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Fields of Gold Chapter 211 - A Transformation

The raging demand for the Yu Family's starch jelly was more than they could supply. Even the passengers on the ships would also come over to join in on the fun and buy a bowl of takeout to taste. Naturally, one bowl was not enough to satisfy the desires of a whole family. Thus, they would send their servants to buy some more. However, the Yu Family's starch jelly was too popular. Oftentimes, by the time the servants arrived for the second portion, they had to go back empty handed. There were even some people who waited in line for a long time in order to just have a taste of the starch jelly!

The few baskets of red algae that Yu Xiaocao had brought over had very quickly been simmered away into starch jelly, and there were still people clamoring for more. Furthermore, starch jelly was not the type of food that filled people up, so after eating one bowl the person would soon get hungry again. Thus, the dockworkers all came back during their next break to consume another bowl to satisfy their desires and cool themselves down.

Xiaocao's cold noodles were also quite popular, especially during the time when one pot of starch jelly was sold out and the other was still simmering on the stove. The workers who couldn't wait could only settle for the other option and order a bowl of cold noodles to eat. However, they didn't expect the cold noodles to also be incredibly delicious, so they were all pleasantly surprised. All of the remaining flour in the noodle stand, whether it was made of coarse grains or wheat, had all been used up by the time evening arrived.

By the time it was suppertime, the Yu Family's stand had nothing left to sell to the workers who came by. After sending off the groups of disappointed workers, Xiaocao and her family cleaned up the stand in preparation to go home.

At this time, a tanned youth who wasn't very tall but was very muscular stopped by quickly. He flashed a smile that revealed a row of white teeth, "Second Uncle, Xiaocao, are you guys cleaning up already? Do you need my help with anything?"

It took Xiaocao a moment before she recognized the brawny and tan young man in front of her. Apparently it was her paternal cousin, who she technically didn't have blood relations with, Heizi. Although Yu Hai had pretty much stopped having any encounter with the main branch, he was still quite friendly to Heizi, who had little to do with their complicated relationship, "Heizi ah! You must be hungry right? There's still some starch jelly in the bucket that your younger sister, Xiaocao, left for me. Take some to eat!"

It could be said that Yu Heizi had undergone an astounding transformation in these past few months. Not only did he manage to endure through backbreaking hard labor, but he also officially became a regular worker under Brother Six. Regular workers received a monthly salary. In addition, they also got two days of paid leave every month and bonuses when they did well. Becoming part of the regular staff meant that one no longer had to fear not having a job to feed oneself.

Heizi, who had worked hard the past few months, had long transformed his body full of fat into a ball of muscle. Although he was on the shorter side, he now looked a lot more brawny and strong. In fact, within his group of coworkers, there were a few who had inquired whether he had already married or had a fiancée yet. If not, they wanted to introduce their own daughters to see if they could be matched with this competent and slick young fellow. Heizi carefully inspected a few families and ended up choosing a girl who had average looks but was kind and hardworking. Then, he had his parents propose the marriage to the girl's family.

Originally, Madam Li had wanted to match her son with a girl whose family had decent circumstances in town. The first person that came to mind was her maternal niece. Her second older brother had a general goods store in town. Right after her niece was born, her second brother had an unexpected accident and harmed his core, so he was unable to father any more children. Although he technically adopted a son from his elder brother's family to carry on the line, at least half of her second brother's fat inheritance had to be given to her niece. Madam Li was planning on using marriage ties to get wealth!

However, Heizi knew what his older female cousin, who was older than him by a year, was truly like. Everyone said that nieces resembled their maternal aunts, and it was true for his cousin. She was just like his mother: happy to partake but not prepared to do any work. In addition, she was as fat as a plump pig. Her face was so fat that it resembled a corpse's face that had been swollen from sitting out for several days. Furthermore, his older cousin had been spoiled by his second uncle to the skies. She had an arrogant and willful temper beyond imagination. In fact, she even dared to shout at and order her own father around.

If Heizi had not changed, then it was likely that he would have listened to his mother's plans and obediently agreed to this marriage for the sake of getting his hands on his second uncle's assets. However, the few months he spent at the docks not only toughened his body but also changed his values. The kind and honest dock workers had morphed Heizi's way of thinking.

Now, he had the ability to make a living. Although he was currently a lowly regular worker, his monthly salary was decent, a tael. One tael was more than enough to sustain a family of four without any issues. In the future, if he continued to work hard and do well, he might be promoted and earn two taels a month. If Brother Six appreciated his work even more, he could then be promoted to a foreman. The

monthly salary for a foreman was five taels. Currently, he had already saved up five to six taels in his private purse after working for a few months. What was the point in sacrificing his future happiness for the sake of money now?

Heizi had revamped his thinking in these past few months. He needed to marry a wife who was like his second paternal aunt, a woman who was kind and capable. She needed to be able to manage both the inner courtyard and outside matters. In fact, he had looked closely at his second paternal uncle's family. They had all become rich through their own efforts and were doing better every day. As for his own family, his father wasn't very competent and his mother was a lazy bum who was of no use. Furthermore, his grandmother held all of the money tightly within her own hands. Thus, the whole family was unable to eat their fill on even coarse grain.

Therefore, when he was considering his colleague's daughters, he chose a maiden whose family was the poorest out of all of them. This young woman's mother had died from an illness two years ago, and the family had sold their few plots of land in an effort to raise money to treat her before she passed. Now, the entire household was reliant on Heizi's colleague's salary to survive.

This girl was the oldest in the family. After her mother passed away, she became the person in charge of farming and taking care of her four younger siblings. It was obvious that this girl was very hard working as she was able to manage the household very well even as a young preteen. Her younger siblings always wore clean clothing that were patched perfectly. At a glance, he could tell that this girl knew how to live her life well! He naturally had to choose a wife like her!

In the beginning, Madam Li didn't want to go along with his choice. However, Heizi said something that made her change her mind: "Mother, I'm marrying a wife, not an uppity lady! You know Older Cousin too. Do you think you can order her around to do work? Do you think she'll take care of you when you get old? She even dares to verbally abuse Second Maternal Uncle and Second Maternal Aunt, do you think you'll be able to endure her bad temper?"

Madam Li thought for a bit and decided that he was right! Her niece just had that type of rotten personality. In the future, if they lived together, who would be the person serving who? Her son truly had a filial heart and knew how to find a wife to take care of her!

Madam Li, you're truly thinking too much. Your son is not like his second paternal uncle, a man who has unquestioning filial piety. Don't take his past behavior to heart, he knows how to take care of his wife. Furthermore, the woman who he wants to marry isn't someone as easy to bully as weak Madam Liu. She knows what work needs to be properly done, but she'll also say what needs to be said. Your son will

mostly stand on his wife's side, so don't think you'll be able to take advantage of this mother-in-law daughter-in-law relationship!

But this is all stuff reserved for the future. Currently, the docks had two shifts, day and night shift. Yu Heizi was currently on the day shift, and he was about to leave work at this time when he saw his second uncle and his cousins cleaning up the food stand. Thus, he came over to see if there was any work he could help with.

After helping Xiaocao carry the basket full of utensils onto the donkey cart, Heizi couldn't resist his second uncle's kindness and gobbled down the bowl of refreshing and cooling starch jelly. He had heard of his second uncle selling starch jelly earlier from one of his coworkers. However, he was afraid that other people might accuse him of cadging a meal from them due to their familial relationship, so he normally asked someone to buy him a portion of braised food whenever Xiaolian was selling some. Otherwise, he chose to resist the temptation of the braised food and never came up personally to buy some.

Today was the same. Although his coworkers all praised the starch jelly to high heaven, he resisted the temptation to come over. Only when he saw that his second uncle's family was cleaning up did he finally come by. However, he didn't expect his second uncle to especially save a portion and so he managed to score a taste.

After he finished the starch jelly, Heizi was about to take out some money when he was stopped by Yu Hai, who told him that there was no point in being so petty between family members. It was only a bowl of starch jelly, if he continued to insist, then his second uncle would become angry...His uncle even said that in the future, if he was hungry, he should come over to the stand to have a bowl of starch jelly or cold noodles to cool down. There was no point in treating his family members like strangers. In the future, his two younger cousins needed him to support them!

This whole conversation made it awkward for Heizi to bring up the subject of money again. Thus, later on, Heizi always came by when he had the time to help wait tables or scrub bowls. Furthermore, whenever Xiaocao gave him a bowl of starch jelly or noodles, he also never brought up the subject of paying again. All he could do was to help them out whenever he was able to!

After he finished loading Second Uncle's donkey cart, Heizi went back to the village with his second uncle's family. At the mouth of the village were a bunch of children, who had finished eating dinner, playing. When they saw the Yu sisters come back, they all formed a circle around them and started spewing questions, "Xiaocao, Shanhu told us that you're looking to harvest some seaweed, is that true?"

“Xiaolian, seaweed looks a lot like grass, can we really sell it to you guys for money? Shanhu's not tricking us, right?”

“Xiaocao, I picked up a full basket of seaweed today. Don't tell us that you're not taking it ah!”

“That's right, that's right! In order to gather seaweed, I even forgot to cut some ragweed and was scolded by my mother! Don't let me labor in vain...”

Xiaocao felt like her head was about to explode from the noise. She was finally able to find a gap in the chatter, and she promised, “Don't worry, I was the one who had Shanhu tell all of you. You absolutely won't be working in vain! All of you should bring the seaweed over to where my family buys seafood. Let me go home and rest for a moment. After that, I'll weigh the seaweed and pay you guys!”

The group of kids, who had all been waiting for the two sisters at the entrance of the village, scattered back home after hearing Xiaocao's words. They ran as if they were afraid that the Yu Family might stop buying seaweed if they came back too late.

Yu Hai doted on his daughter, so he had her sit on the side as he himself went up to receive all of the seaweed. No wonder there was a saying: 'Many hands make light work.' Although each child only had a dozen or so catties worth of red algae in his or her basket, there were a lot of children! After tallying all of the seaweed, they ended up with three to four hundred catties of algae in the end. They almost didn't have enough baskets at home to carry all of this seaweed.

Zhou Shanhu swung the string of copper coins in her hand contently. Today, even her older sister, who was sewing her dowry, had come out to gather red algae! Their haul was quite large. They managed to earn forty-some copper coins! Her family was doing better due to their prosperous chicken sales, so forty copper coins wasn't worth too much. However, this was the money that she earned herself. Furthermore, her mother had told her that this money was for her alone to keep. Now, she had her own private purse! In the future, she needed to gather more seaweed so she could save some more money!

Madam Liu stood in the center of the courtyard and looked worriedly at the baskets full of seaweed. From her experience, she knew that whenever her daughter came up with a new idea, the first three days they would be swamped before the craze slowly died down. Their business today had gone quite well, but they only managed to use twenty to thirty catties worth of seaweed. Now, they had a few hundred catties of seaweed sitting in their yard. The weather had been very hot lately, so if this bunch of seaweed went bad, what were they supposed to do?!

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Xiaocao could tell that Madam Liu was worried, so she smiled and said, "Mother, don't worry. The seaweed here can be dried and stored for about a year afterwards. We don't know how long we'll have fresh red algae around, so storing extra isn't a bad idea."

