

Folly 791

Chapter 791: Kill Him (Part 1)

Wang Erma thought today's afternoon incident was a neighborhood dispute that would cool down and nothing would happen.

Until the village chief brought a few sturdy men from the village bursting into Old Wang's house, Wang Erma sensed something was wrong.

But it was too late, a few strong men tied Wang Erma up like they were catching livestock, dragged and pulled him to the village chief's house, and locked him in the wood shed.

Tomorrow morning, the village's sturdy men will send him to the county to face the County Magistrate's questioning!

The Da Ning Dynasty has the authority to judge only from the county government office or higher, neither the town nor the village has the right to declare someone guilty.

However, the village chief is the one who ensures the village's safety, he can order the villagers to catch troublemakers and then send them to the county government office.

Wang Erma's wife and son, Wang Gousheng, were already panicking. Wang Erma was the backbone of the family; if he were arrested, the entire Old Wang Family would collapse.

Gousheng's mother was crying in the house, desperate, and Wang Gousheng was anxious.

Initially, he just wanted his father to teach a lesson to the third branch people and then take back the pork from Mu Shuangshuang's courtyard and the money from selling pork from the third branch, to make a small fortune.

He never thought his father would attack someone and cause injury, even drawing blood.

"Oh dear, what should we do, what should we do! The big fat pig in the courtyard hasn't been sold yet, and your father is going to be sent to prison, our Old Wang Family is finished, finished..." Gousheng's mother mumbled to Wang Gousheng.

Wang Gousheng was just a child; how would he know what to do?

"Mother, this morning a few of our cousins also went; we'll go talk to them, try to find a way to save my father." Wang Gousheng said.

"Hmm... Mother will go with you!" Gousheng's mother got up and went with Wang Gousheng to see his uncles and cousins.

But when they saw Gousheng and his mother, they immediately shut the door, and no matter how much Gousheng's mother shouted, they wouldn't open it.

"Oh dear Gousheng, what now, everyone isn't willing to open their doors..." Gousheng's mother sat on the ground in despair and cried.

Wang Gousheng also looked troubled.

"Mother, this issue is surely caused by the Old Mu Family; we... can't afford to anger Mu Dade."

Mu Dade is the only scholar in the village; even the village chief doesn't dare to act rashly in front of him.

If they had harmed someone from the third branch, there might be room for discussion, but the injured was Mu Dazhong, and there's no room for negotiation.

After all, he's the scholar's younger brother, how can ordinary villagers like them ever challenge that?

"Oh dear, that bastard, I told him to escape early, he didn't listen! Now he's been captured, what are us widows and orphans supposed to do!"

Gousheng's mother cried miserably, and a few villagers who passed by heard her but moved aside one by one.

No one wants to involve themselves in trouble, nor offer their kindness to someone like Wang Erma who loves to fight recklessly, because you never know when you might get cut by him.

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Old Mu Family second branch

Mu Dazhong, who had been treated by Zhang Huai Shu, was lying sideways on the heated kang bed, surrounded by the Old Mu Family members who had come to check on his injury.

In fact, the injuries weren't severe, after stopping the bleeding and bandaging, there was no major issue.

Yet Mu Dazhong had been wailing all afternoon; the sound was so loud, even louder than when Lu Yuanfeng slaughtered pigs at noon.

Even Mu Shuangshuang, who was at the third branch, found it piercing and just wanted something to plug Mu Dazhong's mouth.

"Mother, that Wang Erma bullied us too much, your son's back was slashed such a long wound by him, so much blood flowed, he's trying to kill me..."

"Get revenge for me, you must get revenge for me, I want Wang Erma punished!!!!"

Mu Dazhong mumbled to the others.

Old Mrs. Mu sat by Mu Dazhong's kang, comforting him.

"Second Son, mother knows you're in pain, I'll surely get justice for you! I've already told the village chief to catch that Wang Erma, he will be sent to prison tomorrow; that Wang Erma is so arrogant, I'll make sure he stays in prison."

Old Mrs. Mu at this moment appeared as a loving mother, occasionally saying comforting words, completely unlike the unreasonable Old Mrs. Mu of the past.

Everyone found it curious, but no one spoke, for fear of disturbing Old Mrs. Mu, causing her to revert to her true self.

"Today's incident, not only did it affect the second branch, but the third branch also suffered losses. Later, Fifth, you go to the third branch and ask if he wants to join us in complaining and get Wang Erma sent to the County Magistrate's Office."

Mr. Mu stood in the center, arms crossed behind him, looking calm.

For there was no other reason; Mr. Mu had absolute confidence that Wang Erma would suffer.

Before catching Wang Erma, the village chief had already assured them that Wang Erma would definitely be sent to prison.

"Humph, why call the third branch? The village chief sending someone to the government so quickly is for the sake of the eldest's face, not some random girl can compare to that." Old Mrs. Mu said sarcastically.

Mr. Mu ignored her but didn't forget to signal Mu Danian with his eyes.

And so, with all the noise and chaos, night fell.

Mu Dazhong's voice was hoarse from shouting and stopped, and the busy Old Mu Family members, tired out from the afternoon's activities, went to bed.

The night was dark, wind swirling, a night for murder...

Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng hurried toward the village chief's house, and outside met Huang Da and Huang Er brothers who had been waiting there.

Huang Da lowered his voice and said, "Miss Shuangshuang, we brothers have already scoped out the place, no one is watching the wood shed, we can move at any time!"

During the day, they had made a plan, since Wang Erma liked to use a knife to slash people, they would rescue Wang Erma and scare him with kitchen knives, scare him!

"What are we waiting for, let's go now!" Mu Shuangshuang gave the order, and two shadows flipped into the village chief's backyard, one after the other.

It was Lu Yuanfeng and Huang Da, as Huang Er was less skilled and careless, prone to making mistakes, so he stayed behind, and Mu Shuangshuang watched him to ensure nothing went wrong.

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Inside the wood shed, Wang Erma had buried half his body in the straw due to the cold, suddenly feeling a chill sweeping the area, with his exposed bottom feeling icy.

He recalled the elders saying that if it felt cold at midnight inside a closed area, it meant there were ghosts.

The cold intensified, Wang Erma then heard sobbing sounds, terrifying him into crying aloud.

"Spare me, spare me... Let me go, let me go...!"

Behind Wang Erma, Lu Yuanfeng and Huang Da exchanged puzzled looks, not knowing what stunt Wang Erma was pulling.

Then Wang Erma started chanting, "Ghosts..."

The two men suddenly realized that Wang Erma thought they were ghosts!

Chapter 792: Compensation for Losses

"What should we do?" Huang Da signaled Lu Yuanfeng with his eyes.

Lu Yuanfeng shook his head, unsure whether he should drag Wang Erma out of the haystack and take him away.

Seeing Lu Yuanfeng unable to make a decision, Huang Da decided to consult Mu Shuangshuang for advice. He carefully opened the door to the woodshed, and at that moment, another gust of cold wind blew inside.

Wang Erma shivered even more violently.

On cold winter nights, the howling wind particularly resembled the sound of a pig being slaughtered.

Wang Erma, having slaughtered many pigs in his days, grew even more fearful upon hearing the sound.

He squeezed his entire body further into the haystack, regardless of whether or not it could fully conceal him.

Huang Da left the village chief's backyard and approached Mu Shuangshuang to relay Wang Erma's reaction.

Mu Shuangshuang immediately thought of a way to prank Wang Erma.

"Listen to me, let's pretend to be ghosts and scare that Wang Erma!" Mu Shuangshuang briefly explained to the Huang Brothers.

The Huang brothers laughed so hard their mouths were crooked.

This time, the three of them entered the village chief's courtyard together.

Winter really was convenient; they didn't have to worry about the homeowner coming out at night to relieve themselves, causing an awkward encounter.

Once inside the woodshed, Mu Shuangshuang immediately spotted Wang Erma, who had curled his body into a ball, revealing only an exposed butt cheek.

Whether too scared or not, Wang Erma whimpered and sobbed incessantly, sometimes pleading for mercy and at other times muttering that pigs were seeking him out.

Mu Shuangshuang followed Wang Erma's words and imitated a pig's squeal.

"Ah..." Wang Erma suddenly felt as if something was blocking his throat, particularly as he sensed something gnawing at his behind.

Then, the sound of a wild boar feeding echoed as well.

