

Chapter 271: Worse than Animals

“Divorce?”

“Just not to pay the compensation?”

Everyone witnessed the cold-blood ruthlessness of Xiao Chengcai’s family. In order to shirk the responsibility, the family was willing to abandon Zhang Xiaolan. The ruthlessness chilled the hearts of everyone present.

Xiao Chengcai’s mother and Xiao Chengcai were both like this. If Xiao Chengcai’s sons were also like this, then Zhang Xiaolan had really lost all hope in the world.

Then again, what about themselves? What was their position in their own family?

When Xiao Lingyu heard Xiao Chengcai’s question, she did not answer. Instead, she said, “Uncle Chengcai, I’m sorry. I don’t know the answer. You should ask the court or the lawyer directly!” Then, Xiao Lingyu looked at the surrounding villagers and asked, “Aunties and Uncles, do you have any other questions?”

“No.” A villager said. “We’re just passing by. I still have something to do, so I’ll be leaving first.” After that, he ran away.

“Me too. I’m just passing by. I also have something to do, so I’ll be leaving too.”

“Wait for me!” One after another, they left.

Only Xiao Chengcai and his family were left behind. Xiao Chengcai was still kneeling there.

When Old Master Gong saw this, he sighed and said, “Girl, you’ve been standing there for so long. Go back and rest.” With that, his expression changed, and he shouted sternly, “Brat, what are you still standing there for? Quickly help the girl back to rest!”

Xiao Lingyu didn’t wait for Gong Tianhao and walked back into the home on her own.

After everyone left, only Xiao Chengcai and his mother remained outside the courtyard door. The other villagers watched from afar. They pointed at the pair but didn’t say anything.

Xiao Chengcai’s mother looked at the tightly shut courtyard door. Her eyes were sharp and venomous. Then, she looked at her son and said angrily, “Let’s go back first.”

When they returned home, Xiao Chengcai’s mother said directly, “Go and divorce that bitch! After that, we don’t have to pay the money anymore! Xiao Lingyu is another bitch. She wants our house! She even wants us to work for her for free!”

Xiao Chengcai was silent. Then, he asked, “Mother, how am I supposed to divorce Zhang Xiaolan? She’s in jail.”

Xiao Chengcai's mother thought for a moment and said, "Let's go ask Xiao Taiyang." Xiao Taiyang was the village chief. He knew many things better than the people in the village. There was another person who could answer their question. It was Xiao Lingyu. But obviously, they wouldn't ask Xiao Lingyu.

Xiao Chengcai said, "Mom, should we tell Xiao Chun and Xiao Dong about the divorce?"

Xiao Chengcai's mother said, "Why should we? This is none of their business. There's no need to tell them."

"Alright!"

When the village chief learned that Xiao Chengcai was there to inquire about the divorce, he was stunned.

With a gloomy face, he pointed angrily at Xiao Chengcai and scolded, "You're simply inhuman!" How could he abandon his wife when she desperately needed it? He was worse than an animal.

Xiao Chengcai did not feel ashamed at all and said, "Village chief, you're not the one in trouble. Of course, you have the moral high ground.

"If I don't divorce Zhang Xiaolan, her debt will fall on my family. If that happens, what will my family eat in the future? Also, Xiao Chun and Xiao Dong have reached the age of marriage. I don't want their mother's crimes to hold them back. Village chief, I hope you can understand me."

The village chief said angrily, "I can't understand you. What I know is that Zhang Xiaolan has served your family for two decades. But now, you decide to kick her when she's down. That's too much."

Xiao Chengcai did not argue with him anymore. He only pursed his lips, and his sunken eyes stared intently at Xiao Taiyang. He looked very stubborn and cold-blooded.

The village chief sighed and said, "Alright, I can go to the town to help you ask the relevant personnel."

Xiao Chengcai smiled and said, "Thank you, Village Chief!"

As soon as Xiao Chengcai left, the village chief's wife, Auntie Zeng, looked at his back and spat. "I always thought Xiao Chengcai was afraid of his wife, and he loved her very much. But it is all an act. When the pressure is on, he is more heartless than anyone I know." Auntie Zeng then looked at her husband, "Are you really going to help this awful man?"

Village chief said, "He has already come to ask for my help. If I don't help him, who will?"

"He can help himself!" Auntie Zeng said angrily, "Zhang Xiaolan has done something wrong, but she is nothing but a saint to her family. She worked so hard for her family. Now, she is shunned just like that. Her family is worse than animals."

"Alright. There's no point for us to say anything anymore." The village chief sighed, "I'll depart for the town in a bit."

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In less than half a minute, everyone in Taoyuan Village knew that Xiao Chengcai was going to divorce Zhang Xiaolan. The reason was that they didn't want to get burdened with Zhang Xiaolan's debt.

Some scolded Xiao Chengcai for being cold-blooded and heartless. They didn't think Xiao Chengcai had to be so ruthless to his wife. As long as he talked it out with the Xiao Family and apologized sincerely, there was still hope for this marriage.

Of course, some people also felt that Xiao Zhengyang's family was too cruel. They had forced Xiao Chengcai to the point of divorce! They were too harsh and cruel.

In short, people were talking about Xiao Chengcai and Zhang Xiaolan.

The village chief brought Xiao Chengcai to the town and found a lawyer through his connections.

The lawyer said, "Even if you get divorced, the debt will still be divided equally."

Xiao Chengcai was dumbfounded. He asked in confusion, "Why?"

"Because your wife committed the crime when she was still married to you. A husband and wife's financial situation, be it income or debt, is shared when they're still married," The lawyer explained.

"So, I can't divorce her?" Xiao Chengcai asked foolishly.

"No, you can still do that. It means that the debt of 108,000 RMB will be split equally. You have to pay 54,000 RMB while your wife pays the rest. She'll work on the debt after she comes out of prison." The lawyer explained.

Xiao Chengcai said very confusedly, "So if I ask for a divorce, I still need to pay half of the compensation? If I don't get the divorce, I have to pay in full? There's no way for me not to pay the compensation?"

"Correct!" The man nodded.

Xiao Chengcai immediately fell silent, his hands tightly clenched into fists.

For a moment, he didn't know what to do.

The village chief said, "Chengcai, you'd better think it over carefully!"

Chapter 272: Another Top-Scorer

Zhang Xiaolan's imprisonment, Xiao Chengcai's divorce, Zhang Chunjiao's disgrace, and Zhang Chunjiao's eldest daughter, Xiao Dahua's divorce, these things happened nonstop. It was like a curse had fallen upon these two families.

Xiao Fuqi was unwilling to get a divorce, despite the urging from his mother. He was afraid that he wouldn't be able to marry again after the divorce, and he would really be single for the rest of his life.

Therefore, he swallowed the embarrassment. Losing his face was better than losing his wife.

This made Xiao Fuqi's mother so angry that she was about to have a stroke. But in the end, there was nothing she could do. She moved back to her old house and pretended not to see them.

Xiao Dahua was sent back to her mother's house to wait for her divorce. This matter made Zhang Chunjiao furious.

She brought her daughter to Ten Mile Village to make a scene. The Guo Family didn't even answer the door because they were ashamed to have a disgraceful in-law like Zhang Chunjiao. Furthermore, they had concrete evidence of Xiao Dahua's adultery.

In the past, they had forgiven her own due to the child. However, the incident with Zhang Chunjiao had pushed the Guo Family over the edge. Both the daughter-in-law and mother-in-law had brought shame to their family. The Guo Family decided to have a clean cut-off.

The Guo Family ignored Zhang Chunjiao. Zhang Chunjiao couldn't get support from her in-law or her maiden family, so she couldn't make too big of a scene.

