

## Gold Chapter 161

### Chapter 161 – Getting Jealous

With her eyes widened, Yu Xiaocao looked at him strangely and said, “Godfather, the shares weren’t given away for free! I invested a hundred taels and the recipe for the oyster sauce, so I kind of feel that getting twenty percent dividends is still too little ah! This is something that we deserve. If I don’t take it, wouldn’t that just benefit that fellow, Third Young Master Zhou?”

Fang Zizhen finally realized that he had misunderstood the situation. He laughed to conceal his mistake and said, “So it turns out that the shares are something that we deserved to receive ah! My daughter is so capable. You’re already investing in a business at such a young age. Very good, very good! You’re definitely worthy of being my, Fang Zizhen’s, daughter!”

Yu Xiaocao was still concerned about the matter regarding the location of the oyster sauce factory, so she worriedly asked, “Godfather, is there really nothing we can do for our oyster sauce factory?”

Since it was his daughter’s business, Fang Zizhen naturally wouldn’t continue to deliberately cause trouble. He pretended to think for a while, and then said, “I just recalled the blueprint I have seen. When I go back, I will discuss it with the people at the Ministry of Works and do my best to keep your factory. Don’t worry, Godfather will help you!”

Only then did Yu Xiaocao smile and said, “Thank you, Godfather! If it’s too difficult to handle, then forget it! We can’t delay the progress of the harbor construction just because of our factory.”

“It’s not difficult, not difficult! Your godfather is still capable of putting a word in!! Daughter, what are we eating for lunch? Don’t we have pork belly? Let’s eat red braised pork. The red braised pork you make is fragrant and soft, and fatty but not greasy. It really suits Godfather’s taste!” Fang Zizhen deliberately shifted the topic to the dishes for fear that his clever daughter would notice something.

Third Young Master Zhou, who was beside them, seemed to have noticed something. But, this young boy also didn’t understand why the imperial envoy seemed to be quite unsatisfied with him. Today, if it weren’t for Xiaocao, he probably wouldn’t be able to keep the factory that he worked so hard for during these past few months. Although the Zhou Family were imperial merchants, they could only concede to government officials who had real power and authority!

The problem was solved, so Yu Xiaocao returned to the kitchen. First, she baked a small portion of the sandworms over a small fire to make dried sandworms. Then she assigned a task to Yu Hang. She asked him to take the dried sandworms to Madam Mao's house and borrow the small stone mill, and then grind the dried sandworms into powder. Sandworm powder can enhance the taste of food. It was much safer and more environmentally friendly than the MSG in her previous life!

With the remaining sandworms, she made a plate of garlic steamed sandworms, a bowl of sandworms and spare ribs soup, and also stir-fried some with chives as a side dish. In addition, there was also the oil-dripping braised pork and several plates of stir-fried vegetables seasoned with sandworm powder. Although they didn't make preparations in advance, it was still a sumptuous feast.

The dishes made with sandworms received unanimous praise from everyone. Fang Zizhen especially favored the 'garlic steamed sandworms', which was mostly eaten by him. The tasty and crisp sandworms, complemented by the unique taste of garlic, was simply too delicious!

The sandworms that Yu Xiaocao keep were big, meaty, and of high quality. The sandworms and spare ribs soup was as white as milk. It tasted very delicious, refreshingly sweet and nourishing. Even Madam Liu, who was afraid of the worms, drank a full bowl.

The sautéed vegetables seasoned with sandworm powder was also much more delicious than usual. Even Third Young Master Zhou was very surprised and thought that Xiaocao's cooking skills had improved again, exceeding that of Head Chef Wang, who had decades of experience.

Before he could speak, Yu Xiaocao said mysteriously, "I just came up with another seasoning recipe. You just tried it, so give me some feedback ah! If you think it's good, we can mass produce it in our oyster sauce factory and sell it throughout the country..."

Third Young Master Zhou's eyes lit up and said in surprise, "You mean, the unique taste of these vegetable dishes was due to the usage of your newly developed condiment? Xiaocao, you're a genius among geniuses! I was just about to ask you why the greens taste even more delicious today! Quickly write down the recipe, and I'll give you another ten percent of the shares!"

In this way, she would possess thirty percent of the shares for the factory. Yu Xiaocao felt as if she could see little silver ingots continuously flying towards her. She was so happy that her eyes narrowed into a seam. She immediately nodded without any hesitation, "But I want to ponder over the recipe again and try to make it even more perfect!"

With just sandworm powder alone, others would quickly see through the recipe and imitate it. She prepared to add in kelp powder and a small amount of spice. In fact, she really did have some talent for cooking. She was able to find the best ratio in a few days, and it was far more delicious than the simple sandworm powder. While she was experimenting, she also churned out the recipe for five-spice powder, which she also handed to Third Young Master Zhou.

As a result, their factory wouldn't just be an oyster sauce factory. All the condiments produced by them would be called 'Haitian', which included 'Haitian Oyster Sauce', 'Haitian MSG', 'Haitian Five-spice Powder', and 'Haitian Fermented Bean Curd'... Later, under Yu Xiaocao's suggestion, they added two more condiments, 'Haitian Soy Sauce' and 'Haitian Vinegar', which made Haitian's production of condiments even more complete. This would be recounted later.

At this time, Fang Zizhen was somewhat dissatisfied with the brat from the Zhou Family talking cheerfully and humorously with his daughter, causing her to laugh merrily again and again. From time to time, he would shoot daggers at Third Young Master Zhou, which made Third Young Master Zhou slightly restless. He wondered if he should ask Xiaocao what he did to offend the imperial envoy so he could have the chance to make up for his mistakes. In the future, when his business grew bigger, there would be a lot of times when he had to deal with government officials. If he didn't find out the reason, he was afraid that there would be future troubles.

Fang Zizhen listened to Xiaocao enthusiastically talk about the prospects of the factory. He found the perfect opportunity and interjected with a smile, "Daughter, the sandworms taste really good! It must have been hard for you to come up with these dishes."

Yu Xiaocao smiled at him and said, "Godfather, if it's delicious, then you should eat more! The sandworms not only taste good, but their nutritional value isn't any less than shark fin and abalones! On another day, I'll make some more sandworm powder for you to bring back for Godmother when you return to the capital. I'll write down the cooking methods so Godmother can also try the delicacies of the seaside!"

Fang Zizhen drank a big mouthful of the sandworms and spare ribs soup and nodded, "Your godmother really liked the tomatoes that you told me to bring back last time. She especially likes the method of eating it with sugar after heating it slightly... By the way, your godmother made several sets of clothing for you, and she also told me to bring over some snacks from the capital. They're all in my luggage. I'll go get them for you."

Xiaocao quickly stopped her godfather, who was about to stand up, and smiled, "Godfather, it's not like it's urgent. You should eat first! This is your favorite red-braised pork. Here, this piece has the perfect ratio of fat and lean meat!"

Fang Zizhen's face was full of happiness as he ate the piece of braised pork that his goddaughter personally gave him. He said, "My daughter is so considerate! Father didn't dote on you in vain!"

Yu Hai looked jealously at the piece of braised pork in Fang Zizhen's bowl. He coughed twice and looked at his younger daughter. After Yu Xiaocao also gave him a piece of meat, he finally showed a slight smile on his face.

Madam Liu, who was beside him, watched her husband's immature behavior and couldn't help but smile with her head lowered. He was already such a grown man, yet he was still competing with others for favor. Moreover, it was for their younger daughter's attention. Why didn't she know that her husband had such a cute side?

With her chopsticks, Madam Liu picked up some stir-fried sandworms with chives and put it in Yu Hai's rice bowl. Yu Hai looked up at her. Usually, his wife seldom got food for him in the presence of outsiders. What was going on today? When he looked up and saw his wife's gentle and understanding gaze, Yu Hai's face instantly flushed. What was wrong with him? Xiaocao was his own flesh and blood. Even though she had a godfather now, it still wouldn't change the fact that they were blood-related family. How could he feel uncomfortable just because of a piece of braised pork? He was seriously becoming more and more childish as he got older!

In the days that followed, the Yu Family became busy again. Except for those who went to sell braised food at the docks, everyone else was mobilized by Xiaocao to go dig sandworms at the beach. At times, when Fang Zizhen wasn't working or Little Shitou came back during break, they would also be ordered to work at the beach.

With the little divine stone as her secret weapon, Yu Xiaocao was the person who caught the most every day. Sometimes, even if all the sandworms that the entire family caught were together, it still wasn't as much as Yu Xiaocao alone. In order to not catch all the sandworms on the beach, Xiaocao constantly changed the area where she catches the worms.

The other villagers were perplexed by the family frequently digging spoon worms. Tongren Medicine Hall wasn't accepting spoon worms anymore, so why were they still digging them? Several families, who were more acquainted with them, came to inquire one after another. Yu Xiaocao didn't hide it from

them and taught them several simple methods of eating sandworms. When they saw the dried sandworms in the Yu Family's courtyard, they had already gotten the urge to hoard some dried sandworms.

After all, the fishermen of Dongshan Village depended on the sky to make a living. If the weather at sea was terrible for a period of time, most of the villagers of Dongshan Village, who relied on the sea to make a living, may lose their source of income. Most of the villagers were poor. The impact of them not going out to the sea for several days might not be very apparent, but if they didn't go out to the sea for half a month, or for the entire month, many families would go hungry. Being able to dress warmly and eat one's fill had always been the pursuit of the villagers of Dongshan Village.

Disregarding the taste of the sandworms, they had learned from the Yu Family that the sandworms were definitely edible. It wasn't easy to store sandworms, but dried sandworms would be fine. If they ran out of food one day, they could resolve this urgent matter by using dried sandworms to stew soup.

For a while, a unique scenery appeared along the coast of Dongshan Village: Villagers of Dongshan Village with various tools were either bending down, sticking their butts out, or laying on the sand, and looking for the traces of spoon worms.

Zhenxiu Restaurant also immediately introduced several dishes with spoon worms or dried spoon worms as their ingredient. Their unique taste won the praise of many customers.

As soon as the Zhenxiu Restaurant in the capital opened, it received unanimous praise from customers for their five specialties: roasted chicken, osmanthus duck, braised food, spoon worm dishes, and oyster sauce dishes. It even attracted many of the customers of several long-established restaurants in the capital! Zhenxiu Restaurant became an instant success and swiftly gained a firm foothold in the capital with its endless specialty dishes.

At this time, Haitian Condiment Factory had also begun operating. Marine products like oysters and sandworms were needed for oyster sauce and sandworm powder MSG. Zhenxiu Restaurant using sandworms as a cooking ingredient also increased the demand for sandworms. As a result, Third Young Master Zhou sent people to various fishing villages to purchase and collect these marine goods.

#### Chapter 162 – Jealousy

In Dongshan Village, Third Young Master Zhou had solemnly entrusted Yu Hai to help him purchase those items. Of course, he would not let Yu Hai work for nothing. Zhenxiu Restaurant would give him ten percent of the profit as remuneration. Dongshan Village wasn't the only fishing village around the area,

so Zhenxiu Restaurants had also selected a staff member to be responsible for that task in the other fishing villages.

Seafood like oysters and penis fish were too common in the coastal region, and there weren't many people who eat it, so very few people would buy them. Even with occasional acquisition, it was hard to sell them for a high price. However, Zhenxiu Restaurant the price that Zhenxiu Restaurant offered for these goods was higher than the market price: ten copper coins for a catty of oysters and twenty copper coins for a catty of spoon worms.

Although offered a much higher price for spoon worms, it was only a temporary acquisition for the medicine hall. Zhenxiu Restaurant, on the other hand, were purchasing spoon worms all year round.

After the news came out, there was an endless stream of people who came to visit the Yu Family's residence. They were all inquiring about the purchase and the prices of the oysters and spoon worms. After they received reliable information from Yu Hai, both the old and young villagers of Dongshan Village all began to dig for spoon worms and gather oysters.

The sea's gift to the people was selfless. Every time the tide went out, people would flock to the beach and leave when the tide rises. Even if the was low tide at night, people would still carry a lantern and work hard throughout the night.

As long as one was willing to work, there would definitely be a harvest. An average adult could dig at least ten catties of spoon worms in a day. The old, weak, women, and children could also harvest a few catties of oysters. In this way, as long as someone someone from each household in Dongshan Village was willing to contribute, they could earn a few hundred copper coins in a day without any problem.

There was a steady flow of oysters and spoon worms being purchased. Yu Hai had already taken in over a thousand catties of seafood. These seafood products were all transported to the workshops at the dock. The employees of the condiment factory were all servants who had signed a death contract with the Zhou Family. Whether it was the oyster sauce or MSG, the formulas must be kept a secret. So, the core employees must've served the Zhou Family for many generations. Fifty people were carefully selected from the servants to work in the workshop, but when faced with the endless orders, they still lacked manpower.

Cleaning the sandworms was a labor-intensive job. Thus, Third Young Master Zhou set down a new purchasing rule: the prices for cleaned oysters and spoon worms would be twice as high as those that hadn't been cleaned. Of course, the seafood must still be fresh.

What did the villagers not lack the most? It was labor and time. Although the oysters wasn't bad, there wasn't much profit to be earned after the shell was removed. In contrast, the spoon worms wouldn't lose much weight even after the sand was removed from it. The price of the spoon worm was more expensive than pork, so even if it took more time, the villagers were willing.

For a while, Yu Hai had more work than he could handle. All the cleaned seafood and the uncleaned seafood had to be separately weighed and paid for, and they must also be stored separately. The Yu Family had planted their entire courtyard with vegetables. In order to prevent the people who came to their house to sell seafood from damaging their garden, Yu Hai specially set up a wooden shed at the west side of the fence to be used for the purchase of seafood. It was too much work for just one person, so he asked Yu Hang to help out. The father and son were frantically busy and barely managed to handle everything.

Yu Hai had become stricter with the purchase of seafood ever since he found out that his daughter owned a part of the shares of the condiment factory. He didn't accept spoon worms that weren't cleaned properly, seafood that weren't fresh, and also if they practice fraud by putting water inside the spoon worms to increase its weight... Although he offended some people who wanted to take advantage of him, Yu Hai's reputation in the village was still pretty good.

