

Gold Chapter 181

Fields of Gold Chapter 181

Linglong and Zhenzhu looked at each other. It seemed like Miss Yu was highly regarded within the madam's heart ah! At least, she had surpassed the madam's niece, the young miss who had lived with the Fang Family for several years. They reminded each other with their eyes: In the future, they absolutely could not neglect or have any contempt for the adopted young miss!

However, Yu Xiaocao said embarrassingly, "Godmother, I'm not a child anymore. I should walk myself and not tire you out."

"How much do you weigh? I can even carry a hundred catty sandbag with ease at home. Even carrying something that weighs three times as much as you do won't wear me out!" Lady Fang put Xiaocao on the bed and helped her take off her jacket like she was taking care of an infant.

"I'll do it myself..." Yu Xiaocao blushed with shame and took off her outer garment. But her movements were too big, and she accidentally pulled at the wounds on her back, causing her to grit her teeth in pain.

"You ah, stop trying to be brave!" Lady Fang pressed her down onto the bed and lifted up her snow-white inner garment. She saw an obvious and hideous dark purple bruise on her nearly transparent, fair back.

Not only was Lady Fang extremely heartbroken, but Linglong and Zhenzhu also gasped in shock. It must be so painful ah! Had it been another little girl, she would have definitely cried out loudly in pain a long time ago. Yet the young miss had been holding back the pain and amusing the madam so that she wouldn't be angry...

Lady Fang had brought along a small medicine box. She took out a delicate porcelain bottle from her small medicine box, which was a bottle of 'bruise soothing powder' bestowed by the emperor. She carefully poured some of the powder onto her palm and gently covered the bruise on the slender back with her hand. For the bruise soothing powder to be effective, it was necessary to use some strength to relieve the acupuncture points and dissolve the bruise. Lady Fang was afraid that the little girl couldn't endure the pain, so she first gently massaged before gradually increasing her strength.

At first, Yu Xiaocao hissed as she sucked in a breath of cold air. Then she wailed sorrowfully, "It hurts, hurts, hurts... be more gentle. Godmother, please be more gentle!"

"Endure it for a bit. If I don't use some strength, it won't be effective..." Lady Fang tenderly comforted her, but she didn't reduce the strength in her hands. Yu Xiaocao continued to scream and flail her limbs vigorously, hitting the bed loudly.

Linglong and Zhenzhu lowered their heads and tried to hold back their laughter. At this time, the young miss looked like a fish out of water. Her unpretentious appearance looked really cute.

Xia Furong gnashed her teeth and stared enviously at the whining brat. Her paternal aunt was so biased. When she first came to the General Estate, she was only seven to eight years old and her aunt's most intimate action was to hold her hands and touch her head. But how can this dirty rural girl let her aunt hold her in her arms and personally apply medication for her?! The bruise soothing powder was awarded by the emperor, and it would be difficult to obtain on the market even with a thousand pieces of gold. How was that wretch worthy of such a precious thing?

However, Yu Xiaocao didn't want this honor at all. She was only a little bruised. When she got home, she could just let the little divine stone blow a breath of celestial air on her back and everything would be fine. Why did she have to suffer like this for no reason ah!

Lady Fang giggled, patted the little girl's restless butt, and daunted, "Behave! Be careful not to hurt your arms and legs. If they get bruised, you'll have to suffer again."

After hearing that, Yu Xiaocao immediately stopped, as if she was a robotic doll that was out of power. But her cry of pain became louder and louder. A crying child would get milk, so she wasn't going to go for that act of 'gritting her teeth and enduring in silence'!

"What's going on?" Eldest Maternal Aunt, Madam Han, and Xiaocao's maternal grandmother, Madam Yao, had come to deliver the goods. As soon as they entered the shop, they had heard Xiaocao's loud shrieking, so they hastily came in to inquire. Seeing the bruise on the little girl's back, the two couldn't help but feel heartache.

Yu Xiaocao immediately stopped screaming. She turned her head to see her maternal grandmother and eldest maternal aunt's wan smile, and softly said, "Grandmother, Eldest Maternal Aunt, it's alright! I just

accidentally bumped into the door. I'll be fine after applying some medication—By the way, this is my godmother, who came from the capital!"

Madam Yao and her daughter-in-law knew that Xiacocao had gotten an official as her godfather. Hearing that she was Xiaocao's godmother, didn't that mean that the wife of an official had come? The two honest matrons were bewildered as they just stood there and smiled awkwardly.

Lady Fang smiled affably at them and said gently, "We are relatives now, so you guys don't have to be so restrained."

Seeing her maternal grandmother and aunt's perplexed expression, Yu Xiaocao smiled and said, "Grandmother, Eldest Aunt, I don't know if Uncle Li can handle all the work in front, so can you guys go help out first? I'll come help after applying the medication."

Madam Han nodded and said, "It's not that busy, so it will be fine with just your grandmother and me. You're injured, so you should just stay and chat with your godmother!"

Xia Furong's heart was full of contempt for the typical speech and behavior of the two rural women—As expected, that damned wretch's relatives were unpresentable.

Yu Xiaocao's 'torture' finally ended. She spread out her arms and legs on the bed and pretended to be dead. Lady Fang was so amused by her that she couldn't stop laughing. She patted her fleshy little butt and said, "Stop playing around. Quickly get up and put on your clothes so that you won't catch a cold."

Yu Xiaocao sat up and moved her arms. It seemed like her back really didn't hurt as much as before. She slowly put on her clothes and said, "Godmother, are you going to go rest at the residence in town or come back to Dongshan Village with us?"

Her godfather's job was basically the same as a project supervisor. It would take at least three to five years to complete the construction of the port, so he bought a residence in town. But her godfather rarely lived in the residence in town. He usually stayed in the Zhao Family's old residence at the foot of the West Mountains. This was because it was located close to Xiaocao's house, which made it more convenient for him to freeload meals from the Yu Family.

Fang Zizhen had already explained this matter to his wife in his letters. Lady Fang pondered for a moment and then said, "With my understanding of your godfather, he will go straight to Dongshan Village when he returns from the prefectural city. So I will wait for him at Dongshan Village!"

Yu Xiaocao nodded her head obediently and said, "Mhm! Godfather set off to the prefectural city early this morning so he should almost be there by now. I reckon he will have to stay a night at the prefectural city and come back tomorrow! The conditions of the residence in town is better, but no one has been living there for a long time after all. So it will be very troublesome to clean. Although the house in Dongshan Village is simple and crude, it's closer to my house and we can take care of each other. Godmother, you've been traveling for such a long time, so you should be hungry, right? I'll treat you to a feast at Zhenxiu Restaurant..."

It would cost at least a hundred taels for a meal at the Zhenxiu Restaurant in the capital, and it was common to pay three to five hundred taels for a meal. Lady Fang knew that her adoptive daughter had average living conditions. Although the watermelon shop was doing very well, it was still better to help her daughter save some money.

"I heard from your godfather that you have excellent cooking skills. Godmother wants to try your cooking." Lady Fang caressed the young girl's smooth, black hair, and inwardly praised the little girl's hair for growing so well. Unbeknownst to her, this head of black hair was still as dry as a stick of firewood half a year ago!

Yu Xiaocao thought of the empty kitchen in the courtyard. She had been so busy with the opening of her shop that she didn't have time to prepare the kitchen utensils, let alone the seasonings. She bit her lip and murmured, "Godmother, there's nothing prepared in the small kitchen in the shop. A skillful woman can hardly cook without rice. It's almost noon already, so how am I supposed to make food for you now? If you want to try my cooking, I can show you my skills tonight! Let's just make do with a meal at Zhenxiu Restaurant first..."

Going to eat at Zhenxiu Restaurant, yet she described it as putting up with a meal? If others heard this, she would definitely get beat up! Due to Zhenxiu Restaurant's endless stream of new dishes, even the tables in the main dining hall had been fully booked for several days. Without making a reservation in advance, don't even think about eating the delicacies at Zhenxiu Restaurant!

Xia Furong narrowed her eyes and sneered with a smirk, 'A poor village girl wants to pretend to be capable and impress my aunt by treating her to a meal at Zhenxiu Restaurant? Even a table of the most simple dishes at Zhenxiu Restaurant will cost several dozen taels. Even if she sells watermelons for an entire day, she still might not earn enough money for a meal at the restaurant.' Later, she must take

advantage of this opportunity to order more of their signature dishes so that the damned brat would have a heartache! Even the snobby and arrogant noble ladies in the capital seldom had the chance to eat at Zhenxiu Restaurant, let alone her!

It was almost noon. Xiaocao, who had been busily working since dawn, was so hungry that her chest was sticking to her back. After having a small talk with her godmother, she accompanied her godmother to the nearby Zhenxiu Restaurant.

When she passed by the shop, she smiled at her maternal grandmother and eldest maternal aunt, who were in the store, "Grandmother, Eldest Maternal Aunt, since there isn't a lot customers right now, let's go eat something across the street first!"

Madam Yao looked at the lavish silk brocade that Lady Fang wore, as well as the impressive aura she gave off. Even the two maidservants behind her were dressed better than them. She felt slightly ashamed of her inferiority, so she shook her hands repeatedly and said, "You go accompany your godmother! There needs to be people in the shop. We can just buy two steamed flatbreads to eat later!"

Xiaocao also knew that, even if her maternal grandmother and eldest maternal aunt went, they still wouldn't be able to eat with ease. Thus, she didn't force them and said, "I'll ask the server to deliver some food over. Grandmother, Eldest Maternal Aunt, Zhenxiu Restaurant's roasted chicken and osmanthus duck are pretty good. Later, have a taste and see if they suit your appetites!"

"No need, no need! How much money would you have to spend to get chickens and ducks?! Even if you have money, you still can't spend them like this. I think eating steamed flatbread is fine!" Eldest Maternal Aunt disagreed with Xiaocao spending money recklessly.

None of them knew that Yu Xiaocao had never needed to spend any money when eating at Zhenxiu Restaurant. No matter what, she could be considered as business partners with the boss of Zhenxiu Restaurant. The money that she helped them earn was enough for her to eat several lifetimes of sumptuous meals!

It was currently mealtime, so Zhenxiu Restaurant was completely packed with customers. Several people from out of town, who had come to visit after hearing about the famous restaurant, walked out of the restaurant with disappointment upon hearing that the tables had been reserved for the next three days.

"Seems like there isn't any tables left." Lady Fang, who was holding her goddaughter's hand and unwilling to let go, heard the disappointment of the visitor who passed by. She lowered her head to look at Xiaocao and softly said.

Xia Furong also had a face full of disappointment. She couldn't control herself and blurted out, "Younger Cousin, did you pretend to be generous and treat us to a meal because you knew that we wouldn't be able to get a table at Zhenxiu Restaurant at this time?!"

"Furong!" Lady Fang could understand a young girl having slight vanity, so she wasn't mad about this matter. She was afraid that her daughter would become angry from embarrassment, so she hastily chided her niece.

Xia Furong felt even more angry. She snorted unhappily and said, "Aunt, you're siding with her! Look, even someone like Second Young Master Zhu couldn't get a table, let alone an ordinary peasant girl like her?"

Fields of Gold Chapter 182

Lady Fang looked in the direction of her niece's line of sight. Sure enough, Prince Jing's second son, Zhu Junxi, was talking to someone who appeared to be a manager. At this time, there were several people, who looked like merchants, coming out of the restaurant with a disappointed expression.

"Forget it, Godmother will treat you to a meal at Fulin Restaurant to try their specialty dishes! In your godfather's letters, he mentioned that there are a few long-established restaurants in Tanggu Town and they each have their own specialty dishes. You can just invite us to eat at Zhenxiu Restaurant on another day." They had only just met, but Lady Fang felt that she was kindred spirits with this little girl. Thus, she provided a way for her to get out of this awkward situation.

Yu Xiaocao smiled genuinely at her godmother, held her hand, and stepped into the main entrance of Zhenxiu Restaurant.

"This guest, I'm really sorry! All our tables for today has been reserved three days ago. We really can't get an empty table for you, let alone a private room..." The head manager had a keen eye for people. He was absolutely certain that the dignified and noble young man in front of him had an extraordinary family background. However, integrity was very important in business. He couldn't cancel other people's reservations, which they got with much difficulty, for him just because he was someone of high status. Wouldn't that be ruining their own reputation? Hence, he could only sincerely apologize.

Zhu Junxi had a slightly unpleasant expression on his face. Generally, big restaurants would have a couple private rooms reserved for the owner's friends. Although he didn't know the owner of Zhenxiu Restaurant, there could be an exception for everything. He was willing to pay double the price to borrow the reserved private room for a one time use, but this manager wouldn't agree no matter what...

He took in a deep breath and was about to say something when he was interrupted by a clear voice behind him, "Uncle Manager, is Third Young Master here today?"

The head manager smiled apologetically at Zhu Junxi and then looked at Xiaocao, who was behind him. He smiled until his eyes had narrowed into a line, "Miss Xiaocao, our boss went to send a batch of vermicelli and century eggs to the capital. He just left this morning! Are you looking for our boss?"

"It's nothing! My godmother came from afar, so I wanted to borrow Third Young Master's reserved private room to entertain her." Yu Xiaocao bluntly stated her intention.

The head manager quickly said, "What do you mean by borrow? Our boss has already said that Miss Xiaocao can use his private room whenever you like!"

"Then thanks a lot Uncle Manager!" Yu Xiaocao showed a sweet smile, and then walked up the stairs beside the main hall to the second floor with familiarity!

Zhu Junxi finally couldn't help but pull a long face and angrily said, "Manager, everything should be done on a 'first come, first served' basis! I just talked to you in a good-natured way for a long time and was also willing to pay double the price to use the private room, but you wouldn't agree no matter what. Yet, you readily agree to let someone use it now?"