When Madam Liu heard this, she immediately relaxed. She worked along with her two daughters, carefully washing the seaweed before it was placed on some grass mats to dry in the sun. It would take quite a long time to process a few hundred catties of seaweed. Fortunately, before long, Lady Fang came by with her two handmaidens. When she saw her daughter dripping sweat from work, she couldn't stay seated and also began to help them.

This wasn't the first time Lady Fang had helped out. She couldn't watch her daughter work hard on her own, and Xiaocao wasn't the type of person to sit around twiddling her thumbs. Thus, Lady Fang also bustled around every time her daughter was doing something. As for her two handmaidens, they couldn't just stand on the side while their mistress worked, right? So, the Yu Family had an additional three working hands for free.

Freshly washed seaweed had a slightly fishy odor. Lady Fang was bent over, taking the just washed seaweed and placing them on grass mats. Suddenly, a puff of fishy odor wafted over and she couldn't help but retch.

"Madam, is something wrong?" Linglong, who was right next to her, hurriedly supported her mistress to sit down when she saw her heaving. She then ladled up a glass of warm water from the ceramic jar and helped her mistress drink it down.

Lady Fang felt her stomach settle down after the slightly sweet taste of the warm water hit her mouth. She smiled reassuringly at Xiaocao, who had come over out of concern, and said, "I'm fine. Don't get worried like Linglong. It might be that I'm not used to the smell of seaweed yet! Cao'er, Godmother will be fine after resting a bit!"

Madam Liu smiled, "When I first married and came to Dongshan Village, I was also not used to the smell of seafood. Every time I had a whiff of fishy odor I wanted to vomit. Her father even thought I was pregnant!"

Yu Xiaocao sniffed lightly at the red algae. The fishy odor was quite faint and was similar to the smell of the seafood porridge that she normally made for her godmother. In these past few months, her

godmother had tried every type of seafood available without a problem. Furthermore, she had even been able to help with processing caught fish without vomiting. Why did she have a problem now?

Suddenly, she heard her mother say the word 'pregnant'. Her eyes immediately lit up. Her godmother and godfather had been eating her medicinal cuisine with added mystic-stone water. Both of their bodies were completely healthy now. Her godmother was in her early thirties while her godfather was around forty. They had a good relationship, so her godmother becoming pregnant wasn't something out of the ordinary.

Xiaocao placed the seaweed in her hands down and carefully washed all traces of fishy odor from them. She then arrived next to Lady Fang and pulled at the woman's hand to take her pulse.

Lady Fang watched as her adopted daughter solemnly took her pulse. The tiny and delicate little face had such a serious look that she couldn't help but tease, "Oh! Our family's little miracle doctor is showing off her skills now. What did you diagnose? Tell Godmother quickly!"

At this time, Fang Zizhen had just come in from the rear courtyard with a basket of freshly washed seaweed in his hands. When he saw his adopted daughter feeling his wife's pulse, he grinned, "Wife, believe in her! Our daughter has quite the medical talent. The last time I saw Tongren Medicine Hall's Doctor Sun, he even complimented our daughter for being quick at learning. If she truly wanted to learn medicine, I suspect that she would even have no problems entering the palace to become an imperial female doctor!"

Female doctors belonged to the Imperial Hospital, and they were in charge of treating the palace's empress and consorts. They mostly handled the diagnosis and treatment of some more private ailments.

"Okay, then what does our little 'female doctor' think Godmother has right now?" Lady Fang felt like she had become healthier and healthier ever since she started living in Dongshan Village. The change was especially obvious after she started eating her daughter's specially prepared medicinal cuisine. Now, she had so much energy that she was sure she could kill an ox by herself. However, she could tell that her daughter felt worried about her after she vomited a couple of times.

Feelings between people were mutual. Xiaocao clearly cared about her, so Lady Fang treated her as if she was her own biological daughter. Anything that was good had to go to her daughter.

Although Yu Xiaocao only had a dabbling of medical knowledge, she was quite talented at diagnosing through feeling a person's pulse. The worried look on her face quickly cleared. It was still a bit early but she was certain that she felt a slippery pulse. Furthermore, she could tell that her godmother's health was quite good. However, a pregnant woman should always take more care and needed to do less hard labor.

Fang Zizhen relaxed when he saw his daughter's expression. However, he still had to ask, "Daughter, is your godmother okay?"

"No problems, she's doing quite well! If I'm not wrong, I'm pretty sure I'll have a little brother or sister eight months from now!" Yu Xiaocao was quite confident in her diagnosing ability, so she flashed a mischievous grin at her godfather.

Fang Zizhen smiled gently as he nodded, "As long as she's okay—what did you say? What do you mean a little brother or sister? Am I thinking in the right direction..."

It took a moment for the information to sink in. Suddenly, Fang Zizhen's eyes opened wide as he desperately tried to restrain his reaction. He strode forward and grabbed his goddaughter's arm as he repeatedly babbled.

Lady Fang, who was still sitting, was so stunned that she resembled a statue. She stared at her daughter as if she was trying to figure out whether the little girl was teasing her or not.

Yu Xiaocao had never seen her godfather in such a state before. Although he was clearly quite agitated, the hand that he used to grip her hand had modulated its force. It didn't feel uncomfortable at all. Xiaocao felt very grateful within her heart. She originally wanted to tease her godfather a little more but those thoughts completely vanished. She solemnly nodded her head, "Godfather, you didn't hear wrong! I just felt a slippery pulse, so I'm pretty sure Godmother is with child!"

"With child? Hahaha! I'm going to be a father?! Cuiyun, we're going to have our own child!!" Fang Zizhen gleefully danced around as if he was a joyful kid again. Despite the members of the Yu Family around them, he gently drew his wife into his arms.

Lady Fang had never been hugged by her husband in front of so many people before. She flushed and lightly pushed at him while scolding, "That's not necessarily true! Are you crazy? We'll talk about this again after I find Doctor Sun in town tomorrow to confirm."

Lady Fang was also feeling very emotional right now. She was married at the age of fourteen to General Fang, who was more than a decade older than her. For twenty years, there was no stirring in her belly. Although the imperial physician had found out that it wasn't her fault that they were childless, she still had a bit of regret within her heart. Despite her husband finding a satisfactory goddaughter for them, that hole in her heart was still not filled.

Her husband knew that she had felt somewhat lost, so he, disregarding a man's dignity, searched for doctors and medications diligently. As soon as he heard of a talented doctor somewhere who was good at treating infertility, he would devoutly ask that doctor to treat him. However, despite all their efforts, the heavens had never taken pity on them. Twenty years had passed without any sign of pregnancy. Time flowed by, and she no longer had any hope anymore. Now, suddenly, her adopted daughter had told her that she might be with child! Lady Fang thought back to her recent retching and a tiny beacon of hope lit up in her heart.

The Yu Family had previously joked that Xiaocao had been given pointers by a god. Now, she truly wished that that joke was true. Perhaps Xiaocao was truly her lucky star and could give her a different future...

Fang Zizhen acted as if he was handling a piece of delicate porcelain and was incomparably careful when he hugged his wife. The smile on his face almost split his face in two as he chuckled, "Wife, even without confirmation I have a feeling that you're pregnant. I noticed that your tastes have changed this past month. In the past, you didn't like to eat sour foods, so all of the dishes at home had less vinegar added to them. Recently, you've been wanting to eat sour foods as if they were the only thing good on earth. In fact, you even have to add a couple drops of vinegar to seafood soup. As for our daughter's sweet and sour fish, sweet and sour pork chops, you could probably down at least half of a large platter on your own. Also, you've been sleeping in a lot while in the past you've always woken up early...you must be pregnant. Our baby must be a lazy bum who loves to eat sour foods!"

When Madam Liu heard this, she hurriedly congratulated them, "From what General Fang is saying, it's probably eighty to ninety percent certain that you're pregnant! When I was pregnant with Little Shitou, I also loved to eat sour foods. In fact, I loved to eat unripe apricots straight off the tree, which are usually so sour that most people can't take a single bite. Sour foods for boys, spicy foods for girls, you must have a fat little fellow in you!"

Madam Liu had been pregnant three times and given birth to four children, so she was considered experienced. When Lady Fang heard her words, her somewhat nervous heart settled down. She gently used a hand to rub at her belly and a loving smile appeared on her face, "It doesn't matter whether this child is a boy or girl, he or she is still the best present that the heavens have given me!"

Yu Xiaocao nestled next to her godmother and let out a silvery laugh, "Godmother, tomorrow I'll have Godfather bring you into town. We can have Doctor Sun tell us if there's anything pregnant women need to avoid and also buy some tonics as well. We absolutely cannot neglect my little brother!"

Fang Zizhen grinned foolishly and repeatedly agreed, "Yes, yes! We should buy a lot of tonics! It's hard for you to be pregnant so we must take good care of you!"

Yu Xiaocao's whole family was sincerely happy for Fang Zizhen and his wife. The two had been married for twenty-some years and Fang Zizhen was already in his forties. Now that he could finally have a descendant of his own blood, was there anything else that could make him even more happy?

With the good news revealed, everyone worked lightly and quickly. Before long, the few hundred catties worth of seaweed had all been completely washed and set out to dry by the group. Lady Fang, who also wanted to help, had been ordered to sit on the side by them. After drinking some water that was enhanced with mystic-stone water, she didn't feel unwell again. In fact, that evening, she managed to eat an extra half bowl of food!

The next morning, Fang Zizhen carefully brought his wife into town. As usual, Yu Hai and his daughters took the donkey cart to the docks.

The previous night, Xiaolian had proudly showed the rest of the family the amount of money they earned that day. Since the docks were doing well, the prices had also gradually gone up. An ordinary bowl of coarse grain noodles used to be one copper coin a bowl, but was now two copper coins a bowl. Wheat flour noodles had gone up to three copper coins a bowl, and they had set the price for cold noodles at four copper coins a bowl. Starch jelly was set at five copper coins a bowl. Thus, in one day, they made around two taels, which was two thousand copper coins! From that, one could see just how many bowls of starch jelly and cold noodles they sold in a day!

For the Yu Family, two taels really wasn't a lot of money anymore. However, for Xiaolian, it was still considered quite a lot. In the past, when she sold braised food, even though the price had gone up to two copper coins a portion, she could only make a couple hundred copper coins in a day. After splitting a tael with her younger sister, she still had more money in her hands than before.

The most important part was that all of this money was considered to be hers and hers alone! In the past, before they split from the main branch, she thought having a couple copper coins on hand was a grand sum. Now, she had over a hundred taels worth of private savings, but she was still considered the poorest of her family. Little Shitou, who was studying in town, had multiple people giving him some pocket money here and there. Thus, even his private savings was more than her own! However, judging by the speed they earned money the previous day, her private savings were soon about to double! Yu Xiaolian immediately felt enthusiastic and optimistic about the future!

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The starch jelly business at the pier kept Xiaocao busy for a bit. For the past few days, she got up at the crack of dawn, staggered out the door with the pot of starch jelly Madam Liu had made, and drove the donkey cart with Xiaolian. On the way over, she took a nap on the donkey cart. Once they got to the pier, they simmered chili oil, prepared the condiments, kneaded the dough, rolled the dough, cooked noodles, and then greeted their first group of customers for the day.

