

Chapter 91: Aroma of Vegetables

Mother Xiao took out a few tomatoes and told the three, "We don't have much, but these tomatoes taste good. Why don't you try them?"

The three's eyes lit up when they saw the tomatoes.

Ning Weiyi immediately said, "Auntie, you're too kind. We're good brothers with Ye. His family is our family. His mother is our mother, so we will act like we're home."

Xiao Lingye kept rolling his eyes, secretly scolding them for being shameless. 'My sister became their sister, and now my mother became their mother. How shameless.'

But, he still added, "Mom, he's right. You don't need to be too polite to them." Xiao Lingye looked at the tomatoes and said, "Mom, they don't like tomatoes. You should put them away. They like sunflower seeds." He hadn't even enjoyed enough tomatoes. How could he give them to these gluttons?

Mother Xiao looked at Xiao Lingye with suspicion when she heard that. Xiao Lingye's friends immediately said, "Auntie, we can eat anything. Tomatoes are fine!"

Ning Weiyi went forward and took the plate of tomatoes from Mother Xiao. They came all the way for the tomatoes, so how could they miss out?

Ning Weiyi popped a tomato into his mouth. The other two saw this and stopped following the decorum. They grabbed the tomatoes from Ning Weiyi and shoved them into their mouths.

"Wow..." They ate happily, "This is the taste. It's amazing!" They had missed this taste. The tomatoes were like a sweet dew on their tongues.

Xiao Lingye saw the almost empty plate, and he immediately rushed to grab one for himself.

Yang Baolin countered, "Xiao Lingye, you're the host. How can you steal food from the guests?"

Xiao Lingye retorted, "You guests are shameless enough to snatch the food from the host, so why can't I snatch them back?"

Mother Xiao was dumbfounded by their actions. She soon laughed. "Kids, don't fight over food. There are more." Mother Xiao then reprimanded Xiao Lingye, "Ye 'Er, as the host, you really shouldn't fight for food with our guests. Treat your friends well. I'll go make dinner."

Xiao Lingye also said, "Mom, I'll help you!"

Mother Xiao said, "Yu 'Er, you should rest. Your hair is still wet. They'll become oily again if you enter the kitchen. You can help your brother entertain our guests."

Ning Weiyi said, "Auntie, there's no need to prepare anything fancy. We're not picky eaters." However, internally, he was curious if the other vegetables were as delicious as the tomatoes. Of course, out of politeness, he couldn't order Mother Xiao to make specific dishes.

Mother Xiao decided to treat the three guests with the vegetables and fruits Xiao Lingyu's friends brought. She made a cabbage noodle soup, an eggplant steamboat pot, a stir-fried beef, a stewed mushroom chicken, a fried fish, and a tomato fried egg.

When they had a guest, it was custom for the villagers to welcome them with the best food. They would slaughter the chickens and geese to serve the guests.

Even though Mother Xiao told Xiao Lingyu to stay in the living room, she needed her daughter's help with the amount of food Mother Xiao planned, or else she might not be able to finish them on time.

Mother Xiao slaughtered the chicken, and Xiao Lingyu helped prepare the vegetables. Mother Xiao stewed the chicken with wild mushrooms. The Xiao Family had an earthen stove with two cooking pots. While one pot was stewing the chicken, Mother Xiao fried the vegetables in the other pot.

The three students, I mean, four students retreated to Xiao Lingyu's room after they finished the tomatoes. They talked mostly about...

"Ye, our sister is really beautiful." Yang Baolin entered the room and saw a photo of the siblings on the table.

At that time, Xiao Lingye was only six years old, and Xiao Lingyu was twelve years old. Xiao Lingyu didn't wear glasses in the picture. Despite her age, she was already a beauty. Xiao Lingye's friends were really captivated by the fairy on earth.

Xiao Lingye's face darkened. He sternly corrected, "I'll say this one last time. That's my sister, not your sister." He reminded them, "Plus, don't you all have your own sisters?"

Ning Weiyi shook his head and sighed. "My younger sister is a bit crazy. No one can control her other than my big brother." But his face still carried a hint of love.

Yang Baolin sighed, "I also have a bigger sister, but we don't have a good relationship." He sounded disappointed. This problem was caused by his mother's preference for sons over daughters!

Yang Baolin's elder sister hated him for it because he was the reason why that had happened.

Kang Le shook his head and said, "I don't have any siblings, so I envy you guys." Especially Xiao Lingye, who had a caring big sister. Of the four, he was the only child.

Then, Kang Le's eyes lit up. He asked Xiao Lingye, "Ye, do you think our sister will take me as her stepbrother?" He thought this was a fabulous idea.

Xiao Lingye rolled his eyes. "Don't even think about it!" His sister was his alone.

Just as Kang Le was about to say something, he suddenly sniffed and asked, "Do you guys smell that?"

"Yes," Yang Baolin said, "It smells like chicken. It smells so good. What kind of dish is this?"

The three immediately stared at Xiao Lingye with burning eyes and said, "Ye, what kind of dish is Auntie cooking? Why does it smell so good?"

"Other than that, I smell cabbage, eggplant, and eggs." Ning Weiyu frowned, "But, are these things normally that fragrant?"

As they were wondering, Xiao Lingyu shouted, "Little brother, it's time to eat. Invite your friends too!"

The three didn't even wait for Xiao Lingye. They got out of bed and ran to the dining room.

Chapter 92: A Family of Handsome Men and Beautiful Women

The three students were surprised by the feast on the table. They looked like ordinary home-cooked meals. The three came from powerful backgrounds, and they had frequented five-star hotels in the county town. However, none of the food they had could be compared to the simple dishes on the table.

They had no idea that a simple vegetable could be so fragrant. The smell invigorated their appetite, and it also made them feel refreshed. Ning Weiyi saw the dishes and said seriously, "Sis, they smell heavenly. Auntie is such a good cook!" Then, he turned to Xiao Lingye, who was only arriving. He shouted, "Ye, you're so lucky that Auntie is such a wonderful cook!"

Their mothers never cooked. They complained about the grease in the kitchen. Plus, they had nannies. The help would cook and do all the housework. They had never had their mothers' cooking before. They were very envious of Xiao Lingye.

Xiao Lingye said proudly, "Of course." It was true that his family life was harmonious and happy.

Xiao Lingyu set up the table and said, "Come and sit down at the table!" She saw the saliva dripping down Xiao Lingye's friends' mouths. "Ye 'Er, you need to take care of your friends!" Xiao Lingyu told Xiao Lingye.

Xiao Lingye nodded reluctantly. 'These three didn't need to be taken care of. They have already treated this place as their home.'

After Xiao Lingye sat down, he thought of something and asked, "Sis, is Dad coming back for dinner?"

Xiao Lingyu shook her head and said, "Dad said that he will go to Uncle Cheng's house to have a few drinks tonight!"

"Oh!" Xiao Lingye nodded and then told his friends. "Come and sit!" It was embarrassing that they kept staring at the food on the table.

Xiao Lingye wouldn't admit it, but he was also distracted by the food on the table. He knew how delicious they'd be. Xiao Lingye's friends immediately rushed to grab the seats around the dining table. They grabbed at the dishes. This was rude, but the smell was too tempting.