After all, he was the second son of Imperial Prince Jing. The dignified and imposing manner within his anger caused the head manager's heart to become stagnant for a moment. In spite of the patron's rage, the head manager explained, "That private room is our boss's exclusive room, so except for entertaining friends and relatives, it won't be lent to outsiders. Miss Xiaocao has a very special relationship with our boss. She can be considered a partial owner of Zhenxiu Restaurant, so..."

"Second Young Master, we don't have a lot of people. If you don't mind, let's dine together!" Xia Furong didn't expect that the wretch could really get a table, moreover, it was a private room. Seeing that

Second Young Master Zhu had encountered an obstacle with the head manager, she felt that this was a rare chance, and thus she made an invitation.

Zhu Junxi had just noticed that Lady Fang was not far behind him. He faintly glanced at Xia Furong, and his impression of her became even worse. Disregarding the custom that men and women should dine at different table after the age of seven, Xia Furong wasn't the one who got the private room and she also wasn't the one paying for the meal. To make the invitation without asking the host first, she was seriously too rude!

He ignored Xia Furong; instead, he bobbed a greeting towards Lady Fang and said in a graceful manner, "Lady Fang, good to see you again!"

Lady Fang was quite displeased with her niece's nearly fawning words. She suppressed the rage within her heart and said to Second Young Master Zhu, "Your mother isn't in good health. After sitting in a carriage for such a long time, it's a good idea to find a place to rest! What's wrong? Was there some change in plans with the county magistrate's wife?"

"No, my mother said that it's almost noon, so we shouldn't disturb the county magistrate's family. We decided to eat lunch here before visiting the county yamen. But..." An unpleasant expression appeared on Zhu Junxi's face again when he thought of the fatigue on his mother's face.

Lady Fang looked at her goddaughter and asked for her opinion, "Xiaocao, Lady Zhu and Young Master Zhu took good care of me on the way here. She wants to take a short break here, so what do you..."

Xiaocao naturally wouldn't reject her godmother's request. With a bright smile, she said cheerfully, "Since she is Godmother's friend, it is only proper that I shall treat her with the utmost hospitality. I'll go with you to invite Lady Zhu to have a meal together."

Zhu Junxi didn't look down on Xiaocao because of her ordinary clothes. Instead, he gave her a solemn bow and said, "Thank you very much, miss!"

Princess Consort Jing had long been bored sitting inside the carriage. From time to time, she would raise the curtain of the carriage and look in the direction of Zhenxiu Restaurant. When she saw her son coming back, she asked in a soft voice, "How is it? Still can't book a private room?"

They were traveling incognito this time, so Second Young Master Zhu just called his royal mother 'Mother' in front of outsiders. He explained softly, "Mother, the Zhenxiu Restaurant in Tanggu Town, like the one in the capital, must be booked seven to eight days in advance. Fortunately, Lady Fang's goddaughter has some face at Zhenxiu Restaurant and was able to get a private room. Lady Fang wants to invite you to dine together!"

"Lady Fang's goddaughter? When did she get a goddaughter? Why wasn't there any news about it? A lot of people thought that she would adopt her maternal niece as her daughter! It seems like someone's plans are going to fall through!" Don't underestimate a woman's heart for gossip. Although Princess Consort Jing seldom went out, she had still heard a little about it.

With the help of Meixiang and Lanxiang, Princess Consort Jing got off the carriage and smiled gracefully at Lady Fang. She saw the thin little girl beside Lady Fang and said softly, "Lady Fang, is this your goddaughter? She is a bright and decent-looking young girl!"

"Thank you so much, Madam, for your praise! It's inconvenient to talk here. Let's continue talking in the private room on the second floor!" There was a trace of reverence in Lady Fang's attitude.

Xiaocao had sensitively perceived it. Her godmother, who was the wife of a third-ranked general, also had to act courteous towards her. It seemed like the status of this noble madam was certainly impressive. She showed a natural sense of nobility and grace. Could she be related to the imperial family? What was the matter with all these nobilities? Why were they all coming to a poor, remote place like Tanggu Town?

Since they were all women, Zhu Junxi knew the etiquette and didn't follow them to the private room. Instead, he took the imperial bodyguards, who were disguised as servants, to dine at a famous, old restaurant nearby. Xia Furong had wanted to take this opportunity to get closer to Second Young Master Zhu, but her plans had failed again.

With an extra honored guest, Xiaocao certainly wouldn't let her godmother lose face in front of the honored guest. When ordering, she almost ordered all the most famous dishes in Zhenxiu Restaurant! There were several dishes that even someone of Princess Consort Jing's status hadn't heard of.

Princess Consort Jing smiled at Lady Fang and said, "This child of yours is really too sincere! She ordered so much food, but we won't be able to finish all of them ah!"

Yu Xiaocao stood up and personally poured a cup of herbal tea for the princess consort and her godmother. She had added a few drops of mystic-stone water inside the tea, which would help eliminate fatigue. Hearing her words, she smiled and said, "You and my godmother have come from afar, so of course, I shall treat you guys to a meal to welcome your arrival!"

The little girl didn't have a tall stature and was very young, but her cleverness was apparent in all aspects, which was a quality that the princess consort admired. She said with a smile, "Is this considered me being benefited from my association with your godmother?"

"Of course not! My godmother said that you have taken good care of her all the way from the capital! I want to express my gratitude to you with this table of food and drinks!" Yu Xiaocao's attitude was neither humble nor arrogant, and her speech was courteous and thoughtful. This caused Lady Fang and Princess Consort Jing to have an even better impression of her.

Princess Consort Jing had even started to joke with her, "Oh! So it's a meal to welcome and thank me at the same time. You want to get rid of me with just one meal? No, that won't do. There should be at least two meals!"

"Don't mention two meals, as long as you're willing to come, Zhenxiu Restaurant will welcome your arrival at any time! Here, try this 'century eggs with tofu'. It's a new dish at Zhenxiu Restaurant." Yu Xiaocao used a communal spoon to ladle a spoonful of the dish into Princess Consort Jing and Lady Fang's respective bowls.

Princess Jing smiled and said, "Alright, you sit down and eat! Just let the maidservants serve us—Mhm! This tofu has a fine and smooth mouthfeel... What is this? Century eggs? This combination has a rather unique taste. Sure enough, this is Zhenxiu Restaurant. They can make such an interesting and novel dish with a simple ingredient like tofu!"

After eating two bites of the century eggs with tofu, Princess Consort Jing took another look at her favorite osmanthus duck. Meixiang, who was behind her, immediately picked up a piece of duck meat and put it into her bowl.

"I have a weak spleen and stomach. For a slightly greasy dish like roasted duck, I can only eat one piece. But this osmanthus duck is fatty but not greasy, and it's also fragrant and delicious. So I can eat a few pieces." Princess Consort Jing had refined table manners, but she ate with gusto.

Yu Xiaocao introduced 'duck blood soup with vermicelli' to the two of them. They were very interested in the vermicelli inside and unknowingly finished a bowl full of the dish.

Vermicelli produced at the Zhou Family's factory didn't have varying thickness like the ones made by Yu Xiaocao, a non-professional. After rigorous training, the workers had become professional at making vermicelli. The vermicelli were uniform in thickness, and were bright and translucent. When eaten, they were soft, smooth, refreshing, and very chewy.

The vermicelli and century eggs had just been put into production. It couldn't be seen in any other places except for Zhenxiu Restaurant, let alone eating it. One of the most important reasons that Princess Consort Jing had eaten with great relish was that she was able to eat something novel!

Everyone thoroughly enjoyed themselves during this meal. After the county magistrate's wife received the message, she personally came to pick Princess Consort Jing up with her entourage.

At this time, the watermelons in the watermelon shop had already been sold out. Xiaocao's maternal grandmother and eldest maternal aunt, who had also eaten the 'take-out' that Xiaocao ordered from Zhenxiu Restaurant, were wiping the shelves in the store!

Since Lady Fang was unwilling to stay in the town, Yu Xiaocao sat in her godmother's carriage and introduced the scenery along the way while giving directions to the coachman.

Eldest Maternal Aunt had come to help in the shop, so she would stay in the store from now on. Seeing that her help wasn't needed and because she worried about her husband and the chickens and ducks at home, Xiaocao's grandmother had directly returned to her village from the town.

Fields of Gold Chapter 183

The road to Dongshan Village wasn't very smooth, especially that section of the mountain road, which was very bumpy. Xia Furong felt as if she was about to puke out her guts due to the jolting. She had a grim expression and a lot of resentment within her heart, 'Seriously, what is wrong with my aunt? She doesn't want to live in a perfectly good house in town, but instead she decides to come to this poor, remote countryside. It's all because of that damned wretch. If she hadn't said that my uncle had been staying in Dongshan Village this whole time, my aunt might have settled in town already!'

Aiyo! Xia Furong didn't pay attention for a moment and bumped her head on the window of the carriage, making a loud noise. The little girl covered her sore head and looked at her aunt, Lady Fang, with tears in her eyes.

After all, Lady Fang had practiced with her husband before. No matter how bumpy the carriage was, she still sat upright and was as motionless as a statue.

Yu Xiaocao swayed her body in the direction that the carriage jolted in, but she maintained a crossed-legs sitting position. The twisting and swaying of her waist made it look as if she was dancing.

Hearing the sound of Xia Furong hitting the window, Yu Xiaocao turned her head and looked at her with a slight smile. She said, "Older Cousin, we will arrive at Dongshan Village after crossing this mountain road. Be attentive and you won't get hurt!"

In Xia Furong's eyes, Xiaocao was mocking her with the faint smile on her face. She covered the bump on her head and angrily complained to Lady Fang, "Aunt, look at her! I already got hurt, yet she's still making sarcastic remarks."

Yu Xiaocao widened her big, black eyes and looked at her innocently, 'This person really doesn't know how to appreciate other people's good intentions. I was comforting her, okay!'

Lady Fang patted her goddaughter's thin shoulder and softly said to her niece, "Furong, your younger cousin is just concerned about you and reminding you to be more careful so that you don't hurt yourself again."

"Aunt! You're too biased!! She obviously didn't mean well, yet you're still speaking up for her!! Aunt, now that you have a goddaughter, you don't care about your niece anymore. Waahhh..." The little girl began to cry bitterly.

Yu Xiaocao's mouth twitched, 'She's already so old, yet she's still crying and competing for favor? What's the point in doing that? I have my parents to spoil me at home, so I don't lack love. I'm not going to be on the same level as that little lass!'

Lady Fang saw Xiaocao's small movement, and felt that she seemed even more lovely the more she looked at her. Then she looked at her niece, who was crying with a runny nose. She was already thirteen or fourteen years old, which was a marriageable age. Yet, she was still competing for favor with a young girl who was under the age of ten. She was also at fault for pampering her niece, and thus raising her expectations. After having her wish destroyed, it was inevitable that there would be some disparity in her mentality.

"Stop crying. You're already at an age when you can look for a husband, but you're still fighting for favor with a little girl. Aren't you afraid of being laughed at?" Lady Fang handed over her own handkerchief and consoled in a soft voice.

After all, Xia Furong was a young maiden. After hearing this, she blushed and bowed her head. But she also didn't forget to take this chance to give Xiaocao an angry glare. Then she said in a low voice, "Aunt, who would laugh at me here but her?"

Lady Fang helplessly said, "Xiaocao is my goddaughter, so you two are sisters now. You guys should get along well with each other. Don't always fight and argue upon seeing each other..."

Xiaocao had an even more innocent expression on her face as she pouted and said, "Godmother, I didn't ah!"

Lady Fang placated her with a smile, "Our Xiaocao is a good child... Your older cousin just arrived at an unfamiliar place, so she's not used to it. You must do your best to help her as a host."

"I will!" Yu Xiaocao looked at Xia Furong with a mischievous smile, while wondering whether she should take her to catch caterpillars in the mountains or dig for spoonworms and sea cucumbers by the sea.

Xia Furong glared at her fiercely, and then agreed aggrievedly, "Don't worry, Aunt. I will yield to younger cousin!"

Just now, her aunt had personally mentioned her marriage. As long as she was obedient and didn't make her angry, her aunt would naturally arrange a good marriage for her. First, she had to put up with this damned girl. It was best that they meet less in the future so that she could get some peace of mind!

While the two were deep in their own thoughts, the carriage had passed the most difficult mountain road and the outline of Dongshan Village could be seen from afar.

Xiaocao pointed to an area not too far away and grinned, "Godmother, that's our watermelon field over there. It's not very big and just a little more than three mu. But the watermelons have grown very well. We can harvest over a thousand catties in one mu of land!"

Lady Fang looked at the small fishing village, which seemed as if it was embraced by luxuriant mountains. It was surrounded by green trees, singing birds and fragrant flowers. The place that Xiaocao pointed at was an area of verdant green, which felt very comfortable to look at.

"The crop that is planted on both sides of the road is..." Lady Fang had never seen this crop being planted in the rural estate from her dowry, so she asked with slight uncertainty.

Yu Xiaocao looked at the sweet potato sprouts on the roadside and said with a smile, "Dongshan Village is close to the sea, so most of the land here is sandy. There won't be much yield if we plant crops like wheat and soybeans. Thus, most people plant crops like sweet potatoes, which can be grown in various environments."

"Sweet potatoes? Is it the new crop that can produce thousands of catties in one mu of land?" When the emperor made his first voyage, he had brought back the high yielding crop, sweet potato, which was quickly popularized. With this high-yield crop, the early Great Ming Dynasty, which was stirred up by war and in a disastrous state, finally wouldn't have even more people dying of hunger...

