

## Folly 941

### Chapter 941: A Woman's Influence on a Man (Part 3)

A sumptuous meal was laid on the table, with members of the Old Yu Family and the third branch gathered around.

Before they could sit down, Li Juhua, who had run away before, returned.

True to Old Yu Family's words, running away was just for show.

Just wanted to see her own status in the Old Yu Family's eyes.

Now she knew she had no status.

Li Juhua had lost all hope; her husband was unreliable, her in-laws didn't welcome her, and her son was not around.

With the notion of making the most of each meal, Li Juhua found a seat for herself, and before Old Mrs. Yu and Mr. Yu could say to start eating, she had already started eating alone.

Meat, dried fish, bamboo shoots—she devoured them as if she hadn't eaten in three days and nights.

Mr. Yu and Old Mrs. Yu's faces darkened.

They really had no desire to pay attention to the disgraced abandoned wife in front of them.

Although Mu Shuangshuang was the host, Li Juhua had come with Old Yu Family's members.

To beat her would be to disgrace Old Yu Family's face, and she wouldn't do such a thing.

Li sat alone, wolfing down a bowl of cured meat, an entire dried fish, three bowls of rice, and a bowl of hot soup, nearly as if she were eating pig slop.

When she finished, her stomach looked like that of a pregnant woman four months along.

Trying to stand up was no longer a simple task.

"Oh no... my stomach hurts, my stomach hurts..." Li yelled, clutching her stomach.

Sweat beads as large as grapes rolled down her face.

This was probably the consequence of eating alone, thought Mu Shuangshuang.

Li Juhua moaned and groaned for a long time, but no one went to help her.

Her stomach pain must have become unbearable, as Li Juhua clutched her stomach and headed straight for the third branch's latrine.

At this point, Old Mrs. Yu's face grew dark as night; she wished she could strangle Li Juhua.

But since Li Juhua wasn't there, she could only berate Yu Erlang: "Look at the good wife you married – is this even a woman?"

Going to someone else's house, first to criticize, then after running away, coming back and eating more than half of someone else's meal.

This kind of wife is just a disaster to keep.

Even though Li Juhua had been abandoned, Old Mrs. Yu still felt embarrassed.

Yu Erlang also felt ashamed, and at this moment, he was too angry to eat.

"Mother, I'll go find that woman." Yu Erlang said.

"Why go look for her? Are you afraid of her?" Old Mrs. Yu said irritably.

She was probably really angry, as Old Mrs. Yu's tone began to resemble Old Mrs. Mu's relentless style.

Yu Si Niang, fearing for the old lady's health, quickly helped her to sit down.

Mu Shuangshuang began to clean up the mess, saying: "Egg dumplings are still steaming in the pot, I've made two bowls of cured meat and dried fish, and if that's not enough, we can make a hot pot and cook some greens. After all, we want to eat until we're full."

The midday meal was finally finished, and Old Mrs. Yu and Mr. Yu were taken by Yu Si Niang and Mu Dashan to see the third branch's fields and the school.

It was rare for them to visit, so the elders were interested in everything about the third branch.

Mu Shuangshuang stayed home because ever since Li Juhua had gone into the third branch's latrine at mealtime, she hadn't come out.

Mu Shuangshuang thought Li Juhua might be up to something and wasn't afraid as long as she was around.

But after only just taking a nap, Yu Erlang came anxiously looking for Mu Shuangshuang.

He wanted her help to find a doctor.

Li Juhua's meal, whether due to overeating or otherwise, since entering the latrine, it was as if a mountain was collapsing, and part of her intestines had even come out.

An hour of squatting in the latrine had left Li Juhua completely exhausted.

When Yu Erlang went in, Li Juhua had fallen into the latrine pit, covered in filth, nearly suffocating him.

A day of marriage often becomes a hundred days of kindness, and Yu Erlang couldn't bear to let Li Juhua die in the latrine pit like that.

He wiped Li Juhua's bottom and found that part of her intestines had come out, nearly sickening him.

But he managed to hold it together.

After hearing Yu Erlang's description, Mu Shuangshuang wanted to laugh but felt it was immoral.

In the end, she barely held it in until she got to Zhang Huai Shu's house, and as soon as she finished describing the symptoms, she squatted on the ground, laughing uncontrollably.

Zhang Huai Shu's face turned as black as coal.

"Shuang, I must really have a grudge against your Old Mu Family.

The last time it was that Mu Xiangxiang, this time it's your aunt by marriage, I... I'm getting on in years, and if this happens a few more times, my life will be over."

Mu Shuangshuang held back her laughter and apologized to Zhang Huai Shu.

But even in her eyes, that sly smile left Zhang Huai Shu helpless.

Ah, Zhang Huai Shu, once the most sought-after barefoot doctor in the area, had now become someone who specializes in examining feces and urine.

They went together to the third branch, where Li had been placed in Mu Dashan's room.

Feng Xiaohua changed her clothes, but the smell still lingered.

Zhang Huai Shu, suppressing his nausea, completed his diagnosis and prescribed medicine.

When Mu Shuangshuang invited him to stay for a meal or tea, he quickly ran away.

Watching Zhang Huai Shu's departing figure, Mu Shuangshuang shrugged helplessly.

This matter really had nothing to do with her.

"Shuangshuang, today... I've troubled you. For Mother to do such a foolish thing again, I'm ashamed myself." Yu Erlang said, his face as red as a monkey's behind.

Mu Shuangshuang waved her hand.

Li Juhua was someone she had dealt with for quite some time.

Back when she gave her sixth uncle medicine to cause impotence, and now she's overeaten and gotten sick – it seemed like divine retribution.

"Second Uncle, I know it's not my place to interfere with the matters of the elders, but I still want to say something.

When it's time to cut, cut. If you think there's no hope with Aunt Li, then let her go; don't let her upset grandmother anymore.

If you still want to make it work with her, then live a good life together, and communicate well with Aunt Li."

Li had been abandoned, so Mu Shuangshuang didn't have to call her Aunt anymore.

However, Mu Shuangshuang still felt that Yu Erlang's handling of Li's matter was unfair.

The so-called test was just an excuse Yu Erlang found.

No matter how bad Li was, if he had no intention of living with her anymore, he should have let her go. Dragging it on was no good for anyone.

Yu Erlang was taken aback, and with a mournful face, he said to Mu Shuangshuang: "I don't know either. She is my genius son's mother; I can't let her marry a fifty-year-old widower.

But with her temper, I don't want to take her back and suffer again. Shuangshuang, to be honest, because of that woman stirring things up, I almost felt... I almost felt that your sixth uncle should never have children in his lifetime.

Everything in the tea garden should belong to our second branch."

"Shuangshuang, you're not married yet, you don't know. When you haven't started something yet, but there's always someone next to you implanting ideas in your head. It's something you don't want to do, but because of her influence, you can't help thinking about it and doing it..."

Mu Shuangshuang was stunned. She never knew that a woman could have such power to influence a man's independent judgment.

Even... could make him have such vicious thoughts!

Chapter 942: Seven-Aperture Exquisite Heart

Yu Erlang's words surprised Mu Shuangshuang.

But as Yu Erlang said, some people's thoughts might be unknowingly changed.

Spending long periods with someone, their values and views, more or less, tend to align, especially when Yu Erlang and Li Juhua are husband and wife.

"Uncle, can Shuangshuang ask one more question?"

Yu Erlang nodded, having revealed such a deeply hidden secret today, he was no longer afraid of any question from his niece.

"Do you still have those kinds of thoughts now?"

Mu Shuangshuang knew that the idea of 'benefit' could drive people mad. To her, Yu Erlang was willing to work, was diligent, and intelligent. His farming knowledge was probably known by few in the entire Qingshan Town.

That he could earn money was only natural.

But living under the same roof, can others see it clearly?

Mu Shuangshuang's question indeed stumped Yu Erlang.

To say he wasn't jealous of his younger brother, that would be a lie.

Who could watch someone right under their nose rise step by step, stand taller and taller, to the point they must look up, and not feel envy, jealousy, or hatred?

No one!

"I still... am jealous, even before Liulang knew he and his younger sister had a child, I imagined that one day... if one day our parents drove them out and gave everything of the tea garden to me, how great that would be.