No matter where Madam Zhang went these days, she would always hear: XX family earned XX amount of money from selling seafood; XX family was able to pay back their debt owed for several years from famine in just ten days; XX family didn't have anything to eat or wear in the past, but now they can afford meat... Thus, the old lady's heart began to waver.

Of course, she couldn't go cause trouble at the old residence. The imperial envoy was now living in Old Zhao's old house and would eat all of his three meals at the Yu Family's house. With such a big Buddha there, even if Madam Zhang was given three times more courage, she still wouldn't dare to look for trouble.

But at her house, Old Yu and his son had to go out to the sea every day. So, she put her mind on Madam Li and Yu Heizi. Yu Heizi would diligently run to the dock every day, but he wouldn't even bring back one copper coin. If they are all as greedy as this grandson of hers, where would she get the money for her daughter's dowry? Where would she get the money to pay for her younger son's education?

She couldn't bear to let her daughter, who was going to marry in the autumn, to go to the seaside under the sun and wind. So, she forced Madam Li and Yu Heizi to go to the seaside to dig for spoon worms.

One catty of cleaned spoon worms was worth fifty copper coins. With both Madam Li and her son working, it shouldn't be a problem for them to earn two or three hundred copper coins in a day!

Yu Heizi wasn't someone who was obedient. Although he could earn money by digging spoon worms, he knew that he wasn't going to receive any of the money he earned. So why did he have to waste so much effort to get them? After a month of physical exercise, Yu Heizi didn't look like the short and fat Yu Heizi from the past. Although his skin was still dark, he was a lot stronger, and he didn't have much body fat on him. He had also grown taller, so now he looked like he was full of vigor.

In order to hide from his grandmother, he would run away every day before the sky turned bright. Madam Zhang couldn't catch Heizi who was as slippery as a mudfish, so she had strictly watched over Madam Li, forcing her to go to the beach every day. But with Madam Li's gluttonous and lazy character, how could she be the type of person to work? After digging only a few times, she would start lamenting to the heavens while bawling with tears in her eyes and snot dripping from her nose.

However, Madam Zhang wasn't a soft-hearted person. What's more, she had also taken tools and gone to dig for spoon worms at the beach with her head lowered. How could she allow Madam Li to slack off? Seeing that her mother-in-law was also working, she couldn't find any reason to slack off, so she could only accept her misfortune and dig a little here and there. Both the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law had no experience in digging for sandworms. Furthermore, Madam Li wasn't very reliable since she would take every chance she could to slack off. In a day, other people were able to dig about ten catties of spoon worms, but it would already be considered pretty good if the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law pair could dig up two to three catties of spoon worms.

When Madam Zhang saw that other people had harvested a lot compared to them, she felt extremely unhappy in her heart. When she got home, she scolded Madam Li for being worthless, Old Yu for having no abilities, and Yu Dashan for being a good-for-nothing who couldn't even control his wife... The entire Yu Family was shrouded in her shadow of rage.

Yu Dashan was wedged between his mother and wife, and he was also bad at conveying his feelings. To return peace to the family, he would take the initiative to dig sandworms with Madam Zhang when the tide recedes after he returned from the sea.

There was a strange phenomenon in the Yu Family. The more they worked, the less they got in return. In Madam Zhang's eyes, this was all right and proper. Yu Hai was like this in the past, and now Yu Dashan was also experiencing the same thing. They worked more, but they also received more complaints!



Madam Li wasn't like Madam Liu, who was willing to bear hardships without any complaints and watch as all the hard-earned money that she and her husband earned went into her mother-in-law's pocket. It would've been fine if the money was used for them ah! They now earned at least a few hundred copper coins from fishing and gathering seafood at the sea, which should be about three to five taels of silver a month. Yet, they were still eating dark and coarse flatbread and boiled vegetables without oil.

Madam Li soon became discontented with this situation. She looked at her suffering husband and touched her big tanned face. She complained to Yu Dashan who was behind her, "Heizi's father, we worked ourselves to death, but none of the money we earned is spent on us! It's all spent on Caidie and Xiaobo! What is the point of us doing all this hard work?"

Yu Dashan didn't have any strength remaining in his body as he lay on the kang bed. His eyes were half-closed, and he looked like he was about to fall asleep. He was an honest man, so in a low muffled voice, he responded, "You can't talk like that! Isn't my younger sister about to get married? The condition of my future brother-in-law's family is not bad, so if the dowry is too unsightly, she would be mistreated after she gets married. My third brother needs to take the exams during these two years, so he can't be delayed in his studies..."

Madam Li was so angry that she pinched his arm and said, "Well, good for you, only thinking about your younger siblings. But have you thought about our child? Heizi is fourteen this year, it's about time for him to start looking around for a suitable wife. However, your mother hasn't mention this at all! She even wants Heizi to hand over the money he earned! As their older brother, you're earning money to raise your younger siblings, but it makes no sense for the nephew to earn money to support them!"

Yu Dashan rubbed the arm that got pinched and turned around, "Heizi is still young! It's not too late for him to start looking for a wife next year. Besides, when Heizi marries, the betrothal gifts will be taken out from the public account. Don't worry about it! Go to sleep, I still have to go to the sea early tomorrow morning!"

Madam Li had numerous thoughts on her mind, so how could she fall asleep? She said resentfully, "I won't say anything about your brother since he has to study every day. But your younger sister has arms and legs, so why can't she work? Your mother treats her like a noble young lady! When she enters her husband's household, she won't know how to do anything. It would be a wonder if she doesn't get beaten!"

Yu Dashan couldn't fall asleep from the noisiness, so his tone wasn't good as he said, "You don't know how to do anything, but did anyone beat you?"

“You dare?! I have a few brothers at home who will support me. Over the years, my maternal family has subsidized our family a lot. With just the food we eat at home, it would’ve been a miracle that we didn’t starve to death. How did you think we were able to stay so plump and healthy?” When Madam Li talked about her maternal family, her waist and back would straighten.

Yu Dashan looked at the fat that had accumulated on her body and snorted, “I don’t think it’s bad for you if you lose some weight! Look at our son, Heizi. After he slimmed down, he looked more and more like me, like a real man!”

Madam Li touched the fat on her waist (Author’s note: Where’s the waist? Do you have a waist?) and sighed. She said, “Looking at it now, it seems like it wasn’t a bad idea for the second branch to move out. Look at how they’re living! I heard that he earns at least a few hundred copper coins in a day just by helping Zhenxiu Restaurant’s owner purchase seafood! If our branch had also moves out at that time...”

“Don’t even think about it! Mother won’t allow us to move out!! It’s not like you don’t know about the situation when Second Brother moved out; they were driven out and abandoned. Second Brother was able to endure it because of his fate... He is also someone with a good fortunate ah!”

Yu Dashan’s mood was very complicated when he thought of his younger stepbrother, who was only a few months younger than him. Yu Hai’s capabilities made him look mediocre. He had also worked very hard, but he could never catch up to Yu Hai’s footsteps.

At one point, when Yu Hai was injured and the doctor said that Yu Hai wasn’t going to survive the injury, he had felt relieved for a long time. He thought that the large mountain that was pressed against his head would finally fall down.

#### Chapter 163 – Helper

However, the second son still withstood that hard-pressed situation. The second son’s family now lived more comfortably than they had before they separated from the main branch. This made his mood unbalanced again.

Especially at the beginning of the spring when they went out to the sea, the amount of fish he caught was less than that of Yu Hai. The amount of money he earned was much less, at least half of what Yu Hai earned before. His mother always complained that he had no ability and that he couldn’t even compare with half of Yu Hai. These iron-like facts made him recognize the gap between himself and Yu Hai. The boulder that he had put down for a while once again pressed against his heart.

He went out fishing early in the morning, and he gathered seafood at the sea in the afternoon. Sometimes, he would go out in the middle of the night to dig for sandworms. He worked himself tirelessly to prove to his family that he wasn't worse than Yu Hai.

However, reality still made him feel dejected. He had worked tirelessly without a moment of rest, yet he was only able to earn two to three hundred copper coins a day. Yu Hai didn't have to go out to the sea or dig in the sand, but he was able to earn two to three times the amount he earned... If Yu Dashan could read, he would surely have the feeling, 'there's always someone better than you.'

Yu Hai, who didn't know that he was envied and hated by his older brother, was currently anxiously discussing some matters with his family. They were discussing whether or not he should give the job of purchasing seafood to someone else.

Fang Zizhen patted Yu Hai's shoulder. Using a loud and clear voice, he said, "Why are you hesitating? If you want to do it, then do it. If you don't want to do it, then throw it at someone else. What's so complicated about that?"

Yu Hai's mood was currently very complicated. The family only had a lot of the businesses due to his youngest daughter's effort. He was only a supporting role in all her efforts. He had allowed a child younger than ten to work busily every day for the family's livelihood. As a father, he felt guilty and distressed.

Through a stroke of luck, Zhenxiu Restaurant gave him an opportunity to increase the income for the family. Even if he was busy, bitter, and tired, he was happy in his heart. However, the three mu of watermelon in the fields were about to ripen. In order to look after the melons, harvest the melons, or sell the melons, he wouldn't be able to leave the fields. Therefore, he was struggling to decide whether he should continue the job of purchasing seafood or manage all the matters regarding the melon fields.

When Yu Hai heard that, he bitterly smiled and said, "Brother Mingzhe, it's easy for you to say that, but I earn three taels of silver from that in just a day. In one month, I can earn 100 taels of silver, so how I can just toss it away? However, we need people to tend to the melon fields at home right now..."

Yu Xiaocao finally understood why her father had a worried frown on his face these past few days. She softly laughed and said, "Father, the melon fields and the purchase of seafood won't clash with each

other. I know that you must feel that we need more people to work at home, yet you can't balance both jobs simultaneously. I have an idea; I don't know if you will think it's feasible or not!"

Yu Hai had a whole new level of respect for his youngest daughter after the first half of the year. He never dared to treat her as a child. Yu Hai was full of hope as he said, "Cao'er, tell me what good idea you have."

Xiaocao organized her speaking points, and, after thinking about it, she said, "Our family's watermelons are about to ripen, so we really need someone to look after them. Although it's fine in the morning, the watermelon fields definitely need someone to tend to during the night. I don't think anyone else is as qualified as you to look after the melons!"

Fang Zizhen smacked his lips, making his existence known, and said, "It's just looking after melons! I can call Li Li or Wu Yun back to look after the melons, won't that solve everything?"

Yu Xiaocao smiled sweetly at her godfather and said, "Godfather, both big brothers are already very busy on the dock. How can I trouble them with my family's personal matters? Besides, it takes more than one or two days to watch after the melons and sell them. Your idea is not going to work!"

Fang Zizhen glared at her and said, "They should be honored to manage personal matters for this old man. In the past, these two new and young recruits were rescued by me from a mass of dead people."

"Godfather, I know you're amazing. However, we shouldn't coerce them to do things in return for your kindness. Even if Brother Li and Brother Wu take the initiative to come here and help me, I still wouldn't agree!" Yu Xiaocao definitely didn't want her godfather suffer from other people's criticism.

Fang Zizhen was also aware of this point, and he felt very touched by her thoughtfulness. It was a blessing to have a daughter like her. *freewebnovel.com*

Yu Hai wanted to say something, but he stopped himself. Yu Xiaocao said to her biological father, "I know that my big brother won't be able to handle the purchasing of seafood by himself."

Yu Hang opened his mouth, but he unwillingly closed it. What his younger sister said was the truth. He was only eleven to twelve years old. Besides, the problem was that people in the village might not trust

him as he also needed to weigh the goods and collect money when it came to purchasing seafood. He would also need to put the collected goods in the correct places. It was definitely not a one-man job.

Yu Xiaocao gave him a soothing glance and continued, "There's more work than we can deal with, but we can hire someone to help us! It's not the harvesting season right now, so the villagers have plenty of free time! We can find someone trustworthy to help father do his job. We won't make him work for free either. If he works for a day, then we'll pay him a day's pay."

"Do you mean you want to hire someone to work for us? However, we're all villagers, so it might not be appropriate..." Yu Hai felt like hiring someone to help him do his job would make him the same as those wealthy old landlords exploiting poor farmers. It didn't feel good at all!

"Father, why would it be inappropriate? It's the same as when we hire people to build our house. Feeding someone for helping you is the same as giving someone wages! Plus, we aren't making him work for free." Yu Xiaocao was very puzzled by her father's reaction.

Yu Hai thought about it and her reasoning seemed to make sense. He replied hesitantly, "Then...who do you think we should hire? How much should we pay him in a day?"

"This person must have a good and honest character as well as be steady and capable!" Yu Xiaocao said with a smile. She already had a candidate in her mind.

Yu Hang pursed his lips. He hadn't said anything throughout the exchange but now he finally spoke up, "I think Third Uncle is a suitable candidate for this job. Whenever our family is busy, he would always come over to help. We all know about his honesty and good character! Father, if you still feel guilty about it, you can just pay Third Uncle a little more money!"

Yu Hai thought about it. His younger cousin, Yu Jiang, had a flexible mind and he was a great friend to the family. He was indeed a good candidate for the job, so he nodded his head in agreement.

It was a sunny day the next day. The sun shone warmly on their bodies. Yu Hai went to his uncle's house early in the morning and told his uncle's family that he hoped that Yu Jiang could help him out. He was a little embarrassed when he briefly mentioned that he was planning on paying him.

Yu Hai's eldest uncle, Yu Lichun, was very angry in the beginning. He felt that since they were relatives, it would hurt their relationship if one party paid the other party for just helping out. Yu Jiang also repeatedly stressed that he would go help them, but he won't accept any money for the work.

Yu Hai's heart was very touched by them. He received the family love that was missing back home from his eldest uncle's family. He stood up to his uncle's preaching and explained everything patiently.

