

## **Folly 931**

### Chapter 931: Finally Consummated

As soon as she finished speaking, Da Lang lowered his head and held her face.

Like a clingy little pug, he leaned in and gently nibbled on Huang Bitao's lips.

It was as if some line in their bodies had been tugged, both of them stiffened, and suddenly felt a bit hot...

"Brother Da Lang, it's a bit hot!" Huang Bitao said foolishly.

"Me too..." Mu Dalang hugged the person in his arms even tighter.

Being newlyweds, the two of them had never been this close before.

They could feel each other's breath.

"Bitao, I think we should do something, don't you think?"

The night before the wedding, Mu Dazhong was afraid Da Lang wouldn't know how to consummate the marriage, so he deliberately found some item to demonstrate for Mu Dalang.

As for Huang Bitao, although her parents died early, and she hadn't been taught about these things before marriage, Matchmaker Sun had taught her some of it.

So even though both of them didn't have much experience, they had been instilled with knowledge in that regard.

Huang Bitao felt her face was about to turn into a hot iron; she had always thought that marriage wasn't complete without consummation.

But now that the moment had arrived, she became nervous.

"Da Lang, I'm ner...vous." Huang Bitao swallowed and admitted directly.

Mu Dalang was also nervous, but after all, he was a man, and if he shrunk back now, he would never have this chance with his wife in this life.

"Don't be afraid, Bitao, I'm here..."

After Mu Dalang finished speaking, he carried Huang Bitao onto the bed. The following events differed from simply chatting under the quilt.

Like a newborn calf, Mu Dalang tried countless methods, finally reaching the heights of passion with Huang Bitao...

The knot in their hearts was completely untied that night.

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The next day, Da Lang relayed Mu Shuangshuang's words to Mu Daniao without missing a beat.

This deflated Mu Daniao, who originally wanted to report the incident.

The issue wasn't about doing bad things; the critical part was not getting caught.

Once someone has evidence against you, you can only swallow the bitter pill.

Mu Daniao lay on the ground, unable to move, yet he had to endure the humiliation from the younger generation.

After Da Lang finished reciting a series of unequal terms, Mu Daniao was still forced to eagerly press his handprint.

"Uncle, I'll call you uncle again. You must remember clearly what's written on this paper.

First, you are not allowed to appear outside Bitao's and my bedroom door at night.

Second, you are not allowed to harbor any ill intentions toward Bitao.

Third, you are not allowed to meet Bitao alone.

Fourth, you are not allowed to do anything that would damage Bitao's reputation.

If you don't follow any of these four points, I'll take the sachet to the county, and you'll spend your life in jail."

Mu Danian nodded obediently; at this point, he'd agree to anything Da Lang said.

As long as he could keep his life, that was enough.

After pressing his handprint, Da Lang carefully put away the sachet and the contract before leaving.

As for Mu Danian, having been beaten and after lying on the ground all night without breakfast, he developed a high fever.

It wasn't until Mu Dazhong entered his room to discuss matters with him that he was discovered.

By the time he was sent for treatment, half of Mu Danian's life was gone, and it took several days of resting in bed before he improved.

Mr. Mu was furious because his son was beaten up at home, and he vowed to find out who did it.

But Mu Danian adamantly refused to admit he'd been beaten. He only said he got up in the night to relieve himself and, without a lamp, stumbled the whole way, resulting in his injuries.

Mr. Mu didn't believe this for a second. Would tripping result in a black-and-blue nose and bruises all over?

Clearly, he was beaten.

However, since the person involved wasn't pursuing the issue, there was nothing Mr. Mu could do without evidence to find out who was behind it.

So the matter was left unsettled.

That day, at the Old Mu Family's communal dinner table, Mr. Mu inquired about the third branch's situation with Da Lang.

"Da Lang, you usually have the most interaction with the third branch. How's Shuangshuang's restaurant doing? And the private school?"

Mu Dalang replied, "The private school is almost finished, just needs some final touches. But the restaurant, according to Shuangshuang, is short on funds for renovation.

In short, she said the restaurant opening is temporarily on hold until she has money for the renovations."

As soon as Mu Dalang finished speaking, it sparked jealousy at the dinner table, particularly from the second branch and Mu Danian.

Mrs. Lin remarked sourly, "The third one really has good fortune, having a child who's so good at business.

The private school is built, and there's even a restaurant, unlike us, barely scraping by, living a hard life."

"If it's so hard, then don't eat; plenty of shit in the latrine for you to eat, and that doesn't cost anything,"

snapped Old Mrs. Mu, whose back injury had healed.

"Mom, I was just speaking my mind. Why do you have to be so harsh? We're eating here, and now I can't eat anymore," Mrs. Lin complained.

But who would have thought, just as she finished speaking, Old Mrs. Mu stood up, grabbed the bowl in front of Mrs. Lin, and dumped it on the floor.

"You find it disgusting, huh? I'd rather give it to the dogs."

Half a bowl of sweet potato rice spilled onto the ground, and in an instant, a stray dog from the neighbor's place devoured it completely.

Mrs. Lin tried to kick it away, but it was already too late.

She cursed, "You little beast, get lost, get lost..."

"Why are you yelling? You're the one who said it was disgusting. I was just helping you. Next time if you dare to talk nonsense during meals, don't even think about entering the dining room again, just stay in the pigsty,"

This little incident didn't dampen Mr. Mu's curiosity about the third branch's situation.

He continued to ask, "Do you know how much silver it's going to cost to renovate?"

Da Lang shook his head, "I don't know, but Shuangshuang said once the private school admits students, she'll use that money for renovations.

I guess the renovations could take at most half a month, maybe the restaurant will open in March."

Hearing Da Lang's words, the corners of Mr. Mu's mouth slightly turned up, seemingly pleased.

Old Mrs. Mu, upon seeing this, felt extremely displeased.

"Why do you care in private? They won't even tell you when the restaurant opens, you old fart."

"The son you've raised all these years, only for that bitch and little brat, they don't have you in their hearts or eyes."

Old Mrs. Mu's words were always infuriating.

Most times, Mr. Mu pretended not to hear, but this time, it was really too harsh.

"Just eat! If you keep prattling, be careful or you'll get your tongue cut out when you die.

If you're so idle, think about preparing for Xiangxiang's marriage.

Matchmaker Sun came to remind us again, asking when you'll let the two kids meet."

Bringing up Mu Xiangxiang's marriage got the Old Mu Family buzzing.

Even the younger ones at the table perked up, eager to hear what Mr. Mu had to say next.

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After waiting for a long time, there was no sign of Mr. Mu continuing the conversation.

Everyone was anxious.

"Dad, you were just talking about Xiangxiang's marriage, what's going on?" Mu Dazhong asked curiously.

"What's going on, it's none of your business, I, as the old lady, haven't agreed to the Sun family's proposal yet."

Old Mrs. Mu rolled her eyes at Mu Dazhong and said irritably.

Mr. Mu's face darkened. He hadn't intended to bring it up, but he answered Mu Dazhong's question anyway.

"Back then, I agreed with your mother that if we wanted Xiangxiang to come out to have New Year's Eve dinner, we had to agree to Matchmaker Sun's nephew, Sun Dali's proposal.

Just as it happens, there's not much going on at home recently, it's time to consider Xiangxiang's marriage. Once she gets married, we can find a good wife for Fifth as well."

Time waits for no one, as we age, we have to marry and have children.

In the entire Old Mu Family, those who remain unmarried in their later years are just two people, Mu Dandan and Mu Yingying, but they are different, with a scholar father and possibly a future champion scholar.

They are proper rich ladies, easily able to marry landlords and the sons of big landowners.

"Pfft... Sun Dali? That fat pig? Hahaha, Dad, did I hear you right, how could you push Xiangxiang into the fire pit?"

With such a heavy man, won't he crush Xiangxiang to death on the wedding night?" As soon as Mu Dazhong heard Sun Dali's name, he covered his mouth and couldn't stop laughing.

Mr. Mu's face went from black to white, then turned red.

He was almost furious.

He shouted loudly: "You're full of crap! Do you know Xiangxiang's situation? A lunatic, which wealthy man would marry her?"

And have you forgotten how your wife's hair on the back of her head is gone? Xiangxiang eats enough for five adults in one meal, who can afford her?"

Now Sun Dali isn't looking down on Xiangxiang, that's her blessing. I've already discussed with Matchmaker Sun to set the marriage once the two kids meet."

Mr. Mu's words were cutting, making Mu Dazhong want to bite his tongue off.

Why was I so careless in saying good words for that damned girl?"

Why should he care about that damned girl's life or death?