Mother Xiao walked out with a plate of fried peanuts. She smiled, "You should treat this place like your own home. Auntie has prepared plenty of food."

"Okay, Auntie!" The three answered.

Mother Xiao told Xiao Lingyu, "Yu 'Er, you should eat too!"

"Okay!" Xiao Lingyu prepared a bowl of rice for Mother Xiao. She told her mother. "Mom, you better sit down and eat too!" Xiao Lingye and his friends were sweeping through the food. If Mother Xiao didn't sit down soon, the food would be all gone.

Then again, when she remembered how tempting the food was, Xiao Lingyu sighed with understanding.

Mother Xiao saw the depleting food, and she quickly sat down. She took the rice from her daughter and started to eat. The hosts and the guests were fighting for food.

Xiao Lingyu had to cover her mouth and laugh.

At that moment, Father Xiao rushed in. Xiao Lingyu stood up. As she walked to the kitchen, she asked, "Dad, aren't you staying with Uncle Cheng?"

Father Xiao smiled, "I heard we have some guests, so I came back to welcome them." In reality, Father Xiao missed the food. He knew that his wife would cook more dishes since they had guests. The wonderful taste of the food far exceeded his love for wine.

"Hello, Uncle!" When the three guests saw Father Xiao, they immediately stood up to greet him.

Father Xiao smiled, "Nice kids. Please, don't let me disturb you." Father Xiao had already heard that his son had brought his classmates over.

Ning Weiyi looked at Father Xiao and immediately complimented, "Uncle, you're so handsome. No wonder Ye is so popular among girls. He got it from you. Ye looks exactly like Uncle."

Ning Weiyi was not lying. The pair of father and son had different personalities, but they looked alike. Xiao Lingye looked like a younger version of Father Xiao.

Father Xiao was very happy to hear the compliment. As he was about to say something, Yang Baolin added, "Uncle, Auntie, your family is a picture-perfect family! Everyone is beautiful and handsome!"

A woman appreciated being called beautiful no matter her age. Mother Xiao was no exception.

If Xiao Lingye resembled Father Xiao, then Xiao Lingyu looked like Mother Xiao.

Kang Le didn't want to fall behind and said, "That's right. Uncle is so handsome, and Auntie is gorgeous. Big Sister is like a fairy, and even the worst Ye is the Prince Charming in many girls' heart."

Mother Xiao laughed, and Xiao Lingye choked.

Mother Xiao said cheerfully, "You three have such sweet mouths. Come, let's dig in. The dinner will get cold soon."

"Thank you, Auntie!" The three of them said in unison.

Very soon, all of them stopped talking. They were caught in a food war. It was hard to tell who was the guest and who was the host.

In less than fifteen minutes, the food was gone.

Ning Weiyi went so far as to pour the soup of the eggplant steamboat into his bowl. The soup was so delicious that he wanted to lick the pot. However, that would be too rude, so he settled with licking his own bowl. His two friends followed his example. Then, the three sat there rubbing their round stomachs.

Yang Baolin praised openly, "Auntie, your cooking is amazing. Even the five-star chefs can't compare to your cooking. The food is so delicious I wanted to eat the plates too!"

Ning Weiyi nodded and echoed, "Auntie, it's true! No wonder Ye 'Er misses his home-cooked meals every day."

Kang Le added, "Auntie, you should open a restaurant. I'm sure with your culinary skills, and the customers will line up all around town!"

Xiao Lingyu and Mother Xiao were both intrigued when Kang Le said that.

Mother and Father Xiao had been busy collecting tuition fees for Xiao Lingyu in the past few years. They didn't have extra money to pursue their own ambitions.

It was only recently that the family had some extra savings. A small diner was not a bad idea.

However, Xiao Lingyu had another direction. She planned to rent the barren mountain land at Taoyuan Village. It would cost a lot. She needed to use the family savings.

She would have to have a good talk with her family that night.

Chapter 93: Family Meeting

After the three students were sent to clean up, Xiao Lingyu stood up and said, "We need to have a family meeting."

Father and Mother Xiao nodded. Xiao Lingye ushered his friends to his room. His friends were curious about this 'family meeting,' but they knew it'd be too rude to intervene. They realized they were quite envious of Xiao Lingye. At the dorm, Xiao Lingye came from the poorest family. However, after staying with the Xiao Family, they realized Xiao Lingye was the happiest among them.

What was the use of money?

For the three, their mothers were busy socializing, and their fathers were busy working and finding mistresses. Their houses were cold. Other than the staff, there was no family at home.

After they entered Xiao Lingye's room, Kang Le sat on the chair while Ning Weiyi and Yang Baolin lay on the bed.

Yang Baolin asked, "Yi, Le, what do you think Ye's family meeting will be like?"

Ning Weiyi and Kang Le shook their heads. "I don't know. Why don't we ask Ye later?"

Ning Weiyi suggested, "How about we go and have a look?"

Yang Baolin and Kang Le rolled their eyes and said, "You can go on your own. If Ye discovers you, don't drag us down with you!"

This was the Xiao Family's family meeting, and they were outsiders. Furthermore, the hint was already clear enough when Xiao Lingye sent them to his room. Clearly, they were not welcome to attend the meeting.

To Xiao Lingye, his roommates were like good-natured parasites. They had been trying to endear themselves to his family. Xiao Lingye had a feeling they would stick to him and his family more often in the future. Xiao Lingye looked at his sister.

Of course, Xiao Lingye also believed that his friends wouldn't be uncouth enough to eavesdrop on their family meeting.

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Father and Mother Xiao looked at Xiao Lingyu as they sat at the dining table. Mother Xiao asked, "Yu 'Er, what's the matter? Why did you call for a family meeting?" In their family, they would only have a family meeting when there was a major event.

Xiao Lingyu said, "Mom, Dad, I plan to contract some land."

Her family looked at her with puzzled expressions.

Xiao Lingye couldn't hold back his curiosity and asked, "Sis, don't we already have land at home? Why do you need to contract more land?"

Their family had six Mu of land. If she wanted to grow vegetables, one or two Mu should be enough. Why the need to contract extra land? Did his sister plan to expand her farm?

Father Xiao narrowed his eyes and said, "That's right, Yu 'Er. Our family already has some land. Why do you need to contract more?"

Xiao Lingyu said seriously, "Mom and Dad, we've been eating the vegetables my friend sent me. Do you think there will be a market if I farm them at a large scale?" In other words, their family's current land was not enough.

Father and Mother Xiao were shocked. Mother Xiao asked, "Yu 'Er, you mean to grow these vegetables to sell?"

"Yes." Xiao Lingyu nodded.

Mother Xiao had a question. "Yu 'Er, I know the vegetables and fruits are so delicious because of your friend's secret formula. However, if you plan to have a large-scale farm, can your friend provide enough fertilizer?"

Xiao Lingyu smiled and said, "Mom, don't worry. My friend will be able to supply me with as much fertilizer as I need." After all, there was an endless stream of spring water in the farming space.

"If we start a large farm, where do you plan to sell the harvest? At the market?" Father Xiao considered the problems. "No matter how delicious the crops are, the market is only so big. If we rely on pure retail, how many can we sell? At most, I predict it'll be several thousand catties. Then, what about the rest? Yu 'Er, have you considered these issues?"