Yu Xiaocao nodded her head and said, "The yield of sweet potatoes is really good. If they are planted well, it's possible to get a harvest of two to three thousand catties in one mu of land."

"Stop bragging! At this time, the heads of wheat at the farmstead are already sprouting. Yet these sweet potatoes still only have leaves and nothing else. With just one to two months remaining, they can produce over two thousand catties? Who are you kidding!" Xia Furong smirked, and her tone was filled with the intention of finding fault.

Yu Xiaocao looked at her as if she had seen a weirdo. She asked in surprise, "Older Cousin, you don't think that sweet potatoes are grown on vines, do you? Pffft... Don't misunderstand, I'm not laughing at

you... But, it's really funny... The fruit of sweet potatoes are grown underground. Uncle coachman, please stop in front..."

Yu Xiaocao jumped off the carriage and picked up a dried branch from the roadside. She dug downwards along the vine of the sweet potato in the field beside them.

"Hey! How can you randomly dig other people's sweet potatoes? Isn't that the act of a thief? Quickly come up. It will be so shameful to be caught ah!" Xia Furong screamed as if she was afraid others wouldn't hear her.

Yu Xiaocao ignored her and dug out a sweet potato that weighed over one catty from the sweet potato vine, as well as a few small sweet potatoes that were less than one catty. She removed the mud on top with her hand, took the sweet potatoes to the carriage, and flaunted to Lady Fang, "Godmother, look, these are sweet potatoes. Sweet potatoes can be cooked, steamed, and roasted! It tastes delicious and sweet. If you eat it once in a while, it's pretty good!"

Xia Furong looked at her with disdain and said, "I didn't expect you to be a such a person! Didn't your mother ever tell you that taking something without asking is the act of thieves?"

The smile on Yu Xiaocao's face gradually faded. Her big eyes stared at Xia Furong with dissatisfaction and she uttered one word at a time, "You can say anything about me! But please don't drag in my parents!! What do you know? This land belongs to my eldest granduncle's family!!"

Her staring caused Xia Furong to feel restless. She muttered in a low voice, "Even if it's your eldest granduncle's fields, you can't just dig in it..."

"Eldest Granduncle, you're taking a walk?" Before Xia Furong could finish speaking, her words were interrupted by Xiaocao. Xiaocao, who was sitting on the shaft of the carriage, greeted the figure in the distance with a smile.

Yu Lichun looked up and saw Xiaocao sitting on an unfamiliar horse carriage. He nodded at her first, and then said, "Yes, I didn't have anything to do, so I came to check out the fields! Whose carriage did you come back in?"

"It's my godmother's, who came from the capital. I'll take her home to rest first—Eldest Granduncle, I was craving roasted sweet potatoes, so I dug up several sweet potatoes from your fields just now..." Yu Xiaocao giggled without a trace of embarrassment.

Yu Lichun knew that before they had divided from the main family, the Yu Family ate two meals a day. But Xiaocao had a weak stomach and needed to eat an extra meal of sweet potatoes in between the two mealtimes every day. The little lass had eaten sweet potatoes for such a long time, and now that she was living a better life, she still couldn't forget that taste ah!

He chuckled and said, "It's something grown by your own family. If you want to eat it, then just dig for it yourself! Your family didn't plant any sweet potatoes this spring, so when it's time to harvest the crops, I'll tell your third uncle to send a few sacks over."

"Thank you, Eldest Granduncle! Later, I'll get a watermelon from our field and send it to your house!" Yu Xiaocao understood the principle of 'courtesy requires reciprocity'.

Yu Lichun hastily waved his hands and said repeatedly, "No, no need! A watermelon costs several taels. Eldest Granduncle can't afford to accept it! You should keep it to sell for money..."

Yu Xiaocao smiled like a blossomed flower and said, "Eldest Granduncle, why can't you accept it? It's grown by family, so why can't you eat it? Last winter, if you hadn't lent me money to see a doctor, I might have... You have saved my life, so what's wrong with eating a watermelon? Okay, it's settled then. You haven't tasted our watermelons yet!"

Yu Lichun wanted to say something, but Xiaocao waved her hands at him, jumped onto the carriage, and drove past him. Yu Lichun shook his head with a smile. To know how to be grateful, that little lass, Xiaocao, was really someone who deserved to be loved.

"That was your eldest granduncle? Your families seem pretty close ah! Why did your godfather write in his letter that your family doesn't seem to have a good relationship with your grandparents' family..." Lady Fang didn't treat Xiaocao like an outsider and asked with slight concern, upon recalling the contents of the letter.

Yu Xiaocao also didn't hide anything from her godmother. She avoided the serious matters and briefly explained, "We don't have a good relationship with my grandmother. My grandmother is... As a younger

member of the family, it's not proper for me to comment on that. You will know in a few days. My eldest granduncle's family are pretty good people. It was so difficult last winter, but they still gave us all their money in order for me to see a doctor!"

"What's wrong? Your health isn't good? Your godfather didn't tell me that ah!" Lady Fang looked at the slightly thin, but rather spirited, girl in front of her and asked with concern.

Yu Xiaocao hugged Lady Fang's arms and rubbed her face against her like a spoiled cat. She whispered, "My health wasn't very good in the past. Last winter, I was seriously ill and almost died! But, I'm alright now! Don't people always say: 'If you survive a disaster, you will be blessed'. Sure enough, I need to thank the heavens for letting me meet Godfather and Godmother!"

Lady Fang pulled the little girl into her arms and said with a smile, "You ah, your little mouth is as sweet as honey. Godmother has a hundred-year-old ginseng. Just take it as a meeting gift. Tell your mother to make ginseng stewed chicken to nourish your body. You're too thin!"

Fields of Gold Chapter 184 - Helping Her Settle Down

"Thank you, Godmother!" Yu Xiaocao didn't act courteous. A hundred-year-old ginseng wasn't considered rare to her since she already had a five-hundred-old ginseng at home. But she would remember her godmother's kindness within her heart. If she had anything good in the future, she would definitely share it with her godmother!

Xia Furong felt even more displeased within her heart. It wasn't that easy to obtain a hundred-year-old ginseng. They had just met this wretch from a rural village, but she had actually cajoled her aunt!

As they spoke, they had already arrived at Xiaocao's family's watermelon fields. Yu Hai was currently loading two carts with watermelons. He had to take these two carts of watermelons to town later. There wasn't anyone else in the Yu Family who was available to drive the cart, so he had to ask his older male cousin, Yu Xi, to come help out.

"Father, Oldest Paternal Uncle!" Xiaocao had jumped off the carriage as it came to a complete stop. Seeing this, Lady Fang repeatedly urged her to slow down.

Yu Hai saw his daughter getting off of an unfamiliar horse carriage. Behind her was a woman in her thirties, who was dressed in rich silk brocades. He had some doubts in his heart, but he couldn't stare at her for a closer look. So he just asked his daughter, "Cao'er, didn't we agree that I will take you back when I deliver the watermelons? Why did you come back by yourself?"

Yu Xiaocao hastily introduced the identity of her godmother, and the two politely exchanged a few words. Yu Hai noticed that Lady Fang's love for his daughter could be heard in her words, so he felt slightly reassured.

Yu Xiaocao picked a big watermelon and asked Linglong to help take it onto the carriage. The two watermelons that they picked out at the shop were unwittingly sold by Eldest Maternal Aunt when they went to eat at Zhenxiu Restaurant. Her godmother really liked the plate of watermelon gifted by Zhenxiu Restaurant. She couldn't promise anything else, but she could guarantee that they would have more than enough watermelons to eat!

Lady Fang, who had seen the sales of the Yu Family's watermelon shop, also didn't act courteous with her goddaughter. Of course, she should kindly accept her daughter's show of filial respect. Moreover, this watermelon tasted much more tasty and refreshing than the watermelons that she had eaten before. She didn't know whether it was her own illusion, but she felt as if all her fatigue from her long journey for these past few days had all gone away after eating the watermelon!

This low-key yet slightly luxurious horse carriage attracted many of the villagers' curious looks as it traveled through Dongshan Village.

The Zhao Family lived close to halfway up the mountain, so the horse carriage couldn't continue going up. Xiaocao told the coachman to stop the carriage in front of her house, and then she helped her godmother down the carriage.

“Oh! Xiaocao, you're back from town? Who's this noble madam?” Next to the seafood collection stall, there were several women, who had just sold their collection of cleaned sandworms. They greeted Xiaocao warmly. The little lass Xiaocao was doing extremely well now. To have an official as her godfather, she must have accumulated a lot of good fortune in her previous life!

“Hello, Aunties! Your spoonworms are really clean ah!” Xiaocao knew that the matrons were just curious, so she greeted them with a smile.

One of the matrons, who was very thin, grinned and said, “Of course! If they're not cleaned thoroughly, who would have the nerve to come sell them? Your family gives a fair price, unlike Wang Dazhi of

Dawang Village, who's very black-hearted. His price is five copper coins lower per catty compared to your family's!"

Xia Furong covered her nose with her handkerchief and curiously got closer to see what they were selling. However, her face turned ghastly pale from the fright of seeing the soft spoonworms lying inside the basket. She screamed and hastily retreated, nearly tripping over a stone on the ground.

Another chubby woman looked at her attire and laughed, "She is a young miss from town after all. It's inevitable that she would be scared when seeing spoonworms for the first time."

Seeing Xia Furong's change of expression, Yu Xiaocao was afraid that she would get angry and throw a tantrum. So she hastily said, "Aunties, you guys continue with your work. My godmother and older cousin are tired from traveling such a long distance. I'll take them inside to rest first."

The women all watched as Lady Fang entered the Yu Family's gates while being supported by her two personal maidservants. They expressed their envy in succession:

"So it's Xiaocao's godmother ah! The wife of an official! Look at that aura she gave off... tsk tsk!"

"Look at her maidservants. They're dressed like young ladies from noble families. The silver hairpins on their heads probably cost at least several taels!"

"I heard that Xiaocao's godmother came from the capital. Do you think that the lass Xiaocao will benefit by her godparents and become a noble young miss in the capital?"

"Of course ah! I heard that Xiaocao's godfather didn't have any children and he pampers her like his real daughter. When her godfather completes his assignment and returns to the capital, he will probably take Xiaocao back with him! Xiaocao will be the daughter of an official in the future!"

"This child is really blessed..."

Yu Hang quietly listened to the aunties' discussion, while he helped the coachman unload the carriage. He took the horse to the newly built stable and fed it with fodder. Xiaocao had rinsed all the fodder that the Yu Family fed to their livestock with mystic-stone water, so the Fang Family's horse enjoyed it even more.

The coachman was very surprised. The Fang Family's horses were meticulously fed and raised by him, and they had always scorned crude fodder. The Yu Family's fodder was only the cheapest and most crude type of forage, but the horse actually didn't mind and ate it with relish. Could it be that it was hungry after traveling through a mountain road for such a long time?

At this time, Lady Fang had already sat down on the recliner in the courtyard, basking in the warm sun, and looking at the green vegetables in the garden. Though the house beside her was simple, it gave off a warm and simple feeling. Was this the pleasure of living in the countryside?

The only decent lounge chair in the yard was already occupied by her aunt, so Xia Furong laid her handkerchief on a stone chair and sat down aggrievedly. When she lowered her head and saw that her embroidered shoes were stained with mud, her heart felt even more upset. She didn't know how much longer she had to live in this remote and barren place in the future. Dirt roads, low-ceiling thatched cottage, boorish women... How was she supposed to live like this ah!

“Godmother, my mother went to wash clothes by the stream at the foot of the mountain. It's very hot today and we just traveled for nearly two hours, so you must be thirsty! Here, eat a few pieces of watermelons to quench your thirst!” Yu Xiaocao got a knife from the kitchen, sliced the watermelon on the stone table, and then handed a piece to Lady Fang.

With the corner of her eyes, she looked at Xia Furong, who was pouting so much that she could almost hang an oil bottle on her lips. She handed her a piece of watermelon and said with a smile, “Older cousin, eat a watermelon! The fruit tray at noon was too small, so you probably haven't eaten enough, right? You can eat more now!”

Xia Furong frowned and didn't take the watermelon that she handed over. She angrily exclaimed, “Why does it seem like there's some hidden meanings in your words? Do you think that I haven't eaten watermelons before?”

Yu Xiaocao looked at her in surprise and said, “Older Cousin, don't overthink it. I didn't mean anything else. If you think that there was something wrong with what I said, then I will apologize to you!”

Lady Fang was about to put the watermelon into her mouth, but she stopped. She had a grim expression and her voice was full of displeasure, “Furong, if you feel wronged about coming to Dongshan Village, I

can let Zhenzhu stay with you in town! Don't vent your anger on innocent people. Your younger cousin is young, so she speaks bluntly. But she didn't do anything wrong. Don't always pick on her!”

Xia Furong knew from her aunt's expression and speech that she was really angry. She hastily lowered her head and admitted her mistake, “Aunt, I know you're angry and that I was wrong! Niece came with you in order to serve you. I'll stay whenever you stay. Niece doesn't feel wronged...”

Although she said that she didn't feel wronged, her heart was filled with resentment. Thinking about the simple and crude living environment in the future and that she had to share her aunt's love with another person, the rims of Xia Furong's eyes reddened and she almost cried.

After eating a few pieces of watermelon, Lady Fang leaned comfortably on the recliner and looked up at the blue sky and white clouds. Occasionally, a bird flew across the sky. She couldn't help but close her eyes as she gradually relaxed.

Yu Xiaocao covered her godmother's legs with a lined blanket. Seeing that there were a lot of watermelons leftover, she whispered to the two handmaids, Zhenzhu and Linglong, “Two older sisters, have a taste of our family's watermelon. It tastes quite good!”

