

Weak B 1711

Chapter 1711: Refused Acceptance_2

As he spoke, Xi Jingyu deliberately put on a mournful face.

"It was this thing that tripped me."

It wasn't that he found it himself, but the he shou wu in his hand tripped him, and then he picked it up.

"Yeah yeah, you're really lucky, got tripped by a piece of he shou wu. Looks like hanging out with Tuantuan and the others rubbed off plenty of their luck on you."

Xi Jingyu chattered on, but was met with a glare from Ming Han: "Stop talking nonsense about luck and all that. That's Xiao Yu's own good luck."

Found treasures, harvested treasures, and now picked up another one; bagged a few wild critters too. Ming Rui and Jiang Yilin decided to head down the mountain, and none of the others—big or small—had any objections.

So, a few little ones were scooped up by bodyguards, following along behind Ming Rui and the older kids, and before long, they walked out of the woods, heading down the stone steps toward the base of the mountain.

...

Recently, Jiang Li had been busy with the factory and the eco-cycle park. By noon today, things were pretty much settled, so she took a break to come to Jiang Hongfa's villa and chat with this "discount grandfather" and Old Master Xi. Just as she arrived, she saw Ming Rui's group of kids, big and small, all smiling as they came into the living room from the backyard, and she couldn't help but ask, "Did you find treasure up on the mountain?"

Her gaze landed on Ming Rui.

"Mom, you really guessed it! But it wasn't all of us who found something—it was Tuantuan, Tangyuan, Guoguo, and Xiao Yu."

Ming Rui's eyes carried a faint smile, and as he spoke, he set his basket down on the floor. He said, "Tuantuan poked into a wild ginseng nest, Tangyuan and Guoguo each found a lingzhi, and Xiao Yu picked up a human-shaped he shou wu."

Before Ming Rui could take out the wild ginseng and lingzhi, Xi Jingyu was already showing the he shou wu Xi Chenyu found to Jiang Li and the others.

"This must be at least fifty or sixty years old."

Jiang Li glanced at the he shou wu Xi Jingyu handed over, and explained to Jiang Hongfa and Old Master Xi. Hearing what she said, the three were visibly stunned; then Jiang Li added, "I got this from medical books—I can estimate the age roughly."

"Mom, Great-grandpa..."

Ming Rui called to Jiang Li and the others, then he took out the wild ginseng and lingzhi and placed them one by one on the coffee table. Instantly, Jiang Li and company all widened their eyes in shock.

After a while, Jiang Hongfa said, "These five wild ginseng roots—the youngest must be at least two hundred years old, the oldest close to five hundred. They're incredibly rare!"

This is life-saving stuff. In an emergency, just slice a thin piece, and it might save a life!

"They need to be properly processed to preserve them."

Jiang Li had no shortage of money and certainly wouldn't sell the wild ginseng or lingzhi, but as for processing medicinal herbs, though she knew the basics, she'd never actually done it herself. To avoid ruining such precious things, she'd have to find an expert.

"Old Xi, with your connections, you must know someone good at herbal processing here in the provincial city. How about it—can I leave this job to you?"

Jiang Hongfa looked at Old Master Xi. Beside him, Jiang Li smiled before Old Master Xi could respond: "Grandpa Xi, after everything's processed, I'll help the kids give you one as a gift."

Turning to Tuantuan and the other two: "You kiddos okay with that?"

All three shook their heads together.

"I actually do know an old buddy here—he's a true master of Chinese medicine, and his skill in processing herbs is extraordinary. I'll call him shortly, but I can't just take wild ginseng for free. It's way too precious; if I took one for nothing, my conscience wouldn't be at ease. So, here's what I'll do: I'll buy one, and I'll buy a lingzhi too. What do you think, grandparent and grandchild?"

Old Master Xi looked at Jiang Li and Jiang Hongfa.

"Li, you make the call, whatever you decide."

Jiang Hongfa handed the decision to Jiang Li.

After all, the treasures were found by Tuantuan and the other two. Though he was their great-grandfather and the oldest in the family, the kids were definitely closer to their mom. So letting their mother decide was best.

"Alright then."

Jiang Li knew these items were incredibly valuable, and with Old Master Xi's character, since he'd said those words, there was no way he'd take them for free. She also understood why Old Master Xi wanted to buy the ginseng and lingzhi—clearly to nourish his wife's health.

Of course, once bought, Old Master Xi could take some for himself too. After all, as folks get older, some aches and aging ailments are inevitable.

Especially since Old Master Xi had lived through gunfire and battles—maybe he still had hidden injuries in his body!

Several minutes later.

Old Master Xi contacted his old friend in the provincial capital. As soon as he explained, the other party agreed without hesitation, telling him to send the items over whenever. The two chit-chatted for a bit more, then hung up.

Chapter 1712: Refusing to Accept_3

Kang Li: "Should I go over?"

Jiang Hongfa: "Are you done with your work?"

"I haven't really been busy. There are people in charge here. I just took a walk around the factory and the eco-cycle park."

Kang Li said with a smile. Hearing this, Jiang Hongfa spoke: "Don't treat your health lightly, or this old man and your dad might end up who knows how."

"Don't worry about me, I won't become a workaholic. Besides, the kids are still young—I need to watch them grow up and be there for you and my dad, take care of you in your golden years!"

The smile on Kang Li's face was bright, she looked so full of positive energy.

Jiang Hongfa saw this, but still checked: "You're not planning to rest a bit?"

"No need."

Kang Li shook her head.

Jiang Hongfa: "Then you can go, but you can't go alone."

"Okay."

Kang Li replied.

After lunch, Jiang Hongfa's driver drove, and with a famous bodyguard accompanying, Kang Li set out for the provincial city.

It should be said, Old Master Xi didn't give all the wild ginseng he bought to Kang Li to process—instead, he cut half off, and kept it with the reishi mushroom for Old Madam Xi to directly nourish her health.

Well, he needed some tonic for himself too—so he could hang on for another couple of years.

