

## Folly 81

### Chapter 81 Crawling Through the Dog Hole (Part 1)

The night was dark and windy. Mu Shuangshuang carried a wooden bucket and quietly slipped out of her house. After tossing the bucket across to the other side, she took a few steps back, made a running start, climbed up the Old Mu Family's courtyard wall, and jumped over to the outside.

Having done all this, she was drenched in sweat and exhausted, panting heavily.

"Looks like I shouldn't act cool next time. It's so tiring, better to crawl through the dog hole!"

The Old Mu Family's courtyard wall surrounded all the rooms except Mu Dade's wing on the east side. Usually, Old Mrs. Mu only kept watch over the front yard, believing that nothing could escape her eyes.

But she didn't know there was a hole half the height of a person near the house where Mu Shuangshuang now lived. For a child like Mu Shuangshuang, crawling out was hardly any effort.

She headed towards the small stream below Niuwei Mountain, planning to scoop a bucket of stream water and then make mountain berry juice to store in jars.

At night, Er Gui Village wasn't quiet. After a few steps, one could hear terrifying dog barks alternating with the incessant frog croaking on the ridge; it was hardly different from being in a bustling city, only the sounds came from different sources.

A sudden gust of wind hit Mu Shuangshuang's face, slightly easing the summer heat.

To get to the small stream, she needed to pass through a section of the path lined with ditches. Halfway, a dark figure appeared in front of her, just as she considered whether to dodge, someone called her name.

"Shuangshuang..."

Should Mu Shuangshuang say it's fate or did she just have ridiculously good luck?

Meeting someone during the day and then again at night?

"What are you doing here?"

"Where are you going?"

Both spoke almost simultaneously, but the meaning was remarkably similar.

"I'm catching frogs. Tomorrow I'll see if anyone in town wants them." Lu Yuanfeng's voice carried a slight tremor, adding a touch of allure to the not-so-quiet night.

"There should be buyers!" Dry pot frog, stir fry frog, spicy frog... just thinking about them made one's mouth water.

"Yeah, what about Shuangshuang?" Lu Yuanfeng wondered why a girl would come out late at night, wasn't she scared?

"I'm heading to the stream to fetch some water."

"Huh?" Lu Yuanfeng didn't immediately understand.

"I said I'm going to the stream to draw water." Mu Shuangshuang thought she had explained clearly enough; why couldn't this silly boy understand?

"I'll help you then; I've already caught enough." Lu Yuanfeng spoke with some guilt, palms sweating uncontrollably.

"No need, I can still carry one bucket of water myself. Now that you're done, head back and rest early."

Mu Shuangshuang directly refused Lu Yuanfeng's kind offer; after all, she wasn't without hands or feet and couldn't keep taking advantage of others.

Lu Yuanfeng furrowed his brow, knowing that the person before him had her own ideas and wouldn't easily change because of his words.

So Lu Yuanfeng stopped insisting. He watched Mu Shuangshuang as she walked away until she was far enough not to notice him before following her.

Mu Shuangshuang slightly opened her mouth, clearly aware Lu Yuanfeng had followed her. The footsteps behind were very light, as if afraid she'd notice.

This silly boy really was quite foolish, but his heart was kind, always sacrificing himself for others.

Mu Shuangshuang didn't expose him, allowing him to follow her all the way until she fetched the water, returned to the bottom of the Old Mu Family's courtyard wall.

This time Mu Shuangshuang chose to crawl through the dog hole. She squeezed through herself and then dragged the bucket into the yard.

Lu Yuanfeng watched as she entered her house before returning to see if there were any more frogs to catch along the ridge.

The items Mu Shuangshuang planned to take to town were almost ready, except for the mountain berry juice, which was simple enough. Since Little Zhi wasn't sleeping with her tonight, she could tinker away as late as she wanted.

Finding a piece of gauze, Mu Shuangshuang wrapped the washed mountain berries tightly, then vigorously pressed them with a small bamboo tube. The sweet mountain berries slowly yielded to red juice under Mu Shuangshuang's hands.

Since the cloth had only a length and width of twenty centimeters, she could only crush a small amount of berries at a time. To ensure all the juice was extracted, she repeatedly crushed them with patience.

After crushing a basket of berries, she added water and some sugar as dawn approached, and throughout Er Gui Village, roosters began to crow together.

Yu Si Niang quickly finished washing up and opened her daughter's room door, seeing her ready with everything, even those dirty marks on her face had been reapplied.

"Shuangshuang, shouldn't you stop putting this stuff on your face?"

Her girl wasn't ugly, why did she always need to hide that face?

"Mom, it's not the time yet. Once we separate from the family, Shuangshuang will be able to show her face in the village."

By then, the other members of the Old Mu Family wouldn't have the say in her marriage matters.

"Preparedness averts misfortune," was a phrase she firmly believed in; a village girl at the mercy of others should not flaunt herself too much for now.

Unlike Mu Dade's two daughters who dressed attractively just to marry well, live like an official's wife, what she aimed to achieve didn't require looks, talent sufficed.

"Alright, mom listens to you, whatever you say goes."

"Mom, we should hurry up, while the rest of the family isn't up yet. These things need to be moved out."

For this trip, Zhao Yun worried the mother-daughter duo wouldn't make it to town with all the items, specifically asked her husband to borrow a handcart for them.

The cart, with a single wheel, was often used by villagers to transport grain to town to exchange for essentials like oil, salt, or cloths.

Yu Si Niang and Mu Shuangshuang exerted themselves to put the jar of mountain berry juice and the bucket of cold noodles onto the cart, stepping on the morning dew, they set off on the road to town.

Along the way, Shuangshuang and Yu Si Niang exerted great effort, slowly pushing the handcart, sweating profusely, and panting heavily.

Luckily, they left early, and the sun was yet to rise.

"Shuangshuang, thank goodness you're smart, knowing to ask Aunt Xiao Yun if she had a cart we could borrow, otherwise we'd be exhausted."

The jar and the bucket, if carried alone, would be unbearable.

"Mom, take a break if you're tired, Shuangshuang will push."

Mu Shuangshuang hadn't slacked along the way, but compared to Yu Si Niang, she was faring better as she felt her body's strength growing day by day.

Now her goal each day was not to starve; even if it meant eating boiled wild vegetables, she made sure to fill herself up. Only then did she have endless energy.

After persevering along the way, Mu Shuangshuang finally arrived in town, just as the sun was overhead, temperatures rising slowly, marking about the time her business would begin.

"Shall we go to the market?" Yu Si Niang asked.

She had little time today, once Shuangshuang found a good spot, she had to hurry to Wealth Master Zhang's house to work; today being the most important day of the feast, she couldn't afford to be messy or careless.

"Today's stuff might not fetch a great price at the market, let's head to the east side of town where there's lots of shops; I just need to rent a small place in front of one."

There were lots of rich people there, likely to fancy something fresh.