This sound was made by Huang Er. Mu Shuangshuang had told them to act according to the situation, ensuring Wang Erma was scared witless!

Wang Erma's lips turned white with fear. He wanted to squeeze further into the haystack, but his foot was suddenly grabbed by something and dragged straight out.

"Big Brother, this Wang Erma always kills our kind. Let's kill him today!"

Mu Shuangshuang pinched her nose and whispered in Wang Erma's direction.

"My goodness, the pig... the pig is talking..." Wang Erma murmured to himself.

"No, we should nibble away Wang Erma's flesh bit by bit, so he can never kill... kill us again." Huang Da was indeed a bit troubled.

To cooperate with Shuangshuang's act, he even impersonated a pig.

But was this really effective?

Upon thinking this, Wang Erma, who had been dragged halfway out, suddenly turned around, and with a thud, knelt before the group.

"Pig Grandpa, Pig Grandma, spare me. I... I know I've made a mistake. I won't dare to kill pigs anymore. Please, spare me..."

Wang Erma was so frightened that he trembled uncontrollably, his face turning blue and pale.

Farmers have always held a reverence toward matters of ghosts and gods, and the current events only made Wang Erma feel life was not worth living.

"No, you must die today!" Lu Yuanfeng declared.

Lu Yuanfeng's voice was distinctive, and if listened to carefully, it was recognizable. However, Wang Erma was too tense, only remembering that pigs had come to seek revenge, never thinking he was being tricked.

When he got scared, he couldn't even hold in his stool, and the woodshed was immediately filled with a foul stench.

Huang Da and the others quickly covered their noses. The woodshed was enclosed with no ventilation, making staying inside worse than death.

Mu Shuangshuang adjusted herself for a while before saying, "If you want us not to kill you, you must confess everything you've done today, and resolve it as well!"

Wang Erma naturally thought about the big fat pig in the yard that hadn't been sold yet.

"I... I slaughtered a big fat pig this morning. I won't dare again, won't dare again..."

"Not that. What else did you do?" Mu Shuangshuang asked.

Wang Erma thought hard, only recalling causing trouble at the Third Branch of the Old Mu Family, and in their yard, a big fat wild boar had been slaughtered during the day.

"I don't know..." Wang Erma said.

Mu Shuangshuang stepped on Wang Erma's back and said to the others, "Let's tie Wang Erma to the door plank and slaughter him like a pig!"

Wang Erma cried and begged for mercy.

Lu Yuanfeng and Huang Da took the opportunity to bind Wang Erma with hemp rope.

The two of them carried Wang Erma back toward his house, knowing that only using his own tools would scare him enough.

After the time it takes for a stick of incense to burn, Wang Erma appeared at his own home. The pig-slaughtering door plank and knife were in his courtyard. Gousheng's mother and Gousheng were sleeping soundly on the kang after a long day's work, oblivious to the commotion inside.

The wind whipped across Wang Erma's face as he cried painfully, "I understand now. Today... today I went to cause trouble at the Third Branch of the Old Mu Family. I know I was wrong, and from now on... I won't do it again!"

"You won't do it again? How can we trust you? Your pig-killing, people-killing skills are renowned in the village." Mu Shuangshuang sneered.

At the village chief's house, Wang Erma refused to admit to his actions at the Third Branch. Now he confessed after leaving the village chief's house. What's going on?

"I have money, lots of money. Let me go, and I'll compensate, I'll compensate!" Wang Erma pleaded.

"Compensate? Compensate whom?" Mu Shuangshuang asked.

"The pigs, for the pigs and... for the Third Branch. I damaged the Third Branch's pig slaughtering basin, their courtyard gate, and injured Old Mu Family's Second Branch Mu Dazhong. I'll take full responsibility!"

Huang Da was covered in tears and snot, looking filthy all over. When getting closer, the unpleasant smell seemed to cling to his nose, unable to be shaken off.

Initially, Mu Shuangshuang and the others weren't seeking wealth, merely aiming to teach Wang Erma a lesson by strapping him to the slaughter board and scaring him with a knife.

Now that Wang Erma was willing to compensate for the damages, Mu Shuangshuang did not refuse.

"Five taels of silver, not a penny less, or else we'll continue the slaughter!"

Five taels of silver aren't a small sum for a farming family, but to Wang Erma, it's not a big deal.

He quickly agreed to Mu Shuangshuang's demand, and Mu Shuangshuang instructed Huang Da to untie Wang Erma.

Wang Erma went inside and fetched five taels of silver, thinking the matter resolved. But then his vision went dark as Lu Yuanfeng knocked him out.

With five taels of silver in hand and a lesson taught, Mu Shuangshuang felt elated.

She said, "Take Wang Erma, tie him up and send him to the village chief's house, with several pig-slaughtering knives tied to him. Let's scare him to death in the morning!"

Lu Yuanfeng and Huang Da did as told, transporting Wang Erma back. By then, the sky was already showing a pale fish-belly white, indicating dawn was breaking!

Chapter 793: Wang Erma is Finished (Part 1)

The next day, early in the morning, the strong men escorting Wang Erma had breakfast and then went to the woodshed to pull people out.

After the commotion last night, Wang Erma was already scared out of his wits, and when he opened his eyes, he found himself tied with hemp rope, with two pig slaughtering knives hanging above him.

Wang Erma went berserk, muttering continuously: The pig has become a spirit and wants to eat him. He even thought about breaking free of the rope and escaping! Several strong men hurriedly stepped forward to restrain him.

But his strength was incredible, and it took three strong men, grabbing his hands and pressing down on his neck, a lot of effort to finally subdue Wang Erma.

"Damn it, what did this Wang Erma eat, being tied up and still so strong?" someone said.

"What do you care what he eats! But I guess he ate too much pig offal, you can smell it, Wang Erma reeks, it's uncomfortable to even get a whiff." Another person said.

"Haha, exactly. Wang Erma, haven't you guys noticed? Usually, he harms us villagers, and finally, he's getting his comeuppance! Anyway, we are going to send Wang Erma to face trial today!"

The men laughed, escorting Wang Erma out of the village chief's courtyard, where the villagers had gathered early to watch, some holding rotten eggs and vegetable leaves, just waiting for Wang Erma to come out so they could start throwing!

Gousheng's mother was outside, crying pitifully, constantly calling out Wang Erma's name.

"Gousheng's father, you're leaving, how are Gousheng and I supposed to live as a lone orphan and widow?"

"The pig spoke... The pig wants to eat people..." Wang Erma muttered over and over.

"Village chief... village chief, please let my husband go, he knows he's wrong and won't dare to do it again!" Gousheng's mother knelt in front of the village chief, clutching his sleeve, crying bitterly!

The village chief also looked troubled, being from the same village, he didn't want to send him to the county government, and moreover, Wang Erma already looked so pitiful.

But since Mu Dade is a scholar, as the village chief, whoever he offends, he mustn't offend the Old Mu Family.

What if one day Mu Dade from the Old Mu Family becomes a high official and causes him trouble, wouldn't he be finished?

A person, don't ask for merit, just ask for no fault!

"Gousheng's mother, there's nothing I can do about this, Erma injured someone, and he injured the scholar's brother, in our Da Ning Dynasty, that's a serious offense, don't say anything more, your life should go on as usual!"

After speaking, the village chief went into his own courtyard.

Gousheng's mother chased after Wang Erma out of the village, and at the village entrance, the villagers started throwing rotten eggs and vegetable leaves, even hitting the escorts, who cursed continuously.

For a moment, the village entrance was chaotic!

Fortunately, Wang Erma was taken to the government and directly locked up, also considered settling the grudge in their hearts.

Gousheng's mother complained all day at home, making everyone in the village restless, but Wang Erma still wasn't released.

The government said the case of Wang Erma was a serious one, definitely not to be trialed before the year ends, so it would be handled after the New Year.

In other words, no matter how long Wang Erma had to be in prison, he would not be spending this New Year at home.

With Wang Erma gone, life went on in the village, but Lu Yuanfeng's business improved a lot, even before going to the mountains, people came to order his game, and the price offered was quite reasonable.

Eighteen wen per jin!

Lu Yuanfeng killed a wild boar yesterday, sold most of it to the villagers, leaving fifty or sixty jin of meat, and also two pig trotters, half a rack of ribs, and no one bought the pig offal.

Mu Shuangshuang decided to clean the pig offal herself and make a dry pot for the men who worked at home.

