

## Folly 851

Chapter 851:

"No matter what happens, I'm here to face it head-on. I won't let you encounter any danger, trust me, Shuangshuang."

Lu Yuanfeng spoke sincerely, and Mu Shuangshuang believed him.

In Shuangshuang's eyes, Lu Yuanfeng had never boasted; if he said something wouldn't happen, it wouldn't.

However, this matter was indeed handled foolishly by Mu Dade, not only did he provoke people he shouldn't have, but also brought trouble back to the Old Mu Family.

This hot potato, if the County Magistrate suspects, doesn't even need evidence, he can just come to the village and ask.

On the other hand, Mu Dade's mistake was now a bargaining chip in Mu Shuangshuang's hand; if he wants to act against the third branch, he'd have to think it over.

Mu Shuangshuang decided not to think about these things anymore.

She followed Lu Yuanfeng to immerse herself in the festive atmosphere of the Small New Year.

Lu Yuanfeng put the tied-up firecrackers in the courtyard of the third branch and used flint to light them.

The sound of firecrackers exploding mixed with sparks unfolded in the courtyard of the Third Branch of the Old Mu Family.

The kids who heard the sound came over, pointing at the firecrackers in the third branch's courtyard and laughing loudly, feeling extremely happy.

The gloom in Mu Shuangshuang's heart vanished instantly.

She spent some time setting off the firecrackers with Lu Yuanfeng, roasting some food, and almost at midnight, she waved goodbye to Lu Yuanfeng and Yuanbao who returned to their own home.

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The next day, Lu Yuanfeng came early to Shuangshuang's house to call her, to together go to Shigou Town to look for the person he thought could be a capable restaurant chef.

Walking to Shigou Town would take a whole day, so Lu Yuanfeng borrowed a horse as usual from Wang Fugui's house.

Horses are always faster than walking.

But first, they had to head to the town to find the restaurant steward Yu Dahai.

The three agreed to go to Shigou Town together.

Mu Shuangshuang estimated that the three of them, in a hurry, wouldn't have the time to stop specifically for a meal.

Besides, Shigou Town was a place where none of them had been before; keeping stops to a minimum on the way was the safest approach.

Therefore, early in the morning, she was baking pancakes, preparing dry food and water, to eat on the road.

Since it was the first time going on a long trip, Mu Dashan and Yu Si Niang were a bit worried, they accompanied Mu Shuangshuang and Yuan Feng all the way to the village entrance.

Only when they saw the two walking away did they turn back to the village.

Upon reaching the town, Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng hailed Yu Dahai and without staying long, headed to Shigou Town.

By around noon, the three reached Shigou Town, much earlier than anticipated.

Though Shigou Town was adjacent to Qingshan Town, its size and bustlingness were still nowhere near Qingshan Town's.

Scattered along the streets, there were just a few people, and not many buying and selling things.

There was not a hint of festive atmosphere.

Unlike Qingshan Town, where these past few days were crowded with people bustling to buy things for the New Year.

To put it in one sentence, you had to stand on tiptoe to find a place to step.

"None of us is familiar with this place, so let's just ask for directions!" said Mu Shuangshuang.

Lu Yuanfeng and Yu Dahai both nodded in agreement.

Then, Lu Yuanfeng turned to ask an older-looking man the exact location of the restaurant they were looking for.

Luckily, the man knew where the restaurant was and kindly told Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng's group how to get there.

The restaurant Lu Yuanfeng wanted to find was called Good Taste Restaurant, which sounded a bit intriguing.

As Mu Shuangshuang predicted, Good Taste Restaurant wasn't a large establishment; compared to Fulin Restaurant, which Mu Shuangshuang acquired, it was much smaller.

It was called a restaurant but was actually sized like a small noodle shop, with only a single floor and about five or six tables.

In general, such a restaurant only needed two people in the kitchen: a main chef and a sous chef, who took on tasks much like a general assistant.

Good Taste Restaurant's business was even worse than Fulin Restaurant's, as the three looked on from outside for quite some time, but didn't see a single customer go in for a meal.

Mu Shuangshuang thought: With such a restaurant and such business, it should barely make any money.

She felt reassured about hiring someone.

Just as Yu Dahai mentioned, many people are reluctant to leave their hometown, but if relocating means a better life, people are still willing to move.

Upon entering the restaurant, Lu Yuanfeng and Mu Shuangshuang didn't immediately look for someone, instead, they ordered some dishes.

The three of them acted like regular customers, carefully tasting the food.

Three people, four dishes, two meats, a vegetable, and a soup.

These were the simplest dishes at the restaurant, but they were also the ones that could best reflect a restaurant's quality.

When the waiter brought the dishes, Mu Shuangshuang realized just how good the now-closed Fulin Restaurant really was!

No idea where they found this chef, but the dishes tasted far from what Mu Shuangshuang had expected. She always believed that even a sparrow has all its internals.

Even small eateries can still serve food that tastes especially good.

Patiently, Mu Shuangshuang finished the meal, then took the opportunity while drinking tea to chat with the waiter.

Mu Shuangshuang asked, "Little brother waiter, how many chefs do you have in your kitchen here?"

The waiter was slightly startled, not expecting Mu Shuangshuang to ask such a question, and for a moment felt a bit awkward.

Mu Shuangshuang took out a string of cash and handed it to the waiter, then said, "Don't worry, we're just asking casually."

After taking Mu Shuangshuang's money, the waiter grinned wider, even letting go of his guard.

"We have two chefs in the kitchen, but there's only one main chef, and the dishes you ate were all prepared by him.

He's a relative of our shopkeeper; the food is decent, though not as good as great chefs', the portions are plenty, keeping you full."

Mu Shuangshuang agreed with the waiter on this point.

Good Taste Restaurant's portions were indeed the largest Mu Shuangshuang had seen among these restaurants.

But often, people don't go to a restaurant solely for the quantity; it's whether the chef cooks well that ultimately matters.

Good taste brings returning customers.

"Waiter, I'm asking about someone; do you have someone named Sun Dawu working here, who's been a kitchen helper for about half a year?"

"Are you talking about Brother Wu? He's no longer working at the restaurant, I think he's now selling baked pancakes at the street corner."

Seeing the three of them surprised, the waiter simply explained the whole story to them.

Initially, Sun Dawu did work in the kitchen of the restaurant. But since he was never given an important role, and the main chef was the shopkeeper's relative.

Sun Dawu had no choice but to work as an assistant, not even able to support his family, so he left the restaurant.

Selling baked pancakes, though hard work, requiring walking all over the town, earned him more than just helping out in the kitchen.

Chapter 852: Wu Dalang Baked Pancake

Sun Dawu wasn't at the restaurant, so the three of them had no choice but to leave the restaurant and try their luck on the street to find him.

Completely unfamiliar streets, completely unfamiliar people, Lu Yuanfeng and Mu Shuangshuang didn't forget to carefully observe the surroundings.

Whether they were vendors or pedestrians, they were always vigilant.

After walking down two streets, they didn't see anyone selling baked pancakes, but they saw quite a few candied hawthorn sellers.

"Hey, new owners, if we can't find Sun Dawu, we'll have to stay overnight in Shigou Town," Yu Dahai reminded Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng.

"Don't worry, Brother Yu, we'll definitely find Sun Dawu before sundown."

After Mu Shuangshuang spoke, she walked a bit further and noticed a crowd gathered around, pointing at something in the center.

It really looked like the street performers Mu Shuangshuang had seen on TV in her past life.

At first glance, they were indeed performers.

A man and a woman, the man wearing a gray worn cotton coat and the woman in a floral cotton coat, stood out among the crowd.

Mu Shuangshuang saw the woman clasp her fists and say, "Dear villagers, my brother and I are new here..."

Mu Shuangshuang stopped listening after that; it was really nothing new, similar to what she'd seen on TV in her past life!

Especially those lines, not innovative at all.

It seemed that the saying "art comes from life" wasn't a lie!

Events spanning numerous timeframes can still coincide.

But such a crowd was actually a good thing for Mu Shuangshuang.

According to the staff, Sun Dawu's baked pancake stand never stays in one spot in the town; it's here today, somewhere else tomorrow.

This means Sun Dawu probably follows the crowds, selling baked pancakes where it's busy.

"Fengzi, Brother Yu, let's wait here, Sun Dawu might come here to sell baked pancakes."

