

Folly 761

Chapter 761: Full of Schemes

Old Mrs. Mu has always doted on Mu Xiangxiang, and now with Mrs. Lin praising all of Mu Xiangxiang's virtues, Old Mrs. Mu seemed overjoyed.

After such a long time targeting Mrs. Lin, Old Mrs. Mu finally relented.

"If you, as the second sister-in-law, can handle the engagement of Xiangxiang well, I, the old lady, won't hit or scold you anymore. But if you don't do it well, I won't be polite to you."

Old Mrs. Mu still spoke in a threatening tone, but Mrs. Lin happily accepted it.

"Mother, don't worry, leave it to me, no problem. I guarantee that Xiangxiang will have a grand engagement with the son from the Old Qin Family." Mrs. Lin couldn't stop smiling.

Handing over Mu Xiangxiang's matter to her, wasn't this leading Mu Xiangxiang to a dead end?

Hopefully, the old lady won't regret it later, Mrs. Lin thought to herself.

Mrs. Lin was so delighted that Old Mrs. Mu found it puzzling, but she didn't say anything.

"Mother, I'll go talk to the third branch and have Shuang come over to cook on Xiangxiang's engagement day, and let the third daughter-in-law assist her. How do you think?" With Old Mrs. Mu's renewed trust, Mrs. Lin spoke in a buoyant tone.

Old Mrs. Mu, worried about no one handling major matters, finally breathed a sigh of relief when Mrs. Lin spoke.

"If that's the case, I'll leave it all to you," Old Mrs. Mu said.

"Then I'll go tell Shuang about this joyous occasion."

Mrs. Lin couldn't wait to go to the third branch, eager to flaunt her regained favor from Old Mrs. Mu.

When she arrived at the third branch, Mu Shuangshuang had just finished making a pot of meat soup. The delicious aroma filled the air.

Standing at the door of the kitchen of the third branch, Mrs. Lin kept swallowing, and even inside the kitchen, Mu Shuangshuang could hear that gulping sound as she prepared to light the fire.

The difference between inside the kitchen and outside was like heaven and earth.

After standing for a while, Mrs. Lin was nearly frozen.

She raised her voice and shouted at Mu Shuangshuang inside the kitchen, "Shuang, open the door, I'm your second aunt, I have something to discuss with you."

"Second Aunt, whatever it is, say it outside. I'm cooking and the house is very smoky," Mu Shuangshuang said after getting the fire going, as she and Lu Yuanfeng warmed themselves by the fire.

Inside, Mu Shuangshuang whispered, "We'll have breakfast once my second aunt leaves."

Lu Yuanfeng nodded.

"Shuang, open the door, what's smelling so good in there? Can your second aunt have a taste?"

"Shuang..."

Mrs. Lin's voice grew hoarse outside, but Mu Shuangshuang didn't open the door.

Angry, Mrs. Lin moved forward and started kicking the door.

"Open up, you brat, it's so cold, and you leave your aunt outside while you warm yourself inside. What are you up to? Get out here."

The sound of banging on the door mixed with Mrs. Lin's curses.

Mu Shuangshuang, calmly staying inside, ignored Mrs. Lin's antics.

When Mrs. Lin got tired of shouting, she went to knock on Mu Dashan's door.

Soon, a properly dressed Mu Dashan came out, trying to mediate.

"Second sister-in-law, what brings you here?"

Mu Dashan didn't invite Mrs. Lin inside to sit; the third branch was just a few separate rooms from the Old Mu Family, without a main room.

Usually, guests were taken directly to the kitchen, but now, with Shuang not opening the door, the kitchen was inaccessible.

"Third brother, persuade Shuang to open the door. It's rare for me as her second aunt to visit, just for a taste of the soup.

Shuang is really stingy. After all, I am her second aunt, not an outsider." Afraid of appearing stingy, Mrs. Lin said quite a lot.

Mu Dashan coughed lightly and said, "Second sister-in-law, maybe you should come back later. The stove had issues these past days, and the kitchen is very smoky.

Shuang didn't let you in for your own good, or if there's anything, you can tell me!"

It was obvious that Mu Dashan was protective, which left Mrs. Lin staring blankly in disbelief.

"Third brother, you're siding with Shuang? Let me tell you, this young girl can't be spoiled, or it will cause trouble in the future.

Shuang is a daughter; what if she sides with her husband's family and not her maternal family in the future?"

Inside the kitchen, Mu Shuangshuang rolled her eyes dramatically at Mrs. Lin's words.

What's this about siding with the husband's family and not the maternal family?

She remembered previously, Mrs. Lin had said her mother only cared about the maternal family, not the husband's family.

This double standard was too much; are the Mu Family the only ones human, while others are not?

"Second sister-in-law, this is a matter for our third branch; who Shuang sides with is her choice.

If you don't have anything important, please head back!" Mu Dashan was firm, showing no room for negotiation.

Inside, Mu Shuangshuang felt her blood boil at his words.

Back then, Baozi's father wouldn't retaliate even if hit or cursed by the Old Mu Family.

Even the scar on his face was because Old Mrs. Mu refused treatment, leading to it.

But Baozi's father never complained, always saying that suffering losses is a blessing.

Now, finally, Baozi's father stood up, knowing how to refuse unreasonable demands.

Outside, Mrs. Lin stomped her feet in anger at Mu Dashan's words.

She left with harsh words: "Third brother, remember, it's your own fault for not letting me in. You'll see, just wait..."

Mrs. Lin stormed off towards Old Mu's house, but after a few steps, she slipped on the icy road, falling face-first.

She got up and continued, only to fall again.

Mu Dashan initially wanted to help her up, but then saw Mrs. Lin, in passing by Shuangshuang's clothes hanger, kick and break the third branch's clothesline.

Helping such a person seemed pointless to Mu Dashan himself.

Finally, tranquility returned to the third branch, and Mu Shuangshuang opened the kitchen door.

A sun, like a salted duck egg, just rose on the horizon.

At last, the day was warming up.

Mu Dashan didn't ask about earlier, as he entered the kitchen with a smile, took his water cup, found a willow twig, and went out to clean his teeth.

Soon after, the people in the third branch gradually woke up.

After breakfast, Lu Yuanfeng took Yuanbao home.

Mu Shuangshuang then wandered into the vegetable garden, and upon returning, she encountered Fu Xiaonan's mother waiting in her courtyard.

"Auntie, what brings you here?" Mu Shuangshuang greeted warmly.

"Shuangshuang, do you also know about Xiaonan's situation?" Fu Xiaonan's mother asked.

"Yes!" Mu Shuangshuang nodded and added, "Let's go inside to warm up. The thaw is colder than the snowfall."

"Shuangshuang, please help Xiaonan. That child is stubborn and insists Qingshan must drive away Shen Yueying, or she won't marry into the Liu Family," Fu Xiaonan's mother said.

"Auntie, do you want Xiaonan to marry or not?"

Chapter 762: Shameless to the Extreme (Part 1)

"Shuangshuang, don't think Auntie is being unreasonable. Xiao Nan and Liu Qingshan's marriage was decided when they were young.

The whole Er Gui Village knows that in the future, Xiao Nan is to marry Liu Qingshan and become his wife. If she suddenly refuses now, what will people think of Xiao Nan?

It's normal for a man to have multiple wives, but if something happens to a woman, people will gossip. I don't expect Xiao Nan to be rich and powerful, just to live a peaceful life."

Fu Xiaonan's mother spoke earnestly to Mu Shuangshuang.

These words were more about convincing herself than persuading Mu Shuangshuang.

The Da Ning Dynasty inherently valued men over women, and even in the Old Fu Family, with only one daughter, they still placed her status incredibly low.

"Auntie, this matter is difficult for Shuangshuang to comment on. However, as Xiao Nan's friend, Shuangshuang hopes Xiao Nan finds someone who is wholly devoted to her, not someone disloyal.

And Shuangshuang believes that marriage is a matter for two people. Sacrificing oneself for so-called reputation, even if people don't gossip, but living unhappy and unfulfilled, what's the point?"

Mu Shuangshuang sighed deeply. She didn't mean to fault Fu Xiaonan's mother, but she felt she was too resigned to fate.

It's one thing to resign oneself to fate, but to do the same for one's daughter?

"Shuangshuang, you're still young and don't understand how important reputation is for a woman. If Xiao Nan is rejected by the Liu Family, no one else will want her." Fu Xiaonan's mother spoke, her eyes red.

