

Chapter 961: It Was Stolen by Jin Gen

“Auntie, I haven’t eaten for three days. I want to go home, I want to live.” She choked with emotion with every sentence she spoke. But she was afraid that no one would take her in. She had saved the lives of so many people, but in the end, she did not know who could save her.

“It’s all right, it’s all right.” Changsheng’s mother hurriedly touched Yan Huan’s hair, like how she would treat her own children and said, “It’s going to be okay. You’re going to be fine at Auntie’s place here. We’ll let you eat what we have in our home. You won’t starve.”

“Well, have a good night’s sleep after you have your dinner. Everything will be alright once you wake up.” Changsheng felt really sorry for Yan Huan, who had not eaten for three days. She might really starve to death if she had not stopped her.

Changsheng’s mother brought out the bowl just when Changsheng also came back.

“Changsheng, you come over here. Mom has something to say to you.” Changsheng’s mother hurriedly called his son.

Changsheng went over. He did not know what his mother wanted to talk to him about.

“Ah, Changsheng.....” Changsheng’s mother took hold of Changsheng’s arm and asked. “Did you ever talk to the girl about letting her live in our house ah?”

“About that...” Changsheng touched the back of his head and replied, “Mom, I haven’t mentioned it yet.”

“Didn’t I ask you to speak to her the last time?” Changsheng’s mother really wanted to give Changsheng a slap. How had he not handled the matter? He was already so old and yet he did not know how to pass on a single of the message?

“It was not that I felt embarrassed.” Changsheng blushed which was rare. He actually did not know what happened. When he talked with the other girls in the village, he also had nothing to be nervous about. But as soon as he saw Yan Huan, he would become nervous. He was so nervous that he could not speak. Even if he had spoken, he also did not make much sense. In the end, the matter that he was supposed to bring up, he had not spoken up about it until now.

“This child of mine.....” Changsheng’s mother really did not know whether to scold her son, or to scold that immoral thing. He actually stole the other person’s only food. Did it not imply that he deliberately wanted that person to die?

“Mom, what’s going on? Did something happen?”

At this moment, Changsheng realized that it was as if his mother had something to say that she had not said yet.

“What else could be the matter?” Changsheng’s mother rolled her eyes at her son. Then she pointed to the empty room and said again, “I brought her back.”

“What do you mean? You brought her back?” Changsheng did not believe it and asked again, “What’s going on? Why did you bring her back?”

“Lower your voice.” Changsheng’s mother pulled her son over and pulled him aside.

“When I went out, I just happened to run into her, so I brought her home. It’s a good thing I brought her back. Did you know that the girl has not eaten for three days? If no one really cared, this would be literally letting her starve to death.”

“Three days without food? How is that possible?” Changsheng did not believe it. It was not possible. He said, “I had sent her rice and the people in the village also gave her some rice, enough for her to eat till spring comes.”

“What’s impossible about that?” Changsheng’s mother said. She felt really angry inside as she added, “I don’t know which son of a bitch did these inhumane things. She already had so little and yet that person stole her rice. It might have been fine if that person stole from other families. How can that person steal from her? She is without family and no one to take care of her. Plus, she was also an outsider. She was counting on the rice to survive. All of a sudden, her rice was stolen and completely gone. Was this to let her die like this?”

“How could the rice be stolen?” Changsheng also could not believe it. He said, “What was the point of stealing the rice? Who did it?”

“Ah, from the way I see it, it must be Jin Gen who did it.” Changsheng’s mother thought about it for a long while and could only think of Jin Gen. The people in the village had lived together for almost a lifetime. Everyone knew everyone’s character. No matter how the people in the village were, they could not have done such an inhumane thing as to drive someone to her death. Only Jin Gen was someone capable of doing such a thing.

“I guess he was the one who did it, too.”

The moment Changsheng mentioned Jin Gen’s name, he felt anger rise in him. Was it not deliberately making someone die? After he finished speaking, he wanted to go outside.

“What are you going to do?” Changsheng’s mother stopped her son in a hurry.

“I want to look for him for some answers.” Changsheng could not hold down the anger in him after he heard that Jin Gen had taken all life-saving rice away from Yan Huan and made her go hungry for three days. If she had not happened to run into his mother just in time, perhaps she might have really starved to death soon after.

“You go looking for him and he will admit it?” Changsheng’s mother grabbed hold of her son tightly. She was afraid that he would be impulsive and ran over to Jin Gen’s place. What kind of person was Jin Gen? He was the village’s scum. There was no sense in reasoning with him.

Changsheng also calmed down once he heard the words and said, “Mom, don’t tell me that we have to put up with him committing those outrageous acts?” Changsheng was still unwilling to let these things go. How could that kind of person get away with committing wrong and then repeatedly hurt other people once again?

“Sigh...” Changsheng’s mother sighed and said, “It’s not that we don’t avenge it. It’s just that the time is not ripe yet. All right.” She patted Changsheng on the shoulders and said, “You should also go wash your face. I left food for you in the stove room. Eat first. Anyway, the child is now in our house. She is going to be fine. She was just starving.”

Changsheng still felt somewhat uncomfortable inside. But it was no use no matter how uncomfortable he was. What Changsheng’s mother said was right. He could not go look for Jin Gen. It was useless even if he did look for him. Jin Gen was not likely to admit it.

It might cause the incident to be known by everyone at that time which would not be good for them.

Jin Gen was an incorrigible scoundrel. Indeed, they could not punish him but there were many people who could punish him in the world.

Changsheng was just getting ready to go to the stove room but he also glanced toward that room. He had already packed up all the things inside, which made the room livable. In a short while, he would go get some firewood and heat up the brick bed. In that way, it would be more comfortable while sleeping.

He had just picked up the bowl. He had not yet eaten a mouthful when he put the bowl down and went first to fire up the heated bed.

In fact, Yan Huan did not fall asleep. She had heard the conversation between Changsheng and his mother just now.

Truthfully, the guess by the mother and son was also similar to her guess that Jin Gen had taken all her rice. Indeed, the time was not ripe yet. She did not have the ability to take revenge for herself. She, Yan Huan, would remember this grievance. She would avenge her own grievance and did not need to wait for other people to do it for her.

He robbed her of one rice grain, she would let him suffer a kick. Then counting the number of rice grains, even if it meant beating him to death, it was not enough to make up for the suffering of being hungry that she had to endure for three days.

She put her hands inside the quilt and suddenly, the pair of eyes which had always been clear, finally held a hint of smile within. Perhaps this was the first time she smiled since she came here.

Chapter 962: She Would Repay The Debt Of Gratitude

Now that she could feel the warmth, her fingers were no longer numb. She touched the blanket and could sense that it was also dry. The inside of the blanket was quilted with fluffy cotton, unlike the rugged blanket she had in her old bed which constantly felt damp as if water could be wrung out of it.

The blanket also carried a scent of laundry detergent, which was not extraordinarily fragrant and had nothing special to it. Basically, it just felt clean and cozy.

The thing was as she looked down and saw the clothes that she was wearing, she feared that its filthiness would dirty the bed. Hence, she decided to fold the beddings and laid down on the heated earthen bed with no blankets over her.

She thought it was finally time for her to have a good sleep.

When Changsheng's mother entered the room, she found out that this was how Yan Huan usually slept.

"Oh dear..." she sighed, "This poor child."