In the end, Zhang Chunjiao had no choice but to return home reluctantly and vent her anger on Xiao Fuqi.

In the past, Xiao Fuqi would give in to her and let her scold and beat him, but it was different now.

Xiao Fuqi had reasons to be angry. Ever since Zhang Chunjiao's incident at Xing An Town, Xiao Fuqi turned to alcohol. Whenever he got drunk, he would give Zhang Chunjiao a good beating. Xiao Dahua wanted to save her mother, so Xiao Fuqi beat both of them up.

After this happened a few times, Zhang Chunjiao was really afraid. Her rotund figure became thinner. Her previous arrogance turned into weakness.

Xiao Fuqi grumbled, "You really need to beat some sense into these women." In the end, Xiao Dahua was divorced by her husband.

Xiao Chengcai also divorced Zhang Xiaolan. Paying half was better than paying all. Zhang Xiaolan was furious. She cursed her ex-husband from inside the prison.

Xiao Chengcai didn't care at all.

As for compensation, Xiao Chengcai wasn't willing to sell his house or land. He didn't want to work for the Xiao Family for free either. Therefore, this issue reached a stalemate. Xiao Chengcai's mother would come and make a scene with the Xiao Family from time to time.

But one day, Xiao Chengcai's house caught on fire. Xiao Chengcai's 12-year-old son was playful and accidentally set the woodshed on fire. After the flame caught, he ran away because he was afraid of being scolded.

When the fire was discovered, the entire woodshed was already burning. Fortunately, everyone put out the fire in time, and only one woodshed and one kitchen were damaged. This gave Xiao Chengcai's family quite a scare. If their house had burned down, where would they stay?

Many villagers said that this was their retribution. They had been so cruel that even God couldn't stand them anymore. If they continued to be so stubborn, they would be punished further.

Xiao Chengcai's mother and Xiao Chengcai were frightened by this and immediately toned down their actions.

In an instant, Xiao Lingyu's family found peace.

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Since Gong Tianhao had made the promise to pursue Xiao Lingyu, he took action. He would report to Xiao Lingyu every day and then stick to her side. It didn't matter if Xiao Lingyu ignored him or not.

He noticed that Xiao Lingyu was annoyed by Xiao Chengcai's family, so he had Xiao Zhang add fuel to the fire while Xiao Chengcai's son was playing. No one knew that the fire was intentional too.

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Soon after the fire, the strawberries entered their last harvest period. Zeng Yaozu was the main reason why these strawberries could be sold so quickly.

They harvested 44,000 catties of strawberries from six Mu of land. Xiao Lingyu sold around 10,000 catties. The customers came to pick around 5000 catties. The rest were all sold by Zeng Yaozu.

The price of the strawberries went from 45 RMB, 60 RMB... all the way up to 300. Even their prices at the supermarket skyrocketed.

The best example was City Z's National Union Supermarket. From 15 RMB per strawberry, it had grown to 30 RMB per strawberry. However, the demand was still very high. Yan Yihai and Yan Ruyu didn't expect this at all.

4,000 catties of strawberries had actually earned them millions of profits. They had managed to win back their previous customer traffic.

Such a huge profit simply shocked all the directors.

At the same time, it also gave some directors the illusion that strawberries were easy to sell. Some of them suggested that they order strawberries from other places. The price of strawberries from Taoyuan village was too high.

For the sake of more profits, most of the directors agreed. They bought the strawberries from somewhere else, but they sold them at the same high price.

The result was obvious!

Most of the strawberries were not sold. The small purchases were made because the customers took them wrongly.

They had no choice. They had to turn back to Taoyuan Village. However, they were too late. Taoyuan Village's strawberries had already all been booked. Yan Yihai's face was livid with anger. The directors lowered their heads. They were ashamed and regretful at the same time.

With the completion of the strawberry work, Xiao Lingyu finally turned her attention to land contracts.

She did not lack money or seeds but land.

She knew that the villagers wouldn't rent out their own farmland. They would farm the land themselves.

However, there was plenty of land in the mountains.

With the funds in her hands, she should be able to rent the surrounding mountains.

While she was planning this, Xiao Lingyu received good news.

“Sis, I got into Imperial University!” Xiao Lingye called home with a rare expression of excitement. He happily reported the news and said, “I am the top scorer in City Z with a score of 736.”

Her younger brother, Xiao Lingye, got into Imperial University. Xiao Lingyu got into South University as the top scorer in liberal arts. Now, her young brother got into Imperial University as City Z’s top scorer in sciences.

In her previous life, he scored better as the top scorer in the whole province, but that was because he repeated his exam. This was his original result.

Xiao Lingyu immediately told the news to her parents, who were working in the fields.

Father Xiao and Mother Xiao immediately put down the work in their hands and said excitedly and happily, “This is great!” Everyone working in the area could hear them cheering.

“Did Lingye get into Imperial University?” Zhou Yan was happy. “That’s in Beijing. That’s a better university than the one Lingyu attended.”

Mother Xiao nodded and said, “Yes, yes. Yu ‘Er also said that Ye ‘Er is the top scorer of science in our entire City Z.”

When the others heard this, their eyes widened in surprise.

Then, they all said happily, “Top scorer! Heavens, we have another top scorer?!” Their eyes unconsciously revealed a look of envy.

Two top scorers in one family!

Xiao Zhengyang and Chen Qiuying were really capable!

How did their family raise such an outstanding pair of children?

Mother Xiao said, “Father, quickly tell mom and dad about this good news. Mom and dad said that when our Ye ‘Er gets into university, they will come back with uncles and aunties to celebrate.”

Father Xiao was so excited that he quickly took out his cell phone and called his distant relatives.

When the phone rang and a familiar voice sounded, Father Xiao immediately said happily, “Big Brother, Tell Mom and dad that Ye ‘Er has been admitted to the university. It’s Imperial University! Ye ‘Er is City Z’s top-scorer in science!”

When the other party heard this news, he also said happily, “Okay, okay, I’ll tell Mom and Dad Now!”

After saying that, the other party shouted, “Dad, Mom, second brother called and said that Ye’er has been admitted to Imperial University and is the top scorer in City Z.”

“That is great news. Let’s get ready and be prepared to go home to celebrate!”

“Okay!”

Chapter 273: Contract the Mountains

After the university entrance exam was over, Xiao Lingye stayed in the county town to learn how to drive. His family was busy but they didn't disturb him. However, Xiao Lingye would often go to the shop to help.

The shop had already made a name for itself in the county town. However, they were running out of stock. New vegetables had been planted but it was not yet time for harvest. The shop mostly sold strawberries.

Xiao Lingyu reserved the vegetables in the farming space for her old customers. Xiao Lingyu couldn't go to the county town every day, so she transplanted the vegetables from the farming space onto the farmlands.

After the transplant, they didn't taste any different from if they were grown in the farming space, provided that they were watered with the spring water every day.

This was the result of Xiao Lingyu's many experiments. This way, she didn't need to go to the county town every day. It also helped protect the farming space's secret.

The management of this one Mu of farm was left to the people closest to Xiao Lingyu. Mother Xiao and Father Xiao harvested the vegetables daily.

The villagers were told that this Mu of land was experimental farming. The Mu of land used the most advanced scientific planting methods, as well as the nutrients developed by Xiao Lingyu's friends from the Academy of Agricultural Sciences. The Xiao family said that if the experiment was successful, they would expand the operation.

The villagers didn't doubt anything.

However, Old Master Gong and his grandson didn't believe this. But they were on Xiao Lingyu's side. They knew there was a secret but they didn't attempt to expose it.