"Dad, I understand my mistake, it's not... I was just worried about Xiangxiang being wronged! Besides, with Xiangxiang getting married, I'm too happy as the second brother to even think of opposing it," Mu Dazhong chuckled.

"Dad, you really found a good match for Xiangxiang, that boy is hardworking," Mrs. Lin laughed along.

Originally, discussing Mu Xiangxiang's marriage was reasonable for them to give opinions, but this action angered Old Mrs. Mu.

She stood up swiftly and yelled at Mu Dazhong and Mrs. Lin: "Who do you two think you are? Why do you think you can talk about Xiangxiang's marriage?"

If Sun Dali is so good, then let Qing get married to him, she can serve him like a horse."

As soon as Old Mrs. Mu finished speaking, Mu Qingqing at the neighboring table dropped her chopsticks with a 'clank' onto the ground, she whimpered twice and started to cry: "Grandma, I won't marry Sun Dali, I won't marry..."

Since connecting with Mrs. Liu from the town, Mu Qingqing hadn't shown a fearful expression in a long time.

But this time, she was scared.

In Old Mu Family, a single word from any elder could easily decide her fate.

Just like back when others wanted to marry Mu Shuangshuang to that crippled old man Wang San.

She didn't want this fate, she did not...

Mu Qingqing's agitation made Old Mrs. Mu even angrier: "You little brat, is marrying someone a matter where you say you won't get married and that's it?"

I, as the old lady, insist on marrying you to Sun Dali, what can you do about it?"

Old Mrs. Mu's tone was extremely arrogant, as if saying she would marry Mu Qingqing to Sun Dali, that tone was as casual as saying she'd squash an ant.

At this moment, Mu Qingqing suddenly resented the Old Mu Family, hated the other members of the Old Mu Family.

Hated them for so easily deciding her marriage.

"I would rather die than marry!" Mu Qingqing, with red eyes, said this and then ran out.

Mrs. Lin stopped eating, and followed after her, shouting.

"Qingqing, mom won't let you marry Sun Dali, if we're going to marry, it'll be to Liu Zian, don't go..."

When Mrs. Lin came out, Mu Shuangshuang happened to be in the yard drying quilts.

In the spring sunshine, it was a warm midday, after drying the quilts, the bed would be warm at night.

She heard the words from Mrs. Lin's mouth and chuckled softly, then continued patting the quilt.

Yu Si Niang was feeding pigs in the yard, hearing her daughter's laughter, couldn't help but ask:  
"Shuangshuang, what are you laughing about?"

Mu Shuangshuang shook her head: "Nothing!"

Mrs. Lin wasn't wrong in thinking that marrying Liu Zian was better than Sun Dali.

But from the sounds of it, the people of Old Mu Family were planning to marry Mu Qingqing to Sun Dali?

It shouldn't be, the Sun family doesn't have much money, with just a few acres of land, considering Old Mu Family's current status, they wouldn't take notice of it, Sun Dali's family also doesn't have much of a connection in the village.

The only face they have is that Sun Dali is a relative of Matchmaker Sun.

But after all, he's just a relative, not a son, no matter how much wealth Matchmaker Sun has, she wouldn't give it to Sun Dali.

Mu Shuangshuang shook her head, deciding not to think about it.

On the contrary, Yu Si Niang came closer, seemingly still curious about what had just happened.

Mu Shuangshuang briefly mentioned what she overheard, Yu Si Niang also looked quite surprised.

She and Mu Shuangshuang had similar thoughts, thinking this seemed unlikely.

"If Auntie married Sun Dali, I might believe it, after all, in the eyes of the villagers, she's a madwoman abandoned by her fiancé, who almost hurt someone."

Mu Shuangshuang said casually, unexpectedly hitting the mark.

"By the way, Shuangshuang, your Uncle Six sent a message saying they would spend the Lantern Festival at our place, bringing your grandparents along, and told you to prepare more dumplings, and that bean sprouts too, your grandma has been talking about it for a long time."

Mu Shuangshuang smiled slightly, and in front of Yu Si Niang, she counted the days to the Lantern Festival.

Four days left.

There's enough time to sprout the beans, and if we prepare some good food, we can treat the family well that day.

When her grandparents arrive, she'll give them the bean sprouting method, so they won't have to keep thinking about it.

"Mom, I understand, Shuangshuang will handle it. If there's nothing else, I'll go find Fengzi."

As soon as Mu Shuangshuang mentioned Fengzi, Yu Si Niang looked at her and smiled.

As if hinting at a little secret between Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng.

Mu Shuangshuang also smiled, though her smile carried a hint of shyness.

"Mom, Fengzi didn't come over this morning, and he didn't come for lunch, I'll go see if he went to the mountains." Mu Shuangshuang explained awkwardly.

Yu Si Niang gave a knowing look and urged, "You better hurry, and while you're at it, check on how the private school is doing, your father said it might be finished in a few days!"

Chapter 933: Betrothal Gifts

The private school built by Mu Shuangshuang is the village's second private school in recent years.

It's been almost fifteen years since the last private school existed.

So this matter is considered a big deal in the village, and quite a few people are eagerly watching.

Some hope that once the private school is completed, their children will be the first to benefit. But more hope that the school of the Third Branch won't succeed, and they'll leave in disgrace.

After all, no one wants to see others become wealthier first, especially the Third Branch of the Old Mu Family, which was poorer than anyone else back in the day.

"Then I'll go first!" Mu Shuangshuang said, placing the wooden stick she had just used to beat the dust out of the quilt onto a chair beside her.

She headed straight in the direction of Lu Yuanfeng's house.

The path to the private school overlaps with the route to Lu Yuanfeng's house, and after walking for about the length of a stick of incense, Mu Shuangshuang detoured and arrived near the private school.

From afar, she could see the people still busy at the private school entrance.

Mu Dashan stood in the most conspicuous place, directing, while Zhang Yutou and Zhao Gouzi were up on the roof, doing the final laying work.

Once they cover the roof in the next few days, tidy up the house, and build a wall, the private school will be complete.

One must say, the place Mu Shuangshuang chose is wonderfully scenic.

With the Qingshan and lush waters, whether it's for studying or living inside, it should be an enjoyment.

Standing at the entrance, she took a few deep breaths of fresh air, and as soon as she stepped into the grounds of the private school, Mu Dashan noticed her.

"Hey, Shuangshuang, why are you here? Where's your mother? Have you had lunch?"

Mu Dashan started with a flurry of questions.

Mu Dashan didn't return to the Third Branch for lunch; whenever there's work, he eats cauldron meals here with the working men, cooked by Zhao Yun.

"We've eaten. My mother asked me to come over to check how the private school is coming along. Dad, can I look around nearby?" Mu Shuangshuang asked.

Mu Dashan nodded and said, "Of course you can, I'll let them know to be careful."

"Thanks, Dad."

Mu Shuangshuang wasn't very knowledgeable about construction; it's a field she's not familiar with, so all she could do was look around at the school's layout and such.

After wandering around, Mu Shuangshuang was quite satisfied with the private school.

She shared her thoughts with Mu Dashan, bid farewell to him, and headed to Lu Yuanfeng's place.

This path is one Mu Shuangshuang has walked thousands of times; she's very familiar with it.

When she arrived at Lu Yuanfeng's house, Mu Shuangshuang nearly got frightened.

The yard was filled with half-finished desks, with Huang Da and Huang Er each occupying a side; one was banging away, the other was squatting down, painting chairs and desks.

Lu Yuanfeng was in the center of the yard, wearing a long-sleeved short shirt, with a slight sweat on his forehead, holding a saw and earnestly sawing wood.

The sound of sawing reverberated above his house.

Apparently not expecting Mu Shuangshuang to come over, the three men were focused on their tasks.

If not for Yuanbao rushing out from the kitchen with tea and calling Mu Shuangshuang's name, the three of them might not have noticed her.

"Why are you here? The paint smell in the yard is strong. I'll have Yuanbao bring you a chair; you can sit in the backyard for a while."

Lu Yuanfeng looked up, giving Mu Shuangshuang a silly grin.

"It's fine; you guys are working and aren't bothered, so why should I be? Oh, I made some masks for you. Smelling too much paint is bad for your health." Mu Shuangshuang picked up a long piece of wood from the ground, handed it to Lu Yuanfeng, and asked.

"I forgot; I'll go get it now." Lu Yuanfeng just remembered the masks.

As an ancient person, his self-protection awareness wasn't as strong as Mu Shuangshuang's.

The gloves, hats, masks, scarves, and such prepared by Mu Shuangshuang were often forgotten by him.

"I'll go; you rest here." Mu Shuangshuang called to Lu Yuanfeng, who had already put down the saw.

She quickly went ahead into his room.

