

## All Hail 531

### Chapter 531: Taking the Blame

Zhou Linghuai chuckled. "What kind of people do you think these water bandits are? They only rob pirates and don't go ashore or rob commoners."

Song Mingzhao immediately reacted and heard Yu Youyao ask, "Could they all be soldiers who retired from the navy?"

Zhou Linghuai nodded. "That's most likely the case. It's difficult to subdue them, but it's also simple. We do it by controlling their families to threaten them and luring them. It's fine even if they don't accept them for the time being. If they can help the navy fight the pirates and restrain the pirates, they can also be at peace. At that time, when the old soldiers are recruited, they can more or less become a leader and won't be too passive."

As expected of Zhou Linghuai.

Yu Youyao frowned. "But how do you know the identities of these water bandits, Lord Ye? If you don't know their identities, how can you know their families?"

Song Mingzhao had just picked up his tea, but before he could drink it, he said,

"Lord Ye has taken over Song Xiuwen's position. He will naturally get the list of navy recruitments over the years. As long as we check the list of retired soldiers and screen them, we can also find clues. After all, if these people really secretly became pirates at sea, it's impossible for there to be no abnormalities."

The commander-in-chief was under the jurisdiction of the state capital, so Ye Hanyuan and Zhou Linghuai definitely knew each other.

Ye Hanyuan was also confident about going to Zhejiang.

After Old Madam Yu heard this, she took a deep look at Zhou Linghuai. "It's no wonder the emperor wants to send Ye Hanyuan to Zhejiang. Other than him, no one else can do it. Incorporating water bandits and recruiting new veterans into the navy. Song Xiuwen is already an experienced general. It's impossible for him not to have thought of this. But why didn't he succeed? Because as soon as he entered Zhejiang, he was controlled by the Zhejiang capital."

Yu Youyao agreed deeply. "Ye Hanyuan is different. Not to mention that his status as a disciple of the side branch of the Ye Residence is still very important in the Jiangnan area. Just based on his relationship with King

Wumu, as long as the Zhejiang capital doesn't want to offend the Imperial Court and the North, they won't dare to touch him. It's only a matter of time before Ye Hanyuan takes control of the Zhejiang navy."

Song Mingzhao agreed with this, but he said, "Ningbo, Shaoxing, and Taizhou aren't the only counties in Zhejiang. Even if Ye Hanyuan isn't controlled by the Zhejiang capital, he might not be able to help the Imperial Court reorganize Zhejiang."

Ye Hanyuan alone could not shake the capital of Zhejiang.

The atmosphere in the room couldn't help but fall silent

Everyone understood this logic. Her cousin had schemed for Ye Hanyuan to go to Zhejiang not to help the Imperial Court reorganize Zhejiang, but to use Ye Hanyuan to disrupt the overall situation in Zhejiang.

Zhou Linghuai smiled faintly. He peeled another plate of oranges and placed them on the plate one by one, pushing them to Yu Youyao.

Yu Youyao took the small silver fork and picked up one piece to eat.

Song Mingzhao suddenly felt a surge of hostility in his heart. 'Zhejiang Qingliu will report it to the Imperial Court and the Zhejiang capital to speak up for Song Xiuwen. Zhejiang will probably be in chaos.'

Old Madam Yu frowned when she heard this. Since Song Xiuwen could join forces with Zhejiang Qingliu, it seemed that the crime that Ning Yuanbo had reported was quite untrue. He had taken the blame for the capital of Zhejiang.

In that case, it was difficult to tell if Song Xiuwen was loyal or cunning.

The capital of Zhejiang would not sit back and do nothing. Zhejiang was really in chaos.

She didn't know much about what the big boss was doing too...

Zhou Linghuai seemed to know what Old Madam Yu was thinking. "Since Ye Hanyuan has arrived in Zhejiang, it's time for Uncle to return. He's here to investigate Uncle Ningyuan and report Song Xiuwen's crimes. Previously, he didn't mention Song Xiuwen at all in the memorial to the Imperial Court. Every word and sentence revolved around the Zhejiang navy."

In other words, even if Zhejiang Qingliu spoke up for Song Xiuwen, it had nothing to do with Yu Zongzheng.

Yu Zongzheng had only found out that Zhejiang had embezzled money from the army and taken away salary money. It gave Zhejiang Qingliu a chance to bite back at the Zhejiang capital.

Song Xiuwen's crimes still needed to be investigated by the Imperial Court.

This concerned the Ministry of Justice, the Imperial Court, the Court of Justice, and the Ministry of War. It had nothing to do with the Ministry of Official Personnel Affairs.

The emperor had originally sent the Minister of Official Personnel Affairs as the imperial envoy because he wanted to reorganize the government in

Jiangnan. In order to prevent anything from going wrong, he had also sent Yu Zongzheng from the Ministry of War, the Ministry of Justice, the Court of Justice, and the Imperial Court to accompany him.

Actually, everyone knew that the investigation of this case still fell on the Ministry of Justice, the Imperial Court, and the Court of Justice.

Old Madam Yu heaved a sigh of relief and smiled. "The Ministry of Justice is in charge of investigating the cases. The Imperial Court is in charge of investigating, and the Court of Justice is in charge of resolving matters. It's not part of the Ministry of Official Personnel Affairs' business."

The Imperial Court had changed from the Imperial Censor's Office in the previous dynasty. It had a very high authority. Both internal and external officials were supervised by it. Its authority was very vast, and hundreds of

officials were afraid of it.

They had the right to supervise, impeach, and advise people.

In serious cases, the Imperial Court could also supervise institutions such as the Ministry of Justice and the Court of Justice.

However, the emperor had not been in the court for a long time. The eunuchs had stolen power in the middle forces, weakening all the authority of the Imperial Court and its supervision of the court. Gradually, it became a place for civil servants.

Yu Zongzheng's position as the Imperial Censor of the Left was to be an official. The rank of this official position was actually not high but it had a lot of authority and was very powerful. He had the responsibility of patrolling on behalf of the emperor.

In layman's terms, he could even be sent by an imperial envoy.

However, as the authority was too broad and dispersed, the previous emperor had undergone a change when he was still alive and abolished the authority of the imperial envoy.

Internal investigations and external investigations were still very wide-ranging. In this dynasty, the cabinet stole the authority and responsibilities. Now, it usually dealt with impeachment and advisory.

The Imperial Court was fine, but there were eunuchs in the middle who stole power and weakened their authority.

Outside, the cabinet stole its authority and held power.

The Imperial Court had already lost control of the investigation, making it impossible for it to follow the rules of the court and the government.

If not for that, the Imperial Court would also be a good place.

Of course, the Ministry of Official Personnel Affairs was the head of the six ministries, so it naturally had a higher status.

After discussing the situation in Zhejiang, Old Madam Yu asked about Zhejiang again.

Song Mingzhao was knowledgeable and broad-minded. He told her what he had seen and heard when he went south to Zhejiang and talked about the wealth of Jiangnan. Every word and sentence was meaningful.

Even Yu Youyao, who did not like Song Mingzhao, could not help but listen with interest.

This conversation lasted for a long time.

While drinking his tea, Song Mingzhao occasionally looked at Yu Youyao. He could always see that she and her cousin had a tacit understanding. The

Rougui tea in his mouth lost some taste.

Song Mingzhao suddenly said, "Zhejiang is rich and prosperous. It's a place of business and trade. It's especially prosperous in the north and south, maritime trade, and foreign trade. When I returned to the capital this time, I also prepared some unique silk, tea, and other things from Jiangnan. I specially picked some today to show my filial piety to Grandmother Yu. In addition..."

He changed the topic and looked at Yu Youyao. "Miss Yao, you're good at incense medicine. Jiangnan is elegant and popular, and women are good at spices. You often invite friends who fight over incense, appraise incense, and appreciate incense. There are also a lot of incense medicine there, so I brought some over."

## Chapter 532: Extremely Vicious

The Zhenguo Marquis Residence usually used Yu Youyao's incense medicine a lot.

Song Mingzhao had specially brought some incense and medicinal materials from Jiangnan to the Yu Residence. It was reasonable for him to be polite.

When Old Madam Yu heard this, she also felt that he was polite and thorough.

Her smile deepened. "I've troubled you."

However, she did not say that she would not accept it.

The two families were family friends to begin with. As a junior, Song Mingzhao shouldn't have come empty-handed. In addition, the Yu Residence also had a friendship with Song Mingzhao, so it was no wonder that he was polite.

Since he had already mentioned her, Yu Youyao couldn't pretend not to hear him. She smiled and said, "Thank you, Heir Song." Song Mingzhao nodded. "That's only right."

It was rare for him to talk to Yu Youyao, so Song Mingzhao found a topic to talk about the famous incense medicine in Zhejiang and the incense competition there. It could be considered to suit her interests.

Suddenly, she heard Zhou Linghuai's indifferent voice. "I didn't expect Heir Song to be interested in incense medicine. I'm sure you've broadened your horizons and understood a lot."

Women were good at making incense, so it was also the women who were interested in these topics.