If anything, they helped Xiao Lingyu. Xiao Lingyu's vegetables were special so naturally they would attract people's attention. Old Master Gong and Gong Tianhao had stopped all of these people's investigation.

These people only found out that Xiao Lingyu used special planting technique and the soil of Taoyuan Village was unique.

As for the matter of the Little Cattle King, the villagers kept mum on it to outsiders. They were using Little Cattle King's manure on their own farmland to earn money. They were not stupid enough to share that secret with others.

The village chief also instructed the villagers not to spread the news about the Little Cattle King. It would not be good if others had ill intentions.

Even though the Little Cattle King belonged to Xiao Lingyu, the entire village benefited from it. The villagers naturally knew the importance of this matter. After all, it was related to their own personal interests.

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“What?” When Xiao Lingyu’s parents heard Xiao Lingyu’s plan, they were surprised even though they had already heard Xiao Lingyu mention that she wanted to rent a whole mountain in the past.

Back then, the money they earned had been used to pay off the business debt so they didn’t have any extra money to rent a mountain. They would wait until they had more money.

This matter was only known to her family and not to others. They knew that if this matter was spread, it might cause some troubles.

After all, in less than half a year, Taoyuan Village had turned from the poorest village to the liveliest village in the county.

After a slight shock, Father Xiao asked calmly, “Yu ‘Er, how many mountains are you planning to contract?”

Xiao Lingyu said, “I want to contract the surrounding mountains.”

“Ah, all of them?” Father Xiao and Mother Xiao asked in surprise, “Yu ‘Er, why would you contract so many mountains?”

“To plant fruit trees and vegetables,” Xiao Lingyu said.

“But, will it work?” Father Xiao and Mother Xiao asked in confusion.

“It shouldn’t be a problem!” Xiao Lingyu said.

“Okay, I’ll talk to the village chief,” Xiao Lingyu’s father nodded and said. They would support their daughter no matter what she did.

“Thank you, Father!” Xiao Lingyu said gratefully.

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Xiao Lingyu told the village chief about contracting the mountains

“Does Lingyu want to contract the mountains?” The village chief asked.

“Yes.” Father Xiao explained, “Yu ‘Er plans to contract the mountains to plant fruit trees.”

The village chief asked, “Then which mountain do you want to contract?”

Father Xiao said, “Yu ‘Er means to contract all of the mountains around Taoyuan Village. She hopes that the village chief will tell the villagers.”

“All of them?!” This time, the village chief was really surprised. “There are a total of six mountains in Taoyuan Village. That’s more than 10,000 mu.”

The rent alone was several million. It looked like the Xiao Family had really struck it rich.

The village chief persuaded, “Zhengyang, why don’t you talk to Lingyu again? This is not a small matter. Six mountains, the annual rent alone is over a million.

“What if the agriculture business doesn’t earn money? Why doesn’t she start with one or two mountains first?”

The village chief was really kind and considerate of them. Taoyuan Village had improved greatly thanks to Xiao Lingyu. So, he only wanted the best for the girl.

Father Xiao said helplessly, “Village chief, you also know how stubborn our girl is. Once she has made a decision, no one can change her mind. As her parents, her mother and I can only support her.”

“You two spoil her too much!” The village chief scolded with a smile, “In the village, your family is the best at spoiling children. Alright, since you have already decided on this matter, I will have a meeting with the villagers to discuss it. After everyone has approved it, I will go to the town to ask for official approval.”

Then, the village chief’s expression became somewhat serious. He reminded, “Zhengyang, you’re going to contract six mountains in one go. If you don’t take care of the natural environment and destroy them wantonly, the higher-ups will definitely not approve it.”

Xiao Zhengyang said, “Don’t worry, village chief. We will only use them to plant fruit trees and vegetables. We’ll not destroy the structure of the mountain.”

“Alright. I’ll go to the village committee first and discuss it with a few village elders. After that, I’ll have a meeting with the villagers.”

“Okay. Thank you, Village Chief!” Xiao Zhengyang said with a smile.

After Xiao Zhengyang left, Auntie Zeng’s eyes revealed a look of envy as she said, “It seems that their family has struck gold. To think they’d contract six mountains just like that. That’ll cost several millions.”

The village chief nodded and said, “Yes, they have indeed made a fortune. Anyone with a discerning eye can see it.”

Auntie Zeng asked doubtfully, “But why do they need so many mountains? What kind of fruit do they plan to grow? Peaches?”

Peaches were the most famous at Taoyuan Village.

In the past, when the traffic was inconvenient, the peaches that were planted would rot in the ground. But now, the peaches had been selling well.

Auntie Zeng’s eyes lit up and she said, “Old Man, shall we plant some peach trees too?”

Chapter 274: Spend Our Money Please!

Old Master Gong and Gong Tianhao were having dinner at the Xiao family’s residence. When they found out that Xiao Lingyu wanted to contract the mountains, they were shocked beyond words.

Old Master Gong glanced at Xiao Lingyu’s stomach and said worriedly, “Girl, your stomach is already so big. This is very taxing. Can you handle it?”

Xiao Lingyu smiled and said, "Old Master, I won't be working the mountains myself. I only need to move my mouth."

Old Master Gong nodded and said, "Then you have to take care of your body." After saying that, Old Master Gong turned his head and instructed Gong Tianhao, "Hao 'Er, Lingyu's condition is not convenient. You have to help her if she has errands to run!"

Gong Tianhao immediately replied, "Yes!"

However, he only knew how to invest and didn't know how to farm. Then again, he could always learn.

Father Xiao immediately said, "Old Master, won't this be too troublesome for Tianhao?"

Old Master Gong said indifferently, "Anyway, he has nothing to do here. Since he strolls around all day, he might as well help Lingyu."

Gong Tianhao, "..."

That was actually not true.

Although he wasn't in the capital, he was still commanding the company via video conferencing. He was busy every day. However, he would sacrifice all these to win back his wife. His wife and child were more important.

Old Master Gong asked, "Zhengyang, Lingyu, how many mountains are you going to contract?"

Xiao Zhengyang replied, "There are six mountains in Taoyuan Village. So it's over 10,000 Mu."

Old Master Gong nodded. "The rent won't be low then!"

Xiao Zhengyang nodded and said, "The paddy fields are rented for 800 RMB per mu, the first-class drylands are 600 RMB per mu, and the second-class drylands are 300 RMB per mu, but the mountains are usually 150 or at most 200 RMB per mu."

"In that case, the annual rent for those six hills is at least 1.5 million. I heard that when your family rented the sandy land, you'd pay the rent once every three years. If you're doing the same for the mountains too, then it's four to five million RMB every three years."

When Mother Xiao heard that, her eyes widened in shock. She exclaimed, "Four to five million?"

That was so high. If this were two years ago, they wouldn't even dare to consider spending four to five thousand RMB.

Mother Xiao turned to look at Xiao Lingyu and asked, "Yu 'Er, do we have that much money on hand?"

Xiao Lingyu smiled and shook her head. "No. We only have three million."

"Three million?" Mother Xiao asked worriedly, "That means we are still short of two to three million? But we'll have to pay once the contract is signed. How are we going to raise that much money?"

When Old Master Gong heard this, he immediately said, "This old man still has some spare money. I can lend you three million." He originally wanted to give them five million, but he was afraid the Xiao Family

wouldn't accept it. In fact, if the Xiao Family were willing to take his money, he would give them fifty million, much less five million.

He didn't have money, but his grandson did. His grandson's money was his granddaughter-in-law's money anyway.