The two trusted Mu Shuangshuang implicitly and waited with her for Sun Dawu.

After a while, a man carrying a pole quickly came over.

The man was thin, with sweat beads visible on his cheeks, panting heavily but stopping immediately upon reaching the crowd.

"Sir, would you like to buy a baked pancake?" Sun Dawu asked a man closest to him.

The man glanced at Sun Dawu impatiently, "Get lost, get lost, don't bother me watching the show or I'll beat you up."

Sun Dawu turned red, apologized to the man, and asked the others nearby.

Each time he tried, the response was similar to the first man's; their attitudes were bad.

Everyone's attention was on the show; they didn't want to give Sun Dawu even a second.

By this time, Lu Yuanfeng was certain that the man selling baked pancakes was Sun Dawu.

He was about to speak but was stopped by Mu Shuangshuang's gaze.

Mu Shuangshuang kept her eyes on Sun Dawu.

Because in her opinion, small matters most reveal a person's character. The fact that Sun Dawu hadn't sold a single baked pancake didn't discourage him at all—if one person said no, he'd move to the next.

Even when cursed royally, he'd cheerfully apologize.

Honestly, just from his demeanor and approach, Mu Shuangshuang felt she wasn't wrong to come.

If his culinary skills aren't bad, she'd hire him as head chef.

After a while, Sun Dawu brought up the courage to come up to Mu Shuangshuang, and as before, asked, "Young lady, would you like a baked pancake?"

"Sure, I'd like four baked pancakes!" Mu Shuangshuang raised four fingers and waved them in front of Sun Dawu.

Sun Dawu thought he misheard, looked up to see if Mu Shuangshuang was joking, and then saw Lu Yuanfeng.

"Fengzi... you're Fengzi!" Nearly a year gone by since he last saw Lu Yuanfeng, Sun Dawu shouted excitedly, pointing at him.

"Brother Dahu, long time no see, this is Shuangshuang, and this is Yu Dahai. We came to Shigou Town for some business today," Lu Yuanfeng was equally excited.

Though he and Sun Dawu worked in different trades, when he initially joined the mess hall, Sun Dawu took good care of him many times.

The tasty food at the barracks, Lu Yuanfeng enjoyed them, mostly thanks to Sun Dawu.

Yet, Lu Yuanfeng didn't reveal he came seeking Sun Dawu, knowing Mu Shuangshuang still wanted to test him.

Sun Dawu didn't ask what the matter was, saying, "If it's you, then no charge for the four baked pancakes; treat it as a gift from your brother."

Sun Dawu smiled cheerfully, saying as he prepared the pancakes, instantly moving past the earlier unpleasantness.

He skillfully prepared the baked pancakes, clearly having practiced many times, promptly handing the four to Mu Shuangshuang.

She had one, while Lu Yuanfeng and Yu Dahai shared one and a half each.

The pancakes tasted great, aromatic and crispy, with a special sauce on top that made Mu Shuangshuang savor the entire thing.

She was about to ask for one more when Lu Yuanfeng handed her his extra half.

Mu Shuangshuang took it without hesitating, leisurely eating it but not forgetting to remind Sun Dawu.

"Brother Dahu, take a break, otherwise you might get too busy later."

Sun Dawu paused, not understanding what Mu Shuangshuang meant.

"Brother Dahu, you better listen to Shuangshuang; she's probably up to something," Lu Yuanfeng looked at Mu Shuangshuang with affection and then told Sun Dawu.

Sun Dawu noticed the close relationship between Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng.

Heeded Mu Shuangshuang's words.

Mu Shuangshuang ate the half pancake extremely slowly, much slower than when she had eaten a whole one before.

Yet the slower she ate, the more curious Lu Yuanfeng and Yu Dahai became, eager to know Mu Shuangshuang's next move.

When Mu Shuangshuang finally finished, Yu Dahai was already anxious.

Sun Dawu hadn't interacted with Mu Shuangshuang before and didn't know her personality.

But seeing a young girl enjoy the pancakes he made with a happy expression also pleased him.

Just then, the performing siblings finished their act and started collecting money.

Everyone rushed out, only a few willing to pay.

Mu Shuangshuang placed the oil paper in Sun Dawu's small wooden bucket, then made a megaphone with her hands and began shouting, "Everyone come take a look, delicious Sun..."

Mu Shuangshuang intended to call out for Sun Dawu but felt it lacked impact; changing her tone, she said, "Delicious Wu Dalang baked pancakes, a family recipe passed down for five hundred years, only available here."

Fragrant, crispy, crunchy, beautiful, Da Ning Dynasty's number one baked pancake now on sale! Five coins, just five coins. Five coins and you can taste the unique secret recipe of Wu Dalang pancakes~"

Mu Shuangshuang's words left Sun Dawu so shocked his jaw nearly dropped.

"This..."

Chapter 853: Impressive Skills

Sun Dawu said it wasn't surprising, but that was a lie.

His baked pancakes had been sold for just two copper coins each since the day he set up his stall, and sometimes when there were fewer people, he would even sell them for one coin.

But this Miss Shuangshuang, right from the start, doubled the price of his pancakes. Would anyone buy at this price?

However, the reality was far from Sun Dawu's expectations. Mu Shuangshuang's few shouts not only attracted people, but someone really came up to ask.

It was a young girl.

She came up and tossed five copper coins, urging, "Quickly make me one of those pancakes of yours!"

Mu Shuangshuang smiled and said, "Brother Wu's baked pancake, young lady, you're the fifth person today to try our pancakes. That makes you the luckiest customer of the day, and we're not charging you for your pancake.

But please, after you finish the pancake, tell everyone whether it tastes good, see if I'm lying or not."

Mu Shuangshuang returned the five coins to the young lady in front of her.

The expression on the young lady's face was one of astonishment.

It was her first time not having to pay for food.

But the young lady still waited for Sun Dawu's pancake to be done and tasted it right there.

She ate with oil all over her mouth, looking blissful. She mumbled to everyone, "Delicious... This Wu Dalang pancake is delicious, boss, I want another one!"

Her exclamation of deliciousness, plus asking for another, made the onlookers start to pull out their wallets.

"I want one..."

"I want one..."

It's undeniable that Mu Shuangshuang's strategy of letting customers verify was indeed the right move. The folks had just finished watching a street performance, they were indeed a bit hungry, and with Mu Shuangshuang's promotion,

spending money on baked pancakes became a very normal thing.

One person said it was good, and the rest wanted to try it.

Sun Dawu couldn't stop smiling; he was there making pancakes so fast that smoke nearly came out from his busy backside. That's when he knew what Mu Shuangshuang meant by 'too busy to handle'.

Lu Yuanfeng and Yu Dahai both went up to help, while only Mu Shuangshuang continued to shout advertisements.

Each shout was more pleasant to hear than the last.

The street-performing siblings next to them were looking at Sun Dawu's pancake stall with faces full of envy.

Just a moment ago, they had done so many performances, but when it came time to ask for money, everyone ran away; what kind of world is this?

"Brother, why don't we sell pancakes too!" said the performing sister.

"Forget it, we make a living from our skills, how can we stoop to selling pancakes like that fool! Listen to me, this town isn't good, let's go to the next town.

I heard that nearby Qingshan Town is much more prosperous than this Shigou Town. If we perform there, we're sure to make more money."

Saying that, the siblings started to pack up their things, and before long, they disappeared from the open space.

Sun Dawu's pancakes were nearly sold out in no time.

Those who didn't get one stretched their necks, staring at Sun Dawu's stall. Seeing this, Sun Dawu quickly smiled, "Do you want to wait a bit, guest, I'll..."

Before he finished speaking, Mu Shuangshuang cut in, "They'll be gone even if you wait, come back tomorrow, Wu Dalang pancakes are in limited supply, first come, first served. If you come late, there won't be any left!"

When Mu Shuangshuang said that, the people felt even more disappointed.

They stared at the pancakes that passersby were eating, almost drooling.

"Young lady, are you sure these Wu Dalang pancakes are here every day? How come I didn't see you here yesterday?" asked a particularly eager man.

"We indeed weren't here yesterday, but from now on, we'll be here every day. You're the last one to ask us questions; come earlier tomorrow, we'll give you a free pancake."