After breakfast, Mu Shuangshuang was in the yard using salt to cure thirty jin of pork, waiting for the sun to come out tomorrow, so they could take it out to dry.

This was the first year since the third branch separated, and life was relatively good. Everyone in the third branch was well-fed and clothed, with no one starving or freezing, and they gained two new members—Fengzi and Yuanbao.

Who would have thought, at the time of separation, the third branch had almost nothing, worrying about the next meal as soon as they finished the last?

Fortunately, over time, the third branch accumulated quite a few good things, with the most excited being Yu Si Niang.

She never thought she could prepare so much cured meat during the New Year, even back when they celebrated at the Old Mu Family, Old Mrs. Mu only bought ten jin of meat.

The Old Mu Family had many mouths to feed, and Mu Dade was Old Mrs. Mu's beloved. With ten jin of meat being divided up layer by layer, the daughters-in-law couldn't even taste the meat soup.

"Mom, the work here is almost done, I'm taking Fengzi to Tie Dao Village for a bit!"

After finishing the work, Mu Shuangshuang said to Yu Si Niang, who was still laughing.

Yu Si Niang was stunned for a moment, then asked: "Didn't you say there was nothing to do today? Why not rest at home?"

"No, I left thirty jin of meat before, that's for Fengzi's brother Ge Sandan, I need to take it over today." Mu Shuangshuang said.

"Alright, come back early, I'll prepare lunch today!" Yu Si Niang laughed.

"Okay, I'm going to find Fengzi!"

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Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng arrived at Aunt Ge's house in Tie Dao Village, it's been a long time since they've met.

Aunt Ge, wearing an old cotton-padded coat, stood in the courtyard basking in the sun.

Not far from her, Xiuxiu was holding a baby, rocking back and forth, the scene was very heartwarming, but soon, the baby started crying.

Flustered, Xiuxiu began checking if the baby had wet its pants, and Old Mrs. Ge snorted coldly before saying: "The baby is hungry, why are you checking her clothes?"

Xiuxiu blushed, holding the baby and entering the house.

"Aunt Ge, is everything alright?"

In the corner of the yard, Mu Shuangshuang gestured with her eyes to Ge Sandan.

Back when Xiuxiu gave birth to a daughter, Aunt Ge had a big knot in her heart, didn't eat or drink for several days, and later because Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng were so busy, they hadn't visited Ge Sandan's home to check on the situation.

Ge Sandan's smile froze, and after a while, he nodded.

"My mother is fine now, but there's still a knot in her heart. She's been urging me and Xiuxiu to have another child.

She can't wait to hold her grandson, but Xiuxiu and I want to wait a bit, raising one child already feels a bit overwhelming, and if there's another one, who knows what will happen!"

Mu Shuangshuang listened, feeling helpless, it was Ge Sandan's family matter, as an outsider, it wasn't her place to speak.

"Fengzi, why don't you and Shuangshuang stay for lunch today? It's been a long time since we had guests, and a few days ago, Xiuxiu mentioned how bored she was, unable to find someone to talk to."

Old Mrs. Ge usually doesn't talk much to Xiuxiu, and even if she speaks, it goes through Ge Sandan to Xiuxiu.

Xiuxiu is very lonely, and now that Mu Shuangshuang is here, Ge Sandan thought to have her keep Xiuxiu company for a while.

Chapter 794: Offered Great Help

"Brother Sandan, you chat with Fengzi for a while. I'm going to chat with Xiuxiu," said Mu Shuangshuang.

Ge Sandan was eagerly hoping for Shuangshuang to go. He looked at Mu Shuangshuang with gratitude on his face and thanked her repeatedly.

Mu Shuangshuang entered the back courtyard of the Ge Family. At this time, Xiuxiu had already fed the baby and was sitting on the bench in the courtyard crying.

The baby wasn't by her side, probably sleeping inside the house, so Mu Shuangshuang didn't deliberately lower her voice.

Mu Shuangshuang came to Xiuxiu's side. She was wiping her tears, her eyes were red, making one ache to see.

"Shuangshuang, why are you here? Let's go inside and sit, there's wind outside!" Xiuxiu stood up.

"It's okay, let's just chat here for a while!" said Mu Shuangshuang.

Xiuxiu was slightly stunned, then nodded.

"It's been a long time since I've seen you. Are you doing well? Sandan said yesterday was your engagement day with Fengzi, and we didn't go, really sorry about that," said Xiuxiu.

"It's okay! Fengzi told Sandan before that if busy, he can come during the wedding. And we didn't have a big engagement ceremony, just some familiar folks from the village," Mu Shuangshuang tried to comfort Xiuxiu.

She continued, "Xiuxiu, you're a mother now, sometimes you have to learn to be strong yourself. Crying doesn't solve problems."

Hearing Mu Shuangshuang's words, Xiuxiu cried even harder.

"Shuangshuang, what to do? I really don't want to have more kids. This girl, my mom doesn't like her. If I have another girl, my mom will definitely force me to separate from Brother Sandan. I don't want to leave Brother Sandan."

Mu Shuangshuang felt bad seeing Xiuxiu like this. "When I say to be strong, it doesn't mean you have to have a son.

If Old Mrs. Ge's affection relies on you having a son, then it's not you she likes, but only the son in your womb, her own grandson!"

Mu Shuangshuang's words made Xiuxiu even more perplexed.

In Xiuxiu's mind, the only way for her to earn status is to have a son.

"Xiuxiu, listen to me. You can't decide whether you have a son or daughter. We don't need to dwell on this. What you need to do is raise Little Treasure well, and when the baby grows up, find a job for yourself."

In ancient times, most women stayed home raising kids, adhering to their husbands, seen by many as depending on men.

That's why those in-laws often fought with daughters-in-law, telling them to get out of their home.

Because they thought, without their son, the wife would surely starve.

Coupled with established ideas, in-laws and daughters-in-law almost became mortal enemies.

"Find a job? Impossible, Sandan's mom won't agree! She said, women are better off staying home with the kids while men are the ones to venture outside. Moreover, there's no suitable work for me." Xiuxiu said, full of disappointment.

For Xiuxiu, stepping out into the world seemed too daunting.

"Who says it's impossible? Why should women always live under others' shadows? Can't we be the backbone of our own homes? Have you thought about it? If you earn your own money, feed yourself, why worry about what Old Mrs. Ge says?"

"We're not missing hands or feet, why stay home veiled, never stepping outside? You say you can't find work. I think there are many jobs women can do, like embroidery? Can you do that?"

"How about washing dishes at a restaurant in town? Selling some lady's items on the street?"

Mu Shuangshuang suggested a bunch of things Xiuxiu had never considered.

Xiuxiu does know embroidery, but it hardly earns money. Vendors who come see the floral patterns made from coarse fabric, offering only a couple of pennies, not even enough for wages.

As for washing dishes in a restaurant, doing side jobs is possible.

"Can I do that?" Xiuxiu asked.

"Of course, no one can stop you from doing anything, not even Brother Sandan," said Mu Shuangshuang.

Xiuxiu thought for a moment, then suddenly spoke up, "My brother is working as a steward in a restaurant in town, and he made some money a few years ago.

But lately, the restaurant business hasn't been good. The owner plans to sell the restaurant, so not sure if my brother will remain the steward under new ownership.

If he does, I could ask my brother to find me a dishwashing or grocery cleaning job, earning three hundred pennies a month!"

"Wait, Xiuxiu, which restaurant does your brother work at?" Mu Shuangshuang asked.

"Fulin Restaurant. My brother said the restaurant business in town is getting tougher. First, it was Jiu Si Xuan, later another restaurant opened, making it hard for small restaurants around to operate."

Talking about this, Xiuxiu also looked worried.

But for Mu Shuangshuang, this was fantastic news. The struggling restaurant business in town meant she could boldly open a new one.

Moreover, she wasn't worried about competing with Jiu Si Xuan or Xue Yi's restaurant, as she was selling different items.

The specialties she offered were certainly unique to her place!

Thinking about this, Mu Shuangshuang was determined to visit town for a look at the restaurant situation first thing tomorrow morning!

This trip was truly worth it!

Mu Shuangshuang comforted Xiuxiu further, finally helping her ease her mind, and she decided to talk to Old Mrs. Ge.

Concluding their conversation, Mu Shuangshuang went to find Lu Yuanfeng.