Not to mention that as a man, he shouldn't pay too much attention to the incense matters of women. Otherwise, it was inevitable that there would be rumors of him having protective feelings for the fairer sex.

Even though it was obvious that he went to the south this time to broaden his horizons, it was actually also for Song Xiuwen's case. He probably did not have time to pay attention to such unimportant matters. Otherwise, wouldn't others misunderstand that he was not diligent in the case?

Zhou Linghuai's words seemed to be casual, but his intentions were extremely sinister.

Song Mingzhao remained calm. "Of course not. I originally went south with Lord Yu this time to broaden my horizons. Jiangnan is a rich and prosperous place. Naturally, I have to take this opportunity to take a closer look. The Musk Medicinal Fragrance Pill that Miss Yao made

previously can be considered a life-saving contribution to me. I have to pay more attention to the incense medicine. ”

Every word and sentence was watertight. It was obvious that Heir Song was meticulous and rigorous.

Zhou Linghuai nodded. “Heir Song is right.”

These casual words seemed to agree with him very much, but Song Mingzhao was not happy.

He had mentioned the incense incident in Jiangnan to attract Yu Youyao’s attention and suit her preferences. Zhou Linghuai’s indifferent words diverted the topic.

Song Mingzhao prepared to change the topic to incense.

Yu Youyao looked at the time. “You guys chat first. I’ll go to the main kitchen to take a look.”

It was almost noon, but Song Mingzhao did not say that he was leaving. His grandmother remembered him and had helped Yu Zongzheng a lot in

Zhejiang. She also asked him to stay for lunch in the residence. Although there

was no need to make a fuss, at the very least, they had to be polite. She could not neglect the guests and lose her dignity and etiquette.

Just as Old Madam Yu was thinking this, she turned to Song Mingzhao and said, “It’s getting late. You have to have lunch at our house.”

He had brought a lot of gifts over for no reason and even specially brought back letters from Jiangnan. How could she let him leave after drinking a few cups of tea?

Before she could say anything, he was about to leave. Song Mingzhao was a little disappointed, but he agreed. “I’ll do as you say.”

Old Madam Yu waved her hand and said to her granddaughter, “Let’s eat quickly. Mingzhao is still sick, so his diet is light. Prepare more medicinal cuisine to nourish his body.”

Yu Youyao agreed and bowed to Old Madam Yu, Song Mingzhao, and her cousin.

Song Mingzhao used the excuse of drinking tea to cover himself as he looked at Eldest Miss Yu. She was wearing a pomegranate-red jacket, upper jacket, lower skirt, collar, and sleeves. They were inlaid with white fox fur, making her look noble and beautiful. There was a circle of white fox fur collar around her neck, complementing her palm-sized oval face. She was beautiful, bright, delicate, and eye-catching.

Eldest Miss Yu’s figure was slender. Even though she was wearing a thick jacket, her figure was still slender. The clothes were meticulous on her, and she did not look bloated at all.

When she reached the door, a maidservant brought over a cloak with red silk and silver mink and helped her put it on.

The cloak was also inlaid with a fur collar, making her look noble and generous.

He thought that he had done it discreetly, but little did he know that Zhou Linghuai had seen his every move.

It was obvious what Song Mingzhao wanted from Yu Youyao.

He was a very independent person and did not have the habit of making clothes for others. How could he let another wild man benefit from the outstanding little girl he had painstakingly trained?

In the words that his father often said, “Looking for someone out of your league? Dream on!”

Although he often criticized his father for this sentence, his father was like a toad who had eaten swan meat. At first, every time his father heard this, he would take off his shoes on the spot and chase after him to beat him up.

As time passed, his father couldn’t chase after him anymore, so he shouted at him in exasperation, “So what if I’m a toad eating swan meat? That proves that I’m a toad with ambition. I’m a toad, but I’m also the most beautiful toad.

You’re also a toad. Perhaps one day, you’ll eat swan meat.”

Of course, he would never admit that he was a toad.

In this world, only his father would admit that he was a toad, although he had always been smug that he had successfully eaten swan meat.

Song Mingzhao put down his teacup and said, “I heard that your family has a charity hall in the capital that specially accommodates those young children who have lost their mothers and some women and children who have no one to rely on?

Zhou Linghuai’s expression was indifferent.

Song Mingzhao had a strong desire for Yu Youyao. Even if he went south, he would probably send someone to keep an eye on Yu Youyao’s every move in the capital.

As soon as he returned to the capital, he knew that Yu Youyao had organized the Graceful Heart Hall herself.

However, he deliberately did not say it clearly, prompting Old Madam Yu to mention Yu Youyao.

Old Madam Yu had always doted on her granddaughter. As long as it was her granddaughter, she could say a few more words happily. However, she pretended to be reserved, revealing the upbringing and etiquette of a descendant of an aristocratic family.

However, this steady, noble, and smart junior was valued and more we’ll liked by the elders than slick words.

Old Madam Yu, who was old and shrewd, actually did not notice that even when this person spoke to her, he had calculated a way to quietly flatter her.

But so what if she noticed?

Not only did Old Madam Yu not feel angry, but she was also even happier.

After all, all the foundations of flattery were suggested in terms of etiquette. Moreover, Song Mingzhao’s thoughts were hidden, so Old Madam Yu would not associate them with her granddaughter.

Indeed!

At the mention of this, Old Madam Yu smiled again. “I’m already so old, so

how can I set this up so carefully? Even if I wanted to, I couldn't do anything. It was Yao Yao who did it herself, and I've never interfered. I originally thought that it was just a hobby, but I didn't expect her to do it well."

Not long after the Graceful Heart Hall was established, it attracted a lot of attention because Yao Yao had established a relatively complete set of rules and even went to the government office to officially sign a contract..

## Chapter 533: Helping the World

With the end of the year approaching, many families had to do good deeds.

Many families donated money, clothes, and items to the Graceful Heart Hall.

Due to the support of the Graceful Heart Hall, the children of the Graceful Heart Hall could often go to other people's manors and restaurants to do odd jobs.

Some women and children could also receive some needlework, starch, and some rough work to support their livelihood.

Not only that, but after the donation, the Graceful Heart Hall had more money and leftovers. They would also set up a porridge stall for two hours a day to help more people.

The name of the donor to the Graceful Heart Hall would be hung on the porridge shed. Today, it would be the Zhenguo Marquis Residence. Tomorrow, it would be the Qi Residence, and the day after tomorrow, the Tang Residence...

They took turns to do it one by one.

Those who came over to eat the porridge knew which family sponsored the porridge stall. They also knew which family's kindness they had received.

Her actions made the donor family even more satisfied. They felt that the Graceful Heart Hall was organized according to the rules, and Yu Youyao was also an honest and benevolent person, so they were even more concerned about the Graceful Heart Hall.

In just ten days, the hall had already been reopened.

This was both an ability and a skill.

Currently, the Graceful Heart Hall had already taken in many people. They had also invited martial masters and teachers to teach the children how to read and practice martial arts.

Two days ago, Yao Yao had even taken over the courtyard beside her, planning to expand it.

A smile appeared on Song Mingzhao's face. "It's also because Grandmother Yu is well-mannered. Miss Yao is young, so she's as kind-hearted and virtuous as you."

Although Old Madam Yu was clearly flattering her, it was also just right.

Old Madam Yu showed kindness and virtue to Buddha, while Yu Youyao really showed kindness and virtue to the right people.

Yu Youyao was in the inner residence, but she had a heart that helped the world.

As they chatted, Yu Shanyan came over. He took off his cloak and went forward to greet Old Madam Yu. Then, he greeted Song Mingzhao and Zhou Linghuai.

Old Madam Yu was overjoyed. “Why are you here?”

Yu Shanyan said respectfully, “There’s only half a day of class today. School will be having a break this afternoon. Classes won’t start until the 16th of the first month. When I heard that Brother Song was here, I came over to take a look. ”

Upon hearing that it was time for the holidays, Old Madam Yu immediately asked, “Have you prepared a New Year’s gift?”

Yu Shanyan smiled. “Mother has prepared it early in the morning and will send it to you tomorrow. Some time ago, Cousin gave me large Dragon Resting

Stones of especially good quality. I personally made an inkstone and gave it to you.”

The New Year’s gifts that the family prepared were tokens of appreciation.

The gift that Yu Shanyan had prepared himself also showed his respect for Mr. Hu Shan. This child was getting more and more organized, and he already had the demeanor of his father back then.

How could Old Madam Yu not be happy? “During the new year, we still have to prepare gifts. I have top-notch brushes, ink, paper, and inkstones in my room. We can’t neglect Mr. Hu Shan.”

Yu Shanyan agreed respectfully.

Song Mingzhao had become famous at a young age and was extremely talented. He had taken the High Scholar examination last time. Yu Shanyan and Song Mingzhao were three years apart, and he was still two years away from taking the High Scholar examination.

Song Mingzhao was sad and was still staying in the main residence. He was not in a hurry to leave, so Yu Shanyan had to come over to study.

Yu Shanyan wanted to ask for guidance, so Song Mingzhao had to give him some pointers.