It was the umpteenth time Mu Shuangshuang entered Lu Yuanfeng's room; the room had pitifully few furnishings.

A bed, a standing cupboard, a long bench, a table, and nothing more.

The masks and such were locked in the cupboard by Lu Yuanfeng, with two keys, one in Mu Shuangshuang's hand and one in his.

Opening the cupboard, Mu Shuangshuang noticed a small red lacquered box, about the size of two small stools, with beautiful patterns carved on top, crafted with exceptional finesse. The lacquer didn't seem ordinary either.

Out of curiosity, Mu Shuangshuang moved closer and saw totem-like phoenix designs but slightly different.

Before she could touch it, Lu Yuanfeng suddenly rushed in.

He saw Mu Shuangshuang looking at the small box in the cupboard and hurriedly walked up to take it away, then blushing stammered an explanation to Mu Shuangshuang, "That...that's not for you, don't misunderstand."

Mu Shuangshuang blinked, looking at Lu Yuanfeng with a puzzled expression.

Seeing Mu Shuangshuang like this made Lu Yuanfeng even more nervous.

This box was a jewelry box he made for Shuangshuang, containing all his possessions, including property deeds.

Also, his mother's only keepsake, a silver hairpin. Though not valuable, it was passed down to the daughters in his grandmother's family.

His mother didn't have a daughter, so it was passed to Lu Yuanfeng, and he intended to give it to Shuangshuang when they got married.

Overall, it was meant to be a surprise prepared by Lu Yuanfeng.

He didn't want Shuangshuang to find out so soon.

"What's wrong? Why is your face so red?" Mu Shuangshuang assumed Lu Yuanfeng was catching a cold, and reached out her hand to check his forehead temperature.

The cool back of her hand touched Lu Yuanfeng's forehead, causing him to feel his breath catch.

His body temperature felt unusually high, almost like he was ill.

"Are you really sick? You rest and don't work. I'll go get Grandpa Zhang." Mu Shuangshuang said and headed towards the door.

She had only taken a step when Lu Yuanfeng pulled her back.

His hand clasped onto Mu Shuangshuang's shoulder, his eyes fixated on her.

In those dark, inky eyes, emotions surged, hinting at a sentiment that made breathing challenging.

"What...what's wrong?" Mu Shuangshuang asked again.

This time, Lu Yuanfeng pulled her into his embrace.

"If the jewelry box wasn't meant for you, wouldn't you be mad?" Lu Yuanfeng sulkily asked.

"So it's a jewelry box, huh? It's quite nice looking." Mu Shuangshuang chuckled innocently.

"Why would I be mad? That's yours, not mine." Mu Shuangshuang replied.

"But I said before, what's mine is yours."

Now Mu Shuangshuang truly didn't know how to respond.

Lu Yuanfeng had said this to her before, but she never took it to heart.

Or rather, Mu Shuangshuang hadn't naturally come to accept others' possessions as her own.

Chapter 934: Jinxed and Mad (Part 2)

When it comes to relationships, Mu Shuangshuang is still a novice.

She doesn't understand much, but she always feels that even love has its boundaries.

Mutual respect is the key to lasting relationships.

"Shuangshuang, about that box..." Lu Yuanfeng wanted to reveal the surprise he had prepared for Mu Shuangshuang, but she interrupted him.

"Shh! Fengzi, since I've chosen you, I trust you unconditionally. There are some things you don't need to say, and I still understand.

Whatever you initially wanted to do, keep doing it according to your original intentions. Don't easily compromise your principles. People should have some personality, that's what girls like." Mu Shuangshuang stuck her tongue out at Lu Yuanfeng.

Mu Shuangshuang isn't foolish. From the moment Lu Yuanfeng said the box wasn't for her, she already had a guess.

Especially when Lu Yuanfeng mentioned it was a jewelry box, she was almost certain it was meant for her.

It should be a surprise from Lu Yuanfeng.

Although she inadvertently spoiled it, at the moment, she still doesn't know what's inside.

Mu Shuangshuang is very clever, truly clever.

At least in Lu Yuanfeng's eyes.

However, her final playful gesture unexpectedly made Lu Yuanfeng burst into laughter.

The atmosphere instantly became cheerful, and right in front of Mu Shuangshuang, Lu Yuanfeng put the box back in the cabinet.

He mimicked Mu Shuangshuang's way of speaking, saying, "When the day comes that Shuangshuang wants to marry me, I'll give you this thing, otherwise, I won't."

"Hmph, I don't care, I don't want it." Mu Shuangshuang turned her head arrogantly.

"Do you really not want it?" Lu Yuanfeng asked.

"No!" Mu Shuangshuang replied.

"Then I'll give it to someone else."

As soon as Lu Yuanfeng finished speaking, Mu Shuangshuang turned around and pinched his waist, threatening Lu Yuanfeng, "Who said that? That's mine. If you dare give it to someone else, I'll strangle you."

Lu Yuanfeng let Mu Shuangshuang pinch his waist, a slight smile tugging at the corners of his mouth.

He thought for a moment, then nodded seriously, "Then I guess I'll give it to you!"

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Mu Shuangshuang spent a whole afternoon at Lu Yuanfeng's house, busy painting the desks and chairs for the private school. Once the paint dried, they would be taken to the school.

These days, Mu Shuangshuang also started publicizing the school in various villages. Initially, she thought she wouldn't be able to recruit students, but it turned out that finding students wasn't an issue at all.

With the village chief's endorsement, parents from nearby who wanted their children to study have already started contacting Mu Shuangshuang.

All that was left was to prepare the school and have Luo Juren come over to teach.

After finishing her tasks, Mu Shuangshuang went home to cook dinner.

The tofu she made earlier was used in a few dishes, and everyone was generally satisfied. The only thing missing was the stinky tofu that Mu Shuangshuang kept talking about, which no one had seen yet.

However, Mu Shuangshuang had prepared the tofu by cutting it up and leaving it in a ventilated place.

In a few days, once mold grows on it, it will be ready to eat.

After dinner, Mu Shuangshuang rested in the courtyard, planning to digest her food before washing up and going to bed.

Suddenly, from the Old Mu Family's main house, the sound of Old Mrs. Mu's cursing rang out.

Mu Shuangshuang's brow furrowed instinctively. She didn't want to join in on this commotion.

Just as she was about to go to the kitchen to fetch water, Da Lang came rushing over.

Upon seeing Mu Shuangshuang, Mu Dalang looked like he had found a lifeline, exclaiming, "Shuangshuang, something's wrong, Grandma and Matchmaker Sun are fighting!"

"Big brother, I don't want to get involved in this." Mu Shuangshuang said directly.

"No, Shuangshuang, you don't understand. Matchmaker Sun and Grandma are fighting over Auntie and Sun Dali, and now Matchmaker Sun wants to expose the matter between me and Bitu."

"What?"

Mu Shuangshuang didn't care about Old Mrs. Mu's affairs.

But if it involved Huang Bitu and Mu Dalang, that was a big deal.

Could Matchmaker Sun be so bold as to bring up such a thing?

"I heard it with my own ears; Bitu is in a panic and doesn't know what to do!" Mu Dalang said.

"Then what are you standing around for? Let's go!" Mu Shuangshuang immediately dashed towards the main house...

In the front yard of the main house, Matchmaker Sun and Old Mrs. Mu were facing off, their hands on their hips, continuously hurling insults at each other, saliva flying in all directions.

"Old hag, how long have I put up with you? You tell me." Matchmaker Sun shouted.

"I've put up with you! I've already said, your useless nephew is not someone our Xiangxiang is interested in, so why are you here?"

Old Mrs. Mu shouted without backing down.

Earlier in the day, Mr. Mu had arranged for Mu Xiangxiang to meet Sun Dali, and in the evening, Matchmaker Sun showed up.

This time, she was more direct, hoping to finalize the marriage quickly.

After dinner, Mr. Mu went off to chat with the village elders. With the main figure of authority in the Old Mu Family absent, a quarrel was inevitable.

Nobody knew who first started to expose each other's faults, with Old Mrs. Mu calling Sun Dali a loser,

And Matchmaker Sun calling Mu Xiangxiang a lunatic.

Neither would back down, and eventually, Old Mrs. Mu proclaimed herself a scholar's mother, claiming her status was higher than Matchmaker Sun's.

In a hurry, Matchmaker Sun brought up Mu Dalang and Huang Bitu.

Hitting Old Mrs. Mu where it hurt, Old Mrs. Mu quickly demanded, "What about Dalang and Bitu? You speak up!"

"I'll say it, who's afraid of whom!" Matchmaker Sun shouted.