She placed the things in her hands on the table and walked toward her, then she pulled the blanket over Yan Huan's body. Actually, she did realize that this lady had a pretty appearance. However, it was pretty unfortunate that she had a scar both on her face and one of her legs. If this was not the case, perhaps the villagers would not have treated her like this. It seemed like she hoped to find a wife for her son who was still a bachelor, but even so, that old bachelor, Jin Gen must also have planted this idea in his mind.

Certainly, Changsheng's mother had never thought of this. However, even if she did, it would still fall back on the lady's consent along with her son's willingness to accept before engaging in a relationship. Although she had been living in the village her entire life and had limited contact with the outside world, she still understood that a relationship required the consent of both parties to work.

Yan Huan was sleeping soundly so she absolutely had no idea that Changsheng's mother came in. By the time she woke up, it was already quite late at night but there was no way she could tell how late it was since there was no clock and she lacked the concept of time. She would only know if it was day or night.

"Dear child, are you awake?"

Changsheng's mother predicted that it was almost time for Yan Huan to be awake from her sleep. Hence, she cried out from the outside, "It's time for a meal. If you are not eating, I don't know what to do. You have been starving for the past three days so you should have a proper meal now."

Yan Huan sat up and the first thing she noticed was the garment placed on the table. It was a flowery winter jacket. However, with just a glance, she could tell that the jacket was worn out. Perhaps it was previously worn by Changsheng's mother. However, Yan Huan would definitely not give Changsheng's mother a cold shoulder, instead, she found this gesture heartwarming.

She got down from the heated earthen bed. For the first time, she did not feel cold; she did not feel sad; she did not feel like crying.

She opened the door, smiling with her eyes reddened.

"Aunty, you can call me Little Yan."

"Is it the 'Yan' from 'Yan Zi' (swallow)?" Changsheng's mother returned a smile as she asked.

"No." Yan Huan shook her head. "It's the 'Yan' from 'Yan Yu' (language)."

"Oh, that 'Yan'," Changsheng's mother understood. "Then, Little Yan, quickly wash up and eat. Oh, by the way..." She picked up the cotton-padded clothes on the table and added on, "this jacket was previously worn by me, however, it is still new since I only got it last year. You can wear the jacket first for now. The living conditions in this village are not as great, so I can only provide this for you. Let's wait until the weather gets better and then I will make you some new clothes."

"Thank you, aunty." Yan Huan took the garment and brought it close to her chest. She could feel the softness of the fabric from her fingers and the warmth from the bottom of her heart. Even though it was worn out, to her, it was still brand new. Even the cotton within it was still fluffy, perhaps Changsheng's mother was reluctant to wear it all the time and only willing to wear it during the new year.

Her hands trembled slightly as she held onto the cloth. Truthfully, she could not bring herself to accept it, however, she clenched her teeth and swallowed her words back in because she absolutely did not have any other clothing to put on.

She would remember the kindness that Changsheng's mother had shown her. When she return home, she would definitely repay Changsheng's mother with a hundred, no, a thousand pairs of clothes.

"I've boiled some hot water, you should go wash up." Changsheng's mother caressed Yan Huan's hair which was all knotted together and sighed, "Look at you poor thing, you didn't even dare cover yourself with a blanket."

Yan Huan grinned shyly as she turned her head around to take a glance at the clean bedding. I am too dirty to use that.

Changsheng's home did not have a proper bathroom but only equipped with a huge metal tub so they would usually use a metal tub for bathing. Even during festive seasons, they would also stick to this method. Most of the villagers would simply boil some water and then use a tub for bathing.

Yan Huan dipped her hand into the big tub. The warm water came in contact with both her hands such a soothing sensation that tickled her. It had been a while since she last took a shower. There were big patches of dirt on her skin. The tub of water turned dark after she bathed in it, and even so, she was still unable to untangle her knotted hair.

Therefore, she heartlessly took a pair of scissors and cut her knotted hair off, snipping it off completely. She touched her short hair but no tears came as she was unable to bring herself to cry.

Perhaps she had been through too much, or maybe she had a strong character, or maybe it could be that she was already used to all that had happened; she was not sure of it herself.

Dinner was noodles from the local farmyard, steamed buns and a plate of salted vegetables which was self-marinated. A touch of oil was added to it, making it look rather appetizing. Changsheng's mother sympathized with Yan Huan so she intentionally fried an egg for her. However, Yan Huan did not eat it. Instead, she gave it to Changsheng's mother. She knew that in the village, eggs were labeled as rare goods. Some people would even collect the eggs and sell them outside of the village. When she did the shooting for The Uncle and the Flower, they had to stay in a village. The living conditions in that village were much better than Chengjia Village. Eggs were also not easily obtained for meals, but at the very least, that village was powered by electricity, unlike Chengjia Village.

Yan Huan took a bite of the steamed bun and ate a mouthful of the salted vegetables. As if they were some delicious delicacies, she took her time instead of gobbling up the food. She did not seize all the buns for herself but only took one even though she was sure she could eat at least three of them. She ended up eating only one. She thought to herself, that the first thing she would do when she got home was to repair the roads of Chengjia Village and then provide them with access to electricity.

Then, she would add three more floors to Changsheng's big house and equip it with all types of electrical appliances. That night was the night that she had slept most soundly and peacefully for the longest time. It was the most heartwarming night, even the blanket had the smell of sunshine. The heated earthen bed was neither too warm nor too cold, it felt very comfortable when she laid down on it. She did not

wake up in the middle of the night with her bones aching. She was fully aware that the reason behind the aching bones was the freezing coldness.

The next day, when Changsheng's mother woke up and was getting ready to clean the house, she was surprised to find that the house was already cleaned, the water was already filled, even the fire in the kitchen was lit up, and Yan Huan was busy working in the kitchen.

Chapter 963: She Knows How to Cut Hair

Even inside the water bucket had been filled with water carried on a shoulder pole. These were originally her and Changsheng's chores. In the end, Yan Huan had finished them all. She was even able to carry the water on a shoulder pole which was a man's job and finished it.

"Auntie, I have already boiled the water. What would you like to eat? I'll make it for you all." Yan Huan turned around. With her short hair and disfigured face, she was so skinny all over her entire body that there was no excess flesh on her bones. But she did not make people feel afraid. Instead, due to her extremely bright eyes, she came across as immaculate.

This was a clean and immaculate child, and not an opportunist. She was raised by their parents with love.

Changsheng's mother suddenly felt that the rims of her eyes were a little hot. She could see that Yan Huan was in fact still cautious and timid. She might be afraid of being thrown out by their family.

"Oh dear..." Changsheng's mother gave a sigh and then touched Yan Huan's short hair, which was spiky to touch. Why did a girl make herself into this appearance?

"Ah, Xiao Yan, don't you worry, you can live in Auntie's house. Auntie does not have a daughter. I only have Changsheng. You will be Auntie's daughter, and everything will be okay. You will eat and share whatever food we have to eat."

Yan Huan cracked a grin, but the tears gathered at the wells of her eyes were once again forced back in.

She turned around and cooked together with Changsheng's mother. She knew how to cook but she did not know how to make food on a farm. She knew how to use electrical appliances, but she did not know how to use the earth stove here. However, she was still able to build a fire, which was not difficult for her. It was just like the stove that she built the fire for before. She was able to light it up just once. So, she only knew how to boil water but did not know how much rice Changsheng's family ate each time and how much would be considered enough.

Changsheng's mother rolled up her own sleeves and scooped out half a gourd amount of rice from inside the rice jar. She washed the rice with water and swiftly started making the dishes. The morning meal was very simple, which consisted of steamed buns made by them, salted vegetables and corn porridge. Originally Changsheng's mother also wanted to cook an egg for Yan Huan. But Yan Huan declined as she did not eat eggs. She was fine with eating the salted vegetables.

