

Folly 861

Chapter 861: Choosing Between Two Options (Part 2)

In Mu Shuangshuang's dictionary, money is best spent when earned by oneself, so as not to be subject to others.

The third branch can be independent now, unafraid of the scholar uncle, simply because their money is not in Old Mrs. Mu's hands.

They can use money whenever needed, no longer like in the past when the whole family lacked even a warm cotton coat.

Not to mention furniture, aside from a broken wooden cabinet with a missing leg and a wooden table picked from a garbage heap, there's nothing else.

The third branch had been poor once, although they're still poor now, at least they don't have to worry about their next meal.

Nor do they have to be berated by Old Mrs. Mu from dawn till dusk over a single coin, relentless.

The fourth branch hasn't divided the family yet simply because they own nothing.

No fields, no land, no house. Anyone leaving the Old Mu Family ends up with nothing.

Mu Dajiang nodded repeatedly and asked, "Shuangshuang, what... do you think I should do? Should I continue to make puffed rice, or work the fields for others?"

Mu Dajiang had made up his mind; he won't work in the fields anymore from now on.

He'll find work on his own; as for his parents, he'll just hand over some Silver each month.

Once he saves enough money, he'll immediately separate from the family, not even needing Old Mu Family's house.

"Do them all! In spring, there's a lot of work in the fields; you can work for others, but not in our village, lest grandparents have opinions. This way, you can earn some wages each day.

As for now, as I see it, fourth uncle shouldn't wait any longer and should push a cart to fry puffed rice from village to village. Seize the time before the year-end to pocket some money.

I'll provide the rice for frying puffed rice, and I'll teach you how to make popcorn, which you can sell on your own."

Mu Shuangshuang is no longer cooperating with the tea houses in town to deliver popcorn, although they approached her seeking continued collaboration, even willing to send people to pick it up.

But Mu Shuangshuang refused.

She plans to open a restaurant herself; when the time comes, inviting storytellers or something will make that popcorn very useful.

"Alright! I'll listen to Shuangshuang," Mu Dajiang said.

The responsibility of this matter for the fourth branch wasn't pursued anymore, but if it occurs again, even if unintentional, she won't forgive it, a thought Mu Shuangshuang didn't forget to convey to Mu Dajiang.

Mu Dajiang nodded repeatedly, in his heart, already blacklisting the main branch, deciding to never trust what they say again.

As for how Mu Dade intends to resolve this matter, Mu Shuangshuang doesn't care.

She kept the fourth branch for a good dinner, and also called Mu Dalang and Huang Bitu over.

Recently, Mu Dalang has been helping the third branch build the academy while also inquiring who sells piglets.

He plans to buy piglets and take on the entire pig farming business in Er Gui Village.

After dinner, the fourth branch returned to tidy up the leftovers from the Old Mu Family.

Mu Dalang pulled Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng aside to seek their opinions.

Mu Dalang briefly shared his plan with Mu Shuangshuang, hoping the two could offer some help.

"Fengzi, you're the most skilled hunter in the village; do you think I should catch piglets outside or buy prey from hunters?"

Mu Dalang knows that Lu Yuanfeng often catches wild pigs, rabbits, and the like.

Lu Yuanfeng thought for a moment and said, "It's better to buy piglets from butchers! Wild animals from the mountains are difficult to tame; raising a few is fine, but any more, and problems will surely arise.

By the way, hasn't Wang Erma still not come out? His piglets and sows probably haven't been sold; do you want to buy from him?"

"What? No way, why should I buy pigs from that wicked Wang Erma?" Mu Dalang was astonished.

After Wang Erma was imprisoned, Old Wang Family lost someone to slaughter pigs.

Wang Gousheng, being lazy and gluttonous, wouldn't even slaughter pigs and bleed them when his father was around.

Since his father went to jail, living off prison meals, he knows nothing.

Lately, he's been selling off his big fat pigs at a loss.

The breeding pigs have been bought by butchers from other villages, leaving just three old sows and a heap of piglets.

Villagers aren't interested in sows, not only are they tough to eat but having produced so many piglets, the pork would certainly be tough.

Mu Dalang considered checking it out but halted at the thought of why Wang Erma ended up in jail.

"Shuangshuang, what's your opinion?" Mu Dalang asked Mu Shuangshuang again.

"Consider the money! Whichever way saves money, do it that way, regardless of whether it's Wang Erma's pigs.

Currently, we don't have any funds; even talking about a large scale purchase of many pigs is impossible."

At this moment, the money for renovating Mu Shuangshuang's restaurant hasn't been gathered.

And she can't fork out more money for Mu Dalang either.

The price of a sow isn't cheap, and such high-yield sows are practically equivalent to an acre of fertile land.

If Mu Dalang were to buy from other homes, he could only manage to buy one sow with the money he has.

Thinking about piglets is unrealistic, since there's no money to buy them.

"I only have three taels of Silver, these three taels were originally invested by Shuangshuang, adding up to four taels with mine; we intended to buy ten dairy sheep.

Later, we spent eight hundred wen to buy two goats for Bitā's family. Initially, I thought with three taels, we could buy seven or eight sheep, but now it seems if I wish to start a pig slaughter business, I'll have to put the sheep farming on hold."

If Mu Dalang had to choose, he'd pick slaughtering and raising pigs of course.

Since Wang Erma isn't around, the pork business is stranded, money is sure to be made.

"Should I discuss it with Gousheng's mother tomorrow?" Mu Dalang said, though he felt it might be tricky.

"Will Gousheng's mother agree to sell the pigs to me? After all, it's because her husband injured my father that he was caught, she must resent the Old Mu Family, so...."

Mu Dalang's concern isn't unfounded.

"Well, then have Gousheng's mother lower the price. Tell her you're willing to help Old Wang Family, allowing people in the county to release Wang Erma sooner.

Also, when Wang Erma is released, their whole family should relocate and never appear in Er Gui Village again."

"Release Wang Erma? How is that possible? We have no connections in the county," Mu Dalang said.

"Who said we don't." Mu Shuangshuang smiled.

Wang Erma injuring Mu Dazhong actually didn't necessitate imprisonment in the county.

It was just because Mu Dazhong is Mu Dade's brother, and Mu Dade is a scholar; the village head feared offending a scholar, fearing difficulties for their future, leading villagers to send Wang Erma to the county.

Moreover, Wang Erma's issue should only have landed him a few days in custody.

Nothing like now, so long without a word.

The only possibility is that this matter was influenced by Mu Dade's sweetheart, Ruan Xiao Jiao, whispering in his ear.

To untie the bell, the person who tied it is needed; to release Wang Erma, seeking help from Mu Dade and Ruan Xiao Jiao is necessary.

Chapter 862: No One Can Compare to Him

Sure, here is the translated text:

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Mu Shuangshuang shared her idea with Mu Dalang, and only then did Mu Dalang let go of all his previous worries.

Having dealt with matters here, Mu Dalang returned to the Old Mu Family.

In the room, only Lu Yuanfeng and Mu Shuangshuang remained.

The two looked at each other and shared a smile.

During these days, both have been busy. Though together, they seldom shared their innermost thoughts.

Mu Shuangshuang got up and poured Lu Yuanfeng a cup of tea, asking, "Fengzi, do you think our life is fulfilling?"

Mu Shuangshuang herself quite liked this kind of life, bustling and not boring.

Moreover, she could work together with those around her towards a common goal.

"Yes! As long as we have things to do, it's fulfilling," Lu Yuanfeng nodded, looking at Mu Shuangshuang with a smile full of warmth.

"It's true, but most of these matters are the Old Mu Family's trivial issues, which can be a bit annoying," Mu Shuangshuang shared her thoughts in front of Lu Yuanfeng.

Lu Yuanfeng laughed and shook his head. He usually refrained from commenting on the affairs of the Old Mu Family.

And most of the time, Lu Yuanfeng didn't speak ill of others.

Regardless of whether they were Lu Family members who had harmed him and his mother or anyone else.

"By the way, Shuangshuang, your room doesn't have a heated bed, are your feet cold at night? Do you sleep well? How about I make you a heated bed tomorrow, I always worry you'll be cold and can't sleep," Lu Yuanfeng said.

A tall and sturdy young man, his brows softened when speaking about Mu Shuangshuang.

His gaze stayed on Mu Shuangshuang's face from beginning to end.

Her delicate little face, becoming more beautiful over time, made Lu Yuanfeng feel increasingly like he had found a treasure.