Soon, Song Mingzhao realized that not only did Yu Shanyan have a unique understanding of the imperial examination, but he also had deep knowledge. When he talked to him about the scriptures of the Four Books and Five Classics, every word he spoke was concise and a gem.

Song Mingzhao smiled. “I heard from Father early on that the eldest son of Second Master Yu’s first wife is smart and eager to learn. With your current level, you’ll definitely be able to excel in two years.”

Not only would his position be stable, but it’s ranking probably wouldn’t be low.

From this palace examination, it was obvious that Ning Yuanbo was useless. Although the Yu Clan was not powerful in the royal court, they were very influential. The emperor wanted to put the Yu Clan in an important position.

Yu Shanyan said humbly, “Uncle, you flatter me. It’s also because my cousin from the Zhou family often guides me that I’ve improved a lot.”

When Song Mingzhao heard this, he couldn’t help but glance at Zhou Linghuai.



As Zhou Linghuai listened to them, he took out small tweezers and was peeling pine nuts one after another. There was already a small plate piled up in the small plate.

For some reason, Song Mingzhao thought of the scene when Eldest Miss Yu was still in the house just now. This Eldest Young Master of the Zhou family was holding a small tweezer and peeling cinnamon.

He seemed to do this often, and his every move was familiar.

Eldest Miss Yu seemed to be used to it.

Yu Shanyan and Song Mingzhao's conversation came to an end. He turned around and asked, "Cousin Zhou, why are you peeling so many pine nuts?"

If Yu Shanxin and Yu Shuangbai were around, they would definitely roll their eyes.

Zhou Linghuai's lips curled up slightly. "Making pine nut snacks. Cousin likes

Although the pine nut snacks were delicious, they required a lot of pine nuts. It was difficult to peel pine nuts, and there were many things to do at home at the end of the year. The servants did not have time to make any. Therefore, Yu Youyao did not eat it often and often craved it.

Yu Shanyan nodded in understanding, not surprised at all.

Song Mingzhao's fingers trembled slightly. Ever since he was three years old, he had a photographic memory. Other than studying and practicing martial arts, there was nothing else in his daily life.

He had never peeled pine nuts before.

There was a variety of banquets for lunch) and most of the dishes were light and nourishing.

When the light dishes were on the table, it was inevitable that they would feel bland. Yu Youyao had spent a lot of effort setting up the dishes and had also used some bright fruits and vegetables to decorate them, making them look exquisite and elegant. It made one feel tempted.

The venison soup and mutton soup were both stewed until they were soft. They were light but not greasy. There were medicinal herbs in them, and they were also very nourishing.

As the Yu Residence's medicinal cuisine was endless, there was medicinal cuisine prepared for every season. Old Madam Yu's health had clearly recovered, and the Zhenguo Marquis Residence had also begun to imitate the Yu Residence and found chefs who were proficient in medicinal cuisine. The food they made was not bad, but compared to the Yu Residence, it was clearly much inferior.

Unknowingly, Song Mingzhao had eaten a lot.

After lunch, Yu Shanyan suggested bringing Song Mingzhao to the Yu Residence.

Firstly, she considered that it was rare for Song Mingzhao to stay in the residence, so it wasn't good for him to stay in the residence all the time. In the winter, the house was filled with charcoal stoves. It was boring to stay in the house all the time and bad for digestion.

Song Mingzhao recalled that the last time he came to the Yu Residence, he had originally wanted Eldest Miss Yu to bring him around. Later, when he bumped into Third Miss Yu, Eldest Miss Yu used the excuse of being busy and planned to let Third Miss Yu do it for him.

At that time, he had been seriously ill. When he woke up, his emotions were often unstable, especially when he saw Eldest Miss Yu.

He kept feeling that the blurry and fragmented figure in his dream was Yu Youyao herself..

#### Chapter 534: Shocking the Court

He even inexplicably guessed that in his blurry dream, he must have done something bad to Eldest Miss Yu and caused her to die early.

But!

What puzzled Song Mingzhao was that he admired Eldest Miss Yu very much. Why would he hurt her?

Even now, this question still troubled him.

He couldn't help but start to pay attention to Eldest Miss Yu and ask about everything related to her.

Soon after, Song Mingzhao bade farewell.

Old Madam Yu asked someone to prepare Rougui tea and incense for his residence. Yu Youyao contributed by adding some incense and new years' gifts.

All the gifts filled up half a carriage ride back.

Song Mingzhao sent over gifts that filled most of the carriage and brought back specialties from Jiangnan. The Yu Residence was not stingy either and also returned to the Zhenguo Marquis Residence with incense, tea, medicine, and so on.

The next day, Nanny Liu personally went to the manor to pick Yu Jianjia up.

Yu Youyao had originally planned to go over personally.

However, Old Madam Yu did not allow it. "It's cold and the ground is freezing.

The journey isn't short. Your bones are still tender, so how can you go out and suffer from the cold? Nanny Liu can go alone. The new year is approaching. You've been busy preparing for the new year etiquette these past few days. You're already busy enough. Even outsiders won't say much."

Usually, Concubine Qiu could handle the matters in the residence. Although she was pregnant, she had the help of her clan aunt and Nanny Liu, so it was not tiring.

However, no matter how capable Concubine Qiu was, she couldn't help with the preparations.

The rules and etiquette here were to build a list of people in the Yu Residence who were usually on good terms with them. Then, they would find the list of gifts from the other party last year. They would compare them and allocate gifts appropriately to show the etiquette of reciprocation.

Whether a family member was virtuous or not, others would generally have an idea when they saw their gift list.

The gift list embodied the core of dealing with people and socializing with them.

Yu Youyao did not insist and said, “Old Madam Liu in my courtyard is a proper person. Usually, when I go out, I have to bring her along. I’ll feel more at ease if Nanny Liu brings her along.”

It was cold, and Yu Jianjia’s health wasn’t good. If she brought a few more people with outside experience, she could handle it well.

Old Madam Yu smiled when she heard this. “You’re still the most thorough.”

There were not many old people like Old Madam Liu who had a lot of experience in the outside world and could deal with it.

Yu Youyao smiled and discussed the gift with Old Madam Yu

“On the gift list from the Qi Residence last year, there was a Jing De Heavenly Green Jade Bottle. The color was clean and it was top-notch green enamel. Logically speaking, the gift prepared by the Qi Residence this year is about the same value as in the past. Our family has to follow last year’s tradition when preparing the gift.”

Old Madam Yu twirled her prayer beads and said nothing.

The gift list was given every year, and the value was also adjusted according to the price.

Every year, other than the things that would change a little, the value and weight of the gifts were also the same.

Yu Youyao continued, “Only on rainy days can high- grade azure enamel be made. This year, the weather is dry and hot, and there’s very little rain. There are especially few azure enamel on the market, and their value is higher, so it’s not suitable to return this gift. This dynasty still favors red, and the Spring

Festival is a festive day. Why don’t we change it to a red jade pot and spring bottle? It’s also very rare for a pure and beautiful enamel to be red.”

Old Madam Yu smiled. This was the essence of giving gifts.

This year, because that was rare, the value of the green enamel was almost half as high as in the past. Giving one back to Ru Tianqing was a clear loss.

With the relationship between the Yu and Qi families, this jade bowl was a treasured gift.

However, giving gifts emphasized the word “etiquette”, not the word

“expensive.” Only when it was just right and polite could it be considered good.

If you gave expensive gifts and the gifts from other families were not as expensive as the ones from your family, wouldn’t it be embarrassing to compare them?

Giving something “expensive” wasn’t worth praise. It wasn’t good when it came to dealing with people. Others would be embarrassed, and she would miss out on etiquette. This was thankless.

Old Madam Yu nodded repeatedly. “Red enamel is good. Not only is it worth the same as the jade bowl from last year, but the color is also very likable.”

During the new year, every family looked forward to prosperity.

Just based on this color, no one else would have any objections.

In the afternoon, Yu Jianjia returned to the residence.

Due to Yu Jianjia's cold, Old Madam Yu was worried. She immediately took a token and invited Imperial Physician Hu into the residence to treat Yu Jianjia.

The Yu Residence was generous and was not a difficult family to deal with.

Even though it was almost the end of the year and the weather was cold, Imperial Physician Hu was willing to make this trip.

After the treatment, Imperial Physician Hu smiled. "During this period of time,

Third Miss's health has been recovering well. The medicine on the prescription can be reduced a little. I'll prescribe a new prescription for Third Miss. Autumn and winter are good for nourishing the body. Just continue to recuperate in the future."

He did not mention anything about the cold, so it was probably not important.

Naturally, Old Madam Yu was happy. As the new year was approaching, not only did the Yu Residence give him consultation money, but they also prepared a new year gift and sent it to Imperial Physician Hu's carriage.

It seemed that after the new year, Yu Jianjia would have to go to the manor to recuperate.

Although her reputation was not good, if Yu Jianjia could really recover, it did not matter. After all, it was not good for the reputation of the residence if a legitimate daughter was always sick.