"Eldest Uncle, I'm not inviting Little Jiang over to help out for a day or two. Instead, I'm planning on working with him for a long time. Let me tell you the truth, I receive a 10% profit by helping Zhenxiu Restaurant purchase seafood. How can I make my little brother work for free while I take the money all for myself? Don't get angry yet, let me finish explaining first! Zhenxiu Restaurant's condiment factory requires a long-term supply of seafood. Having one person from each family working on it can be considered as two families cooperating together to do business. I'm also taking advantage of your family because our Xiaosha is still half a child..."

Yu Jiang thought that it was a feasible idea for the two families to cooperate together to do business because his cousin's family couldn't deal with all the work they had. When he heard this, he quickly helped Yu Hang get some justice and said, "Older Cousin, although Yu Hang is young, he can do an adult's work. Even if Yu Hang didn't use an abacus, none of the accountants in town can beat Yu Hang when it comes to calculating accounts!"

Of course, Xiaocao already taught the multiplication tables to her brothers and sisters, so it wasn't difficult for them to calculate using their heads.

Yu Lichun finally agreed after Yu Hai's repeated his request sincerely. However, no matter what, he didn't agree with Yu Hai about splitting the earnings equally between the two families. Yu Lichun understood in his heart that Yu Hai was able to get a profitable job because of his friendship with Zhenxiu Restaurant.

In the end, they agreed on a forty-sixty percent split. Yu Jiang was going to receive forty percent of the earnings and Yu Hai was going to receive sixty percent of the earnings. Yu Hai felt very embarrassed by this as he felt like he took advantage of his uncle's family.

Yu Jiang showed up early in the morning. It coincided with the time the tide receded today, which was early this morning. There were already villagers coming to sell their oysters and non-processed sandworms. Yu Jiang had helped out a few times before, so he was able to deal with them very quickly.

He was in charge of weighing and placing the seafood they purchase, while Yu Hang was responsible for bookkeeping and settling the bill. Yu Hang had followed his younger brother for several months, learning how to read and write characters. Now, he could read and write most of the commonly used words. The two people worked together very well.

Yu Hai family's purchase of seafood had always been honest; they never gave people less for what their seafood was worth. They also weren't like the people in charge in the other villages where they would lower the purchasing price of the seafood. Therefore, not only did the villagers in Dongshan Village sell to them but also some of the fishermen in several nearby villages would walk a little more to sell their seafood.

As a result, the amount of seafood the Yu Family purchased steadily increased each day. Although it was hard work, their income had increased a lot. At night, when they calculated their earnings, Yu Jiang was surprised when he found that he had earned one to two taels of silver. An able-bodied man's labor in town was only worth ten or so copper coins.

He didn't have to do any heavy labor, and, when there were fewer people, he was able to rest for a while. However, in one day, he was able to earn more than one tael of silver... Yu Jiang wasn't convinced and even suspected that his cousin had given him more money.

Yu Hang explained the accounts to him, and Yu Jiang couldn't help but become speechless. He thought that he was only going to earn a little money by helping out his cousin with his business. But who would've thought that he would be able to earn forty to fifty taels of silver in a month? This was something he never dared to think about before!

He didn't have a skilled trade, so if he worked all year round by doing unskilled labor, he would be able to earn five to six taels of silver in a year if he worked tirelessly. That was already considered to be quite a sum of money. Now, he didn't need to do any heavy labor and was able to earn forty to fifty taels of silver in a month doing light labor. He would be able to earn five hundred to six hundred taels of silver in a year... Yu Jiang suddenly felt dizzy as if he was in a dream.

On his way home, Yu Jiang held the broken silver bits that added up to one tael and three hundred copper coins in his hand tightly. The skin on the palm of his hand had red marks from gripping the money too hard. Yu Lichun was tending the vegetable garden, and, his older brother, Yu Xi, who was chopping firewood, noticed his restless appearance. They stopped what they were doing and looked at him with concern.

“What happened? Didn’t you go help your second brother out? Why did you come back so early? Is your body feeling uncomfortable?” Yu Lichun wanted to touch his palm, but he realized that Yu Jiang had his hand in a tight fist.

Yu Jiang finally recovered his wits and spread his fist out in excitement, revealing the pieces of silver inside.

#### Chapter 164 – Surrender

Yu Hai’s eldest uncle’s family didn’t have anyone who could fish, so they relied on about five mu’s worth of sandy land to make a living. Yu Xi and Yu Jiang also occasionally went into town to find work or to the docks to move cargo. Their family’s circumstances were not very comfortable. Earlier that morning, Yu Jiang had left home empty-handed, yet came back with more than a tael in his hands...

Yu Lichun and Yu Xi looked at him, flabbergasted. Apparently, they were waiting for him to explain.

Yu Jiang stammered somewhat emotionally, “This is from the seafood purchasing business today...”

“You bastard!” Yu Lichun was stunned for a bit before he burst out into rage. His beard stuck up in the air as he snarled, “Didn’t we agree that we will only take forty percent of the income ah? You...you took all of the money your elder brother earned? Quickly send it back!!”

Yu Xi also regarded his younger brother with disapproval, “Younger Brother, it’s not that I’m scolding you! But, when Dahai gave you money, you just took it? Did you not calculate it out yourself?”

“No, no!” In front of his father and older brother, Yu Jiang didn’t quite know what to say and felt a bit depressed. He did his best to explain what happened, “This money is forty percent of what was earned today, I even looked at the account book!” However, he left out that he didn’t quite understand what was written in the book, argh!

Yu Lichun and Yu Xi still didn’t quite believe him and asked, “So you’re telling us that today, in one day, they earned almost four taels? That’s not possible, right? How could buying gathered seafood be that profitable?”



Yu Jiang analyzed the situation for them, “Zhenxiu Restaurant set a price for Second Brother and his family’s labor. Do you know how much seafood they took in today? Over a thousand catties ah! On average, one catty is about thirty copper coins, so isn’t one thousand catties around thirty to forty taels? For the work of our two families, we got around three to four taels as our fee, so me taking at least one tael home isn’t a problem!”

After he heard his son calculate out everything, Yu Lichun finally was convinced. The money that his son had earned today equaled the amount that the whole family used to make in a month doing temporary work ah! When he started to think about the total income his son could make in one month and then in one year, he immediately became light-headed. If they continued with this and earned a whole year’s worth of money, they could buy more than ten mu of good land, or even buy a pretty good house in town. With a few more years of work, wouldn’t his family become one of the wealthiest families in Dongshan Village then?

Yu Lichun forcefully swallowed down his saliva and spoke in a trembling voice, “Jiang’er, in the future, you absolutely must remember your Brother Dahai’s benevolence. If we didn’t have him, then our family couldn’t even dream of making so much money in one day ah! You must work hard for him!”

“Father! Believe in me!! My older cousin is basically my biological second brother. Xiaocao and the kids are now my full-blooded nieces and nephews!!” In the past, when there wasn’t anything to be given in return, Yu Jiang was able to help Yu Hai’s family whenever they had difficulties. Now, it was a given since they were collaborating together in business!

Yu Lichun suddenly frowned and remarked, “Remember, you absolutely cannot broadcast this news outside! This will prevent your third uncle’s family from finding out and causing problems for Dahai’s family!”

Yu Jiang also realized that Second Brother asked him to help with that eye popping business and not Dashan and the others. This meant that Dahai trusted him explicitly. He absolutely could not cause trouble for Second Brother’s family!

Xiaocao had no idea what had just occurred at Eldest Granduncle’s house. She lifted her small bucket, which had her exclusive ‘fertilizer’ in it. Yu Hai was behind her with two buckets of water on a shoulder pole. From time to time, he would remind her to be careful where she was walking.

After they finished watering the fields, Yu Xiaocao walked around the watermelon fields. Under the prompting of the little divine stone, she discovered there were two watermelons that were already ripe.

These two melons were large and round, and both of them weighed around twenty catties each. Their outer skins were a vivid green-blue and looked so fresh that one could pinch water out of them.

“Father! These two watermelons are ripe already. Let’s pick them and bring them back home to taste!” Yu Xiaocao took one off the vine and held it in her arms. She toddled over on the ground. When Yu Hai saw his daughter struggling, he hurriedly strode over in large strides and took the watermelon from his daughter’s hands.

The two watermelons, which didn’t weigh over forty catties altogether, were considered small weights to Yu Hai. He held one under each arm and took them to the edge of the field. He then softly spoke to Xiaocao, “I’ll send you home first and then come back to build the melon shed.”

Watermelons, to the villagers of Dongshan Village and other neighboring villages, were considered to be very rare and strange objects. When they first planted them, they attracted a bunch of curious people who came over to look. Now that the melons in the field were on the eve of ripening, there needed to be someone in the fields watching over them. Yu Hai had already chopped some bamboo in preparation for building a melon shed.

“Father, do what you need to do now! In a moment, Godfather will return and I can have him help us bring them back!” Yu Xiaocao watched from the side as her father swiftly built the shed. She would occasionally help with some smaller tasks and propose a few suggestions. Before noon, the outlines of the shed could already be seen.

Surely enough, Xiaocao’s prediction came true. After finishing up some tasks at the docks, Fang Zizhen rushed back home on horseback. When he found out that his adopted daughter was helping build a wooden shack in the melon fields, he felt bad, ‘A little girl should be pampered in life, how could she possibly be doing such hard labor? That’s not okay, I need to go over there now to help!’

With the addition of another strong man, the melon shack, which would have taken two days to complete, was finished in less than a day. Yu Xiaocao also had her two fathers construct a bamboo bed in the shed as she was afraid that her father might become chilled while watching the melon fields.

That evening, Little Shitou came back on his rest day and the whole family sat together in a circle to eat dinner. They prepared to share the first ripe watermelons amongst each other.

At this period, watermelons were not a common crop. The fruit was not only rare for the Yu Family, but even in the capital Fang Zizhen had also rarely eaten watermelon.

“Xiaosha, send the other watermelon to your grandfather. Let your grandfather taste some too!” Yu Hai saw that the watermelon, when cut open, had brilliant red flesh. The bright red juice flowed along the knife and the smell of sweetness hit his nose. When he was happy, he also thought of his aged father and hoped that he could also try some of this.

Yu Hang scowled slightly and softly replied, “If my grandmother thinks it tastes good and wants us to send some over every day, should we give in to her or not?”

Technically, Yu Hai could send them a watermelon every day. However, he had previously heard Fang Zizhen mention the prices of watermelons in the capital. They were even more expensive than meat! On the cheaper side, one watermelon could go for a couple hundred coppers. If they sent over one every day, what was the point of their family growing watermelon then? Were they still planning on earning money?

The excitement in Yu Hai’s eyes immediately dimmed, and he slowly sat down on a stool. He let out a deep sigh. The originally happy atmosphere had also fizzled out at the mention of the main branch.

Yu Xiaocao didn’t want her father to look so confused and stood up. Her clear voice broke the silence, “Why don’t...I go deliver the watermelon to Grandfather?”

“No! What if your grandmother makes things difficult for you? Actually, even if we don’t send any, it’s okay. Tomorrow, we’ll invite your grandfather over to have a piece, that also works!” Yu Hai was afraid that his daughter might become injured so he immediately changed his plans.

“It’s okay! With Grandfather around, my grandmother wouldn’t have the guts to do much! That being said, she should be as happy as a clam when she sees me sending her some watermelon. How could she possibly try to make things difficult for me?” When Yu Xiaocao got an idea in her head, it was very difficult to convince her to do something else.

Fang Zizhen promptly stood up and stooped over to grab the other large watermelon, “Daughter, the watermelon is heavy. I’ll help you carry it. Let’s go, the faster we get there, the faster we’ll get back. You can all wait for us to get back and then eat!”

Yu Xiaocao knew that her godfather was afraid that she might get bullied by the main branch, so he was coming with her as support! She was touched by his kindness and naturally allowed him to go with her.

As expected, when they got there, Madam Zhang found out that watermelon was a very expensive fruit. She not only wasn't grateful but she also insinuated that they brought over too little. Old Yu glared at her for a long time and only then did she quiet down. In addition, Fang Zizhen was also there, so Madam Zhang didn't dare to throw a tantrum.

As they were leaving, Yu Caidie escorted them to the gate. She stated somewhat shamefully, "Xiaocao, my mother is just that type of personality, so don't take it personally. Please thank my second brother and second sister-in-law for me. Thank you for thinking of us whenever you guys get something good."

Before they split from the family, this youngest aunt of hers was probably the only one in the family besides Old Yu who had good intentions towards them. Although her youngest aunt had a weak personality and was somewhat squeamish, Yu Xiaocao still had somewhat of a good impression of her.

She pulled on Yu Caidie's hand and softly said, "Youngest Aunt, I heard that your wedding date is already set. Congratulations. When the moment comes, my mother and I will come over and add to your dowry."

Yu Caidie flushed red as she lightly patted Xiaocao's hand before she quietly replied, "Please thank my second brother and second sister-in-law for me..." When she finished, she turned around in embarrassment and fled back inside.

On the side, Fang Zizhen remarked, "Your youngest aunt is very similar to a lot of the noble young maidens in the capital. She gets shy and embarrassed too easily. Her personality isn't as good as my daughter's, confident and calm. That really goes well with my personality!"

Yu Xiaocao pulled at the sleeve of his official's uniform and grinned until her eyes turned into small crescents, "Godfather, you think everything your daughter does is good! Perhaps in other people's eyes, they think I don't resemble a little girl at all!"

"Who said that my daughter isn't good? Just watch me beat them up until all their teeth fall out!" Fang Zizhen made a giant fist with his hand and waved it around fiercely.

The two of them chattered happily as they walked into the old residence when they suddenly saw that there were two additional people in the courtyard. With a closer look, they realized it was the Wang Ergou couple.

Ergou's wife was currently pulling on her husband's ear and had an apologetic expression on her face. She said, "Second Brother Yu, I am truly sorry! Ergou'zi picked a watermelon from your field without asking for permission...tell me how much it is, we'll take it as if our family bought it from you."

Because their fields were close together, Madam Liu had some interactions with Ergou's wife in the past and had a good impression of her. She replied, "We're fellow villagers and neighbors. If you want to eat some watermelon, just tell us, no need to mention money!"