Meanwhile, Mu Danian was ready to pounce, just waiting for Matchmaker Sun to speak ill of Huang Bitu, so he could have his mother divorce her and then teach that mean woman a lesson.

To get his revenge.

"You think your family gained something, huh? Well, let me tell you, Huang Bitu and Mu Dalang..."

At this point, Huang Bitu's heart was in her throat.

Just as Matchmaker Sun was about to spill the beans, Mu Shuangshuang rushed in and separated Matchmaker Sun and Old Mrs. Mu.

"Grandma, Matchmaker Sun, what is this argument about? Can't we talk it out?"

And Matchmaker Sun, you're supposed to be matchmaking, so how did this turn into a fight with my grandma?"

As Mu Shuangshuang spoke, her cold gaze fixed on Matchmaker Sun's face.

Like a chill of winter, it froze Matchmaker Sun's anger completely.

Matchmaker Sun suddenly remembered a vow she had made, if she were to speak about Huang Bitu and Mu Dalang, she would never be able to matchmake again, and the consequences would be dire.

Matchmakers tend to believe in these things.

Terrified, Matchmaker Sun broke out in a cold sweat, unable to imagine the miserable fate she would suffer if she had let those words slip.

"Speak! What about Dalang and Huang Bitu?" Old Mrs. Mu insisted, not wanting to let it go.

But Matchmaker Sun wasn't going to discuss it anymore.

She turned her head away, ignoring Old Mrs. Mu.

Just at that moment, Mr. Mu returned.

Seeing the situation in the yard, his face darkened once again.

Inside the yard stood members of the Old Mu Family, and outside were onlookers there for the drama.

One of the nosy villagers shouted, "Matchmaker Sun, don't sabotage your nephew! Your nephew may be fat, but at least he's normal.

And that Mu Xiangxiang is, well, ill-fated and crazy. If you marry her, and she has a child, it'll be a little lunatic too. Your Sun Family, you'll lose everything."

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"What nonsense are you spewing? How did our Xiangxiang become a bane to her husband? She has nothing to do with that brute from the Qin Family! If you dare speak recklessly again, I'll tear your mouth apart."

Old Mrs. Mu rushed forward, dragged out the person insulting Mu Xiangxiang, and pointed at them, yelling.

The person refused to concede, insisting that Mu Xiangxiang was crazy.

"You're the crazy one, damn it! Our Xiangxiang isn't crazy, isn't crazy..."

At that moment, Old Mrs. Mu looked like a genuine mother.

But her defense only worked for Mu Xiangxiang and Mu Dade; the others couldn't enjoy it.

Mr. Mu's darkened face became even more ominous amidst Old Mrs. Mu's repeated assertions that Mu Xiangxiang wasn't crazy.

He took a step forward, grabbing Old Mrs. Mu and started walking towards the inner courtyard:  
"Enough, don't go mad again. Aren't you ashamed enough?"

Old Mrs. Mu, full of rage, shook off Mr. Mu's reaching hand.

A big fight was about to break out.

Mu Dalang couldn't stand it anymore and shouted, "Grandfather, Grandmother, look, all these folks are here for our family drama. If you have any issues, can you please resolve them inside our house?"

"Is it your place to speak? I haven't even settled accounts with you for bringing a brat here to watch the show.

I'm telling you, this isn't over! My daughter Xiangxiang will never marry that ugly thing Sun Dali!"

As if demonstrating, Old Mrs. Mu glared at Mu Dalang and Huang Bitao with her fierce eyes, making them tremble all over.

Mu Shuangshuang stood nearby, ignoring what Old Mrs. Mu said.

Matchmaker Sun was still startled by Mu Shuangshuang's previous look and hadn't recovered.

Everyone in the courtyard was at a standoff, unwilling to leave. The spectators outside were like nailed pegs, motionless but with eyes fixed on the Old Mu Family.

This drama could only be so extravagant with the Old Mu Family.

After a long while, Matchmaker Sun suddenly spoke up, "Alright, alright, I'll tell my nephew that we aren't worthy of the Old Mu Family.

From now on, I, Matchmaker Sun, won't meddle in the Old Mu Family's marriage affairs. Please find someone else more capable."

It wasn't the first time Matchmaker Sun declared she wouldn't interfere with the Old Mu Family's marriage affairs.

But it was always said in front of Old Mrs. Mu, never in front of the villagers.

This time, it was like making a vow; Matchmaker Sun genuinely decided not to meddle in the Old Mu Family's affairs anymore.

Unless Mu Xiangxiang and her nephew Sun Dali could make a life together.

Matchmaker Sun's concession made Old Mrs. Mu feel triumphant.

Mr. Mu wanted to salvage the situation, but unfortunately, Matchmaker Sun had made up her mind.

Once Matchmaker Sun left, Old Mrs. Mu lost her quarrel target and quieted down.

The villagers reluctantly dispersed, leaving only the Old Mu Family members.

Old Mrs. Mu thought the matter was over, but unfortunately, Mr. Mu was determined not to let Old Mrs. Mu have it easy.

He didn't say a word, heading straight towards the main house.

By the time Old Mrs. Mu realized, it was too late; Mr. Mu had already broken into Mu Xiangxiang's room.

Inside, the room was clean; Mu Xiangxiang sat on a chair, with a pile of food in front of her. When the old man entered, she was smacking her lips, eating.

Seeing Mr. Mu, Mu Xiangxiang was first startled, then began to pretend to be silly and laughed foolishly.

Unfortunately, none of it could fool Mr. Mu now.

"Girl, you're not crazy at all! At Dalang's wedding banquet, you and your mother colluded, just to avoid marrying that Qin Family brat!" Mr. Mu said.

Following behind, Old Mrs. Mu turned pale.

Deceiving one's spouse is never a trivial matter.

"Old man, listen to me, Xiangxiang really was crazy before, and just in recent days, she's become a bit clearer. I was afraid she'd go crazy again, so I didn't dare tell you. Old man, please don't blame me!"

Old Mrs. Mu sobbed, playing the pitiful victim.

"Enough, put away your crying, fussing antics.

This time, I truly don't intend to keep you as my wife. Pack your things and go back to your Liu Family Village!"

This time, Mr. Mu seemed resolute. After he said this, no matter how Old Mrs. Mu tried to explain, he refused to look at her.

He truly seemed to have lost heart.

Mu Shuangshuang watched this scene with a cold smile, feeling immensely pleased. That old hag deserved to learn a lesson.

The family ended up like this, and that old hag couldn't escape responsibility.

If she hadn't acted so excessively, treating others like nothing, how would the third branch have suffered so much?

How would the fourth branch become so silent about everything?

Even Dalang and Bitao had to sneak around just to get married.

"Old man, are you really willing to let me go? Over the years, I've worried myself sick about this family. Without me, can this home even hold together?"

Mr. Mu was unmoved.

Old Mrs. Mu started wailing, but not a single person spoke for her. Even her beloved Mu Xiangxiang was just beside her, continuously stuffing food into her mouth like a garbage bin, endlessly consuming junk.

Mrs. Lin was also contemplating, thinking that once Old Mrs. Mu left, she would become the oldest daughter-in-law in the Old Mu Family.

Managing all of the Old Mu Family's affairs, big and small.

Mu Dazhong and Mu Danian's mouths curled to a certain angle, reflecting on just how many outrageous things Old Mrs. Mu must have done to end up like this.

However, Old Mrs. Mu didn't think she had done anything wrong.

Although she uttered words of remorse, her eyes showed no trace of repentance.

Seeing this, Mu Dalang and Huang Bitao both knelt down: "Grandfather, Grandmother knows she was wrong. Please, spare her!"

"Even though Grandmother has a bad temper, her intentions were for the best for the Old Mu Family. Everyone shares the responsibility for Aunt's predicament.

If she hadn't been pushed to marry into the Qin Family, to that paralyzed man, Grandmother wouldn't have... wouldn't have done such a thing," Mu Dalang said.

Once Mu Dalang spoke, the others who had been watching decided to make a show of it by saying, "Father, just let it go. At the end of the day, you and Mother have been married for so many years."

Mrs. Lin added, "Father, although Mother hasn't handled things perfectly, at least Xiangxiang isn't actually crazy, which is a good thing. This way, she won't need to marry that fat boy from the Sun Family. Perhaps she could even marry a landlord."

Mrs. Lin didn't realize that by speaking, she reminded Mr. Mu of Old Mrs. Mu's deceit.

And her attitude in handling matters.

"All of you, shut up! Whoever pleads for her can leave with her! The Old Mu Family is still my domain!"

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The show was almost over by this point. Mu Shuangshuang, not saying a word, left Mu Xiangxiang's room.