Every family was bustling with activity, preparing to celebrate the new year.

The Yu Residence was filled with red lanterns.

However, on the last day before the New Year.

A report came from Zhejiang. Ever since autumn and winter, the pirates had often disturbed the borders and plundered ships at sea. This was not a big deal. The Zhejiang navy often fought with the pirates along the coast and were experienced. There were usually few pirates.

However, because of Song Xiuwen's case, all the officials in Zhejiang were in danger. The navy was also in turmoil. A small group of pirates attacked Taizhou and broke through the defense of the Taizhou navy, causing the pirates to enter the city to burn, kill, and plunder. Countless people died, and a large number of supplies were plundered. Most of the inner city was burned...

The news seemed to be a little rushed, and everyone had specially chosen New

Year's Eve to celebrate the new year.

It immediately shocked the court!

The court officials did not even care about New Year's Eve as they put on their court clothes and entered the palace.

The pirates were unpredictable and committed all kinds of crimes. They had always been a thorn in the side of the Great Zhou Dynasty.

The Great Zhou Dynasty had established the navy to completely eliminate the pirates. All these years, they had invested a large number of troops and money to fight the pirates and pirates who had colluded with them.

However, it was not easy to nurture the navy, and it was also very difficult to fight at sea. It had also taken more than ten years for the Great Zhou Dynasty to achieve results.

At that moment, there were court officials who detailed the tragedies of the pirates wreaking havoc along the coast since the Great Zhou Dynasty was established. Wherever they went, they burned, killed, plundered, and committed all kinds of crimes..

#### Chapter 535: Exterminating the Pirates

When an old minister mentioned the tragic situation, he couldn't help but cry.

An old minister even suggested, "Your Majesty, resisting the pirates is the most important thing. We can't be negligent at all. In the past ten years, our Great Zhou Dynasty has worked hard to build a navy and invested a large amount of military power, assets, material resources, and energy. We'll give up all our efforts. Your Majesty, please issue a decree and let the Zhejiang capital exterminate the pirates."

"That's right, Your Majesty. If the pirates aren't eliminated, the sea routes won't be accessible, and maritime trade won't be smooth. Official ships and merchant ships won't be able to pass. Our Great Zhou Dynasty will suffer a huge loss. This is a big pain of the Imperial Court. There's no time to delay exterminating the pirates..."

"Your Majesty, our Great Zhou Dynasty is a vast dynasty. We let a mere pirate group charge into the country, kill the citizens, snatch money, and burn a city. Where's the dignity of our Great Zhou Dynasty? Where's our face? We have to eliminate the pirates!"

The emperor sat high on the dragon throne and listened to the court officials tearfully talk about the importance of exterminating the pirates. His face turned slightly green.

Initially, he had sent the Minister of Official Personnel Affairs to Zhejiang. He had a lot of responsibilities, such as inspection of seals, inspection, and merit examination. He deliberately took the opportunity to patrol and clean up Zhejiang to strengthen his control over it.

Unexpectedly, Yu Zongzheng was quite impressive. He had investigated the entire Zhejiang navy inside and out, giving the Imperial Court an excuse to deal with Zhejiang next.

The emperor was secretly delighted. He felt that Yu Zongzheng was indeed a capable official when he was transferred to the Ministry of Official Personnel Affairs.

Unexpectedly, in just a few days, the pirates had already charged into the city.

All of this was simply like a slap to his face. Not only did it make him lose all his dignity, but it also made his face burn with pain.

It was as if he was laughing at his naivety.

Due to Song Xiuwen's case, the Zhejiang navy was divided. If they couldn't stop the pirates, how were they going to deal with Zhejiang and reorganize the entire Jiangnan?

Not only did the capital of Zhejiang embezzle money, but it was also a slap to his face. If he didn't teach Zhejiang a lesson, how could he vent the hatred in his heart?"

"Every year, the Imperial Court allocates a large sum of money to the Zhejiang capital to deal with the coastal war. The Zhejiang capital is so incompetent that they actually let a few hundred Japanese invade the city. The emperor should be punishing them and not tolerating them."

"The Zhejiang capital's incompetence in suppressing the pirates has caused the dignity of our Great Zhou Dynasty to fall to the ground. How can a mere army's morale be dissipated? It's not the Imperial Court's fault that the army's morale is dissipated. It's the fault of the officials in charge of the Zhejiang capital."

"Song Xiuwen's case is very important. Currently, Song Xiuwen has yet to be escorted into the capital. His crime has yet to be tried. I don't know if it involves the others in the Zhejiang capital. Please forgive me for being blunt. The Zhejiang capital has lost this battle and is suspected of threatening the Imperial Court. The war is tense. In order to stabilize the army's morale, the Imperial Court can't implicate too many people..."

Everyone understood this logic, but saying this was equivalent to saying nothing.

Now, the Imperial Court was in a dilemma. Everyone in the court was arguing, but they did not come to a conclusion.

Things were at a stalemate.

When Yu Youyao heard the news, she only felt that it was ironic. "Cousin, you're really right. The Imperial Court was killed, robbed, and burned by a mere few hundred Japanese. Not only did they suffer heavy losses, but their dignity was also lost. Should they face the problem of eliminating the Japanese first or reorganizing Zhejiang first? However, no matter what they choose, the Imperial Court won't do well."

On the first day of the new year, there was another memorial in Zhejiang.

One by one, Zhejiang Qingliu jointly reported the ten crimes of the officials in the capital of Zhejiang.

They pointed out that the officials in the capital of Zhejiang were worried that the Imperial Court would investigate Song Xiuwen and they would be implicated. They deliberately delayed the war to threaten the Imperial Court and the emperor.

They even said bluntly that the Imperial Court had originally established the navy to eliminate the pirates. It was already a huge mistake for the capital of

Zhejiang to be attacked by the pirates. Back then, when the Northern

Barbarians invaded the North on a large scale, as a noble, King Li of Zhou was summoned to the capital to be punished because he had lost his city. What happened to the capital of Zhejiang? After losing his city, he planned to leave it unsettled...

As soon as this memorial was submitted, the events in Zhejiang became messier.

No one in the court dared to speak anymore.

Zhejiang Qingliu really dared to say anything. After using the King Li of Zhou as an excuse, no matter how unyielding the Zhejiang capital was, they could only bite the bullet and eliminate the pirates.

When Yu Youyao received the news, she asked her cousin, “The pirates have come ashore to do evil, and the war can’t be delayed. Although the Imperial Court has some arguments, we still have to decide as soon as possible what to do. The memorial from Zhejiang Qingliu was submitted very timely. If it was a day or two later, when the Imperial Court’s decree was issued, the Zhejiang capital might really threaten the Imperial Court.”

Zhou Linghuai nodded. “Since ancient times, only by dealing with the internal and external forces can we be at peace. The Imperial Court has no choice but to eliminate the Japanese or Zhejiang. In the face of an invasion, the best choice is to eliminate the external enemies first.”

Without the memorial from Zhejiang Qingliu, the Imperial Court would definitely have ordered the Zhejiang capital to exterminate the pirates with all its might.

After the Japanese problem was eliminated, Zhejiang’s capital would contribute to the suppression of the Japanese. It wouldn’t be appropriate for the Imperial Court to deal with Zhejiang at this time, so the importance of the Zhejiang navy became even more obvious.

Yu Youyao continued, “The people from Zhejiang even used the King Li of Zhou as an excuse. There are many places for people to make a fuss here. If we’re not careful, we’ll be exposed. At that time, we won’t be able to threaten the Imperial Court. Instead, we’ll cause trouble ourselves and give the Imperial Court an excuse to deal with us. In order to avoid suspicion, we have to eliminate the pirates.”

This was the wonderful thing about Zhejiang Qingliu. How many people had been killed in King Li of Zhou’s case, and how many nobles and powerful ministers had been implicated? How many days had it been?

Zhejiang Qingliu dared to use the King Li of Zhou’s case to make a big fuss.

If they really did this, the Zhejiang capital would definitely not be able to bear it.

Zhou Linghuai smiled. “Although we have to eliminate the pirates, it doesn’t mean that the Zhejiang capital will submit obediently. As long as the strength of the extermination is lower, the Imperial Court won’t be able to use the excuse to interrogate us. Then, the pirates will continue to run rampant along the coastal area, showing the seriousness of the Zhejiang navy. It won’t be good to deal with Zhejiang rashly.”

As long as the pirates were not eliminated, the Imperial Court would not be able to do anything to the capital of Zhejiang.

Yu Youyao was also speechless. “The people from Zhejiang sent a memorial to the Imperial Court in time. Cousin arranged this, right? Otherwise, the timing wouldn’t be so accurate.”

Zhou Linghuai smiled. “That’s right. Zhejiang is an outstanding place to begin with. The people in Zhejiang are prideful and refuse to collude with the capital of Zhejiang, forming a huge force.

However, these people have been pressured by the power of the capital of Zhejiang. Zhejiang Qingliu is involved, and the two sides have been fighting endlessly. I only gave them a chance to bite the capital of Zhejiang.”