After using these good things—wild ginseng and reishi—the old master's health obviously improved.

Even Old Madam Xi's condition made a big turn for the better.

She could walk independently, and now could go for ten minutes at a time, unlike before. She could walk, yes, but needed someone's help, walked slowly, and at most could only manage five or six minutes. That's why she spent most days in a wheelchair or in bed.

And when winter came, she couldn't get out of bed at all.

All in all, Old Madam Xi felt that Aoli Village was her lucky land. Coming here closer to nature, her sleep improved, and her long-sick body slowly turned for the better. To be honest, she was willing to stay here long term.

But Old Madam Xi knew that wasn't possible. For one, her home was in North City. For another, her children and grandchildren were all there. For years, the whole family worried about her health.

Now that she was getting better, getting back to her family for a happy reunion was better than anything.

"Once we're back, your health will only get better!"

"I hope so, too. That way I won't keep being a bother to the kids."

"What are you saying?! If they dare call you a bother, I'll kick them out of the house!"

Today was cloudy, no sun in the sky, and now it was mid-afternoon. Old Master Xi and his wife lay on lounge chairs in the villa's backyard, enjoying the cool breeze, smelling the delicate flowers, chatting leisurely, back and forth.

As for Jiang Hongfa, he went to chat with Grandpa Jiang.

The older kids like Ming Rui were all reading, the three little dumplings and Xi Chenyu were following their private tutor for lessons.

Everyone's days were warm and peaceful, time flowed quietly.

"What kind of father are you? Besides, don't you know exactly what our kids are like?"

Old Madam Xi rolled her eyes at Old Master Xi. She said, "It's just that I feel like my health is such a burden, making you and the kids worry day in and day out, afraid something might happen to me. You don't know—there were more than a few times I thought of ending it all, but I just couldn't bear to leave you all..."

Gripping Old Madam Xi's hand close to his side, Old Master Xi said, "Lucky you didn't do anything foolish, or this old man would have mostly followed you."

Old couple, after weathering life's storms, if his wife chose to end things because of her health, he definitely couldn't take that blow.

"Yeah, lucky I didn't take that step—otherwise, how would I know my health could ever improve."

Old Madam Xi smiled and said, "Every single child Kang Li raised turned out great."

Old Madam Xi suddenly changed the topic, but Old Master Xi didn't look the slightest bit surprised. He kept it gentle, smiled: "Yeah, that girl knows how to raise kids, and is good at having them, too. The kids in the house are all full of spirit—they'll all turn out to be pillars of the country one day."

Old Madam Xi: "If it weren't for Kang Li and Guobang's generation gap, I think Jingyu and little Vivi would make a perfect match!"

"If the kids really liked each other, generational ranks wouldn't be a problem."

Old Master Xi paused at this, then went on: "Xiao Yu is really fond of Guo Guo."

"...."

Old Madam Xi was stunned, then came back and asked, "Don't tell me you're thinking about a child marriage?"

Chapter 1713: Refused Acceptance_4

"I'd like that too, but Old Jiang just won't agree. Still, I have a good feeling about our Xiao Yu. Maybe in ten or twenty years, he really will marry Guoguo into our family."

As Old Mr. Xi said this, his face bloomed into a wide chrysanthemum-like smile.

"If that day really comes, that'd be wonderful."

Old Mrs. Xi was all smiles too.

"By the way, is Li Li really the child born by Feng's second wife?"

Old Mrs. Xi looked at Old Mr. Xi: "That's what Guobang's wife told me. She mentioned it in passing, but I was so tired my eyelids kept drooping, so I didn't listen carefully after that."

"Mm, that's how it is. Feng's second wife, the one he married later, was the daughter of Old Jiang's housekeeper. Back then, Boya was young, love just blooming, and he and the housekeeper's daughter took a liking to each other. But Old Jiang absolutely refused, so those two youngsters simply eloped. By the time Old Jiang's men found Boya, almost a year had passed. Boya was forcibly brought back to North City, and soon after Old Jiang forced him abroad..."

Old Mr. Xi briefly recounted to Old Mrs. Xi what he'd heard from Jiang Hongfa about the story between Jiang Boya and Fang Su. In the end, he sighed, "Old Jiang's actions back then were harsh, but from where he stood, I guess I understand. But Feng's wife at home, her way of handling things was just plain wrong."

If she chose to give birth, even if she didn't want to raise the child, or couldn't, she could've given her away, or left her somewhere with people around, at least that would have given the child a chance to live. But who'd have thought she'd be so cruel as to dump her newborn in the hospital's trash can? Honestly, I'm not surprised Li Li doesn't acknowledge Feng's family. Not one bit."

"Such a heartless woman!"

Old Mrs. Xi said, "To throw away her own daughter, and chase her son out of the house too—no real mother should ever do such things."

"Exactly."

Old Mr. Xi agreed, "She must be regretting it bitterly by now."

"Serves her right."

After learning what Fang Su did to Jiang Li and Feng Yi, Old Mrs. Xi had nothing good to say about her. She said, "Li Li's adoptive parents, they're really good folks, honest and sincere. I can tell—they treat Li Li as if she were their own child."

"Mm."

Old Mr. Xi nodded.

...

"You keep it yourself. Your dad and I don't need it."

Cai Xiufang looked at the wild ginseng and lingzhi that Jiang Li set before her, showing not the slightest inclination to take them. She closed the box and said, "If your dad and I ever really need it, you'd still bring it out for us, wouldn't you?"

"Of course!"

Jiang Li didn't even think before saying, "Whatever I have, in my heart, it all belongs to Dad and Mom."

"What silly talk is that?"

She gave Jiang Li a look. Cai Xiufang said, "Your dad and I know these things are precious, but Tuanzi and the others found them in the mountains, and rightly, you should keep them. If we took them, and your big brother found out about it someday, trouble might come of it."

Team Leader Jiang spoke up, "Your mom's right. You hang onto them yourself."

"But the wild ginseng and lingzhi are for you two. Whether you use them or give them away later, it's all fine by me."