Ergou's wife resolutely shook her head, "Yu Hai's wife, even if you didn't tell me I would know that this watermelon is a rare fruit. It's absolutely very expensive! Ergou'zi, how could you? I've warned you so many times! If our family is poor, then we have to be honest and poor! Didn't you promise me that you were going to be an honest man now? How could you go back to your old, rotten ways? You...you truly disappoint me too much!"

When Wang Ergou saw that his wife was so mad that tears were pouring down, he immediately panicked. He repeatedly apologized, "Wife, I know I was wrong!! This is the last time, I absolutely won't do this again!!"

"How many times have you told me, 'this is the last time', ah? I was stupid to believe that you might change your ways! Now, I see clearly, a dog can never change its desire to eat poop! Tomorrow, I'm going back to my parents' house. I'd rather my child not have a father than have a father who idled around and steals other people's things. A father that would make my child ashamed to raise his head in this world!!" Ergou's wife had an expression full of despair on her face as she pushed aside his hand.

Chapter 165 – To Change

"Wife, wife! I will truly change this time!!" When Wang Ergou saw that his wife had made up her mind, he almost fell to his knees. He sullenly continued in a soft voice, "I only did this because I noticed that you looked tired due to pregnancy and didn't have an appetite, right? So...I wanted to pick this watermelon and have you try some..."

A faint spark appeared within Ergou's wife's dead-looking eyes, and she snarled angrily, "You stupid wretch! Do you think I could possibly eat the watermelon that you stole?!"

“I was wrong, I truly did the wrong thing this time. Wife, please forgive me this one last time!!” Ergou’zi saw that his wife was still willing to leave him so he apologized profusely in hope that she might understand his reasons. He truly regretted his actions now!

Ergou’s wife sniffed her nose a couple of times and said, “What are you apologizing to me for? It’s not like I lost anything. You should actually be apologizing to Second Brother Yu! There hasn’t been much rain this year, so these two siblings, Xiaosha and Xiaocao, have been hauling water into the fields to water them. You should know how hard it is; you’ve seen it with your own two eyes. You should actually be apologizing to these two siblings! Why do you think Second Brother Yu’s family decided to plant watermelons? The people you should be apologizing to is them, not me!”

“Yes, yes, yes! Don’t be angry, wife. I’ll apologize, I’ll apologize right now!” Wang Ergou immediately turned into his wife’s slave. If his wife said to go east, he absolutely wouldn’t go west.

Wang Ergou hung his head as he guiltily faced the Yu Family. He softly yet honestly said, “Second Brother Yu, I’m so sorry! Brother, I was confused and stole your family’s watermelon...I’m willing to compensate you guys for this watermelon. Please forgive me...”

Yu Hai walked over and slapped him on the shoulder, “I understand your feelings! When your second sister-in-law was pregnant with Xiaosha, she also didn’t have a good appetite. At that time, I snuck out of the house late at night to go hunt in the hills in order to make your second sister-in-law some chicken broth to drink. A man who knows how to treat his wife well is a true man!! However, in the future, if your wife wants to eat watermelon, give us a holler and don’t hurt your wife’s feelings anymore. Go and comfort your wife. It’s not embarrassing to bow in front of your wife!”

Yu Xiaocao couldn’t help but let a peal of laughter come out. Her father’s love towards his wife could clearly be seen by his words. Apparently, ah, he was destined to be a henpecked man.

“You’re back, Cao’er? Did your grandmother make things awkward for you?” When Yu Hai heard his daughter’s snicker, his entire face felt hot, yet he still solicitously asked her about her trip.

Fang Zizhen’s laughter was even more prominent as he replied, “With me there, who would dare to have to guts to bully our daughter? However, brother, I never would have thought that you were someone who treated your wife so well ah! What you said was right! Treating your wife well isn’t embarrassing at all!!” Wah! Here was another guy who pampered his wife!

Xiaocao sniggered endlessly. Fang Zizhen felt embarrassed by her laughter and gently knocked on her head with a fist but then tenderly rubbed the part he hit with a hand.

Xiaocao spoke to the Wang Ergou couple, "In the future, if you want to eat watermelon, come and find me! This watermelon isn't ripe yet, so it won't taste good! Come, try some our ripe watermelon here!"

Wang Ergou had been able to smell the melon's sweet scent from where he was standing and stealthily swallowed down the pooled saliva in his mouth, "I don't need to eat any! Give my wife two pieces to try...yeouch!" The pitiful Wang Ergou had just been pinched by his wife again.

Yu Xiaocao took two pieces of the already sliced melon and gave it to him. She grinned, "Uncle Ergou, this watermelon has a cold nature, so pregnant women can't eat too much. If they do, they might have a miscarriage!"

When Wang Ergou heard her warning, his face immediately paled. He almost harmed his own wife; he was truly too stupid! He solemnly apologized again to everyone in the Yu Family and promised that he would never touch their watermelon fields again!

"Uncle Ergou! Our family's watermelons will soon become ripe. Do you have any interest in taking some to sell at town or the docks ah?" Yu Xiaocao considered for a bit and realized her family was short on working hands. With her cheat, the mystic-stone water, their melon fields would absolutely have a large output. Even a good wine was afraid if there was no market. This was their first year in attempting to sell watermelon, so she wasn't sure how it would go. They couldn't let the ripe watermelons just rot in the fields, right?

"Eh? Sweet niece, what do you mean by this?" Wang Ergou felt faintly excited inside. His eyes brightened as he looked at Yu Xiaocao.

Yu Xiaocao smiled sweetly at him, "We will sell these watermelons to you below the market price, so you can sell them at market price in town. That way, you can keep the difference."

Wang Ergou's eyes revealed an excited yet emotional look. He hesitated for a bit before he admitted, "Niece ah, you also know what my family's circumstances are like, I'm afraid that we don't have enough money right now to buy them..."

“Not a problem, the first time you can just take the melons from my family and then pay the bill after you sell the melons.” Wang Ergou definitely wouldn’t have enough money to pay for one whole cart’s worth of watermelons. Yu Xiaocao had also thought of this problem.

Wang Ergou’s lips trembled as he softly replied, “You...you trust me?”

“Why wouldn’t I trust you? My father said earlier, any man who treats his wife well can’t be a bad person!” Yu Xiaocao winked at him teasingly, “That being said, whether or not I trust you isn’t the point, but how could I possibly not trust Auntie Wang eh?”

Ergou’s wife’s eyes became wet with tears as she repeatedly expressed her gratitude. No one knew how hard it was for her after she married over. She had used a lot of energy ordering her idle husband around, but the rest of the household also required her to be present. Everyone said that she was competent and capable. However, if she had a husband that she could lean on, did she have to work so hard day in and day out?

“Ergou! This time you have to do the job well! Second Brother Yu’s family trusts us and is taking care of us, so you absolutely cannot let them down! If, if you slack of this time too, then I will definitely...”

Wang Ergou hurriedly grabbed his wife’s hand and promised, “Wife, believe in me!! I, Wang Ergou, will absolutely do my best and not let you down, otherwise I will no longer be surnamed Wang!! And the child can also have your surname instead!!”

Wang Ergou had lost both of his parents and he was their only child. When his father was on his deathbed he had held his hand but didn’t close his eyes. Only after he vowed to take a wife and have kids did his father finally peacefully close his eyes. Thus, he was very attached to carrying on the family name. Therefore, when he said that his child could take his wife’s surname, that meant that he was making a serious vow.

After they escorted the extremely grateful Wang Ergou couple out, Yu Xiaocao and her family, along with Fang Zizhen, sat down to enjoy the sweetness of the watermelon.

Because they had used the mystic-stone water to irrigate their plants towards the end of spring, the Yu Family’s watermelons had all become ripe before the regular season. In other words, the watermelon



plants in the capital had only just flowered on the vine while the Yu Family's watermelons could all be brought to market. A summer fruit becoming ripe at the end of spring, that was absolutely out of season ah!

In her previous life, watermelons easily weighed more than twenty catties, and that size wasn't considered rare either. However, Yu Xiaocao didn't know that, in this era, the largest watermelon that could be seen was usually around ten catties. In addition, watermelon grown in ancient times had flesh that alternated between red and white, and the white parts couldn't be eaten. More than half of the watermelon had to be thrown out when being consumed, what a waste!

As for the Yu Family's watermelons, after being improved by the mystic-stone water, they were pretty much the same as the ones found in modern times. The white parts of the melon flesh, that couldn't be eaten, had completely receded and only the red parts were available.

Out of all of the people here, only Fang Zizhen had eaten a watermelon before. He was a crude person, so how could he possibly care about what a watermelon looked like? In the past, the watermelon he ate had all been carefully prepared by his servants, who only gave him the edible parts. This was also the first time that Fang Zizhen was able to eat watermelon that had been cut into slices.

He picked up a very thick slice and opened his mouth very wide to take a bite. The sweet and fresh juice flowed into his mouth. To someone that was thirsty, the refreshing cold and sweet juice was absolutely something that could quench thirst.

"Sweet! So sweet!! This tastes a hundred times better than the watermelons I've eaten before!!" Fang Zizhen didn't stint on his praise. The biggest reason was this: his daughter was the one who had proposed planting watermelons and the watermelons were also personally taken care of by his daughter. However, this watermelon was truly extremely delicious!

Yu Xiaocao gave Yu Hai and Madam Liu each a piece. At this moment, Little Shitou could no longer wait and impatiently grabbed a slice. He licked his lips. The expression on his face showed that he desperately wanted to eat a bite but couldn't bear to; it was quite adorable.

Xiaocao rubbed his head and also picked a piece. She lightly bit off a small mouthful and slowly chewed it. She couldn't help but let out a satisfied sigh, "So sweet..."

Little Shitou copied his sister's method and also bit a tiny crescent from the watermelon. His large, cute eyes immediately crinkled into a smile. The juice from the watermelon dripped down along his mouth, and he used his pink little tongue to lick it up.

The Yu Family normally couldn't even bear to buy sugar, so how could they possibly eat something that was as sweet as this juice. They simultaneously ate as they exclaimed compliments.

Fang Zizhen polished off a slice quickly and put the remaining rind with skin in front of the little roe deer, who was pitifully staring at them. He then started on his second piece. The little roe deer hastily lowered its head and gnawed at the light rind on the skin. It ate with extreme pleasure.

After being raised at home for over half a year, the little roe deer, for whatever reason, still didn't get any larger. The Yu Family members were all busy, so the little roe deer had been given free-range. When it was hungry, it would eat the fallen leaves from the vegetables. When it was thirsty, it would drink its water from its special bowl. The water had been specially prepared by Xiaocao and had a few drops of mystic-stone water in it, which frequently attracted birds who wanted to steal it from the deer.

Whenever the little roe deer got bored, it would run out of the courtyard and stroll in the area around the old residence. The Qian Family's and Zhou Family's children all liked the creature very much and played with it. Sometimes, they would even carry the animal in their arms. The little creature was quite clever and could tell whether someone had good or bad intentions towards it. When it met Qian Wu or some other kid who frequently played with it, it would obediently let that person carry it and would occasionally lick that person's palms. However, if it met someone who had ill intentions and wanted to steal it, it would run like the wind. Even an adult man who sprinted swiftly wouldn't be able to catch it.

The little roe deer loved to play the most with its master's other pet—the little golden kitten. The tiny kitten had a smell that was irresistible on its small body. Usually, the little kitten would climb on its head and take a nap, while it obediently kept its neck steady and slowly walked around with the kitten on its head. If someone wasn't careful, he or she might even believe that the little roe deer had a golden hat on its head, it was quite a sight to behold!

At this moment, the little roe deer was energetically gnawing on the melon rind. When Little Shitou noticed that his beloved pet also liked to eat watermelon, he left a thick layer of red flesh on the skin of his slice and even used a small knife to peel the skin and chop the flesh into small pieces to put into Tiny's bowl.

Had it been before, someone at home would have definitely scolded him for wasting food. When they first split from the main family, the whole family didn't have enough food to fill their stomachs, let alone leave any to feed the little roe deer. At that time, the little roe deer was also not picky and would eat withered grass and leaves as long as there was mystic-stone water on them. Now, the family's circumstances were a lot better, so no one would reproach a child for feeding his beloved pet some bits of melon flesh.

#### Chapter 166 – Blazingly Popular

Anyone who had a pet would treat them well. Yu Xiaolian collected all of the melon peels and copied her little brother's actions. She also used a knife to peel away the skin and used the remaining melon rind to feed Little Gray. Ever since the donkey arrived at their home, it had worked hard every day. Whenever they went to the docks to sell braised food or the town to buy things at the market, they no longer had to tire their own feet with the donkey around. As a result, Xiaolian took very good care of Little Gray.

The current little donkey was like a completely different animal compared to its previous self. Who would have thought that the donkey, that had been so sick that it couldn't stand up and had its ribs showing, would be able to grow into its current plump and strong self? Its fur was now very sleek and soft. Not only did the little donkey look very good but it also was full of energy.

The last time they went into town, they came home along with Uncle Ma, who was from a neighboring village, and his donkey cart. Uncle Ma's cart didn't have anything on it while the Yu Family's donkey cart was filled with food and household supplies. Despite the obvious difference in loads, Little Gray managed to be faster than Uncle Ma's donkey and left them behind in the dust.

That was also before they had switched cart wheels! Nowadays, all of the villagers who were going into town liked to sit on the Yu Family's donkey cart. Why's that? Well, the Yu Family's donkey cart had rubber wheels. Not only did it travel quickly on the windy mountain roads but the cart also didn't jostle a lot. Had the Yu Family decided to pull people into town for a living, then the Ma Family's carting business would have long gone down!

It was said that, in town, only the Zhou Family and the county magistrate's family, basically those who had connections, were able to buy rubber wheels. The Yu Family's new donkey cart had been gifted to them by the Zhou Family's third young master. Now, all of the villagers in Dongshan Village envied the Yu Family for being able to have a connection with the boss of Zhenxiu Restaurant. They clearly enjoyed his influence in their lives!