Changsheng's mother liked this child, Yan Huan. She was smart, sensible, and not greedy. Of course, she was also diligent and rushed to do the chores inside and outside the house. She was free on this day and had nothing to do with her hands, but she did not know what to do.

Yan Huan changed into her old clothes with the cotton padding exposed. She had just put it on and her whole person felt like she was lying on ice. That chill made her shiver.

She was still going to pick up firewood and also to move the firewood which she had put in her own house to Changsheng's mother here. She could do only these things. Otherwise, she could not just eat white rice and not work. She did not want to live by relying on someone else's charity. Other people who were good to her was because they were kind, but it was not that they ought to be.

She remembered, and she knew it well in her heart at the same time.

Changsheng's mother could not dissuade her, so she could only let her go. In fact, Changsheng's mother was also aware that Yan Huan was a child with a moral backbone. Even if they wanted her to be a freeloader here and did not mind her freeloading since it was nothing more than an extra mouth to feed, in any case it was not possible for her to make them poor, but Yan Huan did not think like this. She did what she could so as to prevent her from really freeloading here for a few months. She might trouble them even more in the future.

She moved out the things from inside her own house, which was in fact, nothing much. It was only firewood. What she had the most was firewood.

The people in the village were pointing fingers behind her back. But what could she do about it? She was ugly and a cripple, but she would not eat or drink for free on others.

Yan Huan did all the housework in Changsheng's house. She was the first to rise in Changsheng's house. She was also possibly the first to be up in the whole village. Every morning at the first sound of the rooster's crow, she would get up and clean and sweep inside and outside the house. Then she would go to the upper reaches of the river and carry the water back to fill up the water tank. She could carry two buckets of water with a carrying pole. The water tank would be completely full, with only five or six trips back and forth. Then she would cook for Changsheng's mother and Changsheng to eat. Every time Changsheng wanted to go ferry the water, the water tank was often all filled up, which made him quite helpless. He was already up very early, but Yan Huan was even earlier than he was. She had finished all the household chores alone. So, what was the point of having him around as a man?

Consequently, he kept busy in the fields more often during this period and grew a variety of grains. He took good care of those acres of crops so that it would yield them some more food later and also to earn more money. Changsheng was also full of energy and even started work on several acres of wasteland. Once the beginning of spring was here and the land had thawed, he would cultivate and plant on the wasteland.

Yan Huan did not spend too much time in Changsheng's house. Regardless of the weather, she would go out to collect firewood, so that Changsheng's family did not have to use any coal. They only used firewood for burning. In this way, they inadvertently saved a lot of money. Other people still said that when Changsheng's mother took in a person and brought her home to eat at home, drink at home and live at home, it was not known how much food she had already eaten.

But Changsheng's mother did not think in this way. It was obvious to her that she had picked up and brought home a treasure. That child took care of everything inside and outside the house. She was also

able to pick up a lot of firewood everyday which saved them from using coal. That in turn saved them money. When all was said and done, in fact, she was the one who benefited from it.

“Auntie, are you thinking about cutting your hair?” Yan Huan had already thought about asking the question for many days. Changsheng’s mother’s hair was already very long. But due to her old age, she always had hair loss nowadays and it was not easy to comb it up. She might as well cut it short, which was convenient and neat.

“Ah yes, I am also thinking about this matter.” Changsheng’s mother touched her hair and said, “I’m waiting for Third Aunt next door. She has good skills but it’s just that Third Aunt has not been feeling well this winter and has not gotten better. I thought maybe I should just cut my own with a pair of scissors.”

“Oh?” Changsheng’s mother suddenly remembered something and couldn’t help but slap her own thigh as she said, “You see, how can I forget about you? You can give Auntie a haircut. Just cut it like how your hair is.”

“All right.” Yan Huan agreed with a smile. Apart from the destroyed half of her face, her pair of eyes revealed the clear smile inside, like the new green grass that grew out in the early spring. It was very refreshingly comfortable.

“Alas, it’s a pity...” Changsheng’s mother said, shaking her head.

Did Yan Huan know what Changsheng’s mother felt pity about? Half of her face? Perhaps, she did not despair because her own face was destroyed, and her leg was lame. It was not easy for her to keep this life. No one knew how she worked so hard at staying alive and how much she wanted to live. So, it did not matter regardless how she had become. She still persisted that she wanted to live.

Chapter 964: Many People Came Over

She loosened Changsheng’s mother’s hair after grabbing the scissors. She knew a little about hairdressing. She longed to be a good wife and a loving mother during her previous life. That was why she went for a hairdressing course. Since then, she would do Lu Qin’s hair by herself. This could be considered as a part of her profession. Of course, she did Lu Yi’s hair too. She would make him look clean and tidy every single day. Hence, the image of Prosecutor Lu had always been excellent, as he never once looked scruffy.

She took the scissors and found that it was quite unhandy. However, after having a few attempts, she felt that it was easy to use, at the very least, the scissors were quite sharp.

Snip, snip. She guided the scissors with her hands as strands of hair fell to the ground. To be honest, Changsheng’s mother did not know how Yan Huan cut her hair. All she knew was that Yan Huan walked to-and-fro from time to time, accompanied by the snipping sound of the scissors. As there was no mirror so she had no idea what she looked like.

“Okay, it’s done.” Yan Huan kept the scissors and did the final touches on her hair. Changsheng’s mother caressed her hair, feeling joyful in her heart.

Luckily, her hair was still intact. Her worries of turning bald from Yan Huan's cutting seeped away. Hmm, this should be presentable. Moreover, she was getting a bit old, so she paid no heed to her image. It did not matter whether the haircut was stylish to her, as long as it was practical.

Therefore, she did not pay much attention to how she looked. Anyhow, her hair was trimmed short and her head felt lighter right then. She felt that she was more clear-headed and not top-heavy like before.

Consequently, just as she took one step out of the door, she felt that all eyes were on her head. It was no big deal if there were only one or two people boring into her, but Changsheng's mother felt embarrassed when the gazes came from a crowd.

"Changsheng's mother, where did you get your hair done? Was it by Third Aunt?"

An aunt with a loose tongue quickly came forward and asked Changsheng's mother.

"What's wrong, Xiao Song's mother? Does it look hideous?" Changsheng's mother caressed her short hair once more, she genuinely wished that she could cover her head.

"No, no." Xiao Song's mother hurriedly shook her head. "How can it be hideous? You look amazing as if you've become ten years younger with this hairstyle. Can you tell me who was the one that had cut your hair. Was it the Third Aunt? But isn't she sick? How could she cut your hair then, or has she recovered? If it was so, I would like to ask her to cut my hair right at this instant. I want to have the same hairstyle as yours."

Xiao Song's mother was going to head back and get her scissors after she finished speaking, but then Changsheng's mother grabbed hold of her frantically.

"Please don't go and look for Third Aunt."

"What?" Xiao Song's mother snapped her head back, "Why? I want to ask her to do this haircut for me. Your hair is cut so well, I like it so much."

Changsheng's mother gently stroked her hair again. "My hair wasn't cut by Third Aunt. She is still bedridden."

"Your hair wasn't cut by Third Aunt?" Xiao Song's mother asked with eyes wide open. "If it wasn't Third Aunt, then who was it that cut your hair? Please bring me to her now."