"Auntie, saying that, Shuangshuang can't help. But you want me to persuade Xiao Nan to accept Shen Yueying, I can't do it."

Fu Xiaonan's mother was startled and looked puzzled, "How did you know I wanted you to persuade Xiao Nan to accept Shen Yueying? I hadn't even mentioned that yet."

From the first sentence Fu Xiaonan's mother said upon seeing Mu Shuangshuang, Mu Shuangshuang already knew.

Fu Xiaonan's mother clearly didn't want things to escalate.

"Auntie, Shuangshuang can't agree with this. Since Xiao Nan asked Liu Qingshan to drive Shen Yueying away, it proves she really can't accept Shen Yueying. As her friend, I should support her decision."

Mu Shuangshuang understood Fu Xiaonan's straightforward temperament. If she said she didn't want Shen Yueying with Liu Qingshan, there was no turning back.

Besides, Xiao Nan wasn't lacking. Why should she share a man or love with someone else?

"Shuangshuang, you..." Fu Xiaonan's mother initially thought, as a fellow woman, if Mu Shuangshuang persuaded her, Xiao Nan would agree to let Liu Qingshan take Shen Yueying as a concubine.

Unexpectedly, it turned out like this.

"Auntie, here's some cabbage that Shuangshuang just picked from the vegetable garden. Please take some back. As for Xiao Nan's matter, let her decide for herself. I believe Xiao Nan knows what she wants."

Mu Shuangshuang said and then walked straight into the courtyard of the Old Mu Family.

She took a basket of greens into the kitchen and added some wood to the fire in the stove room.

Yu Si Niang was busy nearby the fire, and Mu Shuangshuang noticed that she was holding two white animal hides, trying to press them with her hands but without success.

Seeing what was in Yu Si Niang's hands, Mu Shuangshuang couldn't help but ask curiously, "Mom, what is this? Shoe soles?"

"Yes, I got them from your Aunt Zhao Yun to make a pair of shoes for Fengzi. That child, in the middle of winter, is wearing such a pair of torn cloth shoes, and he has to go up the mountain. It breaks my heart."

Yu Si Niang spoke openly in front of everyone.

"Mom, saying that makes Shuangshuang jealous, a whole barrel of jealousy." Mu Shuangshuang pouted, making a gesture with her hands as if hugging.

It made the children present burst out in laughter.

"Sister, you're so funny. These shoes were decided for Brother Yuan Feng by our vote, wasn't it, Brother Xiao Zheng?" Little Zhi laughed and found himself an ally.

These days, Xue Zheng had clearly integrated into this family's life.

He would occasionally say a few words and sometimes help guide Xiao Han with his lessons.

Xue Zheng was about seven or eight years old, a year and a half older than Xiao Han, and from a well-off family. He started reading and recognizing characters when he was two.

Now there were hardly any words that stumped him.

"I haven't voted yet, so I'll vote for myself." Mu Shuangshuang deliberately teased the children.

Unexpectedly, Xue Zheng seriously said, "I'll give you my vote, so you also have new shoes to wear!"

"Xiao Zheng, thank you for your kindness, but sister can't just take your things. Besides, you've been here for quite a while now, and when we give something to someone, it's handmade, not store-bought," said Mu Shuangshuang.

With Xue Zheng in the Old Mu Family, Mu Shuangshuang didn't play the role she thought, as most of the time she wasn't with Xue Zheng, leaving him to play with the children.

And she's already so grown-up, asking the little ones for things would be a bit embarrassing.

Xue Zheng didn't say anything more, but the smile on his face didn't fade an inch.

Mu Shuangshuang also smiled brightly, and the atmosphere in the third branch of the Mu Family was once again filled with joy.

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When Fu Xiaonan's mother returned to the Old Fu Family, everyone was gathered in the main room, pondering how to resolve the issue.

Last night, Shen Yueying was driven out of the room by Fu Xiaonan and wasn't allowed into Liu Qingshan's room. Thus, she stood outside Liu Qingshan's room alone.

The next day, when Liu Qingshan woke up, Shen Yueying had gotten to the point of having to call a doctor from the village.

Now Liu Qingshan and Fu Xiaonan were at an impasse over Shen Yueying.

Fu Xiaonan naturally wanted Shen Yueying to leave.

But Liu Qingshan wanted to keep Shen Yueying.

"Xiao Nan, Yueying was already punished last night. Can't you let her go?" Liu Qingshan nervously said.

"Let her go? When did I make things difficult for her? I just don't want to see her in my home, is that wrong?"

Fu Xiaonan had a fiery temperament, and at this point, she was already feeling very hurt.

But she still held back, wanting to protect her last piece of sanctuary.

"Xiao Nan, why are you so stubborn? Uncle already said it's nothing for men to have multiple wives. Besides, it's not like I planned to take a concubine, but you treated Yueying like that.

Do you realize that without Yueying, I would have died last night? Also, your friend refused to let me warm myself by the fire and whipped my hand with a cane, couldn't you see that?"

Liu Qingshan questioned.

"Shen Yueying saved you? How can you say that when it was clearly Shuangshuang and Fengzi who saved you? Liu Qingshan, don't go too far!"

Fu Xiaonan shouted.

The more angry she was, the more she blamed herself for being blind back then.

"Liu Qingshan, I'm giving you two choices: either you marry me and let Shen Yueying go, or you take Shen Yueying and leave, and never appear before me again."

Chapter 763: The Elder Uncle Strikes Back Again

Fu Xiaonan sat on the kang all night, thinking about her future, whether to forgive Liu Qingshan or give up.

She envied Mu Shuangshuang and Fengzi, simple yet joyful.

Fengzi wouldn't flirt with other women.

In the village, no matter how beautiful or ugly, he wouldn't even glance at them. But Liu Qingshan not only flirts but also brings them right in front of her.

But a ten-year relationship isn't something you can just give up on. Fu Xiaonan still wanted to try and see if she could win back her happiness.

At first, Liu Qingshan would cry and apologize, admit his mistakes, but when Fu Wu said that it's normal for a man to have several wives and concubines, it became an accepted fact in the village that couldn't be changed.

Then Liu Qingshan began to change, his words becoming more and more hurtful.

Just like now, he's always arguing with her for Shen Yueying.

"Xiaonan, our engagement was jointly decided by my parents and your uncle and aunt. We have no right to question it."

"Dad, Mom, did you hear what Liu Qingshan said? Are you still going to let your daughter marry this kind of person?" Fu Xiaonan held back her tears and asked Fu Wu and her mother.

"Nannan, everyone in the village knows about this. If you refuse this engagement, who will dare propose to you in the future?"

Fu Wu was a middleman in buying and selling land among several nearby villages, visiting many places.

In such matters, it's always women who suffer.

Endure for a moment, and you'll have peace. Take a step back, and the sea will be wide open!

Fu Xiaonan was almost in despair. Words from related people didn't matter much.

But from close family, they became a sharp sword.

"Dad, Mom, let me think this over!" Fu Xiaonan glanced at her parents and then walked straight out the door.

She was going to find Mu Shuangshuang.

Shuangshuang was attentive, only she could help.

On the way, Fu Xiaonan thought about all the little moments with Liu Qingshan over the years.

But recalling them, she found there were very few memories with Liu Qingshan, only their twice-a-year meetings.

Even when they met, it was just eating, drinking, and playing.

There was no time to truly settle down and think about this relationship.

Fu Xiaonan was so absorbed in her thoughts that she almost fell into a ditch several times. By the time she reached Shuangshuang's house, she was covered in dirt, her good clothes turned into rags.

The moment she saw Mu Shuangshuang, Fu Xiaonan lowered her head, the emotions in her eyes undergoing a dramatic change.

"Shuangshuang, I..."

As soon as Fu Xiaonan called Mu Shuangshuang's name, Mu Shuangshuang knew she had made her choice.

"Congratulations, Xiaonan, for escaping your suffering!" Mu Shuangshuang smiled.

"You know my choice?" Fu Xiaonan asked.

"Not only do I know your decision, but I also know you want to make things difficult for Liu Qingshan."

In fact, Liu Qingshan was clearly in the wrong, it's just that Fu Wu and Xiaonan's mother were afraid of being talked about and losing face.

"Shuangshuang, do you know what my parents said?" Fu Xiaonan asked.

"I know what they said. Your mother came to see me. The urgent thing now is to find a way to make sure everyone in the village knows about Liu Qingshan's affair."

"How can we make sure everyone in the village knows?" Fu Xiaonan asked.