But when I saw the radiance of fatherly love on Liulang when he knew he had a child, I suddenly understood.

I can't help being jealous, but I can't have malicious thoughts. I still have three children, Tianzi, Tianmu, and Tianxue. I have to set an example for them, otherwise they'll follow in my footsteps and do bad things."

Yu Erlang never attended a so-called school and didn't know how to talk about the big principles, but what he said were his most genuine inner thoughts.

Mu Shuangshuang felt deeply touched by this.

Indeed, jealousy can at any moment turn a good person into a bad one.

But similarly, it can also become a driving force for a person to move forward.

When Yu Erlang was blinded by jealousy, he knew he had to walk the right path, but the Old Mu Family people had forgotten what the right path was all along.

As long as it was something they desired, as long as it was something others had, they would want to reach out and take it as their own.

As for setting a good example for the children, that's even more of a fool's dream.

"Uncle, Shuangshuang also has something to tell you. If you think Aunt Li can still change and are willing to spend the time to change her, then explain things to her clearly, one principle at a time.

If she can imperceptibly instill those bad thoughts into you, maybe you can gradually instill the notions of being a good person and having a good heart into her.

But no matter what, if you keep dragging a matter along, it will never get solved."

Yu Erlang sighed deeply, thinking he probably knew what he needed to do.

"Shuangshuang, thank you! Liulang said you have a Seven-Aperture Exquisite Heart, capable of solving many troubles others can't. He was right, Uncle didn't ask the wrong person this time."

Mu Shuangshuang sheepishly touched her nose, only feeling that it was good to be able to help her uncle.

In the evening, Mu Shuangshuang made dumplings and sesame-filled rice balls.

During Da Ning Dynasty's Lantern Festival, everyone ate dumplings. Mu Shuangshuang making rice balls was something everyone found refreshing.

Everyone ate a bowl of rice balls, but as for the dumplings, not many touched them.

After dinner, Lu Yuanfeng went to the Old Wang Family to borrow a cart and carried the Old Yu Family back to Yu Family Village in one trip.

This small gesture made Yu Si Niang and Mu Dashan even more satisfied with Lu Yuanfeng.

Yu Si Niang even straightforwardly said that with this son-in-law, her daughter would definitely not suffer in the future.

With today over, the New Year was thoroughly concluded, and the matters that needed attention were to be put on the schedule.

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Early the next morning, Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng went to Qingshan Town together, where Yu Dahai was already waiting for them at the restaurant.

They had agreed earlier that after the fifteenth day of the first lunar month, the restaurant's matters would need a concrete plan, and of course, there were more operations issues.

The renovation had been decided before the New Year, and as soon as the money was in place, work would begin immediately.

Thirty-five taels of silver, with twenty-five taels needed for renovations, leaving ten taels as the restaurant's start-up capital for purchasing various ingredients.

Yu Dahai had found an accountant, an old gentleman who had just retired from a town restaurant, conveniently whose home was in the town, and he was a decent person. Mu Shuangshuang had interviewed the old gentleman and kept him on.

In total, it was a ten-day renovation, and everything from fixtures to the old tables and chairs in the restaurant was being replaced.

In short, this time, everyone was ready to work, and they all had a plan in mind.

They worked the whole day, and by the time Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng returned to Er Gui Village, the sun had set.

Mu Shuangshuang invited Lu Yuanfeng to eat at her home, and at the courtyard gate, she heard unfamiliar voices speaking.

The voices didn't sound like they were from her own village.

When Mu Shuangshuang reached Mu Dashan's room and saw the visitor, half of her smile faded.

"It's you... what are you doing here?" Mu Shuangshuang asked Chen Sheng plainly.

Contrasting with Mu Shuangshuang's indifferent attitude, Chen Sheng eagerly approached as soon as he saw her.

"Miss Shuangshuang, I went to see the village school during the day; it's genuinely impressive, and the building's wood looks especially sturdy.

I also saw the teacher's office space; compared to the town, it's not lacking one bit."

Mu Shuangshuang didn't understand Chen Sheng's point, so she didn't respond to him.

Chen Sheng felt particularly frustrated by Mu Shuangshuang's lukewarm attitude but reminded himself to be patient for the sake of his grandmother's plan.

Once he became the private school's teacher, he could make money however he wanted.

"Miss Shuangshuang, why aren't you speaking? Oh, I brought some homemade snacks for you." Chen Sheng pointed to a few mandarins on the table.

Mandarins were common among farm households, larger than tangerines but incredibly sour.

Usually, unless a pregnant woman, a sick person with a persistent cough, or someone with an intense craving, ordinary people wouldn't think of eating these mandarins.

This Chen Sheng was truly a bit stingy.

Mu Shuangshuang would rather he came empty-handed than bring something that made the third branch feel indebted.

However, Mu Shuangshuang hadn't expected that Chen Sheng picked the mandarins while on the way to Er Gui Village from a tree he saw, using a stick to knock a few down.

Otherwise, he indeed would have come empty-handed.

"Mr. Chen, I appreciate the gesture. If there's nothing else, please take your leave!"

#### Chapter 943: So Envious

"Miss Shuangshuang, I'm here today because there's something going on. You mentioned last time that your school is recruiting teachers, with a yearly salary of five Silver Tael.

I've thought it through and I'm ready to join anytime, you see..." Chen Sheng said.

"See what?" Mu Shuangshuang's eyes twitched, pretending not to understand Chen Sheng's intention.

In fact, she understood his meaning perfectly.

Though she didn't know why Chen Sheng changed his mind to take an interest in her school.

But she clearly remembered Chen Sheng insisting each student must pay him one Silver Tael as a gift.

She couldn't possibly hire Chen Sheng to her school.

Inwardly, Chen Sheng had already cursed Mu Shuangshuang many times.

To him, Mu Shuangshuang was being ungrateful, even though he had made his intentions quite clear, yet she dared to play dumb.

Chen Sheng squeezed out another smile, "Miss Shuangshuang, my point is, when can I come over to teach? Seeing your school is built, you must have enrolled quite a few students, right?"

"I'm really sorry, but I've already hired a teacher. Luo Bai from Luohe Village, the new scholar, has agreed to help teach the local kids. As for the gift, I've already discussed it with him."

Chen Sheng knew Mu Shuangshuang already hired someone.

Hearing this from Mu Shuangshuang, he wasn't surprised.

"Luo Bai recently became a scholar, but I heard he just lost his father. Might he not have time to teach the kids?"

"Miss Shuangshuang, your school should have many students in the future, why not hire a couple of teachers then.

This way, there will be a comparison to see who teaches better. Moreover, with more teachers, students will get more attention."

Chen Sheng had a good head on him, at least he could suggest comparing two people to see who excels.

If Chen Sheng's character were better, Mu Shuangshuang might have agreed.

Unfortunately, Chen Sheng's nature and conduct were well known to Mu Shuangshuang; she knew exactly what kind of person he was and whether he could properly teach.

"Mr. Chen, our school is small with few students. Likewise, we don't have much money to hire more teachers; Luo Juren alone is sufficient!"

A teacher costs five Silver Taels a year, and she's already invested heavily in the private school.

Hiring others would mean spending more money, which Mu Shuangshuang couldn't afford.

"Miss Shuangshuang, I know you're still holding a grudge from when I refused you last time, but I was just testing your resolve.

I didn't know if you were really going to open a school. You must know, Chen Sheng also likes children and wishes to teach them, I..."

Chen Sheng wanted to explain further, but Mu Shuangshuang interrupted.

"Really sorry, we truly don't need more people." Mu Shuangshuang motioned for Chen Sheng to leave.

At this point, Chen Sheng was furious.

He yelled, "What do you think you are? I came looking for you out of my goodwill.

Without me, Chen Sheng, you think you can educate any decent students? Dream on!"

Mu Shuangshuang scoffed, directly retorting Chen Sheng, "Please pass the scholar exam first, then speak to me like this, otherwise, kindly shut up!"

"You..." Chen Sheng was left speechless, the words stuck in his throat.

He stepped forward, intending to act but was stopped by Lu Yuanfeng, who quickly moved in front of Mu Shuangshuang.

"Chen Sheng, if you're a man, then leave quickly! Don't force me to act."