At this time, Lu Yuanfeng was chatting with Ge Sandan.

"Sandan, our house has been so busy these days, let's postpone getting together. I still need to go to the mountains to cut trees for hunting!" Lu Yuanfeng said.

"Cutting trees? What kind of trees? Firewood for New Year or...?" Ge Sandan was surprised. He knew Lu Yuanfeng hunted, but didn't realize he cut trees.

"Shuangshuang wants to open a school in the village and it's being built, needing a lot of trees."

"You don't have to cut. There's a family in our village who previously cut many trees for building a house before New Year's. But after earning money in business, they bought property in town and plan to move after the year.

Those logs are idle. If you buy them, you'll save a lot of time and money while giving the family some convenience."

Freshly cut trees can't immediately be used for beams or boards. They need drying, removing moisture for at least half a month, even longer in winter.

Ge Sandan saw Lu Yuanfeng's trees as unusable.

Lu Yuanfeng understood, so he said excitedly, "That's great, Sandan. You're helping me a lot!"

Mu Shuangshuang also smiled. The three discussed it for a while, and, led by Ge Sandan, visited the family to check the logs.

Chapter 795: Taking Over the Restaurant (Part 1)

The wood is indeed good wood. After Lu Yuanfeng looked it over, he immediately discussed it with Mu Shuangshuang.

Wood from the countryside is naturally cheap, and since this batch was being sold urgently, the two of them managed to acquire it at a very low price.

Mu Shuangshuang paid a deposit of two hundred coins, and as soon as the remaining amount was settled, they could arrange for someone to transport the wood.

The three chatted a bit more and then said goodbye to Ge Sandan.

On the way, Mu Shuangshuang talked to Lu Yuanfeng about the matter between Old Mrs. Ge and Xiuxiu, still with a face full of regret.

The old lady is nice, just too obsessed with her grandson's affairs!

Even Mu Shuangshuang found it somewhat frightening!

"Fengzi, if the two of us get married someday and I have a daughter, you won't dislike me, right?" Mu Shuangshuang asked half-jokingly, tightening her small fist, waiting for Lu Yuanfeng to say something unsatisfactory so she could punch him and show her strength.

Lu Yuanfeng blushed, stared at Mu Shuangshuang for a long time before speaking, "I like daughters, and... it'd be best if she looks like Shuangshuang!"

"Why is it better if she looks like me?" Mu Shuangshuang asked.

"Because Shuangshuang is beautiful!" Lu Yuanfeng replied earnestly.

"Hahaha..." Mu Shuangshuang belatedly burst into laughter.

Lu Yuanfeng is really adorable, though he doesn't talk much, he always keeps her in his heart.

This man is quite good!

"By the way, Fengzi, my eldest cousin needs pork for his wedding, and you promised him. Shall we go hunting in the mountains, or buy it in the town?" Mu Shuangshuang asked, switching to a serious expression.

Mu Shuangshuang's betrothal is on the twelfth of the lunar month, and Mu Dalang's is on the eighteenth. If they weren't so far apart, the thirty pounds of meat at Shuangshuang's house could have been used for Mu Dalang first.

"Let's take a stroll in the mountains. If we can't catch anything, we'll buy it in town."

"Alright! I also want to check that Fulin Restaurant being transferred; when shall we go?" Mu Shuangshuang asked.

"Why not go as soon as we get back?"

Lu Yuanfeng and Mu Shuangshuang don't like procrastinating. Once a decision is made, they act on it promptly.

"Okay, but we'll borrow a horse from Uncle Fu's house, we'll ride to get there faster!"

The most common way for Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng to go to town was by walking, but it wasn't early today. If they walked, by the time they returned, it would be dark.

They rushed home; it was still early. Lu Yuanfeng helped dig the foundation at the worksite, while Mu Shuangshuang helped Yu Si Niang make lunch.

Time flew; after lunch, Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng quickly headed to town.

Mu Shuangshuang knew Fulin Restaurant, it's two streets apart from Xue Yi's First-class Residence, and quite close to Ah Ru's fabric store.

It was still summer back then, and the business at Fulin Restaurant seemed fine, which is normal since Xiuxiu mentioned her brother earned money during that time.

Usually, it takes about an hour to get there, but with a horse, it only takes two incense sticks' time.

Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng tied the horse under the big tree at the entrance of Fulin Restaurant and informed the waiter before heading inside.

Inside the restaurant, since it wasn't mealtime, there were barely any diners amidst the bustling atmosphere. As soon as Mu Shuangshuang entered, the waiter greeted them.

"Are you here to dine, guest? We have many delicacies unavailable in Qingshan Town. Shall I report the menu for you?"

Ancient restaurants didn't have menus; what was considered a menu was actually what the waiter verbally conveyed.

All dishes were introduced verbally, allowing every diner to know.

Mu Shuangshuang had kept a plan; when her restaurant opens, she'd definitely place a menu at each table, letting those who can read order themselves, while those who can't would hear the menu read aloud.

"Waiter, we're here to meet your shopkeeper; is he here?" Mu Shuangshuang asked.

"Yes, our shopkeeper is on the second floor; may I ask what you need, guest?" the waiter asked.

"I heard your restaurant is being transferred, is that true?" Mu Shuangshuang asked with a smile.

"Please follow me, guests!"

The waiter led them to a private room on the second floor, where the shopkeeper appeared surprised upon seeing Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng.

Their attire was quite ordinary, common among rural folk, and not new.

The shopkeeper hesitated whether to do business with Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng.

"Shopkeeper, we're interested in discussing the transfer of your restaurant. Is your restaurant really being transferred?"

Actually, without Mu Shuangshuang asking, the shopkeeper indeed planned to transfer it. He had opened another larger restaurant in the county, and had lost interest in this one, originally planning to transfer it after the New Year if anyone wanted it; it'd be fine to transfer it directly now.

"Young lady, are you sure you want to take over the restaurant with this young man? You both look so young, should you call your parents over?"

The shopkeeper had been in the restaurant business for years; no one familiar was in front of him, so even if they brought money, he had to consider if it was legitimate.

Otherwise, if legal troubles arose, he'd have a hard time dealing with it.

"Shopkeeper, I know what you're worried about; take a look at this!" Mu Shuangshuang pulled out two contracts from her pocket.

One was for her popcorn distribution contract, the other was Mu Shuangshuang's contract with First-class Residence and Xue Zheng.

These two items were enough to prove Mu Shuangshuang's identity, not some heinous villain.

The shopkeeper's expression towards Lu Yuanfeng and Mu Shuangshuang changed instantly after reviewing the contracts.

"So, you are the girl who delivered cold noodles to Jiu Si Xuan; many of us in the restaurant business have been wanting to find you."

Mu Shuangshuang's cold noodles were sold exclusively, and in limited supply; many restaurants wanted to contact her for additional supply rights.

Even after Mu Shuangshuang ceased cooperation with Jiu Si Xuan, several restaurants sought her out to no avail, as she ultimately declined them all.

"Shopkeeper, you praise me too much!" Mu Shuangshuang's face reddened slightly, looking somewhat shy.

Yet deep down, she truly felt no embarrassment.

After all, her face was thick-skinned enough, but for business purposes, she tried to appear more polite and graceful.

The shopkeeper laughed heartily at Mu Shuangshuang's words.

"The young lady suits my taste; she's courteous, knows her way around. Just like that, I won't charge you a hundred taels. Most items in the restaurant remain with you, including pots, pans, and staff including waiters and stewards.

Of course, you can dismiss them and I'll cover the severance costs."

Chapter 796: Want Silver (Second)

Fearing Mu Shuangshuang would disagree, the shopkeeper added, "Although my restaurant isn't the largest in town, it has a great location, spanning two main streets, and I'm two blocks away from Jiu Si Xuan and First-class Residence, so it doesn't overly affect business."

Currently, all the restaurants in Qingshan Town are being overshadowed by two larger establishments, Jiu Si Xuan and First-class Residence.

Jiu Si Xuan appeared earlier than First-class Residence. It thrived for a while because of its cold noodles.

Later, it had a downturn, but the owner of Jiu Si Xuan was skilled and quickly stabilized its old patrons while also attracting new ones.

Even though people still yearn for the previous cold noodles, the desire isn't as strong now that the weather has cooled down.

The shopkeeper is quite honest, but Fulin Restaurant is indeed a bit small; the location is okay, but it's not the prime location the shopkeeper claims.