Mother Xiao nodded. "Yu 'Er, your father is right. The crops are delicious, but your selling prices are too high. They are several times more expensive than normal vegetables." She paused before continuing, "We have sold everything on our first trip to the market because we didn't have much stock. Plus, some customers bought from us due to novelty. It might work the first few times but will this work long term? Do we have that many rich potential customers?"

Xiao Lingyu said, "Mom, Dad, I have considered all the questions you have raised. However," Her eyes were filled with determination and seriousness as she continued, "As long as our crops can maintain the

same taste, I am sure we can succeed. We won't even need to find the buyers because they will come to us. Places like big hotels and restaurants will come to get our stock." Xiao Lingyu blinked and said confidently, "Our crops can compete with the best farms. We'll prove ourselves with the taste and freshness of our crops."

Xiao Lingyu's parents frowned and thought deeply.

A moment later, Father Xiao asked, "Yu 'Er, we know the harvest is amazing because of your friend's secret formula. However, once you start to plant them on a large scale, and when people realize how different they taste from normal vegetables, they'll stand out too much. It'll cause some trouble. Won't that be a problem for your friend?"

Even though Xiao Lingyu said the vegetables and fertilizer were provided by her friend, Father Xiao had not seen that friend before. How did Xiao Lingyu contact that friend and how did the friend transport the stuff to her daughter?

Xiao Lingyu was flustered for a moment, but she quickly adjusted her thoughts. She had a feeling her father was hinting at something else.

Xiao Lingyu shook her head. "Dad, don't worry. He'll be fine." The friend was a fictional character. Even if people went to the Academy of Agricultural Sciences, no matter how hard they looked, they wouldn't find him.

Father Xiao sighed softly. "Okay, Yu 'Er, you have my support."

Mother Xiao thought and said, "Yu 'Er, I'll support you!"

As parents, they would always support Xiao Lingyu.

Xiao Lingyu raised his hands. "Sis, I'm on your side too!"

It was unanimously approved.

Xiao Lingyu said excitedly, "Thank you, Dad, Mom, and my dearest little brother!"

As long as she had the support of her family, no matter how tough and tiring the road was in the future, she would continue on.

"Yu 'Er, have you picked out the land you want to contract?" Father Xiao asked. "Tomorrow, I'll ask around the village."

Xiao Lingyu told him the location of a few pieces of land.

Chapter 94: The Legend of the Calf

The next morning, Father Xiao went to find the village chief. The village chief's name was Xiao Taiyang. He lived in a two-story building in the middle of the village.

When Xiao Taiyang saw Xiao Zhengyang, he smiled and said, "Zhengyang, it's rare for you to come to see me. What do you need?"

Xiao Zhengyang smiled and said, "Chief, I need to trouble you with something."

Xiao Taiyang was always happy to see Xiao Zhengyang's family because Xiao Lingyu had made Taoyuan Village proud by being the top scorer. Xiao Taiyang was praised by the county town leaders.

Xiao Taiyang smiled and said, "Come in and have a seat!"

After entering the house, Xiao Zhengyang went straight to the point, "Village chief, my Yu'er wants to contract the few plots of land at the back mountain. Village chief, can you help me ask if the villagers are willing to help or not?"

Xiao Taiyang was shocked. "Lingyu wants to contract the land? But why? Is she not going back to the big city to work?" Over the years, only Xiao Lingyu had moved out of Taoyuan Village. However, the only university graduate was moving back to farm. This confused the village chief, especially since the Xiao Family's life was improving after Xiao Lingyu worked in the big city.

Xiao Zhengyang said, "Village chief, my Yu 'Er temporarily doesn't plan to return to the big city. She wants to farm at home." Xiao Zhengyang supported his daughter fully.

"She wants to be a farmer?" The village chief was surprised, "Zhangyang, Lingyu has a good job in the city. Why would she come back to be a farmer? Doesn't she know how tiring farming is? A university student is coming back to the countryside to farm... Is she mad? And you're supporting her?"

Xiao Zhengyang shook his head. "Village chief, you know my Yu 'Er's temperament. She has always been headstrong. No matter how difficult it is, she will see it to the end!"

For example, they couldn't do anything when Xiao Lingyu decided to date Chen Ran when they were only fifteen.

In any case, opening a farm would be a good way to draw attention away from the break-up with Chen Ran.

His daughter was perfect except for one thing. She was quite stubborn. Even her parents couldn't control her. The village chief sighed. "But you still need to persuade her. Back then, you and Qiuying did some farming, and what was the result? Without any retail channel and connection, the vegetables were left to rot. There weren't any big losses, but there wasn't profit either."

If Xiao Lingyu stayed to farm, it would be a waste of her talent. If the harvest didn't sell, it would be a waste of money, time, and effort.

Xiao Zhengyang knew the village chief was being kind. He also had thought of these problems.

Xiao Zhengyang said, "Village chief, we've considered all that. But my Yu 'Er still wants to give it a try."

The village chief said, "If she wants to give it a try, she can use the several Mu of land your family already has. Can you give her a few lots? The back mountain covers more than 10 Mu of land. Do you know how big that is?"

"I do." Xiao Zhengyang nodded. "My Yu 'Er said since she wanted to do this, then she would go big. She said it would be hard to find a retailer with just one or two Mu of lands!"

"You... are too indulgent of Lingyu!" The village chief was helpless. But in the end, he sighed with resignation, "Alright, I'll help you ask around!"

“Thank you, village chief!” Xiao Zhengyang said with a smile. Then, he took out a pack of cigarettes from his pocket and handed it to the village chief. “Village chief, Yu ‘Er brought these cigarettes from the city. They are for you!”

Xiao Taiyang laughed. He said in an amused tone. “Zhengyang, it looks like you wouldn’t have shown me the cigarettes if I refused to help you. I have no idea you’re so stingy!” However, there was no anger in his tone. He didn’t refuse the cigarettes either.

Xiao Zhengyang said, “Village chief, how can you say that? I only remembered I have this pack of cigarettes when I saw you smoking.” He paused and smiled, “But of course, I’m only joking. Regardless of what your reply is, the cigarettes are for you. You’ve taken care of my family a lot.”

Xiao Taiyang waved his hand and said, “Alright, you can stop buttering me up. Since I’ve agreed to help, I will do it.” Then, he added sharply, “The back mountain is vacant, but the lands have owners. Lingyu wants to contract the land but have you considered the rental price?”

Xiao Zhengyang said, “My family is discussing this. Village chief, do help us ask around first!”

The village chief nodded. “Okay.”

“Thank you, village chief!” Xiao Zhengyang thanked him sincerely.

The village chief waved his hands. “You don’t need to thank me. In the future, if Lingyu really made something of the farm, remember to help the village.”

Xiao Zhengyang nodded. “Of course!” Then, he left.

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Ever since Xiao Xiaohui promised to be his cousin’s cow herder, he had been working hard. Other than the salary, it was also because the two cattle were easy to herd. They were very smart. Xiao Xiaohui only needed to lead them to the mountain, and they would find grass to graze. They would automatically avoid the villagers’ crops.

Xiao Xiaohui jumped up in joy when he discovered this. He gathered his group of friends, and they went hunting for bird eggs. They climbed up trees to find bird nests. The eggs could be eaten raw or roasted over the fire. The eggs tasted sweet with a slightly fleshy smell.