Mu Shuangshuang's words delighted the asking man. He said, "Then I definitely have to come tomorrow to get this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for Wu Dalang pancakes!"

As the crowd dispersed, Sun Dawu looked at Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng, full of excitement.

"You guys are truly my lucky stars. I've been in the pancake business this long and never sold this many. Today I sold sixty pancakes and made three hundred coppers!"

Sun Dawu was floating; he couldn't believe that he had sold that many pancakes.

In his excitement, Mu Shuangshuang suddenly took out eight copper coins and handed them to Sun Dawu.

"Brother Dawu, here's the money for the four pancakes I had earlier."

Seeing the money Mu Shuangshuang gave, Sun Dawu quickly shook his head, "Miss Shuangshuang, don't joke, I already said those pancakes are on me. And even if you were to pay, it should be me paying you for help."

Sun Dawu knew that if he relied on himself, selling pancakes for two coins each, he might sell ten or so a day, making thirty-something coins; it was nothing like now, making ten times the money.

"Brother Dawu, that's not how it works. The pancakes we ate were bought at your stall, and paying for them is the rightful thing to do.

If we were eating at your home today, naturally we wouldn't pay. Different places, different rules, can't break your principles."

Mu Shuangshuang never intended to take advantage of Sun Dawu in the first place. She admitted that initially, she ate the pancake to try its taste.

If it was good, she'd brainstorm ways to help sell them.

If it wasn't good, there wasn't much she could do.

"What principle? If you hadn't come, I would've sold these pancakes for one coin each," Sun Dawu said.

"Fengzi and I are brothers; I can afford to give out a few pancakes! By the way, Miss Shuangshuang, can you tell me why people buy my pancakes when you shout, but when I shout, I get cursed at?"

Sun Dawu wasn't stupid. With just a few words, Mu Shuangshuang not only raised the price of his pancakes but also sold better than ever.

If someone in front of him had no skill, Sun Dawu wouldn't believe it if you beat him to death.

Mu Shuangshuang smiled and said, "If you want to know, you have to accept the pancake money first."

Sun Dawu was scratching his head in anxiety, wanting to hear Mu Shuangshuang's answer but not wanting to take her money.

After thinking it over, he finally said, "How about you all come to my house for dinner, and I'll have my wife make something delicious for you."

"Sure!" Mu Shuangshuang said.

When the three agreed to eat at his house, Sun Dawu finally accepted the money Mu Shuangshuang offered.

Mu Shuangshuang said, "Brother Dawu's pancakes are delicious, the only thing missing is promotion, letting everyone know about your pancakes.

Earlier, my shouting was just to let everyone know your pancakes are special. But what really made those people buy was the work of that girl who I invited for a free pancake.

She was a complete outsider; her saying it was good is more convincing than if we said it ten times. It might seem like she took advantage of us, but in reality, her saying it was delicious attracted others to pay up.

Mu Shuangshuang feared Sun Dawu would mind her giving away pancakes for free earlier, so she clearly explained her intention for doing so.

Chapter 854: Blame My Incompetence

Sun Dawu nodded repeatedly.

Next to him, Lu Yuanfeng and Yu Dahai were also full of admiration.

"But why is it called Wu Dalang Baked Pancake?" Yu Dahai asked the question on his mind.

Logically, it should be called Sun Dawu Baked Pancake, so why use Wu Dalang's name? Besides, Wu Dalang sounds particularly like someone's name.

Mu Shuangshuang was caught off guard by this sudden question and started coughing uncontrollably.

Mu Shuangshuang initially chose this name because she thought Wu Dalang Baked Pancake sounded better than Sun Dawu Baked Pancake!

If she said that, they would undoubtedly ask why it sounded better. At that point, she'd have to go into Wu Dalang and Pan Jinlian, and who knows, she might get into the entire Water Margin story, getting more and more off track!

"Brother Yu, Shuangshuang just came up with it randomly. Please don't take it to heart," Mu Shuangshuang said.

Yu Dahai nodded.

He didn't ask further.

"By the way, Miss Shuangshuang, what price should I set for selling baked pancakes in the future? The previous one or the current one?"

Having tasted some success, Sun Dawu was unsure of his next steps for a moment.

He wanted to hear Mu Shuangshuang's opinion because he knew the person in front of him could help him make money.

Mu Shuangshuang said, "That's exactly what I wanted to talk about. If Brother Wu wants to continue selling baked pancakes in the future, he must remember to use the name Wu Dalang, and tell each seller that only your shop is authentic.

Also, the price should remain the same. If anyone asks, just say it's made from a five-hundred-year-old family recipe, it's the wisdom of your ancestors.

Another thing, limit the number of baked pancakes each day. Just like today, you sold sixty. So, in the future, only make sixty, and if someone can't buy one, tell them to come the next day."

Mu Shuangshuang had calculated the foot traffic in this small town. Selling sixty baked pancakes a day was reasonable; it was easy to sell out, yet attracted another wave of customers to come back the next day.

If you sell too many at once, people will eventually get tired of Sun Dawu's baked pancakes.

No matter how delicious something is, you can't eat it every day.

The occasional queue makes people value it more.

Sun Dawu didn't understand the intricacies, but he felt Mu Shuangshuang was particularly business-savvy, so he nodded, "I understand, thank you, Miss Shuangshuang!"

"How about this? I'll go to the market to buy some groceries first, and you wait for me a while, then we'll go back together, okay?"

Sun Dawu needed to prepare dinner, but since they had just had lunch not long ago, if they really stayed for dinner, they wouldn't have time to return to Qingshan Town.

"New owner, should we really stay here for the night?" Yu Dahai asked.

"Yes! Even if we rush back now, by the time we get to Qingshan Town, it will be midnight. It's not suitable to return to the village.

I already told my parents when I left that I might not return to the village tonight."

To hire a good chef, Mu Shuangshuang made a lot of effort and spent a considerable amount of energy.

So far, she was very satisfied with Sun Dawu in every aspect.

However, the final decision still depended on tasting a meal cooked by Sun Dawu to decide whether to hire him or not.

Yu Dahai nodded. If a little girl wasn't afraid, what was there for a grown man to fear!

"Since that's the case, let's stay here tonight! We'll book two rooms at a guesthouse in Shigou Town.

Fengzi and I will share one room, and you can have one to yourself, would that be okay?"

Mu Shuangshuang had no objections, she nodded and said, "That sounds good!"

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Sun Dawu strolled around the market, bought two pounds of five-flavor pork, and planned to make meatballs for the three guests from afar to enhance their meal.

He brought the three back to his home.

Sun Dawu's wife was at home doing embroidery work, and a teenage girl was in the yard helping to dry clothes.

A boy of about seven or eight was following the girl, giggling all the time.

"Daya, Xiao Zhu, Dad's back," Sun Dawu called to the little ones in the yard.

The two kids looked up at the same time and then rushed towards Sun Dawu together.

"Dad, why are you back? Did you sell out of pancakes, or was business bad and nobody bought them?"

The girl called Daya was very considerate and immediately helped Sun Dawu with the pancake stand.

Sun Dawu was in a good mood and said, "Dad's got friends today, they helped Dad sell out the pancakes, and we made quite a bit of money, so Dad bought two pounds of meat, and tonight we'll have a good meal."

When he mentioned meat, Mu Shuangshuang clearly saw a glint in the little girl's eyes.

Then came the sound of swallowing, small but audible to Mu Shuangshuang.

Seeing this, Sun Dawu awkwardly scratched his head and said, "The little girl at home hasn't had good food, having meat is a rarity, so that's why... don't laugh at us..."

Mu Shuangshuang smiled and waved her hand, "The little girl is quite cute. In reality, everyone's living standards are pretty similar, and having meat once a year is rare, but as long as the family is happy together, it doesn't matter what you eat."

Sun Dawu completely agreed with Mu Shuangshuang's point of view, "Miss Shuangshuang is right, I also think as long as the family is together, even if it's a bit tough, it's okay!

The only thing is my little son is already at the age of formal education, but because there's no money, he has to stay at home. He's always telling me he wants to go to school, to the academy, but I can't afford it..."

Speaking of this, Sun Dawu choked up a bit. As a man, he couldn't provide his wife and children with the best, making them endure hardships with him.

"Brother Wu, trust me, things will get better," Mu Shuangshuang comforted.