In half a year, Mu Shuangshuang grew from just a frame into her current form with more weight, eating and exercising in between.

Fortunately, it all paid off, and the effort wasn't in vain.

Now, her appearance, in Er Gui Village, is among the top, envied by the village maidens and young wives.

"Fengzi, why are you always staring at me? Is there something on my face?" Mu Shuangshuang turned slightly red under Lu Yuanfeng's unabashed gaze.

Even someone as thick-skinned as her could feel shy when it came to matters of love between men and women.

"Shuangshuang, you haven't answered my question yet, are your feet cold at night?" Lu Yuanfeng asked.

"Not cold, my mother gave me a brazier, I put it under the bed, it's almost as good as a heated bed," Mu Shuangshuang replied.

Mu Shuangshuang didn't lie; aside from the brazier, perhaps due to frequent exercise, her blood pressure wasn't low, even in the dead of winter, lying alone under the quilt didn't feel cold.

As long as she covered herself well, her body quickly warmed up.

Throughout the night, she slept comfortably, except for the vigilance cultivated in her past life, waking her even with slight disturbances.

For the first time, Mu Shuangshuang felt overly alert was a mistake.

"By the way, don't make me a heated bed, I'm not used to it," Mu Shuangshuang said.

In her past life, she was accustomed to sleeping on a bed. In this era, most families slept on heated beds, ate on kang tables, unfamiliar to Mu Shuangshuang, all seemed natural here.

"Shuangshuang, wait a moment!" Lu Yuanfeng suddenly said.

After speaking, he walked out.

Mu Shuangshuang widened her eyes, anxiously watching the door by the light of the kerosene lamp, eagerly awaiting Lu Yuanfeng's return.

As soon as he appeared, Mu Shuangshuang felt warmth in her heart.

She waited for a while until Lu Yuanfeng returned with a wooden basin.

The basin contained freshly boiled hot water, and before Mu Shuangshuang could react, he squatted down, lifting Mu Shuangshuang's foot to help her remove her shoes.

"Fengzi... what are you doing?" Mu Shuangshuang was stunned.

The young man before her clearly intended to wash her feet.

In the Da Ning Dynasty, women washing men's feet, even using leftover water, was customary.

Though she didn't agree, she wouldn't criticize it, as each era has its unique way of existing.

She may not adapt, she could change herself, but cannot interfere with others' ways of life.

Mu Shuangshuang never expected Lu Yuanfeng to wash her feet.

"Fengzi, you better not wash them, I'm lazy, and might not wash yours in the future," Mu Shuangshuang tried to pull her foot back but was held by Lu Yuanfeng.

Her foot rested on Lu Yuanfeng's knee, with shoes and socks still on.

He didn't mind the dirt.

"I'll always help Shuangshuang wash her feet, no need for Shuangshuang to wash mine," Lu Yuanfeng said cheerfully.

He understood the rules of the Da Ning Dynasty.

But he didn't want Shuangshuang to be like other women.

He was willing to pamper Shuangshuang, wash her feet, and give her all he had.

"Fengzi, have you heard this saying? People are greedy; if they haven't had something, it's nothing; but suddenly losing what they had is more painful than never having it.

Now that you've spoiled me, I might not be like other wives using husbands as their sky, making husbands' preferences their own," Mu Shuangshuang warned Lu Yuanfeng.

"Shuangshuang, I understand. I never planned to marry a wife just to be served.

Like you said, everyone is equal, mutual respect is the key to lasting relationships.

Moreover, I'm a man, so I should shoulder heavier responsibilities than women.

Shuangshuang not disliking me is already very kind to me, and I shouldn't demand Shuangshuang do anything," Lu Yuanfeng said.

Whenever conversing with Lu Yuanfeng, Mu Shuangshuang felt his mindset had transcended those of the Da Ning Dynasty.

Sometimes she felt the concepts Lu Yuanfeng spoke of were only possessed by those educated in modern times.

"Then I'll remember what you said, if you dare make me do this or that, I'll divorce you!" Mu Shuangshuang said domineeringly.

Lu Yuanfeng chuckled, having grown used to her unique terms.

"Don't worry, I'll never give you the chance to divorce me."

Shoes and socks were removed, revealing Mu Shuangshuang's white tender feet.

Lu Yuanfeng held onto these feet, placing them into the basin.

The water wasn't too hot, just right for soaking.

While Mu Shuangshuang soaked her feet, Lu Yuanfeng went out again; when he returned, he carried a newly lit brazier.

The brazier was burning brightly, with no trace of blackened charcoal.

He placed the basin under Mu Shuangshuang's bed, and warmth enveloped Mu Shuangshuang.

She grinned foolishly at Lu Yuanfeng, unaware when he lifted her feet from the basin.

Chapter 863: At Most, Not Hating

Lu Yuanfeng held Mu Shuangshuang's leg carefully and placed her foot on his knee, then he picked up Mu Shuangshuang's towel and carefully wiped the water droplets from her foot.

His movements were gentle, as if he was holding a treasure.

With one wrong move, the treasure might shatter.

Mu Shuangshuang felt a warm feeling in her heart and kept staring at Lu Yuanfeng.

Watching his gentle actions, watching how good he was to her.

After wiping her foot, Lu Yuanfeng carefully tucked Mu Shuangshuang into bed, spreading the blanket over her.

It was late at night, and Lu Yuanfeng felt it was time for him to go back.

Reluctantly, he said, "Shuangshuang, it's late, I... have to go."

Mu Shuangshuang nodded blankly, and just as she saw Lu Yuanfeng lift his foot, about to turn to leave, she suddenly called him.

"Fengzi, come here."

Just as Lu Yuanfeng turned around, Mu Shuangshuang crawled out from under the blanket and gently kissed his cheek.

A light kiss, but Lu Yuanfeng's heart felt as if a feather had brushed across it, tickling him, making him moved.

"Hush! Don't say anything, soak your feet when you get back tonight, you don't have to get up so early tomorrow, I'll save breakfast for you."

Mu Shuangshuang said softly.

Lu Yuanfeng nodded heavily, then left Mu Shuangshuang's room with a silly smile.

Little Yuanbao was already waiting in the yard. Seeing Lu Yuanfeng smiling foolishly like that, he started smiling foolishly too.

"Second Brother, tell me, when can you marry Sister Shuangshuang?"

Every day we have to run so far just to have a meal, if only Sister Shuangshuang lived with us directly, it would be great."

Stepping on the uneven muddy ground, Yuanbao pouted as he asked Lu Yuanfeng.

Lu Yuanfeng slightly restrained his smile and answered seriously, "Soon, as soon as Second Brother earns enough money, I'll marry your Sister Shuangshuang."

"Alright, then Second Brother needs to earn money quickly, waiting is truly painful." Yuanbao's chubby face showed a look of grievance mingled with youthful maturity, creating a comic effect.

However, it was dark now, and Lu Yuanfeng didn't see it.

"It won't be painful, don't think about waiting, just think that with each passing day, you're one day closer to Sister Shuangshuang moving in, and you'll feel happy." Lu Yuanfeng, in a rare good mood, comforted Yuanbao.

Yuanbao drooped his head, trying hard to think as Lu Yuanfeng said.

But he was still anxious.

"Second Brother, I think never mind, I'll be happy once you marry Sister Shuangshuang!"

One tall, one short, they headed home in the whistling north wind.

At home, the first thing Lu Yuanfeng did was to heat the bed, in the kitchen he warmed it up well.

Yuanbao sat on the bed, waiting for Lu Yuanfeng to fetch water for him to wash, and suddenly he looked up and saw Old Lady Lu standing at the door.

Ever since Lu Yuanfeng and the Old Lu Family severed ties under the witness of the village head, Lu Yuanfeng didn't let Yuanbao go to the Old Lu Family anymore.

Yuanbao, being obedient and understanding, didn't want to make his big brother awkward, so he hadn't gone to find Old Lady Lu.

Actually, Old Lady Lu was nice to Yuanbao, giving him tasty food.

The ones truly bad to Yuanbao were Gu Jiulian and Yuanbao's father.

But ever since Lu Yuanfeng returned, they couldn't harm Yuanbao anymore.

"Grandma, why... why are you here?" Yuanbao looked dazedly at Old Lady Lu.

"Good boy, Grandma brought you roasted sweet potatoes, didn't you used to love them? Grandma made them for you, they're still warm." Old Lady Lu said, taking out a sweet potato wrapped in cotton cloth from her pocket.