“Little Loach, aren’t you supposed to be helping your cousin herd the cows?” Little Charcoal asked in confusion as he ate the roasted bird eggs. “Why do you have the time to play with us?”

The other kids had herded cows before. They found the job restricting their playtime. They had to keep their eyes on the cows all the time. If the cows ate a villager’s crops, they would be scolded.

Xiao Xiaohui said proudly, “That’s because my eldest cousin’s two cattle are too smart! Do you see that calf? Do you know why my cousin bought them in the first place?”

“Why?” The children asked curiously.

“The calf is spiritual.” Xiao Xiaohui said, “When its mother was about to be taken to the slaughterhouse, it grabbed my eldest cousin and cried. It begged her to save its mother.”

“Hmm? Can cows cry?” The kids asked doubtfully.

“Of course, they can!”

Chapter 95: Little Light

Xiao Xiaohui drooped his head and followed behind Xiao Chengbang.

Xiao Chengbang held a calf in his hand.

Xiao Xiaohui pleaded, “Uncle Cheng, can we not go to my second aunt’s house? I promise to keep an eye on Little Light from now on! I won’t let him do this again!” Little Light was the name Xiao Xiaohui had given the calf. Xiao Xiaohui was frustrated. Little Light was usually very obedient. He knew what to eat and what not to eat.

However, when Xiao Xiaohui was off bird nest hunting with his pals, Little Light had munched off a whole plot of young seedlings. And he was caught red-handed.

Xiao Xiaohui’s heart pounded. He was ashamed to face his eldest cousin. He had let her down. He was afraid that his eldest cousin wouldn’t let him herd the cows anymore. Then, he would return to receive a beating from his father.

Xiao Chengbang felt sorry seeing Xiao Xiaohui’s sorrowful face. However, Xiao Xiaohui was always causing trouble, which was a serious issue. As a cow herder, he shouldn’t have allowed his cow to eat another villager’s crops.

Xiao Chengbang said with a stern face. “No, your family has to give me an explanation for this.”

Xiao Xiaohui said with a pout, “But Uncle Cheng, I’ll get a beating once my father finds out.”

Xiao Chengbang laughed. “Good.” He was not going to compromise. Then, he thought about it and said, “Little Loach, wasn’t it your eldest cousin who asked you to herd the cows for her? Then, I won’t find your father, and I’ll go to her!”

Xiao Xiaohui’s face dropped. He cried, “Uncle Cheng, please go to my father. I’d rather get a beating from dad than disappoint my eldest cousin!”

Xiao Chengbang was amused by Xiao Xiaohui’s changing expressions. The brat was not afraid of anyone in the village. However, he was scared of Xiao Lingyu, the gentlest child in their village.

Xiao Chengbang thought it was necessary to teach Xiao Xiaohui a lesson, so he decided, “It sounds like I need to go directly to your eldest cousin!”

Xiao Xiaohui’s face drooped even lower.

The kid following them joked. Little Bun said, “Little Loach, didn’t you say the cows are very smart? If so, why would they go and eat Uncle Cheng’s tomato plants?”

Xiao Xiaohui groused, “How would I know? Little Light has always been obedient.”

Little Moon consoled him, “Little Loach, don’t worry. Sister Lingyu is very kind, so she won’t scold you.”

Little Charcoal added, "Little Moon, you're right, but once Uncle Mingyang heard about this, Little Loach will get his beating." He sounded happy when he said that.

Xiao Chengbang was tickled by the conversation of the brats.

Xiao Chengbang led Xiaohua to Xiao Lingyu's house.

"Lingyu, are you home?" Xiao Chengbang shouted as soon as they reached the door. He looked up and saw Xiao Lingye and three young men.

Xiao Chengbang smiled, "Lingye, you're back?"

Xiao Lingye saw Xiao Chengbang and immediately walked over. He called out, "Uncle Cheng!" Xiao Lingye glanced at the kids behind Xiao Chengbang and then the calf. He asked with confusion, "Uncle Cheng, what is..."

When Xiao Lingyu bought the two cattle, Xiao Lingye was studying in the county town. Therefore, he had no idea their farm had two new members. Xiao Lingye was further puzzled when he saw Xiao Xiaohui with a long face.

Xiao Chengbang pointed at the calf behind him and said, "Little Light ruined my tomato sprouts and even ate a few tomatoes."

"Little Light?" Xiao Lingye was puzzled. He looked at the yellow calf and asked suspiciously, "Uncle Cheng, is Little Light the calf behind you?"

Xiao Chengbang was confused before he laughed, "Oh, Lingye, you didn't know your family's little calf's name is Little Light?! Then again, it was Little Loach who gave him the name. He probably didn't tell you."

"Huh? My family's?" Xiao Lingye was slightly surprised.

Xiao Xiaohui stuck his head out from behind and said, "Third cousin, Big Light and Little Light are the two cattle bought by eldest cousin."

Xiao Lingye finally understood. His sister bought two cattle, and Xiaohui named them Little Light and Big Light. And now, Little Light had eaten Uncle Chen's tomato sprouts and tomatoes. So Uncle Chang came to demand an explanation.

However, Xiao Lingye didn't know Xiao Xiaohui was supposed to herd the two cattle.

Xiao Lingye stepped forward and took the reins. He apologized, "I'm sorry, Uncle Cheng. We should have watched over them. Don't worry. We'll compensate the damages."

Xiao Chengbang smiled, "It's fine. It's just a few seedlings and tomatoes. If Little Light likes tomatoes, I'll bring some for him this afternoon."

Xiao Lingye immediately shook his head. "Uncle Cheng, how can we do that? Since Little Light ruined your tomatoes, we will pay for them. If Little Light likes tomatoes, I'll buy some from you."

At that moment, Xiao Xiaohui looked around and asked in a low voice, "Third cousin, is eldest cousin not home?" It was best if she was not.

Xiao Lingye frowned in confusion before saying, "She is home. She is watering the vegetables in the backyard. If you want to find her, go to the backyard."

Xiao Xiaohui immediately shook his head and said, "No, no, I'm not looking for eldest cousin. I... I'm just asking."

Little Bun shouted, "Brother Ye, Sister Ye paid Little Loach to herd the cows, but Little Loach didn't do that. He went to the mountain to find bird eggs. So Little Light had the opportunity to eat Uncle Cheng's crops."

Xiao Xiaohui glared at Little Uncle, "You awful bun, your insides are rotten. I... I won't play with you again!"

Little Bun stuck his tongue out at Xiao Xiaohui. "I'm only telling the truth." Xiao Xiaohui's threat was false. Children forgot these things easily. That afternoon, they would be playing together again.

Xiao Lingye caught the details. He shouted at Xiao Xiaohui angrily, "Xiaohui, were you slacking off when you should be working? Okay, I'll go tell your eldest cousin about this!"

At that moment, Xiao Lingyu walked out of the backyard. When she saw the crowd in the front yard, she was confused, "What's going on?"

Xiao Xiaohui immediately lowered his head.

Chapter 96: The Three Despised by Little Light

Xiao Xiaohui walked out with his head lowered and confessed for the sake of leniency. "Eldest cousin, I'm sorry. I was too playful and forgot to watch Little Light. I allowed him to eat Uncle Cheng's tomatoes."