However, Xiao Lingyu didn't want to take 300 RMB from the Gong Family, much less three million. She didn't want to get mixed with the Gong Family. She didn't want to owe anyone anything.

Xiao Lingyu shook her head and said, "There's no need, old master. I can apply for a loan from the bank. With my current assets, it shouldn't be a problem for me to borrow two to three million."

Old Master Gong, "... How can I forget that my granddaughter-in-law is not an ordinary farmer. She graduated from a famous university and is very knowledgeable.

Old Master Gong said with slight regret, "Alright then. Lingyu, if you need this old man's help, feel free to ask. If you need some manpower, while this old man can't help much, this brat can. You can just order him around."

"..." Xiao Lingyu couldn't brush off Old Master Gong's good intentions, "Thank you, old master."

"We're a family. There's no need to be polite!" Old Master Gong waved his hand and said very naturally.

"En?" Xiao Lingyu and her family looked at Old Master Gong suspiciously.

"Cough Cough!" Gong Tianhao put his fist to his lips to remind him.

Old Master Gong said, "What I mean is that I feel like we're already like a family, so there's no need for ceremony."

"The old master is right. However," Xiao Zhengyang cleared his throat and said, "Old Master, even brothers can't take advantage of each other. We'll ask for the old master's help only if we need it. Thank you, old master."

Old Master nodded and said, "Yes, of course."

After Old Master Gong and Gong Tianhao left, Father Xiao and Mother Xiao revealed worried expressions and asked, "Yu 'Er, what do you mean by the bank loan?"

Xiao Lingyu explained, "It means I'll have to borrow money from the bank."

Father Xiao and Mother Xiao were shocked. "Borrowing money from the bank?!" These rural people only knew how to deposit money in the bank, but they didn't know that the bank could lend people money.

Father Xiao asked, "Yu 'Er, can you do that?"

Xiao Lingyu explained, "Yes. But we have to pay interest. Just like how the bank will give interest when you save money with them, they will charge interest when you take a loan from them."

"Oh, I see." Father and Mother Xiao nodded and said, "But will the bank loan us so much money?"

Xiao Lingyu explained, "The bank will do an asset assessment before processing any loan. They will assess the investment and risk."

"But will the bank loan us the money since we're only using it to contract mountains?" Mother Xiao asked with some worry.

Xiao Lingyu shook her head and said, "I don't know either. I'll have to ask around."

Her words were very conservative. She didn't want her parents to worry.

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When Old Master Gong returned home, he said directly, "I didn't expect Lingyu to contract the entire mountain range. That is not easy."

Gong Tianhao thought for a moment and said, "Yu 'Er is very thoughtful."

Old Master Gong nodded and said, "Yes, that girl is indeed a wiser thinker. But most importantly, she has a family that is tolerant and supportive of her."

Gong Tianhao didn't say anything, but he agreed with Old Master Gong.

In rural areas, most families were still misogynistic. It was rare for a girl to make a name for herself by studying. Most families believed investment in daughters was pointless. After all, she would leave the family to serve her in-laws.

However, the Xiao couple not only nurtured their girl into a talent, but they also supported their daughter's willful return to the family to farm.

They cared about their children and never had such a preference for sons over daughters.

Therefore, Gong Tianhao liked the atmosphere of the Xiao family very much.

He was also eager to join this big family.

Old Master Gong glanced at the silent Gong Tianhao and said somewhat resentfully, "When did you become so useless? It's been so long, but you still don't have your wife back yet.

"People say that you're the richest man in the world, and you can make anything happen. But now, you can't even win over a woman's heart. You haven't even held her hands yet. What a joke!"

Gong Tianhao defended himself, "Grandfather, I have already hugged her!"

Old Master Gong immediately said in disdain, "Hmph, don't think I don't know the truth! You were only taking advantage of her! Both times were accidents!"

Gong Tianhao, "..."

In any case, in Old Master Gong's eyes, he only valued his granddaughter-in-law and great-grandson. His grandson? Hah!

Old Master Gong thought of something and said, "Sigh, why is Lingyu so stubborn? We didn't say we'd give her the money, we only wanted to lend her some, but she still refused us. What should we do? We have plenty of money for her to spend, but she doesn't want to."

The wealthy families were always worried about gold-diggers, but this family was the opposite. They were worried because their daughter-in-law wasn't willing to spend their money.

Gong Tianhao thought for a moment and said, "Grandfather, since Lingyu isn't willing to borrow money from us, she must have her own plans and considerations. Let's not worry about these things for now."

Old Master Gong rolled his eyes at him and said fiercely, "Such a slowpoke! No wonder you can't get a wife!"

Chapter 275: Our Home

Village chief Xiao Taiyang called a meeting of the village elders.

After hearing that Xiao Lingyu was going to contract six mountains, the elders entered a heated discussion.

Some agreed while others disagreed.

Those who disagreed were mainly worried about environmental disruption. They didn't want to risk mudslides.

The other worry was that once Xiao Lingyu contracted the mountains, she would restrict the villagers from collecting the mountain resources. Usually, when the villagers were free, they would go up the mountains to chop woods, harvest mushrooms, herbs, and so on. They could already hear the villagers complaining.

Xiao Taiyang said, "How about this? I'll call Xiao Lingyu over. We can ask her in person."

The others nodded and said, "Yes, it's good to get her direct opinion."

After that, Xiao Taiyang went to give Xiao Lingyu a call.

Xiao Lingyu was at home preparing some loan information for the bank when she received a call from the village chief.

"Alright, I'll come over now." After Xiao Lingyu hung up the phone, she turned around and walked out of her room.

The moment she walked out of her room, she saw Grandfather Gong and Gong Tianhao drinking tea in the courtyard.

Xiao Lingyu was a little speechless. She thought to herself, 'Why do you two come here every day? Isn't it more comfortable back at your own home?'

Either way, it was not her place to chase the guests away.

When Old Master Gong saw Xiao Lingyu, he smiled and asked, "Girl, are you going out?"

Xiao Lingyu smiled and said, "Yes, village chief called and asked me to go to the village committee."

"Oh~" Old Master Gong dragged out his voice and said, "It's such a long way from here to the village committee. Let this brat accompany you."

Xiao Lingyu, "..."

'That is just not true. The village committee is less than two Li away.'

Old Master Gong looked at Xiao Lingyu's troubled expression and immediately said seriously, "Girl, you're in a special condition now. Better to be safe than sorry." His gaze on Xiao Lingyu was deep with concern. Then, he sighed exaggeratedly, "Girl, if you don't like this brat to accompany you, then this old man will accompany you."

The corner of Xiao Lingyu's mouth twitched as she thought to herself, 'In that case, there's no telling who is taking care of who! But wait, I can get Xiao Wang or Xiao Zheng to walk with me if they want me to have protection that much.'

Xiao Lingyu was about to say that when Old Master Gong appeared to read her thoughts. He smacked his head. "Wait, I forgot. I have sent Xiao Wang to the county town to do some grocery shopping. Xiao Zhang is at home resting."

Xiao Lingyu's mouth twitched again. 'Sir, who are you fooling with your acting?'

Xiao Lingyu couldn't really ask Old Master Gong to come with her. so she sighed, "Alright then. I'll have to trouble Young Master Gong!" Xiao Lingyu knew that she had no choice.

When Old Man Gong heard Xiao Lingyu call Gong Tianhao Young Master Gong, he felt a little helpless. He told her to address his grandson as Tianhao or Brother Hao, but it was to no avail.

Xiao Lingyu seemed to sense something from them. She was always polite to them and kept them at a safe distance away.