Yu Youyao was amazed by her cousin’s flawless plan. “The capital of Zhejiang will definitely not do their best to eliminate the pirates. When Zhejiang Qingliu sees this situation, they definitely won’t let it go.”

At this point, she paused

Chapter 536: Why Don’t You Go to Heaven

Right on the heels of that, Yu Youyao continued, “Internally, there’s fighting between Qingliu and the Zhejiang capital, and externally, there’s riots by the pirates. With the chaos in Zhejiang, Ye Hanyuan will be much less restrained. It’s only a matter of time before he makes a comeback with the navy under his name.”

This was her cousin’s plan to disrupt Zhejiang.

Often, before it happened, no one could guess her cousin’s entire plan.

Zhou Linghuai nodded. “That’s right!”

Yu Youyao’s heart skipped a beat. “Zhejiang’s capital is under the jurisdiction of the Left Military Governor’s Residence. I remember that the Left Military Governor’s Residence is controlled by Ning Yuanbo. Although Ning Yuanbo has been demoted, a starving camel is still bigger than a horse. The many years of management can’t be underestimated. This time, Ning Yuanbo threw out Song

Xiuwen because he was worried that Song Xiuwen would implicate Shandong and Zhejiang so he wanted to deal with Song Xiuwen first...”

Zhou Linghuai smiled again. “This is only one of the reasons. Ning Yuanbo has repeatedly been demoted and has lost the trust of the emperor. For a new noble like him, who has no foundation and is relying on the emperor’s promotion, only by relying on the emperor can he enjoy wealth and glory. Therefore, he threw out Song Xiuwen because he wanted to use this as an excuse to help the emperor manage Zhejiang and gain the emperor’s trust and importance again.”

Yu Youyao’s eyes widened in shock. “I have to say that Ning Yuanbo’s actions are indeed very brilliant. Although he has been demoted, he still has control over the Left Military Governor’s Residence. Zhejiang’s capital is under the jurisdiction of the Left Military Governor’s Residence. He threw out Song Xiuwen and gave the Imperial Court a chance to manage Zhejiang. If it succeeds, he will indeed have contributed greatly. The emperor will definitely reward him.”

But!

Ning Yuanbo probably never dreamed that from the moment he threw out

Song Xiuwen, he would fall into his cousin’s trap.

Her cousin first led Yu Zongzheng to investigate the entire Zhejiang navy.

Then, he encouraged the navy in Zhejiang to be dissatisfied with the capital.



This way, all the officials in Zhejiang were involved. All the officials in Zhejiang felt threatened. In order to deal with the Imperial Court) they had no choice but to threaten it.

Everything was out of Ning Yuanbo's control.

Zhou Linghuai nodded. "Ning Yuanbo is a new noble with a shallow foundation. He has a lot of chips in his hands, but not many. He wants to be favored again but the emperor doesn't care about him. Only the huge benefits of the navy can satisfy the emperor's appetite. I calculated this long ago." This scheme was too deep. She had actually never discovered it!

Yu Youyao pouted. "Cousin's goal was Ning Yuanbo from the beginning, right?"

After taking such a big detour, from the Marquis of Changxing to Li Qiguang to Song Xiuwen, no one noticed that her cousin had secretly aimed an arrow at Ning Yuanbo from the beginning.

Zhou Linghuai did not deny it. "I've always been a vengeful person."

Revenge was not a good word, but Yu Youyao did not feel that something was amiss. "The reason why Cousin did not attack Ning Yuanbo from the beginning is because there are benefits to be gained from him. Cousin wants to remove all the advantages from Ning Yuanbo's side first before killing him, lest he benefits the dog emperor!"

Only today did she realize that her cousin was still a black-hearted person.

However, back then, it was still the Marquis of Weining's Uncle Ningyuan who had borrowed the opportunity to help the North to steal the military power of Youzhou and commit all kinds of monstrous crimes with the Marquis of

Changxing and the others.

Now, her cousin was just giving him a taste of his own medicine.

The tides were changing.

In addition, they should use extraordinary methods to deal with corrupt officials like Ning Yuanbo and the Zhejiang capital.

After all, Song Xiuwen had the old and noble Zhenguo Marquis Residence behind him. Although the Zhenguo Marquis Residence had declined, it was still the most deeply rooted faction in the royal family.

Song Xiuwen's methods were a little lacking, which was why he had fallen to this state.

Zhou Linghuai's lips curled up. "The situation in Zhejiang has already been set up, and the current plan has come to an end. Next, we just have to sit this one out and reap the spoils later." At this point, he added, "When Ye Hanyuan arrives in Zhejiang, he will reorganize the navy in Ningbo, Shaoxing, and Taizhou Prefectures as soon as possible. He will build an army that can resist the pirates. Although it can't eliminate the pirates and pirates, it can at least protect the peace of these three lands. I..." He pursed his lips slightly and said, "I can only try my best to do this."

Yu Youyao was kind-hearted and virtuous. This time, because of his scheme, the commoners of Zhejiang would probably not be peaceful.

Yu Youyao understood what he meant. “It’s obvious that the Zhejiang capital has colluded with the pirates. Even without Cousin’s scheme, the pirates still disturb the borders often. At the very least, Cousin can guarantee the peace of these three counties. It can be said to be righteous.”

The capital of Zhejiang was so bad that countless people died every year because of the pirates.

It wasn’t because her cousin had schemed.

Instead, it was like this every year.

Her cousin had only done what he had to do. This wasn’t her cousin’s fault. The one in the wrong was this Imperial Court. They raised traitors and harmed the commoners, disregarding human lives.

Zhou Linghuai understood this logic better than anyone else. He also knew that Yu Youyao was deep and righteous. She might understand this logic, but he was still worried that Yu Youyao would misunderstand.

He was not an arbitrary person. He felt that there were some things that the other party would understand, so he did not waste his breath and cause unnecessary misunderstandings.

Why did others have to guess what could be explained in a few words?

Yu Youyao rested her chin on her hand and sighed. “What a pity. I’ve been looking forward to it from the beginning of the year to the end of the year, but it’s not peaceful at all. The capital of Zhejiang is really too detestable.” Zhou Linghuai had also guessed that the capital of Zhejiang would make a move.

Unexpectedly, they had directly given the Imperial Court an opening gambit. Their actions were as fierce as a tigers, making everyone dumbfounded and shocked until their eyeballs fell to the ground.

The more Yu Youyao thought about it, the angrier she became. “Since he’s so capable, he should rise up with the wind!”

In other words, why didn’t he go to heaven?

Zhou Linghuai couldn’t help but laugh. “He might not really be capable. To put it bluntly, King Li’s tragedy was caused by the military. As soon as your father investigated the Zhejiang navy, not only the Zhejiang capital, but all the officials in Jiangnan had goosebumps. The military salary that Zhejiang greedily stole every year is enough to support 300,000 troops in Youzhou.”

Yu Youyao thought for a moment and understood. “When I think about it, more than a thousand people who were killed because of the King Li of Zhou’s case and more than a thousand people who were exiled to the Shangyang Castle because they were implicated. Many of them are nobles, powerful officials, and high-ranking officials. All the officials in Jiangnan are also worried that the emperor will use the King Li of Zhou’s case to vent his anger on the entire Jiangnan. That’s why they used the invasion of the pirates to show the importance of the navy.”

Once it was related to King Li of Zhou, anyone would be wary.

The officials of Zhejiang could only come up with this plan. It was not necessarily a bad idea. The importance of the Zhejiang navy to the Great Zhou Dynasty was obvious.

It was both a threat and for self-preservation..

Chapter 537: When Will You Grow Up?

At this moment, Chun Xiao brought over some snacks.

Yu Youyao's eyes lit up. She lifted a white piece of vegetable and handed it to her cousin.

Zhou Linghuai looked at the vegetable piece near his mouth and then at the little girl. He smiled so widely that his eyes curved. Little did he know that this was something only loving couples did.

His lips curled up slightly as he ate the vegetable piece.

After he finished eating, Yu Youyao asked impatiently, "Does it taste good?"

Zhou Linghuai nodded slightly. "The meat is juicy. It tastes sweet, like shrimp. It tastes very special. I've never eaten this before. What is this?"

Yu Youyao immediately beamed with joy. "This is called a sweet potato. It's a little similar to yams. They're both roots that grow in the soil. They're sweet and juicy. They're not from the Great Zhou Dynasty."

Zhou Linghuai was a little surprised. "I thought this was a fruit. I didn't expect it to be a vegetable. How did you get it?"

At the mention of this, Yu Youyao smiled. "A while ago, a merchant ship under my name followed a team of merchant ships from the Xie family to Luzon. The local merchants took out this precious food called sweet potatoes and entertained the stewards of the merchant ships. After the stewards tasted it, they felt that the sweet potatoes were delicious, so they thought of a way to trade with the local merchants. At the end of the year, they sent them into the residence with the New Year gift. At first, no one in the residence knew what they were, so no one paid attention to them."

The sweet potatoes were the products of another country, so they were not easy to obtain. The steward probably also felt that they were very precious, so he bought a lot.