For the other food vendors at the docks, the summer was their off-season. However, the business at the Yu Family's sisters starch jelly stall grew with the summer heat. Other people did try to find out how to make starch jelly. Although starch jelly was easy to make, the ingredients were hard to come by.

As a result, Xiaocao and her sister made sure to tightly cover the baskets that held seaweed. They also separated part of the noodles stall into a storage space. People could come to the stall to eat starch jelly, but they couldn't go to someone's storage space! Furthermore, the pot that cooked the seaweed was covered with a thick covering, which not only prevented someone from secretly opening it but also sped up the boiling process.

This summer, for some reason, seaweed poured onto the shore after the tide went out. Xiaocao couldn't help but think that an earthquake had occurred at the bottom of the ocean causing the seaweed that grew at the bottom of the ocean to break off and float to shore with the changing tides. Those who wanted to find out the recipe of the starch jelly would have never thought that the seaweed floating all over the sea was the key ingredient.

After a few days, business finally settled down. However, this business required cooking, prepping ingredients, and taking care of the customers. Xiaocao couldn't do this alone, and Xiaocao's godfather had asked her more than once in private to find spare time to take care of her godmother.

The doctor confirmed that Lady Fang was pregnant the last time they went into town. Fang Zizhen treated her as if she was a phoenix egg, catering to her every whim. He wished that he could be beside

her the entire day in order to protect her from any falls or stumbles. Recently, some important people were going to come for an inspection. He couldn't avoid it, so he asked his goddaughter for help. His goddaughter's good medical skills were good and she was skilled in recognizing beneficial medicines for a healthy diet. He would only feel relieved if his goddaughter was watching over his wife.

Thus, Xiaocao entrusted her Eldest Maternal Uncle, who was working at the docks, to send a message to her Eldest Maternal Aunt. Her aunt was currently idle at home and Xiaocao wanted to have her and Xiaolian work together to run this business. Although the starch jelly and cold noodles stall was a small business, after subtracting the costs of ingredients, the profits were decent. The two families could split the earnings and get one tael each, which added up to thirty taels a month. There were very few people at the pier who could surpass their business.

Eldest Maternal Aunt came with her younger daughter the next day. Her eldest daughter, Liu Feifeng, was almost seventeen years old and had been engaged for two years. She was going to get married at the end of the year, so she had to stay at home preparing for her wedding! Madam Han was planning on using the fifty taels she would earn from helping Xiaocao manage the stall on her eldest daughter's dowry. After all, her eldest daughter had worked hard.

Liu Feiyong, the second daughter, was fourteen years old and recently just got engaged. Madam Han, upon hearing from Xiaocao that marrying early may not necessarily be a good thing, told her future in-law's to wait until their daughter was sixteen or seventeen years old to marry over.

The in-laws agreed; they couldn't disagree. The Liu brothers had made a lot of money with their brother in-law selling watermelons. Everyone in Xishan Village knew about this. The oldest son of the Liu Family didn't have a son, so he took the money he earned and bought a shop for each of his daughters in the newly built harbor as their dowry. His eldest daughter also had an additional fifty taels of silver for her dowry. This was a generous sum of money. Let alone people in Xishan Village, no one else within the dozen or so other nearby villages was willing to give such a large dowry to their daughters. Therefore, the Liu Family's door sills had almost been flattened by the number the matchmakers coming to their door.

After picking and choosing, Madam Han chose a family living in the suburb of the town for her second daughter. If this family was in Xishan Village, they would also be considered an uncommonly rich family. This family had thirty-some mu of fertile land, and they had relatively simple relations. The older couple was known for their good tempers. The elder brother was already married and had children. When the younger brother married, the older couple planned on separating the family and living with the elder brother. The land and family property will be split equally between the brothers, and the younger brother will only have to give rice to the old couple to support them every month. This was why Madam

Han chose this family for her second daughter, even though the family wasn't the richest out of the people who came to propose marriage.

The Liu Family's net worth kept rising. Madam Han's second daughter wasn't the only one who got many marriage proposals, even her youngest twelve year old daughter also had people coming over to inquire. However, Madam Han felt that her younger daughter was too young and wanted her to live joyfully for an additional two years. Furthermore, she believed that as long as her family continued to work with her younger sister in-law for the next couple of years, they would continue to prosper. By the time she needed to find a husband for her youngest daughter, there would likely be more choices.

The Liu Family's eldest son and his wife, Madam Han, were people who didn't like to stay idle. Right after the watermelon season was over, Liu Pei went to the docks to do manual labor. Brother Six had found him and asked if he wanted to become an official employee. Liu Pei, who was planning to sell watermelons at the end of spring every year, tactfully declined this offer. Temporary workers on the pier weren't always able to get some work every day. However, due to Brother Six's relationship with Xiaocao, he assigned Liu Pei work every day and even paid him the salary that regular workers received.

Madam Han stayed at home for a few days, thinking about what business to do on the side to make some money. Before she could make a decision, her husband came home with good news.

"Xiaocao, your Eldest Uncle said you came out with a new food? He said you two sisters are too busy and can't manage the business on your own. Let me come help you guys. If there is anything you need me to do, just tell me!" Madam Han never doubted her little niece's cooking skills.

Madam Han was used to cooking at home, so it wasn't hard for her to knead the dough and make noodles. Thus, Xiaocao gave her the recipe to make cold noodles. As for her cousin, Liu Feiyan, she was nimble and quick like her mother. As such, Xiaocao had her bring the cold noodles and starch jelly to the guests. This way, Xiaolian only needed to take care of making starch jelly and seasoning the cold noodles and starch jelly!

Madam Han and Liu Feiyan were both good workers. After the initial rush, they soon got a handle of their tasks.

"Heh! How is it? Did the two of you manage to help out?" Liu Pei and his eldest nephew, Liu Zhiwei, wiped the sweat off of themselves as they came over with great strides after loading the cargo. Liu Zhiwei was also an official employee of Brother Six now.

Madam Han took the noodles that were ready and placed them in ice water, not forgetting to roll her eyes at him. She smiled, "Did you think that the two of us eat for free? Making noodles is nothing to us."

Liu Feiyan poured two bowls of iced water for her dad and cousin, smiled mysteriously at them and said, "Dad, drink some water to quench your thirst!"

Liu Pei had been thirsty for a long time, so he drank the water with a big gulp. A wave of coolness went through his body, which was more enjoyable than drinking cold water from the well on a summer day.

After finishing the iced water in one breath, Liu Pei let out a long sigh and exclaimed brightly, "Yan'er, bring dad another bowl! Xiaocao, where did you get such cool well water?"

Liu Feiyan brought over another bowl of water and said, "Dad, younger cousin is really impressive. On such a hot summer day, she can make ice cubes. This iced water is cooled by those ice cubes!"

"Such a hot day, where would you get ice? Are you saying that our Xiaocao is an immortal in disguise, with the ability to change water into ice?" Old Hao sat down under the awning, with the summer heat hanging onto him. Grabbing a fan in the shop, he vigorously fanned himself with it. Upon hearing their conversation, he jokingly inserted a sentence.

Xiaocao also poured him a bowl of ice water. There were even two ice cubes floating on the top. The big clay jar in the noodles stall had become her ice manufacturing tool. The starch jelly and cold noodles were all chilled with ice water that was cooled with ice cubes, making them more refreshing.

Old Hao opened his eyes wide and stared at the ice cube that was the size of a pigeon egg. He picked it up with his hands and clicked his tongue as he looked at it a while longer before putting it in his mouth. He chewed it and it made a satisfying crunching noise!

The other people coming in to eat lunch also wanted a bowl of ice water after seeing this. Xiaolian said with a smile while seasoning the cold noodles, "We only have this one jar of ice, if we give it to you guys then we won't be able to chill the cold noodles and starch jelly. Do you guys want to eat warm starch jelly and noodles?"

Upon hearing this, the honest dock workers all laughed and gave up on this idea. One of the men, who was more witty, loudly said, "Xiaolian, we know that this iced water isn't easy to come by and we wouldn't be drinking it for nothing. One bowl of ice water for one copper coin, what do you think?"

Since someone was bringing money directly to their doorstep, they naturally couldn't leave them hanging. Xiaocao, who was making ice inside, came out upon hearing this and hurriedly said, "Since uncles have brought it to this point, if we continue declining then it will become unpleasant! Alright, in the future, we will add one more thing to the menu—iced water!"

Xiaolian worriedly asked, "Little sister, making ice isn't easy. We don't have that many people, will we be able to handle the work?" What Xiaolian was trying to hint at was that they only had one jar of ice. Was that enough ice to sell?

Xiaocao smiled and loudly said, "If we can make it convenient for people, then it's fine if we are a bit busier! Don't worry, it's just making more ice every day!"

Xiaocao's meaning was to let her father expand the stall and build a formal storage room and put two large tanks inside. As long as the saltpeter and water were well proportioned and the water placed in an iron bucket, then there wouldn't be any inconvenience.

However, in the future, their consumption of water will dramatically increase, and the water would have to be brought from the nearby villages, making it inconvenient. Nevertheless, if you had money, then you can even make ghosts do work for you. They could hire people to help them transport the water! A few copper coins for a cart full of water, there were still people willing to do this type of work!

After adding the service of selling iced water, the Yu sisters' business became even more prosperous. Everyone was sweaty all over on such a hot day. Upon drinking a bowl of cooled iced water, it quenched their thirst and relieved them of the summer heat. With the relief from the summer heat, their appetite naturally grew. With a bowl of cold noodles and starch jelly to eat, a person felt very comfortable!

With Eldest Maternal Aunt and her older cousin helping, Xiaocao could finally find some time to take care of her pregnant godmother. There were many trees on the mountains and the environment around the residence was cooler. Lady Fang didn't have the discomforts of a pregnant woman either. Every day, once in the morning and once in the evening, she would stroll around, like usual, enjoying the beautiful scenery.

Lady Fang's pregnancy was stable. Every day, Xiaocao took her pulse. In addition, Xiaocao believed that Lady Fang shouldn't do any hard labor in the first three months of pregnancy, yet proper exercise is still necessary. In terms of nutrition, Xiaocao made different tasty dishes for her godmother every day. Faced with the beautiful environment of the West Mountains and her filial goddaughter's company, there wasn't anything wrong with the lady's appetite apart from not being able to stand the smell of seafood.

Xiaocao mischievously said, "Little brother must be clever and filial. He knows that being pregnant is hard on godmother, so he doesn't want to cause you suffering."

Lady Fang used her index finger to poke at Xiaocao's forehead. She cradled her growing pregnant belly and revealed the brilliance of a mother's love.

Fields of Gold Chapter 214

The morning light cuts through the dark blue sky and the ocean breeze bringing along a slight cool breeze. Yu Hai's family started their busy day.

"Brother Dahai, are you ready to go?" Uncle Shuanzhu, who was of the same village, was carrying sharpened iron pitchforks. He excitedly pushed open the Yu Family's door and urged.