Xiao Lingye added in explanation, "Sis, Little Light has eaten Uncle Cheng's tomatoes and tomato sprouts." Xiao Lingyu immediately understood everything.

She walked towards Xiao Chengbang. "Uncle Cheng, since my cow has eaten your stuff, then I'll have to compensate you."

Xiao Chengbang smiled, "It's just a few fruits and sprouts. There's no need for compensation. But..." He glanced at Xiao Xiaohui, "The kid has failed as a cow herder. Thankfully, Little Light ate my food. If he had barged into some other villager's house, they might not be so forgiving."

Xiao Lingyu instantly understood the purpose of Xiao Chengbang's visit. She smiled and said, "Thank you for your reminder, Uncle Cheng."

She walked over to Xiao Xiaohui and patted his head. "Xiaohui, you seem to have failed what you promised me."

Xiao Xiaohui's face was full of guilt. He lowered his head and admitted his mistake. "Eldest cousin, I was wrong. I won't let it happen again."

Xiao Lingyu nodded. "Alright, I'll forgive you this time. Make sure this doesn't happen again."

"Of course!" Xiao Xiaohui nodded vigorously. "Eldest cousin, I'll pay more attention in the future."

Xiao Lingyu walked away from Xiao Xiaohui to Little Light. She patted the cow's head and scolded, "Little Light, I know you like tomatoes, but you shouldn't destroy another person's crops. You ruined not a few tomatoes, but Uncle Cheng's family's hard work."

The yard of people was dumbstruck as they watched Xiao Lingyu scold the cow. But could Little Light understand it?

Little Moon was curious, "Sister Lingyu, will Little Light understand what you're saying?"

Little Light could, but Xiao Lingyu didn't plan to explain. Xiao Lingyu smiled, "Little Moon, I don't know if Little Light can understand me or not. But I'll still lecture him. Eventually, he will get it. Like a puppy, once you teach him enough times, he will catch the meaning."

Little Moon nodded with confusion. Then she turned to Xiao Xiaohui and said, "Little Loach, you need to remind Little Light not to eat other people's food in the future!"

"I know!" Xiao Xiaohui nodded.

Xiao Lingyu asked Xiao Xiaohui to drive Little Light and Big Little back to the cow pen. The barn was not fully built yet, so the cattle were still staying with Xiao Lingyu's fourth uncle.

Xiao Lingyu followed Xiao Chengbang to his field to assess the damage caused by Little Light. Thankfully, Little Light was discovered early. Only a few seedlings were trampled. Xiao Lingyu asked Xiao Chengbang, and the man told her Little Light had eaten about ten tomatoes. Xiao Lingyu was surprised that Little Light liked tomatoes that much.

Xiao Lingyu compensated Xiao Chengbang for the ruined tomatoes and seedlings. She also bought about one catty of tomatoes to feed the cattle. Xiao Chengbang gave Xiao Lingyu a few catty extras.

Xiao Lingyu thanked Xiao Chengbang profusely.

When Xiao Lingyu arrived home with the basket of tomatoes, Xiao Lingye's roommates immediately grabbed a few. They were too embarrassed to ask for more. However, they frowned after they washed the fruits and put them into their mouths.

The tomatoes tasted only slightly better than the ones they bought at the market. The tomatoes ripened naturally and had no fertilizers, so they tasted pure.

Xiao Lingye guffawed when he saw this. "Haha, these tomatoes are not the same as the ones my sister gave me. My sister's tomatoes came from her friend at the Academy of Agricultural Sciences. The tomatoes you have are just ordinary tomatoes, so naturally, they are not comparable."

Honestly, after Xiao Lingye had his sister's tomatoes, he didn't like the normal tomatoes anymore. It was why he didn't join the fight for the tomatoes earlier.

Ning Weiyi had a bite of tomato in his mouth. He wondered if he should spit it out. Out of courtesy, he swallowed it. He asked, "Ye, then why did our sister buy so many tomatoes?"

"It's to feed the cows!" Xiao Lingye knew his sister well.

"Feed the cows?" The three gasped in unison.

“Yes.” Xiao Lingye nodded and explained, “Little Light likes to eat tomatoes, so my sister bought more for him!”

Yang Baolin held the tomato he had taken a bite out of and asked, “Ye, then do you think that calf will help me finish this tomato?” The other two also turned to Xiao Lingye with questions in their eyes.

Xiao Lingye was speechless. He coughed twice and said, “Well, let’s go find out!” The three took their bitten tomatoes and followed Xiao Lingye to his Fourth Uncle’s house.

At the cow pen, Xiao Lingye was feeding the tomatoes one by one to Little Light and Big Light.

“Sis!” They called.

Xiao Lingye was confused when she saw them. “Why are you all here? Are you here to see Little Light and Big Light?”

Xiao Lingye’s three friends lowered their heads in embarrassment.

Xiao Lingye looked at them and joked, “Sis, it’s like this. Didn’t they snatch the tomatoes from you earlier? However, they realized the tomatoes don’t taste the same as the ones from our house, so they came to feed their leftovers to the cows!”

Xiao Lingye nodded. “Okay. Bring the tomatoes over. See if they’ll eat them!”

The three walked over and placed the bitten tomatoes before Little Light. What they saw next embarrassed them even further.

Little Light saw their bitten tomatoes and rolled his eyes. He mooed at the tainted tomatoes and turned his head away.

He looked down on the leftovers.

“Haha...” Xiao Lingye guffawed. “It looks like even a cow won’t even eat your leftovers! This is just wonderful!”

Chapter 97: A Touching Moment

The three were conflicted as they looked at their rejected tomatoes. The calf wouldn’t eat their tomatoes, and they couldn’t throw them away. So who would eat them? They were devastated.

Ning Weiyi suddenly exclaimed, “Wait... Is the calf rolling his eyes at us? Did you see that?” Apart from Xiao Lingye, everyone turned towards Little Light.

“You’re right. The calf is rolling his eyes in disdain!” Yang Baolin gasped, “Is he some kind of magical creature?”

Kang Le laughed, “Are we in some kind of wuxia world?” Then, he turned to Xiao Lingye and praised, “Sis, Little Light is so clever!”

Xiao Xiaohui and the other kids had been following them. At that moment, Xiao Xiaohui piped up, “That is nothing. Little Light is a hero who saved his mother. He is a genius!”

The three students were intrigued. “Little Loach, come and tell big brothers what happened.”

Xiao Xiaohui said proudly, "A few days ago when eldest cousin was on her way back from town, Little Light rushed out of the crowd and ran towards eldest cousin. He looked at eldest cousin with tears in his eyes. Little Light's original master came over. After doing some asking around, eldest sister found out Big Light was about to be slaughtered. Therefore, eldest sister bought Little and Big Light on the spot."

Xiao Lingye and his friends were amazed.

"Little Light is really intelligent." Kang Le was impressed. "He cried to get Sis's help. This is the first time I've heard about something like that."

"This is also the first time I heard a cow knowing how to cry." Ning Weiyi exclaimed. He looked at Little Light. "How old is Little Light? At his age, he's already more loyal and filial than most people!"

"That's right!" The others concurred.