Returning to the third branch, she hadn't even caught her breath before her parents bombarded her with questions about the situation.

Mu Shuangshuang naturally replied truthfully.

After listening, the couple fell into silence, each with faces looking somewhat troubled.

Chapter 936: Young Once More

The farce in the Old Mu Family lasted for four days.

It finally came to a halt on the day of the Lantern Festival.

The plan to marry off Mu Xiangxiang to Sun Dali was also put on hold due to the festivities.

However, the Old Yu Family coming to the third branch for the Lantern Festival was a sure thing.

On the morning of the fifteenth day of the first lunar month, Yu Si Niang got up early. She changed into new clothes meant for the holiday and deliberately went to Mu Shuangshuang's room to have her do her makeup.

Since Mu Shuangshuang charged a small fee for makeup during the Qixi Festival, village girls have occasionally sought her out for her skills.

Some because they were going on dates, others purely because they thought it looked good.

A few pennies at a time, over several occasions, it amounted to enough to buy a kilo of pork. Mu Shuangshuang thought doing more makeup for the village women could be a good way to make money.

But putting makeup on Yu Si Niang was like a big girl heading to the sedan chair for the first time. So Mu Shuangshuang was particularly cautious this time.

After a long time of dabbing and brushing, Mu Shuangshuang finally let Yu Si Niang open her eyes.

The person in front of her, because of the powder, appeared much fairer than usual.

Her eyelashes looked especially long because they were curled with a hot wire. Additionally, after Mu Shuangshuang styled Yu Si Niang's hair into the popular Da Ning Dynasty bun — the Feiluo Bun — Yu Si Niang's image completely changed.

Previously, she looked like a rural woman, but now she appeared as the wife of a landlord, standing next to Mu Shuangshuang, looking more like sisters than mother and daughter.

But come to think of it, Yu Si Niang indeed was not that old, close to thirty but not quite there.

If it weren't for the torment she suffered in the Old Mu Family in earlier years, she would probably look even younger now.

Yu Si Niang gazed at herself in the copper mirror, momentarily unable to believe it.

"Shuangshuang, maybe... I shouldn't do this after all, it stands out too much. If your grandma sees it, I'm afraid she'll scold me again."

Mu Shuangshuang grasped Yu Si Niang's hand and consoled her, "It's okay, Mom. Grandma hasn't even cleaned up her own mess. She won't have time to meddle in our business.

Besides, a woman's face should be cherished by herself, not everyone else's concern. Mom, you look especially beautiful today, and when Grandpa and Grandma come later, they'll definitely see that you haven't suffered in the third branch." Mu Shuangshuang laughed brightly.

Yu Si Niang blushed at Mu Shuangshuang's words, giving her a playful glare.

She got up and glanced towards the adjacent room.

But it was still early, and the kids hadn't woken, even Mu Dashan was still asleep.

Mu Shuangshuang guessed that Yu Si Niang wanted her father to see the transformation early, but she sensibly said nothing, not wanting to embarrass her mother further.

"Mom, I'll go make breakfast, you can stay longer in my room." Mu Shuangshuang suggested.

Yu Si Niang quickly stood up too.

"I'll join you. I'll light the fire, you cook!"

"Mom, you've already put on makeup, take a good rest today. It's rare that Dad doesn't have to work on the construction site today; I'll take care of today's meals."

Mu Shuangshuang waved her hand grandly, speaking with great enthusiasm.

Yu Si Niang and Mu Dashan usually don't have it easy, whether at home or on the construction site. When there's nothing to do on the site, they tend to the fields.

They never allow themselves to be idle.

"Shuangshuang, you're all grown up!" Yu Si Niang remarked sentimentally, looking at Mu Shuangshuang.

Who would have thought that this time last year, my daughter was too timid to come out, hiding at home, not answering to anyone?

Now, my daughter can handle everything, and Yu Si Niang feels that the heavens have not treated her poorly; she's very content.

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After breakfast, the family of the third branch went straight to the village entrance, waiting for the arrival of the Old Yu Family.

When the sun was up, the Old Yu Family appeared at the village entrance.

Mr. Yu, Old Mrs. Yu, Yu Liulang, and Feng Xiaohua, as well as...

Mu Shuangshuang focused her eyes, her face turning dark upon seeing Yu Erlang and Li Juhua, who had once threatened to abandon her. Though she had no objection to Yu Erlang's presence, she truly disliked Li Juhua's presence.

"Mom, why is Li Juhua here at our house? Wasn't she already abandoned?" Mu Shuangshuang asked, slightly displeased.

Yu Si Niang was equally puzzled, not knowing why Li Juhua had come. But because of what Li Juhua had done before, Yu Si Niang and Mu Shuangshuang shared the same stance — Li Juhua wasn't welcome.

"Once they're here, they're our guests, and we have to treat them well." Mu Dashan interjected.

As they spoke, the Yu Family had reached them.

The elder Yu couple immediately noticed the changes in Yu Si Niang. Old Mrs. Yu's eyes lit up as she praised Yu Si Niang.

"Girl, since the last time we met, you've become much prettier. The younger you look, the more beautiful you get."

Yu Si Niang shyly lowered her head, looking at her toes. She said, "Mu Shuangshuang put rouge and powder on me. Without them, I... I don't look good."

"Nonsense, my daughter is beautiful," Mr. Yu chimed in.

Beside them, Mrs. Li, seeing the elder Yu couple gathering around Yu Si Niang, tried to insert herself to compliment Mr. and Mrs. Yu:

"Yes, fourth sister, your skin is silky smooth. How do you manage to look younger as you age? Tell me your secret for beauty so I can try it too and become beautiful."

Mrs. Li's words, not only were Yu Si Niang unhappy but even Old Mrs. Yu turned her head away in disdain.

Everyone appeared unwilling to engage with Mrs. Li.

The elder Yu couple hadn't visited the Old Mu Family for several years. The last visit was when Yu Si Niang gave birth to Little Zhi amidst the ice and snow. No one was there to wash clothes and diapers, so Old Mrs. Yu came to help for two days.

When she came, she brought a black hen and some blood-enriching herbs that the Old Yu Family borrowed money to buy, and she stewed the soup in Yu Si Niang's room.

When she finished washing the diapers, she returned to find the stove and pot gone, only to find chicken bones scattered in the Old Mu Family's dining room.

Old Mrs. Yu, who had never argued with anyone, had an altercation with Old Mrs. Mu, resulting in her being chased out.

Old Mrs. Yu never mentioned it to Yu Si Niang, fearing her daughter would bear a grudge against Old Mrs. Mu over this incident.

However, for Old Mrs. Yu, the knot in her heart remained. Even when Old Mrs. Mu went to Yu Family Village recently, Mr. Yu and Old Mrs. Yu avoided her.

"Dad, Mom, let's not talk here and risk being laughed at. Let's go home." Yu Si Niang held Old Mrs. Yu's hand and headed toward the third branch.

Mu Dashan followed behind, chatting with Yu Liulang and Yu Erlang. They were particularly interested in the private school and restaurant at Mu Shuangshuang's house.

As Mu Dashan talked about these matters, the two occasionally shared their opinions.

#### Chapter 937: Timely Help in the Snow (Part 2)

Mu Shuangshuang was walking at the end of the group with Feng Xiaohua, chatting about secrets between best friends.

Unfortunately, someone didn't know when to leave, sticking close to Mu Shuangshuang and Feng Xiaohua, eavesdropping on a lot of secret conversations between the two, despite Mu Shuangshuang's attempts to wink and signal them to leave.

"Shuangshuang, it's been a while since we last met, you've become as pretty as Fourth Sis." Feng Xiaohua gazed enviously at Mu Shuangshuang.

"Aunt Xiao Hua too, you've changed a lot. Compared to before, there's a mature charm about you now, and a touch of maternal glow. Are you... pregnant?" Mu Shuangshuang asked casually.

Unexpectedly, she got a positive answer.

"Yes! It's been a month." Feng Xiaohua smiled lightly.

Mu Shuangshuang's guess was right; Feng Xiaohua was originally a gentle, demure type of girl, always speaking and acting softly.

But earlier, when Mrs. Li was standing beside her, Mu Shuangshuang clearly felt that Feng Xiaohua had toughened up a bit compared to before, and was subconsciously protecting her own belly.

"Shuang, your second aunt is here to take care of your Aunt Xiao Hua. When it comes to giving birth, I have experience; when the time comes, Xiao Hua doesn't even need a midwife, just me."

Mrs. Li patted her chest in a flattering manner, looking at Feng Xiaohua.

Unfortunately, neither seemed to buy it.

Mu Shuangshuang suddenly said, "Aunt Xiao Hua, we should hurry up. I left a lot of delicious snacks at home, if we're late they might be gobbled up by the kids there."