Previously confused, Mu Dashan grabbed a dry branch from the ground unceremoniously, "If you dare touch my daughter, it won't end well for you!"

With two men standing in front of Mu Shuangshuang, Chen Sheng cursed a few times more and ran off, tail between his legs.

Mu Shuangshuang brushed off the dust on her hands and suggested everyone forget about the incident, ignoring Chen Sheng.

But everyone was still curious.

Mu Shuangshuang had to explain Chen Sheng's situation briefly to the third branch.

Yu Si Niang, who previously thought Chen Sheng was courteous, no longer sided with him.

As for the few oranges Chen Sheng had returned, they looked distasteful no matter how much they saw them.

"Shuang, maybe... we should return these oranges to him!" Yu Si Niang suggested.

Mu Shuangshuang chuckled and shook her head, "Mom, you're right, but to see that weirdo again just for a few oranges, I can't bring myself to do it.

Better yet, let's not eat the oranges and just toss them."

Mu Shuangshuang wasn't one to waste, but encountering someone as odd as Chen Sheng, she'd rather waste.

"Alright! Mom will do it now!"

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Everything related to the school was wrapped up by the twentieth of the first lunar month.

Nowadays, Er Gui Village has a school built at the foot of the mountain; although modest and not very grand, this place will carry the hopes of many in the future.

Perhaps, students emerging from here will become Scholars, become scholars, or even reach higher positions.

On the day the school was completed, everyone from the village came.

The people were wandering in and out, curious to see what the village's first school looked like.

Some men who had never been to school even sat in the classroom, playing student and teacher.

Nobody in the third branch stopped this behavior.

Though villagers had never attended school, deep down, they all had a small dream to one day, like the wealthy children from the town, take a visit to the school.

Even if it was just a visit.

Lu Yuanfeng followed the crowd quietly, suddenly expressing a sentiment, "If only everyone could attend school, even if just for a year or so."

"Unfortunately, for farm families, attending school is too difficult; three Silver Taels a year, that's more than a few fields could yield."

Lu Yuanfeng hadn't studied, so his words carried a strong sense of resonance.

Mu Shuangshuang seldom saw this side of Lu Yuanfeng.

Lu Yuanfeng was usually reserved, mostly internalizing his emotions, which seemed quite mature for his age.

Now, with his emotions on display, it proved how correct they were in letting villagers visit the school today.

"Fengzi, do you believe that maybe there's a place where regardless of age or gender, education isn't particularly difficult.

Anytime you want to enter school, you can study, and nobody needs to spend a generation or even several generations saving money just to raise a single student?"

Mu Shuangshuang was referring to modern times, equality between men and women, with more opportunities to save money.

Lu Yuanfeng's eyes lit up, the gloom on his face suddenly dissipated.

"I believe! As long as it's said by Shuangshuang, I believe it."

"You're really naive..." Mu Shuangshuang said with a laugh.

Her happiness was so apparent that even passing villagers felt envious.

"The third branch's Shuang and Fengzi are doing better and better; I heard they saved up for a restaurant and fields together."

"Hey, how does Mu the Third have such good fortune? His daughter can earn money, even the son-in-law is capable."

Chapter 944: Old Acquaintance Zhuangzi's Mother

Villagers, without knowing when, gathered together.

The topic of discussion was still about Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng.

Most were envious, while only a few had a hint of sourness.

When everyone finished discussing, Mu Shuangshuang seized the opportunity to promote her school to everyone.

Previously, she was worried the school wasn't ready, but now it stood there, and Mu Shuangshuang was confident.

What Mu Shuangshuang said was mostly what she had mentioned before, making it clear that in the next five days, everyone could bring their children to have a look and then register them.

After paying the gift, they would be students of Er Gui Village's 'Zhi Xue' Academy.

People understood the efforts Mu Shuangshuang had made lately.

They no longer considered the girl in front of them a mere whim.

Everyone was eager, with villagers already thinking about signing up.

Until the village chief's wife came over with her grandson, taking the initiative, other villagers also began discussing the gift with Mu Shuangshuang.

Only a few brought one tael of silver and three cured meat strips as a gift, while others negotiated with Mu Shuangshuang to provide one tael of silver after the summer harvest, and as for the cured meats, they would help the third branch with work to offset it.

Mu Shuangshuang conducted a credibility assessment and invited the village chief to witness it.

In just half a day, six students were enrolled.

Even people from outside villages came to inquire.

Six students weren't a large number, but it was enough for Mu Shuangshuang to pay Luo Bai's annual salary.

This part didn't incur a loss, so Mu Shuangshuang didn't worry much, leaving the rest to fate.

After a busy morning, drying her mouth from talking, Mu Shuangshuang returned to the third branch, not having caught her breath, when she was informed that visitors had arrived from outside the village.

Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng hurried to see the situation, not even stopping to eat, and went to the village entrance to meet them.

She was quite surprised to see the visitor.

It was Zhuangzi's mother, Mu Shuangshuang's second aunt's former mother-in-law, who had Zhuangzi divorce Mu Zhenzhen due to Xiao Mizi's situation and Mu Zhenzhen's past actions.

As for what followed, Mu Shuangshuang didn't bother to talk about it.

After Mu Zhenzhen ran away, she never returned to the Old Mu Family.

"Granny, why are you here?"

Back then, Mu Shuangshuang helped Dahuo Village solve the traffickers' issue, forming a bond with Zhuangzi's mother, and since then, Mu Shuangshuang had called her granny.

Zhuangzi's mother had been waiting at the village entrance for quite a while.

Seeing Mu Shuangshuang, the old lady couldn't contain her excitement. She came forward, checking Mu Shuangshuang thoroughly as if she were her daughter.

Confirming that Mu Shuangshuang hadn't lost weight and looked more rounded, Zhuangzi's mother was delighted.

Her hearty laughter echoed far from the village entrance.

"Crazy kid, I knew I wasn't wrong, Shuang is looking so healthy because of you, well done!"

Lu Yuanfeng turned red, feeling somewhat embarrassed.

"Granny, Shuang isn't nurtured by me; she's very capable, takes good care of herself and does an excellent job," said Lu Yuanfeng.

Zhuangzi's mother squinted, tilted her head, and said, "Young man, don't be modest. The look in Shuang's eyes clearly shows she likes someone.

Besides, how do you know that when I said nurture, I didn't mean care?"

This left Lu Yuanfeng speechless.

He had to remain silent, listening to Zhuangzi's mother.

He was willing to listen to the elders, especially those who meant well for him and Shuang.

"Granny, it's lunchtime, why don't you come and eat at my place," Mu Shuangshuang suggested.

Zhuangzi's mother readily nodded and said, "Sure, sure, I've heard Yu Si Niang is the most virtuous among the Old Mu Family's daughters-in-law, now's the chance to see it for myself."

After speaking, she yelled out loudly not far away.

"Old Second, hurry up, what are you dawdling for? Shuang has invited us for lunch."

After shouting, Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng noticed a man about eight hundred meters from the village entrance, pushing a cart.

The cart was piled half-human height, and the man was laboring all alone, face red as if he were about to explode.

"Granny, what's with this?" Mu Shuangshuang was puzzled.

"This is last year's harvest from the fields, we can't finish it. We've got over twenty acres, the house is almost bursting, so Zhuangzi's father and I decided to bring it to you.

By the way, girl, our Zhuangzi found a new wife, and she will soon join the family."

When speaking of the new wife, a bright smile spread across Zhuangzi's mother's face.

Seeing this smile, Mu Shuangshuang knew Zhuangzi's mother was very satisfied with the new wife.

If Mu Zhenzhen weren't her second aunt, she might have really asked about it out of curiosity.

But given their relationship, she refrained.

Unexpectedly, without her asking, Zhuangzi's mother offered the information.

"The wife is from another village and was previously married with a child, already seven years old, a boy.

This time, Zhuangzi's wife will bring the child along and join the Zhao family house."

Mu Shuangshuang didn't sense any discomfort from Zhuangzi's mother's words about the child; rather, she detected a feeling of fondness.

Zhuangzi's mother was indeed no ordinary woman.

Her openness and broad mind wouldn't necessarily be matched even by modern women.

Unfortunately, Mu Zhenzhen didn't have that fate.

After five years of marriage, if she had been willing to give Zhuangzi a child or been sensible, Zhuangzi's mother wouldn't have had Zhuangzi divorce her.