"My hair was cut by the lady staying in my house," Changsheng's mother was suddenly pleased with herself. "Alright, I would like to find a mirror and have a look at my hair. I haven't got the chance to see it after having a cut. Your compliment makes me even more eager to look at it."

She did not dare to look at her hair after the haircut. She thought that if it was hideous, then so be it, as long as it was comfortable. However, when Xiao Song's mother complimented her hair, it made her even more impatient to glimpse at her new hairstyle.

Yan Huan was out when she came back, but she knew that Yan Huan went to collect firewood. This girl was stubborn. She had told her that there was already enough firewood in the house, but she still went out to search for more every day. Her house was almost filled with firewood, there were no other houses that had more firewood than hers.

She entered her room briskly. Then, she took out a mirror and placed it in front of her.

Oh? She was dumbfounded when she saw her image in the mirror. No, she was absolutely stunned.

No wonder Xiao Song's mother wished to have the same hairstyle as hers. It was absolutely amazing. Her layered hair was longer in the upper part and shorter at the bottom. Besides, it laid smoothly on her scalp. It looked wonderful from any perspective, and she looked ten years younger with this hairstyle. She was totally satisfied with her new look. It was many times better than her previous one.

However, she could not understand why Yan Huan's hair was unsightly although she had great skills in hairdressing.

She almost forgot that Yan Huan would be cutting her own hair, not the hair of others. How could she cut her hair when she could not see it? Moreover, her hair had grown into such a mess so even the comb could not save it. Hence, in the end, she ended her misery with a snip of the scissors, chopping off all of her hair, and that was why the back of her head was in this state.

The sky was getting dark when Yan Huan returned. That day was a rewarding day for her. She came across some black fungus in the mountains. That was why she came back later than usual. Her big harvest could be their meals for several days.

However, when she arrived, she found that Changsheng's house was crowded with people consisting of not only middle-aged women but males and females of all ages.

"You are back, Little Yan. Come over here, quick." Changsheng's mother waved to Yan Huan once she saw her. On the other hand, all of the by-standers had their eyes fixed on her as if they carved for a slice of flesh from her body.

Yan Huan put aside the firewood and came to her side, but the people never shifted their gaze away from her. The feeling was similar to the time when she had met with her fans before. However, she caressed her face, thinking to herself. How could it be possible that I still have fans when my appearance is not as presentable as it used to be?

After a short while, she realized that they were not fans, but a group of fans.

"Little Yan, can I have the same hairstyle as Changsheng's mother, can I?"

Xiao Song's mother was the first one to arrive at the house. Of course, she wanted to be the first one for her hair to be done. She wanted nothing else but the exact same look that Changsheng's mother had. That was the best hairdo, and it looked amazing. It could make her feel like a typical city girl.

In addition, it was better to have short hair. She did not need to comb it anymore. This could save her a lot of time in a day.

"Yes, you can." Yan Huan took the scissors. She did not even have the time to change her clothes, as her clothes would be dirtied again even if she changed to a new one. She took the scissors skillfully as her hand glided in a swift motion. Yan Huan promised her the same hairstyle as Changsheng's mother, but it would not be identical.

Changsheng's mother had a hatchet face, so that hairstyle suited her. However, Xiao Song's mother had a typical round type of face. Therefore, that hairstyle was not quite suitable for her. She cut her hair longer and fluffier than Changsheng's mother, or else, her face would turn out like a watermelon.

Chapter 965: No Daughter-In-Law Yet

After the haircut was done, Xiao Song's mother hurriedly took the mirror. Although she was old, she liked to look pretty. It was every woman's nature. No matter what profession one was in and at what age, women had a natural enthusiasm for beauty, which was what these middle-aged women were like as well.

Yan Huan's line of sight occasionally fell on the mirror. She could see her own face clearly. The right side of her face had potholes and was uneven. Almost the entire side was destroyed. The scar on it also had some scar tissue growth, strip by strip and line by line, which was a ghastly sight. Of course, it also made people feel disgusted.

She then touched her face and turned her face. She could feel the unevenness on the surface of her skin when she touched her fingers. Thankfully, these people did not feel nauseated when they looked at her face.

She did a few more haircuts which made other people very satisfied. But, she did not have time to go out to collect firewood.

At night, those aunties in the village left feeling satisfied. But, more would arrive tomorrow come to think of it. After all, there were only these people in this village. Certainly, not everyone in the village would want to get their hair trimmed. It was that the people in the village loved to go with the tide. If someone had something today, they would want the same thing tomorrow. What someone ate today, then they would want to eat the same thing tomorrow.

And even a thing like getting a haircut, the people in the village also wanted to follow the trend. At the very least, the aunties who were of Changsheng's mother's age and often got together, would come over.

Yan Huan had gotten up early in the morning. She took a broom to sweep the floor. However, she had only swept halfway when she almost swept a person's legs.

"I'm sorry." Yan Huan said as she quickly straightened her back and also took the broom to one side.

"It's alright. I'm the one who's standing here." Changsheng said with an embarrassed smile, "Ah, I'm going to fetch the water." He pointed inside the kitchen. He looked like he was red in the face and his complexion was blotchy and dark. At this time, he was also red all over, like a monkey's ass. Luckily, this person was born dark-skinned. Otherwise the twenty-something year old man would be utterly embarrassed.

He hurriedly ran into the kitchen and picked up the carrying pole from inside to go fetch the water. In the past, he could still sleep longer but now, Yan Huan did indeed wake up a little too early, which also inadvertently made him follow suit to wake up early to fetch and fill up the water tank with water in the house. This was so that she did not have to fetch the water alone as a woman, which was outrageous. Only a woman without a man in her family would fetch her own water.

Yan Huan bowed her head again and continued to sweep the floor. After she had swept clean the house in and out, she then went into the kitchen, boiled the water, and then made breakfast. She could make an additional dish today from the black fungus that she had picked and soaked till it was soft last night.

There was a cold dish of salted vegetable shreds dressed with sauce and a light stir-fried black fungus with chopped spring onion put inside. And they were all very delicious. The standard of living in the village was not high after all. The vegetables that they ate were grown in their own homes. Summer was good because they could just simply pull out a handful from the ground. But when winter came, the basic dishes were also their own pickles, salted vegetables and so on. No one was willing to eat eggs which were saved.

The black fungus dish which Yan Huan had stir fried, looked delicious. With some chopped spring onion sprinkled on top, it whetted people's appetite and increased it by a lot all of a sudden.

"Xiao Yan's cooking is delicious." Changsheng's mother could not help but compliment Yan Huan. This girl is good at everything but it's a pity that such a good person had a disfigured face and lame leg.

Changsheng also kept nodding his head as if he did not mind Yan Huan's outer appearance. He picked up a pair of chopsticks and seems that there is no love of the appearance of the same, he picked up chopsticks and slurped down a bowl of rice porridge till he finished it. He also ate a lot of the dishes. He wanted another bowl in a while and together with the salted vegetables, he made sure no food was left in the pot. Changsheng's mother was very happy as she watched. Her son was blessed to be able to eat well, which proved that his body was healthy, able to work hard and had prospects.

After Changsheng finished his meal, he went to work in the fields. The grounds should not be frozen today, so he could cultivate more acres of land which he could plant in the piece of land when spring came next year.

After Yan Huan scrubbed the pot and washed the bowls, she got ready to change her clothes to go pick up firewood.

"Xiao Yan, are you going out again?" Changsheng's mother did not want to let her go so she said, "You see, it's so cold today and there's enough firewood in the house. You go out every day, you might catch a cold."