When Zhenzhu and Linglong were serving their masters the watermelons, the strong, sweet fragrance had caused them to secretly swallow their saliva. In the capital, the masters' leftovers were also awarded to the competent maidservants. Thus, Zhenzhu and Linglong didn't refuse and started eating the watermelons. The sweet and juicy watermelon immediately conquered their hearts. It was tasty and could quench their thirst. They didn't stop until their bellies were too full to continue eating.

While her godmother was taking an afternoon nap, Xiaocao took the two handmaids to the Zhao Family's house to air the quilts that they brought over and clean up the main room. General Fang had lived there alone without anyone to serve him, so there wasn't much in the room except a few clothes.

Zhenzhu and Linglong used the things that were on hand and decorated the room based on their master's preference. Xiaocao watched in admiration as they quickly arranged the room to look neat and warm.

When Lady Fang woke up from her nap and came over with Xia Furong, the three of them had already tidied the room and cleaned the kitchen.

Dinner was made with Xiaocao as the chef and the help of Zhenzhu and Linglong. The ingredients were fresh homegrown vegetables gathered at home, fish caught in the pond behind the house, chicken bought from the Zhou Family, and the seafood they had at home—oysters and sandworms.

Zhenzhu and Linglong took out the dishes and put them on the table in the main hall. Lady Fang nodded contentedly as she looked at the delicious and fragrant dishes. Linglong jested, "As expected, Miss Cao'er deserved her reputation of an excellent chef. This sweet and sour fish had a vibrant color, a beautiful shape, and alluring fragrance. It arouses one's appetite just by smelling it!"

"Miss Cao'er put in a lot of effort to make this roasted oyster with garlic! Madam, you seldom get the chance to eat such fresh seafood in the capital. Enjoy the young miss's cooking today!" Zhenzhu was also full of praises for Xiaocao's culinary skills.

"What is this?!!" Xia Furong saw a plate of pink and plump food and thought of the nauseating creatures that she had seen earlier. Her face immediately turned pale and she started screaming.

Yu Xiaocao, who had come over with a plate of steamed clams with eggs, turned towards the sound and faintly glanced at her, as if she was blaming her for making a fuss. She indifferently said, "It's stir-fried spoonworms with scallions ah! Spoonworm is a natural condiment. This dish needs to be cooked in a natural way in order to keep the original taste of the ingredients and highlight the fresh, crisp, and tender mouthfeel of seafood. It has a mild taste and is very healthy and nourishing..."

Before she finished speaking, Xia Furong's piercing scream rang out again, "Who asked you to cook with spoonworms? The intestines of the sea..." She retched. "It's disgusting to even think about it!! You actually dared to let Aunt eat this..."

Fields of Gold Chapter 185

Her voice abruptly came to a stop because she hopelessly watched as her aunt picked up a spoonworm with her chopsticks, put it into her mouth, and slowly chewed it. Why? This bug-like thing looked so disgusting. Shouldn't her aunt think it was disgusting, just like her? How could her aunt, who was of noble status, be able to stomach that?

"Mhm! It's really fresh and tender. Your godfather praised the spoonworms endlessly in his letters. I have long been eager to taste it. Xiaocao's cooking is very good. I really like this dish." Lady Fang tried two more mouthfuls before she could spare some time to praise her.

Xia Furong was having a mental breakdown inside, 'How can a noble and elegant person like my aunt like to eat bugs?'

As a matter of fact, this Lady Fang was rather courageous. Upon seeing soft and plump appearance of sandworms, most people would politely decline eating it. Yu Xiaocao, who was originally worried about not being able to get along with a noblewoman from the capital, finally felt completely at ease now. This godmother of hers was quite approachable ah!

She naturally had to support and praise the meal cooked by her daughter. Moreover, Xiaocao had excellent cooking skills. She could make many different delicacies with very simple ingredients, and thus caused Lady Fang, who was usually someone with a lot of self-restraint, to unexpectedly overeat by accident.

Night had fallen. The shadows of the trees nearby gracefully swayed under the moonlight, while the bright moon hung above the treetops. Occasionally, a late-returning wild bird passed by and cast a beautiful shadow on the silver moon...

It was Lady Fang's first time experiencing such a beautiful night sky. Simple stone walls, rough brick house, and a spacious courtyard... They were all so primitive. This simple and natural environment cleansed one's heart and mind. It made Lady Fang, who had lived in large estates for a long time, feel relaxed physically and mentally.

Xiaocao, whose task of washing the dishes had been taken away by Zhenzhu and Linglong, looked at the sky and said goodbye to her godmother, "Godmother, I'm going back now. You should rest earlier. I'll see you again tomorrow..."

"It's already so dark. How can I be at ease letting a little girl walk on a mountain road alone? I'll send you back!" Lady Fang grabbed a lantern, which had a fine brush painting of flowers and birds drawn on it, and followed Xiaocao out the door.

Xiaocao quickly said, "Godmother, I used to frequently go catch wild hares and pheasants in the mountains with Brother Han. So I'm very familiar with this mountain road. You don't have to send..."

"Why be so courteous with me, your godmother? Godmother has eaten too much this evening, so I'll walk with you and digest the food." Lady Fang lit the lantern, held Xiaocao's hand, and slowly walked

towards the main gates. Zhenzhu saw this and hastily handed the work in the kitchen to Linglong. She swiftly caught up to her master and took the lantern in her hands.

The Zhao Family's house was quite big and the courtyard was spacious. When Xia Furong, who had just arrived at an unfamiliar place, saw everyone getting ready to go out, she also followed them with slight hesitation.

The mountain road was quiet, and the mottled shadows of the bushes on both sides of the road appeared on the road. Xia Furong looked at the pitch-dark mountain and heard the crowing of night birds. Feeling scared, she quickly moved closer to her aunt. A gust of wind blew and the shadows of the trees on the ground suddenly shook. The anxious Xia Furong cried out in surprise and startled everyone.

"Older Cousin, people can die from being scared by another person. Can you stop making the atmosphere so tense?!" Yu Xiaocao rolled her eyes in the darkness.

Xia Furong hugged Lady Fang's other arm tightly and looked suspiciously at the dark thicket beside the road for fear that some unknown creature would suddenly jump out.

One's worst fears would always happen. Suddenly, a dark figure swiftly flew past her feet and she even felt it step on her toes. Xia Furong screamed even more tragically and hugged Lady Fang. She hid her head within her aunt's embrace and didn't dare to come out.

Yu Xiaocao was rendered completely speechless. Looking at the physical shape and gait of the dark shadow, it was merely a young hare. Did she really need to scream like a pig being slaughtered?

"Don't be scared, Older Cousin. It's just a wild hare. The ferocious animals of the West Mountains will only appear deep in the mountains. The animals that appear around here are mostly small animals like wild hares, pheasants, badgers, and so on. They're not aggressive." Yu Xiaocao informed Noble Young Miss Xia.

Xia Furong ignored her and cried in a trembling voice, "Aunt, it's too scary here. Let's go back!"

Lady Fang patted her niece on her shoulder to placate her and then said with a smile, "Don't be afraid! We have a lot of people, as well as a light. Even if there are wild beasts, they won't dare to come over.

You just arrived at a new environment and haven't adapted yet. In a few days, you will be able to experience the pleasure of living in the countryside. When your uncle has a break, I'll tell him to take us hunting. The game that we caught ourselves would definitely be more delicious."

Yu Xiaocao nodded repeatedly and said, "That's right, that's right! It would be even better if we can catch a wild deer! I don't even need to mention the taste of roasted venison! There's also badger meat, which is tender and delicious... I'm about to drool!"

Lady Fang chuckled and touched Xiaocao's head. With a doting voice, she said, "You ah! An outright little foodie!"

Yu Xiaocao recalled the hard and bitter yet happy days. She said with a grin, "Godmother, my father used to be an expert hunter in the village! He often went up the mountains with Uncle Zhao, who is Godfather's younger martial brother. He would be able to catch a lot of game every time! My father had also killed a large wild boar by himself. It weighed two to three hundred catties!"

The night was quiet, and the whole mountain resounded with the sound of Xiaocao's chattering. Lady Fang listened with interest and occasionally interrupted her to ask a question, which made Xiaocao speak even more enthusiastically.

Xia Furong curled up her lips in disbelief. If hunting was so easy, then why were they farming ah! She couldn't help but want to expose Xiaocao's lies, "Since your father is so good at hunting, why are your family growing vegetables and watermelons? Isn't it tiring for your family to do so much work?"

Yu Xiaocao replied without hesitation, "Hunting can also be risky. How can it be as safe and steady as farming? Ever since my father was injured by a bear, my mother has forbidden us from going up the mountains. But don't underestimate our family's income from growing vegetables and watermelons. It's even more profitable than a nobleman's plantation!"

Lady Fang thought of the income from the watermelon shop today and nodded in approval. The annual income of the largest plantation from her dowry was only around a thousand taels of silver. It really wasn't as good as the income that Xiaocao's family got from selling watermelons for a few days.

Xia Furong, who knew nothing about farming, didn't believe Xiaocao's words at all. If people could make so much money by farming, then why would those farmers be dressed in rags and have little food to eat? That damned wretch must be boasting...

But, what did that brat just say? There were bears in the mountains? She and her aunt, as well as the two maidservants, were all women and they lived halfway up the mountains. If a ferocious beast came down the mountains, then there would be unthinkable consequences—Xia Furong kept thinking about it and became even more frightened as her face turned pale and her legs trembled.

As they happily chatted, they had unknowingly arrived at the entrance of the Yu Family's residence. The Yu Family, which should have been very quiet at this time, was bustling with noise.

Yu Xiaocao and her godmother looked at each other, and then hastened their pace. When they hurried into the yard, they heard Wang Ergou's distinctive rogue-like voice. He shouted angrily, "...You're not sleeping this late at night, and instead hiding in the watermelon fields. If you're not a thief, then what are you? Could it be that you're going to meet your lover in the melon field??"

Then there was the shrill screaming of her eldest paternal aunt, "Wang Ergou, you bastard! You're trying to ruin my innocence. I'll risk my life to fight with you..."

There was a sense of reproach within Ergou's wife's calm voice, "Dashan's wife, Ergou has never been a good speaker. I'll apologize for his offensive remarks, so don't be angry. But what were you doing hiding in the watermelon fields in the middle of the night?"

At this time, Yu Xiaocao had already arrived next to the crowd. Under the light cast by the lanterns in the yard, she could see that the entire Yu Family were present, except for Little Shitou, who was studying in town. There were also Wang Ergou and his wife, as well as her eldest paternal aunt Madam Li, who was in a mess.

After being questioned by Ergou's wife, Li Guihua's eyes flickered and she hesitated to answer the question. Today, she went to deliver food to her son, who was working at the docks, and saw Wang Ergou selling watermelons on his cart. The news had already been spread throughout the whole village that Yu Hai's family didn't plant sweet potatoes this spring and worked on growing something called watermelon. Planting watermelons wasn't very popular yet. Madam Li held the mentality of watching the second branch become a laughingstock, and waited to see the watermelons not being able to sell and rot in the fields.

Unexpectedly, when she arrived at the docks, she saw several well-dressed merchants gathered around Wang Ergou's handcart and paying for watermelons. Moreover, some of the customers almost ended up fighting for the last two watermelons.

She quietly got closer for a better look and saw that a watermelon actually cost five taels! Five taels was enough for an ordinary family to spend frugally for an entire year, yet there were actually so many fools scrambling to buy it. Thinking of Yu Hai's fields full of round watermelons, Madam Li felt as if there was a cat scratching her heart—So much money ah! This was a sign that Second Brother-in-law was going to get rich ah!

After returning from the docks, Madam Li hid in her own room and made plans: At night, she would go to Second Brother-in-law's fields in the dark and take two watermelons. Then she could sell them at the dock's tomorrow. With that, wouldn't she be able to get ten taels in her hands? There was no need for her to be afraid even if she encountered Second Brother-in-law in the evening. She could just say that Father and Mother wanted to eat watermelons and told her to pluck two back for them. Could he not give the watermelons to her?

However, Madam Li had never expected that the person watching the watermelons tonight was the most difficult person in the entire village, Wang Ergou! Seriously, what was wrong with Yu Hai? He actually allowed an unreliable outsider to help guard such a valuable thing. Wasn't he afraid that Wang Ergou, who liked to engage in petty crimes, would steal the watermelons from the fields?

Madam Li hemmed and hawed, and didn't know how to explain herself. Wang Ergou didn't let her off easily and said, "What else? Of course she was trying to steal something! This Madam Li got envious after seeing me sell watermelons at the docks this morning, and thus wanted to steal some watermelons at night to sell herself! Brother Dahai, you even said that as fellow villagers, no one would come steal the watermelons. Unexpectedly, you have guarded against outsiders, but not family. This situation really fits that saying: No matter how much preventive measures you take, it's still hard to detect a thief in the family!"

Madam Li put on a tough appearance and shouted, "Ergou'zi, don't talk nonsense! Who stole the watermelons? Where are the watermelons? You must find the stolen goods to catch a thief. Where is the evidence?"

"That's because I came just in time and you didn't have the chance to make your move! If you're not stealing watermelons, then what are you doing in the watermelon fields in the dark?" Wang Ergou raised his voice without any signs of backing down.

"I... I was just passing by, alright?" Madam Li continued to argue.

Fields of Gold Chapter 186

Wang Ergou didn't believe her at all, "Passing by? All of our village's farmland are outside the village. What were you doing outside the village in the middle of the night? Moreover, pass by Brother Dahai's watermelon fields?"