In the end, Mu Zhenzhen made a regrettable mistake in this lifetime.

During the conversation between Mu Shuangshuang and Zhuangzi's mother, Lu Yuanfeng went over to help Zhuangzi's second brother.

Pushing such a cart wasn't easy by any means.

But before touching the cart, Zhuangzi's mother stopped Fengzi: "Fengzi, let Old Second do it, this guy is tough, doesn't feel comfortable without doing some work."

Of course, Lu Yuanfeng wouldn't actually stop helping; he smiled, explaining, "Granny, I'm tough too, let me help Uncle Zhao!"

Mu Shuangshuang led everyone into the third branch.

Zhuangzi's mother orchestrated unloading the cart bit by bit into the third branch's house.

Vegetables, sweet potatoes, rice, then cured meats and dried fish—what Zhuangzi's mother referred to as harvest surprised Mu Shuangshuang.

It also astonished Yu Si Niang and Mu Dashan.

"Granny, why...why did you bring these things? You should take them back, I can't accept these," Mu Shuangshuang said.

"Come on, girl, I haven't properly thanked you for helping me find Xiao Mizi, yet this small amount of stuff is something you refuse to accept.

And I have come today with a request, so you accept these, and do me a favor."

"Granny, whatever help I can offer, I certainly will, but I can't accept these items," Mu Shuangshuang insisted.

"Why are you so stubborn? I've brought these things over, certainly won't take them back.

If you try to give them back, I won't accept them, and neither will anyone else," Zhuangzi's mother declared.

Chapter 945: Trouble May Be Brewing (Part 1)

Zhuangzi's mother spoke with her eyes fixed directly on Mu Shuangshuang.

This way, Mu Shuangshuang knew that her stance on the matter was firm and wouldn't easily change.

Mu Shuangshuang looked at the old lady in front of her, feeling quite helpless.

If it was just as the old lady said, just a bit of the harvest, she might have accepted it. But the things Zhuangzi's mother brought were clearly not just from the field's harvest.

Just the rice alone amounted to two bags, about two hundred jin.

Converted into money, it would be at least one tael and six qian of silver.

Adding these cured meats, dried fish, and sweet potatoes, it might have already exceeded two taels of silver.

Two taels of silver is certainly not a light gift, especially for farming families.

The two of them were at an impasse.

Zhuangzi's second brother came out to mediate.

"Miss Shuangshuang, why don't you listen to what my mother has to say first, and then decide whether you'll accept these things!" Zhuangzi's second brother said.

"Yes, you little girl don't even know why this old lady came here, and you reject my goodwill. Hmph! Ignorant little girl."

Zhuangzi's mother spoke words of reproach towards Mu Shuangshuang, but there was no hint of blame in her eyes, as she continued to look at Mu Shuangshuang with love.

"Then please, go ahead!" Mu Shuangshuang smiled helplessly.

"I've come to inquire whether my two grandsons can study in your school, and there are also four families in our village whose children asked me to come inquire."

Mu Shuangshuang had initially allowed the village chief's grandson to study for free, in exchange for the village chief helping to spread the word about her opening the school in the nearby villages, and vouching for it not being a scam.

This way, people in the nearby villages all knew about Mu Shuangshuang opening a school in the village, but everyone was basically in a wait-and-see attitude.

That is to say, they wanted to wait for someone else to confirm before they could check it out themselves.

After Zhuangzi's mother heard the news, she immediately took on this task, helping Mu Shuangshuang promote it in the village, praising it to the fullest.

The villagers of Dahuo Village were mostly well-off, so a bundle of one tael of silver a year was nothing to them; they didn't have to squeeze and save like the people in Er Gui Village.

With the assurances from both Zhuangzi's mother and the village chief, a few families relaxed their stance.

Hearing that the school was completed today, they urged Zhuangzi's mother to come and take a look.

"If you can let your grandsons attend the school, that's great, but this doesn't count as helping me—I'm supposed to recruit students anyway, you're the one helping me." Mu Shuangshuang said.

"How about this, for your two grandsons, I won't charge the gift-fee. Our registration period is in the next five days.

After you go back, you can discuss with the villagers when to come and take a look.

Furthermore, Dahuo Village isn't very close to Er Gui Village, so when the time comes, the children may need someone to pick up and drop them off every day.

Then there's the matter of meals..."

Mu Shuangshuang gave a brief explanation without going into details.

Because it was mealtime, and they couldn't delay meal matters—everyone was waiting with empty stomachs.

At the table, Zhuangzi's mother didn't mention this matter, and instead occasionally chatted with Yu Si Niang and Mu Dashan about the third branch family matters.

She even revealed a bit about the Zhuangzi matter to Mu Dashan and Yu Si Niang.

Zhuangzi's mother sighed, "Speaking of which, we are relatives, but just because of what happened between Zhuangzi and Mu Zhenzhen..."

As for Mu Zhenzhen, Zhuangzi's mother had too much bitterness in her heart.

If it hadn't been in front of the third branch family, she wouldn't have brought it up.

It was because Zhuangzi's mother regarded the third branch as her own that she spoke these words.

Mu Dashan and Yu Si Niang didn't know how to respond to Zhuangzi's mother, but deep down, they were already worried.

After seeing Zhuangzi's mother off, the couple called Mu Shuangshuang into their room.

They naturally discussed the matter of Zhuangzi's mother wanting to send her two grandsons to study at Mu Shuangshuang's school.

Mu Dashan had a face full of concerns; he was anxious at heart.

Just the fact that Zhuangzi's mother was Mu Zhenzhen's former mother-in-law made him feel that if the Old Mu Family found out, especially his mother, it would definitely cause endless trouble.

Yu Si Niang feared this would bring on Old Mrs. Mu's wrath.

Mu Shuangshuang, on the other hand, was not worried about it at all.

"Shuangshuang, what do you think we should do now? I'm afraid we can't talk this over with your grandmother." Mu Dashan asked.

Mu Shuangshuang squinted and smiled, "Dad, I know what you're thinking. But I can't refuse the children introduced by Zhuangzi's mother just to avoid trouble with Grandma."

"Regardless of Zhuangzi's mother's character, just speaking of those past events, my second aunt has her own responsibility. If she had gone to resolve things early, she wouldn't have ended up the way she did."

"Why should we place all the blame on someone else for my second aunt's responsibility? If Grandma wants to make a fuss, let her—after all, we have reason on our side."

Even though Mu Shuangshuang said this, the couple still felt uneasy.

Lu Yuanfeng saw their expression and said, "Uncle Dashan, Aunt Si, I think this is something you don't need to worry too much about.

No matter who is right or wrong, the children are always innocent. Shuangshuang built the school to make it convenient for Xiao Han and Yuanbao, and also for families who want their children to study but find the town too far away.

Once these two conditions are met, I think whoever comes to study should be welcomed."

Lu Yuanfeng's focus on the children made Mu Dashan and Yu Si Niang more receptive to the idea.

Mu Dashan said, "Since that's the case, we don't have any other thoughts. You two have been busy all day, take a rest."

Yu Si Niang added, "Yes, you two have been busy from before the New Year to after, and haven't had a good break.

Now with the restaurant renovation and the school's opening, these are not easy matters, so don't worry about the Zhuangzi's matter anymore."

Mu Shuangshuang nodded, "Then Fengzi and I will go rest!"

Saying they were going to rest, the two of them gathered together to discuss the events of the morning.

Regarding the restaurant, since Yu Dahai was handling it, they could relax a bit. However, before opening day, they couldn't be careless—they needed to frequently check on the renovations to see if they were satisfied.

Additionally, the menu and other details had to be personally attended to.

The agreed meeting time with Chef Sun Dawu was approaching, causing Mu Shuangshuang some anxiety.

Every couple of days, she would ask Lu Yuanfeng if the time had come and whether Sun Dawu would not come as a chef because Wu Dalang's pancakes were selling well or something like that.

Every time, it would amuse Lu Yuanfeng.

Because he had always seen Mu Shuangshuang brimming with confidence, this moment of uncertainty was a first for Lu Yuanfeng.

So he always reassured Shuangshuang, "Don't worry, trust me, Brother Dahu will definitely come.