"By the way, Fengzi and I opened a private school in our village, and the teacher we hired is a scholar who passed the exams this year. Do you want to send your son to our private school? The gift is much cheaper than in town, only one tael of silver and three strips of dried meat a year," Mu Shuangshuang said.

"Really?" Sun Dawu found it hard to believe.

He had inquired about the schools in Shigou Town, and they started at five taels of silver. Even the private schools cost four taels of silver, with at least ten strips of dried meat and good wine, something a regular family like his couldn't afford.

"Of course, it's true. But since Qingshan Town is not close, your child would have to leave home," Mu Shuangshuang said.

"Leaving home doesn't matter, what matters is having hope. My child has always wanted to study, and no matter how far, it's worth it," Sun Dawu said.

At this moment, Mu Shuangshuang suddenly felt that the man in front of her was much more visionary than most.

He was bound to succeed sooner or later.

"Then shall we discuss this after dinner?" Mu Shuangshuang suggested.

Sun Dawu nodded heavily.

The Sun family wasn't in good condition, and even Sun Dawu's home wasn't in town, but in a small village outside the town. Although it was close to town, it was too impoverished.

The house was tattered, almost like a dangerous building.

#### Chapter 855: No Need to Stand on Ceremony

Mu Shuangshuang looked at the solitary house standing in the corner and let out a long sigh, hoping that this Sun Dawu was the person she was looking for.

It was still early, and Mu Shuangshuang helped Da Wu's wife with threading needles, as for intricate work like embroidery, she couldn't do it.

Lu Yuanfeng and Yu Dahai were helping Sun Dawu repair the house.

Every time it rained, Sun Dawu's house would leak water, and inside, it was often damp and wet.

Ever since he stopped working at the restaurant, Sun Dawu was busy selling baked pancakes in town and had no time at all to do repairs.

Fortunately, this time, with three men working together, they managed to fix the leaking roof with wood in just two hours.

As soon as they finished with the house, Sun Dawu headed to the kitchen to start preparing dinner for the day.

Mu Shuangshuang exchanged a few words with Da Wu's wife before following Sun Dawu into the kitchen.

"Miss Shuangshuang, why are you coming in? The kitchen is very smoky, wait outside, I'll call you when the food is ready."

Mu Shuangshuang listened, shook her head, and said, "I heard from Fengzi that your cooking is particularly good, no worse than that of a woman who cooks often. I just want to see if what he says is true."

Mu Shuangshuang squinted her eyes and smiled merrily.

"Oh, you listen to that boy's nonsense. I'm just doing it for fun. Big Ya is busy every day with those needlework stuffs, and I don't want her to get too tired, so I took over the cooking myself."

Sun Dawu scratched his head embarrassedly and finally didn't tell Mu Shuangshuang to leave.

Sun Dawu put the bought vegetables in a wooden basin and washed them with clean water.

Suddenly, he looked up at Mu Shuangshuang: "Miss Shuangshuang, you and Fengzi like each other, right?"

Mu Shuangshuang nodded without hesitation, "Mm! We've already betrothed, just waiting to choose a good time to marry."

"That's wonderful!" Sun Dawu placed the cleaned five-flavor pork on the chopping board, and his hands did not stop cutting the pork into small pieces.

It was much like Lu Yuanfeng said, his knife skills were excellent, and the slices were evenly thick.

"Speaking of which, that boy Fengzi is really something. Back in the military camp, he was the only one who could stand out in front of the commander.

If he didn't leave, within ten years, the commander's position would have been his. Unlike us, working for years, still just a lackey of the Fire Head Army."

Talking about this matter, Sun Dawu felt quite regretful.

A fine young lad, practically risked his life to reach the position of Vanguard and gained some reputation in the military camp.

But in the end, he still requested to come back.

What a pity!

"Everyone has their own aspirations, Fengzi left there. He must have made up his mind; fame and fortune probably don't matter to him," Mu Shuangshuang said.

"That's true, actually there's nothing bad now, at least Fengzi met you. When we all came back together, I could still feel that boy had a melancholy air, probably reluctant to leave the life in the camp.

But now, he's completely different, his smile is even more infectious than before."

Sun Dawu share what he saw.

After chatting with Sun Dawu, Mu Shuangshuang opened up the conversation even more.

She said, "Brother Wu, did you learn the dishes made by the head chef during your time at the restaurant?"

"Oh, don't even mention it. When I came out of the camp, I felt that cooking was the only thing suitable for me. I finally found a restaurant, originally thinking that when the head chef left, I could take over.

But the shopkeeper simply didn't give me that chance. The current head chef's dishes don't even taste good, just keeps increasing the portion size.

This isn't a military camp where just being full is enough! For a restaurant, dishes need to be tasty for people to return."

Sun Dawu was full of grievances, and his chopping of the meat slowed down a bit.

Mu Shuangshuang thought for a moment and said, "Brother Wu, if there was a chance for you to become the head chef, what would you do?"

"There's no such chance anymore. Good Taste Restaurant already has a head chef, and other big restaurants, as soon as they hear I don't have experience, at best they'd let me do odd jobs, and I'd never touch the back kitchen in my whole life."

"I'm saying just in case, if there were such a chance, what would you do?" Mu Shuangshuang asked again.

"Haha, if there's really such a good thing, I'd definitely devote myself to cooking." Sun Dawu laughed, looking silly as he spoke.

"Do you really like cooking?" Mu Shuangshuang asked again.

"Mm! Big Ya likes to watch me cook, and she likes to eat what I make too. Plus, in those years in the camp, I got used to everyone happily eating the food I made."

Sun Dawu is quite simple, happiness and unhappiness show on his face. Mu Shuangshuang almost couldn't resist asking his opinion then.

But thinking about the future operation of the restaurant and her prior arrangements with Yu Dahai and Fengzi, she held back.

Yu Dahai also mentioned that the head chef is the core position of the entire restaurant, besides the accountant.

If the head chef isn't good, the entire restaurant is useless.

The downfall of Fulin in the past was exactly because the head chef stagnated for years, and all the dishes tasted the same.

Ten years with no change.

Plus, with no special dishes, it's only natural people went to Jiu Si Xuan and First-class Residence instead.

Mu Shuangshuang helped Sun Dawu light the fire, watching him complete each dish.

Meatballs, dumplings, braised fish, a few vegetable dishes, a plate of fried eggs, all very simple home-cooked dishes, but the fragrance in the kitchen never ceased.

With the food ready, the table was set.

Sun Family's Daya and Xiao Zhu were staring at the table of dishes, drooling almost ready to fall.

Both kids were quite well-behaved.

"Papa, Mama, there are so many delicious dishes today, you should eat more, especially Papa, coming home so late often, you need to keep your body strong!"

Daya looked obedient.

Both kids were shy but considerate.

Sun Dawu and his wife were smiling the whole time, the meal was basically a show for them and Big Ya.

Mu Shuangshuang tasted each dish, they were delicious, most importantly, they had a taste of happiness.

If she could teach him a bit longer, he could definitely become a good head chef.

After the meal, Mu Shuangshuang put down her chopsticks and looked seriously at Sun Dawu.

"Brother Wu, I asked you before, if there was a chance for you to become the restaurant head chef, what would you choose? What if it were me asking this question now, how would you answer?"

"What?" Sun Dawu looked completely astonished.

He turned to look at Lu Yuanfeng.

"Fengzi, does Miss Shuangshuang mean... she's asking me to be the head chef?" Sun Dawu asked.

"Brother Wu, just call her Shuangshuang, no need to be so formal. Here's the situation. Shuangshuang opened a restaurant in Qingshan Town, the restaurant may open after the New Year.

But right now, we're missing a head chef. The three of us came here to find you because the position of head chef is so important, which is why we didn't mention it initially."

#### Chapter 856: Trouble in the Fourth Household

After Lu Yuanfeng finished speaking, Sun Dawu was still in a state of confusion.

Lu Yuanfeng continued, "Brother Dahu, it's just as I mentioned before; the choice is now in your hands. If you're willing to become our head chef, you can come with us to Qingshan Town.

If you find it troublesome or too far, you can stay here in Shigou Town. Shuangshuang said that no matter what you decide, she will teach you two more ways to make baked pancakes.

Even if you just sell baked pancakes, she guarantees you won't worry about food for the rest of your life."

Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng sincerely hoped that Sun Dawu could come to help them.