This Wang Ergou was quite good! During these past two days, he had experienced the benefit of selling watermelons. His net income for two days was a total of one hundred taels, which was something that he would have never expected in the past! Looking at his wife's slightly protruding tummy, Wang Ergou's eyes became gentle, and he was filled with the radiance of a loving father.

This was the money that he had earned through honest labor, and the family property that he had accumulated for his unborn son. In the future, his son wouldn't be the same as he was as a child. In his youth, he was dressed in rags, didn't have enough food to eat, and always thought about stealing something...

After doing a few more days of honest labor, he would be able to hire someone to build a five-room brick house and buy some more farmland. If his family couldn't manage all the fields, he could rent them out to others! In this way, he could leave some family properties for his son. If his son was willing, he would also send his son to study at an academy so that he could take the government examinations. If his son was unwilling, then he could live off of collecting farmland rents. In the future, he, Wang Ergou, would no longer be a loafer that even the dogs and cats of the village despised. He could stick out his chest and be a dignified and upright man!!

In Wang Ergou's opinion, the Yu Family's watermelon fields were the key to building up his family's fortunes. He must take good care of them. Hence, when he returned from selling watermelons and saw that Brother Hai still had to watch over the melons after working the whole day, he volunteered to take over the task of guarding the melon fields. Unexpectedly, as soon as it got dark, he had caught someone with malicious intents. Ha! Moreover, it was Brother Hai's troublesome relative!

But Wang Ergou didn't care whether they were relatives or not. He regarded the person stealing watermelons as someone who was blocking his road to earning money. Brother Hai only planted three

mu of watermelons, so the number of watermelons would decrease as they got pluck one by one. If one got stolen, then that meant he would earn less money. How could he let that happen!!

Madam Li, who had been caught, cursed repeated within her heart. Had Yu Hai been the one guarding the melon fields, she could just apologize, and this matter wouldn't be spread out. After all, in the simple Dongshan Village, the villagers would spurn and isolate sticky-fingered people. However, the person guarding the watermelons today just happened to be the ignorant Wang Ergou, who was a total blabbermouth. If he spread this out, would she still have face to stay in Dongshan Village?

"Brother Ergou, the watermelons belong to my second brother-in-law's family. There's nothing wrong with eating one of my younger brother-in-law's watermelons, right?" Madam Li knew that she couldn't argue with a fearless person like Wang Ergou, so she softened her tone.

Wang Ergou knitted his brows. It was common for the villagers to pick a handful of spring beans and take a few eggplants from their relatives' fields. So her words seemed quite reasonable, but...

Yu Xiaocao let go of her godmother's hand, walked two steps forward, and said with a faint smile on her face, "Eldest Aunt, if you want to eat a watermelon, you can just tell Brother Heizi to come tell us! Why do you have to come pluck it in the middle of the night without telling us? Fortunately, our family didn't raise a dog to guard the watermelons. What should we do if it took you as a thief and bit you ah?! You see, Uncle Ergou isn't a violent person. Had it been someone else, they would have beaten you up without giving you a chance to explain yourself. Wouldn't you have to suffer then?"

Since the imposing General Fang had warned her with a grim face, Madam Li had become somewhat scared of Xiaocao. When facing Xiaocao's gaze, which seemed to be able to see through everything, she couldn't help shifting her eyes away. She stammered, "That... I..."

"Eldest Aunt, you have always had a lot of ideas, but other people aren't stupid! In the future, it's better to do less of these things—Godmother, I have shown you something embarrassing..." Yu Xiaocao had a short stature and a young face, but her words were forceful and carried a lot of weight. Thus, Madam Li was not only unable to defend herself, but she also didn't dare to refute her.

Another reason why she was so obedient was that she had heard Xiaocao call the noble madam beside her 'Godmother'. Didn't that mean that she was Lord Fang's wife? Commoners were most afraid of dealing with officials. Madam Li naturally acted much more honestly in front of Lady Fang. She didn't dare to have those little ideas anymore.

Seeing that she was acknowledging her mistakes with a good attitude, Yu Xiaocao decided to save some trouble and just sent Madam Li home.

Madam Li left the old residence dejectedly. She didn't get anything from them but made a fool out of herself instead. She went home feeling extremely aggrieved. Seeing that the lights in the main room was still lit, she shifted her rat-like eyes and knocked on the door of the main room. At this time, Madam Zhang was worrying about matters related to her younger son! The in-laws whispered privately for a long time. When Madam Li left, the worried expression on Madam Zhang's face had suddenly disappeared and she had a calculating look on her face...

The next day, Lady Fang woke up to the merry singing of birds. Outside the window, the breeze made a light rustling sound as if it was gently brushing against leaves. A bird with bright feathers in front of window looked inside curiously as it chirped melodious tunes from time to time.

Linglong helped her madam put on her clothes and wash up. She looked at the beautiful bird outside the window and said with a smile, "I didn't think that someone would install glass windows in this remote village."

Lady Fang took the handkerchief in her hands, wiped the water on her face, and said in a soft voice, "Patriarch Zhao was a general of the previous dynasty and he was born in a famous noble family. Although he has been a refugee for many years, a lean camel is still bigger than a horse. Thus, he still has some resources. If it weren't for fear of attracting too much attention in this small village, he was certainly capable of building an exquisite rural estate in the mountains. Did you not notice? The furniture might look simple, but they are made of red mahogany and red sandalwood, which is worth a lot of money!"

Zhenzhu, who was a good cook, brought over the breakfast and smiled when she heard her words, "General Fang's family is very generous. They left all of this to the Yu Family."

Lady Fang sat at the red mahogany round table, rinsed her mouth with warm water, and then said, "Young General Zhao is close friends with Xiaocao's father, and Xiaocao's father has also saved Young General Zhao's life before. There's nothing wrong even if they gave them more things, let alone this house. Where's Furong? Not up yet?"

"She might have been too tired yesterday. Miss Furong was raised in a pampered lifestyle, so how can she withstand all of yesterday's happenings?" Linglong said with a smile, "Should I go wake her..."

"No need. Let her sleep some more!" Lady Fang wasn't someone who liked to make things difficult for others. She picked up her chopsticks and prepared to eat breakfast.

Fang Zizhen had never cooked here, so there wasn't anything in the kitchen, except for the several catties of white rice, wheat flour, and vegetables that Xiaocao brought over yesterday. Therefore, compared to the breakfast eaten at the General Estate, this breakfast was rather crude. There was a pot of plain congee, several deep-fried dough cakes, and stir-fried greens. Even the second-ranked maidservants in the General Estate ate a more sumptuous meal! Zhenzhu was worried that her master would dislike this breakfast, so she lowered her head perturbed.

Lady Fang grabbed some greens with her chopsticks and chewed it in her mouth. She slightly creased her brows as she swallowed it. Then she lowered her and drank a mouthful of plain congee, which was so plain that it couldn't arouse her appetite. She lightly sighed and put down her chopsticks—Indeed, it was difficult to live a frugal life after one got accustomed to luxury ah!

"Godmother—are you awake?" The sound of Xiaocao's crisp voice, which was like the singing of larks, came from outside the door, and then the gates were pushed open. With her hair styled into a playful double bun hairstyle, a figure dressed in an emerald green cross-necked dress hopped inside the door, carrying a large food basket that looked somewhat uncoordinated with her height.

Linglong hastily went forward and took the food basket from Xiaocao's hands. She smiled and said, "Miss Cao'er is really early ah. Madam has just gotten up and is eating breakfast right now!"

With crescent-like eyes, Xiaocao said with a face full of smiles, "I came at just the right time then!"

When she entered the main room, she glanced at the nearly untouched breakfast on the table. Looking at the plain congee and greens, even she didn't have an appetite, let alone her godmother who was used to living in a pampered and comfortable lifestyle.

"Godmother, I made lean pork and century eggs congee, crispy egg pancake, chives stuffed potstickers, steamed eggs with shrimps, as well as sweet potato pancake made with the sweet potatoes that I dug out yesterday! Try it while it's still hot!" Yu Xiaocao pushed aside the plain congee in front of her

godmother and replaced it with the hot and fragrant lean pork and century eggs congee that she made. After that, she took out all the food inside the food basket and put them all on the table.

Looking at the table full of fragrant and delicious breakfast, Lady Fang was very moved. Her daughter must have woken up very early to make such a sumptuous meal for breakfast ah! She didn't know much about an ordinary family's breakfast, but she guessed that it must be extremely simple. Her daughter must have specially prepared these seven to eight mouthwatering dishes for her. Her eyes brimmed with tears, and she felt very happy with the feeling of having a daughter being filial to her!

"Godmother, quickly eat! It won't taste as good when it gets cold!" Yu Xiaocao ladled a small bowl of congee and grabbed a piece of luscious sweet potato pancake, which was crispy on the outside and soft on the inside, for her godmother. She watched her eat it with a face filled with anticipation for praises.

Lady Fang was amused by her expression. Unlike the sweetness of other sweet snacks, the rich taste of sweet potato melted in her mouth and stimulated her taste buds. 'Mhm, this sweet potato pancake tastes great. I wonder why this tasty sweet potato is considered a food eaten by low status commoners?'

After eating a piece of luscious sweet potato pancake, she drank a mouthful of the fragrant century eggs congee. She immediately fell in love with the unique and novel taste. There were also the crispy egg pancakes, soft and refreshing steamed eggs with shrimp, and the delicious pan-fried dumplings... Lady Fang felt that this meal was even better than all the breakfasts that she had eaten in the past. In particular, the look of her daughter, Xiaocao, eating with relish could really stimulate the appetite of the person watching her.

Xiaocao brought over a lot of breakfast, so even after the mother-daughter pair filled their stomachs, there were still a lot leftover. All the food that was leftover was awarded to the two handmaids. When Zhenzhu and Linglong were serving their master to eat, they had already been tempted by the rich breakfast. They had been well-trained, so it was hard to tell on the surface. But, in actuality, they had been drooling over the food for a long time already.

By the time Xia Furong woke up, there was only the plain congee, pancake, and stir-fried greens made by Zhenzhu. This noble young miss had never eaten this kind of food, so she threw a tantrum. However, she didn't eat much last night because she was fighting with Xiaocao, so her stomach had long been growling in hunger. If she didn't eat, then she would have to starve! With the thought that her aunt has eaten the same food, Xia Furong ate until she was sixty or seventy percent full while feeling aggrieved.

As soon as Lady Fang arrived here, she had noticed that there were many things that she needed to buy. Knowing that Xiaocao needed to visit her watermelon shop in town after eating breakfast, she decided to go together with her. Xia Furong still had lingering fears about the rough and bumpy mountain roads yesterday, so she volunteered to stay at home. She only had a little maidservant with her, so Zhenzhu, who was a good cook, stayed at home with her.

They went to town on the Fang Family's horse carriage. It had been specially improved, so it was naturally very comfortable. After passing the mountain road, Xiaocao rested comfortably in her godmother's arms, taking a nap with her eyes closed.

Fields of Gold Chapter 187 - To Pester Endlessly

Lady Fang hugged her goddaughter's delicate little body and felt her maternal instincts rising up from deep within her heart. As if she was coaxing an infant, she gently patted Xiaocao's shoulder. Xiaocao, who had originally planned on resting for a bit, had actually fell into a deep slumber under her godmother's gently patting.

When they arrived in the town, Xiaocao was still asleep, but Lady Fang couldn't bear to wake her up. In the end, it was the hawking outside the carriage that woke the sleeping Xiaocao up. She sat up and used her small hands to rub her eyes. She blinked sleepily and had a dazed expression on her face, as if she didn't know where she was. Looking at the dazed Xiaocao, Lady Fang's heart melted into a pool of water.

"Ah! We're already in town?" Xiaocao's pair of abnormally big eyes brightened up again. As soon as she turned her head, she saw an unidentified water stain on the front of her godmother's clothes. She blinked her eyes twice in confusion. When she finally realized what the water stain was, her face instantly flushed.

Lady Fang lowered her head to look at the trace of saliva that her goddaughter left on her clothes, and then she calmly said, "It's alright. I brought spare clothes, so I can just change in inner room of the watermelon shop."

Linglong showed the small bag in her arms to the young miss. When the noble madams and ladies went out, they would always bring a change of clothes as to avoid being discourteous when encountering an accident at someone else's house.

In the watermelon shop, Xiaocao's eldest maternal aunt Madam Han had been busily working since early in the morning. The watermelons were transported over yesterday afternoon, so there was no queue outside the store this morning. However, even after the craze of the opening of the new store, there was still an endless stream of customers in the melon shop.

After Lady Fang changed her clothes, she went to buy necessities with Linglong. Xiaocao stayed in the shop to help her eldest maternal aunt. After all, Li Li was the assistant of the imperial envoy. He couldn't leave his post and stay to help them for a long period of time. Seeing that there was someone helping at the shop, he returned to the docks. These past two days, Wu Yun had been extremely busy at the docks because the imperial envoy went to the prefectural city for work and Li Li was helping out in town!

Unlike the first two days, today's watermelons weren't sold out before noon. By the time it was three to four in the afternoon, there were still five or six smaller watermelons left. At this time, Yu Hai and Yu Xi delivered two carts of watermelon over.

Xiaocao moved the remaining small watermelons to the table at the entrance. She took a small wooden plank and wrote: 'Special Sale For Watermelons! One Tael Each!' Although these watermelons were smaller in size, they were still very sweet and fresh. They would usually cost two taels each.

There weren't any customers in the fabric shop next door, so the boss Shopkeeper Feng walked over while swaying her hips. Seeing the notice on the plank, she looked around and said with a smile, "Why are you doing a special sale on these watermelons? Are they leftovers from the past two days?"