Before Lu Yuanfeng returned, Yuanbao was always craving for food, but back then, the good things in the house were controlled by a few daughters-in-law.

Freshly harvested sweet potatoes from the field, before Old Sir Lu and Old Lady Lu could take them, were moved to each daughter's-in-law's house.

During meals, they would only symbolically take out a little rice for Old Lady Lu to cook.

"Grandma, don't give me food anymore, keep it for yourself! There's never enough food at home, Yuanbao is raised by Second Brother, we don't worry about food and clothing." Yuanbao said in his childish voice.

Old Lady Lu's eyes were wet, if she hadn't made a rash decision then, not stopping them from selling the eldest daughter-in-law, things wouldn't be like this now.

"It's alright, Yuanbao eat, Grandma... has enough food." Old Lady Lu wiped away her tears and pulled Yuanbao into her arms.

Lu Yuanfeng, having heated the water, came out of the kitchen and saw this scene.

He didn't go to disturb them, nor did he make Old Lady Lu leave.

Standing in the cold wind, watching Old Lady Lu and Yuanbao.

Towards Old Lady Lu, Lu Yuanfeng could at most not feel hate, he couldn't forgive.

At least not until his mother was found, he couldn't do it.

Lu Yuanfeng's mother was a renowned beauty in the village area, blind at the time, choosing Lu Yuanfeng's father.

Only after marrying Lu Yuanfeng's mother did it get worse, with gambling intensifying.

The family's land was sold off, even the house was used to pay off debts.

The family was completely impoverished, not a single tile was their own.

Such a person, dragging the family down wasn't enough, eventually even selling the daughter-in-law to pay debts...

Old Lady Lu held Yuanbao for a long time, and when she calmed down, she saw Lu Yuanfeng standing outside.

Hurriedly, she said, "Fengfeng, Grandma wasn't trying to disturb your life. Just this period, I haven't seen Yuanbao, I didn't know how he was doing, so... just came to check.

Don't be angry, Grandma will leave!"

As Old Lady Lu spoke, she hurried out.

Yuanbao, seeing this, felt a sour nose and quickly grabbed Old Lady Lu's hand.

"Grandma, don't go, sleep with Yuanbao tonight, Yuanbao is scared at night!" After finishing, Yuanbao started crying.

"Grandma doesn't want to leave either, but your Second Brother here." Old Lady Lu also started crying, tears and snot coming down.

Lu Yuanfeng frowned.

He said, "Old Lady Lu, back then... when my mother was being sold by you, did she beg you like this?"

Old Lady Lu's body stiffened, her grip on Yuanbao loosened suddenly.

In her mind, she recalled Yuanbao's mother crying heartbreakingly, kneeling at the courtyard gate, her head bleeding, but a few men still deciding to sell her.

Because if she wasn't sold, Lu the Elder's debts couldn't be repaid, and he might have been chopped to pieces.

A daughter-in-law could be married again if lost, but a son gone meant really losing everything.

Plus, Lu the Fourth was anxious to get married, so back then, regardless of how much Yuanbao's mother pleaded, no one in the Old Lu Family relented.

"Fengzi, Grandma is going home first, you... please take good care of Yuanbao for me.

Your mother's situation, back then I made a mistake, I didn't stop it, Grandma doesn't ask for your forgiveness, just hopes you'll live happily, so whatever Grandma can do, she's willing."

Old Lady Lu's words went into Lu Yuanfeng's ears word by word, yet they felt unusually harsh.

Chapter 864: Pushed Mrs. Lin Away

"I don't have much to ask of you, just hope that you, from now on, don't come to our house without reason.

By the way, please take your roasted sweet potatoes back, it's late at night and not suitable for eating."

Old Lady Lu awkwardly took the sweet potatoes from Yuanbao's hands and walked out of Lu Yuanfeng's yard looking full of disappointment.

Yuanbao was still crying, and Lu Yuanfeng had already stepped forward.

"Yuanbao, you may think that the second brother is excessive in many things, but everything has cause and effect. If they hadn't sold our mother back then, she wouldn't have run to the mountains for us and disappeared without a trace.

We wouldn't come home every day to find the stove cold as ice either."

Regarding his mother's matters, Lu Yuanfeng never hid the truth from Yuanbao.

Yuanbao is a child but far more understanding than most.

Instead of hiding it and letting him be used by the people of the Old Lu Family, it's better to tell him the truth.

"Second brother, Yuanbao knows you're doing it for my good. Don't worry, Yuanbao...won't let grandma into the house anymore."

Yuanbao promised.

So young yet so understanding, truly makes one feel distressed.

"Alright, wash up and go to bed early, tonight I'll stay with you!" said Lu Yuanfeng.

With that, Yuanbao jumped up immediately.

"Great, I can sleep with second brother again!" Yuanbao shouted.

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Early the next morning, Mu Shuangshuang got up to make breakfast.

But someone got up even earlier than her.

In the middle of winter, the day breaks later, and generally, people wake up a bit later in winter, but Mrs. Lin insisted on waking up at the hour when wives get up to cook in summer.

She went to wake up Huang Bitā to make breakfast.

When the sky was barely light, Mrs. Lin, with sleepy eyes, didn't wash her face or comb her hair, with a dirty face, went to Mu Dalang's room.

"Huang Bitā, open the door, open up! The sun's up and you're still thinking of slacking off, get up now."

The urgent knocking woke up Huang Bitā and Mu Dalang.

Huang Bitā got up from the bed in shock, planning to dress up and go cook.

Mu Dalang got up after her, glancing outside where the morning star was nowhere to be seen, knowing his mother was deliberately giving Bitā a hard time.

"Bitā, sleep a little more, I'll go talk to my mother," said Mu Dalang while yawning and putting on a coat.

As soon as the door opened, a bucket of cold water splashed onto his head.

Mrs. Lin, not having seen clearly who it was, laughed heartily: "That's what you get for ignoring my words, making a fool of my words, I'll let you learn the hard way today."

The splash of cold water turned Mu Dalang into an ice stick, his whole body shivering like a cork.

With a cold face, he glared at Mrs. Lin fiercely.

He dared not imagine what would happen if that bucket of water had landed on Bitā.

"Dalang..." Hearing the water, Huang Bitā looked up to see Mu Dalang standing like a nail at the door, motionless.

Water droplets trickled down from him.

The dripping sound nearly shattered Huang Bitā's heart.

"Oh, why are you here? I clearly splashed the water on you."

Upon hearing Huang Bitā's voice, Mrs. Lin was confused.

Realizing she'd splashed not on Bitā, but on her own son, she got angry: "You, Huang Bitā, knowing full well I called for you, dared let my son open the door.

You intentionally harmed my son, I won't let this slide!" Mrs. Lin said, raising her hand threateningly.

She rushed at Huang Bitā, only to have her wrist caught by Mu Dalang.

A piercing cold surged up.

"Mother, what on earth are you doing? You splashed water on me early in the morning, you knocked on the door,

what exactly are you trying to do? If you think Bitā and I are eyesores, we'll move out," said Mu Dalang.

"What did you say? You'd move out for this little vixen? Have you lost your mind? After all my years of raising you, this is how you repay me?" Mrs. Lin cursed.

At this point, Mu Dalang was trembling from the cold.

Mrs. Lin didn't care about her son, and was solely focused on bullying her daughter-in-law.

Huang Bitā spoke anxiously, "Mother, please let Dalang change clothes! At this rate, he'll freeze to death."

It only dawned on Mrs. Lin. "Right, son, quickly change clothes. After changing, divorce this jinx.

If she hadn't arrived, you wouldn't have been splashed, rest easy, once you rid of her, I'll find you a better one."

Mrs. Lin's skill at twisting the truth was no small affair, turning her mistake into Bitā's fault.

Mu Dalang, twitching the corners of his mouth, pointed to the door frame and said, "Mother, step outside, I need to change."

"Change then, I'll watch right here, lest this jinx harm you again."

Mrs. Lin refused to leave, thinking it's her son, it's fine to look, he won't lose a chunk of flesh.

Besides, didn't she bathe Mu Dalang when he was a child?

Not satisfied with just thinking, Mrs. Lin continued obnoxiously, "Dalang, you are my son, why are you shy? That thing on you, your dad had too, I don't care to look."