Zhou Linghuai chuckled. "What happened next?"

Yu Youyao smiled again. "It was also yesterday that the servants mistook the sweet potatoes for purple taro. They realized that the sweet potatoes were fresher and sweeter. Nanny Xu was very interested, so she tried all kinds of cooking methods. She realized that be it eating them raw, steaming, fried, boiling, roasting, and sautéing them, they were all very delicious." With that, she created golden-brown balls. "These are the sweet potato balls that Nanny

Xu made according to the method of the fried taro balls. Cousin, quickly try it."

The ball was neither too big nor too small, just enough to take one bite at a time. Zhou Linghuai's eyes were smiling as he took a bite of the ball. "Eat it when it's fried. It's fragrant, soft, sweet, and it has a completely different taste. It's a good thing."

Yu Youyao also smiled. "Cousin, not only is this food delicious, but it's also filling. I ate two fist-sized sweet potatoes yesterday morning and couldn't eat anymore. I didn't feel hungry at noon, so I sent someone to the farmstead in the suburbs of the capital to invite the steward of the merchant ship into the residence and asked about the specific situation of the sweet potatoes."

The merchant ship was under Yu Youyao's name. It was very difficult and risky to sail at sea.

Every quarter, those who entered the capital with the merchant ship would stay in the capital to recuperate for two to three months. The main family would even find a doctor to nourish their bodies.

Zhou Linghuai knew that Yu Youyao valued it very much. The Imperial Court had even specially arranged for someone to do this for the new species that were distributed every year. At first glance, when they saw new species that looked fresh, delicious, and could stave off hunger, it was inevitable that they would have thoughts of planting them.

As expected, as soon as Yu Youyao was excited, she held her cousin's arm. "Luzon's farming industry isn't as developed as the Great Zhou Dynastys. The planting of sweet potatoes is also very simple. Every year, in April and May, they'll be buried in the ground and we can just leave them there to grow naturally. The growth of sweet potatoes isn't based on soil bags. Many poor areas in Luzon can also be planted with them. On a plant, two to five fruits can grow. The small potatoes are only the size of a baby's fist, and the largest potato is the size of an adult's palm."

Zhou Linghuai was smart and immediately understood what the little girl was thinking. "In other words, sweet potatoes are resistant to drought, and flood. The production is not low."

Yu Youyao's eyes lit up. "Yes!"

A fire burned in the little girl's eyes and Zhou Linghuai felt her enthusiasm. Even his heart beat faster. The wild thoughts that had been suppressed in his heart wrapped around him, making it difficult for him to breathe.

Zhou Linghuai stared at her.

Perhaps it was because her cousin's gaze was too deep, but it made Yu Youyao's scalp go numb. Even her face felt a little hot. "Cousin, why are you staring at me?"

Zhou Linghuai sighed slightly. "When can you grow up?"

Weren't they talking about sweet potatoes?

Why did the topic change to this?

Yu Youyao was confused and looked at her cousin innocently. "I'm already ten years old. I'm not young anymore."

As expected, she was still an insensible little girl. Zhou Linghuai suppressed the wild thoughts in his heart, but he couldn't suppress the remaining impulse in him.

He reached out and gently rubbed her head. The little girl's dark green eyebrows were curved like moon hooks. At a glance, he felt that the moon was bright and dazzling.

When she smiled, her curved eyebrows were even more beautiful.

Yu Youyao felt an itch between her eyebrows. Even her voice trembled. "Cousin?"

Zhou Linghuai retracted his hand and asked, "Did you use the brow powder today?"

Yu Youyao smiled. "Yes, it's the Far Mountain Conch Powder that Cousin gave me yesterday. It was a dark green. After it's dyed, it looks even brighter and more beautiful. Isn't it beautiful?"

Her cousin had added five more shades on top of the original brow powder. The far mountain conch powder was one of them. After dyeing her eyebrows with this brow powder, her eyebrows were as green as the distant mountains.

They were beautiful and elegant.

This was a New Year gift from her cousin.

She really liked it.

Zhou Linghuai smiled. If she were a little older, she would probably be even more stunning.

Yu Youyao thought of the sweet potatoes again and continued what she had just said. “Cousin, Cousin, I plan to take some sweet potatoes and try to plant them in the farmsteads in the suburbs of the capital. I’ll use different soils to nurture them. If the sweet potatoes are really as the steward said and they can withstand drought and floods. Can we promote planting in the North?”

There were many sand and halogen fields in the North, so there was not a lot of resources. If the sweet potatoes could grow on harsh land, many hunger issues could be resolved. A portion of the people’s livelihood problems in the North could be solved.

If it were anyone else, they would probably think that the sweet potatoes were not bad and delicious.

Not many people would think about the merits of the sweet potato and want to nurture it and plant it.

However, Yu Youyao did.

Yu Youyao knew that because of the lack of supplies in the North, not only were the commoners living poorly, but even the You army was living a very difficult life because of the lack of military supplies.

Therefore, she was very concerned about the new seeds nurtured by the Imperial Court every year.

She had always wanted to nurture crops that were suitable for growing in the North and promote planting.

Previously, Yu Youyao had read a lot of agricultural books and saw that there were records of planting cotton on alkaline fields. She found a farmer who was proficient in cotton to experiment.

The outcome was not ideal.

However, the cotton also bore fruit, which proved that her train of thought was right.

Most of the cotton in the Great Zhou Dynasty was produced in Long Province. Yu Youyao immediately sent someone to Long Province to learn cotton planting techniques.

As long as the technology was good, it was definitely feasible to plant cotton in the alkaline fields.

Who wouldn’t like such a pure and bright girl?!

Zhou Linghuai chuckled. “Okay!”

Chapter 538: Two Years Later

In the blink of an eye, two years had passed.

In the southeast coastal area, news of pirates disturbing the borders would spread to the capital from time to time. From the previous dynasty to the inner residence, everyone's expression changed when they talked about the pirates. The pirates suddenly became monsters that ate people and crying children.

Fortunately, there was a navy participating in the battle. They did not let the pirates kill their way ashore.

However, ships at sea were often plundered.

The Imperial Court did not know if they had really been "threatened" by the Zhejiang navy. Song Xiuwen, who should have been dealt with long ago, was locked up in the Court of Justice after being escorted into the capital.

It was also because of this that Zhejiang Qingliu naturally refused to let go of Song Xiuwen's case. From time to time, they would use Song Xiuwen as an excuse to accuse the Zhejiang navy of letting the pirates become ferocious and raising bandits as a problem. They would ask the emperor to issue a decree to punish them.

Song Xiuwen's matter had also completely exploded. The conflict between the navy and Zhejiang Qingliu rose.

The two sides fought in full swing, losing many people to each other.

The three counties under Ye Hanyuan's control could still be more stable.

In the past two years, they had recruited a few maritime bandits and recruited some soldiers under the age of 40 who had retired from the army because of injuries and illnesses. They had hired a doctor to treat their injuries.

He had reorganized a decent navy and was not controlled by the Zhejiang capital.

At first, someone from the Imperial Court even impeached Ye Hanyuan, saying, "Ye Hanyuan has appointed bandits and is suspected of colluding with them. Please issue a decree to investigate."

As the current Left Assistant Minister of the Ministry of Official Personnel Affairs, Yu Zongzheng, had interacted with Ye Hanyuan previously and was from the Imperial Court. He immediately criticized the person in charge of the Imperial Court

"In recent years, the pirates have become a problem. The navy was not strong enough to resist the pirates and allowed the pirates to plunder the merchant ships on the sea, causing our Great Zhou to suffer a huge loss. Lord Ye was also forced to set up his own navy because the navy was incompetent and couldn't resist the pirates. The resistance against the pirates has already been effective. It's obvious that those pirates who have been recruited have really surrendered to the Imperial Court. Since they have the heart and loyalty to a leader, why should we talk about their background?"

“You’re accusing Lord Ye of colluding with pirates. You’ve never been to Zhejiang. Do you know how difficult it is to train a navy? Lord Ye’s actions have greatly reduced the pressure on the Imperial Court to nurture a navy. It’s a righteous move.”

“As soon as Lord Ye arrived in Zhejiang, he organized an anti-Japanese resistance. He’s much better than some people who only reach out to ask the Imperial Court for money but don’t do their best to eliminate the pirates. The Imperial Court shouldn’t be punished. They should be rewarded.”

Who in the court did not know the sinister intentions of the Zhejiang capital to suppress the pirates?

However, if the Imperial Court wanted to reorganize Zhejiang, not only did they have to have a reason, but they also needed a capable general who could manage the navy.

Song Xiuwen had the title, but there were only a handful of generals in the Imperial Court who were good at water battles. This was also because each had his own task and there was no spare capacity.

As for Ye Hanyuan, even if he had some ability, he was not qualified.

As the saying went, “It’s easy to obtain a thousand troops, but difficult to find a general.”

It was already very difficult to nurture a navy, and it was even more difficult to nurture an outstanding navy general.

The capital of Zhejiang controlled more than ten prefectures and counties along the southeast coast.