His Wu Dalang pancakes will also come to our town, I guarantee it." Lu Yuanfeng raised his hand and swore.

Only then did Mu Shuangshuang calm down.

#### Chapter 946: Not Allowing Them to Study in the Village

During the five-day enrollment and registration period, Mu Shuangshuang received numerous inquiries from people.

The final number of students settled on was thirty.

Mu Shuangshuang consulted Luo Bai, who was already staying at the academy, and confirmed that this number was not a problem.

Because when it comes to studying, the teacher is only an aid; the students themselves learn most of it.

Furthermore, the teaching classrooms initially constructed were large enough, so Mu Shuangshuang agreed to this number.

Throughout the academy matters, Mu Shuangshuang involved Mu Dashan completely, and she was preparing to let him manage the academy autonomously afterward.

As for the tavern business, Mu Shuangshuang did not plan to let her family handle it.

Firstly, she did not want to overburden Mu Dashan and Yu Si Niang. Secondly, she feared that abruptly handing such a major responsibility to her parents might excessively tire them.

In any case, Mu Shuangshuang had already thought it through and planned to ensure Mu Dashan and Yu Si Niang lived more comfortably.

After sorting out the academy matters, Mu Shuangshuang returned to the third branch.

Her original plan was to rest well, but upon reaching the courtyard gate, she was surprised to see a crowd of people standing in the courtyard.

All were from the Old Mu Family.

Old Mrs. Mu stood at the forefront, while Mu Dashan and Yu Si Niang explained something to her.

Old Mrs. Mu placed one hand on her waist; the other, she pointed at Mu Dashan's face, loudly saying, "Oh, you old three, your heart is truly black to dare accept the Zhao Family's grandson.

Don't you realize that it was because of that vicious woman that our Zhenzhen was abandoned? If Zhenzhen hadn't been abandoned by the Zhao Family, how could she have disappeared?"

At this moment, Old Mrs. Mu's face was twisted with anger.

Moreover, some people beside her incited her further.

Mrs. Lin said, "Oh my, Mother, you wouldn't know how last time I came to find old three to let our Gou Dan go study, how he refused.

He shook his head like a rattle, who would have thought that today, Zhuangzi's grandson could so easily enroll?

Seeing that scene, as the second sister-in-law, the pain in my heart, this family doesn't help their own, how can we live like this!"

Mrs. Lin's words successfully fueled Old Mrs. Mu's rage even further.

Old Mrs. Mu spoke more directly.

"I'm telling you, don't think that just because you opened some academy or have some tavern, you can show off in front of this old lady. Don't you forget that it was I who gave birth to and raised you!"

As Old Mrs. Mu spoke, she sprayed saliva everywhere.

In a short moment, Mu Dashan's face was covered.

Mu Dashan dared not wipe it off, only smiling along and explaining to Old Mrs. Mu, "Mother, Zhuangzi and Zhenzhen's matter is all in the past, and it's inappropriate for us to judge.

Besides, they are just kids, only a few years old. We shouldn't stoop to arguing with children, should we?

Also, the kids are here to learn; I can't keep eager students out of the door."

Mu Dashan didn't want Old Mrs. Mu to know that the decision was made by Shuangshuang, so he took responsibility for it.

"Pah! You're talking nonsense; I don't care if they love to learn. All I know is that anyone who offends my daughter doesn't end well. If you don't get that little bastard out of the academy, don't blame this old lady for being unkind." Old Mrs. Mu said.

Mrs. Lin chimed in, "Also, let my son Gou Dan attend the academy for free!"

"Old three, you heard it, right? Do what Mother asked you to do!" Mrs. Lin said.

Involving his own son, Mu Dazhong, who usually stayed out of things, also got involved.

Even Mr. Mu was glaring at Mu Dashan, seemingly intending to pressure him this way.

Mu Dashan shook his head, "Father, Mother, I won't and can't drive the children away."

"Mother, I said it, old three won't compromise, deep down he has no regard for you. From what I see, you must use the family law against him!" Mrs. Lin said.

Old Mrs. Mu's pupils contracted slightly, and her glance toward Mu Dashan turned vicious.

Mu Shuangshuang stepped into the courtyard just in time to hear Mrs. Lin mention family law.

She curled her lips into a subtle smile and asked, "Second Aunt, which family's law are you referring to? The Old Mu Family's or ours, the third branch?"

When Mu Shuangshuang opened her mouth, Mrs. Lin immediately retreated two steps, hiding behind Old Mrs. Mu.

Old Mrs. Mu had already been standing forward, making her the most conspicuous.

Old Mrs. Mu panicked internally; she knew Mu Shuangshuang wasn't easy to deal with.

She was also afraid that if Mu Shuangshuang went crazy and acted, it would be utterly humiliating.

"You... you don't worry about which family's law, just come clean, was it you who let that old hooligan from the Zhao family bring her bastard grandson to your academy?"

Though Old Mrs. Mu still spoke rudely, her demeanor had significantly weakened compared to when she initially argued with Mu Dashan.

Mu Dashan, fearing Old Mrs. Mu would harm Mu Shuangshuang, promptly said, "Mother, it had nothing to do with Shuangshuang; it was my idea, solely my idea!"

"Shut up, you have no say here." Old Mrs. Mu scolded.

"Ha! Grandma, this is the third branch. How can my dad not have a say?" Mu Shuangshuang asked.

"What you asked about was indeed my decision. If you have any objections, go to the village chief.

All school disputes are overseen by the village chief, not me."

Mu Shuangshuang had deliberately sought out the village chief as a guarantor.

In Er Gui Village, the village chief was the most powerful. As long as he was inclined, even Mr. Mu and Old Mrs. Mu had to respect him.

Now that the village chief's grandson was also studying at the academy, he certainly wouldn't allow anyone to disrupt the school's order.

"You..." Old Mrs. Mu was once again speechless because of Mu Shuangshuang's retort.

She couldn't catch her breath, and her spider-like hands kept rubbing her chest.

Seeing this, Mr. Mu knew he had to step in.

He said, "Shuangshuang, we came not to scold anyone, but primarily for two things.

The first is whether the Zhao family's two grandsons can leave.

The second is whether Gou Dan, as your brother, can be sent to your academy as well."

Zhuangzi's mother sending her grandson to the Old Mu Family for schooling made Mr. Mu feel humiliated.

Especially since Mu Zhenzhen was abandoned by the Zhao family, causing a village-wide commotion, it had already disgraced the Old Mu Family.

Now, if the villagers knew Zhuangzi's mother's grandson was studying in Er Gui Village, under the Old Mu Family's noses, who knows what they'd say.

Moreover, Mr. Mu had just heard from Matchmaker Sun that Zhuangzi's mother had found Zhuangzi a new wife.

She was a woman with children and not even half as good-looking as Zhenzhen.

Adding all these together, Mr. Mu could not tolerate the Zhao family's child appearing in Er Gui Village in any way.

Especially one of the children was the one Zhuangzi brought along from his second wife.

Chapter 947: What Would You Do in My Place?

Mr. Mu rambled on, but in the end, it was all about saving face for himself and the Old Mu Family.

As for the struggles of the third branch, he didn't care at all.

Mu Shuangshuang watched Mr. Mu's solo performance with a cold eye.

A cold smile curled at the corner of her mouth.

He wants her to drive away the Zhao family's two grandsons.

He wants Mu Jingui to study at her school.

His hands stretched far; does he expect her to hand over the money she earns and the land she buys someday?

She would have to be out of her mind to agree to such an unreasonable demand.

"Shuangshuang, what do you mean?" Mr. Mu asked.

Mu Shuangshuang replied, "The issue of Gou Dan attending school is easy to solve."

Before Mu Shuangshuang finished speaking, Mrs. Lin interrupted, "I told you Shuang is reasonable. If our Gou Dan goes to school, he'll surely be the second scholar, the top scorer of the Old Mu Family."

Hearing Mrs. Lin's words, Mr. Mu's expression slightly softened.

Mu Shuangshuang's lips twitched, quickly waking Mrs. Lin from her dream: "Second Aunt, what I mean is, if you're willing to pay one tael of silver for Gou Dan's entrance gift and three strips of cured meat.

The doors of the private school will always be open for Gou Dan, and he can access the same knowledge as others."