"Yes, Shuangshuang, don't keep us in suspense. I'm so confused," Yu Si Niang paused her needlework and asked Mu Shuangshuang.

"Mom, this requires the village women. Tell Aunt Zhao Yun, and have her spread it, and in one morning, the whole village will know!"

Mu Shuangshuang smiled slyly, her eyes bright and expressive.

Everyone present was stunned, staring blankly.

At this moment, Mu Shuangshuang was strong, confident, unafraid of any challenge.

By noon, rumors began to spread in the village that Liu Qingshan was a cut-sleeve. That servant was his kept boy, and Liu Qingshan wasn't interested in women at all.

The day Liu Qingshan nearly got into trouble, he wasn't watching snow at the foot of the mountain. He was actually with the servant in the mountains, when they ran into a bear. They ran for their lives separately, leaving Liu Qingshan behind.

The servant didn't dare tell the truth, fearing their relationship would be discovered, so he lied, making everyone search in vain.

Er Gui Village was never liberal. Even ordinary affairs were intolerable to the villagers, not to mention a cut-sleeve relationship.

So, just after lunch, villagers went spontaneously to Fu's house to see Liu Qingshan, some angrily throwing stones at the Old Fu Family's house.

Tiles on Fu Wu's house were smashed, and next, they would start throwing rotten eggs.

"Fifth, what should we do? Everyone knows about it now, how will our Xiaonan live?"

Fu Xiaonan's mother asked, crying with a handkerchief in hand.

"I think it was Xiaonan who spread it herself. Why didn't she discuss this with us?" Fu Wu looked troubled.

"Ah, this child has been stubborn since she was little. She was the one who liked Liu Qingshan at first, and now she wants him gone. What should we do?" Fu Xiaonan's mother looked worried.

"How about we let Qingshan go? I see he cares a lot about the woman inside. All morning, he was looking after her.

Our Xiaonan fell ill, and he barely looked at her. If he really liked our Xiaonan, he wouldn't behave like this."

Fu Wu knew men's minds well, and if Liu Qingshan didn't like the woman inside, he wouldn't go to such lengths.

"What about our Xiaonan's reputation?" Fu Xiaonan's mother still worried about reputation.

"Forget it, we don't need such reputation anymore. Arrange for a carriage to send them away, and I'll write a letter to Qingshan's parents."

With things blown so out of proportion, Fu Wu had no choice. He still had to live in the village, and if people knew his son-in-law was a cut-sleeve, he would lose all credibility.

Being a middleman to earn money would become nearly impossible.

Soon, Fu Xiaonan's mother arranged for Liu Qingshan and Shen Yueying to be sent back to the county. While they didn't mention ending the engagement, they detailed the events in a letter, which also criticized Liu Qingshan's behavior.

The Liu Family and the Fu Family, more likely than not, were done for.

In the future, when Liu Family members came to Er Gui Village, they wouldn't have a place to stay, and during holidays or Qingming Festival, Old Fu Family wouldn't help them clean graves anymore.

There was no longer any relationship whatsoever!

Fu Wu worried about the impact on Fu Xiaonan, but as villagers initially gossiped, it was soon overshadowed by Mu Xiangxiang's engagement news in the Old Mu Family.

The villagers' focus shifted back to the Old Mu Family.

Most importantly, the eldest family had returned.

Chapter 764: Likes to Act Rich and Pretentious

The Old Mu Family suddenly became lively again.

People in the village started sending gifts like crazy to the Old Mu Family, and everything was sent to the big house of the Old Mu Family.

Mu Dade was so overwhelmed with receiving gifts that his hands were getting tired, and he seemed to be walking on air.

This time, Mu Dade reaped plentiful rewards; not only did he meet the County Magistrate, but he also earned the magistrate's appreciation.

If he hadn't won first place in the Capital, Mu Dade's job in the county would have been arranged by the County Magistrate.

The best decision Mu Dade made in his life was going to the county to find Ruan Xiao Jiao.

Without her, he wouldn't have seen the County Magistrate, nor would he have obtained the position of County Chief Clerk.

There was still half a day before Mu Xiangxiang was to be betrothed, and Mr. Mu gathered everyone from the Old Mu Family, including everyone from the third branch.

The crowd sat together, discussing the affairs related to Mu Xiangxiang's betrothal.

"Everyone, gathering together is giving face to this old man, especially the third family.

But when it comes down to it, we're all one family, all with the surname Mu. When there's something, we should do it together to make it lively."

Mr. Mu surveyed the entire room before he spoke this piece.

Fortunately, these words were quite pleasant.

Mu Shuangshuang didn't refute Mr. Mu and quietly listened to his speech.

"Eldest, do you have anything you'd like to say?" Mr. Mu handed the floor to Mu Dade, whom he regarded as the most significant.

"Not really, Dad, Xiangxiang's betrothal is a big event for our Old Mu Family. As for the family expenses, don't be polite. Dan Dan's mother and I will cover the cost," said Mu Dade.

"Indeed, Dad, just let us know how much the betrothal costs this time, and I'll pay for it," Mrs. Jin chimed in.

Mr. Mu was in a great mood, finally feeling like his son had grown up.

The other few members of the Old Mu Family were also extremely happy.

These past few days, they had gone to town in batches to buy supplies, spending quite a lot of silver.

If their elder brother would make up for it, they wouldn't be nagged by their mother-in-law while eating.

However, Mr. Mu was reluctant.

"We can pay for Xiangxiang's wedding ourselves. You also have to go to the Capital for exams, so keep the money for yourself. If it's not enough, talk to your mother, and we'll all chip in for you," said Mr. Mu.

The faces of several people present immediately changed.

"Dad, I heard that if you become a scholar, the court provides travel expenses and grains," said Mu Dazhong.

This information came from Lin's brother, and Mu Dazhong had been helping Lin's brother at work lately, though he hadn't earned any silver yet. But Mu Dazhong believed he would make money soon.

"Hmph, so what if the court gives it? It's still your elder brother's; stop having ideas you shouldn't have!" Old Mrs. Mu snorted coldly, directly exposing Mu Dazhong's thoughts.

"Mom, how is this having ideas we shouldn't? Big brother's made it now, but the rest of us are still as poor as church mice.

How about asking big brother to give us each a red envelope, not for much, just enough for us to hold our heads high."

Just as Mu Dazhong finished speaking, Mu Dade's expression turned sour.

The money he earned himself, if others wanted even a bit, would feel like digging into his flesh.

"Hehe, Fifth wants a red envelope, but as the elder brother, I..."

Mu Dade hadn't finished speaking when he was interrupted by Old Mrs. Mu.

"Give what? The second child hasn't lost his limbs; if he wants to make money, he should go to the town dock to load cargo, or at the very least, work as a waiter in a restaurant.

Never seen a healthy person die from holding it in. Is it worth opening your mouth to your elder brother for just a bit of money? Useless thing, deserves to work the land for the rest of his life!"

Old Mrs. Mu cursed loudly.

The others who wanted to coerce money from Mu Dade remained silent, each looking outside without a word.

"Since no one is talking, I, the old man, will assign the tasks for tomorrow."

"Fourth family, the two of you will help in the kitchen. With Dade back, the whole village will come to eat tomorrow, so you're indispensable."

"Second family, you two have sweet mouths, so you'll greet the guests at the front, making sure each one holds a cup of tea."

"As for the third family, Shuang will handle the cooking, the third daughter-in-law will assist, and third will handle seating arrangements.

Fifth, you will work with the second family to serve dishes. This serving task is one that everyone must do, as long as their hands are free."

Mr. Mu arranged everything, thinking the matter was settled.

But Mu Shuangshuang stood up.

"Grandpa, Shuang can't handle cooking, better hire someone instead!"

Mu Shuangshuang truly suspected that the people of the Old Mu Family were not in the right mind.

The cooking matter, she had said long ago, she couldn't do it, did they really take her words for nonsense?

"You... Shuang, tomorrow's the day your younger aunt gets betrothed, saying you won't do it, where do you expect us to find a chef last minute?" Old Mrs. Mu said.

"Hire one, Granny Chen in the village does banquets for people, it's not expensive, I asked, it's twenty-five coins per table," said Mu Shuangshuang.

"You..." Old Mrs. Mu was fuming. She always thought Mu Shuangshuang was joking.

Plus, in this household, big matters and small matters were all decided by her, the old lady.

Old Mrs. Mu was confident enough to think Mu Shuangshuang would not contradict her.

"Alright, since Shuang is unwilling, let's go find Granny Chen, anyway it's just two hundred coins or so."