However, Xiao Lingyu didn't show any obvious resistance towards them. This was the best outcome for now.

With Old Master Gong urging them, Xiao Lingyu and Gong Tianhao left the house.

On the way, Gong Tianhao said helplessly, "Yu 'Er, don't mind him. My grandfather likes you very much. After he heard that I was going to pursue you, he wanted to set us up."

Xiao Lingyu, "..."

What could she say?

Based on her observations and guesses, the grandfather and grandson probably already knew that the child in her stomach belonged to the Gong Family. When they stared at her belly, their eyes would glow.

This made her feel both worried and at ease.

At ease, because she didn't have to worry about them looking down on Xiao Tong. Worried, because they might snatch the child away from her.

However, since both parties hadn't exposed anything, she could only take things one step at a time. She would deal with future problems when they came.

When Gong Tianhao worked, he was a cold and selfless boss. Even privately, he was aloof. But when he was beside Xiao Lingyu, even though he didn't speak, he radiated warm happiness.

He had read 'How to Win a Woman's Heart for Dummies' sent over by Li Yuanhang. The book said that women liked men who could talk with them. Therefore, Gong Tianhao, who had always been reticent, tried to find a topic with Xiao Lingyu.

Gong Tianhao asked, "Yu 'Er, I heard that you were the top-scorer of arts in Xingyin County?"

"Yes!" Xiao Lingyu replied awkwardly.

"Now your brother is the top scholar again!" Gong Tianhao said with a smile, "You two are really amazing!"

Xiao Lingyu replied humbly, "Thank you for your praise, Young Master Gong. It's not that amazing." Especially compared to Gong Tianhao's schooling history. She and her brother were less than stellar.

Thinking of this, Xiao Lingyu could not help but stroke her stomach and think to herself, 'I wonder if Xiao Tong would inherit the genius genes from his father!'

Xiao Tong passed away at the age of five, so no one knew if he was a good student or not.

Gong Tianhao noticed Xiao Lingyu's expression from the corner of his eye. His eyes deepened, and a bright light flashed across his eyes. He smiled, looking very happy.

He could tell what Xiao Lingyu was thinking at a glance.

Gong Tianhao continued to praise her, "I think the most impressive people are Auntie and Uncle. They have not nurtured one top-scorer but two! I reckon people from the television and news will come knocking on our home in two days."

Gong Tianhao deliberately emphasized the words "Our home".

'It would be our home sooner or later anyway.'

When Xiao Lingyu heard this, her face immediately turned slightly red. She corrected him, "Young Master Gong, that's my home, not our home."

Xiao Lingyu felt like she was dealing with a child.

Gong Tianhao's eyes were filled with gentleness, affection, and helplessness. He repeated, "Of course. Everything you say is correct!"

Xiao Lingyu, "...."

Chapter 276: The Kids

Xiao Lingyu and Gong Tianhao were on their way to the village committee. Many children were playing around.

Gong Tianhao was afraid that these children would suddenly appear and clash with Xiao Lingyu, so he protected her carefully.

Xiao Lingyu saw this and felt touched.

If they wanted the child in her womb, they could just grab it after she gave birth. She wouldn't be able to resist their power. However, they had shown deep concern to the child's mother too. Xiao Lingyu didn't dare to think too much about it. She was afraid. She was truly afraid.

However, for a moment, she thought that it would be great if she could give Xiao Tong a complete family. However, Xiao Lingyu was self-aware. This was not a Cinderella Story. She wouldn't be qualified to marry into the Gong Family.

On top of that, she had another important concern. After what she had been through with the Chen kid, Xiao Lingyu was afraid of commitment. Even her lover of ten years could turn on her like that, much less someone who had the status and money of Gong Tianhao? Assuming they did get together, could the man stay loyal to her? Would she remain his only woman?

She'd rather be single and alone if she had to live with a husband who had mistresses on the outside, something which was common for the rich and wealthy.

She didn't want Xiao Tong to have a father like that. It would only hurt him. Therefore, Xiao Lingyu had to protect Xiao Tong and stay away from the man from the start. It was why she had been so frosty to Gong Tianhao. She didn't want Xiao Tong to be harmed again.

"Yu 'Er, Yu 'Er..." Xiao Lingyu was too immersed in her thoughts to hear Gong Tianhao. Gong Tianhao frowned when he didn't get any reaction.

His sharp senses noticed a few children running their way. Gong Tianhao tensed. One of his hands quickly reached out and grabbed Xiao Lingyu's shoulder, pulling her into his embrace. Then, he turned to shield Xiao Lingyu from the advancing army of children.

The children stopped before them. Their little faces looked at them curiously. 'What are these two adults doing, hugging each other?'

A moment later, an older child asked in puzzlement, "Uncle, why are you hugging Sister Lingyu?"

Xiao Lingyu's face quickly turned red. She finally snapped back to reality. She was so embarrassed. Xiao Lingyu gritted her teeth and shouted, "Let go of me!"

This was so embarrassing! They were seen hugging by a group of children. This man... took advantage of her!

The last time this happened was in front of a group of adults. Now, it was in front of a group of children. She could hear the rumors starting in the village again.

Gong Tianhao was also a little depressed. He saw that the children were charging their way. Afraid that they'd crash into Xiao Lingyu, he subconsciously shielded her.

Who knew the children would stop all of a sudden and look at them hugging with puzzled expressions instead.

How was he going to explain this?

Xiao Lingyu sounded like she was angry. But then again, Gong Tianhao had to admit it was nice hugging her. He was addicted to the feeling of having her in his arms ever since their first hug. If possible, he wanted to hold her in his arms for the rest of their lives together.

Gong Tianhao reluctantly let go of Xiao Lingyu. If one paid attention, the tips of his ears were red. It was rare for Gong Tianhao to be shy. However, Xiao Lingyu didn't notice this. Neither did the children.

Xiao Linglin looked at Gong Tianhao and then at Xiao Lingyu. He asked curiously again, "Sister Lingyu, why was this uncle hugging you?"

The redness on Xiao Lingyu's face, which was about to fade away, suddenly rose again. Then, she explained, "Linglin, I almost tripped earlier. This uncle pulled me to prevent me from falling. However, he pulled me too hard and pulled me into his arms. Remember, he didn't hug me on purpose. He was just trying to save me."

Xiao Linglin was the oldest of the children, but he was only eight years old. There were many things that he didn't understand. However, he understood Xiao Lingyu's explanation.

Xiao Linglin nodded and said, "Yes, Sister Lingyu, we understand now. This uncle saved you and hugged you, correct?"

The corners of Gong Tianhao's lips curled up, and his mood was very happy. 'These kids are too cute.'

Xiao Lingyu, "... " The more I explain, the more complicated it gets. What exactly have these kids understood from what I said?

Xiao Lingyu sighed a little dejectedly and said, "Sure, if you want to see it that way." She was also confused. Why did she need to explain herself to a bunch of children? The youngest among them was five, and the oldest was eight. How would they understand anything? They were just confused because they saw a man suddenly hugging her on the road.

Xiao Lingyu said to them gloomily, "Alright, Linglin, you guys go and play. Be careful, don't bump into anyone."

"Okay then. Goodbye, Sister Lingyu!"

Gong Tianhao looked at these little kids running away happily. He then lowered his head to look at Xiao Lingyu's stomach. 'My child must be very cute too because his mother is also a very cute person.'

Xiao Lingyu watched as the children ran away. She smiled. Then, she turned her head and saw Gong Tianhao staring at her stomach with a burning gaze.

She was so frightened that she shivered. Her entire person became alert and vigilant.

She hugged her stomach and asked nervously, "What are you looking at?"