In Qingshan Town, there are two prime locations, one occupied by Jiu Si Xuan and the other by Xue Yi's First-class Residence.

Mu Shuangshuang would prefer the restaurant to be closer to these two places because only then would people gather nearby; otherwise, other businesses would struggle since all the customers are attracted to them.

"Shopkeeper, your offer is indeed tempting, and I find it agreeable, but Fulin Restaurant is small after all, with limited capacity for guests at one time.

Moreover, regarding the convenience you mentioned, you know what kind of shops are around here. How about this, let's both take a step back, ninety taels, and tomorrow I can sign the contract with you."

Mu Shuangshuang's initial budget was a hundred taels, and saving ten taels would provide startup funds for the restaurant, so there wouldn't be a worry about having no money to buy ingredients.

"This..." The shopkeeper looked hesitant.

Fulin, after all, was his creation, and business was indeed decent before, earning ten or so taels a month, nearly a hundred taels a year.

But now, with the current situation, operating each day results in a day's loss.

"How about this, give me a hundred and twenty taels, and I will give you a small courtyard with an entrance and exit, two bedrooms, a storeroom, plus a hall and kitchen; the house may be small, but it's livable!"

This offer from the shopkeeper essentially meant selling Mu Shuangshuang a small courtyard for thirty taels, which indeed was expensive, but if it actually had so many rooms, it would save Mu Shuangshuang a lot of effort.

Mu Shuangshuang looked at Lu Yuanfeng, wanting to know his thoughts.

Lu Yuanfeng said, "Shuangshuang, why don't we buy it? I'll figure out the money part!"

Lu Yuanfeng knew Mu Shuangshuang's initial budget was about a hundred taels as there were plenty of expenses due to building a school.

At this current price, she surely couldn't bear it.

Hearing Lu Yuanfeng's words, Mu Shuangshuang clenched her teeth and said:

"Alright then, shopkeeper, I'll bring a hundred and twenty taels tomorrow, and we can have someone witness it and sign the contract, does that work?"

A smile finally spread across the shopkeeper's face.

"Deal! Once the contract is finalized tomorrow, I'll close this restaurant." As he spoke, the shopkeeper looked as if a burden had been lifted.

Mu Shuangshuang, however, had another question: "Shopkeeper, forgive my boldness, but if you close the restaurant, are the staff also being let go?"

It's not that Mu Shuangshuang was being overly curious, it's just that the year-end is approaching, and people need money.

If he were to dismiss these people now, what would that mean for their future?

"Haha, young lady, rest assured, I've already spoken with the restaurant staff and the steward, their wages will be settled by the eighth day of the new year.

Those who wish to keep working can continue, those who don't can take a break at home, but once I close the restaurant, they can't stay there.

Everything else will have to be arranged by the new owner!"

The shopkeeper's words put Mu Shuangshuang at ease.

She couldn't possibly take on all the staff at the restaurant, after all, each person's temperament and character have yet to be proven.

Mu Shuangshuang wants to create the best restaurant, and naturally, she wants to choose the most suitable people for herself.

The terms with Fulin were settled, just waiting for Mu Shuangshuang to bring the silver tomorrow.

Mu Shuangshuang naturally didn't have a hundred and twenty taels in hand, so she and Lu Yuanfeng went to First-class Residence.

Her appearance greatly surprised Xue Yi, who looked behind Mu Shuangshuang, puzzled by the absence of Xue Zheng.

"Miss Shuangshuang, what brings you here today?"

It was previously agreed not to deliver cold noodles during the cold season, so Xue Yi thought it shouldn't be business-related.

"I want to sell the cold noodle recipe to you," Mu Shuangshuang said.

"What?" Xue Yi wondered if he had misheard.

The owner of Jiu Si Xuan had spent so much money and couldn't get Mu Shuangshuang's recipe, and now she's offering it to him?

Xue Yi couldn't understand, thinking that as long as cold noodles and century eggs were supplied to him every few days, Mu Shuangshuang wouldn't starve.

At least in his eyes, those two items were like a hen that lays golden eggs; as long as the hen doesn't die, there's always money.

Mu Shuangshuang's approach of killing the hen to get the eggs wasn't something Xue Yi could agree with.

"I'm prepared to sell you the cold noodle recipe," Mu Shuangshuang repeated.

"You won't regret it?" Xue Yi asked.

"No regrets, once I decide on something, I never overthink it."

"How much do you want for it?" Xue Yi continued.

"Seventy taels!" Mu Shuangshuang replied seriously.

"What? Miss Shuangshuang, are you joking with me? A recipe for only seventy taels?"

"Perhaps you find it absurd, but Shuangshuang only needs this much money, and of course, there's a second condition I haven't mentioned: I want to use the remaining silver to invest in your cold noodle business."

Selling the recipe for seventy taels was universally regarded as a losing deal.

But if she used the remaining value as an investment, it wouldn't seem foolish at all.

Xue Yi laughed heartily, finding the young girl in front of him exceedingly clever, unlike what he had believed before.

"You clever girl, you're just as I imagined, but...why do you think I would agree to your request?" Xue Yi didn't intend to make things difficult for Mu Shuangshuang.

Once he agreed to Mu Shuangshuang's request, her status before him would be different.

The young men his mother favored wouldn't hold as much weight as a business partner.

"First, I have the ability; besides this type of cold noodle, I have another good item for cooling down in summer."

Second, Xue Zheng now communicates with people without much issue, so I'm a benefactor to the Xue family. If I never ask for anything, you would feel uneasy. I assume Boss Xue doesn't like to owe debts."

Mu Shuangshuang's words, in fact, carried a risk-taking element in them.

It was easy to offend people, but with Xue Yi, she was betting correctly.

After a moment, Xue Yi extended his hand, "I hope we have a pleasant partnership!"

Chapter 797: Old Mrs. Mu Loses Her Temper

After receiving seventy taels of silver from Xue Yi, Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng didn't stay long and soon left the First-class Residence.

Walking on the street, Mu Shuangshuang's heart was still pounding.

Such a large sum, combined with what she had at home, was enough for her to make a fortune.

At this moment, the usually calm Mu Shuangshuang was also getting nervous.

She urged Lu Yuanfeng, "Fengzi, let's hurry back home!"

Lu Yuanfeng was used to the fearless Shuangshuang, and seeing her so timid was a first for him.

He stepped forward, held Mu Shuangshuang's hand, and softly said, "Shuangshuang, with me here, don't be afraid!"

The words 'don't be afraid!' instantly erased the little unease Mu Shuangshuang felt inside.

She grinned, "Since we're not worrying, why don't we buy some tasty food in town and celebrate a bit when we get back, what do you think?" Mu Shuangshuang asked with a smile.

"Good!"

With a horse by their side, the couple strolled down the street, with the silver obtained by exchanging the cold noodles recipe from the First-class Residence in their pockets.

In the middle of winter, there wasn't much to buy on the market, but after a round, Mu Shuangshuang spotted some lotus root for sale.

The lotus roots were dug up by farmers from the pond in the dead of winter.

They could be stir-fried or used for soup. Remembering she had some ribs left at home, Mu Shuangshuang decisively bought quite a bit of lotus root.

Lu Yuanfeng seldom saw Mu Shuangshuang buy any specific vegetable, let alone in such quantity, so he noted that Shuangshuang liked eating lotus root, thinking about the lotus roots at Lotus Pond River, which brought a smile to his face.

They also bought some seafood at the market and happily left town.

On their way back, the wind picked up, and Mu Shuangshuang didn't want to ride the horse anymore, so they walked towards the village, reaching Er Gui Village around dusk.

Lu Yuanfeng escorted Mu Shuangshuang home and then headed to Fu Wujia to return the horse.

Mu Shuangshuang hadn't even had time to catch her breath when Mu Dalang made an appearance.

As Mu Shuangshuang imagined, Mu Dalang's face was all lit up with happiness — a sight that clearly indicated a joyful event.

He came straight in saying, "Shuangshuang, Bitu's brothers said they'll come by tomorrow to help Third Uncle, and they might stay for a few days to lend a hand."

The Huang Brothers thought highly of Mu Shuangshuang; as soon as they heard she was building a school in the village, they offered to help.

"Is their family busy at all?" Mu Shuangshuang asked.

"Shouldn't be; they can help until the day Bita gets married."