"What? We have to pay? Isn't it free?" Mrs. Lin jumped up, shouting.

"What? Second Aunt, do you think I'm wrong?" Mu Shuangshuang smiled.

"Or do you think a school is a place you can enter for free? A restaurant where you eat your fill and go?" Mu Shuangshuang spoke slowly.

"You... you..." Mrs. Lin's expression changed rapidly, like a palette of colors.

Seeing Mrs. Lin at a loss, Mu Dazhong quickly stepped out and said, "Well, I knew this ungrateful girl is all about money. Her whole family wants to make money off of us. You're not human; you're a bloodsucking leech."

"If Second Uncle thinks I'm taking your money, you can send Gou Dan to the school in town. It doesn't matter to me," Mu Shuangshuang said.

"Dad, listen to her attitude. She won't stop until she drives everyone mad!

Our Gou Dan is the legitimate grandson of the Old Mu Family, so sensible and well-behaved, and she just wants to shut the door in his face.

It's clear she's jealous of my brother becoming a scholar, afraid that if Gou Dan succeeds, their third branch would become the worst one," Mu Dazhong turned to Mr. Mu.

Mr. Mu said, "Shuang, Gou Dan is not an outsider, so don't treat him like one.

Even if Gou Dan becomes a scholar or top scorer, you're his cousin, and he'll still respect you."

"Grandpa, I understand what you're saying, but everything should be done within one's means, not just showing off with empty pockets.

If I allow Gou Dan to attend school for free today, tomorrow, other relatives will come to me, and the day after, villagers will come.

I would have to bend the rules for everyone, but you must know, I've to spend money to build the private school, and I must pay the teacher's fee and living expenses.

Also, I borrowed money from Uncle Liu's family for the restaurant's renovations. My intention was to change the third branch's life with the business from the restaurant.

Now the situation hasn't improved; instead, we are buried in debt, with no idea when it will be paid off. If it were you, would you make this concession?" Mu Shuangshuang said.

Mr. Mu's expression slightly changed.

What Mu Shuangshuang said wasn't unreasonable; once some things start, they're as unstoppable as a breached dam.

However, Mr. Mu felt uncomfortable.

He believed that since Mu Shuangshuang was part of the Old Mu Family, she should listen to him regardless.

"The debt is because you're incompetent. Other people can make money doing business, so why can't you?" Mrs. Lin foolishly added.

"If Second Aunt thinks I'm incompetent and you ask me for help, aren't you more incompetent than I am?"

If you think others can make money, go find someone else. I won't stop you," Mu Shuangshuang directly faced Mrs. Lin.

"Enough, Second Daughter-in-law, say a few less words, aren't things messy enough?" Mr. Mu scolded the relentless Mrs. Lin.

Mrs. Lin pouted unwillingly, "Dad, this ungrateful girl is putting on airs, you know that. All our money went to the capital for Big Brother to take the exams.

Where do we have money for Gou Dan's schooling or meat jerky? Didn't we pack the car full for Big Brother?"

Mu Dade went to the capital, taking all the valuables of the Old Mu Family; now they lived even worse than before he became a scholar.

Back then, they could at least eat meat once a month.

Now, even in the New Year, they had to save and scrimp, while even the tiniest meat scraps were secretly used by Old Mrs. Mu to feed that bottomless stomach of Mu Xiangxiang.

If they were to spend one tael of silver to send Gou Dan to school, it would be impossible.

Not only because there was none, but even if there were, Old Mrs. Mu wouldn't let go.

Mr. Mu considered Mrs. Lin's words and turned to Mu Dashan: "Old Three, what do you think? Gou Dan is your nephew too!"

Mu Dashan, having been silent for so long, finally spoke.

Without thinking, he said, "Dad, I think it's best to follow the school rules; however others enter, that's how Gou Dan should enter, otherwise it might be unmanageable in the future."

"And Second Brother, Second Sister-in-law, your attitude is too much; Shuang is younger, but she's not someone for you to bully."

Mu Dashan was displeased with Mu Dazhong and Mrs. Lin's aggressive behavior.

Initially, he thought, since Gou Dan was part of the Old Mu Family, he'd speak kindly to Shuang to waive the fee.

But his Second Brother and Sister-in-law kept calling her a brat.

They started with insults, and after scolding, thought they were right. Mu Dashan didn't agree with their way.

He didn't want to be the good guy, only to be stabbed in the back by them.

He'd had enough of that feeling from his Big Brother and didn't want to experience it again.

"Hmph, in the end, you don't consider us family. Old Three, just wait. When I get rich, don't expect any benefits from me because I won't acknowledge you as my brother!" Mu Dazhong glared at Mu Dashan, eyes filled with resentment and a wistful tone.

Indistinguishable from a resentful wife.

"Say what you like!" Mu Dashan replied.

"You..." Mu Dazhong trembled with anger.

Mr. Mu knew this issue couldn't be discussed any further.

"Shuang, about the first matter, what do you think..." Mr. Mu continued to ask Mu Shuangshuang.

"I can't do that either, unless... the school closes down!" Mu Shuangshuang replied.

"Then don't open it, pack up and get out of the third branch, out of Er Gui Village!" Old Mrs. Mu's sharp eyes scanned Mu Shuangshuang back and forth, speaking coldly.

Chapter 948: That Sharp Tongue of Yours (Part 1)

"Mom, how can you say that? Shuangshuang is our third branch's child, how can she leave our third branch?" Yu Si Niang boldly responded to Old Mrs. Mu's words.

This statement prompted Old Mrs. Mu to turn her focus to Yu Si Niang.

The two children of the third branch were not at home, leaving only Mu Dashan, Yu Si Niang, and Mu Shuangshuang.

It's common knowledge even for fools that among the three, some are easier to bully.

"Third son's wife, it's you, you stinking woman, stirring up trouble. The third son dares to defy me, the old lady, because you instigated him, right? Watch how I'll teach you a lesson today!"

Saying this, Old Mrs. Mu picked up a bamboo stick from the ground and headed toward Yu Si Niang.

Yu Si Niang was petrified and instinctively closed her eyes, standing still as if waiting for Old Mrs. Mu to come and punish her.

When Old Mrs. Mu cursed Yu Si Niang, Mu Shuangshuang's expression had already darkened. Now, seeing action being taken right under her nose, did they really think Mu Shuangshuang was dead?

She stared intently at Old Mrs. Mu, and just as Old Mrs. Mu was about to reach her mother, she suddenly stepped forward and pulled Yu Si Niang away.

Old Mrs. Mu, already filled with malicious intent, collided with all her might.

When she realized Mu Shuangshuang had pulled her away, it was too late to stop.

Inertia carried Old Mrs. Mu straight into the third branch pigpen door, with a loud "bang". The pigpen door was nearly damaged, showing how heavy the impact was.

She lay on the ground for a long while, crying out "ouch, ouch".

The people were stunned, intending to help, but Old Mrs. Mu's appearance was still too amusing.

Head down, feet up, splayed out like a turtle playing in water.

Suddenly, laughter erupted, with Mrs. Lin and Mu Dazhong clutching their stomachs in laughter.

Especially Mrs. Lin, who chuckled, "Mother, you too, not watching out for this stinking girl, that fall turned into a dog's breakfast!"

Mu Shuangshuang's eye twitched, uncertain whether to call these two brainless or silly.

Someone like Old Mrs. Mu who bears grudges, won't she retaliate for such ridicule?

Sure enough, hearing her son and daughter-in-law's laughter, Old Mrs. Mu got up ignoring everything and slapped at Mrs. Lin.

Seeing Mu Dazhong would be next, he quickly stopped laughing, pitifully saying, "Mother, I... I didn't mean it, it was Mrs. Lin who laughed, I couldn't hold back, it's her fault!"

Old Mrs. Mu, with a cold face, was about to hit the crawling Mrs. Lin.

"Mother... I know I'm wrong, it wasn't me who caused the fall, it's the stinking girl's fault!"

Everyone saw Mu Shuangshuang pulling away Yu Si Niang, and Old Mrs. Mu fell after Yu Si Niang moved aside.

But Old Mrs. Mu's eyes were solely focused on Mrs. Lin's ridicule, with no time to bother about Yu Si Niang.

She raised her foot and kicked the fallen Mrs. Lin, sending her rolling again.