Previously, Song Xiuwen had presided over the coastal battle in Shandong. As he was quite capable, he was transferred to Zhejiang. At that time, the emperor might have had the intention to reorganize Zhejiang.

However, what happened after Song Xiuwen arrived in Zhejiang?

It was rare for a general who was proficient in the navy to be implicated. Now, if the emperor wanted to send a navy general to Zhejiang, someone had to go!

Even if he forced someone to go, what was the use?

The emperor endured the Zhejiang navy and did not take the Imperial Court seriously. Would he really let it go?

Heh, just from the fact that the emperor had never dealt with Song Xiuwen and let the navy and Zhejiang Qingliu fight to the death, it was obvious that the emperor had sinister intentions towards the officials of Zhejiang.

When Ye Hanyuan first went to Zhejiang, the capital might not have been afraid.

However, at the end of autumn two years ago, when the Di people disturbed the border, King Wumu commanded the You army and killed more than a thousand Di people. He cut off all the heads of the Di people and hung them on the city gate of the narrow Yu Pass.

The Di people felt that their dignity had been greatly damaged, so they sent a few waves of people to snatch the heads.

However, they were all killed in waves.

A new wave of heads would then be on display.

For an entire month, the blood at the entrance of the narrow Yu Pass was not dry.. At first, some people felt that it was cruel, and there were even court officials who participated in King Wumu's opposition, pointing out that he was cruel.

However, the North was invaded by the Di people all year round. Not only did the Di people kill and snatch things, but they also often slaughtered the commoners and set the city on fire. They were even more hated than the pirates.

Every day, the commoners of the North would run to the narrow Yu pass to watch this bloody scene, regardless of the distance. No one was afraid.

Everyone hated the Di people. Even children dared to pick up the stones on the ground and throw them at the heads of the Di people.

At this point, no one felt that it was cruel anymore.

Many scholars and calligraphers in the North even felt that it was satisfying and wrote many poems for King Wumu.

Now, a year had passed, and the heads of the Di people were still hanging on the narrow Yu Pass to show off their victory, but they had already become dried.

This also became a scene at Di Yuguan. Many outsiders specially went to the North to see the dried heads and admire King Wumu's heroic feat.

It was also because of the dried heads hanging all over the city tower that the autumn and winter festival in the North last year welcomed a long-lost peace.

This battle once again made King Wumu famous.

At the same time, it also intimidated the capital of Zhejiang.

As a result, Ye Hanyuan completely established himself in Zhejiang.

The emperor sighed in the golden hall. "If King Wumu was in good health and was sent to Zhejiang to fight the pirates, I don't think I would have a headache dealing with Jiangnan."

No matter how powerful the pirates were, they were still a group of bandits.

Even if they went ashore and killed their way into the city, they would only kill a few more people and steal some wealth.

However, the Northern Barbarians were a large tribe. Not only were they strong, but their people were also valiant and warlike. Once they sent troops north, they would threaten the Great Zhou Dynasty.

If Yin Huaixi could kill the Di people, what were a few pirates?

So what if he wasn't proficient in water combat?

With his brain, if he was given some time, would he be afraid that he wouldn't be able to learn how to command water battles?



Unfortunately, he was crippled.

Ye Hanyuan was not bad either, but he was not as good as Yin Huaixi.

Not only was there an ongoing matter in Zhejiang not stop, but there was one in Shandong too.

Two years ago, the emperor had issued a decree asking the King of Dongning to help the officials of the various prefectures in Shandong to rule over Shandong and eliminate the accumulated ills of the clan. After he received the decree, he publicized the law of the Great Zhou in Shandong wantonly and strictly ordered the clan's law to be greater than the law of the country.

At first, no one took it to heart.

After all, the Imperial Court often sent inspectors to Shandong to publicize the law of the country. After experiencing such things many times, it was a normal event.

However, not long after the Spring Festival, the King of Dongning had a fierce conflict with the clan.

The reason was that a few private soldiers raised by the clan had forcefully snatched commoners' women on the streets. They had been seen by the King of Dongning's men and were killed on the spot. The clan was indignant, so they reported it to the officials and asked the state government office to give them an explanation..

#### Chapter 539: Chaos in the Country

The King of Dongning was also arrogant. He immediately sat down in the hall of the government office. "What explanation do I need to give? I've already announced the national law and posted it on the streets and alleys. Does your clan not know how to read, or are you blind?" After rebuking the clan, the King of Dongning turned to look at the official. "What's the crime of privately raising private soldiers?"

The official hurriedly said, "The lightest punishment will be a fine of silver, and the heaviest punishment will be the crime of deceiving the emperor."

The crime of deceiving the emperor was serious. It could not be underestimated.

Both sides argued endlessly in the government office.

In the end, after the battle of Li Qiguang's rebellion, the clan was beaten into a mess by King Wumu. Although the remaining forces could not be underestimated, the battle had just subsided not long ago, and the clan had also suffered a huge blow. It was not appropriate for them to fight anymore, so they could only take a step back and pay a huge amount of fine money. They also promised to restrain the "guardians" in the family.

This sum of money was given to the treasury by the King of Dongning.

The emperor was very satisfied with this and even specially rewarded King Dongning.

At the same time, the emperor also knew very well that the reason why the King of Dongning could control the clan was because Yin Huaixi had cleaned up the clan and rewarded him with a lot of things.

Of course, this was only the beginning.

After the clan took the first step back, there was a second step.

The number of private soldiers raised by the clan was not small to begin with. Most of them were recruited by the commoners. There were good and bad people, so it was not easy to control them. Once the King of Dongning schemed, it was very easy to be tricked.

Not long after, King Dongning killed the private soldiers raised by the clan.

The crime was that these private soldiers bullied the commoners and collected “protection fees” from them. They deserved to be killed.

This time, it was the King of Dongning who took the initiative to report about the clan to the government office.

This time, it was not so easy for the clan to settle the matter. King Dongning had sent someone to investigate these private soldiers. In the past, they had been charged with all kinds of crimes in Shandong and the clan was asked to disband the private soldiers.

Of course, the clan would not be willing!

King Dongning was not someone to be trifled with. On the same day, he posted the crimes of these private soldiers on the streets and alleys, then sent troops to capture them one by one.

The lightest punishment was being thrown into the prison of the government office.

Those who committed more serious crimes were dragged to the entrance of the market and executed one by one. Those who dared to resist would be punished by Li Qiguang.

In just a day, they had captured thousands and killed thousands.

After killing them, the King of Dongning still had to punish the clan for not controlling them well, allowing them to commit murder and cover up their crimes.

The conflict between King Dongning and the clan intensified step by step.

Last autumn, the King of Dongning had brought 500 elite troops and broken into the Leng Residence in Jinan. He had gathered the ancestral codes, scriptures, history, and various family ancient books of the Leng Residence and burned them all.

This action completely angered the clan.

However, the remaining forces of the clan had become even worse after the King of Dongning’s rule over the past two years. How could they be a match for the King of Dongning and the officials of the various prefectures in Shandong?

The King of Dongning used the words “the clan is lawless, deceiving the emperor, and chaotic” to wantonly burn the codes, scriptures, history, and other ancient books that had been passed down for generations.

The clan finally became obedient.

However, King Dongning’s actions suffered a backlash.

Many scholars jointly reported to the Imperial Court and said, “Our great ancestors are righteous. They recovered the ancient books of the old dynasty and contributed for a long time. They have

benefited his descendants. It's unethical for the King of Dongning to destroy the ancient books of the previous dynasty. This trend can't continue. The Imperial Court should punish him."

It was difficult for the emperor to stop the public opinion of the world) so he punished the King of Dongning for three years.

After he was satisfied, the emperor issued a decree for the King of Dongning to continue helping the various residences reorganize Shandong.

In addition, after two years, the situation of the Great Zhou Dynasty were getting worse.

Two years ago, they had not seen the sun for many days throughout the winter. The snow had fallen from the Laba Festival to the eighth day of the new year. Not long after the Spring Festival, there was another cold wave.

For half a month, it rained and snowed, and the cold lasted until the Qingming Festival.

The rice crops in the south were rotten, and the peanuts and cotton in the north were growing slowly.

Last year, there was another spring drought.

In March, the spring rain was as hard to come by as oil. The soil was thawed, and the winter wheat seedlings returned to green, but it had never rained. Many of the wheat seedlings had died of drought, and the country reaped less than half of the harvest in the past.

The commoners had a bad feeling about the new year and began to stock up on food.

The price of rice began to rise.

Even though the Ministry of Revenue had issued an announcement to the rice merchants to strictly control the price of rice, the price of rice was still increasing. This situation had lasted for more than a year.

Yu Youyao couldn't help but sigh with emotion. "The country is about to fall into chaos. Chaos begins in the sky and spreads among the people first."

The Great Zhou Dynasty had accumulated a lot of ills. In the early years, the wind and rain were smooth. The commoners could live well and maintain a peaceful scene. However, now, natural and man-made disasters were frequent.

Yu Youyao did not want to see this scene, but she was helpless.