The people in the shops nearby peeped out curiously when they saw Xiaocao taking the watermelons out. They had also seen the words on the wooden plank, and several of them were eager to make a move. But, when they heard Madam Feng's question, they stopped themselves.

Yu Xiaocao picked up a fresh melon seedling and showed her. The smile on her face remained unchanged as she explained, "Older Sister Feng, look at this watermelon seedling, it doesn't look like it's not fresh, right? As you have seen, the watermelons in our shop were all delivered here on the day of or in the afternoon of the day before. They definitely won't be placed in our store for more than a day. These watermelons are smaller in size, but they will certainly taste the same when eaten. If you don't believe me, I can cut it open for everyone to see!"

Xiaocao swiftly cut open the smallest watermelon with a knife. The red melon meat and the black seeds appeared in front of everybody. A strong sweetness subsequently drifted into everyone's noses. Xiaocao handed a slice to Madam Feng, and then she invited several of the shopkeepers of the nearby stores to have a taste.

The shopkeeper of the store two shops down from the watermelon shop was pale and chubby, and he had a bright smile on his face like a Buddha. He slowly walked over, unreservedly grabbed a slice of watermelon, and said with a grin, "Little girl, you're actually willing to do this. This cost a tael ah!"

“Of course, I'm willing! One must give up on some things in order to gain more!! Wasn't everyone feeling skeptical about purchasing the special bargain at our shop? After tasting it, you guys can rest assured!” Seeing that everyone was coming over to taste the watermelon, Yu Xiaocao's heart felt completely at ease now. She was full of confidence in the taste of her watermelons.

Sure enough, after tasting it, Madam Feng immediately picked the biggest one of the remaining watermelons and gave a tael of silver to Xiaocao. Of course, the taste of the watermelons sold at the Yu Family's watermelon shop was amazing, but it wasn't sold at a price that just anybody could afford.

Most of the shopkeepers of the stores on this street were wage earners. It was fine to buy one occasionally, but they wouldn't be able to afford eating it on a regular basis. Right now, there was a special sale on watermelons. Moreover, the price was reduced by half. Only a fool wouldn't take advantage of this discount ah!

All of the remaining watermelons, no matter big or small, were swiftly snatched up by several of the shopkeepers of the neighboring stores. Those who didn't manage to buy the discounted watermelons asked frustratedly, “Little girl, when will you have another special sale for watermelons?”

Yu Xiaocao smiled and said, “In the future, our shop will launch a special watermelon sale at random times every day. Please pay close attention to our watermelon shop!”

The fair and chubby shopkeeper of the silverware store looked at Xiaocao with squinted eyes and chuckled, “Little girl, you're quite good at doing business! Not bad, not bad. A young person's abilities should be respected ah!” In his mind, he pondered whether he should also do a special sale for the unsalable jewelry in his shop. This way, they could quickly earn back their capital—Yes, he should go back and discuss this matter with his boss!

Yu Hai, who was unloading watermelons next to the store, saw that his daughter had swiftly taken care of the remaining watermelons. He couldn't help but proudly praise her within his heart, 'She is definitely my daughter. She is born with the innate talent to do business!'

Ever since the watermelons had ripened, the whole family had been busy without time for rest. His daughter's godmother had also come, so after working for the whole day, she still had to take care of her godmother when they got back in the village. The father-daughter pair could only interact at night. However, everyone had been exhausted the whole day, so they fell asleep without saying much to each

other. It had been several days since Yu Hai got to bond with his daughter. After unloading the watermelons, he stayed in the shop to chat with his daughter. In the evening, he would come pick her up and go home together.

The spouts of the freshly picked watermelons were so fresh that one could pinch water out of them. Earlier, when the watermelons were being unloaded, it had attracted many customers to shop in their store. At this time, there were two to three patrons picking watermelons at different shelves in the store.

Yu Xiaocao sat at the entrance of the shop and counted the money, while Yu Hai stood beside her, looking at her with a grin. Just as a patron handed Xiaocao a small five tael ingot, a figure suddenly rushed towards her.

Yu Hai thought that someone wanted to rob them, so he strode forward and blocked his daughter from the other person.

“What are you doing! You, this unfilial son, even wants to hit me!!” Madam Zhang's mean-looking face appeared in front of Yu Hai like a nightmare. She had rushed over too quickly, so she almost couldn't stop herself and plunged right into Yu Hai's arms.

With one look at her grandmother's expression, Yu Xiaocao knew that she came with malicious intentions. Her father was the too foolishly soft-hearted, so he definitely wasn't Madam Zhang's opponent. After she securely locked the money box, she walked out from before her father and said, “Grandmother, who is being unfilial ah? Didn't we already send you guys the grain that we have to give you every month, as a form of our filial respects?”

With her arched eyebrows slanted, Madam Zhang glared at them with her triangular eyes and stiffly replied, “As a son, you're eating and living well every day, yet your elderly parents can only gnaw on bean cakes. Aren't you afraid of being struck by lightning!”

The watermelon shop had been too busy these past two days, so she didn't have time to cook. Thus, they had been eating the food delivered from Zhenxiu Restaurant. Although there weren't any expensive dishes, it wasn't something that ordinary people could afford! All the workers in the shop ate the meals sent by Zhenxiu Restaurant, while his own parents could only eat bean cakes... Everyone around them all looked at Yu Hai and his daughter with a contemptuous gaze.

Without a change of expression, Yu Xiaocao said, "Grandmother, when you forced my family out of the house with nothing, it was written down in black and white: 'As filial respect, the second son must send over fifty catties of coarse grain every month.' Even when we lived in a rundown house that could barely withstand the wind and snow, and didn't have enough to eat, we still gave you everything as promised. After we started selling vegetables and planting watermelons, we have changed the fifty catties of coarse grain to fifty catties of white rice and wheat flour, with an additional five catties of pork. We delivered them to you every month without fail. Why are you still giving my grandfather bean cakes to eat?"

Without waiting for Madam Zhang to speak, she continued, "Oh! I remember now!! I heard from Brother Heizi that you sold all the white rice, wheat flour, and pork that we gave you for money, which you used to buy paper and brushes for Younger Uncle!! The family isn't that poor that you need to sell your food rations in order to buy paper and brushes ah! Before we split from the main family, my father had gotten severely wounded from hunting a bear. Didn't you take all of the three hundred taels? It hasn't even been half a year, where did all the money go?"

More and more people gathered around. From this little girl's words, they had gotten a lot of explosive contents: The second son of this family had gotten injured while hunting for a bear, but the money for selling the bear had been confiscated by the mother. The injured son was forced to split from the main family, moreover, he had to leave with nothing. After splitting from the family, his family could only live in a rundown house and not have enough to eat. However, they still needed to save food while starving in order to send them to their elders as filial respect... She couldn't possibly be his real mother. What mother wouldn't be concerned about her children and grandchildren? Moreover, she was making things worse for them and adding to their burdens?

"What nonsense are you talking about!! What three hundred taels are you talking about? This damned wretch! You waste of money! Stop speaking nonsense here!!" Seeing the onlookers pointing and gossiping about her, Madam Zhang's eyes darted around and shouted at Xiaocao with a fierce appearance.

Outside of the crowd, Lady Fang, who had come back from shopping, quietly looked at the scene in front of her. Linglong said with slight concern, "This woman is too fierce and unreasonable. I'm afraid Miss Cao'er will be at a disadvantage!"

Lady Fang, on the other hand, felt that her goddaughter could handle this situation with ease based on her calm appearance. She smiled and said, "This must be Xiaocao's 'exceptional' grandmother! Seeing that the son who had split from the family was living well, she came to harass them with unreasonable demands. She is truly 'amazing' ah!! But my goddaughter isn't a pushover either. Let's just quietly wait and see how it turns out!"

Xiaocao almost got sprayed by her saliva. She took two steps back, rubbed her ears, and said, "Grandmother, being loud doesn't mean that you're in the right. Why are you screaming so loudly? Are you saying that you didn't receive the three hundred taels that Uncle Zhao sent over? Are you sure? That's not what Uncle Zhao said ah!! He's a fourth-ranked military official, which was a title that the emperor personally conferred. So he wouldn't lie to us, right? If you insist, then I'll write a letter to the capital to ask. I reckon that Uncle Zhao hasn't set out to the border yet, so he should be able to receive my letter..."

Fields of Gold Chapter 188

Madam Zhang's expression changed. Old Zhao was bestowed the title of a second-ranked general and his son Hunter Zhao also got the position of a fourth-ranked military official. Thus, their whole family were high-ranking officials now. If she continued to fabricate lies and ended up angering the Zhao Family, they might convict her for framing an official appointed by the imperial court, which meant that she would have to go to jail.

After all, Madam Zhang had achieved her thick skin from practice and experience. Even after her lies had been exposed, she still remained calm. She even rolled her eyes as she said, "All the money at home was given to your younger uncle as expense for the county examination!! Your grandfather and eldest uncle haven't been able to catch any fish recently, so there's hardly anything to eat at home now!! There's so much shining white silver in your money box. Give me one to two hundred taels to use ah!"

Yu Xiaocao was so angry at her robber-like behavior that she ended up feeling amused, "Grandmother, you're making such an excessive demand ah! One to two hundred taels! Are you preparing to drink bird nest and eat shark fins? We won't even give you ten to twenty taels, let alone one to two hundred taels!!"

Madam Zhang was afraid of Xiaocao's godfather, who was an official, so she didn't dare to do anything to her. But, after so many years, she already had a thorough understanding of Yu Hai's character. Thus, controlling him shouldn't be a problem for her. She pushed Yu Xiaocao aside and rushed towards Yu Hai.

Seeing her fierce expression, Yu Hai subconsciously tilted sideways. It was unknown where she got her strength, but Madam Zhang took a few steps and rushed towards Yu Hai. She tightly clasped onto Yu Hai's arm and forcibly shook it a few times. With the strength that she used to grab onto his arm, if it weren't for the fact that Yu Hai had thick and rough skin, there would definitely be a bruise mark!

"Second Son, I have raised you into adulthood since you were eight or nine, and I also got a virtuous wife for you. After all these years, even if I have no merit, I should still get credit for my hard work! Yes, you

have already separated from the family, but you're still your father's son and your younger siblings' older brother ah! Our family is going through a difficult time right now, so you can't just watch on the side cold-bloodedly ah!" As if she had thought of something, Madam Zhang was overwhelmed by sorrow and tears flowed down from her old face. Her face was covered with snot and tears.

All these years, Madam Zhang had placed all her hopes on her younger son. Every single coin that she had saved at home were used on her younger son. In order to ensure that he could study more conveniently, she had rented a house in town for him. Her younger son was able to eat fine grain, which the family were reluctant to eat, for nearly all his meals. No matter how stingy and frugal she was at home, she still couldn't bear to let her younger son suffer even a little. She just hoped that he would bring honor to her and become an official.

This spring, her youngest son, Yu Bo, took part in the district examination in February and successfully passed the exam. Madam Zhang was extremely elated by this and became full of hope that her younger son would pass the examination for a county official. She, who was usually very stingy, held an all-day banquet in the village to celebrate her son passing the district examination.

However, she had gotten happy too early ah! There were three parts in the county-level examination: district examination, prefectural examination, and county examination. The district examination was just the beginning. In April, Madam Zhang personally escorted her son to the prefectural city with great hope. She encouraged him to pass all three exams in one go and return as a county official.

But the higher one's expectation was, the greater their disappointment would be. Yu Bo failed the prefectural examination, and the entire household was filled with a tense and depressed atmosphere. Madam Zhang had even cried bitterly by herself in secret.

However, Yu Bo blamed his failure on the academy that he studied at, saying that it wasn't good enough. For the town's Rongxuan Academy, eighteen students participated in the county-level examination and they all passed the prefectural examination as expected. Moreover, they all placed high on the ranking. Now, they were all just waiting for the county examination! It wouldn't be surprising even if they achieved the official rank of a county official!!

Shortly after the prefectural examination, Yu Bo came to the village to tell his mother that, if he could enter Rongxuan Academy, he would definitely obtain the official rank of a county official for his mother within two years. He didn't have a chance in the past, but he got an amazing friend who could help him get into Rongxuan Academy. However, a small fee was required.

Madam Zhang was immediately interested in the idea! Even an illiterate fisherwoman like her had heard of the great reputation of Rongxuan Academy. Rongxuan Academy had produced quite a few first and second place scholars of the imperial examination!! If her son could enter Rongxuan Academy and be taught by a famous teacher, the day that he passed the examination would just be around the corner! Haha, she was going to be the mother of an official soon!!

However, she hesitated upon hearing the small fee that her son mentioned. For an ordinary fishing family, five hundred taels was seriously an astronomical figure. Even with Madam Zhang's thrifty and stingy behavior and Hunter Zhao's compensation of three hundred taels, the family's savings was still only around four hundred taels! Even if they gave up everything they had, they still wouldn't be able to get five hundred taels!!

Just when she was at a loss, Madam Li sneaked into her room last night and told her about the news that the watermelons grown by Yu Hai's family could be sold for five taels each. Upon hearing this, Madam Zhang, who was driven into a corner due to money, found a new source of light—For the sake of her younger son, she must get the money for him even if she had to lose her face!!

She came to town early this morning and hid in the corner to secretly observe Yu Hai's watermelon shop. The business of the watermelon shop was very good. There seemed to be an endless stream of customers from the morning to the afternoon. Every customer who entered the store would come out with one or two watermelons. She calculated it in her mind that, if the watermelons cost five taels each, this small melon shop could actually earn several hundreds of taels a day. With this discovery, Madam Zhang became even more confident that she could get the money from Yu Hai.