Xiaocao, who was washing up, looked at the 'weapon' in Uncle Shuanzhu's hand and asked astonishingly, "Uncle Shuanzhu, are you going to the mountains to hunt? Then you will be disappointed, my mother won't let my father go hunt in the mountains."

Madam Liu was afraid of a rope after being bitten by a snake. After Yu Hai was bitten by a bear last time, she had been badly frightened. No matter what, she wouldn't let Yu Hai go hunt in the mountains again. Yu Hai was someone who dearly loved his wife, so in order to reassure her, he never went up the mountain again after that incident.

With the pitchforks in his hands, Liu Shuanzhu happily waved and said, "These aren't for hunting! These are for shark hunting! The dried goods store in the prefectural city is buying shark fins at a high price. Your father is the most famous shark catcher in the nearby villages. In the past, before your grandfather bought the new boat, your father and I were the best shark hunting duo."

"Capturing sharks? It seems pretty dangerous; can my father handle it?" Yu Xiaocao rinsed out the rest of the lake salt in her mouth and asked anxiously with wide eyes.

Yu Hai got a specially made net from the backyard and said to his younger daughter, "I made plans to go out to sea today with your Uncle Shuanzhu a couple of days ago. You stay at home and don't run around! After I catch the shark, I will make a new diving suit for you!"

Yu Xiaocao blinked and cutely said: "Father, Xiaolian is busy right now. She doesn't have time to go to the sea, so I can just use her diving suit. Father, I've never seen shark hunting before. Take me with you. I'll stay on the boat and I won't cause any trouble for you! "

The sea was different from land; there could be danger at any moment. Moreover, Sharks were fierce marine animals. They weren't herbivores. If something happened to his younger daughter, wouldn't her mother and godparents tear him apart?

Yu Hai firmly rejected Xiaocao, "No! if you want to go to the sea, then I will take you on another day. Shark hunting isn't for playing around, so it's better for you to stay at home!"

Upon realizing that acting cute wasn't working, Yu Xiaocao went to the kitchen and ate her breakfast. All of a sudden, her eyes shifted, and she bit her lip, thinking, 'Even if you don't take me, it doesn't mean that I can't go. I still have the little divine stone. Don't I just have to dive into the water and follow from there?'

With that idea in mind, the previously listless Xiaocao quickly finished the meal and sent her father and Uncle Shuanzhu to the Liu Family's new fishing boat.

Yu Hai looked at his youngest daughter, who was waving happily at them, and felt uneasy. He reminded her again, "Cao'er, if you want to swim, you can swim a couple of laps in the shallow waters nearby. Don't swim out too far. Your body isn't strong to begin with, so make sure you can swim back!"

"I know, Father! Quit being so long-winded, even Uncle Shuanzhu is becoming impatient from waiting!" Yu Xiaocao promised. Once Yu Hai and Liu Shuanzhu left, she ran back home and changed into a diving suit. Choosing a place where no one was, she jumped into the sea with a splash.

Today, the sky was clear. The strong sun shined on the yellow sand, and there wasn't a cloud to be seen or a breeze to be felt. In the distance, the sea and the sky merged into one. On the horizon, the color of blue slowly spread to the beach. The seawater was clear and azure like the sky, and shined beautifully like a bolt of brocade.

Yu Xiaocao swam in the sea for a bit, and with the help of the Divine Stone's spiritual power, she floated in the ocean. Cupping her hands around her mouth, she shouted toward the deeper parts of the sea, "Xiaobu—Xiaobu——"

The little divine stone lazily reminded her, [Save some energy! This Divine Stone has already given the baby dolphin a command, as soon as you appear in the ocean, he will come to find you!]

As if answering the Divine Stone's words, the cute and clever dolphin appeared in front of Xiaocao. These days, Xiaocao had been busy with the business at the pier. When she got home, it was already dark outside, so how could she have time to play with the little dolphin in the sea?

The little dolphin happily swam around Xiaocao and occasionally rubbed its smooth head on her arm. As if it was blaming her for neglecting it, it cried, "Ah... Ah——"

Xiaocao gently rubbed the little dolphin's head and said, "I know! Aren't I here now? In the summer, I will come to play with you more often! Right now, I will give you a mission, take me to find a fishing boat. Can you do that?"

The little dolphin seemed to understand her words and nodded its head. Then it placed Xiaocao on its back and swiftly swam toward a direction.

Xiaocao, who was on the back of the dolphin, felt as if she was on a jet ski, breaking through the waves and the wind. Thankfully, there weren't any fishing boats nearby, or they would have thought she was a sea monster!

During this era, most fishing boats were driven by manpower or wind. Although it was difficult to find a fishing boat in the vast sea, it was fun to swim along with the wind. Fortunately, the little divine stone occasionally gave her directions, and Xiaocao soon caught up to her father's boat.

Xiaocao was afraid her father would see her, so she urged the little dolphin to dive into the sea and slowly approach the boat. Sailing with the wind, the fishing boat advanced further into the sea. With the boundary that the little divine stone created with its power, Xiaocao swam under the boat, and she would occasionally dive deeper into the sea to tease the curious fish that gathered.

About two hours later, when Xiaocao felt like she was becoming a marine creature, the fishing finally stopped.

At this time, the tools used for catching sharks were very simple. All one needed were a fishing net and a steel pitchfork. Yu Hai first took the bait he had brought—a piece of fish meat covered in chicken blood—and placed it around the boat. Then he used a piece of wood to gently knock on the deck of the boat, using the sound to attract the sharks.

Yu Xiaocao got off the back of the dolphin and quietly swam over to the piece of fish. She even used her hands and gently poked it. The little dolphin beside her curiously looked at the delicious piece of meat, opened his mouth, and prepared to swallow it.

Xiaocao hurriedly stopped him. That was a bait for sharks, so there were hooks in it. If the little dolphin ate it, it would most definitely lose its life!

Not being able to eat the delicious food in front of it made the little dolphin upset. The little dolphin swam out to a spot not far away and shouted at the boat a few times before jumping out of the water to vent its dissatisfaction.

Liu Shuanzhu looked at the dolphin not far away and laughed, "Ha! Instead of attracting sharks over, we attracted a dolphin. Brother Dahai, if we aren't lucky today and don't attract any sharks, catching that little dolphin wouldn't be bad either!"

Yu Hai looked strangely at the dolphin that was swimming around them. This dolphin looked like it was still a baby, yet it seemed to have gotten separated from its school. It also didn't seem to fear humans.

It took patience to wait for sharks to take the bait. The two people on the boat took out their breakfast and leisurely chatted while they ate. However, it was hard for Xiaocao who was in the water. She was like a fish, swimming to the bottom of the sea looking for treasures. Sadly, she didn't bring any tools, or she would've gained a lot of profit. It looked like there were a lot of resources deep in the sea.

"When will the sharks come ah!" Yu Xiaocao felt like she was going to fall asleep. She had asked the little divine stone to make a bubble with its spiritual power and was currently comfortably lying in it.

[Do you need me to give a helping hand and attract the sharks here for your father?] The little divine stone asked arrogantly.

"Yeah, Yeah! Hurry, if my father catches a shark earlier, then he might be able to get home in time for lunch!" Yu Xiaocao was in a better mood as soon as she heard that the Divine Stone could attract sharks over.

The little divine stone quietly released its spiritual power. The smell it gave off imitated the taste of the sharks' favorite food and it could be sent out very far...

Not long later, Xiaocao saw that sharks were swimming over in the distance. She hurriedly called out to the little dolphin to evacuate the area. If they didn't move now, then they would be waiting to become shark food.

'Wait! What's going on? Why am I surrounded by sharks?' This unreliable little divine stone, it had actually attracted a school of sharks here? Was she going to become shark food?

[What are you worrying about? With me, this Divine Stone here, why would you be afraid of becoming shark food? Coward!] The bubble that the little Divine Stone created could isolate smells, so the sharks didn't even know Xiaocao was there! The little divine stone also did an act of kindness and made a bubble for the little dolphin. The little dolphin was Xiaocao's playmate and companion, so it was automatically included in the protective scope.

Just as Xiaocao was about to breathe a sigh of relief, she heard Uncle Shuanzhu shouting on the fishing boat, "Brother Dahai, what should we do? We are surrounded by sharks!"

Experienced shark hunters all knew that they didn't have to be afraid of a single shark, but an entire school of them would be very scary! If sharks got angry, they could easily flip an entire fishing boat.

Xiaocao frowned as she watched the sharks slowly moving closer to the fishing boat. The first shark that appeared had arrived beside the bait and was opening its mouth to bite the bait...

'No, Father is in danger! I have to find a way to lure the other sharks away!'

She climbed onto the back of the little dolphin and gently pacify the frightened dolphin. The little dolphin, whom Xiaocao had named Xiaobu, only had one thing in it mind upon seeing so many sharks, 'Escape!!'

At this time, Xiaocao pointed it in a direction and the little dolphin rushed off in that direction without thinking. Gradually, the little dolphin realized that the sharks didn't notice them despite being so close. The little dolphin seemed to have calmed down and slowed down its speed.

At this moment, the sharks had surrounded Yu Hai's fishing boat, and the shark that had bit the bait was struggling desperately. Yu Hai, who was holding the fishing rod with the bait on it, almost got dragged into the sea several times.

Liu Shuanzhu was holding the steel pitchfork and was aiming it at the shark, but he hesitated to throw it. He knew that if he managed to injure the shark, the scent of blood would cause the other sharks to attack. He was uncertain whether the boat would be able to remain floating at that time. If the two of them fell into the waters, would the fierce sharks be willing to let them go?

From afar, Yu Xiaocao turned her head and saw that the fishing boat was in a crisis. She hurriedly asked the little divine stone to release the spiritual power that attracted the sharks earlier, while she rode on the little dolphin at the quickest speed to further the distance.

The fishing boat was shaken violently by the shark that was desperately trying to get off the hook. If the two weren't expert sailors, then the boat would have already been flipped. What were they going to do? Were they going to be finished here today? Yu Hai and Liu Shuanzhu were falling into despair.....

Fields of Gold Chapter 215

"Brother Dahai, the shoal of sharks has scattered! Come on, quickly reel the rod!" Liu Shuanzhu was the first to notice that the sharks had left. Although he was inwardly perplexed about why the shoal of sharks suddenly all went in one direction, he didn't think too deeply about it.

At this time, the shark, whose mouth was caught by the hook, was struggling desperately. Its 1.5 meter long body was wriggling vigorously in the water. Fortunately, Yu Hai was strong enough to tightly clasp the iron fishing rod in his hands and prevent the shark from breaking free.

While Yu Hai was reeling the rod, Liu Shuanzhu used the steel fork in his hands to pierce the shark. Perhaps he was still stunned or slightly nervous, but he was still unable to subdue the shark after piercing it several times.

Seeing that blood of the injured shark was slowly dispersing in the seawater, Yu Hai was afraid that it would attract the shoal of sharks from earlier, so he said, "Shuanzhu, come hold the rod and let me try."

Liu Shuanzhu knew that Yu Hai, who was skilled in hunting, was more accurate than him, so he took the fishing rod in Yu Hai's hands. At this time, the wounded shark seemed to have sensed its impending death, so it flopped with all its might, nearly pulling Liu Shuanzhu into the sea.