Mu Shuangshuang was already clued in and said, "Big cousin, why don't you ask Sister Bita to come over too? She can cook for my family, and I'll pay her wages. She can stay at Xiao Nan's place at night.

As for the Huang brothers, your house can accommodate three, you and Fengzi can stay."

Huang Family Village wasn't close to Er Gui Village. They had to traverse mountains, and with the workload on the construction site every day, the Huang brothers would definitely have to commute daily.

That sounded quite exhausting.

Upon hearing Mu Shuangshuang's arrangement, Mu Dalang felt even more grateful to her.

"Shuangshuang, you're thoughtful as always! Tomorrow morning, I'll head over to Huang Family Village to discuss this with them.

Oh, and Shuangshuang, do remember to thank Fourth Aunt for me. If it weren't for her helping Bita and me with embroidering the mandarin duck quilt, I wouldn't know where to start."

"Big cousin, have you arranged the wedding details?" Mu Shuangshuang asked.

"Not yet. I can't find a cook, and Granny Chen isn't willing to do the banquet for our Old Mu Family. I've searched for nearby chefs, still no luck. Besides, I don't have anyone to guide me on some wedding procedures..."

It was fine not to mention, but once said, Mu Dalang's smile disappeared.

He sighed and added, "I used to look forward to getting married, but now I fear it's going to wrong Bitā, such a great girl; she hasn't entered our home yet and already there's nothing ready."

Old Mrs. Mu only cared about Mu Xiangxiang and paid no mind to others.

Whenever Mu Dalang asked, she would hand the matter over to his mother, who didn't favor Huang Bitā, always telling him 'wait and see'.

Mu Shuangshuang furrowed her brow, facing Mu Dalang, "Big cousin, this isn't right. Regarding those procedures and stuff, grandma might not help, but Second Aunt should! As a young man, how could you know these things?"

If it's not handled properly, people's mockery is the least of it; Sister Huang could end up being talked about behind her back."

A new bride mistreated right as she entered the house would set tongues wagging, putting Huang Bitā in a poor light.

"Shuangshuang, what do you suggest?" Mu Dalang was anxious, realizing many things hadn't been thoroughly considered, thankful Mu Shuangshuang pointed them out to prevent any serious missteps.

"Make a fuss! Cause enough ruckus for grandpa and grandma to understand the seriousness. Do you remember what Matchmaker Sun initially mentioned?" Mu Shuangshuang asked.

Mu Dalang hadn't forgotten; it was the statement that Huang Bitā marrying into the Old Mu Family would bring prosperity to Uncle, the reason his grandma agreed to the marriage, or he'd have no chance of marrying Bitā in this lifetime.

"I remember, but what's the connection between the two?" Mu Dalang asked.

"Hear me out..." Mu Shuangshuang waved her hand at Mu Dalang, who obediently leaned closer, whereupon they whispered for a while.

After hearing Mu Shuangshuang's plan, Mu Dalang gave her a thumbs up.

"Shuangshuang, your idea is brilliant!"

Mu Shuangshuang's plan was for Mu Dalang to stir things up, making Old Mrs. Mu and Mr. Mu realize that should the marriage fail, not only would the family's reputation suffer, but it might also impact Mu Dade's luck.

Mr. Mu and Old Mrs. Mu cared most about the family's honor and Mu Dade's future.

As long as Mu Dalang followed Mu Shuangshuang's instructions, the issue was bound to be resolved.

"Shuangshuang, I'll head back now; catch up later to thank you!"

"Alright, you go ahead!"

After speaking with Mu Shuangshuang, Mu Dalang returned to the main house of the Old Mu Family and started making noise in the courtyard.

He claimed that the villagers were mocking him for not having the wedding preparations done.

Now he refused to marry.

Upon hearing this, Mrs. Lin was all for it. "Son, I've told you, what's the point in marrying Huang Bitā? Thankfully, I haven't prepared anything yet!"

Mrs. Lin boasted without restraint, directly exposing to everyone that she hadn't prepared anything.

Just as Old Mrs. Mu came out, she grabbed Mrs. Lin's hair and dragged her backward through the courtyard.

"You damn woman, I've been urging you to handle this, yet you haven't set things right! You rebel! I've said it, but how come no one showed up? Is this how you manage?"

Mrs. Lin was pained and still didn't forget to explain, "Mother, it's not that I'm not handling it. It's Dalang who's unwilling to marry. Since he's refusing, my previous inaction was correct; otherwise, it would be a waste!"

"He says no marriage, so there's no marriage? I say you should die; why don't you go die? I insist on that granddaughter-in-law Huang Bitā!"

Chapter 798: No One Is Here (Part 1)

"Mom, what's so good about that Huang Bitā? Why are you so insistent on letting her into our Old Mu Family's house?" Mrs. Lin asked, shaking as she spoke.

Old Mrs. Mu and Mr. Mu had never discussed Huang Bitā's matter with anyone else.

All along, she and Mr. Mu had maintained a strong stance, suppressing everyone in the Old Mu Family.

Everyone could only obey, but couldn't ask for reasons.

Even at this point, Old Mrs. Mu still refused to tell everyone.

"Why do you care what's good about her? She's the granddaughter-in-law of our Old Mu Family. If you want to find someone better for Da Lang, I don't care, but Huang Bitā must be the primary wife.

Also, for Huang Bitā and Da Lang's marriage, you better make it grand. If you let the villagers gossip again, I'll skin you!"

Old Mrs. Mu looked ferocious, scaring Mrs. Lin into not daring to take a deep breath.

Moreover, Old Mrs. Mu continued, "I and the old man will watch you at any time. If we find that you're doing anything behind our backs, we'll have Second Son divorce you!"

After laying down the threat, Old Mrs. Mu finally released the grip on Mrs. Lin's clothing.

Mrs. Lin pursed her lips and immediately went to Matchmaker Sun's house to find her.

She told herself, even if that Huang Bitu came, she wouldn't let Huang Bitu live comfortably.

With Mu Dalang making such a fuss, the Old Mu Family began to seriously consider Mu Dalang's marriage, and the family started preparing a room for him. Initially, the room had no furniture, but because it was to be a wedding room, and people would come to visit, Old Mrs. Mu allocated money to have a cabinet made, painted in the most festive red lacquer.

Then there's the wedding clothes. Old Mrs. Mu had the wives of the Old Mu Family, including Mrs. Liu and Mrs. Lin, and Yu Si Niang, working night and day.

Because of this matter, the plan to separate from the fourth house Mu Dajiang was also postponed.

But the biggest problem was the cook issue that Mu Dalang always worried about; after searching all the nearby villages, they couldn't find anyone willing to cook for the Old Mu Family.

Mr. Mu and Old Mrs. Mu were both furious and anxious, almost jumping up and down in frustration.

Late at night, the elderly couple couldn't rest and discussed the matter.

"Old woman, why don't you go apologize to Granny Chen? Have Granny Chen make the banquet for us?"

In the dark night, Mr. Mu puffed on his pipe, the cloud of smoke temporarily easing his inner frustration.

"I'm not going. That old hag—what's she worth? Do you still want me to say? It was her fault for taking our meat; otherwise, would I have argued with her?"

"If you don't apologize, who will host Da Lang's wedding banquet for us? Don't forget, on Da Lang's wedding day, the Qin Family people will come over to support us!"

Before, you used Xiangxiang as an excuse, asking for someone to take care of her, and I didn't say anything, thinking you'd let Second Son's wife handle everything.

Now, when it's come to this, you still think of shirking, and the Old Mu Family's reputation is at stake here, so you better handle it yourself!"

Mr. Mu once again laid down a threat in front of Old Mrs. Mu, leaving her feeling disheartened.

"Old man, how about we stop associating with the Qin Family? I'm always worried Xiangxiang will suffer after marrying them! Now with Zhenzhen gone and Xianxian not close to me, I only have one daughter left; if we keep troubling her, we'll lose her altogether!"

As soon as Old Mrs. Mu finished speaking, Mr. Mu tapped his pipe heavily on the bed corner, knocking out several sparks into the dark night, flickering briefly before extinguishing.

"What nonsense are you talking? When you discussed with that Qin Family concubine, didn't you agree? And we sold two mu of land to ensure Xiangxiang wouldn't suffer after marrying them, along with the fifty taels from Eldest, all of which was given to the Qin Family.

