Why aren't you speaking? You asked about the price of green beans, are you thinking of making green bean soup?"

Your grandmother grows some green beans, and nobody at home eats them. Should I go to your grandmother's house to get some tomorrow?"

Yu Si Niang was frightened and panicked seeing her daughter in a daze. She was worried her daughter would return to her previous state, silent, unresponsive, retreating to the corner in fear if touched.

"Shuangshuang, don't be afraid. Mother is here, mother is here..." Yu Si Niang couldn't even manage the bowl in her hand as she hugged Shuangshuang close, not wanting her daughter to revert to the past...

Given such emotional fluctuations, how could Mu Shuangshuang not understand? She gently patted Yu Si Niang's shoulder and comforted her, saying, "Mother, don't worry. I am who I am and will always be like this, not going back to the past."

Afraid Yu Si Niang might not be reassured, Mu Shuangshuang continued to explain, "Shuangshuang asked about the prices of green beans and flour because she wants to start a business. Given our current situation, to have confidence in the future, we must find a job that makes money, and Shuangshuang is currently interested in doing business."

"Doing business is good. Like your aunt, she married a shoemaker, then opened her own shoe shop, and life is quite decent now. Your uncle went to the town, and his residence was arranged by her husband's family."

Mu Shuangshuang's mouth involuntarily twitched when talking about this aunt. Using the term 'white-eyed wolf' couldn't be more appropriate. According to Yu Si Niang, back then, to gather the dowry for Mu Xianxian, Mu Dashan went to the dock to carry goods for three whole months, working tirelessly from dawn till dusk, almost ruining his good muscles, just to gather the dowry money.

When Mu Dashan needed silver for his marriage, Mu Xianxian not only did not help but used the excuse that her family business was disrupted by Mu Dashan, directly kicking Mu Dashan out. If it hadn't been for Yu Si Niang not minding that Mu Dashan didn't have a betrothal gift at the time, Mu Dashan would probably be like Mu Danian now, nearing thirty and still unmarried.

But Mu Xianxian was clever too; during the holidays, she would know to send Mr. Mu and Old Mrs. Mu a few pairs of unsellable shoes from her own shop. Mr. Mu and Old Mrs. Mu appreciated the gesture and didn't pursue the matter of her kicking Mu Dashan back.

Overlooking the disgust brought back by memories of Mu Xianxian, Mu Shuangshuang smiled at Yu Si Niang. "Mother, I want to make cold noodles and cold pasta."

"Cold noodles and cold pasta? What are those? I've only heard that noodles should be eaten piping hot, and that vermicelli stewed with pork is most appropriate. Since when can noodles and pasta be eaten cold?"

Yu Si Niang withdrew from Mu Shuangshuang's embrace, staring curiously at her daughter.

"Mother, have you really never heard of it?" Mu Shuangshuang could hardly believe it; her mother hadn't heard of this summer essential?

"No, passed down through the generations, noodles are eaten hot. A pot of vermicelli with some fatty pork is delicious."

Speaking of pork, Mu Shuangshuang couldn't help but mention that ancient times were indeed strange; generally, lean meat was fifteen coins, pure lean meat was perhaps fourteen coins, but fatty meat, surprisingly, could be sold for eighteen coins.

Here, fatty meat was still a particularly popular dish. Whenever someone held red and white events, they had to serve a bowl of greasy pork to make guests feel the host was generous.

Mu Shuangshuang thought the reason fatty meat sold well was possibly that ancient people's stomachs were less oily, and fatty meat could be rendered into lard, a pot of which could feed the family for months.

"Mother, when Shuangshuang makes money, I'll make you pork stewed vermicelli every day."

"Silly child, Mother was just speaking. How can such good things be eaten every day? Sweetheart, hurry up and finish your dinner, and Mother will bring over water for you to drink later. At night, don't open the door, and if there's any sound, call for Mother; Mother will get up to protect you."

Yu Si Niang painstakingly explained the nightly matters to Shuangshuang, watching her daughter eat heartily with a satisfied face, her smile almost dripping water.

Yu Si Niang had no other wishes and didn't want daily pork stewed vermicelli; as long as her child could grow up safe and happy, she felt it worthwhile even if her life was tough and tiring.

"Mother, trust me this once. Though we don't have it now, we shouldn't give up our pursuit of the future, right? Without dreams, a person is no different from a salted fish."

Yu Si Niang paused, surprised by the sparkle in her daughter's eyes.

Perhaps she should listen to her daughter; perhaps someday, they really could have pork stewed vermicelli every day, what a tasty life that would be?

"By the way, Shuangshuang, you haven't told Mother how you make cold noodles and cold pasta. Is it by leaving the hot noodles to cool? Wouldn't it be mushy?"

Yu Si Niang's series of questions further strengthened Mu Shuangshuang's belief that this business livelihood had potential. It was about having something others didn't, and if they did, doing it excellently, which was the supreme principle of business.

"Mother, wait till you see Shuangshuang make it once and you'll know."

Mu Shuangshuang wasn't planning to explain verbally, fearing someone might overhear, and felt some things must be practiced to be learned quickly.

"Then Mother looks forward to it. Once your cold noodles and cold pasta come out, I'll go to your grandmother's house tomorrow morning and get some green beans for you."

After eating, Yu Si Niang took away the bowl and poured Mu Shuangshuang a cup of cold water. Lunch and dinner were made with her help. Mrs. Mu didn't allow her to use the firewood alone, so she used the cooking time to simmer water with the family's clay pot for porridge.

Over one meal, she could simmer two pots. Two meals, and the family's children and men's tea for the day was enough.

One must admit that Yu Si Niang managed the household exceptionally well; if it weren't for Mrs. Mu's penchant for causing trouble, she would be an exemplary daughter-in-law.

"Thank you, Mother!"

With green beans settled, Mu Shuangshuang contemplated going to town to buy some flour. Last time she went to town, she still had eight coins left, plus one coin from Fourth Aunt, totaling nine coins. With these nine coins, she needed to buy some cups; people couldn't drink juice with their hands, could they?

As for tables and chairs, she'd see which booth she could rent; she wasn't like Lu Yuanfeng, the silly boy who only needed a wooden board. Her business required people to sit down to eat, so she had more things to consider.

Hopefully, this time, she would earn enough for Little Zhi's cabinet money!