"Auntie, I can only do this." Yan Huan took a rope and tied it to her waist as she got ready to go out to pick up firewood to bring back. Changsheng's mother was unable to stop her, so she could only let her go.

Yan Huan did not know that she had just stepped out when Xiao Song's mother came over again and she even brought her grandson over.

"Where's your house's Xiao Yan?" Xiao Song's mother hurriedly asked when she saw Changsheng's mother. With her head of fashionable and sleek short hair, plus her overall outfit was neat, she now looked all the more highly capable.

"She went to pick up firewood." Changsheng's mother was doing housework and stopped when she saw Xiao Song's mother had come. She let Xiao Song's mother come in. The two people were freezing till they were blue in the face.

She pinched the child's small face and said, "Your family's Little Tiger has grown up ah."

"Isn't it? This child is strong. He can really eat and grow. You see, he's so much sturdier than the chubby child in Hong Gui's family. He's also taller. He will be a big fellow in the future." Xiao Song's mother picked up her grandson. The family only had one such darling baby. He was the one person she cherished most in life. Thankfully, he was healthy. He was like his name, strong and sturdy. Ever since he was born, he had not let anyone worry about him before.

Changsheng's mother also constantly nodded her head. She squeezed Little Tiger's small chubby hand for a while. He was getting older. She liked having children coming around to visit.

"I think the auspicious day for your family's Changsheng is also coming up. Maybe this time next year, you can also have a grandchild."

"Where's the grandson you're speaking of?" Changsheng's mother did not even know who her daughter-in-law was. She said, "Let him get a wife first, then we can talk about other matters. With a daughter-in-law, then I can have as many grandchildren as I want." In the mountain region, there was no implementation of any family planning. Anyway, they would have as many as they could give birth to. Just like Changsheng's mother, it was considered low that she had only given birth to one child. It was also because Changsheng's father passed away early. Fortunately, she had Changsheng. Otherwise, if she had a few more, then Changsheng's mother would tire herself to death and it would not be possible to raise a few children.

"Isn't there a readily available daughter-in-law?" Xiao Song's mother stuck out her lips and said, "Isn't the one in your house the right candidate?"

"Alas..." Changsheng's mother gave another sigh.

"What, do you disapprove of that child? I can see that you like her very much, don't you?"

Chapter 966: Opening A Hair Salon

"No." Changsheng's mother was not that kind of person, "I like Xiao Yan too, although her face is ruined and she has a limp, she's a diligent and sensible child. I certainly don't hate her, but she doesn't seem to have that kind of interest in Changsheng."

They shared a daily life after all. Plus she was experienced. How could she not understand that Xiao Yan treated her as an elder and Changsheng as a family member instead of a man.

"You can't rush into things." Xiao Song's mother knew how to deal with this situation as she herself had a daughter-in-law, "A wife must be virtuous. Look at all those families and see how many fights they have just because they married a bad wife. They have spent so much money during marriages, but in the end the wives ran away with other people. Their sons are still bachelors now, even if they want to remarry, people will dislike them for being married once. They'll just stay single if they don't remarry." Xiao Song's mother thought Xiao Yan was a good kid. She figured there was no need for a pretty face as long as she was a nice person.

However, it was Changsheng after all. He was a great man in their village, coupled with his good-looking and tall physique. Besides, he was hardworking. A guy like him would surely have no problem getting a wife. Xiao Yan did not seem like a suitable match for him.

“Oh yeah.” Xiao Song’s mother finally recalled her main concern. They had branched off from the subject after all the chattering.

“I have something to tell you,” Xiao Song’s mother leaned over and whispered.

“Do you want to let Xiao Yan open a hair salon in our village?”

“A hair salon?” That thought had never occurred to Changsheng’s mother.

“That’s right, a hair salon.” Xiao Song’s mother said while touching her short hair, she was fairly satisfied with her hairstyle. Thinking about those who received haircuts from Yan Huan, it might be assumed that no one went home unsatisfied.

“Yes, a hair salon.” Xiao Song’s mother repeated.

“Look at our village, the number of villagers is not too much and not too little. With all the people from the dozen families, there are hundreds of inhabitants in the village. We lack everything here, especially an artisan. Though we used to have Third Aunt who is willing to give us free haircuts, we still have to give her something in return every time we go.”

“Precisely.” Changsheng’s mother was aware of the situation as well. She would bring along a generous amount of rice vermicelli whenever she went for a haircut. Just as Xiao Song’s mother said before, the village was very small and lacked everything, they really needed an artisan.

“You see...” Xiao Song’s mother shared her perception of the situation with Changsheng’s mother. “As a matter of fact, opening a hair salon won’t cost much more than buying a set of tools. Since Third Aunt can’t cut hair anymore due to her health issues, you can just get the tools from Third Aunt. She hasn’t used her scissors for two years, perhaps she doesn’t want to do it anymore.”

“After your hair salon is opened, we can go and get our hair cut. Those who have money will pay you money, whereas those who don’t have money can give you something else in return, just like with Third Aunt. This can help replenish your household supplies. Seeing Xiao Yan picking firewood every day, I know she’s an ambitious child. She’s finding a way to pay you back because she doesn’t feel at ease to simply mooch off of you.”

“Exactly.” Changsheng’s mother let out another sigh, “I know she’s kind-hearted, or else, she wouldn’t be the earliest one to wake up every morning. She finishes all the chores in the house, leaving me, this old lady, with nothing else to do for the rest of the day.”

“Discuss with her about my suggestion, it’ll be great if she agrees with it. She won’t have to pick firewood in the heavy snow anymore. She’s just a young lady, look what happened to her in the freezing snow. Even I feel bad for her that her hands have turned into a radish, a parentless child is indeed pitiful.”

Changsheng’s mother felt sorry for Yan Huan upon listening to her words, although she had no parents, she was an aspiring kid.

When Yan Huan returned with firewood on her back, Changsheng’s mother had already prepared the meal. She cooked some noodles and made a huge pot of soup noodles with some leftover vegetables. It was very delicious, or perhaps everything tasted so good and tasty because she was starving.

Yan Huan helped to serve the dishes to the table and Changsheng came back from the fields not long after. His forehead was beaded with sweat, even though it was winter. He hastily wiped away the sweat with a towel before sitting down to eat.

Yan Huan did not eat much, all she needed was a small bowl of rice so that she would not starve herself to death. Although she had been staying at Changsheng's house for quite a while, she never ate heartily. She was afraid that other people would see her as a freeloader and Changsheng's family would feel uncomfortable. Thus, most of the dishes on the table were eaten by Changsheng.

Yan Huan rolled up her sleeves to wash all the pots and bowls. Her hands were still freezing, sometimes they were awfully numb and itchy, sometimes they were painfully swollen. Lu Yi had never even let her do the dishes. He would either wash it himself or let the dishwasher do the work. She wondered how he would feel if he were to know about what she was doing with her hands right now.

The little flower that he had given attentive care was already fading.

"Xiao Yan." The sudden voice of Changsheng's mother interrupted Yan Huan's thoughts, she looked up and smiled at Changsheng's mother.

"What is it, Auntie?"

"It's actually no big deal." Changsheng's mother was wondering how to tell Yan Huan about it.

"Xiao Yan, Aunt Xiao Song came just now and she told me something. Can I ask for your opinion about it?"

"Sure." Yan Huan smiled but her hand was in the pot. She cleaned it thoroughly, then the bowls and plates.

Changsheng's mother rolled up her sleeves as well and started washing dishes with Yan Huan while talking.