When Yu Xiaocao heard snippets of this gossip, she felt extremely indignant inside, 'Who said that we were the ones benefiting from this relationship with Third Young Master Zhou? Without me, did they think that Third Young Master Zhou's business would be so blazingly popular? Without me, could

Zhenxiu Restaurant, the new restaurant on the block, be able to surpass Fulin Restaurant and some other older restaurant's tricks? Without me, could Third Young Master Zhou enter his grandfather's eye and become groomed as the family's next head ah?'

Just who was benefiting from this relationship? Roasted chicken, osmanthus duck, oyster sauce vegetables, these three important dishes all allowed Zhenxiu Restaurant to make bank. Oyster sauce, MSG, and fermented bean curd were all the center products of the condiment factory that had many advance orders from various customers. Who gave him all of these recipes? Third Young Master Zhou was just expressing his gratitude by helping her buy a custom-made donkey cart, that was all, but, in the eyes of other people, it became them taking advantage of him! The next day, when Zhou Zixu rushed over hastily to their home, he unexpectedly received several glares and eye rolls from Yu Xiaocao.

"What's wrong? When did I offend you?" Zhou Zixu asked in a puzzled tone as scratched his chin cluelessly.

Yu Xiaocao rolled her eyes at him again and replied, "Nothing, ok? I guess my eyes have a cramp alright? What kind of wind blew Third Young Master in today? It can't be that you miss my family's cooking, right?"

After encountering her odd demeanor, Zhou Zixu carefully said, "Recently, I've been busy because of the factory so it's been awhile since I last saw you. Could that possibly be the reason why you're angry at me?"

Xiaocao almost rolled her eyes up into her skull——'Just who do you think you are? Do you really think you're the main dish here, ah? I, this young girl, have been so busy that my feet have almost hit the back of my head, so why would I care how many times you come over? Be angry at you? Is that even worth it?'

After not seeing him for more than half a month, it seemed like Zhou Zixu had grown taller again and also got tanner. His previously bright and handsome face had almost become a healthy bronze color. 'Tsk tsk, who said that pale skin could make up for ugly figures? This guy has a good foundation, so even when he got tanner, he didn't get one iota uglier. Instead, he became even more manly! However, it does look like he's also become a lot thinner too...'

"You've been very busy lately?" Yu Xiaocao decided to be merciful and inquired after him solicitously.

Zhou Zixu had tears of gratitude in his eyes—well, actually, to be exact, it was that his eyes were brimming with tears of excitement, “Xiaocao, you probably don’t know just how popular our condiment factory has become! When we first started selling our products, I was afraid that the MSG and fermented bean curd wouldn’t sell, so I invited a few owners of some large restaurants from the capital and prefectural city over to Zhenxiu Restaurant in the capital. My motive was to have them try dishes that had been seasoned with MSG. Although they were all quite common dishes, their taste was much more tasty and savory than before. I also had some dishes with fermented bean curd in it...as expected, those restaurant owners all asked me what the secret was. I seized the opportunity to promote our ‘Haitian’ brand of condiments. At the end of the event, I even gave them each a small pouch of MSG and bottle of fermented bean curd. What do you think happened next?”

“What could happen? Obviously, they all sent in orders like it cost nothing...” Yu Xiaocao calmly recited the outcome.

Compared to her calm and collected expression, Third Young Master Zhou seemed even more excited as he exclaimed, “Xiaocao, you truly have a mind that jumps to the right conclusion, your guess is too correct!”

“Psh! Everything went as expected, what are you all excited for?” Yu Xiaocao loftily replied, “The goods that I produce are all quality goods! If you follow this big sister, you’ll definitely have plenty of meat to eat!”

Pffftt—Third Young Master Zhou thought her arrogant expression was too funny. He rubbed her head, which didn’t even reach the height of his shoulder, and sighed in admiration, “Just what kind of brain do you have in your head? How could it possibly have such crazy and bizarre ideas in there? Tsk tsk, everyone always says that people who think too much are unable to grow due to the pressure, surely enough that’s right...”

“Zhou! Zi! Xu!” Yu Xiaocao exploded in anger, “Are you blind? Who said that I haven’t grown in height? In the past, I was shorter than Xiaolian by half a head and now I’ve already caught up to her!! Do you think everyone is like you, only grow in height but nothing develops in your brain? To grow a handspan (Author’s note: the distance between the thumb and middle finger when the fingers are spread wide open in a hand) in a month, are you being fertilized by a bunch of manure ah?”

“Okay, Okay! It was me that said it wrong, okay?” Zhou Zixu gently rubbed her hair and chuckled loudly before he continued to share his joy, “Since our condiment factory has opened and started selling to the market, we not only cleared out our stock, which was over a thousand catties worth of condiments, but we also owe a bunch of other orders now. I also transferred a bunch of servants from my family’s

residence over to the factory, so we now have enough workers to work both night and day shifts. Even with that, we still can't keep up with the orders. From the orders we've received in this month, there are some who have to wait until half a year later to be fulfilled! Just from counting money alone, my hands have become cramped."

"After getting the riches, you still act like you're losing!" When she thought of all of that shiny silver from the factory and that she had thirty-percent of the profits, Yu Xiaocao couldn't help but have her mouth slightly curl up in a smile.

Zhou Zixu sullenly grumbled at her, "This is our factory, but you, as the second owner, only earn the money without doing anything. Ever since our factory has started producing, you haven't even gone over once to look it over. You have such great trust in me!"

"Third Young Master, let me tell you this common saying, it goes: 'the capable people are the ones who do the most work'! Didn't we already come to an agreement in the beginning? I was only responsible for the recipes and you, Third Young Master Zhou, were in charge of everything else. You're so capable, and you're one of the rare talented people in the Zhou Family, so how could I not trust you?" Yu Xiaocao gave him a high evaluation.

Zhou Zixu deliberately acted as he heavily sighed, "Ay! You have it good, all you have to do is to wait to get your money, but it's so hard for me! I've spent so much time at the factory. In fact, once I spent over ten days there. My mother thought that I was missing and even ran over to the docks to find me!"

Yu Xiaocao didn't believe his act and retorted, "Are all of the subordinates under you incompetent? What about Steward Zhou and that little assistant, Simo ah? Having assistants but not using them, are you stupid?"

Zhou Zixu glared at her for a second and said, "Those two are even more busy than me. For the sake of the factory, Steward Zhou hasn't even gone back to the residence ever since it started producing. His wife even packed up all of their things and took the children with her to live in the staff housing! Simo is in charge of the transport of the products, especially the oyster sauce. It's not easy to store the sauce so he needs to produce ice when he transports it to a long distance! He's the same as the steward and has been on the road for more than a month. In fact, we had just loaded a ship full of goods for Jiangnan and Simo also went along!"

“In the future, our business will absolutely get larger and larger, so you need to take the opportunity to train more trusted subordinates. If you only rely on Steward Zhou and Simo, the two of them might die from exhaustion!” Yu Xiaocao sank into contemplation.

Third Young Master Zhou sighed, “It’s not that easy to find trusted servants ah! The most important thing of our factory is our recipes. It’s hard to find loyal servants and also prevent the first branch from...”

Yu Xiaocao suddenly interrupted, “You can give a share of the profits as a year-end bonus to the workers. You can give more to the supervisors and less to the regular workers. This way, the success of the factory is tightly bound to the workers’ integrity and ethics. I am sure that no one would try to damage their own income...”

Third Young Master Zhou felt as if he could suddenly see the light at the end of the tunnel. He slapped his thigh and exclaimed, “That’s a good idea! I need to go back and discuss with Steward Zhou to figure out the best way to implement this—Xiaocao, you are truly my lucky mascot. That brain of yours, just how did it develop in you?”

“How did your brain develop this way? Without a comparison, there wouldn’t be faults. With you around, it makes me seem a lot smarter than I actually am!” Yu Xiaocao’s method of interacting with Third Young Master Zhou sometimes made her seem like a bad friend. Before he could feel unhappy, she continued, “Sit down quickly and rest a bit. I will make you something good to eat for lunch!”

“Heh heh!” Zhou Zixu, who had just been insulted, wasn’t angry and was in fact giggling foolishly. “Even if I’m conservative in my estimate, it’s probably still been half a month since I’ve eaten the food that Xiaocao made. Makes me feel a bit at a loss...”

“Psht! Graceful words and a flowery speech often hide bad intentions!!” As soon as Fang Zizhen stepped into the courtyard, he overheard that stinky brat from the Zhou Family flattering his daughter. He rushed over furiously.

Zhou Zixu grimaced as he quietly said, “Lord Fang, when did I ever offend you? You’re a high-ranking official, please don’t bring yourself down to my level!”

Fang Zizhen glared fiercely at him, "In the future, stay farther from my daughter! My daughter is still young, so she's not someone that you can dally with!"

Zhou Zixu's face immediately turned a dark liver color as he stammered, "Lord...Lord Fang, you...you misunderstand me! I regard Xiaocao like she's my biological younger sister. I don't...don't have any other intentions!" Eh, why did it sound like he wasn't very confident when he said this?

"Having no other intentions is good!" Only now did Fang Zizhen regard Third Young Master Zhou with a more favorable look in his eye, "If I, this old man, find out you have some kind of cunning plot going around, I swear I'll beat you up until you're bruised from head to toe, otherwise I'll no longer be surnamed Fang!"

"Godfather!" Yu Xiaocao had been in the kitchen during this entire time and hadn't heard their conversation. She stuck out her head with a sweet smile on her face and said, "What do you want to eat for lunch today?"

"Pork stewed with vermicelli! Is the new batch of century eggs ready to eat? Then also make some century egg and lean meat congee and slice a plate of century eggs...it's pretty hot today at noon, not sure if there's any watermelons available. I'll go ask Brother Yu to help me choose some to quench our thirst later!"

Fang Zizhen wasn't a freeloader. Ever since he started coming to the Yu Family to bum meals to eat, the Yu Family hadn't needed to buy any meat, vegetables, or grain anymore. All of these were paid for by Fang Zizhen!

Originally, he wanted to give half of his salary to Xiaocao. Xiaocao not only didn't take the money but she also threw a temper tantrum and didn't talk to him for a few days. It frightened Fang Zizhen so much that he never mentioned money again to her. Thus, he only bought more things for the family instead.

#### Chapter 167 – Protecting His Daughter

Yu Xiaocao's clothing chest had so much clothing in it that she could wear new pieces every day until the next year and still have more to use. As for her small jewelry box that was used to hold beautiful pieces that weren't very expensive, it was also almost filled to the brim. Once, Zhou Shanhu came over to play and saw her box, which Xiaocao had forgotten to tidy up. The other little girl was so envious that drool almost came out of her mouth.



Since all of these were given to her by her godfather, she couldn't just give them away. In addition, she wasn't a true little girl, she didn't really like to wear them. The box full of hair pins, bracelets, earrings, and other jewelry could only sit there and gather dust.

When Third Young Master Zhou saw Fang Zizhen leave the courtyard, he let out a deep sigh of relief. He scuttled over to the kitchen door and was about to say something when Yu Xiaocao ordered him to do work, "Go! Go to the west room and take a few mud-covered eggs from the kang bed and bring them over..."

Zhou Zixu obediently followed her orders and came back with six to seven century eggs in his arms. From the size of the eggs, one could tell that some were made from chicken eggs and others from duck eggs. Yu Xiaocao glared at him and then scolded, "You're stupid! These are obviously two different types of century eggs. Go back and grab six of each!"

"You said to bring some mud-covered eggs over but didn't tell me what type of eggs you wanted..." Zhou Zixu complained as he felt wronged. However, he didn't dare to resist and returned to grab the rest of the eggs.

"Gently strike these eggs on the ground and peel off the mud shells. Be careful not to dirty the insides of the century eggs!" Yu Xiaocao thought that he didn't look reliable and couldn't help but warn him repeatedly.

Zhou Zixu's eyes lit up and he looked at the mud-covered eggs in his hands with interest. He carefully pinched off a bit of mud, revealing the inner shell. He picked one up, carefully looked at it and asked Yu Xiaocao, "Is this ingredient needed for the 'century eggs and lean meat congee' that Lord Fang was talking about? Why does it need to be coated in mud? Why don't century eggs need to be cooked before eating? Why..."

Yu Xiaocao was being driven crazy by his questions and gave him a fierce look, "Why do you have all of these questions? Are you Ten Thousand Questions [1] ah?"

Zhou Zixu didn't understand her reference and hollowly chuckled a bit, "I don't have that many, just a few questions, that's all! Xiaocao, what is the vermicelli in 'pork stewed with vermicelli'? Is it like century eggs, a new food ingredient that you've come up with?"

Yu Xiaocao took out a bunch of vermicelli that wasn't homogenous in thickness from a kitchen cupboard and soaked it in some warm water. Zhou Zixu rushed over and squatted down to pick up one strand to investigate. When Xiaocao turned around, she didn't notice him there and almost tripped right over him. If Zhou Zixu wasn't there as a sacrificial cushion, then she likely would have fallen straight into the water basin.

"You little good-for-nothing, get out of here! If you continue to hinder me making food, then you can go to the docks and eat instead!!" Yu Xiaocao exploded as she put one hand on her hip while she held a large cleaver in the other. The combination made a ferocious sight that made Third Young Master Zhou tremble in fear.

Zhou Zixu hastily shrunk next to the corner of the stove and pitifully hugged his knees as he squatted down. He placed a piece of firewood into the clay stove and carefully said, "I...I can help you watch the fire, isn't that okay?"

Yu Xiaocao cut pieces of streaky pork as she glanced at him out of the corner of her eyes. She stated somewhat in disbelief, "Eldest Young Master Zhou [2], do you know how to control the flame in the kitchen?"

"I'm not Eldest Young Master Zhou, I'm Third..." Zhou Zixu seemed like an abused young married woman. He raised his head to look at her expression and then hurriedly placed a whole bunch of firewood into the stove, "How could burning firewood be hard? Don't you just add wood to it?"

By adding several sticks of firewood in at once, he almost smothered the flame that was burning. The kitchen immediately seemed as if it had caught on fire as thick smoke billowed out of the room. The smoke choked the two people in the kitchen as they coughed endlessly.