Gong Tianhao, "...."

Chapter 277: Good Fortune

Xiao Lingyu and Gong Tianhao arrived at the village committee after twenty minutes. The journey could have taken ten minutes.

Thankfully, the village officials understood that Xiao Lingyu was pregnant and did not say anything.

They only glanced at the man beside Xiao Lingyu and looked at him strangely. This man's aura was so strong.

It was impossible to ignore him even if he was just standing there saying nothing.

The village chief saw Gong Tianhao and greeted him politely with a smile, "Young Master Gong!"

Gong Tianhao nodded at the village chief.

He didn't like to talk to strangers. However, he had changed a lot after spending time in Taoyuan Village. He was trying to improve for Xiao Lingyu.

The village chief looked at Xiao Lingyu and said, "Lingyu, take a seat!" He directed her to a long bench with a backrest.

After Xiao Lingyu sat down, Gong Tianhao also sat down beside her.

Everyone was speechless when they saw Gong Tianhao take the seat so naturally. They were having a Taoyuan Village committee meeting, so why was Young Master Gong there?

However, no one said anything.

After Xiao Lingyu sat down, the village chief said directly, "Lingyu, we still have a few questions regarding your intention to contract the mountains. We hope that you can answer them truthfully."

Xiao Lingyu nodded and said, "Of course, village chief."

The village chief said, "In the past, when the villagers were free, they would go up the mountains to cut firewood, hunt, pick mushrooms, or gather herbs.

"Now, the question is, after you contract these mountains, can the villagers still do the same?"

Xiao Lingyu said with a smile, "Of course, they can. As long as they don't cut my things or deliberately destroy my crops, they can go up the mountain like they do now."

The few people present were very surprised by Xiao Lingyu's answer. They looked at each other, not quite believing Xiao Lingyu's words.

The village chief asked, "Lingyu, you said you plan to contract the mountains to plant fruit trees?"

Xiao Lingyu nodded and said, "Yes, but I don't plan to destroy the mountain's current habitat. I will try to preserve the overall stability of the mountain."

The village chief and the village officials frowned. They didn't believe that. How could Xiao Lingyu do that while aiming to start a fruit farm?

Xiao Lingyu smiled and said, "How about this? When we sign the contract, we'll include this clause. Uncles, what do you think?"

The village chief and the others discussed it for a while and felt that this proposal was alright.

Then, the village chief said, "If what you say is right, none of us have any objections. We will have a village-wide meeting to get everyone's opinion. We will have a vote. If more than half agrees, then it should be fine."

Xiao Lingyu smiled and said, "Alright, thank you, uncles."

A village official smiled and said, "Lingyu, don't thank us yet. We still need you to lead the people of Taoyuan Village to a brighter future. You have to show the younger generation that they can have a future back at home. This way, we'll have people to look after the elderly and the children."

Xiao Lingyu said humbly, "Uncle Lin Yi, you really think highly of me."

"Haha. Girl, you are too humble. We have been watching. We know how capable you are."

"Yes. We all can witness the changes to the village after you come back from the big city."

"That's right. There is joy all around. Apart from farming, the villagers can earn money by doing odd jobs with your family. Most of the people's lives have improved a lot."

"Now that you're going to contract the mountains, there will be more job opportunities. I believe everyone will look forward to it. Moreover, many families will receive a lot of money from the mountain rent."

Once Xiao Lingyu developed the six mountains, she would need to hire a lot of people. This would be another large source of income for the villagers.

They believed that not long from now, Taoyuan Village would stop being the poorest village in Xing Yin County. In fact, they might just become the richest village.

...

After the village committee confirmed this matter, Xiao Taiyang informed everyone about the meeting the next day morning. Each family would have to send at least one representative to attend.

The villagers had some doubts about the sudden meeting. However, there were already rumors. Soon everyone in the village, young and old, knew that Xiao Lingyu was going to rent the mountains in Taoyuan Village.

"Six Mountains, that's tens of thousands of Mu of land."

"Yeah. How much would Xiao Lingyu have to pay to rent them?"

"I wonder how much she would pay to rent the mountain land?"

"At least one to two hundred RMB per mu. For six mountains, that's at least one to two million RMB. Just how much money have they made?"

"I heard that their family made three to four million just by selling strawberries," Someone said enviously. "And they still have the income from growing and selling vegetables."

"Their family still has three Mu of soybeans and three Mu of peanuts that haven't been harvested. I wonder how much they'd earn from that."

"If the peanuts and soybeans are sold at sky-high prices like the vegetables and strawberries, they will probably make a lot of money."

"With so many peanuts and soybeans, do you think they will sell them as they are or process them first?"

"They might press them into oil. Regardless, they will sell very well."

Someone said enviously, "They have the Little Cattle King. No matter what they grow, they will succeed. They have all the good fortune in the world. The Little Cattle King is amazing to them."

"And she is going to contract six mountains. If she wants to plant fruit trees, will she be using the Little Cattle King's manure too? But will the Little Cattle King produce enough manure?"

"Yeah, what is Xiao Lingyu planning?"

"Who knows? This girl has always been smart and capable. No matter what, we shan't offend her family if we want to get more work in the future."

"That's true!"

Chapter 278: You Have to Get Used to Me Being by Your Side

When they returned to the courtyard, Xiao Lingyu bit her lip and turned to Gong Tianhao, "Young Master Gong, can I ask you something?"

Gong Tianhao's eyes lit up, and he couldn't hide his excitement. It meant that she needed him for something. It meant that she was slowly becoming dependent on him. This was progress, and it was something worth celebrating.

Gong Tianhao smiled and said, "Of course, you can ask me anything. You don't need to be so polite around me."

"..." Xiao Lingyu looked at Gong Tianhao's obviously happy expression and swallowed her saliva. But in the end, she still said, "Can Young Master Gong please not be so close to me in the future? I... I'm not used to it."

Gong Tianhao, "..."

The smile on his face froze for a moment. Then, he replied with a serious tone, "Lingyu, remember this. It's fine if you're not used to it now. You can take it slow. However, you have to get used to me being by your side in the future."

Xiao Lingyu's heart shook when she heard this!

She appeared to be in a daze, and her mind suddenly went blank!

A sentence kept repeating in her mind:

'You have to get used to me being by your side!

'You have to get used to me being by your side!

'What... What did he mean by that?'

Xiao Lingyu stared at Gong Tianhao in a daze, unable to come back to her senses for a long time.

Gong Tianhao's expression was also serious as he stared at her.

Then, he reached out his hand and caressed her fair and tender face as he said in a gentle tone, "Yu 'Er, I know what you're thinking. But it's alright. I'll give you time. However, I'll always be by your side!"

After saying that, he lowered his head and kissed her forehead gently before letting go.

Then, he took a deep look at her and left.

Even after Gong Tianhao left for a long time, she still couldn't come back to her senses.

This person... was too much!

"Yu 'Er, why are you standing at the entrance of the courtyard?" Mother Xiao looked at Xiao Lingyu suspiciously. "Why is your face so red? Why don't you go in? If you stand there and bask in the sun, of course you'd be hot."

Mother Xiao returned, and she saw Xiao Lingyu. Her face was red and she had a dazed look on her face.

Xiao Lingyu heard her mother and snapped back to reality. She turned around and finally realized Gong Tianhao was gone. She was stunned for a moment before she patted her cheeks. 'Xiao Lingyu, snap out of it!'

Mother Xiao looked at Xiao Lingyu with confusion and asked, "Yu 'Er, why are you patting your face? Is it really that hot?"

"..." Xiao Lingyu said, "Yes, Mom."