"Aunt Xiao Song asked whether you want to open a hair salon in the village and give the villagers haircuts without taking any money. You can just take whatever they have when they come for a haircut. What do you think?"

Yan Huan was holding the tablecloth in her hand, shivering slightly. She never envisaged that there would come a day when her haircut skill was acknowledged by the villagers.

Hmm, it seems like a good idea. She never expected to make a living with this skill. However, so long as she could help Changsheng's family financially, it was acceptable for her to just take some food or anything else from the villagers. Even though she could not get much, at least she would not be a freeloader. She could stay and feel at ease without having to worry about people chasing her away.

Chapter 967: Seems Like She Has Some Use Now

Seeing that Yan Huan agreed, Changsheng's mother went straight to Third Aunt and told her about her plans. Third Aunt was delighted at the idea. It wasn't as if her job was being stolen, since one of her hands were paralyzed and none of her children had a knack for the craft, and her tools were just left to

rust. She saw it as a good thing that someone who was familiar with haircutting was in the village. The villagers would all benefit from it.

Yan Huan was surprised when Changsheng's mother brought home a set of haircutting tools. The tools were ratty, but still usable. She rinsed the tools with boiling water, then dumped the tools into a pot and boiled them for an hour. When that was done, all the tools were sparkly clean. They didn't have disinfectant here, so she had to make do with boiling water.

Setting up the mini-salon wasn't a tough task; all they had to do was partition a room in the house and put a chair in the middle of it. Changsheng's mother rushed out a barber's apron, and all Yan Huan had to do was slip it on.

There wasn't washing or blowing services either, and everyone came after washing their hair, which saved Yan Huan a lot of trouble.

Yan Huan did not receive any payment in cash; but at the end of her first day of work, she received 5 eggs, a small bottle of vinegar, and a small bucket of oil from her three customers.

It wasn't much, but it was everything to Yan Huan. She had nothing when she just arrived, but now she had eggs and oil, all of which she earned through hard work! At the very least, she wouldn't feel so guilty at the dinner table next time.

That night, they had an additional dish on the table; stir-fried tomato and scrambled eggs.

"Eat more, Xiao Yan. You earned this through your hard work," said Changsheng's mother, putting some scrambled egg into Yan Huan's bowl with her chopsticks.

"Thank you, Aunty," said Yan Huan. She had earned the eggs herself, and she could now eat them proudly, unlike before, when she always felt guilty during mealtime.

Changsheng had a good, honest smile on his face, but in his heart, he was thinking about something else; With him in the fields and her cutting hair, life would surely get better! Who knows, they might even be able to leave the village someday!

Changsheng's mother could only shake her head when she saw the silly look on her son's face.

It was a one-sided love; Xiao Yan didn't seem to be interested in him at all. To be honest, if Xiao Yan was willing, she wouldn't mind her lame leg or ugly appearance at all! As Xiaosong's mother said, a pretty woman is more likely to cheat! A homely woman would make a much better wife and companion.

She believed there was no need to rush, for love would surely blossom with time. Still, sometimes she couldn't help but feel that her son deserves someone better, even though she didn't mind Yan Huan's ugliness.

Perhaps all humans are contradictory like this.

And so the three of them sat at the table, each occupied by their own thoughts.

Yan Huan slid out of her jacket and piled it neatly at the side. She was always very careful with this padded jacket, as though it might tear at any moment, since it was the only one she had. In truth, she

had another one, but that one was worn out. She always wore that one when she was working, since it wouldn't bother her even if it got torn.

The new one she was wearing belonged to Changsheng's mother, and she would feel terrible if it got torn.

She snuggled in her blanket. The fire was burning, and the room was warm. She placed her hand on the bamboo sheet, warm from the fire, to thaw her fingers.

She took back her hands a while later, and examined them. The swelling had gone down a little, but a few cracks had formed on her hand. When she moved her fingers, the cracks widened and stung.

She carefully wrapped her hand with strips of cloth, hoping that it would help ease the pain. She knew, however, that she would have to unwrap them the next day, since she had to cook, wash the dishes, and cut hair. This was the only time she could wrap them up. Hopefully, it will speed up the recovery of her hands.

Her frostbites had begun acting up again. The winters here were way too cold, and she wondered when these cold days would come to an end.

She had been waiting for too long.

She hugged the blanket tighter, and tears began falling onto the pillows. Soon, she cried her heart out.

It was deep into the night, and quiet all around. Winter was not yet over, and the days were getting increasingly colder. Snow began to fall, as it did in the Sea City.

Lu Yi opened his eyes and turned the light up. He glanced at the little girl sleeping beside him, who was sniffing uncomfortably. His heart wrenched when he saw her tiny body.

She had been falling sick nonstop; it hadn't even been days since her previous flu.

"What is it, baby?" asked Lu Yi as he carefully took her in his arms. He had been taking care of her ever since Yan Huan went missing, and the little girl no longer opened up to anyone but him.

Her hair was long enough to be braided now. She had a small cheek, sharp chin, and large watery eyes which were presently filled with tears. It seemed like a flood might erupt if she blinked.

Xunxun made an indignant pout and pointed at the window. That was the signal for Daddy to carry her there.

Lu Yi sat up, swathed her daughter in the blanket, and carried her to the window. He opened the curtains. The dark night was marked by bright lights, a scenery unique to the Sea City. Xunxun liked to look out of the window at the outside world. Lu Yi did not know if she was looking at the scenery, or looking for her mother. Whatever the reason, he decided to bring Xunxun to this place at night, where he and Yan Huan used to live. From the thirteenth floor, they didn't have a direct view of the city, but Little Xunxun seemed to like the scenery.

Whenever she was sad and crying, Lu Yi would carry her to the window. He wondered what she was looking at with those eyes that looked so very like her mother's. A spark would light up occasionally, like a firework blooming in the sky, before fading into the darkness of her eyes.

Chapter 968: Good Elder Brothers Who Dotes On Younger Sister

Xunxun quietly let her father hold her, while she stared out the window with her huge eyes. She was so small. Sometimes she stayed so quiet that she forgot to cry. He had no idea what was on her mind right now, all she knew was that she refused to fall asleep. Although she was a good girl, she behaved just like her mother. What a stubborn and troublesome little girl.

Lu Yi gently rubbed his daughter's little head. Xunxun lifted her little face, giving him a look of grievance. With a pair of big misty eyes, she really was lovable. At the same time, it made his heart ache, as Lu Yi knew that Xunxun missed her mother and was looking for her.

"Go to sleep, will you?" Lu Yi coaxed her daughter while saying, "Look, the sky has turned dark, daddy needs to work tomorrow and make money to buy milk powder for you and your brothers. If I don't go to work, you and your elder brothers will go hungry."

Xunxun held her father's thumb with her little fingers and obediently nodded her little head, agreeing that she would go to sleep.

Lu Yi held his daughter in his arms while coaxing her to sleep and she fell asleep not long after. Now she was being a good girl and stopped being noisy. She was as thin as a small skeleton, yet she refused to drink her milk properly. As timid as ever, she loved to cry instead of talking.

Lu Yi woke up very early in the morning. The first thing he did was to make a bottle of milk for his daughter and feed her. If others had fed her, she would not drink it properly. She was already as thin as a skeleton, he was afraid that his daughter would disappear if she became any thinner.

"Come, let's eat." Lu Yi placed the milk bottle in his daughter's little hands, "You drink your milk, I'll eat my rice." He took a bun on the table and started eating while Xunxun held her own bottle and drank her milk.