Yu Hai quickly picked up the steel fork and stabbed into the head of the shark that was desperately trying to escape in the sea. He didn't understand the refraction of seawater, but he knew from his long-term fishing experience that he couldn't just aim straight at the target. Instead, there needed to be a small deviation. Sure enough, the harpoon had hit the target! The poor shark flopped a few times before it stopped moving.

The two worked together to pull the shark into the boat, and then skillfully cut the fins. The shark meat had a pungent smell, so most people didn't eat it. However, Yu Hai promised to make a diving suit with the shark skin for his younger daughter. Thus, he prepared to peel off the skin after taking the shark back.

Xiaocao, who had swum far away, told the little divine stone to stop emitting its spiritual power. After the shoal of sharks chasing lost their target, they gradually dispersed. The little dolphin, who quickly fled with Xiaocao on its back, had just swam away desperately with its little life ah. It had actually performed exceedingly well, leaving the sharks far behind them. Of course, there was also the contribution of the little divine stone using its powers to replenish the little dolphin's energy and accelerating its speed.

"Xiaobu, let's go back to that place and take a look!" Xiaocao was still slightly worried and decided to go back for a look to confirm her father's and Liu Shuanzhu's safety.

The little dolphin shook its head desperately, 'It's too scary. There's a lot of sharks ah! My mommy said I have to stay away from dangerous animals. Xiaobu don't want to go!'

The little dolphin reluctantly agreed after Xiaocao persuaded it for a long time and promised to bring it delicious meat (meat soaked in mystic-stone water) later.

On the way back, they encountered several scattered sharks. However, the little divine stone had sensed it in advance and they were able to avoid them. When Xiaocao saw the Liu Family's boat again, they had already begun setting the second bait down.

"Little Glutinous Dumpling, can you lure one shark at a time? Do you know that my father almost died because of you just now?" There was a trace of reproach in Xiaocao's tone. The scene earlier was so alarmingly dangerous that her soul nearly flew away from the fright.

The little divine stone decided to redeem itself with merit, [No problem! But, I need you to get close to the shark. Can you do it?]

"Can you guarantee the safety of me and Xiaobu?" Xiaocao didn't want to sacrifice her own life for shark fins.

The little divine stone patted its chest and vowed, [Rest assured, this Divine Stone is here ah! How can ordinary sharks break through this Divine Stone's spiritual barrier? You're looking down on me ah!]

In light of the fact that the little divine stone was usually pretty reliable and had never messed up at the critical time, Xiaocao chose to believe it.

Xiaocao urged the little dolphin to swim toward the direction where they had found the sharks just now. Soon, an unknown species of shark, about two meters long, swam in their direction. It seemed to be mealtime for this shark. Seeing a delicious little dolphin and an unknown creature, it rushed over madly.

The little dolphin was stunned by the ferocity of the shark. No matter how Xiaocao urged it, it only stayed in the same place and forgot to run away. The big shark swiftly arrived beside them and opened its large, fierce-looking mouth. Revealing two rows of sharp teeth, it chomped in the direction of Xiaocao and the little dolphin.

The little divine stone broadened its spiritual barrier and firmly wrapped Xiaocao and the little dolphin within it. The big shark bit on the spiritual barrier, but the barrier remained intact. The shark's mouth

was propped open by the barrier. It could neither spit it out, nor could it swallow it. Aiyo, how embarrassing!

The little divine stone suddenly shrunk the barrier and used its spiritual power to help Xiaocao and the little dolphin escape from the shark's mouth. The little dolphin finally reacted and fled in panic. Although it was carrying Xiaocao on its back, the little dolphin moved in an agile manner. The shark behind them obviously didn't want to let its prey escape, so it hastily chased after them. With one chasing and the other escaping, the little dolphin and the shark quickly reached Yu Hai's boat.

At this time, the little divine stone suddenly helped them speed up. The big shark quickly lost the target in front of its eyes. It didn't give up and kept searching nearby. Suddenly, it noticed the bait set by Yu Hai and Liu Shuanzhu. It was a small piece of meat, but no matter how small a mosquito was, it was still meat. Hence, it decided to just eat it first!

As proven by facts, greed came at a price. This shark ended up dying due to food!

"Brother Dahai, we're pretty lucky today. It has only been two hours, but we have already caught two sharks! If it continues like this, we might get four or five sharks before nightfall!" Liu Shuanzhu burst with joy as he looked at the two large sharks on the boat! As the saying goes: 'an ounce of shark fin is a tael of gold'. The weight of these two shark's fins must be at least two or three catties. He was going to be rich!!

Yu Hai wiped the sweat on his face and was in a good mood. In the past, when he came out to hunt sharks, he was already considered rather lucky if he could catch one shark in a day! Most of the time, he would return empty-handed when hunting for sharks. He also didn't expect that they were able to catch two sharks so easily. However, he didn't greedily think that they would continue to be so lucky, "Who knows! But, this is more than enough for today, even if we can't catch anything else in the afternoon!"

"You're right... oh, oh! Here comes another one. Quickly look! It's coming straight at us. Is this considered 'delivering itself to us on its own accord'?" Liu Shuanzhu couldn't believe his own eyes. Today, thanks to the heavens, they were getting a big harvest ah!

Yu Hai had already gotten ready. After drinking mystic-stone water for a long period of time, his vision had gotten much better than most people. Seeing that there seemed to be something luring the shark over, he asked in surprise, "Shuanzhu, do you see that? It looks like the shark is chasing something. Let me take a closer look... it seems like a human... no, it kind of looks like a fish..."

Liu Shuanzhu concentrated on staring at the fishing rod in his hands and said, "Brother Dahai, are you sure you didn't see wrong? How can it be a human? Haha... Brother Dahai, you must have heard too many legends... It's on the hook. It got hooked!! It's a big one!! Brother Dahai quickly come help!!"

Yu Hai stopped thinking about what was in the sea and focused on dealing with the big shark. It was really a big one. The two sharks just now didn't seem any more than two to three hundred catties. This one was huge and was at least four meters long. It definitely weighed over a thousand catties!

He threw the harpoon hard, but it didn't kill the shark. It wasn't hard to imagine how strongly the injured shark would struggle. It nearly flipped their fishing boat. Yu Hai quickly picked up the harpoon and used all his strength to throw the harpoon at the vital part of the shark. Fortunately, the life of the large shark was brought to an end during the third jab. Had it taken more time, the two might have been dragged into the sea!

It was such a large shark, nearly bigger than their boat. It was impossible to transport it back. Yu Hai took off his outer garment, jumped into the sea, and swam towards the shark's corpse. He cut off the shark's fins with a sharp knife and threw them onto the ship.

When he climbed back onto the fishing boat, he said to Liu Shuanzhu, "Let's quickly go somewhere else! Sharks have a keen sense of smell. I'm afraid that the blood around here will attract a shoal of sharks to come over!"

Liu Shuanzhu hastily turned the sail and steered towards another direction. At the time, Xiaocao swam over and grabbed the rope at the stern of the boat, letting the fishing boat take her forward. The little dolphin, who was a little tired, followed behind them weakly.

"Oh? Brother Dahai, quickly look! There's a little dolphin following our boat! The little fellow doesn't seem very happy. Perhaps it's hungry!" Liu Shuanzhu saw Xiaobu and teased it with the harpoon.

It might be due to Xiaocao, but the little dolphin wasn't afraid of him. Instead, it poked its head out of the water and stared at Liu Shuanzhu with its big, limpid eyes. Liu Shuanzhu sliced a piece of meat from the shark on the boat and threw it at the little dolphin. The little dolphin was slightly hungry, so it swallowed the meat and stretched out its head to ask for more.

Liu Shuanzhu was in a good mood because of the good harvest today. He started talking with the little dolphin, "Little fellow, did you get separated from your group? So pitiful! Here, eat another piece of shark meat! You're really lucky today. You haven't tried shark meat before, right?" As he spoke, he tossed another small piece of meat over.

After it ate a few pieces of meat, the little dolphin's strength had also recovered. At this time, Yu Hai and Liu Shuanzhu settled on another area and laid the fish bait.

"It's time to work, Xiaobu!! It's hard to complain about someone who has fed you. Quickly lure a few more sharks over!" Yu Xiaocao reckoned that they should hurry up. After catching three to five more sharks, her father would probably set sail to return home!

In this way, with Xiaocao's help, Yu Hai felt as if everything was going his way. The sharks were constantly taking their bait. Moreover, on several occasions, he has seen something in the water luring the sharks over. When he told Liu Shuanzhu about it, he got teased by him, "Brother Dahai, have you ever saved the daughter of the Dragon King of the Sea? Maybe she lured all these sharks over to pay the debt of gratitude? Hahahaha!" After saying that, he burst out in laughter as if he had told a very funny joke.

When the sun started setting, they had already caught eight sharks. They had left most of the shark bodies in the sea and only brought back two of them. One shouldn't be too greedy, so Yu Hai decided to set sail to return home.

Seeing that the boat was preparing to go back, Xiaocao swam back first and waited for them on a reef by the sea. Fortunately, the return trip went very smoothly, and she soon saw the outline of the fishing boat on the shore. Xiaocao jumped back into the sea and swam towards the boat.

"Oh! Isn't that Xiaocao?! Sure enough, she is Brother Dahai's daughter. She's a pretty good swimmer! Xiaocao is such a kind and upright person. She was probably worried about you, and thus waiting for you by the sea!" Liu Shuanzhu saw the agile figure in the sea and couldn't help but praise.

Yu Hai revealed a proud smile on his face. His daughter was really the best. She had only come to the seaside with Shanhu and the others several times, and she had already learned how to swim. Moreover, she could swim so well. 'Mhm! She must have inherited it from me!'

He lifted Xiaocao, who had gotten closer to the boat, onto the fishing boat and proudly showed off today's harvest. Xiaocao pretended to be surprised and voiced a series of praise for her father, which caused Yu Hai to laugh continuously...

Fields of Gold Chapter 216

The shark's dorsal fin, pectoral fins, and caudal fin could all be made into dried shark fin, so at least twenty to thirty catties of fins could be cut off from each shark. Of course, in order to turn them into dried shark fin, they need to be dried and dehydrated. Thus, only around ten catties of shark fin could be produced from each shark.

Yu Hai and Liu Shuanzhu felt that their moral character must be extremely good today; they had actually caught eight sharks in a day. In this way, the fins alone weighed over two hundred catties. The shark fins were equally divided between the two families. After they were made into dried shark fins, they would take them to the prefectural city to sell. They could definitely sell them for a good price. Yu Hai was very good at preparing shark fins, so Liu Shuanzhu left his portion of shark fins with Yu Hai and asked him to help make them into dried shark fins. As a result, Yu Hai was very busy for the next two days.

Yu Xiaocao had fallen in love with the feeling of underwater exploration, especially in the deep sea, which was definitely a mysterious area. There was a rich variety of marine creatures at the bottom of the sea. Her harvest from diving once was much higher than gathering seafood by the sea! Recently, she didn't have any good ideas to make money, so she was thinking about doing something with the high-quality seafood like sea cucumber, abalone, and lobster. Weren't abalone, sea cucumber, shark fin, and fish maw the favorite of the rich?