She could only do her best to manage the Graceful Heart Hall well and save more children, and women. She would also spend more energy on the cultivation of sweet potatoes. As sweet potatoes were foreign, more awareness was needed.

Yu Youyao sighed softly. She did not want to think about these terrible things anymore.

At this moment, Xia Tao led Nanny Yue in.

Yu Youyao was delighted and quickly said, "Nanny, come and sit down."

Nanny Yue looked at her. She was already 12 years old. In a month or two, she would be 13 years old. Her figure had lengthened. She looked slender and beautiful. Her face had also grown a lot, and she looked like she was about to grow up.

Then, she recalled First Madam's last entrustment back then and couldn't help but tear up. "In the blink of an eye, Young Miss has already grown up. If First

Madam is still alive...

At this point, she knew that she had misspoken, so she did not continue. However, she could not help but feel sad.

Yu Youyao quickly handed her a handkerchief. "If my mother knew in the netherworld, she would be happy."

Nanny Yue took the handkerchief from Young Miss and wiped her tears with a gratified expression. "Young Miss is right. As long as Young Miss lives well,

Madam will be happier than anything else."

Like mother, like daughter.

Although Eldest Miss's personality was different from First Madam's, she was also smart and generous in handling matters. She was a magnanimous and considerate person. Her horizons were not narrow, and she could do everything appropriately.

This shrewdness did not mean that she was good at scheming.

She knew the ways of the world, but did not participate. She was proficient in human relationships and was not obsessed with scheming. She was clear about her values, and she did not go with the flow. When dealing with others, she had her own understanding.

Nanny Yue couldn't help but be in a daze. "Matriarch has raised Young Miss very well..."

A young lady like her would either already be engaged or dating.

However, in the past few years, the court had not been stable either. Old Madam Yu was a cautious person and had been watching in the dark. She probably wouldn't arrange an engagement too early.

Which was just as well.

Men were afraid of entering the wrong line of work, and women were afraid of marrying the wrong man.

Their young miss was a young lady with a strong reputation and talent. When anyone in the capital mentioned Eldest Miss Yu of the Left Assistant Minister's family, who wouldn't give her a thumbs up?

She would rather marry late than make a mistake..

Chapter 540: Hope for Survival

Nanny Yue thought of First Madam's worries about Young Miss's future before she died and secretly lowered her eyes. She had to find an opportunity another day to tell Old Madam Yu about this.

Although she was only a maidservant, First Madam had entrusted her with something before she died. As long as it wasn't too much, she could say some things.

Yu Youyao smiled and nodded, not bringing up this sad topic anymore. “Nanny, you specially took the time to come over today. Is there anything important?”

Nanny Yue helped to manage most of the dowry businesses under her name.

In the past few years, she had made many changes to her businesses. It was also because of Nanny Yue’s support that they could progress smoothly. She had also encountered many difficult problems. All of them had been resolved thanks to Nanny Yue’s many years of experience and methods.

Now, because she was involved with the escort business and had cooperated with her cousin in the maritime trade in Zhejiang, most of the businesses under her name were becoming bigger and bigger. They were all almost in a profitable state.

Nanny Yue had contributed greatly to all of this.

Of course, there were also the loyal servants that her mother had chosen for her. All of them had contributed greatly.

Nanny Yue took a handkerchief and pressed it against the corner of her eye. Then, she said, “It’s about the planting of sweet potatoes. Young Miss values the cultivation of sweet potatoes very much, and the people in the manor don’t dare to be negligent. They’ve used different soils to cultivate them for two years. The sweet potatoes are indeed not picky with soil quality. They can be harvested if there’s drought or flood. As long as you spend more effort planting them, the production will be good. However, the potatoes produced will still be too little.”

With that, she instructed the person she had brought to open a small box.

There were more than ten sweet potatoes inside. They were planted from different soils and were all marked with soil quality.

Yu Youyao took a look and saw that there was not much difference in the size. She wrapped her hand in a silk handkerchief and picked up the sweet potatoes produced by the various soils one by one. “They’re about the same size. They can really adapt to various environments.”

Nanny Yue nodded. “This soil is soft and sandy, and the salt fields are good. The production there is higher. A plant can bear at most five sweet potatoes, but most of them can bear three or four sweet potatoes which are a little bigger. The production will be reduced if the soil is harder. A plant can bear at most three sweet potatoes, and they will be small. If the soil is wet and fertile, it’s not good for growth.”

Yu Youyao’s eyes lit up. “What about the texture? Is there a difference?”

Nanny Yue said, “The softer soil will cause them to taste fresher, sweeter, and more juicy. The rest of the soil types aren’t bad either. Whether it’s eaten raw or cooked, it tastes good. Most importantly, it doesn’t require many resources to grow.”

It was precisely because of this that Nanny Yue was very concerned about planting sweet potatoes. She even personally took over the farming test in the manor.

The weather had not been good in the past few years, and it was a drought in spring this year. There was no hope for the winter wheat harvest. After two years of cultivation, the sweet potatoe life cycle had been modeled, so they could be planted on a large scale.

The production of the sweet potato was not good, but its greatest advantage was that it was not picky with the soil. It could survive droughts and floods, and did not require too many resources!

Nanny Yue could tell the pros and cons, so she came to look for Young Miss.

Yu Youyao was really excited now. More than ten sweet potatoes were not big. They were even smaller than yams. Although the production was not low, it was actually not too high.

Its greatest advantage was that it could adapt to all kinds of land.

Yu Youyao pondered for a moment and said, "It's the Spring and Drought

Festival again this year. It's already the end of the month, but it hasn't rained a single drop. I don't think the winter wheat harvest will be enough, and the early rice harvest will be greatly reduced. Without the winter wheat harvest, there won't be any crops in April to July. The commoners can only eat wild vegetables. I wonder how many people will starve. Even if they survive until July and August and the rice is harvested, this little harvest probably won't be enough for many families. In the second half of the year, when the weather is cold, they won't even be able to eat wild vegetables. I wonder how many people will starve to death!"

This was also what Nanny Yue had wanted to say. She did not expect Young Miss to say it.

To be able to say such words, Young Miss was not the kind of delicate young miss who had been raised in her own room and did not know anything about common matters.

Young Miss was kind and virtuous.

Therefore, Nanny Yue decided not to speak about what she was planning. She planned to hear what Young Miss had to say first.

Indeed!

Yu Youyao changed the topic and asked, "How many sweet potatoes are there in the manor?"

Nanny Yue smiled. "We tried planting a lot last year. The outer skin has all dried and is placed in the ventilated cellar. It's carefully preserved. Every day, we'll send someone to clean up the broken ones, in case one of them spoils and rots in the cellar. There are about 5,000 kilograms."

After planting the sweet potatoes, she knew that they were good things. Young Miss valued them very much, so she naturally had to plant more.

Yu Youyao nodded. "If we plant it on a large scale, how many acres can we plant?"

Nanny Yue thought for a moment and said, "The best cultivation method at the moment is to cut the parts of the sweet potatoes that have sprouts and soak them in warm water. At the place where they're cut, wrap them with a layer of plant ash to prevent pests. Then, bury the sprouts in the finished fields. The fields have to be sprinkled with plant ash to prevent pests in the soil. This way, a sweet potato can be cut into about one to three pieces. A thousand kilograms of sweet potatoes can be planted in at least tens of thousands of acres."

This was a conservative estimate. If it was really planted, there would definitely be more.

The farmland under Young Miss's name was at least tens of thousands of acres. This was good fertile land. For example, the inferior sand land covered more than tens of thousands of acres.

Yu Youyao had an idea. “Didn’t I arrange for Cousin’s old servants to be in charge of testing new seeds in the manor previously? Give them 3,000 kilograms out of the 5,000 kilograms of sweet potatoes, and they’ll handle it themselves. The other 2,000 kilograms will be planted in a place suitable for planting under my name.”

They were in charge of testing new seeds to begin with, so they definitely knew how to plant them.

The past two years had not been good, and life in the North had become more and more difficult. The promotion and planting of sweet potatoes could not be delayed. 3,000 kilograms of sweet potatoes was nothing, but it was also a hope for survival.

Nanny Yue only thought that this 3,000 kilograms of sweet potatoes was to be planted in Young Master Zhou’s manor, so she did not say much.

Yu Youyao frowned as she looked at the sweet potato in her hand. “Most foreign species won’t be able to grow well in the Great Zhou Dynasty. Most of them won’t be able to live. Even if a small number of them can grow well, they’ll be half-dead and won’t have much effect. Sweet potatoes are the biggest exception. They will be able to grow on the Great Zhou Dynasty’s land. There won’t be any water or soil problems, and they can also adapt to all kinds of climates and soil. This means that the life force of the sweet potatoes is very tenacious.”

From the looks of it, this sweet potato was really useful.

They were small, and the production was not bad. If she could increase the yield and promote it on a large scale in the country...

She still needed to try more methods of planting the sweet potatoes.

However, this also took time.

The most important thing now was to expand the planting scale as much as possible with the limited 5,000 kilograms of sweet potatoes..