After finishing her milk, Xunxun obediently sat in her baby chair. Lu Yi would feed her a mouthful of porridge occasionally. This little girl did not really like porridge, but she would let her father do the honor as long as he fed her. However, she could not eat too much as her stomach would not be able to bear it.

Lu Yi stood up, holding his daughter with one hand. He wrapped her up in his shirt and used his coat to cover her, getting ready to bring her to the Lu family and hand her over to Ye Shuyun. He could not bring Xunxun to work as his work forbade it. Besides, if he were to get busy, he would not be able to take care of the child. Not to mention how young Xunxun was, it would be painstaking to make sure she drank water every hour and look out for her diaper.

"Xunxun, let grandma hold you, it's been a long time since grandma has seen our little Xunxun." Ye Shuyun hurriedly took over her granddaughter while stroking her face. The soft and warm feeling gave her a sense of relief. She would feel awfully bad if this child were to have another headache or fever again.

"Xunxun, bid goodbye to daddy." Lu Yi reached out to his daughter.

The little girl compliantly reached out her little hand to bid her father goodbye.

Lu Yi withdrew his hand, opened the door and walked out. Xunxun's eyes reddened after Lu Yi was gone as if she was going to tear up again.

"Be a good girl, Xunxun. Don't cry. Let's go and play with your brothers, okay?" Ye Shuyun quickly comforted her granddaughter as she was afraid that the baby was going to burst into tears again. If she were to cry, her grandmother would really cry along with her.

Ye Shuyun quickly brought her to Xiao Qi and Xiao Guang to play together. The brothers were playing with toy bricks. As soon as they saw their little sister, they stood up and wobbled over, each holding one of their little sister's hands.

They then let their sister have all their blocks. Xunxun wiped away her tears with her little fingers, sat on the floor and started to play with her elder brothers. Since young, both the brothers knew they had to offer up to their younger sister. Little sister was the smallest, thinnest and of course a cry baby.

All the males in the Lu family doted the females. Naturally, both the elder brothers also doted on their little sister. They were fine with not having any fun toys or good food or drinks that they came across, and would generously give it to their little sister if she wanted any of those. However, never expect them to hand over anything when it comes to strangers.

Little Xunxun was the only girl in the family and also the youngest, which was why everyone poured their love on her, even her brothers who were only a few minutes older than her did the same. They doted Xunxun and loved her the most. They would silently accompany her, cry with her, and even refuse to eat and drink if she were to do so.

Heavy snow fell on Sea City. This snowfall was very heavy as it had been snowing for three days and three nights. This was Sea City's heaviest snowfall in recent years, and it was definitely one of the coldest winters ever.

Although it was freezing cold out there, it was warm and cozy in the house.

Xunxun crawled around the floor. Even though she still walked wobbly, she was good at crawling. She crawled to the window, placed her small hands on the glass and looked at the vast expanse of white outside.

Lu Qi and Lu Guang immediately looked for their sister when they realized she had disappeared. They found their little sister by the window, both the boys walked over while holding hands together. Each of them sat on either side of their little sister, holding her hands while watching the icy white world outside together.

It was really cold outside.

Yan Huan opened the door with her clothes already changed. As the weather had turned cold, the amount of firewood needed also increased. On the contrary, the number of customers coming to have their hair cut decreased as well. Thus, she got ready to go out and bring back more firewood.

She was afraid that she would let her mind wander if she stayed in one place for too long, which was why she wanted to look for something to do to occupy herself. Or else, she thought she would really strangle herself to death in a small village like this.

Being in this place was like being totally isolated from the world. There was no electricity, computer or handphone here. She could not find anything familiar to her, nor was there anything about her.

She did not even have a proper name here and so far, she was still an outsider, a nameless outsider.

The snow fell continuously onto her. It was only one or two sheets at first but she lost count on how many sheets had fallen on her after that. While blinking her eyes, those snow that had fallen onto her long eyelashes were melted away into drops of water by her body temperature.

As a matter of fact, she really liked snowfall. The weather was not as cold when it snowed, but at the same time, it brought a sense of cleanliness to the world. In addition to the white midwinter, this place was colorless, cold and desolate.

After tying up two bundles of firewood, she hauled the firewood onto her back. Should she now be thankful that she was once enlisted in the army and did all the weight training exercises? Otherwise, she would not be able to adapt to this circumstance so easily. Now she was able to survive even in this type of environment.

Chapter 969: Clothes

She trudged along the snowy mountains, leaving uneven imprints behind her.

She could barely make out the rows of houses, unequal in size, built by the villagers. Occasionally, she could see smoke billowing from the chimneys, and hear dogs barking.

She looked down. Snow and wind rushed into her collar. She shrunk her neck, heaved the bundle of firewood on her back, and pressed on, toward the faint outline of the village that stood amidst the winter storm.

The sky was dusking, and the growing darkness was suffocating.

The village was secluded from the rest of the world, and there wasn't any news but the usual village gossip: whose chicken had died, whose dog had fallen sick, and so on and so forth. Neither was there any form of entertainment in the quiet village at night, and there was nothing to do besides sleeping.

The villagers were early risers, ate crops grown by their own hands, drank alpine water, and breathed in unpolluted air that was unique to the mountains. In such an environment, the villagers were all very healthy. In a way, they lived off the mountains, but not without hard work.

The villagers were exclusive, but hardworking and honest people.

Yan Huan set five eggs on the kitchen counter. She had received that from a single customer that day. It wasn't a bad deal; five eggs for half an hour of haircutting. Five eggs were enough to last them for a week.

With the extra protein from the eggs, Changsheng grew stronger and more muscular. Even Yan Huan had put on weight, and no longer looked as gaunt as before, though a strong gust would still knock her over.

“New Year’s coming,” commented Changsheng’s mother as she worked on her knitting. “I’ll get Changsheng to buy a new piece of cloth when the snow melts. Auntie will make you a nice pair of new clothes.”

“There’s no need for that. I have enough clothes,” smiled Yan Huan. She tugged at her padded jacket, indicating that it was enough for her.

Plus, she might leave the village come spring. Why would she need so many clothes if she had made up her mind on leaving? The cloth would do Changsheng and his mother much more good than her.

“Bah! I insist,” said Changsheng’s mother. She had already made up her mind to purchase cloth and make all of them a new set of clothes. Clothes from the stores may look good, but they’ll never come close to the comforts of homemade clothes. None of the villagers wore store-bought clothes.

Yan Huan tried to protest, but Changsheng’s mother stretched her face in a way that brooked new arguments. “If Auntie says she’s making new clothes for you, you are getting new clothes, and that’s that. Our field wouldn’t be looking so good without your help.”

“That’s Changsheng’s work. I did nothing to help,” said Yan Huan. She didn’t know how to work in the fields, and the only useful skill she had was haircutting. In this village, she was practically useless.

“Nonsense,” said Changsheng’s mother, biting off the thread and dusting the shirt in her hands. She was mending Changsheng’s clothes, since there was a tear in it. That was the way of life in the village; unlike the city folks who would throw out anything with a hole in it. Down here, a single piece of clothing can last for a long time with some mending.

“Would he have had the strength to plow the lands had he not eaten the eggs you cooked for him?”

Yan Huan smiled and said nothing. She hadn’t heard about anyone gaining immense strength from eating eggs.

“You are always thinking about him,” continued Changsheng’s mother. “And giving him all the good stuff. For all that he had eaten, he better work his damned hardest.”

Changsheng’s mother’s fondness for Yan Huan grew as she went on. Yan Huan was diligent and unselfish, and always reserved the best things for her and her son. She was the one that ate the least of the eggs she brought back, and most of it had gone into her and her son’s stomachs.