Why did she only show up at this time? Of course, there was a reason. After their previous interactions, Madam Zhang had experienced the power of Yu Xiaocao. That brat also had a powerful and influential godfather, so she couldn't be scolded nor beaten. Yu Hai, on the other hand, was a lot easier to handle. As long as she emphasized filial piety, there was no way that Yu Hai would refuse her request!

"Second Son ah! Xiaobo is your biological younger brother ah!! He's waiting for this money to save his life right now, so you can't just stand aside and do nothing ah!!" An old woman with white hair and a wrinkled face was crying sadly as she held onto the arm of the man she was complaining to. People who didn't know the truth all looked at Yu Hai with a condemning gaze.

Unable to get away from her tight grasp, Yu Hai was so anxious that he was sweating all over his head. He stammered, "You... What are you doing? If you want to talk, then just talk! You can rest assured that I won't refuse to help if it's something I can do!!"

Yu Hai was no longer the person who Madam Zhang could bully and control as she pleased. In face of Madam Zhang's bitter plea, he had left some leeway in his words.

Madam Zhang wiped her tears with her sleeve, snuffled her nose hard, and spoke in a tone as if someone owed her something, "Who doesn't know that your family's watermelon is selling very well in town and you earn several hundred taels in a day? Isn't five hundred taels just a trivial matter to you?"

After hearing that, the onlookers were stunned in their hearts! All the merchants and patrons on this street were people with some money in their family. When this old lady begged the owner of the melon shop for help, they didn't think that this peasant woman, who was dressed in worn-out clothes and appeared to have an arduous life, would request for anything extravagant.

No one had expected that she would directly demand five hundred taels. Five hundred taels wasn't a small amount of money ah! There weren't many stores within the vicinity that could earn more than five hundred taels monthly. For what reason would a poverty-stricken old woman directly demand for five hundred taels?

Yu Hai had also furrowed his brows, feeling troubled. The first thing he thought about was what trouble had his younger brother caused that they would need five hundred taels to settle.

"Grandmother, the first thing that you ask for when you open your mouth is five hundred taels! Don't you know that most people wouldn't be able to earn so much money even after working hard for all their lives? I really want to know, what exactly do you need this five hundred taels for?!!" Yu Xiaocao, who was unprepared earlier, got pushed by Madam Zhang and almost fell down. Fortunately, the agile Linglong swiftly supported her, otherwise, her skin and flesh would have to suffer!

Madam Zhang glared fiercely at the Yu Xiaocao with her ferocious wolf-like eyes, but her pupils abruptly contracted when she saw the beautiful woman behind Xiaocao. She had heard from Madam Li that Xiaocao's godmother had come from the capital. Disregarding Xiaocao's godmother's attitude towards Xiaocao, in front of her godmother, she stiffly swallowed back the wicked remarks that was about to come out of her mouth.

"You don't have to know what I need it for. Second Son, just tell me if you're going to give me the money or not!" Madam Zhang continued to pick on the easier victim and asked him in a threatening manner.

However, Yu Hai didn't obediently agree to her like she thought that he would have. Instead, he asked the same question, "Cao'er is right. Five hundred taels isn't a small number. What kind of lawsuit did Xiaobo get involved in that you guys need such a large sum of money? He didn't fall into some malicious person's trap, did he?"

"You're the one who's getting sued!! My Xiaobo's life has been blessed by the deities, so he will become a high-ranking official in the future!! This reason he didn't perform well this time was because the teachers at his academy weren't good enough!! After he enters Rongxuan Academy, he will surely pass the examination to become a county official in the upcoming year!! At that time, as his older brother, won't you also benefit?" When she spoke of her younger son, Madam Zhang had a face full of pride, as if he would definitely become a county official.

Xiaocao caught the crucial details in her words and asked doubtfully, "Wait! Did you just say that Younger Uncle is going to enter Rongxuan Academy? Isn't the entrance exam for Rongxuan Academy on the first month of every year? Hasn't the time for the test already passed? Shitou never mentioned that there would be additional test times this year ah?"

Madam Zhang revealed a proud expression and wanted to tell them the truth, but she remembered that her son had warned her not to casually talk about this matter so as to not create unnecessary problems. She swallowed back the words that were about to come out of her mouth and vaguely said, "You guys don't have to worry about it. As long as you take out five hundred taels, entering Rongxuan Academy won't be a problem!"

It seemed like someone had taken advantage of the students', who had failed the exam, desire to achieve merit and fame. But, to directly demand five hundred taels was seriously too excessive ah! Yu Xiaocao, who had already more or less guessed the truth, kindly reminded her,

"Grandmother, did someone tell you that they would let Younger Uncle study in Rongxuan Academy if you give them five hundred taels? If people can enter Rongxuan Academy just by spending money, would we even get a chance? Numerous wealthy businessmen had wanted to use their wealth to get a spot in Rongxuan Academy for their son, but none of them had succeeded. Yet you think that a mere five hundred taels would work?? Grandmother, you and Younger Uncle probably encountered a swindler, didn't you?"

Despite Madam Zhang's aged body, she could actually jump three feet high. With one hand on her waist and another pointing at Yu Xiaocao's nose, she shouted while spitting, as if she was a shrew cursing on

the streets, "Are there any nieces like you? It was hard for your younger uncle to get this chance to enter Rongxuan Academy, which isn't something that just anyone can get. It's fine if you don't want to help, but you still have to curse him to get deceived!! Your younger uncle had treated you so well in vain. Did your conscience get eaten by a dog? I have never seen such a wicked little girl. Let's see who will be willing to marry you, this jinx and black-hearted thing, in the future..."

Fields of Gold Chapter 189

Lady Fang became more and more displeased as she listened. She stepped forward and took Xiaocao, who has been sprayed by Madam Zhang's saliva, into her arms. She frowned, glared at the old woman who was making a scene in front of her, and sneered, "I have never seen a grandmother like you, who would insult her young granddaughter with such vicious words. It's really so sad for our Xiaocao to have such a vulgar and unreasonable grandmother!!"

Madam Zhang, who had gotten an adrenaline rush from scolding people, felt fury rush to the top of her head and she couldn't care less about whether the other party was an official's wife or not. She jumped three feet high, pointed at Lady Fang's nose, and screamed, "Who do you think you are ah! I'm disciplining my ignorant and cocky granddaughter, so what does it have to do with you? Don't think that just because your husband is an official that you can interfere in our family's business!!"

Linglong's face turned pale from anger. She rushed in front of her madam and shouted angrily as she faithfully protected her master, "Shut up!! Our madam is a third-rank noble madam, who even the imperial concubines in the palace had to be respectful to. You ignorant fool, who gave you the courage to point your finger at my madam's nose and insult her!! Madam, this servant will take your message to the county yamen. This servant doesn't believe that we can't subdue this foolish woman!!"

When Madam Zhang heard that two words 'county yamen', she instantly panicked. The flesh on her face trembled, and she, who was like a balloon filled with air earlier, had immediately deflated now. Although she was panicking, her mind was swiftly turning. In the end, she couldn't do anything, so she just sat on the ground and wailed while slapping her own thigh,

"Dear heavens ah! How am I supposed to live like this ah——This old woman is just disciplining my own son and granddaughter, yet I still have to be dragged away to be flogged ah!! Officials can't just look upon human lives as if they were grass ah... Dear gods ah, please open your eyes!! Give me, this old woman, a way to live——"

Not to mention Lady Fang, but even Linglong, who was a child of servants from the dowry that the Xia Family provided, had never seen such a scene. She was stunned by the sight of the vulgar old woman screaming while she rolled on the ground. To encounter such an unreasonable rural old woman, Lady Fang was like a scholar meeting a soldier—unable to reason with each other!

Yu Xiaocao saw that there were more and more people gathering over, and many of the people, who didn't know the truth, were pointing their fingers at them. From deep within her heart, she felt extremely disgusted by Madam Zhang, who was clinging onto her family like a blood-sucking leech. If they didn't properly deal with her, she would become the biggest obstacle to their family's road to making a fortune. However, Madam Zhang kept using the words 'filial piety' to bully and control her father!

[What's there to be troubled about? Just leave it up to this Divine Stone! I guarantee that I can help you get rid of that old witch without anyone knowing!] The little divine stone said such cold-blooded and gruesome words in a voice that was as tender as a child's, yet it didn't seem even a bit weird whatsoever.

Yu Xiaocao knew that the little divine stone was currently resting on top of the multi-colored stone on her wrist in its spiritual form, and thus it knew everything that was happening in front of her and all her feelings. She also knew that the little divine stone was thinking on her behalf and wanted to help her get rid of this trouble once and for all. But, after all, she had grown up in a peaceful era, so the concept of 'a human life is bigger than the sky' was deeply rooted within her. If someone lost their life because of her, she could never feel peaceful within her heart again.

[Psht—phoney benevolence! When handling a wicked old witch like her, we must use extreme means!! Since you're unwilling to get involved in a case of murder, this Divine Stone can naturally use other methods to teach her a lesson. Don't worry, just leave it up to me!!]

Recently, as a master, Xiaocao didn't really need the little divine stone's help that much. As a result, the progress of its cultivation had been very slow. If it continued to go on like this, then when could it recover its heydays, break through the void and return to Goddess Nuwa's side ah?! Thus, when it noticed that Xiaocao was troubled, it immediately jumped out and eagerly requested to help out. Helping its master was the only way for its spiritual power to recover several times faster than usual!

Xiaocao warned it, feeling slightly worried, [Then be careful and don't get caught. Also, don't kill anyone. Madam Zhang is abhorrent, but she doesn't deserve to die!]

[Alright, stop nagging so much! With me handling this, you can rest assured. Don't underestimate this Divine Stone's abilities!!] The little divine stone guaranteed and patted its chest with confidence.

However, the most important thing right now was to send Madam Zhang away. But it seemed like there was no way that she would leave without getting the money!!

Xiaocao remembered that she was the most concerned about her younger son's future, so she said in a calm and unhurried manner, "Grandmother, this is the town! Younger Uncle is a scholar after all, so his reputation is very important to him. If his classmates found out that he has a mother who rolls all over the floor being a disgrace to the educated class, I wonder how much he will be ridiculed! Even if he enters Rongxuan Academy in the future, Younger Uncle's teachers will have a bad impression of him due to this matter. After all, the reason you're doing such a dishonorable thing was because of him!!"

Lady Fang had a whole new level of respect for her goddaughter again. She didn't expect that her daughter, who was young and lived in a rural village, would actually use 'the tactic of psychological warfare'! It was excellent indeed!! This little girl was really to her liking!! Her husband was absolutely right in adopting this little girl as their daughter!!

Madam Zhang was currently rocking back and forth, and smacking her thigh while lamenting in a tone like she was acting in an opera. But, when she heard Xiaocao's words, her crying suddenly stopped and there wasn't even a trace of water on her face. The mouths of the onlookers, who had originally somewhat sympathized with her, all started twitching incessantly.

Madam Zhang stealthily looked around the crowd with her triangular eyes and noticed that there were indeed several youths, who were dressed like scholars. With their lips pursed, they shook their heads with a contemptuous expression on their faces. She was alarmed within her heart! The town was only this big, so gossip and rumors traveled really fast. If her younger son's classmates, or teachers of Rongxuan Academy, were really within the crowd like what that wretch said, then wouldn't her son's reputation be ruined in her hands? But, if she couldn't get the money today, her younger son's future would be affected... For a moment, Madam Zhang didn't know whether she should continue to make trouble, or stop and leave while covering her face.

In the midst of her hesitation, Xiaocao came to her side, bent down to support her arm, and then pulled up Madam Zhang, who was sitting on the ground. Xiaocao didn't lower her voice as she said, "Grandmother, about the money, since you have asked, how can we, as junior members of the family, refuse to give you face? It's just that five hundred taels isn't a small number, after all. Moreover, it related to Younger Uncle's future. So, we can't be careless ah!! I think that you should go back first today and let us ask Rongxuan Academy about this matter. If it's true, then we can have a more thorough discussion about this matter later. If there's no such thing, then we definitely can't let that swindler get away with it. Don't you agree?"

Xiaocao provide her with a way out of this situation, and Madam Zhang smoothly took up this offer. She stared at Xiaocao with her slightly fierce-looking triangular eyes and asked with uncertainty, "Are you saying that you guys will provide the five hundred taels? You're just a little girl, can you even make the decisions? Let your father say something and give me a confirmation!!"

"Grandmother! You're directly demanding five hundred taels, but it's not like we can make money fall from the sky ah! You need to let us prepare the money!! Besides, my father isn't the only older brother that my younger uncle has. Since the family has already split up, shouldn't the two older brothers and parents all share the burden for the money?" Yu Xiaocao's words were reasonable, so even if Madam Zhang wanted to refute her, she couldn't find any fault in her words.

Madam Zhang lowered her head and thought about it. With their family's savings, they only needed around a hundred taels more. Based on what Xiaocao said, Second Son would at least provide two hundred taels, which would be enough at that time. But, she was still unsatisfied and said, "Other than fishing, your eldest uncle doesn't have any other methods of making money, so where is he supposed to get the money? The money that your family makes from selling watermelons for a day is something that he wouldn't be able to earn even if he fishes for his entire life. They're all brothers, so why do you have to haggle over every ounce?"

She was demanding an older brother, who had separated from the family, to financially support his younger brother's studies, yet she still complained that they were haggling over every ounce. Madam Zhang was seriously full of nonsense!! However, Yu Xiaocao wasn't going to a fool and be deceived by her. Who didn't know to complain about being poor?