Jiang Li pushed the box sitting on the table back towards Cai Xiufang and Team Leader Jiang.

"Do you really want your big brother and them fighting over these things one day?"

Cai Xiufang said, "Even among blood brothers, accounts must be kept clear. If your dad and I have these good things, and one day your big brother or any of the others find out, they'll come to ask us for them."

Should we give them or not? If we do, your other brothers will hear and then what? But if they're in your hands, they belong to you. Even if your brothers found out, they wouldn't come asking you for them. Do you get what I'm saying?"

After a long silence, Jiang Li nodded, "I got it. I'll keep them safe for you. If you two need them later, I'll bring them out."

For the sake of family harmony, she'd just hold onto them then. Anyway, as long as her family needed it, she'd always offer it without hesitation.

"I'm going out to check the fields."

Team Leader Jiang said, getting up and heading out the door.

"Aren't you going to lie down for a bit?"

Cai Xiufang asked Jiang Li.

"I'm not sleepy."

Saying so, Jiang Li didn't keep sitting either. She stood up, "I'll go keep Grandpa and Grandma company for a while."

"Go on, then."

Cai Xiufang waved her hand, then added, "I'll put the box back in your room. Remember to keep it safe."

"Okay."

Jiang Li answered, and was out the door in a flash.

...

"Where are you off to, Li Bao?"

Just as she stepped out the yard gate, Jiang Li bumped into Big Mouth Cui. Hearing her, Jiang Li smiled and replied, "Going to my uncle's to see my grandparents."

"Is that so? Come on, I just had something to talk to your aunt about anyway, we'll go together."

Big Mouth Cui was extremely enthusiastic. Her family was about to have two factory workers: her youngest son and his wife. The couple had just gone to apply for jobs at Jiang Li's factory, and they both got hired. This was the best news her family had heard in ages.

She'd heard the factory wages were even better than those at the county factories, and all this fortune had come from the girl by her side.

Sigh! Such a good girl—if only she was her daughter.

If she was, Cui Erhua would be the mother of the factory director, walking out in public with so much face!

Jiang Li, of course, had no idea what was going on in Big Mouth Cui's mind. Even if she had known, she'd probably just laugh it off and not think much of it.

"Oh right, Li Bao, I bet you don't know—Chunxia's come home!"

Startled by Big Mouth Cui's words, Jiang Li paused, then asked, "Auntie, how did you find out?"

"I saw her with my own eyes."

Big Mouth Cui lowered her voice, "She should have just arrived home. If only you'd seen her—she looked all flashy, flirting with every man she saw, not a shred of shame. Still, she came dragging bags and cases—must've earned good money all these years."

Jiang Li only smiled, not saying anything.

Big Mouth Cui was so caught up in her own talk she didn't notice Jiang Li's lack of response. She kept going, "Li Bao, how much do you think Chunxia's earned while she's been away these years?"

"I really couldn't say."

Seeing Big Mouth Cui's eyes on her, Jiang Li smiled faintly, "But you said it yourself, Auntie—sounds like she made quite a bit."

"Yeah, Chunxia dresses all rich now. But to me she never seemed too proper."

Chapter 1714: Didn't Expect You to Be So Insightful

When she heard Cui the Loudspeaker say that, Kang Li's expression shifted ever so slightly.

Her clothes looked upscale, even the cut was neat and classy, but having worked a special kind of job and not knowing how to cover up the worldly air in her vibe, she naturally didn't come off as one of the proper folks.

To put it bluntly—put her in a dragon robe and she still wouldn't look like a Crown Prince!

"But you, you look like a Fairy Girl—anything you wear looks good!"

Getting suddenly praised by Cui the Loudspeaker, the corners of Kang Li's lips curled with a faint smile, and she replied, "Auntie, that's too much credit."

Cui the Loudspeaker waved her hand casually, "Don't talk so fancy with your auntie. We're real country folk here, and when you talk like that, your auntie can't make heads or tails of it. But I know you're just being modest, and your auntie's not giving you empty praise. If you don't believe me, ask anyone else in our village, see if folks don't say you're good-looking."

"Looks are what your parents give you. Besides, even if I do look like a Fairy Girl now, when I get old I'll still turn into an old lady with a face full of wrinkles."

Kang Li spoke with a laugh in her voice, sounding gentle and soft, making people feel comfortable.

On hearing this, Cui the Loudspeaker shook her head, "That's not the same. If you're pretty, you'll still be a good-looking old lady when you're old."

Kang Li smiled and didn't say more, but then she heard Cui the Loudspeaker's loud voice ring out again, "Let's just talk about me and your mom. We're about the same age, but when your mom was young she was like a flower. Even now, though she's older, she looks way more energetic than your auntie here, and you can still see that handsomeness from her younger days on her face!"

"If my mom hears you say this, she'll probably grin for ages."

Kang Li's calm, bright eyes were full of laughter as she looked at Cui the Loudspeaker, "Auntie, you look energetic too. I bet you were a village belle just like my mom when you were young."

As soon as Kang Li finished, Cui the Loudspeaker's smile was so wide you could barely see her eyes, "Oh, you really know how to talk! And you're right—in those days, my looks were definitely one of the best in the village!"

Honestly, that wasn't just talk. When Cui the Loudspeaker was young, aside from her skin being a bit dark, her features were actually pretty good-looking. So the boys in the village used to call her "Black Peony" in private.

But after Cui the Loudspeaker married into Aoli Village, to keep trouble at bay, none of the young men called her "Black Peony" anymore. Instead, she picked up another nickname.

No doubt about it—that nickname was "The Loudspeaker."

At first, Cui the Loudspeaker was furious about it, but her chatterbox habit was hard to shake, and when the village women kept calling her that, she ended up stuck with the name.

Once you get used to something, it's hard to change!

So Cui the Loudspeaker could only tell herself to let it go, so she didn't wind up mad for nothing.

"Looks like I wasn't wrong, huh."

Kang Li smiled kindly.