She had the support of Zhenxiu Restaurant, so she wasn't worried about not being able to sell the marine goods she found from her underwater exploration. On the contrary, when Xiaocao first took out the sea cucumbers, abalones, and a fresh lobster that was half a meter long, the head manager of Zhenxiu Restaurant was completely stunned. After that, he was extremely elated!

It had been a long time since Zhenxiu Restaurant launched a new dish. In summer, greasy food like roasted chicken and braised meat weren't as popular as they used to be. The chefs in the back kitchen were all scratching their heads trying to think of a new and refreshing dish.

With these high-quality seafood, did they still have to worry about not being able to retain their customers? After the head manager expressed his gratitude again, they agreed that if Yu Hai caught more of these high-quality seafood, he had to sell them to Zhenxiu Restaurant. The price was negotiable!

Xiaocao naturally couldn't tell him that she got these high-quality seafood from diving, so she gave her father all the credit. Fortunately, the head manager of Zhenxiu Restaurant, also knew that Yu Hai wasn't only a good hunter but also an excellent fisherman. Thus, he didn't suspect anything at all! A few abalones, several sea cucumbers, and a large lobster was sold for two hundred taels. Xiaocao thought that this business was quite profitable and doable!

Every day, other than taking care of her pregnant godmother, Xiaocao spent at least half a day under the sea. The Yu Family had also noticed that Xiaocao seemed to be going to the sea quite frequently. With the thought that 'his younger daughter had just learned how to swim, so she was still very interested in it', Yu Hai didn't hinder her from playing at the seaside. However, the family would always remind her not to swim too far away, to be careful, and so on.

As midsummer approached, a new batch of sweet potatoes had been planted. It was currently the most idle time for farmers. After experiencing several rainstorms, the Yu Family felt that building their house should be their top priority at the moment. The old residence was too old. Every time it rained, there would be heavy rain outside and light rain in the house. Almost all the household utensils had to be used to catch the rain. In particular, the Yu Family was really worried that the west room of the old house would collapse if there was another rainstorm.

After selling the shark fins, Yu Hai decided to build three tiled-roofed rooms beside the old residence. After moving into those rooms, they could tear down the old residence and rebuild it. In total, they would have five black brick, tiled-roofed rooms. In addition, there were also the east and west wing-rooms. It was enough space for the entire family to live in!

No sooner said than done! Yu Hai went to the prefectural city several times to contact a brick kiln and ordered 150,000 black bricks and 30,000 tiles. These bricks and tiles, including the delivery fee, cost nearly two hundred taels. As for the stones used to lay the foundation, Dongshan Village was close to the mountains, so they just needed to find several strong workers from the village, and they would be able to get enough stones within two to three days.

Since Yu Hai had a good relationship with Zhenxiu Restaurant, the Zhou Family's two factories prioritized recruiting workers from Dongshan Village and provided them with good benefits. Moreover, Yu Hai was usually a warm-hearted person. If other families needed help, he had never refused them as long as he was capable of helping out. As a result, Yu Hai became the most respected person, who also had the best interpersonal relationships, in Dongshan Village besides the village chief.

Originally, Yu Hai had planned to hire around a dozen people from town to help build the house. The daily wage would be fifty copper coins and two meals. Unexpectedly, when several families, who had

good relations with Yu Hai's family heard that they were going to build a new house, they pushed off their work and all rushed over to help.

The first one to come over was Liu Shuanzhu, who had a very close relationship with Yu Hai. As soon as he entered the gates, he shouted, "Brother Dahai, are you looking down on us, your brothers? Or are you afraid that we're not skilled enough to build a house, and thus waste the bricks and tiles that you bought?"

Yu Hai punched his shoulder lightly and said, "Look at you. What are you saying? I'm just afraid that I will delay your work!"

The present Dongshan Village wasn't the same as it was in the past. Except for the old, weak, women and children, there were very few people who were idle. Not to mention those who worked in the Zhou Family's factories, but they could earn a few hundred copper coins a day by gathering sandworms and oysters during low tide! If that wasn't enough, they could also go work at the docks and earn several dozen copper coins in a day.

According to the usual practice of Dongshan Village, if someone wanted to build a house, the young and strong laborers of the village would come to help, and the host just needed to provide two meals for them! Yu Hai was afraid of hindering the villagers from making money ah!

Liu Shuanzhu glared at him and angrily said, "My brother is building a house, even if I can earn a mountain of gold in a day, I still need to help my brother first!"

"Brother Shuanzhu is right! Brother Dahai, you're speaking like we're strangers! As the saying goes: 'a close neighbor is better than a distant relative'! When are you laying the foundation? I'll tell your Older Brother Zhou and oldest nephew to come help!" Madam Fang, who was carrying a basket of eggs, came in the gates and said.

Seeing Madam Fang enter the Yu Family's main entrance, Madam Mao thought about it and also came over. In recent days, the bricks and tiles that Yu Hai ordered had been delivered one after another. The Qian Family lived very close, so it was impossible for them to not know that the Yu Family was building a house. Since the beginning of spring, there had been an excessive demand for the Qian Family's ducks and duck eggs, and thus they had earned a small fortune. Madam Mao had deep gratitude for the Yu Family's friendly sentiments, so she naturally couldn't just sit by idly and act indifferent.

"The wife of the Zhou Family is right! Had it not been for your family's Xiaocao, my family's ducks and Madam Fang's chickens, we might not have been able to sell them! My family's Old Qian can't earn much money at the docks, moreover, he's working himself to death. I have long wanted him to quit! This is perfect. I can take this opportunity to get him to rest for a few days and come help you guys out!" Madam Mao was quite an articulate speaker.

Yu Hai, on the other hand, wasn't a very good speaker. He muttered, "That won't do..."

Liu Shuanzhu's loud voice sounded again, "Why not! In these past few years, the children have grown up and they will probably start looking for a wife in two years. I'm thinking about building a new three-room house next year to make it easier for my son to get married in the future! As you know, I'm not very knowledgeable and don't understand a lot of things, so I'm counting on Brother Dahai to give me some pointers at that time! Brother Dahai, you won't refuse to help, right?!"

"Of course I won't! Nothing is as important as brothers!!" Yu Hai placed great importance in friendship, so he had several good friends in the village!

Liu Shuanzhu clapped and said, "That's right! What are brothers? If a friend needs help, they will stab two ribs into a knife..."

Yu Xiaocao, who had returned from outside, chuckled, "Uncle Shuanzhu, it's 'when a friend is in need, one will be willing to be stabbed on both sides for him'! It means that one would be willing to sacrifice anything for a friend, including his life!"

"Hehe, my dear niece is quite knowledgeable. That's exactly what I meant! I can even give my life to you, let alone a few stinky coins? It's decided then! I have heard that my niece is an excellent cook. I will be able to eat a delicious meal at that time ah!" As Liu Shuanzhu spoke, he went out the door and prepared to go find their other close friends to discuss about the matter of working together to help Brother Dahai build his house.

Yu Jiang, who was collecting marine goods nearby, heard Liu Shuanzhu's shouting, so he poked his head inside door and shouted, "Second Brother! Count me and my eldest brother in on helping with the house construction!"

Before Yu Hai could reply, his head had already retracted. There were still several people waiting to sell their marine goods ah! It was hot in the summer, so it was easy for seafood to go bad. He must check them carefully. If the color wasn't right or it smelled weird, then he absolutely couldn't accept them! The Zhou Family's factories trusted his second brother and handed this business to him, so he couldn't ruin his second brother's reputation!!

Around twenty people came on the day they were laying the foundation. Most of them were villagers who had a good relationship with the Yu Family. There were also people who wanted to improve their relationship with the Yu Family with the thought that if there was something good in the future, Yu Hai would take care of them. Four members of the Liu Family came over, which were Xiaocao's maternal grandparents, eldest uncle, and second uncle.

Xiaocao's maternal grandfather, Liu Cunjin, was over fifty years old, but since he worked throughout the year, he was very strong and healthy. Ordinary youngsters might not necessarily be able to surpass him when doing physical labor. His only daughter's family was building a house, so no matter what, he had to come and make sure everything was going smoothly.

Xiaocao's second maternal uncle, Liu Han, didn't go out to work and stayed at home to take care of the fields. There was nothing to do in the fields at this time, so of course, he had to come help out. Even her eldest maternal uncle had taken a few days off at the docks to come help his younger sister and younger brother-in-law.

During the construction of the house, it was necessary to provide meals for the workers. Her maternal grandmother was worried about her own daughter, so she packed her bags and prepared to stay at her daughter's house for the time being in order to help her daughter with the cooking.

Looking at these friends and relatives and seeing the sincere smiles on their faces, Xiaocao's heart warmed up. The simplicity, kindness, and enthusiasm of the ancient people enhanced the sense of belonging within her heart. Perhaps, she was more suited for this type of lifestyle!

Many hands made light work. With over a dozen young and strong workers, the foundation of the Yu Family's three principal rooms and two side rooms were almost completed in a day!

It was blazing hot in the middle of the summer. Although these people were accustomed to working under the hot sun, Xiaocao was still afraid that they would get heat stroke. So she took out the mung beans that they keep at home to reduce heat and made a pot of sweet mung bean soup. She put it in

the cold water of the well, and then added some rock sugar inside. It was especially refreshing to drink it when one was very tired and hot!

It was a spectacular sight to see seventeen or eighteen young and strong men eating. For just rice alone, they had to cook two large pots. Fearing that it wasn't enough to eat, the Yu Family especially steamed several pans of white and plump plain steamed buns. The rice was white rice, while the steamed buns were made of wheat flour. Even though the current living conditions of Dongshan Village was much better than before, there were still families who ate coarse grains for every meal.

Not to mention the food that the Yu Family ate, which were all high-quality dishes ah! Stewed chicken with mushroom, salted duck, braised pork with vermicelli, and braised pig head meat were all served in pots! The vegetables were also stir-fried with oyster sauce and MSG, which was allegedly only available in the famous restaurants in town! Between the two meals, Xiaocao had also prepared the heat reducing and tasty starch jelly!

Disregarding everything else, they had to work hard in order to eat these dishes which were even better than the food they had during the New Year ah! Otherwise, would they be worthy of all the delicious food on the table?

Originally, Yu Xiaocao and her parents had wanted to pay them every day. However, as soon as they mentioned it, they were scolded by her father's friends. They questioned if they were looking down on old friends after becoming rich. To mention money between friends would hurt the relationship!

They gave up on this thought after hearing Xiaocao's maternal grandfather's words, "We know that you guys have good intentions, but once you start doing this, how can the villagers ask for help when building houses in the future? Relatives and neighbors get along with each other due to mutual affection!" The wise words of the elder had enlightened them. After that, the Yu Family never mentioned money again!

Fields of Gold Chapter 217 - A Fright in the Valley

Recently, Lady Fang didn't have a very good appetite. Besides the vegetables that Xiaocao had watered with mystic-stone water, she vomited everything else that she ate as soon as she consumed them. Meat and seafood, in particular, were food that she couldn't touch at all. Xiaocao understood the importance of a well-balanced diet for the fetus. It definitely wasn't enough to just eat vegetables, so Xiaocao racked her brain in order to make her godmother eat some meat dishes.