But they weren't forcing him, as Yu Dahai said; after all, leaving one's hometown is not a small matter, and they couldn't hold a knife to his throat.

Sun Dawu didn't immediately give an answer, and Mu Shuangshuang gave him time to consider.

They would leave for Er Gui Village after breakfast the next morning, giving Sun Dawu until then to think about it.

"Brother Dahu, I won't beat around the bush; we're inviting you to the restaurant to be the head chef. If you decide to join, I'll teach you some dishes that others don't know, based on what you're already familiar with.

As for benefits and salary, we've yet to finalize them, but rest assured, you won't be at a disadvantage."

With those words, Mu Shuangshuang and the others bid farewell to the Sun Family and headed towards the downtown of Shigou Town.

In town, they found a pretty decent inn and booked two rooms.

After washing up, the three of them, exhausted from a day's work, fell into a deep sleep.

The next morning, just at dawn, Sun Dawu came looking for Lu Yuanfeng with a bamboo basket in hand, filled with breakfast for the three of them.

Handing breakfast to Lu Yuanfeng, Sun Dawu revealed the answer he contemplated overnight: "Fengzi, I won't hide it from you; Daya's mom and I have nothing, but we want to make money for the kids. Daya is getting married, and a dowry is indispensable.

Xiao Zhu is a boy, and we want to send him to school, so Daya's mom and I have decided that once the children start school, our whole family will follow you to Qingshan Town so we can take care of the children and be together as a family."

Sun Dawu's answer was expected yet unexpected for Lu Yuanfeng.

Sun Dawu's love for cooking is something that not everyone can understand. Back in the military camp, he would often have the soldiers help eat the meals he cooked.

Later, when everyone returned, he secretly cried, lamenting that he would no longer have so many people to enjoy his cooking with; he was reluctant!

Working later as an assistant chef in a restaurant, he regained his former enthusiasm.

"Brother Dahu, thank you for making this decision, and thank you for giving us the opportunity," said Lu Yuanfeng.

"Fengzi, I have my own motives too. In the army, I always thought you had the most potential, but I never had the chance to work with you.

Now I have the chance, and I hope that by following you, I can live a good life."

Deciding this way, Sun Dawu was essentially taking a gamble.

But he didn't regret it, thinking that if they could settle in Qingshan Town, it would be a good choice.

It would be beneficial for his son and daughter in the future.

"Brother Dahu, don't worry. The restaurant's management is in Shuangshuang's hands, and there would absolutely be no loss."

Lu Yuanfeng had more faith than anyone in Mu Shuangshuang's capabilities.

Everything she dared to do would undoubtedly succeed.

"Brother Dahu, let's discuss with Shuangshuang about how to proceed concretely."

Lu Yuanfeng brought Sun Dawu to Mu Shuangshuang's room and also called Yu Dahai, and they all started discussing the restaurant's operation.

Mu Shuangshuang suggested that it would be best to renovate the restaurant before opening and would consult with Yu Dahai about how to renovate it when they returned.

As for the opening day, the renovation will take at least a month, and as it's nearing the year-end.

Everything might be ready by February or March, which coincides with the time of growth, and might bring a good sign.

"Brother Dahu, let me now teach you another way to make baked pancakes. Remember, for the next two months, earn as much silver as you can.

When you save enough capital, you can hire someone to make Wu Dalang's baked pancakes, where you'll earn money for your work, and the hired person will earn too; at that point, neither Daya's dowry nor Xiao Zhu's educational expenses will be a problem."

Mu Shuangshuang's considerations were thorough and comprehensive.

Sun Dawu nodded repeatedly, with a spark of hope igniting in his eyes.

Spending some money, Mu Shuangshuang borrowed a kitchen from the innkeeper and some dried plums, preparing to make pork belly buns with pickled vegetables.

Sun Dawu was already skillful at making baked pancakes, so there was no need to improve them.

However, many can make baked pancakes, and no one can guarantee that one day those who study it thoroughly will make better pancakes than Sun Dawu's family.

Thus, she needed to teach Sun Dawu something others didn't know.

In the kitchen, Mu Shuangshuang kneaded the dough and chopped the dried plums and five-flavor pork.

Lu Yuanfeng assisted her, stoking the fire, and the two of them worked together harmoniously.

Once the pork belly buns were ready, Mu Shuangshuang handed the first to Sun Dawu.

Taking a sniff of the bun, Sun Dawu found it to smell particularly fragrant and sweet.

He said, "I haven't even eaten it yet, but it looks and smells delicious—Miss Shuangshuang, you truly have remarkable skills!"

After speaking, Sun Dawu began to chew the bun.

As he ate, Sun Dawu thumbs up to Mu Shuangshuang with one hand over his mouth.

"This pancake is indeed special. If I master it, it will surely attract a lot of business." Sun Dawu chuckled.

With his bun not yet finished, Yu Dahai, craving, also joined in.

...

After completing what Mu Shuangshuang promised, the trio returned to Qingshan Town the same way they came.

By dinnertime, Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng arrived at Er Gui Village.

Though it had been just a day, Mu Shuangshuang felt like centuries had passed.

"Fengzi, we're finally home!"

They were so tired from the journey that they couldn't even have a sip of water.

The Old Mu Family was arguing again, this time with Mu Dashan and Yu Si Niang involved.

Before Mu Shuangshuang could even catch her breath, Xiao Han pulled her to the Old Mu Family's place.

On the way, Mu Shuangshuang asked Xiao Han, "What's going on? Speak slowly, so I can understand and think of a solution."

"Sister, Uncle... Uncle's family sold our cold noodle recipe, and now people are demanding the recipe from them, but Uncle's family can't provide it.

They're causing trouble with Uncle's family, and Aunt is crying, and Dad and Mom are both there trying to solve it," Xiao Han said.

"What do you mean Uncle's family sold our cold noodle recipe? I sold it to the Xue Family in town long ago, and something about this just doesn't add up," Mu Shuangshuang asked, puzzled.

Chapter 857: Caught Her Sneaking Chicken (Part 1)

"Shuangshuang, let's go check it out first and then talk," Lu Yuanfeng suggested.

Mu Shuangshuang quickly picked up Xiao Han, quickening her pace, and ran towards the Old Mu Family.

...

In the backyard of the Old Mu Family, all the family members were gathered in a circle.

In the middle stood Mrs. Liu from the fourth branch and Mu Dajiang.

Mu Dazhong and Mu Danian stood with arms crossed, watching the spectacle.

"I say, Fourth Brother, you really are something else. The stuff from Third Brother's family isn't yours, why did you sell it? Besides, you're not a child anymore, can't touch what's not yours, don't you know that?"

Mu Danian spoke with righteousness, yet his words were filled with sarcasm.

"Old Four, what you did, isn't this making things difficult for Third Brother's family?" Mu Dazhong chimed in.

Everyone seemed to have agreed, all attacking the fourth branch.

Mu Dajiang was trembling all over, holding Mrs. Liu tightly in his arms, gathering his courage and saying, "This matter is my fault. I'll take the blame alone; you don't have to say anything more."

"Say nothing?" Old Mrs. Mu raised her eyebrows, her face stern, "If you say nothing, will you remember? Will you know that you did wrong?"

"Mom, this matter is my fault. The handprint is mine, it has nothing to do with Xiaxia's mother," Mu Dajiang insisted.

"You must have been bewitched by this wicked woman, you can't even think straight anymore. This woman, as your wife, didn't stop you from doing wrong, she's at fault!

In my view, forget everything else, and hand this wicked woman to that Zou fellow, then send him away!"

After all, he was her own son, even if normally she didn't protect him as much, compared to the daughter-in-law, a son was more important.

Mu Xiaxia and Mu Xiaochu had long been crying their hearts out, it was Yu Si Niang comforting them, preventing them from rushing to Old Mrs. Mu and Mr. Mu to demand an explanation.

"Mom..." Mu Dajiang was shocked, he never expected that what he did would make his wife bear the consequences.

"Enough, stop talking back to me. That's the way it's settled!" Old Mrs. Mu said firmly.

Mr. Mu held a pipe, taking a few puffs, and began to mediate the situation: "Everyone from Third Brother's family is here today, so let's address this matter!"

The deal is in black and white, and Old Four admits it, the handprint is his. We need to find a proper way to resolve it.