If you want to regret it now and let the Old Mu Family become the village's laughing stock, do you want Eldest's official career to be ruined because of this?"

Mr. Mu spoke with reason and evidence, leaving Old Mrs. Mu unable to argue.

She could only secretly resolve to send Xiangxiang away within a few days.

"Old man, regarding Granny Chen, I really can't bring myself to face her. Isn't that girl from the third branch able to cook? Let's find her; Da Lang has a good relationship with her, she'll probably help."

No matter what, Old Mrs. Mu refused to bow before Granny Chen.

She thought instead of being humiliated by Granny Chen, she'd rather find Mu Shuangshuang; after all, her granddaughter couldn't possibly overthrow her, right?

Mr. Mu tilted his head and thought for a while, then said, "Indeed, asking Shuangshuang is a solution. How about you let Da Lang personally talk to her tomorrow, no matter the cost, we're willing!"

"Pft! Asking your own family to help, and you still want to pay? You must have your head stuck in the door, just let her join the festivities, wouldn't that do?" snapped Old Mrs. Mu.

"If you're going to say that, then you can cook; the matter rests with you! But can you? Can you prepare food for so many people on time, make it delicious enough not to be laughed at by people?"

"I..." Old Mrs. Mu was at a loss for words and unwillingly agreed to Mr. Mu's request!

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The next day, an uninvited guest arrived at Er Gui Village, Liu Zian's mother, Song Family.

She asked everyone she met where Mu Shuangshuang's house was and where Mu Shuangshuang was!

With an attitude of not stopping until she found her.

Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng were not home; they had gone to town to sign a contract. One hundred and twenty taels, Fulin Restaurant, along with a small courtyard, all fell into the names of Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng.

Holding the contract, Mu Shuangshuang almost cried.

From having nothing initially to now, she thought to herself, now she has a restaurant, a townhouse, and an academy under construction — these are her businesses.

With these properties, the third branch and Fengzi's family's life will improve!

Lu Yuanfeng looked at Mu Shuangshuang fondly as she showed excitement.

With the restaurant, he'll work even harder, earn more silver, and once he earns enough silver taels, he'll marry Shuangshuang!

The future is so long, he and Shuangshuang will surely live happily!

"Fengzi, let's first check out this courtyard and then think about how to arrange it!"

The restaurant's shopkeeper is still operating; on the 24th of the twelfth month, just before the minor New Year, Fulin Restaurant will cease operations entirely, and the steward, employees, and chefs will leave.

So now, the only thing Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng can control is this small courtyard.

The small courtyard is just across the street from the restaurant and is not situated in a bustling area; it's tucked away in a small alley but quiet enough for Mu Shuangshuang to develop new dishes here without worry of disturbance.

Despite its worn-out appearance, Mu Shuangshuang remained delighted.

"Fengzi, from now on, this place will be ours!" Mu Shuangshuang laughed gleefully.

Before she finished speaking, Lu Yuanfeng suddenly lifted her up, spinning her around, and all they could see with their eyes were rapidly changing scenes.

The sound of hearty laughter echoed through every corner of the little alley.

Chapter 799: Mrs. Zi'an Stirring Trouble

Feeling tired, Lu Yuanfeng simply held Mu Shuangshuang in his arms.

Nobody disturbs them here, and nobody sees them; it's the perfect place to nurture feelings.

Mu Shuangshuang laughed enough and then took several deep breaths, looking as if she still couldn't believe it.

"Shuangshuang, the restaurant will close its operations on the twenty-fourth of the twelfth lunar month. Do we still want those people from the restaurant?"

At Fulin Restaurant, from the head chef to the errand runner, they are all well-staffed. If Mu Shuangshuang asks them to stay, they definitely will, since they are accustomed to working there. Better than going to some unknown place outside.

"I don't know; I'll have to see their abilities! How about this, Fengzi, we plan to open after the New Year, and during this time before the New Year, we'll conduct a recruitment process. These people can all stay to participate in this recruitment.

Elderly staff will be given priority for employment. Those who are capable will have a salary increase based on the restaurant's operations. What do you think?"

Mu Shuangshuang's ideas are quite modern; Lu Yuanfeng finds them novel. He has an inexplicable certainty that Shuangshuang can succeed! "I'll listen to you on this matter. Although my name is also written on the restaurant, you are the lady boss, not only regarding the people in the restaurant—I'll listen to you too!"

Lu Yuanfeng laughed.

Mu Shuangshuang's face turned red, and she felt warm inside.

"Alright, when the twelfth lunar month comes, we'll paste a notice at the restaurant's door saying we'll be recruiting restaurant stewards and odd job workers on the twenty-eighth of the twelfth month. Once this matter is settled, we can also get some New Year goods to bring back!"

The matters in town settled, Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng weren't in a rush to go back; instead, they went to Uncle Da Niu's house to place an order for the Mandarin Duck pots Mu Shuangshuang had made previously, ordering fifty of them in one go.

The Mandarin Duck pots haven't been launched by Uncle Da Niu yet, but the small pots used for hot pot have been pushed out, earning some silver tael.

The money for Little Niu's marriage has increased a bit more.

To say it, Uncle Da Niu is also grateful to Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng, knowing that Mu Shuangshuang wants the Mandarin Duck pots, and has worked day and night to make them.

Returning to the Old Mu Family, it was just lunchtime. Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng rushed towards the third branch.

As they reached the gate of the third branch courtyard, they heard a commotion from their yard.

With directions, Song Shi had reached Mu Shuangshuang's courtyard, being greeted by Yu Si Niang.

Initially, Song Shi didn't say why she was here, just asking Yu Si Niang where people were.

Yu Si Niang said they went to town, so Song Shi waited at the third branch courtyard. At first, things were fine, but after waiting for more than an hour, she became impatient.

Eventually, she started arguing with Yu Si Niang.

Yu Si Niang couldn't figure out what was going on, leading Song Shi to loudly shout in the third branch courtyard.

"Everyone come and see, it's the vixen's home! Mu Shuangshuang, the little vixen, seduced my son!

My son, Liu Zian, is this year's newly promoted scholar, ranking first in the entire Qianzhou Prefecture, but this Mu Shuangshuang dares to think of marrying into our Liu Family.

She even makes my son defy me, his mother. Do you say it's wicked, wicked!"

Yu Si Niang's eyes reddened with anger, as she grabbed Song Shi's collar and said, "Where are you from, to falsely accuse our Shuangshuang?"

Our Shuangshuang's heart is only set on Fengzi. When was she ever with Liu Zian? You tell me clearly!"

"Oh, oh, everyone saw it, right? She's trying to silence me by killing! Why did the girl seduce my son? I didn't know before, but now I do.

This is a case of the top beam not being straight, making the bottom beam crooked. If the mother is like this, what about the daughter?"

The third branch had been the talk of everyone for a while.

From having nothing, to buying fields and land, to now planning to build some sort of academy.

If the Old Mu Family's first branch relied on the imperial examination to prosper, then the third branch relied on a clear-headed foolish girl to live a good life.

Mu Dade was not envied by others, so naturally, the third branch aroused envy, jealousy, and additional hatred.

Especially with Song Shi causing a scene like this, a few gossiping women began discussing outside Mu Shuangshuang's yard. The first to rush out was Aunt Zhang, who had previous enmity with Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng.

"Si Niang, don't protect Shuang Yatou anymore! We all can see what she's like!"

"Aunt Zhang, what are you talking about? What's wrong with our Shuangshuang? Can't you see who she is? Can't you see her relationship with Fengzi?" Yu Si Niang questioned.

"What's the use of telling us this? Shuang Yatou isn't seducing my son! I just wonder where this third branch Yatou got her skills to make so much money; turns out it was all from tricking men."

"I even thought that Er Gui Village really produced a talent!" Another village woman said.

"Haha, that's right, people say when men have money they become bad, and when women become bad they have money. This third branch Yatou has probably swindled quite a bit from the scholar lord!"

"Oh pity, this grandson of the Lu Family, for that Yatou, doesn't even want his family, but ends up with a tramp!"

"Who are you calling a tramp?" Just as Aunt Zhang finished speaking, a roar was heard.

It was Xiao Han who was locked inside the house by Yu Si Niang.

He stared intensely at Aunt Zhang with fiery eyes.

"Talking about your sister, huh? What, you want to cause trouble in front of me? Let me tell you, your sister is seducing men, and you, as her brother, are even covering for her!"