"Then, you better hurry on and get inside," Mother Xiao said. Then, she asked, "Yu 'Er, why were you standing out there in the sun anyway?" Then, Mother Xiao saw Old Master Gong, who was drinking tea in the courtyard. Mother Xiao asked, "Elder Gong, what do you want to eat today?"

Old Master Gong's eyes immediately lit up as he said, "Qiuying, are you going to cook whatever I want to eat?"

Mother Xiao nodded and said, "Sure!"

"Then I want to eat braised pork, braised pork trotters with preserved vegetables, stewed pork trotters, and..." Old Master Gong immediately ordered the dishes.

Mother Xiao didn't wait for Old Master Gong to finish and interrupted him. She sighed softly and said, "Old Master, that is too much meat. I'll cook some vegetables for you instead." It wasn't that she was stingy, but Old Master Gong couldn't eat too much meat.

Doctor Huang had told them that because of Old Master Gong's health, he should consume less meat and more vegetables.

Old Master Gong, who was disappointed, pleaded, "Qiuying, please have pity on this old man. I've been hungering after meat so much that I can't sleep at night. Can't you satisfy my craving this once?"

Mother Xiao rejected flatly, "No, Elder Gong, your health is the most important." After saying that, Mother Xiao ignored Old Master Gong and went straight into the kitchen.

Old Master Gong's eyes went with her. Xiao Lingyu found this funny and amusing. Xiao Lingyu smiled.

At this moment, Old Master Gong noticed Xiao Lingyu. He thought of something and said, "Girl, look at me. I just want some meat to eat. Your mother dotes on you the most. Just tell Qiuying that you want to eat some meat and she'll cook for you."

Xiao Lingyu, "... This old man has turned his schemes to me instead.

Xiao Lingyu also sighed softly.

"Elder Gong, the Doctor said that my stomach is growing too fast and I have to control my diet. Otherwise, if my stomach is too big, it won't be easy to give birth. So, even if I tell my mother that I want to eat meat, do you think my mother will believe me?"

Old Master Gong pouted like a child. "I don't care. I want to eat meat. Otherwise, I'll go and tell Qiuying that you and Tianhao were at the courtyard gate just now..." kissing and hugging.

He was threatening her.

"Stop!" Xiao Lingyu's expression immediately changed. 'So he has seen everything.'

Then, she gritted her teeth and said, "Okay, I'll go and tell my mother that I want to eat stewed pork trotters. Is that enough?" At least this dish didn't have that much fat.

Old Master Gong said that he also wanted a dish of braised pork.

Xiao Lingyu seemed to have seen through his thoughts and immediately said, "Elder Gong, I can only plead for one dish. If I ask for more, I might not even get this one dish."

After Old Master Gong heard this, he thought for a moment and reluctantly accepted it. "Alright, stewed pork trotters then."

Xiao Lingyu walked to the kitchen with her stomach puffed out and said loudly, "Mom, I want to eat stew pig's trotters."

Mother Xiao immediately said, "What nonsense! Can't you see how big your stomach is now? The Doctor said that you must control your diet."

Xiao Lingyu immediately added, "Elder Gong also wants to eat stew pig's trotters."

Elder Gong, who was listening outside, "..."

This girl must be doing this on purpose.

Mother Xiao said, "Alright. Since two people want to eat it, I'll make this dish."

Xiao Lingyu said, "Mom, just make this meat dish. The rest can be vegetarian dishes."

"Huh? All vegetarian dishes but one?" Mother Xiao frowned. "That's not very nice. Xiao Zhang and Xiao Wang and the others like to eat meat."

"Mom, look at them. They are going to become chubbier than me! They should eat less meat!" Xiao Lingyu said calmly.

Xiao Zhang and Xiao Wang, "...."

We're innocent! Old Chief, why did you do this to us?

Chapter 279: Meeting

When the meeting happened, the villagers already had an idea of what the agenda was.

The vast majority of the villagers were willing to rent the mountains to Xiao Lingyu. After all, the mountains had been left empty, and they didn't have the money to develop them. Other than cutting firewood, hunting, picking mushrooms and herbs, they couldn't gain much from the mountains. And these harvests depended heavily on luck.

If they were lucky, they could run across rare animals and plants, but not everyone had good fortune.

However, renting the mountains out was different. Even they knew simple math.

Six mountains equaled tens of thousands Mu. Even if the rent was just 150 RMB a year, the total rent for that year was more than 1.5 million. On average, each household would get several thousand RMB. And this was only for one year.

However, Xiao Lingyu paid them three years of rent in one go. In other words, they would be able to get several ten thousand RMB at once. With that in mind, many people were extremely excited.

Of course, there were also some who had side goals. Back then, they rented the sandy land to Xiao Lingyu cheaply. However, now that they realized how much money Xiao Lingyu had earned off their land, they felt taken advantage of. After all, if they didn't rent their land to Xiao Lingyu, Xiao Lingyu wouldn't get to grow so many strawberries, and she wouldn't earn so much money.

Xiao Lingyu rented their land for 300 RMB per Mu, but she earned several ten thousand per Mu. 300 and several ten thousand, the difference was huge. This made them feel uncomfortable in their hearts.

Since Xiao Lingyu wanted to rent the mountains, it was clear that there was money to be earned. Therefore, no matter what, they could not let Xiao Lingyu mistreat them anymore.

The meeting was held at nine in the morning.

Many villagers came over early and gathered to discuss this matter.

Most of them were envious of Xiao Zhengyang and his wife. They were really lucky to have such a capable daughter.

Xiao Lingyu was good at reading and working. She was even better at earning money.

Back then, when Xiao Lingyu rented the land and said that she wanted to grow strawberries, many people secretly mocked her. They said that she had gone crazy after reading too many books. She was going to grow strawberries at the county where the plant couldn't grow.

However, that ridicule turned into envy and jealousy.

With such a rich and capable daughter, Xiao Zhengyang and his wife could just live at home and enjoy their lives. They didn't even need to work anymore.

However, these people forgot the hardships Xiao Zhengyang and his family went through in the past to support Xiao Lingyu's education. In fact, these very people persuaded Xiao Zhengyang to stop wasting money on a daughter. After all, Xiao Lingyu was to be married off in the future anyway.

These people took their own advice. They stopped their daughters from studying. They felt that it was enough for a girl to learn how to read and write. Most of them dropped out around junior high. This preference for sons over daughters had harmed many promising talents.

Xiao Zhengyang and his wife had a correct outlook on life.

They believed that their children should be treated equally regardless of their gender.

Even if their daughter didn't come back to serve them and stayed with her in-law, having a university degree would still benefit their daughter. They only wanted the best for their children. So they sacrificed everything for their children.

Xiao Lingyu had made them proud too. They never had to worry about her... except for the young love with Chen Ran.

Now that she was all grown up, she had made them prouder.

Their pride made others jealous.

...

"Testing, testing." Xiao Taiyang cleared his throat and then said to the loudspeaker, "Everyone, please be quiet."

Everyone present quieted down.

The village chief asked, "Is everyone here?"

There were more than 180 families in Taoyuan Village. Even if only one member from each family came, there would be 180 people. The committee room couldn't fit all of them, so some had to stand outside.

"Village chief, it seems that Xiao Fuqi's family isn't here." Many people paid attention to this since they knew about the bad history between Xiao Fuqi's family and Xiao Zhengyang's family.

“Oh, Xiao Chengcai’s family is not here too,” Someone else said.

Xiao Chengcai’s family had officially made enemies of Xiao Lingyu’s family. In order to pay off the debt, Xiao Chengcai’s family had no choice but to send someone to work for Xiao Lingyu, and that person was Xiao Chengcai.