Mrs. Lin went on spiritedly, leaving Huang Bitā blushing with embarrassment.

Yet Mrs. Lin was relentless.

"Mother, enough, please stop! Your son is not a little child anymore and is married, you need to give us privacy, or else it would bring disgrace to the reputation of the Old Mu Family."

Mu Dalang voiced his thoughts, as expected, chastised by Mrs. Lin.

"Ungrateful, if it weren't for your mother's sweat and tears raising you, did you think you could enjoy a good life, marry a new wife?"

I say you've lost your mind listening to this woman.

Mrs. Lin kept rambling, as Mu Dalang's chill increased.

Fearing her husband would freeze, Huang Bitā gritted her teeth and pushed Mrs. Lin out.

Caught off guard, Mrs. Lin was shoved outside, and Huang Bitā shut the door.

She said to Mu Dalang, "Dalang, stop dawdling, quickly change your clothes, or you'll fall sick."

Having recovered from the push, Mrs. Lin began her next move: pounding the door and cursing Bitā.

"Huang Bitā, you jinx, rotten woman, open the door, who gave you the nerve to push me out.

If I don't beat you to death today, I'm not Lin Xiaozao!"

The banging on the door grew louder and louder.

Huang Bitā braced herself against the door, determined not to let Mrs. Lin in.

Though frightened, she stayed firm, her gaze fixed on the frantic dressing of Mu Dalang.

Wrapped in a quilt after changing clothes, Mu Dalang seemed to have recovered a bit of life.

His hair still dripped wet.

Huang Bitā wanted to help wipe it, but her legs had gone numb, preventing her from moving.

Chapter 865: Remarkable Skill at Distorting Right and Wrong (Part 3)

"What are you yelling about so early in the morning? Can't one get some sleep?"

The commotion at the second branch had woken up Old Mrs. Mu from her lazy morning sleep.

Old Mrs. Mu got up and went to the second branch, only to see Mrs. Lin outside, cursing both father and mother, which made her furious.

Seeing Old Mrs. Mu, Mrs. Lin quickly thought on her feet and stepped forward to complain.

"Mother, you have no idea what kind of daughter-in-law Da Lang has married. She won't cook when asked, and even pushed me aside. Now she's hiding in bed, sleeping in late."

"What?" Old Mrs. Mu's voice suddenly rose upon hearing this.

"Mother, you have to discipline that little slut. She's just good for nothing, brought home only to be a decoration," Mrs. Lin said again.

Upon hearing this, Old Mrs. Mu seemed like a lit firecracker, bursting with explosive force.

"Huang Bitā, Huang Bitā, you little wretch, get out here! Today this old woman is going to whip you to save rice for the Old Mu Family."

The sound of Old Mrs. Mu's scolding rose and fell, and anyone standing a bit closer felt like their ears would grow calluses.

After Mu Dalang's body temperature returned to normal, his brain started working properly again.

He heard Old Mrs. Mu's cursing and, seeing Huang Bitā blocking the door for him, felt a surge of indignation in his heart.

He crawled out from under the blanket and pulled Huang Bitā into his arms.

"Grandma, don't listen to my mother's nonsense. At this hour, it's not even daylight. Who makes breakfast this early? Obviously, my mother is just trying to torment Bitā with this idea," Mu Dalang said.

Old Mrs. Mu listened to Mu Dalang's words and suspiciously glanced at Mrs. Lin.

Mrs. Lin puffed out her chest and said, "Mother, you always said it's rightful for a mother-in-law to discipline her daughter-in-law.

Besides, I'm only doing this for Da Lang's good. Da Lang is bewitched by that little hussy.

Look, he's so close to the third branch now.

Even I, as his mother, can't compete with a glance from that little hussy and the third branch."

As Mrs. Lin spoke, she even squeezed out a few crocodile tears pretentiously.

Even if Old Mrs. Mu didn't like Mrs. Lin, hearing her complaint only made her resent Huang Bitā more.

Especially when Mrs. Lin mentioned the good relationship between Huang Bitā and the third branch, Old Mrs. Mu got even angrier.

"Da Lang, open the door. I have to properly discipline Huang Bitā," Old Mrs. Mu shouted into Mu Dalang's room.

"Grandma, if you want to believe what my mother says, there's nothing I can do, but I won't let you touch Bitā.

The one who did wrong is my mother. Early in the morning, she splashed a ladle of cold water on me. It's a good thing it was me; if it had been Bitā, it could have killed her."

That word "killed" made Old Mrs. Mu regain some sense.

Huang Bitā couldn't die; she was her eldest son's lucky star, the one who prospered her family's eldest.

"Second daughter-in-law, can't you do things with some restraint? Why insist on disciplining Huang Bitā when Da Lang is around?"

"Mother, I'm wronged here. It's because Huang Bitā refused to cook, lazing around, so I splashed her with water. Who knew she'd instruct Da Lang to open the door, and that basin of water ended up on Da Lang's face."

Mrs. Lin looked pitifully aggrieved on the surface, but inside, she was already clamoring for Old Mrs. Mu to beat Huang Bitā to death.

This way, she could marry off her son again.

Hopefully, to someone wealthy, so the second branch could live well too.

"You still have the nerve to speak? What do we do now?" Old Mrs. Mu asked Mrs. Lin, eyeing the wooden door of Mu Dalang's room.

Mrs. Lin didn't have a clue what to do.

She said, "Mother, how about we trick them into opening the door first? Later you hold back Da Lang while I discipline that little hussy?"

Mrs. Lin lowered her voice, so what she discussed wasn't heard by Mu Dalang inside the room.

Old Mrs. Mu pondered and nodded in agreement.

"Da Lang, open the door. I just asked your mother, and she admits it was her mistake. I've already scolded her.

Come out quickly so I can see if you're hurt," Old Mrs. Mu called out from outside the door.

However, Mu Dalang was on high alert at this moment.

What Old Mrs. Mu said didn't match her brash personality.

"Grandma, I'm fine. You and my mother should leave now!" Mu Dalang still refused to open the door.

Despite shouting for a long time, Old Mrs. Mu saw no sign of Mu Dalang giving in.

He seemed scared by Mrs. Jin's treacherous nature.

He was afraid Old Mrs. Mu would use the same trick to fool him.

Failing with one plan, Old Mrs. Mu came up with another. She called inside to Huang Bitu, "Bitu, persuade Da Lang to open the door. I promise I won't touch you two."

As a matter of fact, Old Mrs. Mu's tactic was effective.

Huang Bita, as the daughter-in-law of the Old Mu Family, had to listen to Old Mrs. Mu and Mrs. Lin at all times.

Recently, she trembled with fear at the prospect of being beaten by Mrs. Lin.

Now that Old Mrs. Mu had promised, would she be safe?

"Da Lang, maybe... we should open the door," Huang Bita whispered to Mu Dalang.

"No, Bita, only when my grandpa wakes up can we open the door, or else my grandma and my mother won't spare you."

Mu Dalang knew all too well what kind of person and temper his own mother had.

Bita had pushed his mother out for his sake, and this grudge his mother would absolutely remember.

"Da Lang, it's okay. Grandma said she wouldn't blame us," Huang Bita thought for a moment before speaking.

"Bita..."

"It's alright, trust me!"

Mu Dalang sighed deeply, slowly opening the door, keeping his strong arms protectively around Huang Bita.

However, the moment the door was opened, Old Mrs. Mu rushed in. With a yank, she pulled Huang Bita out of Mu Dalang's arms.

Mrs. Lin picked up a wooden switch from the ground and began to lash at Huang Bita.

With one stroke, tears welled up in Huang Bitā's eyes from the pain.

"Dodge! Go on, dodge, you little slut! This old woman won't stop until you're beaten today!"

Mrs. Lin wielded the switch relentlessly on Huang Bitā, who kept dancing around, as if performing a dance.

Seeing this ridiculous scene, Mrs. Lin clutched her stomach, laughing heartily.

Mu Dalang's eyes reddened. He wanted to help, but Old Mrs. Mu held his arm down.

"Da Lang, you're a grown man, what are you meddling for? Your mother is the mother-in-law. A mother-in-law disciplining her daughter-in-law is nobody else's concern."

Mu Dalang became anxious, "Grandma, you promised not to blame me and Bitā, so why don't you keep your word?"

"How am I not keeping my word? I said I wouldn't touch you and Bitā. But your mother didn't make such a promise!"

Old Mrs. Mu said it as if it was only natural.