"You're full of crap!" Mu Xiaohan, enraged, charged at Aunt Zhang.

As he got close, she slapped him hard enough to knock him unconscious on the ground.

Yu Si Niang dashed forward like a madwoman, holding Mu Xiaohan and crying loudly: "Xiao Han, what's wrong? What's wrong?"

"Heh, serves him right! Little bastard!"

Mu Shuangshuang squeezed through the crowd just in time to see Mu Xiaohan lying on the ground with Yu Si Niang bawling while holding him.

Without a second thought, Mu Shuangshuang rushed forward!

"You're seeking death!" Mu Shuangshuang shouted at Aunt Zhang.

Aunt Zhang hadn't yet reacted before she was knocked down, and suddenly Mu Shuangshuang, who had just returned from town, appeared before her.

Mu Shuangshuang sat on Aunt Zhang and lifted her hand, landing a powerful slap on Aunt Zhang.

With a "smack," the sound resounded through the entire courtyard.

Aunt Zhang was stunned by the slap; before she could react, she heard Mu Shuangshuang say, "Who just called me, Mu Shuangshuang, a tramp? Say it again now!"

Who gave you the guts to dare touch my brother, Aunt Zhang? You are shameless, weren't you quickly forgotten after being caught stealing meat at Fengzi's courtyard last time?

Am I making money off Liu Zian? Are you blind? How well Liu Zian's mother dresses and how much the clothing on her body is worth in silver tael?"

Mu Shuangshuang pointed at Song Shi as she spoke.

Song Shi, in recent years, had saved and scrimped to support Liu Zian's studies, sacrificing on meals and clothing.

A piece of clothing would be washed until it faded to white, and she'd still be reluctant to throw it away.

Even though conditions at home had improved now, she still thought to save.

The public, following Mu Shuangshuang's words, realized that indeed Song Shi didn't look like a wealthy person.

Then they heard Mu Shuangshuang say, "Anyone who spreads rumors calling me a tramp must take responsibility for their words!"

Chapter 800: Don't Ask Around

As soon as Mu Shuangshuang finished speaking, she added two more slaps to Aunt Zhang's face.

The women in the village watching the spectacle were all stunned, each with wide eyes, staring at Mu Shuangshuang as if they'd never seen her before.

Most of the young women in the village are honest. Although they don't always stay inside, none have been as violent as Mu Shuangshuang.

Mu Shuangshuang slapped a few times, then said to Yu Si Niang, "Mother, lend me your shoes!"

Yu Si Niang, still sobbing, had not stopped her tears but didn't think much when Mu Shuangshuang spoke. She just took off her shoes as instructed.

Mu Shuangshuang took the shoes Yu Si Niang handed over and fiercely slapped Aunt Zhang's face with them.

The sound of slapping rang out, and Aunt Zhang alternated between crying and screaming.

"Oh my, you've all seen it. This stinky girl is hitting me... Yu Si Niang, how are you raising your daughter, Yu Si Niang..."

The more Aunt Zhang screamed, the more vigorously Mu Shuangshuang slapped, moving from the face to directly slapping the mouth.

The thick-soled shoes of a peasant household hurt intensely when hitting the face. Half of Aunt Zhang's face was slapped crooked, yet Mu Shuangshuang showed no mercy.

Initially, Aunt Zhang cursed loudly, calling her all sorts of disgraceful names, enjoying the cursing. But gradually, the pain was too much, and she had no strength left to curse.

The village women didn't dare to approach, each looking at Mu Shuangshuang as if she was a plague, retreating repeatedly.

Mu Shuangshuang took in the crowd's reaction, her face full of dominance as she said, "Listen well, everyone. I, Mu Shuangshuang, have no connection with this woman from another village. I don't even know where she's from.

As for her claims that I seduced her son, I suggest she look at her reflection in a puddle of piss. Stop throwing mud on others at every turn!"

Some village women, emboldened by these words, asked, "If it's this woman's fault, why are you hitting Ma Houhou's mother?"

"Why? Because she cursed me without discrimination! I'm an unmarried girl being cursed like this. Shouldn't I retaliate?"

In other words, if she had said this about your daughter, would you still greet her with a smile? If you want respect from others, you must first respect them.

This world isn't full of fools who turn the other cheek after being hit!"

Mu Shuangshuang's words left the talkative woman red-faced, stepping aside and swearing not to say another word.

The observing Song Family member, seeing the situation, began to feel intimidated. She only intended to see what Mu Shuangshuang looked like while tarnishing her reputation.

Now, seeing Mu Shuangshuang's violence and irrationality, the Song Family decided it was best to leave.

Seizing the moment when others weren't paying attention, the Song Family stepped back two paces. Her wrist suddenly felt heavier, and she saw a young man grabbing it.

The young man was tall, his dark brows tightly furrowed, seemingly displeased.

Before the Song Family could speak, the young man said, "Aunt, since you've come to stir trouble and ruin Shuangshuang's name, how can you walk away so easily?"

Lu Yuanfeng spoke few words, but his meaning was clear. The Song Family insulting Shuangshuang and then leaving, letting the village misunderstand Shuangshuang, was not acceptable!

"Young man, who are you to speak here?"

The Song Family wasn't easy to deal with either. Even when grabbed by Lu Yuanfeng, she remained unflustered.

"I am..."

"He is my fiancé, fully representing my intentions! Madam, you surely know your family's situation, right?"

I, Mu Shuangshuang, earn my own money and don't need to rely on a scholar who can't even afford his own travel expenses! If anything, your family, Liu Zian, owes me a favor!"

Initially, it was Mu Shuangshuang who came up with the idea to sell fans for Liu Zian's travel funds, cobbling together six taels, giving Liu Zian the opportunity to take the scholar's exam.

She didn't expect Liu Zian's family to be grateful, but she wouldn't forgive them for slandering her like Liu Zian's mother.

"Don't talk nonsense. My Zian earned his travel expenses by himself! Just because you sold a few fans and flapped your tongue, you think the credit is yours? Don't forget, the paintings on the fans were drawn by my Zian.

Now, his paintings can sell for ten taels each. You think saying Zian owes you a favor makes it true?" The Song Family looked proud; her son had become a golden phoenix, and no one could defame him.

"Ha! You said it's now. Before he passed the exam, your son's fans were worth at most five coins apiece, and that's if someone even bought them!" Mu Shuangshuang sneered coldly.

"Nonsense, you little vixen. You dare insult my son, I'll fight you!"

The Song Family stomped on Lu Yuanfeng's foot. As Lu Yuanfeng winced in pain, the Song Family charged at Mu Shuangshuang, intent on taking her life.

Mu Shuangshuang dodged, and without a target, the Song Family couldn't stop herself and fell face-first into the dirt!

The Song Family winced in pain.

Aunt Zhang, lying on the ground, somehow mustered the strength to get up and kicked the Song Family fiercely in the face.

"You old hag, miserable woman, spreading baseless rumors in our village and causing me to get beaten. Now I'll let you experience what it's like to be beaten!"

Aunt Zhang vented all her pent-up anger on the Song Family.

Although the Song Family usually did some farm work, she couldn't compare to Aunt Zhang, who could even do her own dung carrying.

In front of Aunt Zhang, the Song Family could only take the beating.

Mu Shuangshuang went forward and helped Mu Xiaohan up from the ground.

"Mother, you go ask Grandpa Zhang now, and I'll carry Xiaohan back!" Mu Shuangshuang said.

When Mu Xiaohan fell, Mu Shuangshuang saw, and it seemed she hadn't hit anywhere seriously. Why she fainted would have to be determined by Zhang Huai Shu.

"Shuangshuang, let me go! I'm quicker on my feet. Don't concern yourself with this matter anymore. I'll send Liu Zian's mother back and ask him for a solution."

Lu Yuanfeng knew that although Liu Zian's mother was excessive, Shuangshuang couldn't treat her like Aunt Zhang. The only solution was to take her back and find Liu Zian!

"Fengzi, forget it. Don't involve yourself with that woman. If Liu Zian truly views me as a friend, he'll clarify this matter. If not, no amount of talk will help. Just call Grandpa Zhang, then come back for dinner!"

"Alright! Then I'm off!"

They tacitly ignored how badly Aunt Zhang was beating the Song Family, and each hurried off to their respective tasks.

After exhausting herself from beating, Aunt Zhang got up from the ground and went home!