Little Shitou was at home because it was summer break for Rongxuan Academy. Last week, he received a letter sent to the academy from Brother Han in the capital. In the letter, Zhao Han briefly wrote about his life in the capital. His grandfather had already left for the borders to serve as the commanding

general of the army. For the time being, he and his father were staying in the capital on standby. The contents of the letter mostly consisted of his memories of his life in Dongshan Village, as well as the scenes of him hunting, roasting meat, and cooking fish soup with the siblings...

When Little Shitou heard his second sister saying that her godmother couldn't eat any meat or fish, a lightbulb suddenly lit up in his head and he said, "Second Sister, do you remember the secret base that Brother Han took us to?" Secret base was the name that his second sister gave to the valley. Little Shitou thought that it was quite vivid, so he always referred to the valley in that way.

Xiaocao was pondering whether she should try making some sour and spicy food, which stimulated the appetite. The dish 'boiled fish with pickled cabbage and chili' should be quite good. Her family didn't make any pickled cabbage, but her maternal grandmother should have them. Godmother liked to eat sour food, so 'boiled fish with pickled cabbage and chili' should suit her taste. At that time, if she sliced the fish into very thin slices and soaked it in water for a while, there probably wouldn't be a fishy smell anymore...

Hearing Little Shitou's words, she nonchalantly replied, "What? You want to go play in the valley? When Second Sister is free, I will definitely take you there... You should go study!"

"I don't want to go play! Do you still remember the little white fish in the valley creek? The meat was so tender that it melted in one's mouth. Perhaps Auntie Fang can eat it!" Little Shitou felt that he had been looked down upon.

He wasn't the Little Shitou of the past anymore, ok? He was now a student in the primary class of the Rongxuan Academy. How could he only think about playing? However, he seriously didn't want to admit that he really missed the valley, the taste of the barbeque at that time, and the delicious little white fish...

When Yu Xiaocao heard that, she immediately looked at Little Shitou and gave him a thumbs up, "That's a good idea! You have indeed been studying for half a year; you're coming up with ideas faster than me! Come, let's go to the secret base and catch a lot of little fish back. It's too hot recently, and our parents have been focused on the construction of the house. They have apparently slimmed down quite a lot. The small white fish are delicious and nutritious, so let's catch more to stew soup!"

This matter should not be delayed. If they left now, they could return in time to make lunch for her godmother! Xiaocao carried a ceramic jar and headed to the mountain forest with an excited Little Shitou.

The cool breeze was blowing in the early morning. In summer, the West Mountains was filled with verdant and luxuriant foliage. When walking in the dense forest, one couldn't feel the scorching summer heat at all. Walking through the forest, the siblings arrived at a mountain wall covered with green vines. Yes, the secret base that the siblings mentioned was right behind the green vines.

Pushing aside the thick green vines, a cave that was about a half person tall appeared in front of the siblings. The deeper one walked inside the cave, the more spacious it became. Even if an adult stood up, their head wouldn't be able to touch the stone wall on the top of the cave. After walking for about fifteen minutes, three paths appeared in the cave. They chose the path on the far right. After walking for a while, a brightness suddenly appeared in front of their eyes, which gave people the feeling of seeing a light at the end of the tunnel.

This was the valley that Zhao Han had once taken Xiaocao and her younger brother to in the past. There was flowing water and flowers blossoming like a piece of brocade. Also, due to its strange topography, it was surrounded by mountains, and thus the temperature inside the cave was slightly lower than outside. This was a good place to avoid the summer heat.

"If the opening of the cave wasn't so narrow and hard to pass through, I really want to bring my godmother here to avoid the heat! Godmother will definitely like the scenery here!" Yu Xiaocao's mood had also become more happy and carefree because of the beautiful flowers in front of her.

As they spoke, a snow-white hare stopped not too far away from the siblings. With its pair of ruby-like eyes, it stared curiously at the two strange intruders. Little Shitou cast aside all the constraints of the academy and returned to his true nature. He cheered and ran after the hare, and his laughter echoed throughout the valley.

Yu Xiaocao asked the little divine stone to check around the vicinity. It didn't find any ferocious beast that could hurt people, so she allowed her younger brother to frolic in the valley. She went to the clear stream and bowed her head to search for the fish in the gaps between the stones.

This small white fish seemed to be a specialty of this valley. Xiaocao had never seen it anywhere else. The small white fish was about 6.6 to 9.9 centimeters long. It was very thin and had a snow-white body. It swam in a very nimble and quick manner, so most people wouldn't be able to catch them.

Xiaocao placed the jar, which was filled with mystic-stone water, into the stream and waited for the white fish to enter the jar. Soon, the white fish nearby sensed the spiritual energy within the jar and slowly gathered over. Xiaocao noticed that the valley was bustling with all kinds of exotic flowers. Her godmother, who had come from a noble family, would certainly like them. Thus, she decided to pick some back, put them in a vase, and put it in her godmother's room. She also planned on digging out the roots of the ones that she liked and try planting them at home!

Although Xiaocao didn't know much about flowers, she still had basic ability to admire them. She dug out a plant that should be camellia, and two plants that looked like orchids. She sprinkled some mystic-stone water on the roots to increase their survival rates.

When she returned to the creek, the jar was already filled with many little white fish. After pouring out the water, there should be at least two to three catties! She didn't know whether her godmother could eat them, so these should be enough for now! Looking at the sky, they had been out for about two hours. When taking their return trip into consideration, they should arrive home just in time to make lunch.

Just when Xiaocao was about to call back her frolicking younger brother, as if they had telepathy, Little Shitou ran out of the tall grasses with the dazed white rabbit, who didn't seem afraid of humans, in his hands. He grinned, "Second Sister, look! I caught the rabbit! Let's raise it with the rabbits at home. Look at this rabbit's snowy white fur. It must be very warm and beautiful when woven into a vest."

The little fellow still remembered what Xiaocao said last winter! At that time, they hadn't split from the main family yet and the siblings were still dressed in ragged clothing, which couldn't withstand the cold in the north at all. Little Shitou had gotten frostbite on his hands and feet, so Xiaocao had to use hot water to warm his feet over and over again. She also said that they should raise some rabbits next year and weave some gloves, socks, and vests with the rabbit wool. She hadn't expected that the little guy still remembered that when it had already been over half a year!

"Alright! This rabbit's fur is quite thick. Let's raise it well, so when winter comes, we should be able to collect enough rabbit fur to weave vests and socks." Holding the earthen jar, Xiaocao took the lead to walk out of the valley.

Suddenly, a rustling sound came from the grass nearby. Little Shitou happily exclaimed, "Could it be another rabbit? Let me go see..."

“Come back!!” Xiaocao's voice had turned stern. This was because the little divine stone had warned her that it could feel a gray wolf nearby. She hadn't expected that there really were fierce animals in this mountain valley. They were quite lucky that they didn't encounter them in the past.

Little Shitou had never heard his second sister speak with such a strict voice. He stopped in his tracks and turned his body to look his second sister with confusion. Behind him, the movement within the grass got closer. Xiaocao darted forward, grabbed her brother's hand, and sprinted towards the exit of the valley.

The gray wolf had already noticed the siblings, and quickly ran after them. The valley was overgrown with weeds, and the areas that didn't have grass were covered with rocks. There wasn't any road at all. How could the siblings be faster than the four-legged wolf? The gray wolf caught up to them very quickly.

The gray wolf suddenly sprang over the siblings' head and landed in front of them. With a drooping tail, it observed the siblings with its pair of glittering eyes.

Yu Xiaocao guarded her younger brother behind her back and watched the big gray wolf nervously. The wolf didn't appear very fierce and looked similar to a Siberian husky with gray fur and white face. There wasn't any malevolence within its gaze. It just stood in front of them and looked at them quietly.

[Don't be scared! You guys have my spiritual energy on your bodies. Animals have more keen senses, so it probably followed the energy over. Perhaps you have already noticed that my spiritual energy can make animals have good feelings and be dependent on you. The best evidence is the dumb roe deer and Little Gray at your house! The gray wolf won't attack you, but it's hard to say whether it will let you go!] There was a sense of delight in their misfortune within the little divine stone's voice.

The wolf quietly looked at Xiaocao, as if it was confirming that the friendly feelings that attracted it was emitted from her. It walked a few steps forward and was less than two meters away from Xiaocao.

Little Shitou hugged the rabbit in his hands in fear, yet he still remembered that he was a brave boy who should protect his older sister. He took a step forward and wanted to protect Xiaocao behind him, but it was a pity that he wasn't tall enough. 'What should I do? I should just let the wolf eat me and give Second Sister a chance to run away.'

Little Shitou whispered in a trembling voice, “Second Sister, I'll block it. You... you quickly leave...”

Yu Xiaocao felt moved in her heart. Little Shitou was only six, yet he had such courage. He was indeed worthy of being her younger brother. Xiaocao carefully observed the gray wolf. It really didn't seem to have the intention of attacking them, but it blocked their only path home and just stared at them without moving.

“Uh... Mr. Wolf, if you can understand what I'm saying, can you move a little? We need to go home...” Yu Xiaocao felt that, according to her past experiences, this wolf should be able to understand her words.

“Second Sister, it doesn't understand your words! I'll block it. You leave... We can't both die here...” Little Shitou summoned all his courage as a brave, young boy and sacrificed himself in order to protect his older sister again.

[If you give a few drops of my bathing water to it, it will become like the dumb roe deer and like you even more. Even if you leave, it won't attack you!] The little divine stone couldn't help but remind her. How could it have such a foolish master ah? She was as foolish as that dumb roe deer!

Xiaocao thought about it and took out the bottle of mystic-stone water from her chest pocket. She dripped a few drops onto her palm, and then slowly walked towards the gray wolf.

[Tsk tsk... You actually dared to use your hand to feed the mystic-stone water to it. Aren't you afraid that the wolf will bite off your hand?] The little divine stone exclaimed in a teasing tone.

“Aren't you around? Would you just sit back and watch if your master got in danger?” Although Xiaocao said that, she was actually quite anxious inwardly.

The little divine stone rolled its eyes, 'Master is finally smart for once!' Indeed, before it had returned to its heyday, it was one with her. So, of course, it wouldn't let its master be harmed.

Little Shitou had just wanted to stretch out his hand to pull his sister back, but he was surprised to see that the gray wolf gently licking his second sister's palm like the dogs that his eldest granduncle raised. Its eyes had narrowed as if it was enjoying it very much.

The flowers were bright and colorful, while the grass looked like a green carpet. There were a pair of siblings and a wolf within the myriad of colors, yet the atmosphere was harmonious and at ease.

After the wolf licked all the mystic-stone water on Xiaocao hand, it was still unsatisfied and continued to lick Xiaocao's fair and soft palm with its coarse tongue. However, it seemed to know that the person in front of it only had those few drops of mystic-stone water at the moment, so it didn't demand for more.

The fear in Little Shitou's heart gradually faded. He looked curiously at the gray wolf, who had clean, thick fur and gentle eyes. He whispered to Xiaocao, "Second Sister, is this a dog? If it's a wolf, it would have eaten us already!"