Either... Third Brother gives the cold noodles recipe to Boss Zou to resolve the matter, or..."

Before Mr. Mu could finish, Mu Dashan interjected, "The cold noodles recipe belongs to Shuangshuang, and she's already sold it..."

Mu Dashan's words brought joy to Mu Dade's heart.

When he planned this, he never intended to harm the fourth branch, because he found it unsatisfying.

He just saw that the third and fourth branches were close, and the fourth branch was easy to bully, so he targeted them.

Now, as long as the third branch protects the fourth, then the third branch awaits to suffer greatly!

"Then let Old Four handle it themselves! This matter has nothing to do with your elder brother's family, nor us!"

These words came from Old Mrs. Mu.

Even Mr. Mu wouldn't dare say something like this.

The fourth branch, after all, is part of the Old Mu Family, saying such words cuts off their hope.

Mu Dajiang trembled, his eyes glimmering with white light, his face turned ashen, suddenly seeming a decade older.

In the wind, Mu Dajiang's body appeared disordered, and his gaze scattered, were it not for Mrs. Liu supporting him, he would have fallen.

He stiffly glanced at Old Mrs. Mu, "Mom, do you... really think that way? Is our fourth branch... supposed to die?"

"Quit your nonsense. It's not me putting a knife to your throat forcing you to do this, you did it yourself, so take responsibility yourself," Old Mrs. Mu heartlessly replied.

"Whether Grandma held a knife to Fourth Uncle's throat, I don't know, but I do know, Fourth Uncle is an inseparable part of the Old Mu Family.

If a mistake is made, the family should take responsibility together just like back when, when our Big Brother was enjoying a life of leisure... oh no, I mean taking the exams.

The other uncles and aunts, working hard from early morning to dusk, in the fields plowing and fertilizing, that time, the family took responsibility together.

It's impossible that now Big Brother has become a scholar, he just throws away the previous affairs, right! Then won't the uncles and aunts who supported Big Brother feel disheartened?"

Mu Shuangshuang said loudly before the crowd.

Old Mrs. Mu's face suddenly changed.

She pointed at Mu Shuangshuang, "What right does this brat have to speak here, get out!"

"Mom, I think Shuang's words make sense. Back then, indeed, it was our brothers who supported Big Brother to go out. Now with Big Brother treating Old Four this way, he won't treat us like this after all this, right?"

Mu Dazhong is excellent at adapting to circumstances, and although Mu Shuangshuang's words protected the fourth branch, they were beneficial to him.

Big Brother's household has become increasingly arrogant, who knows if they will abandon their poor relatives in the countryside one day?

Mu Danian also took a stand, "Big Brother, Second Brother, and Shuang were right. Since Big Brother became a scholar, we haven't seen any money to improve our lives, will it be the same in the future?"

Mu Shuangshuang's eyes glistened with amusement, watching the crafty and opportunistic Mu Dazhong and Mu Danian.

In truth, these two individuals embodied shamelessness flawlessly.

Speaking without considering truth, only caring if it benefits them.

Even Mu Dajiang, their own brother, if needed, they wouldn't hesitate to step on him.

Beside them, Mrs. Jin gave Mu Shuangshuang a glare and addressed Mu Dazhong and Mu Danian, "Second and Fifth, why are you anxious? Wasn't it settled that when Big Brother becomes a Champion Scholar, we'll all go to the Capital to enjoy life together?"

Your big brother isn't without money, the silver is saved for the expenses of going to the Capital for exams."

"Big Sister-in-law, don't try to smooth things over. Just yesterday, I saw you secretly stewing chicken in the kitchen, you ate chicken and didn't even give us a sip of broth," Mu Danian sarcastically retorted.

Mrs. Jin's face turned blue then white!

She retreated, signaling to Mu Dade to step forward.

Mu Dade is the pillar of the Old Mu Family.

His words carry more weight than Mr. Mu's, everyone listens to him.

At this moment, Mu Dade was quite displeased.

A good drama was ruined by Mu Shuangshuang.

"Mom, the chicken was for Dan Dan's mother to stew, I've been studying late these days, my head hurts a bit..."

As Mu Dade spoke, Old Mrs. Mu rushed over, grabbing Mu Dade's hand softly, "Headache? What's happened? Is it serious? I'll have Second Brother call Zhang Huai Shu to check, his medical skills are excellent."

Chapter 858: Lifting a Rock Only to Drop It on Your Own Foot

Old Mrs. Mu's words were like a slap in the face for everyone.

Mu Dade just said he had a headache, and immediately there was concern, and they wanted to call a doctor.

When others in the family fell ill, Old Mrs. Mu didn't even allow a moment's rest.

Take, for instance, when Mrs. Liu had a cold and couldn't get up, Old Mrs. Mu still called her to cook on time every day, completely ignoring whether she lived or died.

And then there's Mrs. Lin, although her miscarriage was fake, Old Mrs. Mu immediately made her wash clothes and do chores, not willing to spend a penny to get them treated.

Everyone felt jealous, and their gazes toward Old Mrs. Mu changed.

Mu Dade continued, "This matter is partly my responsibility, but after all, I'm not the one who pressed the handprint.

How about this, the third branch gives the cold noodles recipe to Boss Zou, and I will compensate for the loss, alright?"

After hearing Mu Dade's words, Mu Shuangshuang just wanted to curse, "Damn, he's pushing it too far!"

But on the surface, she kept smiling, although her smile now carried a certain chill.

Mu Dade clearly knew that Mu Shuangshuang had sold the cold noodles recipe, and now he was asking the third branch to hand it over; if that's not bullying the third branch, then what is it?

"Uncle, the third branch doesn't have the recipe anymore; it has been sold to the Xue Family in town!"

When mentioning the Xue Family, Mu Shuangshuang intentionally emphasized her tone.

The Xue Family was the most influential in Qingshan Town, with Mr. Xue being a high-ranking official in the Capital; even the county magistrate wouldn't dare oppose the Xue Family.

Mu Dade looked shocked.

He stared at Mu Shuangshuang's face, trying to gauge if she was lying.

The final conclusion was that Mu Shuangshuang indeed didn't seem to be lying.

She really knew the Xue Family, and Mu Dade suddenly felt a little scared. What exactly was the relationship between this girl and the Xue Family?

If they protected her, would the Xue Family cause him trouble if he bullied her?

Mu Dade's mind was a mess; what he originally thought was a piece of fat within his grasp, to be devoured at will, was suddenly no longer straightforward.

If she really had ties with the Xue Family, perhaps he could leverage his connection with them to advance himself in the Capital.

"Shuangshuang... how do you know the Xue Family? Are you close with Mr. Xue?" Mu Dade asked.

"There's no need to tell you, Uncle! Who I know is my business! Whether I'm close with someone or not, that's my freedom!"

This statement was both a hint and a warning.

She, Mu Shuangshuang, was not the powerless person Mu Dade thought she was.

Behind her stood the Xue Family, a family that Mu Dade dared not offend.

Mu Dade was left red-faced and fuming, glaring at the person in front of him, wishing Mu Shuangshuang would just drop dead.

"Ha, so what does Shuangshuang suggest we do about this?" Mu Dade asked, struggling to control his temper.

"How should I know? You're the backbone of this family, after all. It's up to you to handle it. Besides, you're a scholar; your word matters more than anyone else's in this house.

Regardless of what Fourth Uncle did, what we need to resolve first is the person who bought the cold noodles recipe."

Mu Shuangshuang just wanted to wash her hands of it all.

Mu Dade said so much, purely to make the third branch guilty of ingratitude.

"Little Shuang, how about you write another cold noodles recipe for Manager Zou since you know how to make it," Mr. Mu suggested absurdly.

"Father, you said it yourself; we can't sell the same thing twice. If Shuangshuang gives the recipe to Manager Zou, her integrity would be compromised," Mu Dashan finally spoke up.

He realized that the entire day was spent bullying the fourth child.

Now they've started picking on the third branch.

"This..." Mr. Mu awkwardly laughed, his face looking grim.

"Hmph, this isn't Da De's fault, and he doesn't have to handle it!" Old Mrs. Mu declared.

"Exactly, this has nothing to do with my dad. Fourth Uncle was greedy and hurt the third branch, so why should we, the big branch, take the blame?" Mu Yingying mumbled, clearly displeased.