"Grandmother, you just see that our business is doing well. But there's also our business expenses!! Not to mention how hard it was to find a fine breed of watermelons, but Third Young Master Zhou had worked hard to help us get the watermelon seeds. We still owe him money for the watermelon seeds ah! Now let's talk about the rent for this shop! You can ask the merchants around here, how much is the monthly rent of the stores in this location? Their stores are rented on an annual basis, so it costs over a thousand taels of silver for a year! Moreover, our shop was leased on a short-term rent, which is even more expensive!! If we earn less than two hundred taels a month, then we will be losing money!! Coupled with the monthly tax, we're really not earning that much money!!" Yu Xiaocao immediately said, without even needing to prepare a draft.

Madam Zhang didn't know anything about business. When she heard that the monthly rent was two hundred taels, she harshly scolded them as 'spendthrifts' within her heart. If they had set up a stall at the market, it would only cost a few copper coins a day. Even if they sold the watermelons for a cheaper price, it would still be better than earning money for others.

It seemed like it was impossible to get Second Son to take full responsibility of the money today! Thus, she could only settle for the next best thing and said to Yu Hai, "Then... for the five hundred taels, you and Eldest Son will each be responsible for two hundred taels, and your father and I will provide a hundred taels! Your eldest brother hasn't separated from the family yet, so his share will be provided together with mine. Let me know when you're going to give me the money!!"

When Madam Zhang thought about three hundred taels flying out of her hands, she could feel blood dripping from her heart, which was throbbing with pain!

Yu Hai was about to agree, but his younger daughter interjected, "Grandmother, do you really have to talk about this here? Is it really alright to let everyone know that you're demanding such a large sum of money from your son, who has separated from the family, in order to let Younger Uncle get in from the back door? As the saying goes: 'don't air your dirty laundry in public'. Let's talk about it in detail when we get home!! Grandmother, you go rest in the inner courtyard and eat some watermelon to quench your thirst. In the evening, take our cart back. Don't worry, we won't run away!!"

Madam Zhang thought about it and agree with what she said! With her watching them, they wouldn't be able to run away. She knew that this little brat Xiaocao could make half the decisions in the family. Since Second Son didn't object to what she said, this matter was about to succeed!

She had been stirring up trouble for a while now, crying and screaming. So, her throat had long been dry, thirsty, and uncomfortable. Thinking of the sweet watermelons, she couldn't help but swallow her saliva hard, and then she slowly walked towards the inner courtyard.

Lady Fang and Linglong breathed a sigh of relief: They really didn't know how to handle such an unreasonable and boorish old woman, so they would only end up losing against her! Nevertheless, her daughter (Miss Cao'er) knew how to resolve the problem and was able to appease that old woman.

But were they really going to give her two hundred taels? Lady Fang wasn't distressed about the money but felt that it wasn't worth it!! In her husband's letter, he mentioned a lot about how this old woman bullied Xiaocao's family. She had felt very angry about it when she was still in the capital. Her heart wouldn't ache even if this two hundred taels were given to beggars, but that Madam Zhang was the only person that she was not willing to give it to at all!!

Fields of Gold Chapter 190

For the time being, her atrocious grandmother, Madam Zhang, had been pacified. Xiaocao felt that there was something weird about this matter, so she decided to go to Rongxuan Academy to ask about whether they had this additional enrollment quota for their school. If she could encounter the headmaster, then that would be even better.

Lady Fang had originally wanted to accompany her goddaughter for this trip, for fear that the people at the academy would slight a young girl who was under ten years old. However, unbeknownst to her, Headmaster Yuan, who was usually had a stern and scholarly demeanor, was a complete glutton.

Yu Xiaocao would visit her younger brother at the academy several times every month, and she would bring some food that she made every time she went. A portion was left for her younger brother's roommates to eat, while the other was specially prepared for the old foodie, Yuan Sinian.

Thus, Headmaster Yuan had specially instructed the academy's gatekeeper to immediately notify him when Yu Fan's older sister came to visit him. If he wasn't at the school, then he must remember to inform his manservant, Shishu. For the headmaster to regard her with such high esteem, the gatekeeper was extremely enthusiastic every time he saw Xiaocao and didn't dare to slight her at all.

Xiaocao politely declined her godmother's kindness. After that, she went across the street to the back kitchen of Zhenxiu Restaurant and packed two roasted chickens and two osmanthus ducks. At Zhenxiu Restaurant, these two kinds of braised food and the oyster sauce dishes could almost be considered the treasures of the restaurant. Even though they had launched dishes with vermicelli and century eggs, they still couldn't compete with those dishes.

Even though these two dishes were sold in limited quantities every day, the queue for reservations were already full for the next three days. However, they would make a few extras every day in preparation for the unexpected needs of their boss and his friends and relatives. Yu Xiaocao was naturally classified as a close friend of their boss. No matter if she came to eat or get take-out, it would all be put on Third Young Master Zhou's credit.

If her bill was directly waived, then Xiaocao would really be embarrassed to take advantage of the restaurant. However, since Third Young Master Zhou had instructed to put the bill on his account, she was able to accept it with ease. She had helped Third Young Master Zhou earn so much money, so it was natural that he should treat her to meals.

The commercial street where the watermelon shop was located was in the east market of Tanggu Town, while Rongxuan Academy was in the south side of the town. Fortunately, Tanggu Town wasn't very big.

With a large bag of chickens and ducks in her hands, Xiaocao quickly reached the entrance of Rongxuan Academy.

When the gatekeeper, who was leaning against the door and lazily basking in the sun, looked up and saw a slender and short figure, he suddenly stood up in excitement. Seeing the basket in Xiaocao's hands, the gatekeeper immediately smiled like a blossoming flower, "Aiyo! Miss Xiaocao, it has been a while since you have visited!! Our headmaster has often mentioned you!!"

The gatekeeper could tell that the headmaster really had high regards for this little farmer girl with a pair of big eyes. Even for his precious grandson, he had never been this concerned.

The Yu Family was preparing for the opening of their watermelon shop, so they had been busy for several days. Yu Xiaocao really did come by less often, but the gatekeeper had exaggerated. Moreover, didn't Headmaster Yuan just eat a feast with them when the shop opened several days ago? It had only been three days, yet he was already craving for food? Had she nurtured that glutton to have a picky appetite?

However, she knew that Headmaster Yuan often gave her younger brother extra lessons on the sly. At present, Yuan Sinian's position as the headmaster was only a nominal title. He seldom managed the school affairs. Apart from occasionally giving a lecture to the class that was preparing for the examination when he was in a good mood, he was usually traveling, visiting friends, playing go, and drinking tea. He was enjoying a free and leisurely lifestyle.

As a famous scholar of his generation, to be able to listen to one of his lectures was even better than studying for ten years ah! If he had open lectures, one might not be able to get a seat even after fighting with the crowd. Such a great scholar was actually giving extra lessons to a young child who had just begun studying not too long ago. If this news got spread out, it would definitely make people green with envy ah! Even Headmaster Yuan's grandson didn't receive such treatment! For the sake of her younger brother's future, Xiaocao was very willing to send these 'gifts'!

In fact, the reason that Headmaster Yuan was willing to teach Little Shitou wasn't only due to Xiaocao's delicious food, but also because of his love for talent. During the past year, Xiaocao had added mystic-stone water in everything that the Yu Family ate and drank. Not only could the mystic-stone water improve their health, but it could also unwittingly improve their intelligence.

Little Shitou was originally a smart child, but after being nurtured by the mystic-stone water, his intelligence had gone up another level, almost to the point of remembering everything with one look.

With someone who had so much potential in front of him, could Headmaster Yuan not be burning with eagerness to teach? Had he not been afraid of messing up the generation hierarchy, he would have taken Yu Fan in as his last discipline.

However, he took his disciplines into consideration. The youngest was even older than Little Shitou's father, while the oldest could be Little Shitou's grandfather. If they found out that their respected teacher took in a student who was even younger than their own children and grandchildren, it would be hard to say what expressions they would have on their faces.

Although he didn't formally take him in as his discipline, Yuan Sinian still made an exception and taught him personally. The little fellow had only been studying for half a year, but he could already keep up with the level of the intermediate class. If he hadn't been afraid of spoiling things with his excessive enthusiasm, he was about to help him apply to skip a grade!

He also knew that there were already certain people who were extremely envious of his special treatment towards Little Shitou. If he made another exception and let him skip a grade, it wouldn't be a good thing for Little Shitou. Thus, he told Little Shitou to study with the primary class in the morning and come to his study in the afternoon so that he could explain deeper knowledge to him. Now they were just had to wait for the placement test after summer vacation. He trusted his own judgement and believed that this little fellow could definitely pass the exam to enter the intermediate class!

Rongxuan Academy had two advancement exams every year. One was after the winter vacation, while the other was after summer break. The students of the primary class and intermediate class could advance to the next level class as long as they could pass the examination of the higher class. If they couldn't advance to the next class two years in a row, then they would have to leave Rongxuan Academy. To be able to pass the examination to enter the academy, they definitely didn't lack intelligence and wisdom. Thus, one could only say that those who couldn't advance to the next class just hadn't made enough effort.

However, the students considered it an honor to be able to enter Rongxuan Academy and especially cherished the chance to continue studying in the academy. Since the establishment of the school, very few had been asked to withdraw from the academy.

Back to the present. The news of Yu Xiaocao's arrival at Rongxuan Academy had swiftly entered Yuan Sinian's ears. He knew that the little girl would go to the primary class to look for her younger brother first. He was impatient and couldn't wait any longer, so he pretended to patrol the academy without even bringing his manservant and went to the primary class's courtyard by himself.

The primary class was currently taking a break. When Little Shitou's roommates saw Xiaocao, they were even more excited than her younger brother, Little Shitou. With the speed of a 100-meter sprint, they rushed towards Xiaocao and surrounded her, chattering incessantly.

"Older Sister! What tasty food did you bring for Shitou today?" There were four people in Little Shitou's dorm. The person who spoke was a dumpy child around the age of eight or nine, whose real name was Sun Runze. He was from the prefectural city and was the youngest son of the prefectural magistrate's secretary.

Little Shitou tried his best to push him aside, rolled his eyes at him, and said, "Little Fatty Sun, you're two months older than my second sister ah! Aren't you ashamed to call her 'older sister'?"

Sun Runze was obviously a good-tempered person; he didn't get angry even after being called little fatty. He wrapped his strong arm around Little Shitou's neck, as if they were very close brothers, and grinned, "We're as close as real brothers, so your second sister is naturally also my second sister! Second Sister, what delicious food did you make this time? I'm about to drool just from smelling it!"

Liu Jinye, who was the oldest in the dorm, was the only son of the boss of the largest silk and satin store in the prefectural city. He had a rather gentle personality, and just stood on the side with a gentle smile. Situ Qing, who was not that much older than Little Shitou, jumped over like a monkey, blinked his eyes, and stared at the food box in Xiaocao's hands with a salivating expression on his face. The little fellow's grandfather was a third-rank official in court ah!

Thanks to Xiaocao's delicacy attack, her younger brother, who was born from a poor fishing family, never experienced the agony of being discriminated. Though Rongxuan Academy didn't care about one's identity and just cared about talent, there was still a darker side in private.

It was said that a student of poor origin had left the academy regrettably because of being ostracized by his roommates, which caused his grades to plummet sharply. Fortunately, Little Shitou's roommates were mostly simple and kind children. Even their slight arrogance had been thrown beyond the clouds by the delicacies that Xiaocao brought over from time to time.

Xiaocao touched Situ Qing's hair, which was very neatly combed, and said with a gentle smile, "The shop is busy today, so I didn't have time to personally cook..."

When the three of them heard that it wasn't food personally made by Xiaocao, their instantly dimmed. However, their eyes swiftly brightened up again——

"...So I packed roasted chicken and osmanthus duck from Zhenxiu Restaurant. I don't know if you guys will like them." Seeing the constant change in their expressions, Yu Xiaocao snickered incessantly within her heart.

Situ Qing instantly jumped up, turned around excitedly, and shouted, "Like! Of course, we like them!! Last time, when my mother and older brother came to visit me, they took me to Zhenxiu Restaurant for a meal. Roasted chicken was among the dishes, and it was very, very, very delicious!! But I didn't get to eat osmanthus duck!"

"Wow! Second Sister is so amazing!! You'll have to make a reservation three days in advance in order to eat the roasted chicken and osmanthus duck of Zhenxiu Restaurant!! You actually got both of them at the same time! I have so much admiration for you ah!!" The little fatty's eyes were glowing, and there was an unknown liquid on the corner of his mouth.

Even the oldest Liu Jinye couldn't stay calm and had an even wider smile on his face as he said, "Today, thanks to Little Shitou, we can taste the two most famous dishes of Zhenxiu Restaurant! Thank you very much, Miss Yu."

"You guys—why are you huddling around here?" Headmaster Yuan's voice sounded from outside the door of the courtyard. The kids, like a mouse seeing a cat, had to disregard the delicacy in front of them and dejectedly ran back to the classroom.

As he ran, Little Fatty Sun turned his head and said, "Second Sister, remember to bring the food back to our dorm ah! We'll get some rice and go back after class..."

With a smile on his face, Yuan Sinian looked at the energetic appearance of the children of the primary class and said with a chuckle, "These boys, they may look like a group of monkeys right not, but in a decade or so later, they might become one of the three most important officials in court! In his childhood, my son, who is the current prime minister, did a lot of those things like climbing trees to get eggs and catching fish and shrimp in the river."

Lord Headmaster, was it really alright for you to expose the prime minister like this?

Yu Xiaocao took out two oil-paper bags from inside the basket. Headmaster Yuan gently sniffed and laughed, "Only you, this little lass, can get Zhenxiu Restaurant's roasted chicken and osmanthus duck whenever you want. That little brat of the Zhou Family is seriously too stingy. I have talked to him several times already, but he still didn't give me this privilege!"