Upon hearing about the food, Mrs. Li's eyes gleamed with excitement.

She thought flattering Mu Shuangshuang and Feng Xiaohua wouldn't mean much anyway, since those two brats wouldn't give her a good face to see.

She simply abandoned Mu Shuangshuang and Feng Xiaohua, and dashed toward the third branch.

As she ran, she held her belly and shouted, "Xiao Hua, Shuang, I'm having stomach troubles, I might mess myself soon. I need to find a toilet first, hurry and follow!"

In no time, Mrs. Li disappeared from sight.

As Mrs. Li walked away, the smile on Mu Shuangshuang's face disappeared.

"Aunt Xiao Hua, wasn't Mrs. Li divorced? How come she's back?" Mu Shuangshuang asked.

"She was divorced, then she returned to Li Family Village. Her family quickly found her a match with a fifty-year-old widower.

It's said he killed someone when he was young, and basically, his reputation in their village is as bad as the maggots in a pit.

Mrs. Li didn't want to marry him, so the night before the wedding she ran back to Yu Family Village, cried, made a scene, and insisted she was Talen's biological mother to make her parents keep her.

Her parents relented, but it didn't take half a day before she went overboard, ate two of our chickens, and refused to work.

Her parents wouldn't give her a kind face anymore. This time, she heard you opened a restaurant and built a private school, ignored her parents' opposition, insisted on coming, and her parents couldn't do anything about it.

After listening to Feng Xiaohua's explanation, Mu Shuangshuang suddenly understood everything.

Turns out, Mrs. Li is shamelessly clinging to the Old Yu Family wanting benefits from them.

But a divorced wife returning to her husband's house, in the Da Ning Dynasty, only Mrs. Li pulled that off.

Even when Mu Zhenzhen was abandoned by Zhuangzi, she knew it wasn't right to stay at Zhuangzi's place.

"What does Second Uncle think about it?" Mu Shuangshuang asked.

"Your second uncle thinks to just stick it out for now. Talen's still young, indeed he can't be without a mom, but as for remarrying, it's going to depend on Mrs. Li's behavior."

Feng Xiaohua finished and added another sentence, "But at this rate, it doesn't look promising."

Mu Shuangshuang thought so too.

"But Aunt Xiao Hua, you still have to be on guard against that woman, she did that kind of thing back then." Mu Shuangshuang said.

"Yes! I know, ever since I got pregnant, everything I eat is made by mom, she's not allowed in the kitchen. Mom even said if she tries any funny business, she'll send her to the pond to drown."

Mu Shuangshuang was taken aback, surprised that even the kindly Old Mrs. Yu would speak of such heavy punishment.

The two chatted happily along the way and soon arrived at the third branch.

Before they had time to catch their breath, Yu Liulang took advantage of everyone being distracted and called Mu Shuangshuang into her room.

In front of Feng Xiaohua, Yu Liulang took out a big cloth bag from his chest.

He handed the bag to Feng Xiaohua, who handed it over to Mu Shuangshuang.

At first, Mu Shuangshuang thought it was just some snacks or goodies, so she accepted without hesitation.

When she unwrapped the cloth bag layer by layer, she was dumbfounded.

Inside the cloth were broken silver pieces, roughly estimated at thirty or forty taels.

"Sixth Uncle, Aunt, what are you doing? This silver..." Mu Shuangshuang looked at the couple in confusion.

"This is for you to renovate the restaurant. I heard from your dad that you need a large sum of silver for the renovation. Xiaohua and I have only this much, if it's not enough, I'll sell spring tea and gather more for you."

Mu Shuangshuang shook her head like a rattle, handing the silver back: "No, Sixth Uncle, how can I take your money?"

"I'll wait until the private school enrolls some kids and we collect the gift, then I'll have enough silver to renovate."

"The private school money is for the school! Plus, you think the school will run without money? If you use that money, how will the school operate later?"

"Don't think Sixth Uncle's words are too much or nagging, you and Yuan Feng haven't had it easy, Xiaohua and I will help as long as we can. Money is just external, the most important is for the family to be happy."

Yu Liulang handed the silver back again.

Mu Shuangshuang had no choice but to turn to Feng Xiaohua for help, hoping she could persuade Yu Liulang to change his mind.

"Aunt Xiao Hua..."

"Shuangshuang, your Sixth Uncle's thoughts are mine too. We're waiting for your restaurant to open soon, and also the private school, you must run it well. In a few years, when our kid grows up, we'll send him here too."

To say she wasn't touched would be lying.

These days, Mu Shuangshuang had been worrying about the restaurant renovation.

Because of that, Lu Yuanfeng would go to the mountains during his free time, hunting more to gather the renovation money sooner.

To get the restaurant up and running.

Today, Yu Liulang came and solved her problem, and didn't even mention when to repay the money, making it clear he didn't want to add pressure.

"Thank you... thank you! Sixth Uncle, Aunt Xiao Hua, for helping Shuangshuang today. Shuangshuang will repay you tenfold, a hundredfold someday!"

Just as Mu Shuangshuang finished speaking, the door was kicked open.

Mrs. Li's twisted face from jealousy appeared before everyone.

"Well, Yu Liulang, what did you say to me before? No money, couldn't bring out money!

Now, you actually... actually gave all the money to outsiders! You... you!

If I hadn't gotten suspicious and secretly followed, do you plan to give away the Old Yu Family's tea garden too?"

## Chapter 938: Taking Herself Too Seriously

The sudden appearance of Li Juhua, this remark, not only failed to gain any advantage but made Yu Liulang's face darken.

He really didn't know where Li Juhua got the courage to blame him.

Obviously, she's a woman who was dismissed by the Old Yu Family.

"Li Juhua, don't say you're not my second sister-in-law anymore, you can't control me.

Even if you were my second sister-in-law, you still couldn't control me. This silver, it's all the money I've saved over the years.

Originally, it was all given to Xiaohua, who said to give it to Shuangshuang, so it's Shuangshuang's.

I can't control it, and as an outsider, neither can you. Please, Li Juhua, recognize your own position."

The phrase "recognize your own position" hit Li Juhua's sore spot.

She raised her voice and started shouting, "Yu Erlang, you useless thing, you divorced your wife for the so-called brothers back then, but what happened?

Your brother gave all your family's money to a stinky girl with a different surname, Yu Erlang, you cowardly turtle..."

When it comes to money, Li Juhua is more agitated than ever.

Even looking like she's about to fight desperately.

This loud shouting brought out the old couple from the Yu Family's next room and Yu Erlang.

Mu Dashan and Yu Si Niang also followed behind, even Mrs. Lin from the Old Mu Family who happened to be passing by was craning her neck, trying to catch some gossip.

Everyone turned the third branch into a subject of gossip.

As soon as Mr. Yu and Old Mrs. Yu appeared, Li Juhua ingratiatingly approached them.

She immediately started complaining about Yu Liulang and Feng Xiaohua.

"Mom, that kid Liulang is heartless. Before he was even married, I asked him to lend me money for business.

But what did he say? He said he had no money, couldn't lend it, and I, Li Juhua, foolishly believed him. In fact, he had money; he just wouldn't lend it to me, his supposed second sister-in-law.

Not lending to me, I let it go because I considered him a brother, but now... now he actually took out a packet of silver to give to this stinky girl, I can't take it anymore!"

Mu Shuangshuang rolled her eyes again and again, her mouth twitching too, her fists in her hands already crackling.

If the person in front of her weren't her nephew's biological mother, she would definitely beat Li Juhua to a pulp.

"Enough, what are you babbling about here? Liulang's silver, he can use it however he wants.

Li Juhua, you are no longer part of the Old Yu Family. Today's allowance for you to stay is out of consideration for Tiancai, not kicking you out.

If you dare to say another nonsense word, get out immediately; this is my daughter's room and you're not welcome."

Old Mrs. Yu's attitude was firm.

At this moment, she was so regretful she let such a poisonous woman move back in.

Although Li Juhua had not remarried her son, in outsiders' eyes, she seemed to have gained the approval of the two elders.

A mistake...

Old Mrs. Yu's forceful words gave Yu Si Niang courage to speak.

"Li Juhua, Da Shan and I are not unreasonable people. Since you are no longer part of the Old Yu Family, stop claiming to be an owner here.

The money of Liulang and Xiaohua is their business. They can spend it however they like, even if... it's not lent to Shuangshuang, they still won't give it to you."

Yu Si Niang is not stupid; she never heard about lending money to Shuangshuang from her brother and sister-in-law.

In other words, if not for this Li Juhua, her Liulang did not intend to let her and Shuangshuang's father know about it.