Yang Baolin lamented, "It feels like we humans are no better than cows." Even a cow knew to do everything to save his mother, what about humans?

The four students sighed.

Ning Weiyi looked at his eaten tomato. He showed it to Little Light and coaxed, "Little Light, I've only taken one bite. Don't worry. I'm very healthy. Please eat this for me!"

Little Light turned to look at Ning Weiyi with his big eyes as if it was considering what he said.

He stuck out his tongue to lick the tomato in Ning Weiyi's hand. "Gulp!" The tomato disappeared into Little Light's mouth. His friends saw this and quickly mimicked him. "Little Light, we have tomatoes for you too. We're perfectly healthy as well."

Little Light looked at their tomatoes and then the tomatoes in Xiao Lingyu's basket. After some hesitation, he stretched out his tongue and rolled all the tomatoes into his mouth. Little Light gobbled up the tomatoes. Then, he turned his eyes to Xiao Lingyu and her basket. Xiao Lingyu took a tomato out. Little Light rolled his tongue around it and put it in his mouth.

However, he didn't swallow it. Instead, he turned around to the old cow lying on the ground. He mooed at his mother. The old cow mooed back in response. Then she stuck out her tongue to take the tomato offered by Little Light.

Everyone present was amazed. Little Light was too intelligent and filial. He knew to share the tomatoes with his mother. Everyone was moved when they saw this.

The old cow was aged. After giving birth to Little Light, she fell ill and weakened. At the end of her life, she was sent to the slaughterhouse. Thankfully, she was saved before she became sliced beef. The one who saved her was her son, Little Light.

After Xiao Lingyu saved the two cattle, she had been feeding them the spring water. Big Light's conditions had improved greatly. She was no longer so weak. However, the only thing unchanged was her maternal love for Little Light.

She would let Little Light enjoy everything first. She would only eat with Little Light's urging. This was how the crowd got to enjoy the scene where Little Light fed her the tomatoes.

Xiao Lingyu gave Little Light more tomatoes, and he gave them to his mother. Xiao Lingyu looked at her basket, and there were only half of the tomatoes left. She told Little Light, "You've eaten half of the tomatoes. You'll get the other half tomorrow!"

Little Light's eyes were transfixed to Xiao Lingyu's basket. He clearly wanted to have more.

Ning Weiyi couldn't bear to see this. "Sis, why don't you let Little Light have the whole basket? If it's not enough, we'll buy more from Uncle Chen. Don't worry. We'll pay." Kang Le and Yang Baolin nodded in agreement. "Yes, let Little Light finish the tomatoes, and we'll go buy more."

Xiao Lingye slapped the back of their heads and said, "What are you guys talking about? Do you think that my sister is worried about the money?"

The three of them rubbed the back of their heads and looked at Xiao Lingye in confusion.

Xiao Lingye explained, "Even though Little and Big Light are cattle, they are like humans too. They can't have too many things at once, or they'll suffer a painful stomach. Little and Big Light have eaten about eight tomatoes, so they shouldn't have anymore. You people are born with silver spoons, so you naturally don't know these things!"

The three said innocently, "We're sorry. We didn't know."

Kang Le patted Little Light's head and comforted him. "Little Light, you can't eat any more today, or your stomach can't handle it. We'll come back to feed you again tomorrow, okay?"

They thought they wouldn't get a response, but Little Light nodded. He also mooed at them.

Kang Le was so touched his eyes were red.

Then, the group left Xiao Mingyang's cow pen.

Before they left, Ning Weiyi told Xiao Xiaohui, "Little Louch, I'll go herd the cows with you this afternoon, okay?"

Xiao Xiaohui looked guarded. His bright eyes were full of wariness as he asked, "What... what are you planning?"

Ning Weiyi was speechless. He rubbed the kid's forehead and said, "I'm only trying to help you. After all, you allowed Little Light to eat someone's crops when you were supposed to look after him."

Ning Weiyi was Xiao Lingye's guest, and he caught Xiao Xiaohui's weakness. Xiao Xiaohui sighed, "Fine!"

Chapter 98: Conspiracy

Ning Weiyi and friends followed the group of kids to the mountain. Along the way, they were shown again how clever Little and Big Light were. They didn't eat anything planted by the villagers, and they only grazed the grass by the roadside.

Xiao Xiaohui drove Little and Big Light to the mountains.

Ning Weiyi and his two friends discovered more interesting things when they reached the mountains. They found bird nests on trees, wild berries, and mountain fungus.

“What mushroom is this? It’s so beautiful!” Ning Weiyi noticed a bright red mushroom. “It’s like a ruby. Can I eat it?”

Xiao Xiaohui rolled his eyes. “If you want to die, then you can eat it!” His young eyes filled with disdain, “Don’t you know that the more colorful the mushrooms, the more poisonous they are? Are you really my third cousin’s classmates? How can you not know this common sense? Were you sleeping in class?”

Ning Weiyi felt a heavy blow being lectured by a child. Ning Weiyi defended himself, “You brat, of course, I knew that. I... I was only testing you!” Xiao Xiaohui didn’t believe him. “Why would you test me with common knowledge? City people sure are shameless!”

Kang Le immediately extricated himself from this matter. “Little Loach, I know about the bright mushrooms. I’m not in the same camp as him.” Kang Le then looked down on Ning Weiyi, “Yi, how can you not know that? It looks like you’ve returned everything to our teachers. Shame on you!”

Yang Baolin echoed from the side, “That’s right. The brighter the color, the stronger the poison. This is common sense. Yi, you must remember this in the future.”

Ning Weiyi felt so humiliated. He pointed at them and said, “Alright, you two, how can you abandon me at a time like this? We’re not friends anymore!” He turned to Xiao Lingye and said, “Ye, from now on, we’ll strike out on our own. We’ll ignore them!”

Xiao Lingye said, “I won’t be friends with a fool!”

Ning Wei, “...”

Everyone, “...”

“Haha...” Kang Le and Yang Baolin laughed so hard that they felt like peeing.

“You people... I’m going to unfriend all of you!” Ning Weiyi’s shout reverberated through the trees, scaring away all the birds.

...

Xiao Chengbang’s wife, Zhou Yan, went to the field to look at the tomatoes.

She saw a patch of tomato which was growing particularly well. The fruits on the stalk were larger and redder than the others. Zhou Yan was attracted to them immediately. She picked a tomato and took a bite. As soon as she did, her eyes lit up.

“How come this tomato tastes so delicious?” Zhou Yan was confused. “It has the right amount of sweetness and tanginess. It also has a light fragrance that improves one’s appetite!”

Zhou Yan thought about it and moved to the other side of the field. She picked a tomato from another stalk, wiped the skin, and took a bite. She frowned instantly, “This tomato tastes normal.” She took another bite before she returned to the prettier stalk and grabbed another fruit. She took another bite.

“Why do they taste so different?” She looked at the tomato field with a puzzled expression. “What’s going on?”

She examined the field and saw a cow’s footprint on the ground. She frowned. ‘Is it because of the Xiao Family’s calf?’

Zhou Yan quickly picked all the tomatoes from the pretty stalk, put them in the basket, grabbed her hoe, and ran. Those who didn’t know better would think she was a thief.