This time, the Old Mu Family was putting on quite the spectacle, with ten tables in total, each costing twenty-five coins, amounting to two hundred and fifty coins.

The price, several coins' worth of silver, was enough to make Old Mrs. Mu's lungs explode with rage.

"No, this is a major event for our Old Mu Family, we can't let outsiders be involved. Third family, didn't you work as a kitchen helper in town? You take over the cooking," Old Mrs. Mu targeted Yu Si Niang.

"No, Mom, it's not possible. I've never handled a cooking spatula; there are professional cooks for cooking," Yu Si Niang quickly shook her head.

Cooking was considered a big deal in the village.

After male banquet guests ate, their favorite thing was to critically evaluate, judging whose banquet was well done or poorly done.

Although such things wouldn't bring existential disgrace, being called stingy was not flattering.

"You can't do this, can't do that, what exactly can you do?" Old Mrs. Mu lost her temper, displeased.

"Mom, let's just hire Granny Chen, as I said, I'll cover Xiangxiang's banquet expenses, and let's hire people for tasks that can be hired out," said Mu Dade, stepping up to mediate, making Old Mrs. Mu no longer scold Yu Si Niang.

However, the loss of two hundred and fifty coins was chalked up by Old Mrs. Mu to the account of Mu Shuangshuang and Yu Si Niang.

"Since that's the case, let's rearrange tomorrow's tasks!"

Chapter 765: Seizure

This time, Mu Dade seemed to have saved the third branch from a crisis.

However, Mu Shuangshuang didn't let go of the grudge between the main branch and herself just because of this small gain.

The main branch is the most cunning among the branches of the Old Mu Family. Particularly, the things that Mu Dade does, Mu Shuangshuang finds hard to even speak about.

After the meeting ended, the people from the third branch returned to the third branch.

Other members of the Old Mu Family gathered together.

Mrs. Lin was the first to start criticizing Mu Shuangshuang: "Look at them, look at them, this Shuang girl from the third branch, she's so arrogant. Isn't she just cooking a meal?"

Why is she so cocky? If one didn't know better, they'd think she could turn water into gold. Dad, Brother, you both tolerate that awful girl, but I can't anymore."

"Second sister-in-law, let's move past this. Shuangshuang is a child, and her decisions are inevitably not perfect. Moreover, the third branch has split off, them coming to help is already quite commendable."

Mu Dade began to play the role of understanding and righteous again.

The other members of the Old Mu Family fell for it, especially Old Mrs. Mu, who had made up her mind to let Mu Shuangshuang suffer tomorrow.

In the blink of an eye, it was the engagement banquet the next day.

The entire Old Mu Family was bustling with activity.

There hadn't been a happy occasion for the Old Mu Family in a long time. This time, even though it was just an engagement, people needed to be invited for a feast, so it was no small thing.

Mu Shuangshuang and Mu Qingqing were arranged to serve tea to the villagers, with two big stoves nearby, waiting for one kettle to be emptied and then boiling another.

Old Mrs. Mu had instructed them, the two little girls only needed to attend to the stoves and ensure a continuous supply of hot water.

Mu Qingqing, working with Mu Shuangshuang, did not show her a pleasant face.

She still resented the incident at the town's clinic, holding a grudge against Mu Shuangshuang.

After a while, Mu Qingqing said, "I want to see Aunt get dressed, you stay here and watch the stoves."

Mu Qingqing's words didn't sound like a request but rather like an order.

"Why should I stay here? Why don't you say you'll watch the stoves, and I'll go see Aunt?" Mu Shuangshuang asked Mu Qingqing.

"Because Aunt doesn't want to see you. Look at you, what you're wearing, anyone would think you're begging for food somewhere." Mu Qingqing replied.

Mu Shuangshuang was actually wearing just ordinary clothes today.

She had several new clothes but only wore them for people she liked. For someone like Mu Xiangxiang, not giving her patched clothes was already kind.

In contrast, Mu Qingqing, no one knew where she got those clothes, an orange silk dress that looked expensive in style and fabric.

It was likely worth more than one or two silver coins, but why did Mu Qingqing have it?

Mu Shuangshuang was well aware of the second branch's situation. There was some silver, but it definitely couldn't afford such clothes.

And if there was, Mrs. Lin and Mu Dazhong would surely keep it for themselves to buy clothes, it wouldn't come to Mu Qingqing, a daughter.

Moreover, when Mu Dalang got married, the second couple didn't bring out anything nice, so there must be something fishy!

The more Mu Shuangshuang thought, the more she felt there was an issue.

She wanted to follow Mu Qingqing to see how Old Mrs. Mu would react to Mu Qingqing's clothes later.

Just then, Mrs. Liu came over.

Mu Qingqing asked Mrs. Liu to watch the stove, and Mrs. Liu agreed, giving Mu Shuangshuang the chance to follow Mu Qingqing to the backyard.

In the backyard, there were quite a few people gathered, all waiting to see Mu Xiangxiang.

The matter of Mu Xiangxiang being mute hadn't been told to the villagers. Old Mrs. Mu had calmed Mu Xiangxiang, telling her not to speak unless necessary.

This way, the villagers didn't know.

Inside the room, Mu Xiangxiang was applying layer after layer of rouge and powder on her face, which was already pale, making it look like chalk.

Along with those red lips, it was a disaster scene.

The people present didn't really want to stay but found it necessary to say some congratulatory words due to Mu Dade's presence.

"Oh dear, Xiangxiang girl, she really looks like she's blessed, not only beautiful but marrying a wealthy person, so envious." One of the women said.

Those words hit Old Mrs. Mu's sweet spot, she listened, smiling wide.

A mother always finds her daughter beautiful.

Old Mrs. Mu also felt Mu Xiangxiang's outfit looked good, especially that little face, no one's daughter could compare to hers.

"Xiangxiang, are you tired? Should mommy cushion the bed for you and let you sleep a while?"

Old Mrs. Mu was afraid Mu Xiangxiang would be tired, frequently asking her this and that.

Perhaps after that incident, Mu Xiangxiang had toned down and was listening to Old Mrs. Mu today, without saying anything.

But she kept occasionally glancing outside, seemingly waiting for someone to come.

Mu Xiangxiang obediently shook her head, and Old Mrs. Mu felt overjoyed.

After a while, Mu Qingqing entered Mu Xiangxiang's room.

Mu Xiangxiang's eyes lit up, her mind filled with scheming.

The once obedient Mu Xiangxiang started to cry and make a fuss, pointing at Mu Qingqing's clothes and yelling nonstop.

Old Mrs. Mu was momentarily unsure of the meaning, but Mu Qingqing kept retreating.

Seeing Mu Xiangxiang, she suddenly had a bad premonition.

"Grandma, Aunt, I just came to look, I'm heading back to boil water." Mu Qingqing turned to leave.

But was grabbed by Old Mrs. Mu by the collar.

"Where does a brat like you get such fine material clothes? Tell me, you didn't steal my money, did you?" Old Mrs. Mu asked.

Mu Qingqing shook her head vigorously. "Grandma, no, this was given to me by my uncle, and my mom passed it down to me." Mu Qingqing said.

"Humph, that rotten uncle of yours, always losing money in business, do you think I'd believe that?"

"You better explain today, or I'll strip your skin!"

Old Mrs. Mu began criticizing Mu Qingqing in front of the people outside.

The others watched feeling it was excessive, but it was ultimately a family matter.

The sensible ones left, leaving just the Old Mu Family members.

Mrs. Lin never showed up, leaving Mu Qingqing isolated.

Her clothes were tightly held, she was pressed down hard by Old Mrs. Mu.

Suddenly, Mu Xiangxiang started touching Mu Qingqing's clothes with a liking expression.

"Xiangxiang, you like these clothes?" Old Mrs. Mu asked.

Mu Xiangxiang nodded heavily.

"You heard her, Qing girl! Your aunt likes your clothes, will you take them off yourself or should I do it for you?" Old Mrs. Mu also liked Mu Qingqing's clothes.

Wearing them on Mu Qingqing was simply a waste.

"Grandma, these clothes aren't valuable, it's a birthday gift from my uncle, I..."

Mu Qingqing was about to argue, but Old Mrs. Mu's hand was already twisting Mu Qingqing's arm, causing her to scream.

Chapter 766: Missed the Auspicious Time

"Nai, it hurts, it hurts so much..." Mu Qingqing screamed.

But no matter how much she screamed, it was useless, because when Old Mrs. Mu wanted to do something, no one could stop her for the time being.