This sentiment, Yu Si Niang remembered in her heart.

Under attack from so many people, Li Juhua blushed.

"Fine, you're all bullying me, just wait... you wait for me!"

With that, Li Juhua stormed out.

No one, including Yu Erlang, went after her.

Everyone knew Li Juhua would be back.

Because this wasn't her first time pulling this kind of act.

After Li Juhua left, Yu Erlang stepped forward to apologize to Mu Shuangshuang.

"Shuangshuang, that woman... that woman is like that, always treating others' things as her own.

Don't take it to heart; whatever Liulang gave you, I don't mind."

Actually, it's not that he doesn't mind; it's that he doesn't have the right to mind.

In the Old Yu Family, besides helping out with the tea garden, he hadn't even bothered with the land his brother developed.

The harvest in the field naturally belonged to his brother.

Though Yu Erlang, like Mrs. Li, envied his brother's wealth, envy doesn't outdo the recognition of reality; no one can claim something that isn't theirs.

Even who the tea garden will belong to after his parents pass away is still an unclear matter.

"Second Uncle, I understand. You guys go rest for now, after all, today's a holiday, and once I'm done tidying up, I'll make some good food for you." Mu Shuangshuang said with a light smile.

Though they were angry at heart, none wanted to let an outsider like Li Juhua affect their mood.

At this time, Mrs. Lin, who had been listening at the wall for a long time, stepped forward.

She laughed, "Oh my, if it isn't Father-in-law, Mother-in-law, and Liulang, it's been so long, and I hope everyone's doing well."

The smile plastered on Mrs. Lin's face gave people chills.

The reason she came forward was entirely due to Li Juhua's few shouted words.

In Mrs. Lin's eyes, she had always thought the Old Yu Family was as poor as before.

She never expected that the fortunes would reverse after thirty years on the East Bank, thirty years on the West Bank.

The Old Yu Family somehow turned their luck around, and even had extra money to give to the third branch's stinky girl.

Mrs. Lin was absolutely not going to miss this chance to get close to the Yu Family members.

"Second Aunt, my grandpa, grandma, and my sixth uncle are all doing well. Why are you at our house so early in the morning?" Mu Shuangshuang said with displeasure.

She was puzzled why everyone was coming together on a Lantern Festival.

Especially with that Li Juhua, who had really stirred up a Lantern Festival in the third branch.

"Hehe, Shuang girl, your second Aunt just saw so many relatives come to help, thinking manpower might not be enough, so I thought I'd lend a hand.

I heard Da Lang say you've got more piglets in the pigpen, I'll go clean the pigsty for you, just you wait."

The fawning look in Mrs. Lin's eyes was too obvious.

After speaking, she really hurried to the third branch pigpen, picked up a shovel, and went inside.

In the third branch's pigpen now are four pigs, one big wild boar, which Lu Yuanfeng originally caught, and after raising it for so long, its wildness was almost gone.

The three little piglets were caught by Mu Dalang, though they always claimed outside that they were for Mu Shuangshuang.

Seeing Mrs. Lin really about to work, Yu Si Niang rushed up, wanting to take the shovel from Mrs. Lin.

"Second sister-in-law, forget it, we shouldn't let you do this dirty work; you'd better rest."

Mrs. Lin refused, determined to do it.

"Third daughter-in-law, it was my fault as the sister-in-law before. From now on, I'll be good to your third branch; today's pigsty work, I'll help you do it.

By the way, when will your school open? We're all family, Gou Dan is your direct nephew, and I want to send him to your school.

Oh, and the restaurant... Right, and the restaurant, since Liulang gave you money, does it mean you can open it?"

Chapter 939: Doing Good Deeds Without Leaving a Name

"Let me tell you, when hiring for a family restaurant, you should find family members, it's safer!

If you hire an outsider, be careful or the entire fortune might get stolen.

Our family, Daddy Gou Dan is a good choice. He could work as a bookkeeper and manage accounts for you, just perfect."

Mrs. Lin appeared very familiar with the third branch, arranging work for her husband and affairs for her son. She seemed more like the actual owner than Mu Shuangshuang.

Mrs. Lin didn't treat herself as an outsider, and Mu Shuangshuang had no reason to be polite to her.

She snorted coldly, speaking bluntly, "Second Aunt, are you still dreaming? Since when do you have a say in the third branch's affairs?"

Hearing Mu Shuangshuang's words, Mrs. Lin's face changed. She was just about to start scolding Mu Shuangshuang, pointing at her nose.

But on second thought, the Old Yu Family was no longer what it used to be. Those few words of hers might lead to a conflict with the third branch or the Old Yu Family, and she'd definitely end up at a disadvantage.

Mrs. Lin put on a smile and, speaking softly, said to Mu Shuangshuang, "Shuang girl, I'm not dreaming at all. I had a good sleep last night.

Your second aunt is not making decisions for you; I just feel that we are all family, and there's a saying that wealth shouldn't flow to outsiders.

Gou Dan is also your brother, just like Xiao Han and Little Zhi. Compared to that chubby kid from the Old Lu Family, you are related to Gou Dan by blood.

If you're willing to take care of him, you certainly won't abandon Gou Dan. Otherwise, if word gets out, others will surely laugh at you."

Mu Shuangshuang really couldn't find any interest in Mrs. Lin's words.

When there's value to be had, they're relatives. When there's none, the third branch becomes outsiders.

Is there such a convenient thing in this world?

"Second Aunt, talking about family ties here won't work. The private school isn't just mine, I can't decide alone. As for the restaurant, I've already arranged someone for the bookkeeping, there's no need for my second uncle."

"Even if I could decide, I wouldn't arrange it. You shouldn't think of getting even a penny from the third branch's benefits."

Mu Shuangshuang cast a malicious smile at Mrs. Lin.

This time, it nearly drove Mrs. Lin mad.

She jumped up, pointed at Mu Shuangshuang's nose, getting ready to scold.

Mu Dashan stepped forward quickly, saying, "Second Sister-in-law, Shuangshuang speaks for our third branch, continuing is pointless."

"Our family's affairs, we will decide for ourselves, outsiders can say whatever they want, but it's useless!"

Mrs. Lin threw down the shovel in her hand, angrily saying to the people of the third branch, "You might disagree now, but you'll agree sooner or later, just wait and see!"

As Mrs. Lin left, Old Mrs. Yu patted her chest, calming herself down.

She said, "Goodness, what kind of people are these? The mother-in-law doesn't settle things, and even the daughter-in-law bullies my daughter. Is there any justice left in this world?"

Old Mrs. Yu was never one for many words.

But Li Juhua's matter gave her some insight: if opinions aren't spoken out, others think you're easy to bully.

"Mom, please don't get angry anymore. Just like Shuangshuang said, our third branch is separated now, others have no say."

With Yu Si Niang comforting, Old Mrs. Yu's mood finally settled down.

"Grandpa and Grandma, you go rest in your room first, and we'll chat and have a bite to eat as a family."

The time was still early, so Mu Shuangshuang brought out the prepared dried nuts and pastries one by one.

This time, the kids from the Old Yu Family didn't come along, otherwise they could have eaten and enjoyed.

After settling the family's affairs properly, Mu Shuangshuang took the thirty-five taels of silver to Lu Yuanfeng's place.

She felt that when Li Juhua shouted so loudly earlier, the third branch must have been flaunting its wealth.

It's possible she's already being watched now.

Thirty-five taels of silver, exchanged for land, would be at least seven acres of second-rate fertile land.

Enough to sustain a household for a lifetime, so there's no guarantee someone won't have ill intentions.

For now, it was safest to leave it with Lu Yuanfeng, because no one dared to steal from the Lu Family.

His title of pig-hunting hero was still out there.

When Mu Shuangshuang arrived at the Lu Family, she explained her intentions, and Lu Yuanfeng didn't refuse. He locked the silver in a cupboard at home.

Little Black Dog was tied at the front door.

Little Black was also placed in Lu Yuanfeng's room, effectively providing three layers of security.

Early the next morning, the two of them would go looking for Yu Dahai to find the craftsmen they had previously discussed, starting renovation on the eighteenth of the new year.

Since Lu Yuanfeng was invited to the third branch for the Lantern Festival, Mu Shuangshuang didn't intend to stay much longer at the Lu Family.

However, Lu Yuanfeng shared some exciting news that made Mu Shuangshuang particularly happy.

The chickens raised in the mountains that ate medicinal food laid eggs.

Mu Shuangshuang was overjoyed, urging Lu Yuanfeng to show her the eggs.

The eggs from the new chickens were generally small, and some even had bloodstains on the shell.