“Chengbang, Chengbang...” Zhou Yan shouted as soon as she returned home.

Xiao Chengbang, who was woodworking in the yard, heard his wife’s anxious calls. He put down his tools and ran out worriedly. His wife was already running towards him.

Xiao Chengbang asked, “What’s wrong?”

Zhou Yan didn’t answer him. Instead, she took out a tomato from the basket and handed it to Xiao Chengbang. She ordered, “Eat this!”

Xiao Chengbang looked at the tomato suspiciously, and he asked with a surprised expression, “You ran home in such a hurry to have me eat a tomato?”

Zhou Yan urged, “Just eat it!”

Xiao Chengbang opened his mouth and took a bite. Following that, his eyes widened, and he looked surprised. He stuttered, “This... this taste...”

“It tastes excellent and very different from our previous batches, right?” Zhou Yan finished for him.

Xiao Chengbang wolfed down the rest of the tomatoes. He asked impatiently, “Yan, where did you get such a delicious tomato? We’ll go buy their seeds to plant!”

Zhou Yan smiled, “This is not a new batch of seed. The tomato is from our field.”

“Our field?” Xiao Chengbang was confused. “That’s not right. When did our tomatoes become so delicious? Honey, you’re not lying to me, are you?”

Zhou Yan huffed, “Why would I lie to you? These are indeed grown in our field! However, only a particular stalk can grow this delicious variant of tomatoes. I examined the soil and noticed the stalk is close to where the Xiao Family’s cow defecated.”

Zhou Yan whispered with speculation. “Honey, do you think the calf’s manure caused this change?”

Zhou Yan’s words made Xiao Chengbang frown. Then, he instructed, “This is just a guess. Don’t make it public yet.” Then, he thought and said, “Later, I’ll go to Zhengyang’s place to borrow the calf. We’ll have it roam our field, and then we’ll see!”

...

In the afternoon, Xiao Chengbang went to Xiao Zhengyang’s house.

However, Xiao Zhengyang was not home. Mother Xiao was home.

Xiao Chengbang greeted, "Big Sister."

Mother Xiao smiled, "Chengbang, it's you. Are you here to look for Zhengyang? He's not home yet. He's at the village chief's house."

Xiao Chengbang smiled and shook his head. "I'm not here to look for Zhengyang." He coughed and said, "Big sister, can I borrow your family's calf for today?"

Mother Xiao was confused. "But my calf is too young to plow the field." Little Light was only three months old, so he was too young to work the field.

Xiao Chengbang smiled and said, "Big Sister, it's not that. I'm not borrowing your calf to plow the field. I just wish to bring him to walk around my tomato field." Xiao Chengbang really wanted the calf's manure.

Mother Xiao smiled, "Oh, that's fine. I'll go grab Little Light for you!"

Chapter 99: Walking the Calf

That morning, Xiao Zhengyang received the village chief's news that most villagers were willing to rent their land at the back mountain. However, they wanted to know how the rental would be calculated. A small portion didn't give a concrete answer. A handful of families straight-out refused. They'd rather let their land rot than rent it to Xiao Zhengyang's family.

Therefore, Xiao Zhengyang and Xiao Lingyu decided to go to the village chief's house to find out the details and come up with a plan.

Xiao Zhengyang handed a cigarette to the village chief and asked, "Village chief, what did the villagers say?"

The village chief took the cigarette and frowned slightly, "Zhengyang, Yu 'Er, most of the villagers are willing to rent. The land there is sandy. You can grow peanuts, sweet potatoes, and melons, but the plot is far from the village. If the rental is reasonable, you'll be saving them some trouble."

After all, since the land couldn't provide much income, the villagers might as well rent them out to earn the rental.

Xiao Zhengyang immediately said, "Village chief, don't worry, we'll definitely give them a reasonable price."

The village chief nodded and said, "I believe you." He took a puff of the cigarette and continued, "However, a small number of them didn't say thing, they seem to be waiting to see how the others would respond. Some of them wanted to work the land themselves. The biggest problem is the two or three families who stated they rather let the land run wild than to rent to you."

Xiao Zhengyang and Xiao Lingyu got the gist of the situation. Xiao Zhangyang and Xiao Lingyu shared a look. Then, they fell silent.

At this moment, the village chief looked at Xiao Lingyu and said, "Lingyu, I heard from your father that you plan to rent the land to grow vegetables. However, the plot is sandy. Other than peanuts, sweet potatoes, and melons, you can't grow any vegetables. Have you really thought about this?"

The village chief didn't say Xiao Lingyu lacked common sense. After all, she was a university graduate. Furthermore, Xiao Lingyu grew up at Taoyuan Village, so she should know about the conditions here. Her actions were rather reckless.

Xiao Zhengyang smiled sadly. He had considered these problems.

Xiao Lingyu smiled and said, "Village chief, to be honest, I plan to grow strawberries, watermelons, and dragon fruits there. For vegetables, I plan to rent normal farming plots."

Both the village chief and Xiao Zhengyang were shocked. Xiao Zhengyang wondered if something had replaced his daughter. His daughter always had many ideas but they never changed around so quickly.

The village chief said in surprise, "You plan to grow strawberries and dragon fruits? Can they even be grown here?"

Xiao Lingyu shook her head. "I don't know, but I want to try!"

When the village chief heard this, his heart could not help but freeze. This child was too daring!

She was spending so much money on things she was not sure of. What if the plan didn't take root? It would be a huge loss of money.

The chief didn't know what to say, "Child, do you think this is a game? You'll need a large amount of money to rent the land. Do you know how much you'll lose if the land can't grow anything?" Then, he turned to Xiao Zhengyang, "Zhengyang, shouldn't you advise your daughter instead of letting her do something like this?"

Xiao Lingyu immediately explained, "Village chief, I'm not playing. I have a friend from the Academy of Agricultural Sciences. I learned some planting techniques from him, such as soilless cultivation and the allocation of nutrients for various crops. I'm very confident that I'd be able to grow these crops."

Xiao Zhengyang supported his daughter unconditionally. "Village Chief, I want to give Yu 'Er this chance to try. It doesn't matter if she fails. We'll help with her debt as a family!"

Since Xiao Zhengyang said that, the village chief waved his hands and sighed. "Fine, I'll help you ask around. But do you have any idea how much the rental will be?"

Xiao Zhengyang nodded, "The paddy field goes for 800 RMB per Mu, and the upper-grade farming land is 600 RMB per Mu. The sandy land at the back mountain is lower-grade land, so it's worth about 300 RMB per Mu, but we'll pay 400 RMB per Mu!"

The price was very reasonable. Xiao Taiyang nodded.

He asked, "How long would you rent it for?"

Xiao Lingyu answered, "15 years. We'll pay the rental every three years. After every three years, the rental will increase by 20 percent!"

In other words, for one Mu of land, Xiao Lingyu would pay 1200 RMB for the first three years, 1440 RMB for the next three years, and 1728 RMB for another three years.

Xiao Lingyu was taking into account the devaluation of the currency. She didn't want to face a ruckus from the villagers in the future about rental prices.

Even though it was inevitable.

Xiao Taiyang took another puff of the cigarette. "Okay, I'll try to get everyone to agree to rent the land. If they still disagree, there's nothing I can do. You might have to persuade them yourself."