After Old Mrs. Mu took off Mu Qingqing's clothes, Mu Qingqing squatted in the corner next to Mu Xiangxiang's bed, tears streaming down her face.

The sight frightened the women watching the commotion, and they all moved towards the front courtyard in fear.

By the time Mu Shuangshuang followed behind Mu Qingqing into the room, the matter was already settled. Mu Qingqing's clothes were gone, and the orange silk skirt in Mu Xiangxiang's hand belonged to Mu Qingqing.

At this moment, Mu Xiangxiang was wearing a bright red silk skirt, with a face like a scrawled drawing, her expression bizarre, not quite excited or happy, instead giving Mu Shuangshuang a feeling of...

Mu Shuangshuang looked at the face that was like a car wreck, swallowed hard.

She looked at Old Mrs. Mu's face, hoping to see a hint of something, but Old Mrs. Mu's face still showed satisfaction.

It seemed that Old Mrs. Mu's sense of aesthetics had been led astray by Mu Xiangxiang, probably thinking she looked good with her face painted in a riot of colors.

"Nai, Sister Shuangshuang is here." In the corner, Mu Qingqing, still sobbing, immediately spoke when she saw Mu Shuangshuang.

She looked eager to drag Mu Shuangshuang into the situation.

Mu Shuangshuang quickly said, "Nai, my aunt looks really nice today, and her makeup is especially fitting. Whoever did it must have seen a lot of the world."

You don't hit a smiling face, and since today was a big day, Old Mrs. Mu unusually didn't argue with Mu Shuangshuang.

However, Old Mrs. Mu still symbolically said a few words: "Your aunt's engagement day, why are you not staying in the front courtyard if you have nothing to do, coming to the back courtyard instead? Aren't you handling things up front?"

Mu Shuangshuang smiled and lied without blushing or skipping a beat, "I'm just here to find my sister Qingqing. We agreed to go together, but as soon as I blinked, she was gone, so I came to the back courtyard to find her."

"Qing girl, you heard it yourself, right? You haven't finished handling things in the front courtyard, what are you doing creating a scene in the back courtyard? Get back to the front courtyard this instant!" Old Mrs. Mu glared at Mu Qingqing fiercely and then scolded loudly.

Mu Qingqing, naively thinking it was her chance to get her clothes back, quickly said, "Nai, how can I go to the front courtyard without clothes? Why not let my aunt give me my clothes back!"

Old Mrs. Mu casually grabbed a dirty, oil-stained outfit from Mu Xiangxiang's room and threw it in Mu Qingqing's face.

Impatiently, she said, "If you're going out, go out quickly, stop being in the way here. Even looking at you is annoying!"

Mu Qingqing, with no other choice, grew increasingly resentful toward the people of the Old Mu Family.

She found a corner, put on Mu Xiangxiang's clothes, and stormed out of Mu Xiangxiang's room angrily.

Mu Shuangshuang looked at the sulking Mu Qingqing and thought of only one word, "self-inflicted."

Knowing perfectly well how Old Mrs. Mu and Mu Xiangxiang were, eager to snatch up anything good they saw.

Yet Mu Qingqing foolishly flaunted her nice clothes in front of those two oddballs.

She lost out for no reason.

With Mu Qingqing gone, Mu Xiangxiang looked elated, pulling her clothes, asking Old Mrs. Mu to help her change, which Old Mrs. Mu happily agreed to.

Rightly so, with Old Mrs. Mu's protective nature, even Mu Xiangxiang's farts smelled sweet.

Having seen enough of the commotion, Mu Shuangshuang continued to the front courtyard to boil water.

In the back courtyard, because of Old Mrs. Mu, the women were unwilling to go there, making the front courtyard lively instead.

Everyone was munching on sunflower seeds, chatting.

As they talked, the conversation turned to the son-in-law of the Old Mu Family.

"Xiao Zao, what kind of man is your sister's husband? I heard he's particularly wealthy?" A curious wife from the village asked, pulling at Mrs. Lin.

Mrs. Lin chuckled inwardly. She had been waiting for someone to ask her about the Qin Family for a long time.

"Oh, you all don't know. That Mr. Qin is quite handsome, eight feet tall, with strong features. Most importantly, he's very fond of our Xiangxiang sister."

Mrs. Lin's words piqued everyone's curiosity to the fullest.

The villagers eagerly awaited the noon meal, so they could see such a good man.

"Your family is really fortunate. The eldest passed the scholar exam, and the little sister married a wealthy man. How come all the good things come to your family?" Someone said sourly.

Everyone in the village started out the same, without money, living in poverty.

But gradually, differences emerged. Some families suddenly bought land, some got rich doing business and moved away.

The Old Mu Family was the most impressive, producing a scholar.

So, there was plenty of envy, jealousy, and resentment.

Mrs. Lin was displeased hearing this.

She spat out the shell of the sunflower seed in her mouth and said to the speaking woman, "What do you mean by that? It rains when the sky wants to, daughters marry when they want to, and the Old Mu Family flourishes. Can you stop it? Besides, we're all from the same village. You can feel envious, but saying it out loud makes everyone look bad."

The woman who had spoken earlier blushed bright red.

She lowered her head, stopped talking, but cast resentful glances at Mrs. Lin now and then.

Mrs. Lin, absorbed in boasting, paid no heed to others.

After a while, some in the village plucked up the courage to ask about the rumor of Qin Shijie's wife-beating incident that had been circulating, their faces full of gossip.

This topic suited Mrs. Lin just fine.

She said, "That was just nonsense from outside. My sister Xiangxiang is blessed and will surely bring the Qin Family good fortune."

The crowd found it uninteresting, but those who knew Mrs. Lin understood that she rarely had such nice words to say, yet today she was full of praise for the Qin Family.

By noon, everyone was so tired of looking that their eyes were getting blurry, yet there was no sign of the Qin Family people.

It was fine at first, but later, the villagers began to grow impatient.

They began to discuss.

"What on earth is going on with the Qin Family? Even if it's just an engagement, the Old Mu Family has put on such a big show, there's no way they wouldn't come by this hour, right?"

"Exactly, what's this? It's downright disrespectful to the Old Mu Family. I don't think the Old Qin Family is as good as the Old Mu Family claims. They might be putting on a false front to deceive us."

There was widespread discussion in the courtyard, and the back courtyard was just as tumultuous.

Mr. Mu had gathered all the Old Mu Family members together, beads of sweat forming from anxiety.

"What do you think we should do? What are the Qin Family people up to? Last time they were late to discuss matters, and now they're late for the engagement too. At this rate, our Old Mu Family will lose face entirely."

Mr. Mu paced in circles, casting his eyes on others, waiting for someone to come up with a solution.

"Father, don't worry. What if they were delayed on the road? Let's send someone to the village entrance to check if the Qin Family has arrived!"

Chapter 767: Drawing Water with a Bamboo Basket

"The eldest is right, I was just so flustered. If the Qin Family ran into some trouble on the way, delays are possible."

Mr. Mu comforted himself.

"Dad, I think big brother is right too. Don't worry about it. Today's Xiangxiang's big engagement day, we should be happy." Mu Dashan took the initiative to reassure Mr. Mu.

Mr. Mu's mood gradually improved.

"Second, Fifth, you two are quick on your feet, go to the village entrance and see if the Qin Family has arrived, and also check if Nanny Li has come to the feast."

Nanny Li was the matchmaker who originally arranged the connection, and normally she would be present at such events.

But a few days ago, Nanny Li sent someone to tell us she had something at home and would be late.

The Old Mu Family had no idea when she'd actually show, they just waited foolishly, and in the end, she never appeared.

This led to one rescheduling after another of the originally planned event.

Many tasks that needed a matchmaker had to be handled by the Mu Family themselves.

Nanny Li was indeed not as reliable as Matchmaker Sun, but since Old Mrs. Mu chose her personally, the Old Mu Family had no choice but to deal with the consequences.

Another half hour passed, and there was still no news at the village entrance.

The meal time had arrived, and the villagers outside were already calling to start the meal.

Mr. Mu was extremely troubled, unable to make a decision for a while.

He had to seek help from Mu Dade again.

"Eldest, the villagers want to eat, but the Qin Family hasn't arrived. Our Old Mu Family might become the laughingstock this time."

Mr. Mu cared about the family's reputation, and so did Mu Dade.

Now that he was about to go to the capital for exams, if there were any scandals involving his sister at this time, even if he passed, he could be shunned.

Worst case, people might use it as a joke, spreading it everywhere.