Xiaolian, who had just gotten back from the docks, immediately saw the thick smoke when she entered into the courtyard and thought that the kitchen had caught on fire. She ran toward the room in large strides and discovered the disaster that Third Young Master Zhou had caused.

She didn't know whether to laugh or cry as she took out half of the firewood from the stove and blew air into the fire. The fire slowly grew and heated up again. However, the thick smoke in the kitchen lingered and it would be a while before the air cleared.

Yu Xiaocao felt tears and mucus streaming down her face from the smoke. She kicked at the main offender and scowled, "This is your doing!! You wanted to choke me to death with smoke!"

Xiaolian hurriedly pulled her furious younger sister back and laughed as she reprimanded her sister, "Younger Sister, you're too much! Third Young Master Zhou is our guest, how can you order him to mind the fire? He's used to a life of servants giving him food and picking out clothing, so how could he possibly know how to do this?"

Yu Xiaocao used the back of her hand to rub her eyes. Both of her eyes were as red as a rabbit's as she glared fiercely at Third Young Master Zhou, who was still coughing endlessly, "Who told him to add wood to the fire? He was the one who had nothing better to do so he had to cause trouble!"

Zhou Zixu had a wronged expression on his face as he lamented, "Wasn't I just trying to help you?" "Help me? I think the more you tried to help, the more trouble you caused! Psh, go rest somewhere out of the way ah!" Yu Xiaocao glanced at him with eyes filled with disdain.

After a decent amount of time passed, the smoke finally dissipated from the kitchen. Yu Xiaocao swiftly finished four dishes and one soup. All of them had generous portions. Among them included Fang Zizhen's requested 'pork stewed with vermicelli' and 'century eggs and lean meat congee'. She also made stir-fried pork liver, 'three earthy treasures', and sliced up century eggs seasoned with garlic paste and aromatic vinegar.

Zhou Zixu rapidly inhaled large gulps of the century egg and lean meat congee. He couldn't stop eating. The unique taste of the century eggs with the savory flavor of the meat brought out the best in both ingredients. The congee was thick and viscous, and it wet the throat easily. It was simply so delicious that anyone would want some!

Fang Zizhen regarded his table manners with obvious disdain. He was a young master of a rich family but acted as if he was a refugee who hadn't eaten a meal in eight hundred years. 'Stinky boy! The century egg and lean meat congee was something I ordered, so if he wants to fight with me, he can't win!'

Fang Zizhen devoured bowl after bowl of congee, as if he was trying to win a competition. A whole basin of century egg and lean meat congee, other than a few small bowls for the other people at the table, had pretty much been finished by Fang Zizhen and Zhou Zixu.

After drinking three bowls of congee, Zhou Zixu rubbed at his bulging belly and then extended his evil claw of a hand towards the pork stewed with vermicelli. He picked up a strand of vermicelli and lifted his chopsticks high. To his chagrin, he discovered that the other end of the vermicelli was still in the serving dish. He looked around him out of embarrassment and then stood up to raise his chopsticks even higher before he was able to place the vermicelli in his bowl.

After that, Zhou Zixu noticed that everyone at the table was staring at him. He sheepishly scratched at his head and explained, "The vermicelli was too long so I couldn't put it into my bowl easily..."

Since he had eaten vermicelli before, Fang Zizhen believed he had experience with this. He picked up two strands of vermicelli and twirled them around his chopsticks. Thus, he was easily able to transfer the long vermicelli into his bowl. The older man even momentarily glanced at Zhou Zixu with eyes full of satisfaction.

Pork stewed with vermicelli was a very typical northern cuisine dish. There was even a popular saying about it: 'Pork stewed with vermicelli, even gluttonous wild wolves will howl for it!' From that, it could be seen that this dish was very tasty!! The translucent yet snappy vermicelli had been imbued with the savory flavor of meat. No one could possibly resist such a delicious dish. Even Third Young Master Zhou couldn't stop from eating more!

Everyone ate the meal joyfully. Although a lot of food had been prepared, almost all of it had been devoured. Fang Zizhen and Third Young Master Zhou acted as if they were competing against each other. They both ate so much that their stomachs were distended. Yu Xiaocao boiled some wild hawthorn berries in mystic-stone water and had them drink it to aid with digestion to avoid getting sick.

Fang Zizhen rubbed at his somewhat protruding belly and contently said, "My daughter's food is seriously too delicious. I can't stop eating. Last time, when I returned to the capital, your godmother told me I had gotten fatter."

However, Third Young Master Zhou saw a business opportunity within the century eggs and vermicelli. His bright eyes stared at Yu Xiaocao as he opined, "Xiaocao, I think we can open another factory together to produce vermicelli and century eggs..."

Yu Xiaocao calmly nodded her head, "I was just about to ask you about this idea! Since you got to it before me, then let's discuss the details of our cooperation then!" Third Young Master was never a stingy person, so he slapped the table and proposed, "Let's go with what we've done before, you supply the recipe and I'll handle everything else! We'll split the income 30-70!"

Yu Xiaocao gave him a thumbs up and agreed, "That's the Third Young Master I know, so heroic! Such daring!! I will also include a few more recipes for you..."

When Fang Zizhen heard that Third Young Master Zhou was only given Xiaocao thirty percent of the profits, he immediately became resentful. He wanted to reject the offer yet his daughter had acted faster than he did and sealed the deal. From his perspective, without Xiaocao's recipe, Third Young Master Zhou's factory couldn't even open. Why should he get the lion's share of money and only give his daughter thirty percent instead?

Fang Zizhen wasn't thinking of all of the costs associated with building the factory, recruiting workers, buying raw ingredients, shipping products...which step didn't require capital? After subtracting all of manufacturing costs, Third Young Master Zhou's share of the income wasn't any more or less than Xiaocao's. Compared to the hard work that Third Young Master Zhou had to do, Yu Xiaocao only had to shake her bum around at home and earn money. Getting a smaller share was only natural.

However, Fang Zizhen wasn't thinking of this. He personally believed that his daughter was getting the short end of the stick. When he heard that Xiaocao was going to add some recipes for free, he couldn't restrain himself anymore, "You're giving more recipes for free? The Zhou Family doesn't care about that piddling bit of money! Daughter, have you truly thought of it? Just how much money can the Zhou Family make from your recipes? He's not going to be too stingy to give you a bit more money?"

"Godfather..." Yu Xiaocao was just about to talk when Third Young Master Zhou interrupted her. He nodded his head with a serious expression on his face, "Lord Fang is right! Xiaocao, you can't always let me have my way just because we have a good relationship! Your recipes, I'll buy them at three hundred taels each. Lord Fang, how's that..."

Fang Zizhen stroked his beard and managed to say with difficulty, "Although it's on the lower side, we can still accept it right now! Daughter, don't recklessly spend the money from these recipes. There are two stores in town that caught your godfather's eyes. They're on the same street as Zhenxiu Restaurant. I originally wanted to buy them for you but I was afraid you'd get mad at me and not take them! If we use your own money to buy them, would you agree now?"

They were on the same street as Zhenxiu Restaurant? That was a busy and flourishing section of town ah! It was said that the stores on that street couldn't be bought with money alone. In addition, one store could easily be sold for thousands of taels. How many recipes did she have to sell before she could buy the two that her godfather mentioned?!

Third Young Master Zhou noticed Xiaocao's hesitation and also started persuading her, "I know you think the stores are expensive, but they are expensive for a reason! Do you know how much they charge for rent for the store next to us? On the lower end, one year's rent is around three hundred taels. After two to three years, you'll be able to make back your money! My eldest brother once tried to find the store's owner and, despite offering a huge sum, he ended up coming back empty-handed. I believe only Lord Fang could convince the owner to sell, anyone else would also fail."

In fact, those two stores were bought by Lord Wu under his wife's name when he took his position as the magistrate. He was going to leave his position soon. With his family's background, after leaving office, he would definitely have to go back to the capital to climb the ladder. In the end, Tanggu Town was just too far from the capital and it wasn't easy to supervise properties from a long distance. He had originally planned on emptying the stores and renting them out. The magistrate didn't expect to have his subordinate come back to inform him that the lord imperial envoy apparently wanted to buy them.

#### Chapter 168 – Wealth and Riches

Although Fang Zizhen was only a third-rank military official without much power, Lord Wu had heard that the emperor had favored him. In addition, Lord Fang's master and younger martial brother had recently received the imperial decree and gone back to the capital after being sealed the second-rank Zhenguo General. A large part of the army was put under Zhenguo General's command and before long he was going to the northwest to guard the borders.

Because military families often had both the father and son going into battle, if hostilities arose in the northwest, Fang Zizhen would definitely also be ordered there. When the military leadership was in the hands of Zhao Family's father, son, and disciple, then they would definitely have a place at court in the future...

After considering all of the possibilities, County Magistrate Wu decided to give Fang Zizhen a favor and let his subordinate leak out the news that the shops were owned by his family in order to let the imperial envoy ask for them. However, he had never expected that the imperial envoy actually wanted to buy them for his goddaughter. It had been a busy few days at the docks so Fang Zizhen had forgotten to ask about them. Today, he finally found a chance to talk about them. County Magistrate Wu had been nervously waiting at home. Just what was the imperial envoy trying to do? Did he want to buy them or not?

Yu Xiaocao thought that this was a good idea. In her previous life, many people had earned money by speculating in real estate. Shops and stalls were a decent investment. The shops that were located in the bustling downtown area were even better and often could be sold for a sky-high price. In comparison, the shops in Tanggu Town were already considered not that expensive.

“Godfather, how much would it cost to buy those two shops?” Yu Xiaocao was afraid that she couldn’t raise that much money in a short period of time.

When Fang Zizhen saw his goddaughter agree with his idea, he became even more happy than if he was the one buying the stores. He grinned widely, “Daughter, don’t worry about the price! If you don’t have enough money, Godfather will pay it off for you. Once you have enough money, you can return it back to me!”

Yu Xiaocao rolled her eyes at him. She was well aware that if she took him up on this offer, in the future, when she wanted to pay him back, he would find all sorts of excuses to avoid it. Her godfather already treated her quite well, so she didn’t want other people to accuse her of taking advantage of his money and power! That being said, her godfather also had her godmother at home. If she ended up leaving an impression that she was an avaricious and insatiable greedy person, then she didn’t know what she could do to fix it!

The smile on Zhou Zixu’s face became even more brilliant. He spoke somewhat cautiously to Fang Zizhen, “Lord Fang, you don’t need to worry that Xiaocao doesn’t have enough money to buy the stores. She’s absolutely a wealthy little lady right now! Let’s not even talk about the dividends from the factory, just her dividends from the osmanthus duck alone would be more than enough to buy those two stores!”

The osmanthus duck had been on the market for almost two months now. For every one duck that was sold, Xiaocao got half a tael in return. Between the Zhenxiu Restaurant in Tanggu Town and the one in the capital, those two restaurants probably sold at least two hundred ducks every day. In other words, Xiaocao earned at least a hundred taels every day from this arrangement. In a month, she had an income of more than three thousand taels! To call her a wealthy woman wasn’t an exaggeration in the least!

Originally, the contract dictated that the Yu Family could get the dividends every month or every six months. Yu Xiaocao thought it was too inconvenient to get it every month so she chose to get it every six months instead. Since then, she hadn’t gone into town so she didn’t even know how much money had built up by now.

Zhou Zixu gave everyone a rough outline just how many osmathus ducks his two restaurants had been selling on a daily basis. When the Yu Family found out that, from the sales of the osmanthus duck alone, they had earned five thousand taels, they couldn’t help but be stunned by this number. When had they

ever seen so much money before? They had previously believed that the eight hundred taels Xiaocao had sold her recipe for was an astronomical sum. They would have never thought, or even dreamed, that they might, one day, have over a thousand taels on hand.

Little Shitou's hand loosened its grip on his chopsticks and they pattered down onto the table. He stammered, "Second...Second Sister! Not even two months had passed and our family has earned over five thousand taels, then...then in one year, wouldn't we get over thirty thousand taels? Someone, someone quickly pinch me right now...yeouch! Second Sister, you pinch too hard—haha! I'm not dreaming! Won't our family soon become one of the richest families in Dongshan Village?"

When Zhou Zixu saw Little Shitou, who was dressed in scholarly attire, look so shocked, he couldn't help but laugh at the little boy's lack of sophistication, "Earning around thirty thousand taels in one year makes you so happy that you can't find north anymore? That's only the money from the osmanthus duck. If we add on the money you're earning from the condiment factory and the future century egg and vermicelli, in a few years, let's not even talk about being the richest family in Dongshan Village, even in town your family would be considered extremely wealthy!"

Little Shitou's eyes glittered as if he had stars in them and his face filled with emotion, "That's too good! In the future, I won't have to worry about not being able to afford my school tuition! Older Brother won't have to be sent out from home to be an apprentice! Older Sister and Second Sister won't be sold into the Zhou Family to be maidservants...sniffle, sniffle! I'm so happy right now!"

Although he claimed he was happy, the little fellow covered his face with his hands and started bawling! You couldn't underestimate Little Shitou for being too young. All of his family's sufferings and difficulties had all been heavily engraved within his heart. Before they separated from the main family, his whole family had to endure his grandmother's tyranny. They never had enough to eat, never had decent clothes to wear, and never could finish the work assigned to them. When they split from the family, the house was so run-down that it wasn't livable and it was possible that, at any time, they might run out of food to eat. His father had been bedridden from his leg injury and his mother had washed other people's laundry until the skin on her hands split from the cold and bled. His older brother had been beaten until he had almost died...

To him, those terrible days were still right before his eyes sometimes! At that time, he wouldn't have ever dreamed that there would one day be a day like today. Now, he could eat white rice whenever he wanted and eat large wheat buns whenever he felt like it. From time to time, he could even eat a meal with meat in it. He never would have believed that he might one day enter the town's most famous academy and be able to study and read books for a whole day without any worries. In addition, he never would have expected that this family might have an income of over ten thousand taels as well...