Cui the Loudspeaker switched topics, "Li Bao, I heard your Ecological Recycling Park is hiring too. Do you think your Brother Laqiang and them could get a job there?"

"Yeah, we are hiring, but it's just like the factory—they've got special people organizing that."

Kang Li looked calm, "Auntie, just have Brother Laqiang and the others go sign up when recruitment starts—maybe they'll pass the interview!"

"Li Bao, you're really something. Then I'll go tell Brother Laqiang what you said, and hope your words bring them luck and land them the job!"

Cui the Loudspeaker smiled so hard her whole face wrinkled, not caring at all if she looked good smiling.

And the "Laqiang" she mentioned—he's the eldest son in their family, about the same age as Big Brother Kang.

He's honest and hard-working; if he really got into the Ecological Recycling Park, doing physical labor would be a breeze for him.

After all, manual work at the Ecological Recycling Park isn't anything like breaking your back in the fields all day.

Besides, jobs come with holidays—six days on, one day off, plus a paycheck. Best part is, the wages are just as good as the city, and at the end of the year, the income definitely beats digging for food in the dirt.

"As long as they've got good character and work hard, there's a pretty good chance the park will hire them."

Kang Li was stared at hard by Cui the Loudspeaker, so she had to loosen up a bit.

"..."

Cui the Loudspeaker paused, then slapped her hands together with excitement, "Now you don't need to worry! Brother Laqiang and his brothers are all straight shooters, and they're really good at farm work. A few years back, when everyone hit the fields together, each one of them got full work points every day!"

"Then Auntie, just have Brother Laqiang and them get ready—when the Ecological Recycling Park starts hiring, just go sign up for the interview."

She'd said what she could, but whether they'd get hired wasn't up to her.

Kang Li thought to herself, then added, "As soon as the Ecological Recycling Park announces job openings, Auntie, tell Brother Laqiang and the others to go sign up early."

"Why do they need to sign up early?"

Cui the Loudspeaker asked.

Kang Li: "If you go late and lots of qualified folks sign up first, then they'll easily fill up all the slots."

Cui the Loudspeaker: "So... so if the slots are full, folks who sign up later lose their shot at the job?"

Chapter 1715: Didn't Expect You to Be So Perceptive (Part 2)

"Mm."

Kang Li nodded.

"Got it, dear."

Cui the Loudspeaker responded, thinking to herself that she had to remind her sons to keep an ear out about when the Ecological Recycling Park would start hiring. As soon as there was news, they'd need to sign up quick—otherwise they'd miss the chance to become workers.

Without noticing, they'd arrived at Big Uncle Kang's House.

But Sun Fengzhu (Kang Li's aunt) wasn't home, so naturally, Cui the Loudspeaker had no reason to stick around. She exchanged greetings with Grandpa Kang, Grandma Kang, and Kang Li, then turned around and headed home.

Kang Li stayed behind, chatting and joking with Grandpa Kang and Grandma Kang. After about half an hour, she bid the elders goodbye, walked out of Big Uncle Kang's House, and headed over to Jiang Hongfa's villa at the foot of the mountain.

Just for the record, a few minutes before Kang Li and Cui the Loudspeaker entered Big Uncle Kang's House, Jiang Hongfa had just gotten up and left.

The cool mountain breeze blew in her face as she walked along the flat concrete road. Kang Li glanced at the lush green forest on the hills and every now and then caught a whiff of faint floral and bamboo scents.

The mountain was full of trees, flowers, and a ton of green bamboo.

Looking from afar, the sea of woods rolled, the waves of bamboo all surged, and it just gave off an indescribable presence.

"Kang Libao!"

A familiar female voice suddenly sounded behind her.

No need to think, Kang Li already knew who it was. But she didn't pause, walking along the village path, steady as ever.

"Kang Libao, I know it's you."

The sound of high heels increased in pace on the concrete road, and soon enough, a slender silhouette appeared beside Kang Li.

It was none other than Xu Chunxia.

"You didn't hear me calling you?"

Xu Chunxia stared at Kang Li's delicate, fair profile, and the jealousy and scrutiny in her eyes were anything but subtle.

"Got something to say?"

Kang Li didn't stop walking, tossed out the question flatly.

"The roads in our village, and the big road to the county—did you pay for all that?"

Xu Chunxia tried hard to keep herself in check, but her words were dripping with sourness.

"You should already know the answer."

Kang Li thought Xu Chunxia was really bored. The fact that she asked meant she'd already heard from the Xu family about some of what Kang Li had done for the locals, so what was the point of chasing after her to get a confirmation?

She shook her head internally, speechless over Xu Chunxia.

Seriously, nothing better to do!

"It was Mr. Jiang who paid for you, wasn't it?"

Xu Chunxia's tone was nasty: "Kang Libao, I didn't expect you'd be like this—throwing Mr. Jiang's money around just to show off. If folks in the village ever find out, aren't you afraid you'll drown in their spit?"

"You got too much time on your hands or what?"

Kang Li glanced sideways at Xu Chunxia and said, "First of all, the Mr. Jiang you keep mentioning is my dad—my real, blood dad. Second, I did want to do something real for the locals, but it's not like I'm using my dad's money to make myself look good."

Xu Chunxia blurted out: "I don't believe it!"

"Whether you believe it or not, what does that have to do with me?"

Kang Li really didn't want to waste words with someone like Xu Chunxia who thought she had it all figured out. But Xu Chunxia wouldn't let it drop; she went on: "I know you're full of hot air, Kang Libao. Even if you have a decent job, you only graduated college a few years ago—how much money could you possibly make? But building roads, especially the big one to the county, takes a ton of cash. Don't tell me it just fell from the sky!"

"Xu Chunxia, you really love showing off in front of me, huh?"

Just ahead, twenty or thirty meters away, was Jiang Hongfa's villa. Kang Li suddenly stopped. Her gaze was calm as water as she looked at Xu Chunxia: "You and I? We're just fellow villagers at best. I don't see much to talk about with you, but you act weird—no matter if it's in the village or North City, you always want to latch onto me. Tell me, are you in love with me or something?"