The last bit of hope in Mu Dalang's heart shattered. He reached out to pull away Old Mrs. Mu's hand, only for her to suddenly lay down on the ground.

"Help, my grandson's hitting his grandma..." Old Mrs. Mu yelled at the top of her lungs.

While Mrs. Lin continued to discipline Huang Bitā, catching sight of Old Mrs. Mu lying on the ground, she couldn't help but chuckle.

The old woman sure was an old woman, even capable of coming up with such a trick...

Chapter 866: Determined to Separate

"Enough! Grandma, Mom, how long are you going to keep this up? If you really don't like Bitu, then Bitu and I will move out. We won't use a single penny from the Old Mu Family, alright?"

Mu Dalang had endured long enough. Right in front of him, his mother would still hit Bitu. What kind of life would Bitu have if he wasn't there?

When he first brought Bitu home, he swore never to let her suffer any grievances.

Now, Bitu followed him, gained nothing, and was constantly bullied by his mother. If this continued, he would become a man who breaks his promises.

Upon hearing Mu Dalang's words, Mrs. Lin was furious. She jumped up and pointed at Mu Dalang, scolding him harshly:

"What do you mean by moving out?"

"Moving out means splitting from the family. I want to establish a separate household like my third uncle's family! Bitu and I don't want any money or land, we just want to split from the family!

I'd rather starve outside than let Bitu stay home and get bullied to death by you all." Mu Dalang was also furious.

He didn't want to stay in this house for another moment.

"What did you say? Split from the family? Oh, you heartless creature, you're willing to say such shameless things for a woman.

The effort I've put into raising you, feeding you, housing you, is it worth less than this vile woman?

Or is it this vile woman forcing you to do this? Did she instigate you to speak to your mother like this?"

Mrs. Lin was very emotional and blamed it all on Huang Bitu.

This upset Mu Dalang greatly.

"Mom, why do you blame everything on Bitu? I want to split from the family, it has nothing to do with Bitu. She never said what you think.

Besides, whether you agree or not, I'm splitting from the family!"

Mu Dalang's words were firm and serious, not a hint of a joke.

Mrs. Lin was stunned, and even Old Mrs. Mu was at a loss.

Mu Dalang stepped forward, snatched the withered branch from Mrs. Lin's hand, broke it into pieces, and then took Huang Bitu by the hand to find Mr. Mu.

Mrs. Lin cried and shouted from behind, "Oh, I can't live, I can't live, what kind of son is this? He finds a wife and forgets his mother.

Oh, I regret it, why did I give birth to such a thing..."

Old Mrs. Mu was also very angry, but seeing Mrs. Lin's complaining attitude made her even angrier.

"Look at you, always causing trouble. This trivial matter has escalated to splitting the family.

Lin Xiaozao, if you don't handle this well today, I'll have Old Er divorce you."

The mention of Mu Dazhong divorcing her turned Mrs. Lin's face pale.

She became even more hysterical.

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The matter of splitting the family still needed Mr. Mu's approval.

At dawn, as Mr. Mu woke up from his sleep, washed up, and got dressed, he saw Mu Dalang kneeling at his door.

"What's this? Why are you kneeling here so early in the morning?"

As the grandfather, Mr. Mu was generally kind to Mu Dalang, always speaking gently.

Besides, as Mu Dalang and Huang Bitu were considered part of Wang's Mansion, Mr. Mu was especially lenient with them.

"Grandpa, I want to split from the family!"

One sentence from Mu Dalang made Mr. Mu almost lose his balance, nearly collapsing.

"What did you say?" asked Mr. Mu.

"I said Bitu and I want to move out; life here is unbearable. Early in the morning, before the sun came up, Mom went to our room, yelling for Bitu to make breakfast.

I opened the door, and she poured a whole ladle of cold water on me. In the dead of winter, a whole ladle of cold water! Imagine if that was poured on Bitu, a woman. What if she died?"

Mr. Mu was stunned by these words.

When Huang Bitu was brought into the family, Mrs. Lin was against it.

She said Huang Bitu was a broken shoe meant for the Fifth and was older than Dalang.

But because Huang Bitu was important to the Old Mu Family, these issues were suppressed by him and the old lady, so others didn't know how vital Bitu really was.

But regardless, Mrs. Lin had gone too far. Throwing water on someone's face in the middle of winter, wasn't that a murderous act?

"Dalang, I'll handle this for you. Don't bring up splitting the family, I won't agree to it.

Your uncle just passed the provincial exam, and there are better days ahead. Don't follow your third uncle's example, stubborn as a stone in the latrine."

Mr. Mu was still bothered by Mu Dashan losing his temper incident.

He wouldn't allow another family split in the Old Mu Family.

"Grandpa, I know my mom's nature! No matter what you say, as long as I'm not around, she'll bully Bitu.

I can let go of the past, but in the future, I don't want Bitu to get hurt anymore."

Mu Dalang was stubborn by nature, and once he decided something, nothing could change his mind.

Unless Mr. Mu could solve the issue with Mrs. Lin.

"Dalang, normally, as your grandfather, I shouldn't intervene, but since you and Bita are part of Wang's Mansion, would Old Wang's family be affected if you move out?"

Mr. Mu said.

Honestly, these words left Mu Dalang feeling a bit cold.

Though he was the one who asked Shuangshuang for advice to bring Bita into the home,

he didn't expect the Old Mu Family to see him as a mere tool.

Especially his grandparents, who always prioritized his uncle's family, disregarding everyone else's well-being!

No wonder his third uncle's family decided to leave without hesitation.

"Grandpa, I can't care about that now. If Bita stays in this family, she'll be tormented to death by my mom. By then, forget about being good to your uncle's family, even their fortune might be affected."

Mu Dalang's mention of affecting Mu Dade's fortune made Mr. Mu even more apprehensive.

He said, "You and Bita can't leave, I'll speak to your mother. From now on, Bita doesn't have to make breakfast, she can sleep as long as she wants." Mr. Mu said anxiously.

After he finished speaking, afraid Mu Dalang would regret it, he quickly rushed to where Mrs. Lin was located.

Old Mrs. Mu had gone to take care of Mu Xiangxiang, so Mr. Mu only saw Mrs. Lin.

He approached her and began reprimanding her harshly.

"Second daughter-in-law, what's the matter with you? Bita was married into the Old Mu Family to be a daughter-in-law, not a slave.

Why do you have to go knocking on others' doors early in the morning? Dalang has been driven to his limit by you.

Do you want to see this family fall apart before you're satisfied?"

Mrs. Lin, still steaming with anger, couldn't bear it when Mr. Mu came over and started scolding her.

"Dad, how can you talk like that? What do you mean I'm happy to see the family fall apart? It was you and Mom who insisted on bringing a broken shoe into our family for Dalang, and now it's that broken shoe instigating my son to split from the family. You blame me instead of her."

Chapter 867: Flaunting One's Power

Mrs. Lin kept calling her a "tramp," speaking with great enthusiasm.

Mr. Mu was somewhat displeased.

"Second daughter-in-law, why is your mouth so foul? Who's the tramp?"

"Dad, that Huang Bita was originally meant to marry Fifth, but she didn't marry him, so isn't she a tramp?" Mrs. Lin said as if it were obvious.

"Nonsense! What do you mean she was meant to marry Fifth? We just said to take a look; did Fifth look at her? No, so it doesn't count as an engagement.

Moreover, just getting engaged doesn't make someone a tramp. What about Xiangxiang who is preparing to get engaged with the Qin family, what does that make her?"

Mr. Mu's few words left Mrs. Lin speechless.

Though deep down, she thought Mu Xiangxiang was a tramp, she didn't dare to say it aloud.

Her hair at the back hadn't grown out yet; who knew when Mu Xiangxiang might snap?

And that old lady, she spoils her daughter endlessly. If she knew Mrs. Lin called Mu Xiangxiang a tramp, would she survive?

"So, Dad, what do you plan to do about this? Do you intend to stand up for that tramp... little wench?"

In this matter, Mrs. Lin was somewhat unscrupulous.

Because since she was born, people around her always said it was right and proper for a mother-in-law to discipline her daughter-in-law, and no one could intervene.

As long as Huang Bitu was her daughter-in-law, she had the right to discipline her.

"Enough! Second daughter-in-law, how long do you plan to make a fuss? If you think you have the right to interfere, I'll have Second divorce you and then find a virtuous wife for him.