Yu Xiaocao stopped smiling and pulled the little fellow into her arms. Little Shitou threw himself into his second sister's arms and burst into loud tears. Second Sister was like a little immortal fairy from storybooks. There was nothing that she couldn't do or accomplish! He now had an even deeper conviction that his second sister had been blessed by the heavens and taken care of by the gods themselves. As for them, they had merely enjoyed the afterglow of her fortune! *freewebnovel.com*

Everyone in the Yu Family felt their hearts squeeze in pain from the sounds of his heartbroken sobs. One after another they all recalled their circumstances a few months ago. It was like the difference between heaven and hell! The old memories in the air all dampened the environment for a bit.

Fang Zizhen felt extremely uncomfortable within his heart when he saw the tell-tale red rims around his adopted daughter's eyes. He hurriedly interrupted the Yu Family's thoughts and cheerfully admonished, "Okay ah! Earning money is something to be happy about, why are you all crying? My daughter is so capable that she makes more money in a month than me, her godfather!! In the future, Godfather will have the shamefully ask my daughter to buy things for me ah!"

Yu Xiaocao sniffed her nose a couple of times and a sweet smile appeared on her ruddy lips, "Godfather! In the future, Xiaocao will show her filial respect to you and will buy you many things that you like!"

"My daughter is a filial one! Godfather doesn't really care about anything else except eating good food! In the future, just make me more creative and fresh dishes, that's better than buying anything else!" Fang Zizhen couldn't change that he was a foodie to the bones and, instead, used that as an excuse to request more food.

On the side, Yu Hai pretended to be pitiful and sad as he resentfully complained, "Cao'er, you only know how to show your filial respect to your godfather, but what about me, your biological father?"

"I'll also show my filial respects to you!" Her father, who was striving for favor, was like a kitten begging for pets. It was necessary to smooth his fur over too. "I also have to show my filial respects to Mother and Godmother too! In the future, we also need to help Eldest Brother choose a gentle and virtuous wife and prepare a lot of dowry for Xiaolian. We also have Little Shitou to think about. Second Sister is just waiting for you to become the top scorer in the imperial court examinations and become a high-ranking official, so you can support me!"

Little Shitou nodded his head furiously and confidently asserted, "Okay! Second Sister! I will study very hard! Although I entered the school about half a year behind the other students, but I am already the top of my class! The teacher told me I have a natural talent and in the future I'll definitely become a capable scholar! Once I become the top scorer of the imperial examinations, I will definitely get a noble title for Second Sister..."

"So boastful! You're not even the tiniest bit modest, eh?!" Yu Xiaocao grinned toothily and pinched his face full of baby fat, "I've only heard of people asking for titles for their mother and wife before, who has ever asked for a title for their older sister?" Little Shitou was completely serious as he solemnly stated, "Second Sister, in my heart, you're as important as our mother!!"

Xiaocao felt very touched inside and pulled the little boy into her arms to rub and hug. The scholarly cap on Little Shitou's head had been bumped off, and his hair, which had originally been neatly combed, was now a giant mess of weeds. Little Shitou didn't try to pretend to be an adult anymore and repeatedly begged for mercy.

Following that, Zhou Zixu tasted the watermelon as he came to an agreement with Yu Xiaocao about more goods. Every summer, the Zhou Family always had plenty of watermelons gifted to them. However, he had never tasted watermelon that was this sweet and succulent. Also, if his memory was correct, watermelon usually needed another two months before they'd appear on the market. The Yu Family had, once again, beaten everyone else.

Zhou Zixu accepted Yu Xiaocao's proposal to send a plate of watermelon and fruits to every table whose bill surpassed a hundred taels. In addition, it was also possible to buy a plate of watermelon too! If the gifted fruit and melon plate didn't whet the appetite, then someone could order more. However, it definitely wouldn't be cheap!

"Xiaocao, you should quickly buy those two stores soon so you can open a fruit store. Although Tanggu Town is a small place, there are plenty of rich people around! Furthermore, there are visitors from the south who are touring the north, and they usually have a lot of cash on hand!" Zhou Zixu also gave her a proposal.

"A fruit store? But watermelon is the only fruit that my family has ah!" Yu Xiaocao remembered the fruit markets in her past life were all filled with fruits from the north to south. By comparison, this fruit store of hers sounded a bit too pathetic right?

Third Young Master Zhou thought for a bit and then said, “I know a fruit wholesale business, if you need it...”

“Let’s forget about it! I suspect that my family’s three mu of watermelon fields can only produce enough to sell for two to three months! We’ll first open a watermelon store! Once the watermelons are all sold out, then we can rent the store out! We don’t have enough people at home, so we all have more work than we can finish!”

The family’s vegetable fields all required someone to take care of them. The long rows of vegetable fields could produce enough to be sold until the end of autumn and the start of winter. Now, the Yu Family could earn over two hundred taels per month from vegetable sales alone! Many vegetables, when it was past their season, would get too old and have an odd coating on them, which impacted their taste. However, the Yu Family’s vegetables never had this problem.

Now, other than the Yao Family, a lot of other wealthy families in town also bought their produce from the Yu Family. Also, they all came over to receive the produce. As for restaurants, the Yu Family only supplied Zhenxiu Restaurant alone. With the mystic-stone water as her cheat item that could shorten the vegetable growth cycle, the Yu Family’s four mu of vegetable fields produced enough to supply them all!

Other than the vegetable fields, they also had their braised food business at the docks. The weather was gradually getting warmer, so they were afraid that the food might go bad overnight. Thus, Madam Liu always woke up very early in the morning to braise the food now and had Xiaolian quickly drive the donkey cart to the docks to sell. Every day, they could also earn two to three hundred copper coins from that, which came out to ten taels per month. Don’t look down on these ten taels though, most ordinary people only made that much in a year!

In addition, they also had their wholesale seafood business. Every day, the Yu Family would continuously buy marine goods from the nearby fishermen. Even with Yu Jiang’s cooperation, they were so busy that they couldn’t tell their head from their feet. Sometimes, Yu Lichun would stroll by, see how busy they were, and would also help them.

The three mu watermelon fields would soon be ready to go to market, and she wasn’t sure who could be available to help sell them. This was truly a big problem! However, Xiaocao had already an inkling of an idea of who could help. She decided on doing a wholesale business and was planning to give someone they were acquainted with the opportunity to make some money...

The singing of birds awakened the new day. A gentle breeze blew the fresh and delicate smell of the earth upon one's face. Today, the entire Dongshan Village, contrary to the usual peaceful and quiet mornings, was bustling with noise and excitement due to certain news.

"Did you guys hear about it? The Zhou Family's factory wants to buy a large quantity of sweet potato flour!" The villagers chatted as they waited in line at the entrance of Yu Xiaocao's house, where the Yu Family was collecting oysters and spoon worms.

Another villager was surprised and said, "Really? Last fall, my family harvested a lot of sweet potatoes. We were afraid that they couldn't be kept for too long, so we dried them and stored them in the cellar! After I sell these oysters, I'll go home and tell my husband to grind them all into flour—but, I wonder what the price would be?"

"The Zhou Family does honest business, unlike those black-hearted merchants who deliberately lower the price. I heard that it will be a little higher than the market price!" The person who spoke was a capable-looking man.

Another simple and honest-looking man with a strong-build looked at the cleaned spoon worms in his own basket and chuckled, "Yes, that's right! Ever since the Zhou Family started buying oysters and spoon worms at our village, my family's living conditions have improved a lot. Now, I don't have to constantly ponder and calculate when my children want to get some fine grain! Yesterday, I bought a catty of meat to satisfy my children's cravings!"

"Older Brother Dadong, you and your eldest son are experts at digging for spoon worms. You guys can earn a few hundred copper coins every day. Even if you eat meat for every meal, you still won't spend all the money!" The capable-looking man said with a slightly sour tone.

The honest-looking man, who was called Older Brother Dadong, smiled with embarrassment, "No, that's not true! My eldest son needs to look for a wife soon, so we have to save some money for his betrothal gifts ah!"

"Older Brother Dadong, our Dongshan Village isn't the same as before! In the past, our village was poor so the girls from other villages were unwilling to marry over. Now, as long as you have strength, wouldn't you be able to earn over a hundred copper coins every day? Several of my maternal relatives, who have daughters, have inquired about whether there were any competent young men in our village!" The person who spoke was a matron, who appeared somewhat well-off.

Brother Dadong hastily said, "This auntie, can you help keep an eye out for my eldest son? The girl doesn't have to be very pretty. It's fine as long as she has a good personality and is a diligent worker!"

The matron smiled like a flower and said, "Brother Dadong, if you believe me, then just leave it up to me. My maternal niece has a decent appearance and is a diligent worker. She's definitely capable of managing a household. Go back and discuss with your wife. If she doesn't object, then I'll help you talk to them."

"Alright, alright! I'll have to trouble this auntie!!" Brother Dadong smiled so broadly that even the wrinkles on the corner of his eyes had deepened. In the past, he had gotten married at an older age because his family was poor. It seemed like his son wouldn't share the same fate as him.

As they chatted, Yu Xiaocao came to the front of the line and stood on a tall rock with a paper that was rolled into a paper cone. With the paper cone in front of her mouth, she shouted in her loudest voice, "Everybody, all uncles and aunties! Good morning!!"

"Good! Good! This is Brother Dahai's daughter. She looks very energetic!"

"Aiyo, Xiaocao, don't stand so high. Be careful of falling..."

"Brother Dahai's younger daughter is very clever. Selling braised food and planting watermelons were all her ideas! Look at her. Why don't my family have a daughter like her?"

"This little girl, I wonder what new ideas she came up with..."

Seeing that she had successfully attracted everyone's attention, Yu Xiaocao smiled even more sweetly, "Please be quiet everyone!! I have good news that I want to share with my fellow villagers!!"

When the villagers heard that there was good news, they immediately stopped whispering and pricked up their ears to listen to the good news.

Yu Xiaocao nodded with satisfaction and shouted, "The Zhou Family is planning on opening two new factories! They need to recruit a group of workers, both men and women can sign up. After being selected and signing the contract, you will receive a monthly wage that is no less than one tael of silver!"

As soon as Xiaocao finished speaking, the crowd instantly erupted.

"The Zhou Family is opening another new factory? Moreover, they're recruiting workers from outside? That's great!! I heard that the Zhou Family's condiment factory provides excellent treatment for its workers. They get four days off every month, and in addition to their monthly wage, there's also a bonus at the end of the year! I was just thinking that it was a pity that the Zhou Family only used their own servants in their condiment factory... I wouldn't have expected that they would recruit outside workers for their new factory! I'll definitely go try out no matter what!"

"I'll go too!! Who knows maybe I will get hired! A monthly wage of one tael means that I will be able to bring in a stable income! I will be a fool not to go!"

"Didn't you hear what Xiaocao said? Both men and women can apply. I have nothing to do at home and I'm not good at digging for spoon worms. Perhaps I should go home and discuss with my husband, and also go apply for the job?"

.....

Seeing that her words had attracted the attention of the villagers, Yu Xiaocao cleared her throat and continued, "Third Young Master Zhou said they will recruit workers from Dongshan Village first! Any families who have extra laborers can all go try! Also, the Zhou Family will have a long-term demand for sweet potato flour, chicken eggs, and duck eggs. So, if your family has extras at home, you can exchange them for money! The registration time is only three days, so please spread the news and don't delay on applying!"

This news swiftly spread throughout the entire Dongshan Village. Immediately, several families went to the docks together, registered at the Zhou Family's factory, and waited for their assessment.

Third Young Master Zhou had foresight and specially built several more factory buildings when constructing the condiment factory. When condiment factory first started production, it only occupied

fewer than half of the buildings. The rest were separated and used as factories for century eggs and vermicelli respectively.

Three days later, the Zhou Family's century eggs factory and vermicelli factory were already all set to go. Except for the 'mud' wrapped on the outside, there was hardly any technical skills needed when making century eggs. Xiaocao taught Third Young Master Zhou's trusted subordinate the formula for making the 'mud'. The workers would make century eggs with the mud that he prepared every day. Thus, the staff of the century eggs factory could begin working after a simple training!

The century eggs factory didn't need a lot of people. After the interviews and examination, they only accepted several matrons who were quick and diligent workers. However, it was more difficult to enter the vermicelli factory. No matter if it was kneading the sweet potato flour, tapping the straining basin, scooping out the vermicelli, or drying the vermicelli, they all required a lot of technical skills and rigorous training.

Moreover, workers admitted into the vermicelli factory all had to sign a confidentiality contract. Anyone who leaked the formula would have to compensate the factory one thousand taels for their loss, and they would also be arrested and sent to jail.

Many people wanted to back out after hearing the first clause. However, when they heard that the factory provided a high wage, excellent treatment, and an annual bonus, most people were still willing to sign the contract after careful deliberation. As long as they didn't have any malicious intents and didn't leak the formula, there wouldn't be any problems at all!

The task of kneading the sweet potato flour was mostly assigned to neat and agile young maidens and young wives. The times had changed, and the perspective of the villagers of Dongshan Village were also changing. It was no longer considered shameful for young maidens and married women to make money to support their families!

Young and strong men were responsible for tapping the straining basin and extruding the vermicelli. They would change shift and take a break every hour because this was a job that depended entirely on strength. If they worked from morning till night, it would be a wonder if their arms weren't crippled.

As for the task of scooping up vermicelli and drying them, they chose matrons who worked meticulously and patiently. As a result, more than half of the employees in these two factories owned by Zhou Family were women.

For example, in the past, when the young women and matrons of Dongshan Village were free and idle, they would just gather in groups to chat and gossip. Since the Zhou Family's factories began operating, the village had become a lot more quiet. Except for the elderly, women would be rarely seen under the old elm tree at the mouth of the village.

Of course, except for Madam Xiong and Madam Li! These two were the typical case of lazy and gluttonous people, who couldn't do anything. Thus, the factory definitely wouldn't accept them. The two of them had also went to apply for a job, but when they saw Madam Li's sloppy appearance, she was eliminated in the first round. The reason was that the Zhou Family's factories were producing food. If the worker's personal hygiene was bad, how could they ensure the hygiene of the food?