"Dad, let's carry on with the engagement as planned. For now, let's start the meal; the villagers can't wait any longer," said Mu Dade.

With Mu Dade's approval, Mr. Mu had no choice but to comply.

"Third, go to the front yard and announce that the meal should begin. Everyone should help serve the food and we can deal with this later."

The Old Mu Family had many members, and those serving food were all family members.

But those from the first house were not keen on doing such work; just Mu Dade's scholar status exempted him from many duties.

The work that others had to do, Mu Dade avoided, so the entire first house didn't have to do any work either.

Mu Shuangshuang watched the Old Mu Family's farce, impatiently waiting for the Qin Family to see if they would marry Mu Xiangxiang, or let her become a laughingstock of Er Gui Village.

But there was one sure thing.

After this engagement feast, if the Qin Family didn't want Mu Xiangxiang,

not even Mu Dade's status would help, even if he became an official, Mu Xiangxiang's future marriage prospects would be ruined.

Other than someone who's been married once already, no one would propose to Mu Xiangxiang again.

Because Mu Xiangxiang's reputation was ruined.

To be abandoned on the engagement day, it's unlikely anyone would dare to take on that responsibility.

Mu Xiangxiang's room, Old Mrs. Mu finally noticed something was wrong and came out.

She asked and found out neither the Qin Family nor Nanny Li had arrived, got furious, and went straight to the kitchen to grab a kitchen knife, heading towards the village entrance.

Mr. Mu was scared out of his wits, and the first house's people were sent to stop Old Mrs. Mu.

Mrs. Jin originally didn't want to go, but Mr. Mu insisted, and as fate would have it, Mrs. Jin caught up with Old Mrs. Mu.

She had to muster her courage to persuade Old Mrs. Mu, "Mother, let's go back. There's still a banquet at home, and everyone is waiting for you to make an appearance."

Old Mrs. Mu shoved Mrs. Jin's hand away.

"Get out of my way. It's not your daughter getting married, so naturally, you're not worried. Our Xiangxiang is still young, if they say the groom didn't show up on the engagement day, how will she live after that?"

Old Mrs. Mu was not confused about this matter.

Even if they are late, the Qin Family must show up.

"Mother, rushing out doesn't change anything. If the Qin Family has reached the village entrance, they would have come. But they're not here, what good is a kitchen knife?" Mrs. Jin asked.

"Well, well, eldest daughter-in-law, Jinyin'er, you finally said what's in your heart, didn't you? You just can't stand seeing Xiangxiang doing well, you want her to suffer.

Why is your heart so ruthless? Are you still Xiangxiang's sister-in-law? Are you still one of us in the Old Mu Family?"

Mrs. Jin was full of grievances, the old lady put all the blame on her, wasn't this being a bully?

Yet Mrs. Jin had to put on a gracious act, with a smile on her face, explaining to Old Mrs. Mu.

But the more she explained, the less kindly Old Mrs. Mu treated her.

Mrs. Jin had no choice but to let Old Mrs. Mu go to the village entrance, with a kitchen knife, waiting for the Qin Family to arrive.

But the Qin Family seemed to be intentionally antagonistic towards the Old Mu Family and just didn't show up.

In the Old Mu Family's yard, the sun shone on the villagers, making them feel warm.

The dishes from the Old Mu Family were served one by one, and while eating, everyone started gossiping.

They were talking about nothing other than the affairs of the Old Mu Family.

Since ancient times, inequality between men and women has existed. At this time, instead of blaming the Qin Family, everyone was criticizing Mu Xiangxiang, saying she had issues, causing the Qin Family not to come.

When it involves women, it concerns reputation, and some even carelessly speculated that Mu Xiangxiang had tarnished her reputation while living in the county.

After the meal, Mu Xiangxiang's reputation was already ruined.

Seeing that everyone was about to leave, Mr. Mu reluctantly stood at the center of the banquet, addressing the villagers: "Everyone, today is my daughter Xiangxiang's engagement day. Although it's not the wedding yet, we thank you for taking the time to join us for the feast.

It's just that my son-in-law had some issues and is still on the way; please do us a favor and don't talk about today's event in front of people from other villages.

Moreover, when my son-in-law arrives, we'll give everyone some sweets as a thank you!"

Mr. Mu's speech was essentially about preserving face within the village and not wanting to lose face with people from other villages.

He hoped the villagers would cooperate and prevent the event from spreading to the nearby villages.

However, since this happened, there was no way it could be kept a secret.

On the surface, everyone agreed, but once out of the Old Mu's courtyard, they spread the story, treating it as a joke, and soon, Mu Xiangxiang became infamous in the surrounding villages.

Even three-year-olds were aware of Mu Xiangxiang's scandal.

After lunch, the villagers left together, leaving the Old Mu Family to clean up.

Chef Granny Chen, who had taken two pounds of meat from the Old Mu Family and was just about to leave, got caught by Old Mrs. Mu who had returned from the village entrance.

Old Mrs. Mu, just eager to vent her anger, went off like a shot and pointed at Granny Chen, shouting: "You old hag, stealing from my Old Mu Family, I'm going to kill you!"

Chapter 768: Returning to the Old Profession (Part 1)

Granny Chen was taken aback. She looked up and saw it was Old Mrs. Mu.

Her face quickly broke into a smile as she explained to Old Mrs. Mu.

"Old sister, how can this be considered stealing? Yesterday, I told old brother that all the leftover meat from today's banquet would be mine. And now, after lunch, there's just this little bit of meat left, so I'm taking it back."

What Granny Chen said was indeed true.

Typically, banquets in Er Gui Village must be booked in advance along with a chef. With someone like the Old Mu Family, going to find someone like Granny Chen last minute wouldn't necessarily work.

So, Mr. Mu promised to give all the leftover meat from the banquet to Granny Chen.

Because of this paltry benefit, Granny Chen came without hesitation.

Of course, Mr. Mu had calculated beforehand that even if Granny Chen were to take the leftover meat, at most it would be one or two pounds.

The Old Mu Family was now doing pretty well in life, and they didn't care about a pound or two of meat.

But to Old Mrs. Mu, it was a different story.

Her old man said it was for Granny Chen, why couldn't he give it to someone else? There must be something fishy!

So Old Mrs. Mu got even angrier.

"You old thing, you're at this age and still haven't learned well, picking up the habit of thievery. The stuff from my Old Mu Family, you shouldn't touch, and you can't take it."

After speaking, Old Mrs. Mu stepped forward, snatching away the meat tied with straw from Granny Chen's hands.

Granny Chen, being a stubborn person, insisted that what was promised to her was hers.

It didn't matter if it was the scholar's mother or some official's old lady.

"Working for your Old Mu Family is really like having eight lifetimes of bad luck. Promised me something and then want to take it back, this makes no sense to me."

Granny Chen's hand held tightly to the meat in Old Mrs. Mu's hand, refusing to let go even at death.

"Spit, still won't let go, you thief—"

Old Mrs. Mu, having a quick temper, freed one hand and was ready to tear Granny Chen's mouth.

The two women in their forties and fifties, for two pounds of meat, tangled into a fight, neither yielding to the other.

By the time people from the Old Mu Family discovered them, the situation was already irreparable.

Old Mrs. Mu had a bruised face, while Granny Chen had a handful of hair pulled out, and from the hair in Old Mrs. Mu's grip, a tinge of blood was faintly visible.

The two women also had one hand each tightly holding onto a piece of already disfigured meat.

When Granny Chen saw the people from the Old Mu Family, she started cursing: "Your Old Mu Family is really over the top. Being a scholar is a big deal, huh? I'll go to town, to the county, accuse you of not keeping your word. Promised me meat without giving it, and even hit people!"

"Go sue, my son's a scholar, let your whole family suffer the consequences!" Old Mrs. Mu said.

Mr. Mu had always cared about the reputation of the Old Mu Family, and Granny Chen's words made Mr. Mu a bit anxious.

"Old lady, what did you say, this meat was originally agreed upon to give to Granny Chen, why are you taking it back?" Mr. Mu asked.

"Well, you indeed have something going on with this old thing, I tell you, Mu Dabiao, don't go too far, I'm not dead yet, and you're already finding an old woman to split things with me, you are not human."

Because of Mu Xiangxiang's matter, the anger in Old Mrs. Mu's heart hadn't subsided. Now, with Mr. Mu's situation, it was the last straw that broke her heart.

"You crazy woman, who are you saying has something going on with whom? If you say nonsense again, I'll divorce you." Mr. Mu shouted.