The Old Mu Family doesn't want a daughter-in-law who only stirs up trouble!"

Mr. Mu glared harshly at Mrs. Lin.

Mrs. Lin was shocked. Seeing Mr. Mu's serious face saying he would divorce her, she fell to the ground with a thud, beating the floor with her hands.

"Oh, woe is me, just like others' mothers-in-law, I am one too. How am I wrong to ask my daughter-in-law to cook?"

The mother-in-law doesn't like me; even the father-in-law is unfair to me. I can't live anymore, can't live on..."

Mrs. Lin shouted desperately, but not a tear came out.

Seeing this, Mr. Mu realized there was no talking sense with Mrs. Lin.

"Second daughter-in-law, it won't help to make a scene; from now on, early in the morning, don't go into Da Lang's room, avoid causing trouble for Da Lang and Bitu."

With these words, Mr. Mu turned and left.

Since he was involved, he was going to see it through.

The old man went straight to the main house to find Old Mrs. Mu.

If the mother-in-law was supposed to discipline the daughter-in-law, he'd find someone tougher to give Mrs. Lin a taste of her own medicine.

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The matter of Mu Dalang's separation was resolved because Mr. Mu and Old Mrs. Mu intervened, deciding that breakfast would be made by Mrs. Liu and Mrs. Lin, and Mrs. Lin couldn't easily hit Huang Bitu anymore.

Though Mu Dalang still wanted to take the chance to separate, since Mr. Mu wouldn't allow it, he had no way out.

He just had to take it day by day.

As the year-end approached, every household was busy preparing the final New Year's goods.

The third branch was no exception. Early in the morning, Lu Yuanfeng drove the ox cart to pick up the third branch family, preparing to go to town and buy some things.

They happened to run into Mu Dade, who was also heading out.

Since Mu Dade's return, he rented a carriage from town, even the driver, solely for himself and Ruan Xiao Jiao to go to town.

Ruan Xiao Jiao probably got a long vacation from the County Magistrate, and several times Mu Shuangshuang spotted her uninhibitedly walking to the Old Mu Family.

Sometimes for meals, other times simply to deliver things to Mr. Mu and Old Mrs. Mu.

Old Mrs. Mu loved getting a bargain, and with such a generous person around, she naturally welcomed Ruan Xiao Jiao's visits.

At the village entrance, the ox cart and the carriage met.

Mu Dade deliberately lifted the curtain, as if boasting, loudly saying: "Jiaojiao, how shabby it is to ride an ox cart in this winter?"

This wind biting, doesn't it hurt? Or are there some people born to eat coarse food, dragging even their own children to not have a warm meal?"

Since falling out with the third branch, Mu Dade would mock and ridicule Mu Dashan and Yu Si Niang whenever there was no one around.

He didn't seem like the kind, generous, and humble Mu Dade in public.

Moreover, Mu Dade seemed to find some pleasure from these words.

Always feeling a sense of superiority over the third branch.

Ruan Xiao Jiao, now being Mu Dade's woman, naturally believed whatever he said was right.

She covered her mouth, chuckling, "Yes, Brother Dade, you're a scholar, they're farmers, the difference is naturally big."

"Indeed! After all, I'm a learned person, only I can lead the whole family to a better life."

As Mu Dade spoke, his whole face was contorted.

Mu Dashan clenched his fists tightly, veins popping on his face.

He seemed on the verge of anger.

But Mu Shuangshuang, sharp-eyed, held his wrist.

"Dad, don't be impulsive! He just wants you to lose your temper, to doubt yourself. We're living our lives, not bothering with irrelevant people."

In fact, this Mu Dade was quite despicable. He used to pretend to be kind-hearted, now without the pretense, his true nature was fully exposed.

Mu Shuangshuang's voice was not too loud nor too soft, just enough for Mu Dade in the carriage to hear.

Mu Dade frowned, looking at Mu Shuangshuang, his heart filled with anger and frustration.

Unable to vent it, unable to swallow it.

More torturous than having an argument with Mu Dade was this.

Originally, it was this little girl who refused to marry Wang San, causing him to be threatened by Mu Xianxian even now, saying she gave him money back then and now wants to live a good life with him.

Mu Dade never planned to lead these poor bastards to a good life.

Even if he became an official in the Capital, he wouldn't take these people along.

"Hmph! Ungrateful!" Mu Dade muttered, then ordered the driver to head to town.

The carriage kicked up a cloud of dust, and the dust-bothered Mu Shuangshuang group coughed incessantly.

Mu Dashan lowered his head, face full of defeat.

"It's all my fault, I'm useless, I can't even buy you a carriage to shield from the wind, making you suffer in this cold weather, I..."

Yu Si Niang took Mu Dashan's hand, "Shuangshuang's father, what are you saying? We used to walk to town, remember?"

Now we have an ox cart, even if borrowed, it's better than walking, no? The kids are understanding; we don't seek those luxuries, just to be happier than others is enough."

Yu Si Niang was easily content, just having the family together was enough.

Even if eating coarse food for a lifetime, she'd be willing.

"Why worry so much? It's just a broken carriage. I have modes of transport a thousand times better than his.

Besides, I, Yuanfeng, Xiao Han, Little Zhi, and Yuanbao, we're still young, enduring some hardships is good for young people." Mu Shuangshuang said with a smile.

"Thirty years [locust] east, thirty years [locust] west, just wait and see how long my uncle can strut around!"

Chapter 868: Chengfeng Restaurant

Mu Shuangshuang's last sentence was spoken earnestly, but it was quite amusing.

For some reason, everyone suddenly felt like laughing, and one by one, they leaned against the cow cart, clutching their stomachs and laughed heartily.

Mu Dashan's gloom was completely lifted.

He glanced at Mu Shuangshuang on the cow cart, then at Lu Yuanfeng driving the cow cart.

"Fengzi, Shuangshuang, if there's anything you need help with opening the restaurant, just ask. Whether or not I know how to do it, I'll try my best to get it done."

Mu Dashan was eager to make some contributions to this family.

Mu Shuangshuang understood perfectly, she paused and then spoke.

"Dad, don't worry about the restaurant. Fengzi and I will take care of it."

In Mu Shuangshuang's heart, she didn't want Mu Dashan to work at the restaurant; her initial plan was to have him and Yu Si Niang stay in the village school.

Firstly, this was where Mu Dashan was born and raised.

Secondly, looking after the children was more important than making money.

Someone most trusted must be arranged to look after the place.

"Alright, I'll wait for my daughter and son-in-law to open the restaurant." Mu Dashan leaned forward slightly, his face full of cheerful expressions.

Yu Si Niang laughed along with him, not forgetting to tease Mu Dashan. "I told you, children have their own ideas!

You insisted on being so anxious, aren't you much more at ease now?"

Mu Dashan chuckled, his face reddening slightly.

He coughed lightly to change the subject.

"Have you thought of a name for the restaurant? Or should it still be Fulin Restaurant as before?"

Mu Dashan's casual words made Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng realize they hadn't named the restaurant yet.

In Mu Shuangshuang's impression, restaurant names were usually about the same, like Yunlai, Fulin, and they pretty much looked alike.

But a good name could also add points to the restaurant, attracting some people over.

Mu Shuangshuang thought for a moment and said, "Then let's call it Chengfeng Restaurant!"

When thinking of the restaurant name, Mu Shuangshuang hadn't realized that the word Chengfeng overlapped with Lu Yuanfeng's name.

She simply felt these two words were festive and had the meaning of harvest.

However, in the eyes of Mu Dashan and Yu Si Niang, it wasn't quite the same.

Mu Dashan winked at Yu Si Niang for a while, both seeming to think their daughter's relationship with Fengzi was good.

Even Lu Yuanfeng was blushing, but he was delighted that Shuangshuang kept him in her heart.

Still, he wanted Shuangshuang's name in the restaurant's name.

He said, "Shuangshuang, why don't we call it Double Happiness Restaurant? It would have your name in it."

Upon hearing this name, a wave of tackiness rushed at them.

Mu Shuangshuang's face showed disdain, "Fengzi, why not just call it Big Pot Rice Restaurant? Simple, nice sounding, and easy to remember!"

"Huh?" Lu Yuanfeng was dumbfounded.

"Alright, let's go with what I said, Chengfeng Restaurant is fine, sounds sophisticated." Mu Shuangshuang nodded to herself.

Mu Dashan and Yu Si Niang followed, "Indeed! That's the name."