Madam Xiong was also eliminated in the second round because of her clumsiness. Madam Xiong was extremely bitter to see that several of the women, who she didn't get along with, had passed the examination. So she incited Madam Li to get Yu Hai's family to pull strings for them.

Madam Li was the same as her mother-in-law, who bullied the weak and feared the strong. She didn't dare to look for Yu Xiaocao, who had a backing, and talked to Madam Liu in private, forcing her to help put in a good word for her in front of Third Young Master Zhou. However, Yu Xiaocao, who had kept an eye on her as soon as she entered the gates, overheard her words.

"Eldest Aunt! The century eggs factory and vermicelli factory don't belong to my mother, so what's the use of looking for my mother? My mother seldom speaks to Third Young Master Zhou, yet you're asking her to ask him for a favor. Are you sure you're not looking for the wrong person?! Let me be frank with you! Third Young Master Zhou won't listen to anyone in my family except for me! It's useless for you to look for someone else!!"

With her arms crossed in front of her chest, Yu Xiaocao inwardly scorned Madam Li's bullying the weak and fearing the strong behavior. Did she really think that her mother was still so easily bullied? Dream on!

Madam Li looked around and noticed that Xiaocao's godfather, who was a high-ranking official, wasn't around, so she hastily bent down and smiled flatteringly, "Xiaocao! You see, no matter what we're still relatives. What are relatives? Aren't relatives supposed to take care of each other? Eldest Aunt has never asked you for anything, so please just help Eldest Aunt once!"



Yu Xiaocao's eyes shifted as she pondered and said, "It's not that I can't help you put in a few good words! But all the work at the vermicelli factory are heavy and tiring, so with Eldest Aunt's 'pampered lifestyle', you definitely can't do it. Then... go to the century eggs factory! However, they go by a piece-rate-pay system there! Those who work faster will be paid more and receives a higher monthly wage, while people who work slower will certainly get less money. Eldest Aunt, what do you think?"

Madam Li still knew herself very well. Whether it was before she got married or after she married into the Yu Family, she had hardly done any work. If she received a monthly wage based on piecework pay, then..."

Madam Li smiled flatteringly and said, "Xiaocao, can you see if there's any other job..."

"It's not that I'm looking down on you, Eldest Aunt, but you won't be able to do any of the other work! If you don't think that you're suitable for the job, then just keep digging for spoon worms. As long as you're willing to work hard, you will definitely be able to get a lot of money every month!" Yu Xiaocao waved her hands and spoke in a somewhat impatient tone.

Madam Li knew that Xiaocao wasn't someone who was easy to deal with. She had the support of her high-ranking official godfather, so she couldn't beat or scold her. Although she had a tummy full of dissatisfaction, she still accepted the job. Well, so be it! Even if she worked slow, she would still get money for each one she made.

She was the most satisfied with the fact that Madam Zhang wouldn't be around when she worked. Her mother-in-law wouldn't know how much her salary was, which made it more convenient for her to deduct some money from it and keep it as private savings...

#### Chapter 170 – Selling Watermelons

However, Madam Li wasn't the only one who wanted to get in through the back door! Xiaocao's second maternal aunt was a shrewish woman, who fussed over everything. But she wasn't someone who would pick the easy jobs and shirk on hard work. She had heard from her elder female cousin, who had married over to Dongshan Village, that the Zhou Family was recruiting workers in Dongshan Village first. She immediately felt alert within her heart—If all the positions at the Zhou Family's factories were filled up by the villagers of Dongshan Village, wouldn't that mean that she would have no chance at all?

Madam Hu forced Xiaocao's honest second maternal uncle to accompany her to Dongshan Village behind her in-laws' back. Why didn't she go alone? Because she felt ashamed!

Xiaocao's maternal grandmother had given Xiaocao's family several taels when they first separated from the main family. This was something that she had grumbled about for a long while. Every time she saw Madam Liu and the Yu Family, she would mention this matter in a sarcastic manner.

As the saying goes: 'Don't go overboard to ensure pleasant meetings in the future'. This was seriously such a wise phrase. She hadn't expected that the Yu Family's living conditions would be completely different within a few months. Not only did they repay all the money, but they also became acquainted with a rich businessman in town. She wasn't as thick-faced as Madam Li. With how she treated them in the past, how could she not be ashamed to come ask them for a favor now?

Madam Hu and her husband got up early in the morning, and it was already late in the morning by the time they reached Dongshan Village. However, when the two arrived at the Yu Family's old residence, the person they were looking for wasn't home! They asked Yu Hai, who was collecting marine goods on the side, and found out that the whole family had gone to work on the fields because the watermelons had ripened!

"Second Maternal Uncle, Second Maternal Aunt, go sit down and rest in the yard first. It's almost noon, so my mother will come back to make lunch soon..." Yu Hang greeted them politely with a smile.

Madam Hu impatiently waved her hands and said, "No need, no need! We will just go help out in the fields. Xiaosha, you should continue with your work!"

Liu Han had come to help plow the fields before, so he knew where the Yu Family's three mu of sandy land was. Without the need to be guided there, he brought his wife over to the watermelon fields.

Madam Hu whispered, "Husband, did you see the long line for selling seafood? I reckon that your younger sister probably earned quite a lot of money from doing this, right?"

"How much they earn is their own business! Our village isn't near the sea, so we don't have the luck to earn this kind of money even if we want to!" Liu Han was an honest man who spoke bluntly, so his words sometimes made people feel uncomfortable.

Madam Hu glared at him and said, "We can't collect seafood, but we can come help them when they're busy ah! Just look at your younger brother-in-law's younger male cousin. I don't believe that he's helping for free. He probably gets some sort of benefit?"

“Since he lives close by, it’s convenient for him to come over to help!! Yu Jiang is a good and honest man. Younger Brother-in-law didn’t choose the wrong person!” Liu Han still didn’t understand his wife’s intention, causing Madam Hu to be extremely angry.

“Humph! That younger sister of yours can’t even manage her own household! She doesn’t even think about her maternal family when there’s good opportunities...” Madam Hu finally expressed her inner thoughts.

Liu Han glared at her and said, “My family isn’t like your maternal family. Brothers not doing any proper work and always wanting to take advantage of their married sisters and daughters! Just look at your sisters. Your brothers have been causing so much trouble for them that they’re barely able to continue living! If it weren’t for my parents’ generosity, do you think that you would be able to have such a good life at home?”

Madam Hu’s voice immediately softened, “Weren’t we talking about your younger sister? Why did you mention my family? It’s not like I want those kinds of brothers either ah...”

Liu Han looked at her and said, “We all know what it was like when my younger sister’s family split from the main family. Her family’s living conditions had just improved a bit, so as her older brother and older sister-in-law, we shouldn’t cause more trouble for her! Just directly tell Muyun about the matter when we see her. She will help if she can. But if she really can’t help, remember not to say anything unpleasant, okay?”

Madam Hu was sharp-tongued and somewhat selfish, but she still listened to her husband’s words, “I will remember, after all, we did come to ask for their help! I will definitely control my own mouth!”

As they spoke, they had arrived at the watermelon fields. On the green vines were large watermelons with their bellies swelled up as they basked in the sun. The Yu Family, who were in the melon fields, were bending down and gently tapping on the watermelons to find the ripe watermelons. After picking out the ripe watermelons, they plucked them from their vines. In fact, the harvested watermelons had already been piled high on the ground.

“Oh my! So these are watermelons. They’re really big. Each one probably weighs at least ten to twenty catties, right? It’s seldom seen in town, let alone our small village, isn’t it? Husband, how much do you

think cost for one catty?” Madam Hu curiously walked around the pile of watermelons, while clicking her tongue.

Yu Xiaocao struggled slightly to hold a big, ripe watermelon as she wobbled over. Seeing this, Liu Han quickly went forward to take the watermelon from her hands.

“Second Uncle, why did you come? This morning, my mother and I were just talking about you and Eldest Maternal Uncle!” Yu Xiaocao didn’t really like Madam Hu, but she didn’t have any bad feelings towards her slightly dull second maternal uncle.

Liu Han put the watermelon in his hands with the pile of watermelons. He rubbed his hands and smiled shyly, “Your second maternal aunt wants to work at the Zhou Family’s factory, but we’re not sure if they’re still recruiting people. So I came with her to ask about it.”

Yu Xiaocao looked at Madam Hu, who was staring at the watermelon, and said, “There are still a few vacant spots for drying vermicelli. It requires people who are meticulous and patient. Both men and women are allowed to apply...”

Liu Han laughed and said, “Although your second maternal aunt has a sharp tongue, she’s a very good worker!”

Besides them, Madam Hu picked up her ears and listened attentively, for fear that she would miss something. She nodded vigorously upon hearing his words.

Yu Xiaocao looked down and thought about it, and then said, “Alright. I’ll go with Second Maternal Aunt in the afternoon. However, to work at the vermicelli factory, you’ll need to sign a confidentiality agreement. If you leak the vermicelli formula, you will have to pay a compensation and also be sent to jail!”

Madam Hu quickly vowed, “Xiaocao, you can rest assured! I will never say a word about the factory to outsiders! ...Earlier, you said that you were looking for your maternal uncles. What’s the matter?”

Madam Hu turned her gaze towards the pile of watermelons. At that side, Madam Liu was busy weighing watermelons for Wang Ergou.

Speaking of Wang Ergou, since Xiaocao agreed to let him sell watermelons on credit, he was especially concerned about the Yu Family's watermelon fields. When he encountered Xiaocao and Yu Hai watering the fields, he would rush over to help carry a few loads of water. In the evening, he would also take the initiative to help watch the watermelons, substituting for Yu Hai so that he could go home and rest for a few days.

These days, he had been visiting the melon fields nearly every day. Knowing that the Yu Family were harvesting watermelons today, he woke up before dawn to come help them. Although he didn't know how to tell if the watermelons had ripened yet, he helped transport them to the edge of the field. Early in the morning, he was drenched in sweat and working even harder than when he worked on his own household chores!

He had already repaired his family's handcart and prepared to push a cart of watermelons to the docks today to test the waters. He had planned to sell the melons in town, but when he found out that the Yu Family was going to open a watermelon store in town, he gave up on that idea. When it came to selling things, eight of him would still be incomparable to one Yu Xiaocao. There was a good flow of merchants and passenger ships at the wharf every day, so there should be quite a lot of wealthy people. Thus, he followed Xiaocao's advice to open up a market at the docks.

"Xiaocao, I don't really know how to read a scale. What if I lose money?" Wang Ergou used to be an ignorant and incompetent man, and had only gotten slightly better after he got married. His wife, on the other hand, was very capable and there was hardly anything that she couldn't do. But his wife was pregnant right now. So how could he let her rush back and forth to the docks?

Yu Xiaocao smiled at him and said, "That's easy! The bigger watermelons should be around twenty catties. Since you're getting your melons from us, I'll give you the wholesale price of a hundred fifty copper coins per catty, so it cost three taels. Sell them for five taels in town! Sell the smaller ones for four taels, and the even smaller ones that looks around ten catties for three taels! That should do it!"

Wang Ergou hadn't even reacted when Madam Hu shouted in surprise, "What? A watermelon cost five taels? Five taels is enough for a whole family to eat for half a year. Can you really sell them?"

Liu Han quickly pulled on his wife and glared at her, "If you don't have anything good to say, then don't speak! No one will think that you're a mute!!"

Wang Ergou smiled unconcernedly and said, "Liu Family's daughter-in-law, people like us will definitely be unwilling to spend several taels to buy a watermelon. However, there are many rich noblemen at the docks. Our watermelons are juicy and sweet. Moreover, we're the only ones selling them. They won't be able to find them anywhere else! Even if it's more expensive, I still wouldn't be worried that it won't sell, let alone five taels!! Xiaocao, your idea is really good. I'll just do that!"

Madam Liu was almost done weighing the watermelons. Wang Ergou's handcart wasn't very big, and could hold twenty watermelons at most.

"A total of three hundred sixty-eight catties. We'll round it for you and make it three hundred sixty catties. Xiaocao, calculate the price for your Uncle Ergou!" Madam Liu's math skills was a lot worse than her children's. She didn't have the confidence to figure out such a big number.

Yu Xiaocao silently calculated in her heart and quickly answered, "Uncle Ergou, it's a total of fifty-four taels! I'll write you a promissory note. You can take the watermelons after you leave your fingerprint!"

The provisionary note had already been written and she just needed to fill in the total weight and money owed for the watermelons. Yu Xiaocao filled in the numbers with a quill pen, and then she carefully read it to the illiterate Wang Ergou.

Wang Ergou didn't hesitate and quickly dipped his index finger into the ink, and then printed his fingerprint onto the note. He said, "You don't have to read it. Even if I don't trust others, how can I not trust you? Later, if my wife comes over, just tell her that I went to the docks."

According to the size of the watermelons, Wang Ergou loaded the watermelons onto his handcart and pushed it away enthusiastically.

Yu Xiaocao's shop in town would open for business tomorrow, so they needed to transport the watermelons to the shop for storage today. She pulled up her sleeves, laboriously picked up a watermelon, and struggled to put it onto the donkey cart. When Liu Han saw her, he quickly said, "Just leave it. I'll load them onto the cart!" [freewebov.com](http://www.freewebov.com)

Madam Hu also tactfully picked up a watermelon and said, "Xiaocao, can you carry them with your slender arms and legs? Don't you just need to load them onto the cart? Just leave it to your uncle and aunt!"

Xiaocao also didn't continue to be courteous with them. As she helped, she said to Liu Han, "Second Maternal Uncle, there's not much in the fields right now, so why don't you also take a cart of watermelons to sell in town?! As long as the watermelons don't fall or get smashed, you can keep them for five to six days. If you can't sell them all in a day, you can continue to sell them the next day..."

Liu Han quietly moved several watermelons, and then bluntly replied, "The prime cost for a watermelon is two to three taels. I'm afraid of messing it up... Moreover, we don't have a cart to transport them."