Meanwhile, Mu Dazhong's eyes shifted slightly as he tried to gauge his brother's mood.

As the second child in the family, while he wasn't particularly capable, he was well-attuned to his elder brother's moods.

Clearly, he noticed that after hearing that mention of the Xue Family from the brat, his brother was a little apprehensive.

Mu Dazhong figured that Mu Shuangshuang had some skills that made Mu Dade wary of her.

Without thinking much, Mu Dazhong loudly reprimanded, "Ying, the adults are talking here; it's not your place to speak, go to the side!"

"Uncle, I'm a junior, but isn't that stinky girl too? She can speak, but I can't? You're clearly siding with her."

To Mu Shuangshuang, the idea of Mu Dazhong favoring her was laughable, but she went along and didn't laugh.

After all, the Old Mu Family was already a mess, and everyone was only looking out for their own interests with no regard for anyone else's life or death.

"You..." Mu Dazhong was furious, almost dancing with rage.

"Alright, let's not argue anymore! In any case, there are only two solutions. Either uncle steps up and resolves it, or we push Fourth Uncle out.

But we should avoid the second option because I'll tell outsiders that it was uncle who instructed Fourth Uncle, with the intention of keeping him down!

Making sure Fourth Uncle's family would farm in the countryside for life!" said Mu Shuangshuang.

Her words almost made the big branch cough up blood from anger.

Old Mrs. Mu and Mr. Mu also found themselves fuming at Mu Shuangshuang.

In this whole Old Mu Family, only Mu Shuangshuang dared to speak like this.

She didn't hide her intention to drag Mu Dade into trouble.

Mu Dade had dug a pit for the third branch, but it turned out to be his own grave.

"Bitch, I'll beat you to death!" Mu Yingying had never been so humiliated. Ever since her father became a scholar, everyone treated their family with utmost respect.

Only this brat continuously caused trouble for the big branch, and now, she even wanted to throw dirt on them.

Mu Yingying raised her hand, swinging a slap towards Mu Shuangshuang.

She used all her strength, vowing that this slap would surely leave Mu Shuangshuang stunned.

But before she could touch Mu Shuangshuang's face, her hand was caught by Lu Yuanfeng.

"If you want to talk, then talk. Why resort to violence? So this is the manners of a scholar's daughter!" Lu Yuanfeng said coldly.

Mu Yingying's hand, grasped by Lu Yuanfeng, was in pain as he applied pressure, making her grimace.

"Lackey, you're just that girl's lackey, always listening to her. You're both nothing but thugs!"

Mu Yingying, enduring the pain in her wrist, shouted.

Having said that, Mu Shuangshuang jumped in and delivered a slap that made Mu Yingying's face puff up like a steamed bun.

"Watch your filthy mouth. Who gave you the guts to think you can do whatever you want?" Mu Shuangshuang said.

Chapter 859: The Showdown Between the Third Branch and the Main Branch

"Dad, she hit me..."

Mu Yingying covered her swollen face and began to cry.

Mu Shuangshuang's slap not only stunned Mu Yingying but also Mu Dade and Mrs. Jin.

They were speechless for a while.

When Mu Yingying shouted, Mrs. Jin finally came to her senses.

Mrs. Jin was full of anger; she charged towards Mu Shuangshuang, her hands clenched into fists.

"You wretched girl, how dare you touch my daughter! I won't let this go!"

"You wretched girl, you have no status or standing, who do you think you are? How dare you lay a hand on my daughter?"

Mrs. Jin slapped Mu Shuangshuang.

Mu Shuangshuang dodged easily and, in passing, stuck out her foot, tripping Mrs. Jin, who fell face-first onto the ground.

Her once beautiful white face was now covered in dirt, her nose red.

Mrs. Jin got up and wanted to fight with Mu Shuangshuang, but Yu Si Niang hurriedly pushed her away.

"What are you doing?" Yu Si Niang shouted loudly.

"Who allowed you to bully my daughter? Jinyin'er, you're way too overbearing."

Yu Si Niang protected Mu Shuangshuang like a tigress, shielding her carefully behind her.

Her eyes were fiery red, glaring at Mrs. Jin.

"Yu Si Niang, are you blind? Your daughter started hitting my daughter, what's wrong with me disciplining this little wretch?" Mrs. Jin yelled.

"Why did Shuangshuang hit Yingying, can't you figure it out? It was her foul mouth, Shuangshuang wasn't wrong, not only was she right, but she hit her well. If I hear her call anyone an adulterer again, I'll tear her mouth apart!"

At this moment, Yu Si Niang was like an angry beast, her hair standing on end.

For her daughter, she wasn't afraid of feudal etiquette or the so-called status of the first branch.

In her eyes, there was only one thing: her daughter must not be bullied, even if it meant she had to die.

Mu Shuangshuang felt deeply moved.

Yu Si Niang fiercely protected her cub; she wouldn't let anyone bully her child.

And this time, for her sake, she faced everyone in the Old Mu Family.

"You... you..." Mrs. Jin was so furious she couldn't even speak, pointing her finger, trembling all over as she glared at Mu Shuangshuang and Yu Si Niang.

Mu Shuangshuang was tougher than Mrs. Jin, her eyes wide, her presence overwhelming as she retaliated against Mrs. Jin.

"Auntie wants to compete on who has bigger eyes, I'm ready to go all the way!" Mu Shuangshuang said.

"You..." Mrs. Jin was so angered by Mu Shuangshuang's words that her entire body ached, especially her stomach, as if it was about to burst.

She couldn't catch her breath.

Determined she wouldn't gain anything from this mother-daughter pair, Mrs. Jin turned to Mu Dashan: "Third brother, be a man and properly discipline this troublesome mother and daughter.

They bullied my daughter, caused me to fall, and now disrespect me. I want them to kneel and apologize to me!"

Mrs. Jin spoke to Mu Dashan with an air of superiority, as if Mu Dashan was born to serve her.

Mu Dashan was enraged: "Sister-in-law, precisely because I am a man, I must protect Si Niang and her daughter. Today, Shuangshuang did nothing wrong, nor did Si Niang; the ones in error are Yingying and you.

You've gone too far! We won't apologize and don't need to apologize. Sister-in-law, it's true you are the Scholar's wife.

But let me tell you, you're merely a Scholar's wife, not a Champion Scholar's Wife, so mind your words and actions according to your status!"

Mu Dashan's words were like a deep-sea torpedo in boiling water.

With this strike, the enemy was either dead or crippled.

So, hearing this, Mrs. Jin collapsed, her hands and feet twitching, and white foam began to flow from her mouth.

The Old Mu Family was thrown into chaos.

Mu Dandan and Mu Yingying rushed forward, shouting loudly, "Mom, Mom, what's wrong..."

Only the eyes rolling back, face turning blue, and twitching Mrs. Jin responded to them.

"Dad, my mom... my mom..." Mu Dandan was terrified.

Mu Dade was also filled with panic, he shouted: "Call a doctor, call a doctor..."

Mr. Mu was also anxious; the eldest daughter-in-law had always been the one he cared about most.

Knowledgeable, reasonable, most importantly, from a good family.

If something would happen, what should he do?

At this moment, Mr. Mu somewhat blamed Mu Dashan, he said: "Third son, what's wrong with you? Jinyin'er is still your sister-in-law, do you speak like this?"

"Dad, how did I speak? Did I say anything wrong? Wasn't it sister-in-law calling Shuangshuang a wretched girl, wasn't it Yingying calling them adulterers?"

I didn't even hit them, and now they're upset over the truth, but when I, Mu Dashan, scrimped and saved to send elder brother to school, no one said they couldn't handle it?"

At this moment, Mu Dashan resented Mr. Mu's favoritism and Old Mrs. Mu's cruelty.

They were all sons, yet he and his other brothers never received the desired affection.

Even Zhenzhen and Xiangxiang received more than they ever did.

As long as it was a good thing, elder brother could have it, second sister could have it, seventh sister could have it.

Only them brothers couldn't touch anything.

Injured, sick, crippled, just some plaster and it was taken care of, but elder brother had a headache and they'd invite all of the world's famous doctors.

If that's the case, why give birth to them in the first place?

"You..." Mu Dashan's words left Mr. Mu speechless.

Because they were all facts, not a single lie.

Others might say they made contributions to the Old Mu Family with some discount, feeling it was half-true.

But what Mu Dashan said needed no discount.