Xu Chunxia got so worked up she couldn't spit out a word, and before she could respond, Kang Li added: "But listen up—falling for me won't get you anywhere. Better drop the idea now."

"Kang Libao, can't you be serious for once?"

Xu Chunxia's face turned red: "You're a woman, I'm a woman, I... how could I possibly fall for you?"

Kang Li deliberately sighed, her expression complicated: "You think too small. When you really like someone, love someone, things like age and gender don't matter at all."

"Kang Libao, are you sure you're not insulting me?"

Xu Chunxia glared at her.

"Insult you? Why?"

Kang Li looked genuinely puzzled, glanced at Xu Chunxia for a few seconds: "Am I that kind of person? Besides, if you aren't in love with me, why do you always try so hard to be noticed by me?"

"..."

Xu Chunxia was so choked she couldn't speak. She stared straight at Kang Li for a moment and said, "There's a brand new big factory between our village and the town. Heard it's yours? And that Ecological Recycling Park—did you build that too?"

"You sure switched topics fast."

Kang Li looked surprised, but after a moment, she nodded lightly: "Yeah, the factory and the Ecological Recycling Park you mentioned are both mine. You done asking?"

"No way!"

Xu Chunxia didn't buy it.

"Why not?"

Kang Li replied flatly, "Just because you can't pull it off doesn't mean nobody else can."

"I don't believe it. You're definitely using Mr. Jiang's money to show off, Kang Libao, you're so fake!"

Chapter 1716: Didn't Expect You to Be So Perceptive_3

Xu Chunxia refused to accept that Kang Li was better than her, not one bit willing to accept being compared to dirt by Kang Li. Suddenly, she grabbed Kang Li's arms: "Tell me, you were lying to me about all that, right?"

Kang Li looked at Xu Chunxia as if watching a madwoman die: "I lied to you? Why would I lie to you? Who do you think you are to me? Why would I need to lie to you!"

So ridiculous!

"We're the same age, you just went to college and read a few more books, what makes you so competent?"

Xu Chunxia shook her head. She couldn't believe Kang Li actually had the ability to build a road for the village, to build that wide and smooth avenue, to build a primary school for the village, and to open a factory or establish an Ecological Recycling Park.

But she also knew, most likely Kang Li wasn't lying to her.

Because, based on what she knew of the person in front of her, Kang Li disdained lying about these things and had no need to!

It was precisely because she was clear about this that Xu Chunxia found it hard to accept all that Kang Li had done back home.

Both women, the same age, why such a big difference?

Was she born to be hated, while Kang Libao was born with all the luck?

Xu Chunxia's eyes reddened, her heart aching in that instant. She sniffled and asked, "Do you just really look down on me?"

"Didn't expect you to have that much self-awareness."

Kang Li showed an expression of surprise, entirely on purpose.

"Why?"

Xu Chunxia wanted to know the reason.

"You don't know?"

Kang Li raised an eyebrow in return.

Xu Chunxia stayed silent.

"Since you want to know so badly, I can tell you."

Kang Li cleared her throat and, looking relaxed, said, "You're fake. You don't know how to keep your feet on the ground, you're vain, and especially selfish. That's it."

She spread her hands, raising one eyebrow: "Did I say anything wrong?"

"How am I fake? How am I not grounded? You say I'm vain, don't you have vanity? You call me selfish—aren't you selfish yourself?"

Xu Chunxia retorted, refusing to accept Kang Li's judgment of her.

"You really don't know?"

Kang Li laughed and said, "You like Zhou Weimin. You could have confessed to him before he and I got engaged. Even if you fell for him after we were engaged, you could have been honest with me about it—who knows, maybe I would've let you have him. But what did you do? You acted like we were friends in public, while secretly trying to steal him—tell me, isn't that low? Isn't that fake?"

Xu Chunxia's face turned red, her lips moving but not a single word coming out.

"And about you not being grounded—no degree, no real skills, but once you left your original family, why not find a real job and support yourself? Fine, you became a housekeeper for Mrs. Fang, which was honestly a decent job, suited for you. But your biggest mistake was letting your vanity blind you, forgetting you already had parents..."

Kang Li hadn't finished when Xu Chunxia interrupted, "It was that Fang woman who made up such a realistic story—if it were you, wouldn't you have been deceived?"

"Xu Chunxia, have you not looked in the mirror?"

Kang Li sneered: "You four sisters all look a lot like Aunt Xu—whether it's you, your older sister, or your younger sisters, especially you. Anyone seeing you would know you're her biological daughter, but as soon as a pie fell from the sky, you ignored your real family and ran straight into Fang's lies. Isn't that pure vanity?"

Honestly, I don't believe that after Mrs. Fang claimed you as her daughter, you never doubted it. But you still chose to go along with it, and out of greed, you got into a relationship with a foreigner you didn't even understand, and then were reckless enough to follow him abroad. Xu Chunxia, honestly, why should anyone respect you? And I'm not blind—you and I have completely different values, so why would I give myself a hard time by getting involved with you?"

"Kang Libao! You... you call me out for all this, but are you really that great yourself?"

Xu Chunxia's face darkened. "If you and that Feng woman had recognized each other earlier, would I have ever had the chance to be mistaken for her daughter, to be used by her, to meet that devil, to be taken abroad and almost lose my life?"

Kang Li looked innocent: "So you're blaming me? What can I do? Back then, I didn't even know I was related to Mrs. Fang. Even if I had known, with my personality, I wouldn't have cared about her—and there wouldn't have been any 'early recognition' like you said."

At this, Kang Li waved her hand: "Alright, I need to go check on my grandfather and the kids. I'm not going to stand here arguing with you. If you don't want to be looked down on for the rest of your life, go be an ordinary, decent person—if not, just don't bother coming back to our village."

"Whether I come back or not is none of your business!"

Xu Chunxia's face was full of anger.

"You're right, it's none of my business. Just think of me as meddling."