Mrs. Lin's cries and wails instantly erupted.

More pitiful than a pig being slaughtered.

Someone was curious about what was happening with the Old Mu Family.

Mr. Mu couldn't maintain face, had to stop Old Mrs. Mu: "Enough! Enough teaching, if there's still something, let's resolve it at home, everyone's watching!"

Mrs. Lin clutched her head, sobbing: "Mother, I know I'm wrong, I know I'm wrong... I won't dare next time..."

At this moment, Mrs. Lin wished to hit herself for foolishly laughing out loud.

Otherwise, it would be the stinking girl of the third branch and Yu Si Niang begging for mercy on the ground.

Mrs. Lin cried for a while, and Old Mrs. Mu withdrew her hand, her gaze on Mu Shuangshuang grew more terrifying.

Mu Shuangshuang stood calmly and faced Old Mrs. Mu, and at this moment, Mr. Mu spoke: "Shuang, can you give a reason why not let Zhao family's two grandchildren go? We can overlook Gou Dan's matter!"

"Father, Gou Dan's matter is the big issue, how can we overlook it?" Mrs. Lin, who had been hit, raised her head shouting at Mr. Mu.

"Second son's wife, shut up! Family matters are already numerous, can't you stay quiet? Must you turn the house into chaos?" Mr. Mu said.

Mrs. Lin pouted discontentedly and shut her mouth.

Mu Shuangshuang said, "Grandpa, for this matter, I'm not giving a reason, you give a reason, why let Zhao family's two children go, why not let them enter the school."

The Old Mu Family used to be authoritarian, oppressing the third branch under the guise of seniority.

Now the third branch is separate, yet they want to sideline it using various excuses.

Hmph! How can things be so wonderful, where the third branch suffers and the Old Mu Family benefits.

Mr. Mu puffed on his dry tobacco pipe several times.

Finally, he said: "Zhuangzi's mother initially made Zhuangzi divorce Zhen, a known fact for the village.

Having them appear before our Old Mu Family isn't humiliating for us?"

After Mr. Mu finished, Mu Shuangshuang signaled him to continue.

Mr. Mu continued: "Your uncle is now a scholar, our Old Mu Family's honor matters more than anything, losing face means he loses face.

When he becomes a high official in the Capital, if people know of these things, where can your uncle's honor be placed?"

Mr. Mu spoke entirely for the Old Mu Family, for Mu Dade.

Not a word considered the third branch.

This selfishness convinced Mu Shuangshuang that accepting Zhao family's two young grandchildren was right, and worth celebrating with fireworks.

"Shuang, your opinion?" Mr. Mu asked.

"Since Grandpa spoke so many reasons, I'll share mine too! Firstly, it's indeed because the school lacks funds, that I accepted six children from Dahuo Village, no issue with that intention.

Without money, nothing can proceed, just as Grandpa knows, if Uncle hadn't borrowed 'Usury' from Gao Tiezhu in Gao Village, he couldn't have sat the exams.

Zhuangzi and my second aunt's matter is past, it's not villagers clinging, but Grandpa and Grandma yourselves!"

As Mu Shuangshuang mentioned this, Old Mrs. Mu rolled her sleeves, ready to fight.

Mr. Mu glared, Old Mrs. Mu instantly backed down.

"Grandma, don't use the seniority card in front of Shuang. Over the years, we've helped Uncle significantly, but how did Uncle say it, don't tell me you don't remember.

He repeatedly claimed his scholar title bears no relation to my father, it's due to his own effort, the money spent was his." Mu Shuangshuang candidly voiced her inner thoughts.

Chapter 949: The Village Chief Arrives

Mr. Mu's face kept changing.

He didn't expect that a simple matter could lead this little girl to stir up such a fuss.

To be honest, when Mr. Mu came, he was quite confident.

Although the third branch had split off, both Da Lang and Si Niang were emotional people. Just a few tender words, and they might listen to him.

But to his surprise, Shuang came out of nowhere.

Mu Shuangshuang was the most difficult to handle in the third branch, impervious to reason.

At this point, Mr. Mu hesitated, not knowing how to resolve this matter.

"Old man, don't listen to that nasty girl. She's a grandchild of our Old Mu Family and should listen to us. I said the Zhao Family's children can't go to school, so they can't go!" Mrs. Lin was still domineering.

Mu Shuangshuang originally wanted to let her go, but was forced to speak up.

"Grandma, do you really think you're not responsible for what happened with the Zhao Family? Do you remember why Zhuangzi divorced Second Aunt?

When Zhao Xiaomi was kidnapped, such a big thing happened to the Zhao family. How did you manage to sever ties with them?

I don't need to remind you! But fine, I know what you're afraid of; you're afraid people will say that Zhuangzi would rather marry someone old and ugly than live with Second Aunt. You brought this on yourselves!"

Mu Shuangshuang's words were factual, but they felt like a slap to the Old Mu Family's face.

Mrs. Lin was furious, trembling, pointing at Mu Shuangshuang for a while before speaking: "I'll kill you today, you..."

After saying that, Mrs. Lin lunged at Mu Shuangshuang.

This was a routine move of Mrs. Lin's, and Mu Shuangshuang was used to it.

She had already taken a defensive stance, ready to let the old witch fall flat on her face once again.

However, Mu Shuangshuang didn't expect that Yu Si Niang, in her motherly love, would stand in front of her.

With that crash, Yu Si Niang got hit instead. Mu Shuangshuang reached out to pull her back, but Yu Si Niang still ended up getting hit.

"Thud!" With a cry, Yu Si Niang fell to the ground, clutching her stomach and yelling.

Mu Dashan's face turned pale with fear, and he rushed over to help her up.

Seeing Yu Si Niang lying there, Mu Shuangshuang got angry and yelled, "You old witch! How dare you hit my mother! I'll take your life!"

Mu Shuangshuang kicked Mrs. Lin in the stomach, sending her to the ground, wailing just like Yu Si Niang, though more severely injured since Mu Shuangshuang hit her.

Watching Mu Shuangshuang fight back, Mu Dazhong and a few others stepped forward, grabbing her wrists and ankles.

This time, they were determined to teach Mu Shuangshuang a lesson.

If it were the Mu Shuangshuang from right after crossing over, she would have definitely been caught and tormented to death by these people, but now, Mu Shuangshuang ate well, lived well, and exercised every day.

These cowards were not even enough for her to handle in a single round.

Mrs. Lin was the first to charge and got kicked away by Mu Shuangshuang. She fell headfirst to the ground, landing right in a pile of pig manure that Yu Si Niang had cleaned from the pigsty last night.

The stench of manure filled the air as Mrs. Lin struggled several times, but couldn't get up from the manure pile. Instead, she sank deeper.

Cries of agony echoed above the Old Mu Family as Mu Shuangshuang showed no mercy in beating a few elders.

Lu Yuanfeng, having hurried over upon hearing the news, was followed by a group of children.

Yuanbao, holding a melon scoop picked up from who knows where, tapped a few times on the heads of the people wailing on the ground.

"That's what you get for bullying Sister Shuangshuang! I'll beat you to death!"

Yuanbao was the king of the village kids; once he took action, the other children followed.

"Everyone, hit them..."

They kicked, picked noses, and sat on stomachs...

Mu Dazhong alone had five kids clinging to him.

Mu Shuangshuang was stunned by this sudden child army.

Looking at Lu Yuanfeng, he looked equally bewildered.

The villagers watching almost broke into the courtyard of the Third Branch of the Old Mu Family.

Pointing and talking, most discussed how Mr. Mu used his power to bully others but was taught a lesson by children.

Mr. Mu felt utterly humiliated, quickly helped Mrs. Lin up, and fled in disgrace.

This left Mu Dazhong and Mrs. Lin surrounded by a group of kids, resembling pigs being slaughtered.

The chaos lasted for the time it took an incense stick to burn, and only ended when the village chief arrived, dispersing the children.

The village chief was invited by Mu Dalang, knowing the Old Mu Family was causing trouble for the third branch, fearing things would not end well.

When he came, he drove all the villagers away.

The third branch, the Old Mu Family, gathered in the Old Mu Family's main hall to discuss a resolution.

Lin and Mu Dazhong were bruised and swollen, especially Lin, who was covered in pig manure.