Back then, it was indeed him, waking early and exhausting himself, supporting the entire Old Mu Family's farmland.

"Third son, you..." Mr. Mu wanted to say some gentle words to make Mu Dashan apologize, let the matter pass.

But Mu Dashan's words touched Mu Dade's sensitive spot.

Mu Dade, with a flushed face, confronted Mu Dashan: "Third brother, I've never talked about the domestic matters as an elder brother.

You always say my scholarship success depended on your money-making; I, Mu Dade, am telling you today, it's not true.

The over a hundred taels for the imperial exam, fifty taels were from Jinyin'er's family, and the remaining fifty taels were from eldest sister's in-laws.

As for you, I, Mu Dade, never spent a penny of yours! Don't show up in front of me again, or don't blame me for severing brotherly ties."

Mu Dade threw down these harsh words, but Mu Dashan did not concede an inch in spirit.

He also said: "We of the third branch don't depend on your luck, nor do we expect to follow you up high.

Just hope in the future you don't use your broken scholar's status to pressure our third branch, otherwise my hoe will not spare you."

"Dad, I support you, when it comes to shameless relatives like this, make them roll, the further the better! Also, anyone who tries to harm the third branch behind backs, I curse them to never flip over in their lives!" Mu Shuangshuang said.

Chapter 860: Still Won't Hold Back

"Dad, Mom, listen to this, this stinky girl is so disrespectful, she's cursing the elders, is she even human?"

Seeing the chaos, Mrs. Lin tried to teach Mu Shuangshuang a lesson, but Mu Shuangshuang glared at her fiercely.

"Second Aunt, I'm cursing those who harm the third branch behind our backs. If you think I'm cursing the elders, then I have nothing more to say.

But Second Aunt, you'd better not harm the third branch, or I won't be polite!"

Mrs. Lin was so angry that her nose was crooked. Her trembling hand pointed at Mu Shuangshuang, unable to utter half a word.

After arguing with Mrs. Lin, Mu Shuangshuang no longer paid attention to the Old Mu Family, who were so angry they could spit blood, nor Mrs. Jin, who was still convulsing on the ground.

Mu Shuangshuang stepped forward, picked up Xiao Han, and called over Lu Yuanfeng and her parents.

Without resting for a moment, they walked towards the third branch.

This time, the third and the first branch had completely broken off.

From now on, they no longer needed to watch the first branch's expressions, nor worry about the first branch's tricks behind their backs because all the hatred would be out in the open, and everyone no longer needed to discreetly plot under the guise of relatives.

Thinking about today's events, Mu Shuangshuang had only one thought in her heart, and that was satisfaction!

Her mom countered Mrs. Jin, her dad countered her big uncle, every sentence was brilliant and every word was sharp.

It showed her the astonishing explosive power of her otherwise mild-mannered parents. This way, she wouldn't have to worry about her parents being bullied anymore.

Back at the third branch, Mu Shuangshuang cheerfully started preparing dinner.

Mu Dashan and Lu Yuanfeng were chatting in the room. He asked Lu Yuanfeng about the events of the previous day, and upon learning that a new chef had been hired, Mu Dashan's mood improved instantly.

He decided he wouldn't meddle with the matters of the Old Mu Family anymore, but as for the inn, he had to learn to manage it.

Being a helper at the inn wouldn't be bad, as long as he could help his daughter.

Yu Si Niang made a cup of tea for both Mu Dashan and Lu Yuanfeng. Compared to others' nonchalance, Yu Si Niang was still a bit uneasy. She said, "Shuangshuang's dad, do you think the first branch will trouble us? After all, Shuangshuang's big uncle is a scholar."

"Si Niang, don't worry. Big Brother is a sly person. Even if you don't offend him, he'll still scheme against our third branch behind our backs.

The incident today was clearly orchestrated by him." Mu Dashan said indifferently.

Mu Dashan knew his big brother inside out. Others might be unaware, but how could he, as a brother, not know?

He once thought that his big brother's affairs required neither calculation nor thought.

But Mu Dade's remark about never using a penny from Mu Dashan's earnings completely chilled Mu Dashan's heart.

He, Mu Dashan, wouldn't keep offering warm goodwill only to be met with Mu Dade's cold shoulder.

"Sigh, though it's resolved for us, it's Old Fourth's family who's going to have a tougher time ahead." Yu Si Niang sighed.

Hearing this, a look of concern spread across Mu Dashan's face.

While he could detach and talk about separating from the family, Old Fourth's family had no fields, no land, no way out, and their future seemed bleak.

Seeing this, Lu Yuanfeng said, "Third Uncle, Third Aunt, our inn still needs staff. If Fourth Uncle doesn't mind, he can come work when the inn opens.

The pay might not be much, but it's income nonetheless, and the inn covers three meals a day. If they save a bit, they can keep the wage."

Upon hearing Lu Yuanfeng's suggestion, Mu Dashan's eyes lit up as he said, "That's true, why didn't I think of that?"

But you and Shuangshuang shouldn't burden yourselves too much. If it's doable, great. If not, we can give some silver to Old Fourth to set up a small stall in town. Anyway, Old Fourth has pretty much mastered the skill of making puffed rice."

Speaking of which, Mu Dajiang, who nearly blew up the house trying, eventually managed to make decent puffed rice after several attempts.

Once the weather warms up, he can start making it outside.

"That works. I'll discuss it with Shuangshuang later."

Lu Yuanfeng trusted Mu Dajiang's character, knowing him to be an honest farmer without any deceitful thoughts.

And when it came to selecting people, both he and Mu Shuangshuang prioritized character over skills, although ideally, they wanted people with both good character and skills.

The three chatted for a while, enjoying two cups of tea.

The fourth branch, Mu Dajiang with Mrs. Liu, came over.

Mu Dajiang's complexion had returned to normal, while Mrs. Liu's eyes were red, as if she had been crying.

Upon arrival, they said, "Third Brother, Third Sister-in-law, we're sorry to trouble you again."

Mu Dashan quickly stood up, helping Mu Dajiang, "We're brothers; there's no need to apologize. We know you didn't mean it. But I still don't understand if Big Brother's family was involved or not?"

Mu Dajiang nodded, then shook his head, as he narrated the whole incident to Mu Dashan.

When Mu Dade first returned, his first move was to win over the fourth branch.

Because the fourth branch had a good relationship with the third branch.

On that day, many came to the third branch to buy the cold noodles recipe, every one of them was refused by Mu Shuangshuang.

But Mrs. Jin claimed Mu Shuangshuang was selecting the highest bidder, and she could help if Mu Dajiang got involved.

In the end, Mu Dajiang was deceived by Mrs. Jin into signing his fingerprint on a contract with a shopkeeper in a town tavern.

And this happened months ago, something Mu Dajiang completely forgot about once he got busy.

The fourth branch was naturally honest, making it not too difficult for Mrs. Jin to deceive them.

But Mu Dajiang wasn't aware that this deception brought trouble to the third branch.

"Third Brother, this was all my doing, so don't forgive me. Just let me face some punishment!" Mu Dajiang said with a pained expression.

Upon hearing this, Mu Dashan let out a long sigh.

"Big Sister-in-law is naturally clever; you were tricked by her, so you can't be blamed. It's just that Big Sister-in-law's too scheming.

Back then, she also tricked me into arranging a marriage for Shuangshuang, under the pretense that what I signed had Shuangshuang's date of birth and eight characters of destiny.

As someone illiterate, I had no idea what it said.

I never expected that as a sister-in-law, she would deceive her brother-in-law, almost selling Shuangshuang..."

Mentioning this, Mu Dashan still felt a pang of regret.

Even now, he couldn't get over it.

Had Shuangshuang not regained her senses and chosen to reconnect with the family then, he feared losing such an obedient and understanding daughter forever.

"No, Third Brother, it's still my fault. If I hadn't easily trusted Big Sister-in-law, none of this would have happened." Mu Dajiang insisted, admitting his mistake.

At that moment, Mu Shuangshuang entered the room to scoop rice, hearing this, and said, "Fourth Uncle indeed made a mistake!"

Mu Dajiang bowed his head in shame.

But then he heard Mu Shuangshuang say, "But the biggest fault lies with Big Aunt. Fourth Uncle, just focus on saving money for Fourth Aunt and Xiaxia, that's all."