Kang Li turned, heading for the entrance of the villa where Jiang Hongfa lived, but as soon as she took a step, she stopped again, looked back at Xu Chunxia and said, "Your dress is beautiful, but it really doesn't suit your vibe. To put it simply, it just makes you seem pretty cheap."

Chapter 1717: Didn't Expect You Were a Sensible Person_4

As soon as she spoke, Kang Li wished she could zip her own lips. She felt like she was living by the sea, full of regrets. Once she realized this, she stopped talking, withdrew her gaze from Xu Chunxia, and walked away without a moment's hesitation.

Xu Chunxia stood there, staring at Kang Li's back until she disappeared through the gates of the villa where Jiang Hongfa lived, her expression turning blank and lost.

Still in a daze, she wandered down to a small creek not far away, sat under the weeping willow on a big stone, and stared absent-mindedly at the clear water.

Her parents and brothers saw her return, recognized who she was, and cursed her as soon as they opened their mouths. But the moment they saw her carrying two big suitcases and bags of all sizes, their faces changed instantly. Smiling now, they asked her how she'd been these past few years, handed her a cup of sugar water, said she dressed stylishly, just as well as city folk.

Especially when they saw the gifts she brought them, they became so happy they couldn't stop grinning, kept saying what she liked to hear. In her eyes, with that attitude, it was as if they wished they could worship her like an ancestor.

Yet she knew perfectly well they weren't genuinely good to her—they simply saw a chance for profit. They thought she made money out there, saw her wearing nice clothes, and tried to use sweet talk to get benefits out of her.

Ha! These are her family!

No real affection, only interests.

If one day they found out what she did out there, she didn't even need to guess—she knew exactly how they'd treat her.

——Draw a hard line, curse her for being shameless!

Xu Chunxia's thoughts spun around to this, and suddenly she remembered her shameful illness.

The symptoms were mild for now, and could still be controlled by medicine. Once it got worse, it'd be nearly impossible to cure.

Her lips pressed tight, Xu Chunxia frowned.

Treatment cost money. The police over in North City still hadn't caught the bastard who swindled all her savings, and now she was being threatened by Han's wife, forbidden from appearing in North City again. So if she left the village, would she only be able to make a living in the provincial capital?

Shaking her head secretly, Xu Chunxia knew better than anyone: if she returned to her old work, in the provincial capital she'd run a high chance of bumping into someone she knew.

For example, someone from her village—or even from the neighboring ones. The villages were close, and ties were tight. For all she knew, someone from the next village might recognize her right away.

If she really got recognized, it wouldn't take long before everyone in the villages around Rowlip Village knew what she'd been doing outside.

If she wanted no worries, the only option was to do as Kang Libao said—wait tables and wash dishes in a restaurant, or be a housemaid for some rich family.

But she... she really couldn't stand that kind of hardship!

She didn't want to be filthy all day, tangled up with greasy kitchens.

Settle down in the village and get married?

Xu Chunxia shook her head—no, she'd never marry one of those rough country guys, dirty as hell, rarely showering all year. The thought of sharing a bed with them made her skin crawl!

After pondering it over and over, Xu Chunxia decided: she'd wait a while before leaving the village, maybe go to North City again and try to avoid Han's wife, so she wouldn't have to worry about being targeted.

Or... or maybe go to Deep City—since Yang never said she couldn't show up there.

Thinking of this, Xu Chunxia loosened her frown. She swore to herself, no matter what, she'd find herself a big boss, become his wife, and spend her life with no worries about food or drink, always having someone to wait on her.

As for why she didn't choose to stay and work in Kang Li's factory, Xu Chunxia felt that'd hurt her pride. She didn't want Kang Li looking down on her forever.

Obviously, she hadn't heard Kang Li's words the right way. She never realized Kang Li looked down on her because of her skewed values, her lack of dignity and self-love, and simply didn't want anything to do with her.

"Mom, when school starts, can me, my fourth brother, and fifth brother enroll in the preschool class?"

"Mm."

This spring, the three kids started kindergarten. All together, they asked to be put in the senior class. Kang Li couldn't argue anymore, and she knew the trio had nothing left to learn in kindergarten, so she gave in to their wishes.

After all, the three little ones had already learned what was in the junior high textbooks. Sending them to kindergarten was really about helping them have a happy childhood, letting them spend time with kids their own age.

So whether the three went to the middle class, the senior class, or preschool didn't really matter much.

And when Xiao Chen Yu found out the three were going to accompany Jiang Xuanxuan, he naturally wanted to join them in senior class, too. That's why Guoguo asked the question just now.

The little girl was afraid her mom would think she was young and make her and her fourth and fifth brothers stay in senior class, not letting her be desk-mates with her good friend Xuanxuan anymore.

That's right, for a whole semester in senior class, little Guoguo and Jiang Xuanxuan sat together.

The two girls were so happy!

"Mom, after we finish preschool, me, my fourth brother and little sister can jump straight to third grade in elementary, right?"

Chapter 1718: Do You Really Have to Ignore Me Like This?

Tangyuan asked Kang Li.

"Yes, your dad and I promised you all, so of course we won't go back on our word."

They're only four years old this year, and five the next. Kids their age are still in kindergarten, yet these three little ones are about to step into elementary school, and just like that, straight into third grade.

Sure, she knew with the amount of knowledge they'd accumulated, even graduating elementary school wouldn't be a problem, but the issue was, honestly, they were way too young.

Kang Li felt a headache coming on, but there was nothing she could do. Really, what else could she do?

"Lili, Bun, Tangyuan, and Guoguo will only be five next year, you and Luo Yanqing are really set on sending them to elementary school—and straight to third grade?"

Old Lady Xi looked shocked; she thought kids this young shouldn't start school so soon. Never mind anything else—just getting along with classmates who are several years older is already a big challenge.

And besides, starting third grade at age five—even if they can handle life on their own, age is still a factor. Can they really manage everything?

Like classroom duties—could kids this little sweep the floor clean, reach the blackboard to wipe it, or clean the window glass?

"Yeah."