This time, Lu Yuanfeng didn't find many eggs, about six, but it meant that those mountain chickens would start laying eggs gradually.

The joy of the harvest after half a year made Mu Shuangshuang beam with happiness.

Holding the eggs in her hand, her clear eyes were hard to conceal.

"Fengzi, shall we have egg dumplings for lunch?"

Egg dumplings, as the name suggests, are dumplings where the egg skin substitutes for flour skin.

Mu Shuangshuang made them once before, and the people of the third branch and Lu Yuanfeng couldn't stop praising them.

Farm families generally wouldn't use egg skin for dumpling skins because it's too extravagant.

If there's meat, eggs typically wouldn't appear.

"Sure! I'll be your assistant," he said.

Truth be told, Mu Shuangshuang hadn't married Lu Yuanfeng yet, but she had pretty much trained this fellow.

Men in the Da Ning Dynasty typically wouldn't help their wives in the kitchen; they'd only handle work outside, leaving household chores.

No matter how busy their wives were, they often wouldn't lend a hand.

However, Lu Yuanfeng was different from the men of Da Ning; he'd been in the kitchen with Mu Shuangshuang countless times.

Even helped with laundry.

The only thing was, whenever this guy helped, he wouldn't admit it, always needing her to ask.

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With Lu Yuanfeng carrying the eggs, the first thing to do when returning to the third branch was to boast about the chickens they raised together, and the eggs laid.

Upon hearing they were fed medicinal food, Yu Liulang showed interest, mentioning that once Feng Xiaohua gave birth, he'd come over to buy some for nourishment.

Mu Shuangshuang agreed right away, even scolding Yu Liulang a bit for talking about money.

Mu Shuangshuang thought that since she had just taken those thirty-plus taels of silver from Yu Liulang, she should give him any chicken he wanted without complaint.

In the kitchen, Mu Shuangshuang took out the ribs prepared before the New Year, as well as the cured meat.

These were meant to prepare meals for entertaining the Old Yu Family.

Chapter 940: Crying Up Wine and Selling Vinegar (Part 2)

Mu Shuangshuang was busy in the kitchen.

Lu Yuanfeng was helping out, assisting with the fire and the vegetable washing, working together seamlessly.

Mrs. Lin returned to the Old Mu Family, exaggerating the incident of the Old Yu Family's arrival in front of Mr. Mu and Old Mrs. Mu.

She also took the opportunity to complain about Mu Shuangshuang.

"Mother, you wouldn't believe it, that stinky girl is so insolent. Gou Dan is your own grandson, and she doesn't even give you any respect.

She'd rather let that little bastard from the Old Lu Family attend her private school than let Gou Dan go. It's clear she doesn't want our Old Mu Family to have another official like my big brother."

Provoked by Mrs. Lin, Old Mrs. Mu was so angry that she was practically fuming.

In front of Mr. Mu, she loudly declared she was going to the third branch to teach Mu Shuangshuang a lesson.

Mr. Mu stopped her.

"Your in-laws are here, and you want to make a scene? We've just had a moment of peace, and you still want to argue with people?"

Old Mrs. Mu pursed her lips, instantly lowering her fiery temper.

A moment later, Mrs. Lin was only glaring in the direction of the third branch, not saying anything else, afraid of making Mr. Mu unhappy.

The sudden change in the old lady's attitude left Mrs. Lin unwilling to accept it, so she added, "Mother, are you just going to let it go? Isn't that stinky girl getting out of hand, climbing over your head?"

Old Mrs. Mu was in a bad mood too; she gave Mrs. Lin a cold glance: "You come to this old lady when you can't get your way yourself. You know that girl has a rebellious nature, would she listen to me?"

Old Mrs. Mu's despondent demeanor left Mrs. Lin stunned.

It was the first time she heard Old Mrs. Mu conceding to that stinky girl.

"Fine, fine, if you don't care, then let Gou Dan be a dirt farmer all his life!"

Saying this, Mrs. Lin stormed off to her room.

Old Mrs. Mu also felt angry, but after all, today was a holiday.

If there really was a commotion, she was afraid she might actually be abandoned.

At her age, being cast out would be a laughingstock within ten miles around.

The news of Mu Shuangshuang wanting to renovate a restaurant hadn't spread.

But her intention of opening a private school had reached Chen Sheng, the scholar from Chen Family Village, which she visited for the first time.

Chen Sheng was arrogant, lacking abilities, but believing he'd make a fortune at Mu Shuangshuang's school, he began to live extravagantly.

Up till today, Chen Sheng had borrowed quite a bit of money and goods.

As usual, he started early in the morning to boast in front of the villagers about soon being the teacher at Mu Dashan's family school in Er Gui Village.

Then he went to the village butcher's house to buy meat on credit.

Three jin of meat, to make dumplings, fatty meat cut into fat cubes, lean meat diced into mince. Just thinking about it made Chen Sheng salivate.

Butcher Zhang in the village cut the meat and extended his hand to Chen Sheng.

Chen Sheng was dumbfounded and smiled awkwardly: "Uncle Zhang, what are you doing? Didn't we say that once I was hired by that little girl in Er Gui Village as a teacher, I'd pay you?"

"Bah!" Butcher Zhang spat directly in Chen Sheng's face.

He clenched his fists, looking ready to beat Chen Sheng.

Chen Sheng didn't bother wiping the spit off his face and directly questioned Butcher Zhang.

"Are you crazy, it's a holiday, why spit on my face?"

Butcher Zhang sneered, "I'll do more than spit, I'll beat you, too.

Calculate it yourself, from before the New Year until now, how much meat have you credited from me? It's time to pay up, damn it!"

Chen Sheng, being a scholar, was questioned like this for the first time, and his face turned red.

He retorted, "Didn't I say... after I go to Er Gui Village..."

Stop bragging in front of me, Old Mu the Third's daughter did open a private school, but she hired a teacher, Luo Juren from Luo Village.

Although he lost his father, he's still a scholar. You, young and incompetent, just deceiving the villagers."

Chen Sheng was shocked.

He never thought Mu Shuangshuang would actually find someone else as a teacher.

He'd been so sure that no one would go, which is why he asked for such a high price.

"Uncle Zhang, what's going on, can you explain it clearly?" Chen Sheng asked.

"Get lost, I'll give you three days. If by the nineteenth of the first month you don't pay me for the meat you credited, I'll beat you so bad your parents won't recognize you."

As he spoke, Butcher Zhang pushed him out.

Meanwhile, Chen Sheng's relatives also found out about this.

Each of them looked despairing; everyone had pinned their hopes on Chen Sheng.

Chen Sheng's father even boasted to the villagers they'd be living in a big tiled house by the year's end.

Now that dream is over, everything is gone.

Chen Sheng's grandmother, still not resigned, said, "Ah Sheng, you should quickly go to Er Gui Village and see if the news is wrong.

You're so excellent, that little girl can't possibly not hire you and hire someone else."

Chen Sheng turned pale, explaining: "Grandma, she hired Luo Juren from Luo Village, I... I'm just a scholar, how could I compare to a Juren."

"Oh my, what a mess! If only we'd known, we should have signed a contract for five Silver Taels a year back then.

Five taels a year, after three years, that'd be fifteen taels, enough for our Old Chen Family to live well for a while."

"Why don't... Ah Sheng, you go beg that girl again, five taels, let's be the teacher." Chen Sheng's grandmother suggested.

"I'm not going, things are like this now; what's the use of going?" Chen Sheng, concerned with face, refused to humble himself.

"Are you a fool? Our family owes so much Silver Tael now; if we can't pay it back, what will the villagers think of us?"

You surely don't want the villagers to chase our whole family out of the village for that little money, do you?"

Chen Sheng's father, who hadn't spoken until now, chimed in.

After he spoke, Chen Sheng's grandmother added: "Don't be so stubborn, if you become the teacher there, build a good relationship with the students.

When spring comes next year, you bring those students to study at our home, I'll prepare desks and chairs, then all the Silver Tael we collect will be ours."

Mrs. Chen's idea was to have Chen Sheng act as a mole, pretending innocence while stealing business.

Her scheme of getting something from nothing rekindled Chen Sheng's hope.

And all of this, Mu Shuangshuang, far away in Er Gui Village, was completely unaware of.

She was busy cooking in the kitchen with Fengzi, preparing a dish of cured meat fried with dry bamboo shoots, using a small spoonful of rapeseed oil, and rendering the aroma from the cured meat in a pot.

Next came the dry winter bamboo shoots; once cooked, she added some bright red dry chili.

The mixture of the bamboo shoot's flavor and the cured meat's fragrance whetted the appetite.

The Old Yu Family eagerly awaited Mu Shuangshuang's midday meal...