Once in town, Lu Yuanfeng drove the cow cart to the restaurant, then went to the market with the third branch people.

After Little New Year's, the restaurant was deserted, even Yu Dahai went home for the holiday.

But before leaving, Yu Dahai had the staff clean up the restaurant.

So even without anyone looking after it, the restaurant was spotless.

The group strolled around town, buying things needed for the New Year's Eve dinner.

The little kids naturally tiptoed, their eyes fixed on the firecracker shop.

The adults were thinking about couplets, dinner, and other things.

Today was the 28th of the twelfth lunar month, only a day away from New Year's Eve on the 30th, these things must be prepared.

By tomorrow, everyone wouldn't go out, they'd all be home busy with couplets and cleaning, replacing the old with the new.

Thus, today's town market was the busiest of the year, with people coming and going, buying and selling nonstop, and correspondingly, the goods sold were the most expensive of the year.

But people who had worked hard all year wouldn't care about that.

It's the New Year, all they want is to feel lucky and happy.

If they're happy, it's nothing to buy things a bit more expensive than usual.

Looking at the various goods on sale, Mu Shuangshuang felt a bit regretful, "Had I known things sell so well in town, I would have brought over the cabbages we packed from our field to sell."

Since June, the third branch had no land, they could only find some dry land to grow vegetables, so the house had quite a bit of vegetables.

A lot had been sold to Xue Yi's First-class Residence, but since Little New Year's, First-class Residence had given the restaurant staff a holiday.

As a result, even the cabbages from Mu Shuangshuang's field had no buyers.

"Shuangshuang, why don't we blanch those cabbages in the field and make them into pickled vegetables?" Yu Si Niang suggested in a negotiating tone.

"Indeed, a good choice, but we could also make them into kimchi. Then when we go back, let's buy a few more jars, take them home, and make kimchi, it's quite appetizing."

"Alright, today is a big day for shopping, buy whatever you want, I'm paying today!"

Mu Dashan said confidently.

Previously, he made straw fans and saved quite a bit of money, initially meant to pay for Xiao Han's entrance gift for the school, but now with the school run by themselves, there's no need for it.

"Everyone heard, right? My dad said whatever you want to buy, go ahead, he's paying!" Mu Shuangshuang started, and everyone laughed heartily.

Yuanbao and Little Zhi were more direct, hugging Mu Dashan's legs, dragging him toward the firecracker shop, only letting go after Mu Dashan paid for the firecrackers.

With the firecrackers in hand, the kids thought of food, staring avidly at the candied hawthorn seller, almost dragging them away.

Mu Dashan naturally understood the kids' intentions, paid the money, and the kids were settled.

Holding candied hawthorns, they gnawed so that their mouths were covered.

Obediently following the adults, taking things when asked.

Saying festive words when prompted.

Mu Dashan kept chuckling.

His heart was filled with emotions; in previous years, having a sip of meat soup was already good.

How is it like now, able to buy firecrackers for the kids, fireworks for the family, and snacks for them? Back then, those were dreams.

Being even half-full was a blessing.

"Our family, among these branches, has changed the most." Mu Dashan marveled.

"I still remember when Shuangshuang's mother first married into the family, we had nothing then.

Even the bowls we used for drinking water were the broken bowls my mother discarded.

At that time, Yu Si hadn't married yet, came to my room to drink water, and cut his lip, bleeding a lot."

The man recalled the past with sighs.

"Yes, I remember too, we were terribly poor!" Yu Si Niang said.

Chapter 869: Hearts in Harmony (Part 1)

Yu Si Niang reminisced about the past.

It's strange, those days that felt bitter at the time now evoke a strong sense of longing.

"Speaking of it, everyone most looked forward to celebrating New Year," Mu Dashan sighed.

"Yes, because it was so much better than usual. If we were lucky, there'd be plenty to eat," Yu Si Niang laughed.

"And there were fireworks. Last year, Grandma bought some for my little aunt, and they were beautiful," Little Zhi mumbled adorably.

After recuperating for half a year, not only had Mu Shuangshuang gained some weight, but even Little Zhi's face had become rounder.

On the contrary, Yuanbao, who ate and drank well every day, showed signs of slimming down a bit.

Everyone was moving toward brighter prospects.

"This year our family also bought some. Little Zhi, how about you set off the fireworks during New Year?" Mu Shuangshuang half-jokingly suggested.

No one expected Little Zhi to nod in agreement directly.

"Since everyone is so happy, why don't we all talk about our understanding of the New Year?" Yu Si Niang proposed.

Everyone was happy to oblige.

Each person shared their insights about the New Year, while Mu Shuangshuang rested her chin in her hand, quietly listening to the others' interpretations.

She was from the 21st century, and New Year didn't hold as much significance to her as it did to the people in this era.

The foods and items only available during the New Year were easily accessible to her in her past life.

But the joy, she couldn't grasp.

Mu Shuangshuang even found it strange; even though material wealth was abundant, there always seemed to be a spiritual emptiness.

No matter how good the food was, no matter how much money she had, nothing could make her genuinely laugh from the heart.

But now, it's different. In this era, she's experienced many things—being bullied, not having a meal to eat, often being mistreated...

With these experiences, as she looks back at things she didn't care much for, they seem incredibly important now.

"Shuangshuang, what does the New Year look like in your eyes?" Yu Si Niang asked curiously.

In the previous years, the original owner of the body was muddle-headed, not very sharp, and Mu Shuangshuang hadn't accepted the original owner's memories.

So she really didn't know what New Year was like.

Mu Shuangshuang shook her head.

"I don't remember! But after this year's New Year, if you ask me again next year, Mother, I'll definitely know the answer!"

This reply brought another bout of laughter from everyone.

Lu Yuanfeng and Mu Shuangshuang followed Yu Si Niang and Mu Dashan, with the three children running ahead. The street was already crowded, but everyone was considerate, doing their best not to bump into others.

Lu Yuanfeng grinned widely, his face beaming with happiness.

Suddenly, he felt warmth on his hand; a small hand grabbed his palm.

The warmth traveled from his palm to his chest.

Lu Yuanfeng felt a comforting warmth, as if a cat was gently scratching at his heart.

He clasped Mu Shuangshuang's hand, his broad palm enclosing her smaller one.

The two of them shared a silent understanding, their hearts in tune.

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After wandering for a while, Mu Shuangshuang suddenly said, "By the way, should we bring something to the Xue Family? Xue Yi did help us, and Xue Zheng too. After the New Year, we won't have a chance to see them again, so why not prepare a red envelope as advance New Year's money?"

Speaking of which, it was Xue Yi who introduced the teacher to the village private school. Without Xue Yi, the private school might not have been established.

Even if it were, we would have to settle for Liu Zian's classmate, Chen Sheng, which wouldn't be ideal.

Also, even though she sold the cold noodles' recipe and didn't take much Silver, it was still considered an investment with Xue Yi. Who knows how much money she'll make from it later on, even she couldn't predict.

In short, Mu Shuangshuang made sure not to lose out with Xue Yi.

Lu Yuanfeng nodded.

"Indeed, we should visit Old Mrs. Xue. But we left without bringing anything, what should we do?" Lu Yuanfeng answered.

In the morning when we set out, everyone was focused on going to town to buy things and prepare for the New Year. No one thought about visiting Old Mrs. Xue's house, so naturally, nothing was brought along.

"Well, let me think!"

Mu Shuangshuang racked her brain, which hadn't been used for a while.

The Xue Family is a wealthy family, and they don't care about gold and silver treasures.

Moreover, the old lady doesn't have many hobbies. She likes to eat Lianzi, but it's not the season for Lianzi now.

So what should we give the old lady?

Mu Shuangshuang pondered as she walked.

Suddenly, she remembered wanting to make pickles earlier; since she had thought of it, why not go ahead? Besides, no one was charging her for it.

This way, she wouldn't have to go out of her way to prepare another gift.

"Fengzi, let's do as before and bring pickles to the old lady. Didn't she say she liked them last time?"

Lu Yuanfeng remembered Mu Shuangshuang had previously made a jar for the old lady, and she mentioned several times that she found them delicious. Mu Shuangshuang hadn't found the time to make more, but if she had the time now, making another jar wouldn't be a problem.

"Why don't we buy the ingredients first? Later, we can make them at the restaurant and then deliver them?"

Fulin Restaurant may not be open, but many things were still stored there.