As soon as she entered, Mrs. Lin kicked her out.

For a moment, only the third branch's family, the fourth branch, Mr. Mu, his wife, and Mu Dazhong, there to file a complaint, were left in the hall.

"Village chief, you have to help me out here. That nasty girl beat me up terribly, my handsome face... destroyed, completely destroyed!" Mu Dazhong cried out.

Admittedly, his swollen face paired with his pitiful demeanor was rather comical.

The village chief couldn't help but want to laugh each time he saw him.

However, he was there as an impartial mediator and couldn't laugh.

"Dazhong, when I arrived, all I saw were the kids beating you. I was wondering if you had taken something from them," the village chief said.

"I... I didn't take anything. Village chief, you're the most authoritative here. If you don't help me, I'm doomed..." he said, bursting into tears.

Him crying like this was embarrassing enough for a grown man.

Mu Shuangshuang turned away disdainfully, not wanting to look at Mu Dazhong's pathetic appearance.

"Old man, what do you think about this matter?" the village chief asked.

Mr. Mu had yet to recover from earlier events, and now looked rather strained.

But Mrs. Lin was agitated.

"Village chief, that nasty girl kicked me. This old body of mine, oh... it hurts so much!"

Mrs. Lin thought her pain was just too unbearable, fearing that the nasty girl's kick had tied her intestines in knots.

"So how do you suggest dealing with Shuang?" the village chief asked.

"Beat her to death! That shameless girl dares to strike her elders, she's turning the world upside down!" Mrs. Lin exclaimed.

Mrs. Lin's words caused Yu Si Niang to panic.

She hurriedly said, "Village chief, it's not like that, actually... actually it's..."

"Yu Si Niang, you troublemaker, shut your mouth. You're the one who caused this mess today, you have no right to speak!" Mrs. Lin yelled loudly.

Mu Shuangshuang also stood up, her face cold as she glared at Mrs. Lin, clearly ready to fight if she dared speak about her mother again.

"Village chief, you see that, right? Even now, that nasty girl still wants to hit someone!" Mu Dazhong pointed to Mu Shuangshuang's clenched fists.

Chapter 950: The Village Chief Also Protects Her

Mu Shuangshuang glared at Mu Dazhong and quickly approached him in a few steps.

Before Mu Dazhong could react, she raised her hand and swung a slap towards his face.

Mu Dazhong's first reaction was to close his eyes, but after a while, the expected pain didn't come.

Opening his eyes, he saw Mu Shuangshuang looking at him with disdain.

Only then did Mu Dazhong realize he had been tricked, and he said, "You... you... you have the audacity to fool me."

"Second Uncle really knows how to joke. Just now, you said I wanted to hit someone. I simply used action to prove to you that clenched fists don't necessarily mean wanting to hit.

Similarly, even if a hand swings a slap at you, it doesn't necessarily land on your face." Mu Shuangshuang said with a smile.

"That's nonsense!"

Mu Dazhong almost fainted from anger.

At this moment, the village head nodded in agreement.

"Shuang is making sense. It's pointless speculation, Dazhong, you should stop guessing. You're covered in injuries, so you should go home and rest. With us elders here, you won't suffer any losses!"

The village head's words made Mr. Mu uneasy. He felt the village head wasn't here to help the Old Mu Family but was leaning towards Shuang.

Sure enough, the village head continued, "I roughly understand what happened earlier. Old sir, back when Shuang opened the school, it was discussed with me and some respected elders in the village.

We all agreed since it's not a bad thing. Once we have a private school in the village, more pillars from Er Gui Village can go out into the world. Just having Da De isn't sufficient!"

Mr. Mu agreed with these words because they made sense.

"Without scholars in the family, where would officials come from?"

The matter of opening the school was fine! With more scholars, Er Gui Village can gain fame among the surrounding villages.

However, Mr. Mu still couldn't tolerate the presence of the Zhao family under his nose.

If someone from the Zhao family rises from his granddaughter's school, he would be even angrier.

But with things at this point, Mr. Mu could only see how the village head would handle it.

"Village head, then you tell me, how should this matter be handled?" Mr. Mu asked.

"This matter was definitely Shuang's fault! So I want her to apologize." After speaking, the village head winked at Mu Shuangshuang.

Mu Shuangshuang understood the meaning; the village head was giving her a way out, and she didn't need to stubbornly hold her ground.

Mu Shuangshuang immediately nodded on the spot: "That's no problem! It was wrong of me to hit, I can apologize."

But my grandma hit my mom too. Even though my mom is junior, being innocently hit without doing wrong, shouldn't she also receive fair treatment?"

"How dare you! You want me to apologize to Yu Si Niang? Have you ever seen a mother-in-law apologize to a daughter-in-law? It's only natural for a mother-in-law to teach a daughter-in-law, even if I sold the daughter-in-law now, that's within my rights!"

Old Mrs. Mu probably got mad at Mu Shuangshuang, speaking without thinking.

To say such things in front of the village head.

Though stories of mothers-in-law selling daughters-in-law in Er Gui Village have occurred, everyone does it privately.

If it comes to the village head's attention, he will surely prevent it.

So upon hearing this, the village head's face darkened.

"Old lady, what you're saying isn't right. Let's not talk about other things; just discussing the division agreement back then between you and the third branch, it said you wouldn't interfere in the third branch's affairs anymore.

Given this, how is it right for you to want to sell Si Niang? You can discipline the daughter-in-law, but the daughter-in-law must be at fault.

If she isn't, disciplining her, when word spreads, where would Da De's reputation go?" the village head asked.

Mr. Mu also felt embarrassed, quickly playing the peacemaker: "Village head, my wife just likes to speak nonsense. How could we sell the third daughter-in-law; she's a credit to the Old Mu Family, having children and managing the household well."

Mr. Mu smiled ruefully, but the smile seemed especially fake.

"Old sir, since you invited me here to mediate, I must be fair. Here's what we'll do!

If the old lady doesn't want to apologize to Si Niang, Shuang likewise doesn't need to apologize; they offset each other."

"No, the little girl did wrong, she must apologize!"

Old Mrs. Mu interrupted the village head, fearing he might spoil her plans, she continued:

"My son is a scholar, my word is final here!"

"Hmph! Since you believe your son is the village's scholar and your word is final, I won't mediate; settle it yourselves.

But let me be clear, anyone who dares cause trouble at the school shouldn't blame me for being merciless!" After his stern words, the village head stood up, appearing angry.

Mr. Mu cursed Old Mrs. Mu for being unreasonable while flattering the village head.

"Village head, my wife is ignorant, you're the village head here, and all matters naturally fall under your say."

Upon finishing, Mr. Mu yelled at Old Mrs. Mu: "Why are you still standing here? Isn't there housework to be done? Go look after it!"

"Why should I? I've been beaten by this little girl," Old Mrs. Mu replied discontentedly.

"You go as I tell you; where's all this nonsense coming from?" Mr. Mu scolded!

After he finished speaking, he directly pushed Old Mrs. Mu out of the hall, and after a while, curses sounded from the courtyard, sounding extremely unpleasant.

Listening to this, the village head frowned.

He felt that a rogue woman like Old Mrs. Mu couldn't enjoy herself in the Capital with Mu Dade, even if Mu Dade really became a champion scholar.

"Village head, please continue explaining; I'm listening." Mr. Mu said, grinning at the village head.

The village head regained his thoughts.

"Alright, for Gou Dan's schooling, let Dazhong's family write an IOU, after all, he's their child.

Though Da Shan and Dazhong are brothers, the third branch has separated, Da Shan can't benefit from Da De's achievements, so there's no reason now for Da Shan's family to suffer losses.

As for sending the Zhao family away, I find it inappropriate. I promoted Shuang's school in Dahuo Village; letting them go now would make our village lose face when going out.

The matter with Xiong Family Village is unresolved; we can't afford to offend another village. Otherwise, life in our village will be difficult." the village head said.

Fearing Mr. Mu wouldn't accept, the village head further explained: "I'll speak with the Zhao family, ensuring they don't visit your Old Mu Family for any reason in the future."

Mr. Mu's lips moved hesitantly, clearly dissatisfied with the result.

What he wanted was for the Zhao family to be out of Er Gui Village.