Xiao Lingyu nodded. "Thank you, village chief!"

...

Xiao Chengbang led a calf to his tomato field.

Many passers-by recognized the calf as the one Xiao Lingyu bought not too long ago.

"Chengbang, why are you leading the Xiao Family's calf? Are you bring him to plow the field? It's still so young! Plus, Lingyu's father has a plow machine!"

"Chengbang, why did you steal the job from Little Loach?"

"Chengbang, why are you leading the calf to your tomato field? I heard that the calf ate your tomatoes a few days ago. The girl compensated you with her calf?"

The villagers joked with Xiao Chengbang.

Xiao Chengbang joked back, "I've already plowed my family's land. I have nothing to do so I plan to take this calf for a walk. Didn't they say walking a dog is a good exercise? But since there's no dog, I'll walk a calf." Xiao Chengbang was not stupid enough to directly state his purpose.

Before they arrived at the tomato field, Xiao Chengbang fed Little Light with plenty of fresh grass and tender tomato seedlings. Zhou Yan prepared the feed in the morning.

When they arrived at the tomato field, he patted the calf's head and asked, "Little Light, do you want some tomatoes? I'll pick a few for you."

Since Little Light ate his tomatoes, then he must like tomatoes.

"After you have your fill, please walk around my field. You can pee and poop anywhere you like."

"Moo!"

Chapter 100: Speculation

"Hey, did you guys notice that the Xiao Chengbang's tomatoes suddenly grew up so fast and well?"

Everyone who passed by Xiao Chengbang's tomato field couldn't help but be surprised when they saw the tomatoes that were as thick and round as red lanterns.

"Yeah, I noticed that too. It's strange. Even though his tomatoes were not bad before, they weren't as perfect as these. Look, the tomato stalks are as large as a tree. The fruits are big and round."

"Their family always has a good tomato harvest. Some restaurants in Xing An Town and Yin Xing County Town order tomatoes from them."

“That’s right, or else they wouldn’t plant tomatoes yearly! But the most recent harvest is amazing. It makes my mouth water just looking at them.” A villager reached out to grab a tomato. “I’ll pick one to have a taste!”

“Hey, what are you doing?” Zhou Yan went to check on the tomato field when she saw the crowd there. She also noticed someone picking her tomato. Her face darkened as she warned, “Zhang Qiuxiang, are you still stealing my tomato?”

After being caught red-handed, Zhang Qiuxiang’s face reddened. She said, “I wanted to pick one to taste because your tomatoes are too tempting.”

The praise didn’t go over well with Zhou Yan. She said directly, “Zhang Qiuxiang, you can taste the tomato, but at least you have to ask me first. I’m not a stingy person. However, you picked my tomato without asking for permission, and that is wrong.”

Zhang Qiuxiang was embarrassed and angered. She retorted angrily, “Do you need to criticize me so openly for a single tomato? Do you think they are made from gold?”

The other villagers nodded and said, “That’s right. It’s just a tomato. There’s no need to humiliate people like that.”

Once Zhou Yan heard that she slammed the hoe on the ground and crossed her arms. “It’s just a tomato? You tried to steal my stuff, and you’re being so righteous about it. Don’t you need to inform the owner when you need something from him? We have so many villagers. If everyone has your attitude and thinks they can just pick a tomato when they feel like this, what will I have left to sell? Liu Erying, does this mean that I can go to your farm and pick a peach without your consent? After all, it’s just a peach, right?”

Liu Erying’s family had a peach farm. Their family earned quite a lot from the sales. Of course, they wouldn’t allow people to walk into their farm to pluck the fruits just like that. Therefore, Liu Erying was stumped. She picked up her hoe and huffed, “Just say that you’re stingy! Why do you have so many excuses?!”

The others were embarrassed, and they quickly dispersed. “I didn’t pick any tomato. I was only looking!”

Zhang Qiuxiang also knew that she was in the wrong. She didn’t stay to argue with Zhou Yan. She picked up her bucket and left.

As soon as they left, Zhou Yan looked at the tomato field. Her eyes were filled with joy as she muttered to herself, “The Xiao Family’s calf is amazing. I used only some of its manure, and the tomatoes grew so well. The tomatoes taste fabulous too. They will fetch a good price.”

The abnormal growth of Xiao Chengbang’s tomatoes naturally attracted the villagers’ attention. The villagers guessed Xiao Chengbang and Zhou Yan had added some new fertilizers to their field.

Then, someone remembered Xiao Chengbang had led Xiao Lingyu’s calf to his tomato field a few days ago. He also fed the calf a lot of food.

“Do you think it’s because of the calf?” Someone speculated.

“Probably not.” Another villager answered, but he was already planning to go to the Xiao Family to borrow the calf. It might be false, but there was nothing to lose but everything to gain if it was true.

...

Xiao Lingyu was at home, writing down the proposal to contract the land. From what the village chief told her, there were three families who refused to rent their land. Two of them were not satisfied with the offered rental, while the last family simply refused to lease the land to the Xiao Family outright.

Of the two families who complained of the rent, one was a well-known village scoundrel. He was in his early forties and unmarried. He had a father in his seventies. This man was famous for taking advantage of others. For example, he would appear during mealtimes and stay to finish the meal before he was willing to leave.

He would go around the village eating other people’s food. It was very annoying, but the villagers didn’t do anything to him since they were from the same village. Furthermore, the man hadn’t done anything illegal. He was just a freeloader.

Once the man heard someone wanted to rent his unused land, his greedy nature surfaced. He knew there was money to be made, and in terms of money, the more, the better. His current goal was to force Xiao Lingyu to raise her offered price.

The other family didn’t have a good reputation either. They were lazy and often stole from others. For example, they would go out to the fields at night to harvest other people’s paddy, watermelons, peanuts, and so on. They would sell the stolen harvest openly the next day. They weren’t afraid of being confronted at all. When someone did, they would answer with a sickle or an ax. This family was rude and unreasonable. They were shameless.

The villagers didn’t want to provoke this family, so most of the time, they chose to endure it. It was better to have less trouble.

Fortunately, this family wouldn’t steal too much. They wouldn’t steal a whole Mu of harvest. They would cut off here and there. However, they would end up with a large harvest after combining their stolen harvest from the whole village.

Now, someone wanted to rent their sandy land at the back mountain. Naturally, they would demand more money.

As for the family that refused the rent the land no matter what, the reason was Xiao Zhengyang. They had a grudge against the Xiao Family. To put it bluntly, they were jealous of the Xiao Family.

They were annoyed that Xiao Zhengyang’s children were clever, and their family life was getting better.

Now that Xiao Zhengyang had need of them, naturally, they would use this opportunity to torture Xiao Zhengyang.

Xiao Lingyu frowned and decided to visit the three families in person to talk to them. She would offer them the same price. If they still refused to rent, then so be it. She would farm her land, and they could farm theirs.

While Xiao Lingyu was thinking, she heard someone calling her name from outside. As she walked out, she found three to four villagers in the courtyard.

Xiao Lingyu asked, "Auntie Liu, Auntie Zeng, Auntie Hu, what's the matter?"

The few women looked at each other and immediately went forward to ask, "Lingyu, can I take your calf for a walk around my field?"

Xiao Lingyu, "..."