The ingredients for pickles, as well as the firewood for cooking.

Mu Shuangshuang grinned slightly, "Fengzi, you do have a better brain. I was just thinking of taking everything directly to the Xue house to make there."

Lu Yuanfeng shook his head helplessly.

This kind of idea, only Shuangshuang could come up with.

"Let's discuss this with Uncle Dashan and Aunt Si first, so they won't worry about us later," Lu Yuanfeng suggested.

"Alright, you wait here for a bit; I'll go find Father and Mother!"

Mu Shuangshuang walked a short distance ahead to catch up with Yu Si Niang and Mu Dashan.

She asked the couple to watch the three children, and at noon, they would meet at Fulin Restaurant for lunch.

The supplies could be bought at the market.

Since it was New Year's, spending a bit more was fine; they didn't need to be so tight-fisted.

Yu Si Niang and Mu Dashan agreed with Mu Shuangshuang's words.

Cooking their own meal, even with higher cost, was still much cheaper than eating at someone else's restaurant, which would cost one or several taels of Silver per meal.

"Shuangshuang, don't worry about us. You and Fengzi go take care of things; we're here. Rest assured, we'll buy whatever the kids want to eat."

With that, Mu Shuangshuang returned to find Lu Yuanfeng.

Having been to the market before, buying things was quick and efficient.

In no time, Mu Shuangshuang gathered everything she needed.

Additionally, they bought ten large jars—one for the Xue Family and the other nine to take home.

With all the materials ready, Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng returned to the restaurant early, fetched water, and prepared vegetables. They were quite familiar with these tasks.

Soon, a jar of pickles was ready.

Chapter 870: Backing Is Gone

On the way to the Xue Family, Mu Shuangshuang felt a bit uneasy.

It's been a long time since she'd seen Xue Zheng, and she didn't know how the kid was doing.

Along the way, Mu Shuangshuang kept tugging at her sleeve until she reached the Xue Mansion and finally calmed down a little.

As soon as Housekeeper Xue saw Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng, he immediately came to greet them.

"Miss Shuangshuang, Young Master Yuanfeng, you're finally here. A few days later, our Old Mrs. and Young Master Sun would be heading to the Capital."

"What? Wasn't it said that someone would send them?" Mu Shuangshuang was puzzled.

Originally, Old Mrs. Xue said she would send her grandson to the Capital while she stayed in Qingshan Town.

Also, Xue Yi couldn't leave because of business, so he had to stay in Qingshan Town as well.

"It's more than that. Even our master is going to the Capital, saying it's to expand business there." Housekeeper Xue explained seriously.

Fearing Mu Shuangshuang might not understand, he added, "In other words, this mansion will only have a few servants left to tidy up and clean, and even these old bones of mine are going to the Capital."

Mu Shuangshuang understood, which meant that this time, the Xue Family was moving entirely.

"But isn't the Xue Family's restaurant just starting up? Will it still be open?" Mu Shuangshuang asked.

Housekeeper Xue shook his head, "No, the cooks and everything will be moved to the Capital. Master said the restaurant will be turned into a fabric shop, selling clothes and patterns transported from the Capital, so more women in town can connect with the Capital."

Xue Yi's vision was longer than anyone else's.

After two years of recovery, the entire Da Ning Dynasty was almost restored.

Those with money and power have tightened their money again. If he stays in a small place like Qingshan Town, he won't make any money. It would be better to take advantage of his elder brother's connections in the Capital.

He must quickly establish a foothold in the Capital.

As for Qingshan Town, as long as he does well in the Capital, the hicks there would have to give him some face.

"Thank you, Housekeeper Xue! If it weren't for your explanations, I wouldn't have understood." Mu Shuangshuang said respectfully.

"No need to thank me. You and Young Master Yuanfeng are among the most straightforward people I've ever seen coming to the Xue Family.

In my eyes, you are half a son and daughter to me. I heard you're going to open a restaurant in Qingshan Town.

Don't be afraid of anything. Although the Xue Family's business isn't here anymore, they still have shops here.

Later, I'll inform the shopkeeper managing the fabric shop. If you have any difficulties, you can go to him. Although not every problem can be solved, at least you're under the Xue Family's banner!"

Housekeeper Xue tirelessly instructed Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng.

Yet, in his heart, he still felt uneasy.

Having been a housekeeper for over ten years, he knew well that once people left, the warmth would cool.

Once Old Mrs. Xue left Qingshan Town, no matter how prestigious the Xue Family's name was, it might not suppress the families that would rise after the Xue Family left.

"Housekeeper Xue, thank you so much."

Mu Shuangshuang expressed her gratitude.

Housekeeper Xue held a different significance to Mu Shuangshuang; her first earnings, which seemed to be seven coins, were earned from him.

At her most challenging time in this world, it was Housekeeper Xue's appearance that gave her a glimmer of hope.

Now that he's leaving, he gave her so many instructions, which made Mu Shuangshuang feel a bit sentimental.

Perhaps seeing Mu Shuangshuang's emotions, Housekeeper Xue pointed to Lu Yuanfeng and said, "Silly boy, this silly boy is quite good.

He's loyal, honest, and capable. He doesn't shy away from problems, and most importantly, his eyes are only on you.

Seize the opportunity. If you ever return to Qingshan Town, I hope you've already established a family and career."

Housekeeper Xue spoke more and more.

When he realized he was being too verbose, he suddenly felt a bit embarrassed.

"Alright, quickly follow me to see Old Mrs. and Young Master Sun!" Housekeeper Xue made a gesture of invitation.

After exchanging glances, Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng followed Housekeeper Xue into the Xue Mansion.

The items that Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng brought were lifted by two strong servants called by Housekeeper Xue, to be shown to Old Mrs. Xue, hoping she would be pleased.

After all, the things she had talked about for so long needed to be well taken care of.

In the back courtyard

Old Mrs. Xue was sunbathing, and not far from her, Xue Zheng was squatting on the ground. In front of Xue Zheng was a group of chubby, well-fed rabbits.

The rabbits looked adorable as they basked in the sun, occasionally flipping their bellies out.

Xue Zheng smiled gently at the rabbits and occasionally turned back to say a few words to Old Mrs. Xue.

He was completely normal now.

Though he still missed the simple life at Mu Shuangshuang's house, Old Mrs. Xue said that all good things must come to an end.

No one can be together forever.

He would grow up, and the kids at Shuangshuang's house would grow up too.

"Old Mrs., Xue Zheng..." Mu Shuangshuang softly called out.

Xue Zheng turned sharply, seeing Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng, and ran straight towards them.

Mu Shuangshuang spread her arms naturally, and Xue Zheng fell directly into her embrace.

The two of them hugged each other tightly.

Old Mrs. Xue got up from her armchair, looking at the two old acquaintances, a wide smile spreading across her face.

"Yesterday, Ju'er mentioned the roosters had a fight in the back courtyard, and I wondered if there were guests coming today. Who would've thought, there really are guests."

"Housekeeper, serve tea and snacks. Also, go to my room and bring the fabric I prepared for Shuang and Feng.

Plus, the dried mushrooms that someone sent me a few days ago, bring all of them out."

Old Mrs. Xue's voice was full of energy.

Her voice was loud, yet very endearing.

The housekeeper listened to Old Mrs. Xue's instructions and quickly got busy.

Of course, he didn't forget to remind Old Mrs. Xue, "Madam, Young Master Yuanfeng and Miss Shuangshuang brought you the pickles you've been wanting."

Old Mrs. Xue became even more delighted.

She stared intently at the jar of pickles and instructed the servants to carry it to the kitchen.

"Be careful not to spill it, that's a treasure you can't buy with money!" Old Mrs. Xue said.

The servants became even more cautious.

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Xue Zheng still didn't want to let go of Mu Shuangshuang, his head buried in her stomach, mumbling, "Sister Shuangshuang, why did you come? What about Yuanbao and Xiao Han? And Little Zhi."

Among the group of kids, Xue Zheng was the oldest.

But during his stay at Mu Shuangshuang's house, it was the three kids who led him in their play.

All kinds of mischief were done together by the four of them.

It was Xue Zheng's first time with others blowing up cow dung or using slingshots against the village bullies.

Thinking about it, he missed Little Zhi and Yuanbao even more, maybe even more than he missed Mu Shuangshuang herself.

"They're playing in town, and we'll have lunch at our newly opened restaurant. Xiao Zheng, do you want to come?"