Kang Li nodded to Old Lady Xi, then smiled, "Last year, when Bun and the others just started kindergarten, Luo Yanqing and I promised them we'd send them to elementary school once they turned five. As for jumping straight to third grade—Bun and the others asked for that themselves."

Old Lady Xi was confused, "Asked for it themselves?"

She looked at the three little ones, and heard Tangyuan say, "Great-grandma Xi, me, Fourth Brother, and Sister are already studying eighth grade textbooks. Soon, we'll have learned all the junior high material, and as for elementary school, we've finished learning all of it months ago!"

Tangyuan's soft little voice faded, and Guoguo chimed in, all cute: "Great-grandma Xi, me, Fourth Brother, and Fifth Brother will go through the grade-skipping tests—no special treatment!"

Bun spoke up too: "If Dad and Mom allow, we can go straight to middle school."

In that huge living room, other than Jiang Hongfa and Kang Li's mother, everyone else was left speechless and stunned.

After a while, Old Master Xi finally snapped out of it. He turned to his old friend and said, "I've heard from you that Bun, Tangyuan, and Guoguo are smart, but really, I had no idea these three little ones were THIS brilliant. They're only four, and they've already finished all elementary school courses, and half of junior high! Old pal, your family's genes are seriously something else!"

Hearing this, Jiang Hongfa was modest; he waved his hand casually, "No, no, it's all thanks to Lili and that son-in-law of mine!"

Little Chenyu suddenly piped up, "Grandpa, next September when school starts, I'll take the grade-skipping test with Little Sister Guoguo and the others."

"Little Yu, you're going straight to third grade too?"

That was Old Lady Xi's voice, full of astonishment.

"Yeah."

Little Chenyu nodded his little head, his face tense, serious and confident, "I've already learned all the elementary school material. Next September, I'll take the grade-skipping test and go straight to third grade, no problem at all."

"Bro, I'm feeling a lot of pressure, you?"

Xi Jingyu was sitting next to Ming Han. He nudged Ming Han with his elbow, looking a bit dazed.

He knew his own Little Chenyu was smart, and his buddy's little brothers and sisters were smart, too—but he didn't expect that ALL of them, both his and his friend's little siblings, had quietly finished all the elementary school courses at such a tender age.

Especially his friend's little siblings—those three are one or two years younger than his own Little Chenyu. Not only did they finish elementary school, they're now busy with eighth grade material.

This is too freakish!

Here he was, a fifteen-year-old guy starting ninth grade this September, and his little brother, ten years younger, plus his friend's siblings, eleven years younger—if not for their age, they'd probably be schoolmates with him!

Oh man! He was a bit embarrassed to show his face!

Thinking of that, Chenyu suddenly looked really uncomfortable.

"Yeah, there's pressure—but Bun, Tangyuan, and Guoguo are so clever, honestly I'm more excited than anything. These genius little ones are my brothers and sisters, so in the future, they'll definitely drag me up with them. Just thinking about it makes me happy!"

Ming Han smiled, lowering his voice to respond to Xi Jingyu. Seeing his friend's complicated expression, he didn't mind at all and continued, "No need to be jealous of me. Little Yu will definitely take you flying one day too. Just treat him right, hang on tight to Little Yu's coattails, otherwise, Little Yu probably won't help you out."

Chapter 1719: Are You Really Going to Ignore Me Like This? (2)

Xi Jingyu snorted softly, saying: "If I work hard myself, why can't I fly?"

"Yes, yes, you definitely can, but getting a boost is just so much easier, don't you think?"

Ming Han winked at Xi Jingyu: "So? I'm smarter than you, right?"

"I never thought you were that kind of person!"

Xi Jingyu shot him a scornful look.

"What kind of person am I?"

Ming Han raised an eyebrow.

"Enjoying the glory of your younger siblings, hanging on to them and leeching off them—that's the 'future you' you keep talking about. If one day you actually get your 'wish,' don't go around saying you know me, thanks!"

Xi Jingyu knew Ming Han was joking, so he played along with the act.

"Alright, we'll just be strangers then."

Ming Han nodded.

"What are you two talking about?"

Kang Li saw Ming Han and Xi Jingyu whispering, and couldn't help but smile as she asked. Hearing her gentle, cheerful voice, the two of them shook their heads in unison, then spoke together: "Mom (Aunt Kang), is there something you need?"

Kang Li smiled warmly and shook her head: "No, I just saw you two chatting so lively and got curious, that's all."

Over here, old and young alike got along in a cozy, harmonious way; but meanwhile, at the Xu family, arguments were flying.

"How is what you're doing any different from stealing?"

Xu Chunxia never expected that when she'd only stepped out for a moment, she'd come home to see her family dragging her two big suitcases into the middle of the living room, breaking open the locks, and rummaging through everything. Her sister-in-law and younger brother's wife had already divvied up her favorite dresses and coats, two pairs of brand-name heels, and all her cosmetic bottles and jars.

Her parents were standing there with a bankbook, getting ready to open it. Furious, Xu Chunxia didn't care about anything else—she lunged forward and snatched the bankbook from Mrs. Xu's hands, glaring at her brothers, their wives, and her parents, and shrieked in accusation: "Is it not enough that I brought you gifts? Why do you have to mess with my things? Say something, will you?! Why don't you speak up?"

I've been away for years, always thinking of you because you're my family, and I come home to visit—and this is how you treat me? Each one of you acting like bandits, divvying up all my stuff without a second thought. Don't you feel ashamed for being so despicable and shameless?"

"Who are you calling bandit? Who are you calling despicable and shameless?"

Wang Xinger, Xu Chunxia's eldest sister-in-law, was never one to take insults lying down. She scowled and said, "Back then you snuck out, made us spend so much time searching for you. Mom cried every day, terrified something would happen to you. Turns out, you've been living it up out there for all these years, show up now, and bring us a couple of worthless gifts—that's your idea of generosity?"

And tell me, when you were gone for years, who was here taking care of Mom and Dad? Now all we're doing is taking some of your junk, and you act like it's the end of the world, cussing us out?"