His mother and his twelve-year-old brother were the only ones left in his family. His two adult sons had left the village to find work outside.

“It looks like they are the only families not here.” Someone looked around and said.

The village chief said, “Forget it. If they don’t want to come, so be it. We’ll start the meeting now. I think everyone already knows why we’re gathered here. Lingyu wants to rent the six mountains in Taoyuan Village. As Village Chief, I want to get everyone’s opinion.”

As soon as the village chief finished speaking, someone immediately asked the question that they were most concerned about, “Village chief, how much Xiao Lingyu plan to pay us for the rent? How much per Mu?”

The village chief said very seriously, “According to the mountain area rental policy, it’s 150 RMB per Mu.”

“Only 150? That’s too low.” As soon as the village chief finished speaking, there were people jeering about the low price.

When the village chief heard this, he asked with a serious expression, “Then how much do you think each Mu should rent for?”

“It should at least cost 400 RMB per Mu. At the very least, the rental should be similar to the rent of the sandy land.” Someone said with an excited expression.

This would be another high income for them. Most villagers wouldn’t even need to work anymore.

The village chief immediately revealed a look of disdain. He sneered and said, “You people sure are brazen. 400 per Mu, why don’t you go and rob the bank?”

Someone immediately said unhappily, “Village chief, since the sandy land can be rented for 400 per Mu, why not the mountain land?”

The village chief said, “The sandy land is part of dry land, and it can be used for farming. But can the same be said for the mountain land? There are plenty of trees and rocks. How do you expect Lingyu to grow things there without developing them first?”

“We’re all from the same village. Do you think really think 400 RMB for a Mu of mountain land is reasonable?”

“Or do you think since Xiao Lingyu is rich, you can scam her all you want?”

“Do you think Xiao Lingyu is a fool, or do you think Xiao Zhengyang and his family are all fools?”

Chapter 280: Discussing the Rent

Most of the villagers were ashamed. The remaining villagers looked at these people who demanded 400 RMB per Mu with disdain.

Xiao Chengbang looked at those people and sneered, "You people dare to ask for 400 RMB per Mu?! In that case, why don't you rent the mountain land yourself?"

"What can we do renting it?" Some villagers responded very quickly.

"Xiao Laigou, in that case, shut up!" Someone was angry. "Don't you have a hundred Mu of mountain land behind your house? Why don't you find someone to rent it for 400 RMB? You'll immediately make a fortune! Laigou, you'll get an annual rent of 40,000 to 50,000 RMB. But, we'll see who will come asking to rent the land from you!"

"Laigou, I have claims in the mountains too. How about I rent it to you? Instead of 400 per Mu, you just have to give me 200 RMB per Mu. Then, you can rent it out to others for 400 per Mu. You'll still gain a huge profit, right?"

Xiao Laigou refused, "Do you think I'm stupid to rent your mountain land for 200 RMB per Mu? It's not even worth that much!"

"That's right. Even you think that's stupid, then why do you think Xiao Lingyu would rent your place for 400 RMB per Mu? Do you think she's that stupid?"

"That's just funny. I can say that no one here is cleverer than Lingyu. So, Xiao Laigou, if you want to have that sweet dream, go back to sleep!"

"Haha..."

The villagers burst into laughter.

Xiao Laigou's face turned red. He knew that he was in the wrong, but he still said unwillingly, "Xiao Lingyu has already made a fortune. She should share the wealth with us."

"Even if that's true, it's not through a method like this." The village chief retorted seriously, "You want her to sacrifice her interest to improve yours? Does Xiao Lingyu owe you?"

Xiao Laigou was completely silent. Almost the entire village was on the side of Xiao Lingyu's family. No matter what he said now, he would be countered by them.

Since Xiao Laigou and people like him stopped speaking, the village chief asked again, "Does anyone else have any questions?"

Someone immediately asked, "Village chief, after Xiao Lingyu goes down the mountain, can we still go up the mountain to chop firewood, hunt, and gather herbs?"

After all, this was a source of income for many families, so of course, they would be concerned.

The village chief said, "We've asked Xiao Lingyu about this. She said that you could. She contracts the mountain to develop and farm. As long as people don't purposely go and destroy her crops, they can still

go up the mountain to gather herbs and firewood. If anyone is caught with deliberate destruction, they will be punished severely.”

Many villagers were confused. If Xiao Lingyu wanted to open up a farm, she would need to start with deforestation. In that case, what firewood could they gather from the mountains in the future?

“Village chief, what exactly is Xiao Lingyu’s plan for the farm?” A villager asked in puzzlement.

The village chief replied, “Xiao Lingyu contracts the mountains to plant fruit trees. She won’t plant too many trees, so she won’t need to level out the forest. As for the specifics, we’ll have to ask Xiao Lingyu herself.”

Xiao Lingyu’s family had been sitting in the front and didn’t say much. Even when the villagers asked her to pay 400 RMB per Mu, she didn’t say anything. However, there were some things that only Xiao Lingyu could explain clearly.

Xiao Lingyu said, “Most of the vegetation on the hill will be preserved. The villagers can continue to go up the mountain to chop firewood, hunt, and gather herbs. However, I also need to stress that even after I have contracted the mountains, what happens to you while you’re on the mountain is not my responsibility.”

This was a precaution for a culture that would become popular in the future, faking injury for compensation.

The villagers weren’t aware of this yet, but in the next few years, many people would purposely injure themselves in front of businesses to demand compensation from the bosses.

If something happened to one of the villagers on the mountain, they would definitely cause trouble at her house since the mountains belonged to her. When something happened, she had to take responsibility. Therefore, no matter what, this clause had to be written into the contract.

The village chief and the villagers had some doubts regarding this.

In the future, someone really did have an accident and came to cause trouble at Xiao Lingyu’s place. Xiao Lingyu immediately showed them this clause in the contract. People admired Xiao Lingyu’s foresight.

After hearing that they could enter the mountain to chop firewood after Xiao Lingyu had rented the mountains, the villagers did not have much of an objection.

They had already analyzed the various benefits. Xiao Lingyu would pay to rent the mountains. The rent would be shared by everyone, and it was a large sum of money. Why would they say no to money?

Plus, after Xiao Lingyu contracted the mountain, she would need a large number of people to develop and organize the mountains. Naturally, Xiao Lingyu would need to hire people. This was another sum of income.

As long as people were not stupid, they could see that this was a good thing.

However, some people had a disease called jealousy. It was caused by greed.

They had long been jealous of Xiao Zhengyang's sudden wealth. Usually, they did not dare to offend Xiao Zhengyang's family because they had a favor to ask of them.

But now, it was the other way around.

Xiao Lingyu wanted to contract the mountains, so Xiao Zhengyang's family had come to beg them. They knew that without the consent of the majority, Xiao Lingyu would not be able to contract the mountains. They held power over Xiao Zhengyang's family.

Hence, someone started to speak again. "Lingyu, actually, we don't have any other opinions. It's just that you plan to rent the mountains for 150 RMB per Mu. Isn't that too low?" It was this question again.

Xiao Lingyu looked at the person who spoke with a faint smile and asked indifferently, "Then seventh uncle, how much do you think I should pay for the rent?"

This seventh uncle immediately said, "Actually, we don't need much. Like what Xiao Laigou said, we wanted to rent it for 400 RMB per Mu. But since it's you, we'll rent it for 200 RMB per Mu."

Xiao Lingyu chuckled. "Seventh Uncle, do you know how much the Liu family village charges for their mountains?"

Ah?