She thought of Yan Huan as considerate and thrifty. If she looked past her less-than-pretty face and lame leg, she was a woman who knew how to deal with people and solve problems, and also well-versed with her craft. With her, the future would be worth looking forward to. A woman like her was the cream of the crop in the village.

If she was beautiful, and wasn’t limb... Wouldn’t that be something?

Yan Huan didn’t think about that at all; she was married with children after all. She was infinitely grateful to the Changsheng family, though all she could do now was put an additional dish on their tables. Once she gets home, she would make sure to repay their kindness by folds.

Her mind drifted away as she gazed into the distance, and she didn’t hear anything Changsheng’s mother said afterwards.

She vaguely remembered that Changsheng's mother had talked about many things, about when Changsheng's father was alive, about when Changsheng was little, and about other memories. Yan Huan was in a dreamy daze as she recalled her own life.

The village grew livelier during the New Year, and many villagers set off to a distant town to buy New Year goods.

Yan Huan wanted to go. She wanted to try her luck and see if she could get into contact with Lu Yi. That way she could go home sooner. Yet she was afraid at the same time. She felt her face. Will Lu Yi be able to recognize her like this?

She decided to bury the thought. She had to find a chance to get out of the village. Going out and coming back to the village was a difficult expedition that required a lot of effort. The lack of a road had always bugged the villagers, and they firmly believed that having a road would change their lives. At the very least, they would have access to electricity and water, and wouldn't have to rely on oil lamps or travel a long distance to the river to fetch water.

Chapter 970: She Could Not Leave The Mountain

However, repairing the road of the village was not as easy as it sounded. The mountain and river in the village were all troublesome issues. Of course, the whole village could just move out, but it was not a realistic way as this was the villagers' root. The youngsters certainly intended to move out, but nonetheless, the elderly never wanted to leave. Even when they passed away, they wanted to be buried here.

Thus, the road in the village had yet to be repaired until now as the technologies involved were too high and they had insufficient funds. As a result, the villagers still lived in the valley of this mountain, completely isolated from the rest of the world. They had been living this way for generations and gotten used to such a manner of living.

Despite the poor condition and being lagging far behind, this place was quiet and free from all the squabbles outside. The villagers were able to supply their own needs, which was not really a difficult life for them. At the very least, the days spent there were peaceful and quiet, like in heaven. This was a great place as long as one was content with his lot.

However, the human heart was never easily contented or satisfied.

Yan Huan returned to the house, put her hand near the fire pit and felt the temperature of the fire. It was very warm inside, so she took off her clothes and tugged herself in her blanket. She had not been feeling cold ever since she came here. Regardless of how she was during the day, at least she was able to get good sleep or even sweet dreams at night. In spite of that, she rarely dreamt about Lu Yi or the kids.

As a matter of fact, it was better for her not to dream about them since she would feel sad and terrible if she did have such a dream.

She put her hands in front of her chest, clenching tightly into a fist.

Wait for me, I'll return. I'll come home, I'll come home for sure.

The closer it got to the Spring Festival, the merrier the atmosphere in the village. Everyone was thinking of what to buy for the purpose of the Spring Festival. Notwithstanding the poor condition in the village, they still bought whatever was necessary for the celebration.

Yan Huan's hair salon did quite well recently as it was near the end of the year. Everyone wanted to clean up a little by getting a haircut before the Spring Festival. Yan Huan was quite good at cutting hair. The villagers felt a few years younger and looked more energetic after getting a haircut from her. This eventually resulted in more and more people looking for Yan Huan to get their hair done. According to the villagers, they would have to wait until the second day of February in the Lunar Year to have their hair cut again. Therefore, everyone would usually just get their hair cut before the Spring Festival.

By taking five eggs from one person and another five from another person, Yan Huan had collected a lot of eggs within a short period. Yan Huan received five eggs in return for a haircut, it applied to both adults and children. Giving five eggs for a haircut was not a lot for the villagers as every family herded dozens of hens. Normally, they would just keep the eggs as they could not finish it. This was why they were very generous in paying Yan Huan with the eggs, and of course, nobody asked for deferred payment.

Yan Huan had earned a whole lot of eggs, so she wanted to sell these eggs in the town and buy a phone.

"You want to go?" Changsheng scratched his head, "Why do you want to go?"

"Can't I go?" Yan Huan lifted her face, but she immediately covered one side of her face with her hand after realizing something.

"That's not what I mean," Changsheng quickly explained. "Actually, you're not ugly." He looked at his toes while saying it, his ears burning but the other could not see it.

"The journey is very difficult. You won't be able to go down there due to the condition of your leg."

Yan Huan lowered her head and touched her leg, biting her lip, "I really can't go down there?"

"Yeah, you can't," Changsheng said and nodded his head heavily. "The road is very hard to walk on. Even we have to be very careful when we walk, let alone you. Besides, the roads are covered with thick snow now, which makes things harder. Now's not the right time if you want to leave the mountain, at least wait until the spring is here."

Changsheng explained to Yan Huan. It was not that he disapproved of her from leaving, but she was unable to leave at all. She could have fallen and died if there was an accident, and she might even bring troubles to other people.

Yan Huan understood. Although it made her feel terrible, there was no other choice. It appeared that she would have to wait until the spring. Alright, there's no rush. I've managed to make it through for such a long time anyway, it's just a few more months. Regardless of anything, this is much better than the place she lived outside the village before, right?

Yan Huan asked Changsheng to bring along the eggs when he went out with the villagers. Changsheng certainly knew how to avoid breaking the eggs during the journey as he grew up in the mountains.

Nonetheless, there were really a lot of eggs this time. The prices of goods at the foot of the mountain were cheap, he should have no problem shopping for Spring Festival after selling all the eggs.

Changsheng left the mountain with the rest of the people, laughing and chatting. They were all young fellows with strong bodies and the ability to walk fast. Thus, they would be able to return in just a day as expected. Yan Huan touched her leg while thinking that Changsheng was right. She might not even make it after taking a few steps, not to mention going down the mountain.

She put on her worn clothes again as she wanted to go out and collect some firewood. She would go no matter how cold and freezing it was out there, because this was all she could do now, letting the Northern wind blow away her feeling of helplessness far away. She could not bear any negativity as she still wanted to go home. She had to stay positive and maintain her anticipation to go home.

She picked up bundles and bundles of wood. She had forgotten how many trips she made during the day. Every time she came back, she could see Changsheng's mother standing at the village entrance, waiting for Changsheng to return. Yan Huan could tell that she was obviously in low spirits and feeling anxious at the same time.

Yan Huan could not understand the reason behind Changsheng's mother's worries. After pondering for a while, she figured it was because of the geographical location of this village. The journey must be really difficult, otherwise, Changsheng would not have stopped her from leaving. It was better to have more people to look after each other and help with buying goods. It did not make sense that only the young adults could go and none of the elderly and women in the village followed them.

She had been collecting firewood for the whole day while Changsheng's mother waited for him at the entrance. Changsheng's mother came back for a meal after Yan Huan finished cooking. She looked feeble, even when she was smiling, her mind seemed to be occupied with other things. Most probably she was thinking and worrying about Changsheng.

Thinking that Changsheng had yet eaten, Yan Huan left a portion of dishes for him and added a fried egg on top of his rice. She put the dishes in the pot to keep it warm, so that it would be ready for Changsheng to eat when he returns later. She wondered when exactly they would return.