"I'm talking about you and Granny Chen!" Old Mrs. Mu said.

The two of them confronted each other, neither giving way, and while Old Mrs. Mu was not paying attention, Granny Chen snatched the meat from her hand and left the Old Mu Family's yard, cursing,

"You people from the Old Mu Family are all sick. From now on, you have your red and white events, Granny Chen will not arrange it for you, do it yourself."

Old Mrs. Mu jumped and shouted in anger in place, like a crazy person, roaring nonstop.

Mu Dade finally couldn't hold back from saying, "Mother, in this matter, you really wronged Dad. Granny Chen is the only one in the village who arranges these red and white events. You yourself know, without discussing it beforehand, people are unwilling to come.

In the future, don't say your son is a scholar and will do something to others. If someone with intentions hears it, what would it do to your son's career?"

Old Mrs. Mu didn't speak.

Mrs. Lin, standing by, chimed in flatteringly, "Mother, big brother is right. Now that he's a scholar, we at Old Mu Family should also be mindful of our words, lest we harm big brother."

"Yes, Mother, in this house, only big brother is educated, and he's a scholar. Whatever he says, we should just listen to him," said Mu Dazhong.

Old Mrs. Mu swallowed her anger, ignoring everyone, and headed to Mu Xiangxiang's room.

The person most distressed over the engagement issue was not Old Mrs. Mu, but Mu Xiangxiang.

Old Mrs. Mu had thought of a bellyful of things to explain to Mu Xiangxiang later.

This daughter was Old Mrs. Mu's lifeblood, ever since she was little, she was always by her side. As a child, Mu Xiangxiang was delicate, and Old Mrs. Mu couldn't leave her. Even when doing farm work, she had to bring her along.

In the summer, if it got slightly hot, she would have to fan her with a leaf continuously, just in case her daughter got too hot.

Thinking about these, Old Mrs. Mu's eyes became a bit red.

She entered Mu Xiangxiang's room, which was already a mess, destroyed just while Old Mrs. Mu, clutching a kitchen knife, waited at the village entrance for the people from the Old Mu Family.

"Oh dear, my Xiangxiang, what happened to you? Mother knows your pain. That Qin Family isn't worth it. If they didn't come, never mind.

Mother will find you someone better. Didn't you like those tall and big ones? Mother will find a tall and big one for you, how about that?"

Old Mrs. Mu embraced Mu Xiangxiang, softly comforting her.

Mu Xiangxiang was still acting wildly, throwing whatever was in her hand. After raging for a while, she clutched her stomach, mimicking eating.

Old Mrs. Mu was stunned, not able to comprehend for a long while.

"Xiangxiang, are you hungry?"

Mu Xiangxiang grinned, nodding vigorously; she was really hungry.

Only then did Old Mrs. Mu remember that lunchtime had long passed.

She took Mu Xiangxiang by the hand, heading to the front yard.

Although Granny Chen had left, there was still plenty of food left from before.

Cold dishes, meat, fish, and chicken were all Mu Xiangxiang's favorites.

Old Mrs. Mu felt like she owed Mu Xiangxiang, so she placed all the good food in front of her.

Mu Xiangxiang finished the entire table of dishes by herself.

By the time Mr. Mu and the others came back into the room, even the dishwasher was gone.

"Old woman, why did you give all the food to Xiangxiang?" Old Man Mu had a very peculiar expression on his face, his words accusing Old Mrs. Mu.

"Hmph, why can't I give food to my daughter? I say, you old man, your favoritism has gotten deep enough to reach your pants, hasn't it?"

Granny Chen took two pounds of meat, and you said nothing. Yet when my daughter Xiangxiang eats a bit of meat, you feel the pinch? Can't bear to part with a few coins?"

Chapter 769: The Lackey's Legs Were Broken

"Do you mean that? Xiangxiang just recovered, and you gave her so much to eat, aren't you making all our previous efforts go to waste?"

Mr. Mu was almost infuriated by Old Mrs. Mu.

Mr. Mu still remembered what the town doctor said back then.

Also, Zhang Huai Shu's words that his daughter must eat like a normal person, not too much, or her life would be in danger.

"I... I just got confused out of anger, and since Xiangxiang was upset, I wanted to comfort her, and suddenly forgot!" Old Mrs. Mu retorted.

"You women always doing bad things!" Mr. Mu remarked.

Old Mrs. Mu quickly went to check on Mu Xiangxiang, anxiously asking, "Xiangxiang, my dear, are you okay?"

With a full belly, Mu Xiangxiang smiled more and shook her head carefreely while holding her stomach.

"That's good, that's good. I told you, my daughter won't have problems after just one meal, you old fool always saying scary things," Old Mrs. Mu said.

Seeing his daughter's reaction, Mr. Mu didn't know how to feel.

Had it been a girl from any other family, she would have been seeking death, crying alone in the room.

But his daughter only cared about eating.

"Ah, what's the matter here?" Mr. Mu asked.

"What's the matter? As long as our daughter is fine, it's good. Those Qin Family people, I won't let them off," Old Mrs. Mu declared harshly.

Yet in her heart, she hoped the Qin Family people would show up today.

If the Qin Family showed up, the Old Mu Family could find a reason, saying that their family had some misfortune or something, making it easier to block the mouths of the villagers and regain some face for Mu Xiangxiang.

But after waiting all afternoon, as night fell, the Qin Family still hadn't arrived.

All hope was shattered!

Old Mrs. Mu was like a madwoman, cursing the Qin Family constantly.

Mr. Mu felt irritated listening to this, and said, "What are you yelling about all afternoon, it's already dark, do you think the Qin Family will still come?"

"Hmph, if I don't curse the Qin Family, I can't swallow this. Back then, it was their Qin Family who shamelessly wanted to marry our Xiangxiang.

I didn't even think much of it, even when in the restaurant, our Xiangxiang didn't mind that Qin Shijie was short, but how did their Qin Family treat us, Old Mu Family?" Old Mrs. Mu said.

"What's the use of saying that now? I told you back then, the Qin Family kept giving clothes and silver, no family gives such riches for a bride, they never meant well!

Now look, they didn't even show up for the engagement feast."

Mr. Mu never liked the Qin Family, they appeared too suddenly, and they were so generous, plus that Qin Shijie was just too ugly.

"Now you know to say it, why didn't you say anything before?" Old Mrs. Mu gave Mr. Mu a cold glance.

"Alright, let's stop quarreling. Tomorrow morning, we'll go to town and cause trouble for the Qin Family!" Mr. Mu said.

Only then did Old Mrs. Mu stop cursing.

But as soon as she stopped, she started crying again, like a pig being slaughtered.

Even the third branch and the main branch of the Old Mu Family heard it.

Mu Shuangshuang happened to be in the kitchen roasting sweet potatoes for a few kids, hearing the noise, she knew they wouldn't be sleeping tonight.

Old Mrs. Mu was an expert at making a fuss.

Little Zhi bit into the fragrant sweet potato, thought for a long time, then spoke.

"Sister, why is Grandma crying and shouting again? Little Zhi is scared!"

Before Mu Shuangshuang could speak, Yuanbao spoke up. "Don't be scared, Little Zhi, Brother Yuanbao will protect you. As long as you follow Brother Yuanbao, nothing dangerous will happen."

Mu Shuangshuang laughed, she always thought Yuanbao was a flirting expert, appearing everywhere.

Especially when Little Zhi had any questions.

However, having Yuanbao around saved her a lot of trouble.

"It's getting late, you all go to the room, soak your feet, and sleep early!" Mu Shuangshuang instructed.

These days, Yuanbao and Xue Zheng were both staying at the third branch of the Old Mu Family.

Mu Xiaohan's small bed suddenly had three people in it, but the three kids said it was fine, so Mu Shuangshuang didn't intervene. Anyway, it's cold in winter, and having something to warm your feet isn't bad.

"Alright, Sister Shuangshuang, you go sleep, we know how to soak our feet."

Kids being independent is great, they don't need you to worry about anything.

Mu Shuangshuang nodded.

"I'm going to sleep then!"

Before sleeping, Mu Shuangshuang didn't forget to throw food for Little Black and the Little Black Dog.

Winter had arrived, and Little Black hardly left its nest anymore. Mu Shuangshuang made another nest for it inside the house, laid dry grass, and placed some cloth picked up from Ah Rubu's Mansion.

Looking at the Little Black that had gotten so fat, Mu Shuangshuang wondered if she should release Little Black back into the wild. At least when she first saw Little Black, it was a thin, weasel-like black mink.