Du Juan, Xu Chunxia's sister-in-law, chimed in: "Big Sis is right. These past years, you weren't home—it's been just us two daughters-in-law taking care of Mom and Dad. So today we took a bit of your stuff, honestly, you should feel honored. Not everyone would even want your old junk."

Just like Wang Xinger, Du Juan wasn't an easy character. Before Xu Chunxia came home today, the two sisters-in-law had already gotten into it about lunch.

Both had come back from working the fields, exhausted and only wanting to collapse. But the big family still needed to eat, and someone had to cook. So the two of them kept hoping the other would get up—neither budged. Eventually, Mrs. Xu scolded them, so they reluctantly left their rooms, but in the kitchen it was all banging pots and pans, fighting after just a few words.

It wasn't until Father Xu couldn't take it anymore and shouted at them that the argument finally ended.

"Hand whatever you're holding over to me!"

It wasn't common for country folks to stash money in the bank these days. Father Xu might not be literate, but Xu Chunlai and Xu Chunwang had a little bit of education and knew exactly what that bankbook was, the one Xu Chunxia had snatched from Mrs. Xu. They found it in her suitcase, looked at each other, and promptly handed it to Mrs. Xu.

It's not that they didn't want to see for themselves—it's just that both brothers had their own selfish motives, neither wanted the other to know exactly how much money was in that bankbook. To them, everything in the Xu family was theirs, and when their parents passed, they'd split the inheritance. No need to get ugly now.

Besides, the bankbook belonged to Xu Chunxia. If they held on to it themselves, the "useless daughter" might just lose it and fight them to the death—but if their parents had it, that was different. They didn't believe she'd dare throw a fit at her mother and father.

Chapter 1720: Must You Really Ignore Me Like This?

Alright then, it seems that Xu Chunlai and his brother have forgotten what happened years ago, forgotten how the so-called "money-losing goods" in their mouths went head-to-head with their parents, forgotten who sent their parents to the police station.

"This is mine!"

Chunxia stared coldly at Father Xu: "Don't think just because you're my dad, you can casually take my stuff."

Her eyes moved to Mrs. Xu and Xu Chunlai and the others: "And you all, you'd better put my things back the way they were. Otherwise, I'll go to the police station and report you. Don't think I'm just scaring you—listen up, taking things without asking is called stealing. Even if you're my family, what you just did is still breaking the law. As long as I report to the police, the officers will definitely come to arrest you!"

Chunxia's nieces and nephews huddled together like quails, staring blankly at the adults fighting and shouting at home.

"If you want to report, then go ahead. But it's just family matters—those officers at the station won't bother with this."

Wang Xinger curled her lip, not taking Chunxia's words seriously at all. She glanced at the red wool coat and black pants in her hand, grinning as she asked Xu Chunwang, "Hey, doesn't this outfit look perfect on me?"

"Yeah, it looks great! When it gets cold, you put this on and walk around the village, everyone will be so jealous they could die!"

Xu Chunwang praised his wife freely.

"Wang Xinger, you put my stuff back!"

That red coat was expensive; Chunxia barely dared to wear it herself. Now some slob was holding it, trying to claim it as her own—what nerve!

Chunxia glared angrily at Wang Xinger. If looks could kill, she'd have stabbed Wang Xinger full of holes already.

"You damn girl, I told you to hand over what's in your hands—did you hear me or not?"

Father Xu barked at Chunxia, but Chunxia acted like she didn't hear a thing.

Mrs. Xu walked up and tried to slap Chunxia, but Chunxia dodged easily.

"You actually dare to dodge?! You damn girl, hand over your bankbook to your dad right now, otherwise don't blame us if we stop recognizing you as our daughter!"

Mrs. Xu's face was dark as she saw Chunxia stand unmoving. She urged, "Hurry up, or I'll have your big brother and Chunwang beat you up, and take everything off you!"

"Not recognize me as your daughter? You think I care to have parents like you?"

Chunxia sneered: "If I'd known you hadn't changed a bit these past years, still treating your daughter as nothing, I would never have come back even if I died! You two better listen—tell your precious sons and daughters-in-law to return my things immediately, or I swear I'll go to the police!"

"Once something's in my hands, you want it back? Dream on!"

Wang Xinger smiled smugly and turned, carrying the things into the room where they live in the big house.

"Third Sister, I'll consider these things as compensation for me and your brother. After all, we've been dutiful to our parents, which covers your share of filial piety too!"

Giving Xu Chunwang a look, Du Juan hugged her stuff to her chest and headed to their room.

Xu Chunwang followed close behind.

His wife and his brother's wife were gone from the main hall, and Xu Chunlai suddenly seemed to realize, quickly slipped out too, leaving the mess for Father Xu and Mrs. Xu.

Only an idiot leaves a bargain on the table, but an even bigger idiot sticks around to fight, maybe even to start throwing punches!

"Are you giving it or not?"

Father Xu walked up and held out his hand to Chunxia.

"I already said it's mine."

Chunxia stepped back: "You and mom gave birth to us, but you treat your sons like treasures and your daughter like grass. Parents like you aren't worthy of being called parents!"

Father Xu raised his hand.

"Want to hit me? Did you think I'd just stand here and let you?"

Chunxia grabbed his hand and shoved it aside forcefully. She walked out of the main hall, looked back at Father Xu and Mrs. Xu: "I'm going to the police station right now!"

"You dare?"

Mrs. Xu gritted her teeth, wishing she could rip Chunxia apart.

"Just watch me!"

Those words hanging in the air, Chunxia strode toward the gate.

"You stop right there!"

Father Xu roared from behind.

But Chunxia never paused, and in a blink she'd crossed the gate, as though she hadn't seen all the bystanders gawking at their doorway, heading straight toward the entrance of the village.

Father Xu and Mrs. Xu charged outside, saw the onlookers, and their faces burned with shame, but right now they couldn't care less as they chased after Chunxia, shouting, "You damn girl, you better stop for your dad (for your mom)!"