Now its mink fur was about to burst, having swollen from small size S to XXX... L!

Early the next morning, Old Mrs. Mu woke from her sleep, and the first thing she did was gather the whole family to go to town to trouble the Old Qin Family.

Mu Dazhong and Mu Danyan responded positively.

Back then, each of them got two taels of silver from Qin Shijie, and their eldest brother even got a piece of jade. This time, they went with anger, hoping to get more things.

But before their wishful thinking was completed, the gate of the Old Mu Family's courtyard was violently smashed open.

Then a big man with a face full of ferocity, leading a group of thugs, stormed in.

"Mu Dabiao, Mu Dabiao..." The big man shouted in the front yard of the Old Mu Family, disturbing even the pigs of the Old Mu Family.

The pigs in the pen started squealing, as if predicting something was about to happen to the Old Mu Family.

"Mu Dabiao, get out and pay your debt!" The big man shouted several times in the front yard, seeing no one coming out, he wanted to head into the Old Mu Family's inner courtyard, just as the people of the Old Mu Family came out.

"Who are you? I don't know you!" Mr. Mu said.

"You don't know me? Hmph, Mu Dabiao, your son-in-law Qin Shijie should recognize us, right?" The big man shouted gruffly.

This burly and fat man stood in the front yard of the Old Mu Family, exuding an unprovoked sense of oppression.

The sons of the Old Mu Family all stepped back, leaving Mr. Mu alone to stand in front.

"You know Qin Shijie? Then do you know why Qin Shijie didn't come to our engagement feast yesterday?" Mr. Mu asked.

"Hmph, that turtle son Qin Shijie was gambling with our boss the night before last and lost all of the Qin Family's assets, while also owing a thousand taels of silver. We broke Qin Shijie's leg yesterday, and the Qin Family is overwhelmed with their own issues. Why would they get engaged to your daughter?"

The big man revealed the reason for Qin Shijie's absence as he spoke.

Mr. Mu took a deep breath, finding it hard to believe.

Chapter 770: Who Is Right

"Since it's Qin Shijie's leg that got broken, how did you find our Old Mu Family? And why should our Old Mu Family pay the debt?"

Old Mrs. Mu asked boldly.

"Screw you, you old hag, stop babbling nonsense. I only know that your Old Mu Family's daughter will marry into the Qin Family in the future.

Since that's the case, you might as well help the Qin Family pay off the debt early, I don't want to wait too long!"

The man's logic was that since Mu Xiangxiang would become a daughter-in-law of the Qin Family, she should naturally help pay off their debts.

But Old Mrs. Mu wasn't pleased. The engagement ceremony hadn't happened yet, even if it did, they weren't married yet, and even if they were married, there could still be a divorce. Why should her daughter take such a big loss?

"I'm telling you, I don't care who you are, but the engagement between my daughter and the Qin Family's people is off, my daughter won't marry into the Qin Family, if you want money, go ask the Qin Family for it." Old Mrs. Mu mustered the courage to confront the burly man.

"Hey, you old hag, I've told you to shut up, but you keep blabbering, see if I don't beat you to death."

The man took a few steps forward, grabbed Old Mrs. Mu by the collar, and was about to slam her to the ground when Mu Dajiang stepped up and said to the man, "What are you doing, let go of my mother! Do you think this world has no law?"

The man laughed loudly three times, "I am the law, either you give me the money or buy yourself a coffin and lay in it!"

The man's words were extremely arrogant, and the dozen or so thugs behind him glared at the people of the Old Mu Family like fierce gods guarding the door.

Mu Dazhong and the others were so scared their legs went weak.

Old Mrs. Mu was still held in mid-air, her face turning blue and purple, about to pass out. Just then, the rough man's hand released, and Old Mrs. Mu fell to the ground, nearly splitting her hips in two.

Old Mrs. Mu wailed endlessly.

Her voice also became a little weaker.

Mr. Mu, as the head of the household, had never seen such unreasonable people, but no matter how unreasonable, he still had to be reasonable.

"Dear brother, I don't know how you found our Old Mu Family, but our daughter hasn't married into the Old Qin Family, so she can't be considered a Qin Family member's wife.

As you can see, our Old Mu Family's current condition, living in a mudbrick house, where can we get a thousand taels of silver?"

Mr. Mu pleaded earnestly.

But the man didn't listen to any of it.

"I knew you'd try to play tricks, today I'll let you know clearly."

The rough man finished speaking and shouted to the thugs behind him, "Aunt Qin, get in here right now!"

At the gate of the Old Mu Family's courtyard, a disheveled woman staggered in.

She showed no visible injuries, but her halting steps gave the impression of someone hurt.

Aunt Qin appeared drastically different from the last time they saw her.

But Mr. Mu couldn't worry about that now, he hurried up and anxiously asked, "Aunt Qin, it was your Old Qin Family who said they wanted to marry Xiangxiang, and when you didn't show up yesterday, our Old Mu Family lost all face.

Now our Old Mu Family wants to call off the engagement, you should have no issues with that, right?"

Aunt Qin's expression twisted instantly at Mr. Mu's words.

"Such a cruel heart you have! Our Qin Family once believed that Mu Xiangxiang was a blessed person and wanted to turn our luck around through her.

But ever since the engagement with you, our Qin Family's shops have had endless problems, first accused of selling fake goods, then two shops got shut down.

The night before the engagement, Shijie went to the gambling den and nearly lost the entire Qin Family's fortunes. I see Mu Xiangxiang is far from blessed, she's a jinx.

She ruined our Qin Family, left us with nothing, and now Shijie's leg is broken..."

Aunt Qin raged like a madwoman, yet Old Mrs. Mu didn't back down.

"You shameless woman, stop spewing useless garbage, your Qin Family had problems in the first place, how can you blame others?"

"And Qin Shijie went gambling the night before the engagement, and he's still right? I don't care what you say, my daughter won't marry into the Qin Family."

Aunt Qin looked at Old Mrs. Mu, who was short but exceptionally shrewd.

Luckily!

She had prepared in advance.

"I knew your Old Mu Family wouldn't admit it, but in my hand is a contract you old hag signed, let's see you try not marrying Mu Xiangxiang into our Qin Family."

Aunt Qin took out a piece of paper from her sleeve, nobody knew what was written on it.

But according to Aunt Qin, it was signed by Old Mrs. Mu with her fingerprint on it.

"Oh my dear mother, how could you be so confused to sign something like this, now we're really in for it, our Old Mu Family's left without even our underwear." Mrs. Lin cried out, dissatisfied with Old Mrs. Mu.

"Stop talking nonsense, when did I sign anything with my fingerprint?" Old Mrs. Mu said.

"You're just going to have to ask Nanny Li, her fingerprint is on it too!"

Aunt Qin was extremely confident that her contract was valid.

With Old Mrs. Mu's fingerprint and Nanny Li's as the mediator, this was much more official than the contract from when Mu Shuangshuang was sold by Mrs. Jin. Even if brought to the government, they would only agree to Aunt Qin's request to have Mu Xiangxiang married off.

Only then did Old Mrs. Mu realize why Nanny Li hadn't shown up, she must have heard about the debt collectors after the Qin Family, Qin Shijie's thug leg getting broken, and the so-called contract, so she had run away.

Old Mrs. Mu's body was swaying, almost fainting.

"You... you did it on purpose." Old Mrs. Mu steadied herself, pointing at Aunt Qin.

"So what if it was on purpose, so what if it wasn't? Mu Xiangxiang ruined our Qin Family, you'll go down with us!"

Originally, Aunt Qin had bribed Nanny Li to write a contract fearing that the Old Mu Family would go back on their word on the marriage due to rumors about Qin Shijie being cursed.

It was intended to secure the marriage, but now serves this purpose instead.

With the Qin Family facing such a downfall, Aunt Qin just wanted to take as much money as possible, no longer caring about the rest of the Qin Family.

"You need to hand over the ten taels of silver the Old Qin Family gave you at the start, along with the clothing, and the fifty taels sent to you twice thereafter."

The Qin Family had given ten taels of silver at first and sent more silver to the Old Mu Family several times to marry Mu Xiangxiang.

"Oh, and that piece of jade, and the four taels given to your two sons, hand them over."

Aunt Qin wanted both the money and Mu Xiangxiang herself.

"You're talking nonsense, what ten taels of silver, what fifty taels, the first time you only gave us five taels, and as for the restaurant, you didn't spend a dime, we, the Old Mu Family, even covered the meal expenses."