Xiaocao's heart had also completely relaxed and she was in the mood to tease Little Shitou, "Have you seen such a tall and mighty dog? Isn't it obviously a wolf? As for why it didn't eat us, maybe it just finished eating and isn't hungry!"

With a mournful expression, Little Shitou looked pitifully at the gray wolf and continued to speak in a low voice, "Then... will it keep us as reserved food supply?"

Xiaocao knocked on his head and laughed, "This valley is rich with water and grass, so would there be a lack of prey? Do you think that your meat is really tasty? Human flesh is sour, so it doesn't want to eat it ah!"

Little Shitou immediately went off the topic, "Second Sister, how do you know that human flesh is sour? You've never even eaten it before!"

"Who said I have never eaten it before? I'm an old goblin from the mountains. Your second sister has already been eaten by me..." With a grim voice, the corners of her mouth were arched into a strange smile and her face was filled with a sinister expression... Had it been nighttime, people would be terribly frightened by Xiaocao's current appearance.

Little Shitou looked at her blankly, as if he had been frightened. Xiaocao realized that the little fellow was only six years old after all, so he must have been scared silly.

Just when she wanted to pacify the little guy, the corners of Little Shitou's mouth slowly raised and his voice was filled with confidence as he said, "Second Sister! Although your character and temperament are completely different from before, I am certain that you definitely won't harm any of us. You are my second sister, my kind and capable Second Sister!"

Yu Xiaocao tenderly ruffled the little fellow's hair and chuckled, "I thought you really believed it! How can there be so many demons and ghosts in the world? As long as one doesn't commit a sin, one doesn't have to be afraid of ghosts knocking on the door in the middle of the night. Most of the time, people who harbor malicious intentions are the ones who are filled with suspicion! Our Shitou must be an honest and upright person ah!"

Little Shitou sternly nodded and said, "Second Sister, I'll remember!! ...But, shouldn't we return now? With this wolf here, how are we supposed to go back?"

"How are we going back? Just go back ah! Do you think that this wolf will carry us back?" Yu Xiaocao could feel the goodwill of the wolf, and she also had the little divine stone's assurance, so there was naturally nothing to be afraid of.

She picked up the flowers that she had thrown away earlier when they were trying to escape. Fortunately, she didn't throw the jar in her hand, otherwise, they would have come in vain! Xiaocao asked Little Shitou to hold the flowers, while she carried the ceramic jar. With her free hand, she patted the wolf's head, "We're leaving now. We'll come back to visit you in the future!"

The gray wolf wagged its tail, which was dangling behind it. Little Shitou laughed and said, "Could it be the offspring of a dog and a wolf? It's really similar to Eldest Granduncle's Dahuang ah!"

The siblings walked around the wolf and headed towards the cave. The gray wolf followed behind them for a while and watched them enter the cave before reluctantly leaving.

By the time they got home, it was almost noon. Lady Fang knew that the siblings had gone to the forest. Seeing that they hadn't come back for so long, she was very worried and asked Zhenzhu to go to the forest several times.

"Aiyo! My dear Young Miss, you guys finally came back! If you come back any later, Madam is about to send people into the forest to look for you guys!" Zhenzhu finally saw Xiaocao after waiting for so long.

She quickly went forward and took the jar in Xiaocao's hands. She looked at it curiously and asked, "What kind of fish is this? I've never seen it before!"

Xiaocao giggled and said, "We call it little white fish. It has a tender flesh and doesn't have any strange smell at all. Godmother should be able to eat some!"

Zhenzhu was so moved that her eyes teared up. The madam had a poor appetite recently and slimmed down quite a lot. As her maidservant, of course, she was worried about her master. Xiaocao had been trying different methods to cook for her madam just so she could eat a little more. This was something that Zhenzhu had seen clearly. She said sincerely, "Young Miss, this servant thanks you in place of Madam!"

"Why do I need you to thank me? Your madam is my godmother. It's only right that I treat her well!" Yu Xiaocao glared at her with a smile.

Zhenzhu quickly said with a smile, "Yes, yes! This servant is wrong!"

The group of three laughed and chatted, and soon reached the Zhao Family's residence at the mountainside. From afar, they saw Lady Fang being supported by Linglong as she stood at the entrance and looked over in their direction.

Xiaocao's heart warmed up. She carried the flowers that she dug up and quickly ran towards Lady Fang. Lady Fang finally revealed a relieved smile and said, "Slow down. Watch your step and be careful of the small stones!"

The flushed little face in front of her was covered with a thin layer of glistening sweat like a rose covered with dew. Lady Fang pulled out her handkerchief and gently wiped the sweat for her, and then she softly said, "Why did you go for so long? In the future, if you want to play in the forest, get your godfather to accompany you. With your godfather's abilities, you don't have to be afraid even if you encounter a tiger!"

Yu Xiaocao nodded incessantly yet she thought inwardly, 'We didn't meet a big tiger this time, but we encountered a big gray wolf! But, with the little divine stone present, there won't be any problem even if we encountered a big tiger!' However, she was afraid that her godmother would be frightened and startle her little brother in her godmother's belly. So, she didn't mention anything about the gray wolf.

When Lady Fang's gaze turned towards Xiaocao's hands, a sudden sense of surprise emerged within her eyes. She grabbed Xiaocao's arm, and gently took the flowers from her hands. With a slight trace of pain in her eyes, she asked, "Aiya! This... is this the famous species of orchid—Fairy Flying in the Snow Field? I have only seen it once in the empress's bedroom. I heard that it was a tribute from Tufan [1]. Aiyo, the roots have been cut. I wonder if it can survive!"

Lady Fang was a famed lover of orchids. After Fang Zizhen found out about this, he never forgot to find many different types of orchids for her wherever he went. He had specially hired a horticulturist, who was an expert at raising orchids, to tend the dozens of species of orchid at home for a high wage.

Ever since she saw the 'Fairy Flying in the Snow Field' in the imperial palace, Lady Fang had always been thinking about it. After many unsuccessful searches, Fang Zizhen had thick-facedly gone to the palace to ask the emperor for the orchid. However, he was kicked out by Jianwen Emperor. 'As if you're the only one who loves your wife, you actually dared to want something that belongs to my wife!' Seeing the roots that Xiaocao had cut because she was anxious, Lady Fang felt as if a part of her heart had been dug out. It hurt so much ah!

"Uh... Godmother, let's plant these flowers first. If we delay any longer, it might wilt!" Seeing her godmother's agitated look, it seemed like she had inadvertently dug out a rare type of orchid! Fairy Flying in the Snow Field was quite a beautiful name!! So Godmother liked orchids ah. Next time, she should dig out more varieties. Perhaps her godmother would have a better appetite when she was in a good mood.

As if she was holding a rare treasure, Lady Fang carefully held the orchid in her hands. She asked Linglong to fetch a flowerpot, and then she personally planted the orchid inside. Due to her love of orchids, she was quite experienced in planting orchids. After planting the flowers, it needed to be watered. Xiaocao, who was helping out besides her, changed the water to the diluted mystic-stone water.

The other two plants were camellias that already had small flower buds on them. Lady Fang didn't like camellias as much as orchids, but with her keen sight, she could tell that these two camellias were quite extraordinary.

"Second Sister, I'll put these flowers into a vase..." Little Shitou wasn't interested in planting flowers. He was planning on helping his older brother collect seafood after putting the flowers in a vase.

When Lady Fang turned her head and saw the gorgeous camellias in Little Shitou's arms, she nearly fainted from the pain in her heart, "Oh heavens! Eighteen Scholars!! How can you guys pluck Eighteen Scholars and put them in a vase? I... I really don't know what I should say..."

Seeing the pained expression on her godmother's face, Xiaocao quickly said, "Godmother, that must be one of these two plants. If you like it, I can dig out some more for you tomorrow... Godmother, why is it called Eighteen Scholars ah?"

When Lady Fang heard that there seemed to be more of this type of camellia on the mountains, the pain in her heart felt slightly better. With her goddaughter's support, she slowly entered the house. Upon seeing the gorgeous and charming Eighteen Scholars camellia in the flower vase, she thought, 'Princess Consort Jing loves camellias the most. If she knew that I have 'Eighteen Scholars' in a vase, I wonder if she will be envious or will she scold me for recklessly wasting god's gift?'

"A lot of people think that Eighteen Scholars is bred from eighteen flowers of different colors, but that isn't the case. Eighteen refers to the eighteen rows of petals, not the colors. Most Eighteen Scholars has eighteen layers of petals and its tree also has graceful shape, so it's highly sought after by the common people. There are three types of Eighteen Scholars: Pink Eighteen Scholars, Red Eighteen Scholars, and White Eighteen Scholars. The flowers that you picked seems to include all the varieties. I don't know which type you're transplanting?" Lady Fang touched one of the buds and tenderly explained to Xiaocao.

Xiaocao nodded and then shook her head and said, "I don't know either. Daughter doesn't know anything about flowers. We'll have to wait for it to blossom in order to know which type it is! But it's okay. I can go back a few more times, and we will eventually move all three colors of camellias over here. Next time, I'll take a shovel with me. It was inconvenient to use a wooden stick, so a lot of the roots were broken!"

Lady Fang lightly patted her shoulder, sighed, and said, "I didn't expect that the West Mountains has such rare species of flowers. Do you know? Just this camellia alone is hard to find even with thousands of gold. Yet it's just like radish and cabbage to you. Are you trying to enrage all those flower lovers?"

Xiaocao touched the back of her head and said with a silly smile, "Godmother, is there anyone who is knowledgeable about flowers around you? That person can come with me tomorrow to see if there's any other rare species of flowers. We can dig more back so Godmother can gift them to your bosom friends when you return to the capital. You won't have to spend money to buy them!"

"This little money-grubber! Those precious flowers can only be discovered and not sought. It's not something that can be bought with money! I thought you would say to dig more back to sell for money! Godmother didn't dote on you in vain!" Lady Fang gently pinched her fair and soft cheeks, and her smile was full of emotions.

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The thick soup stewed with small white fish, which appeared like snow-white milk, boiled in the pot and emitted a strong, refreshing scent. A couple drops of mystic-stone water was added into the thick soup and the only condiment used was salt. The fish soup was originally very fresh, so it was unnecessary to add other condiments. Before serving it, one should sprinkle some mashed coriander and two drops of sesame oil on top because the aroma could enhance one's appetite.

Under Xiaocao and the two maidservants' expectant gazes, Lady Fang tried a small sip of the soup. The strong aroma seemed to have aroused the 'gluttonous bug' in her stomach. The soup was refreshingly delicious, and the fish meat was smooth and tender. Unbeknownst to her, Lady Fang had completely finished a bowl of fish soup and half a bowl of fish meat.

Zhenzhu and Linglong held each other's hands and had tears of excitement in their eyes. Their madam's poor appetite recently had been quite worrisome. For each meal, she ate even less than a cat. If she forced herself to eat, it would bring about the opposite effect—she would vomit all the food that she used so much effort to eat. It had been a long time since their madam had finished an entire bowl of soup, especially one that contained meat or fish. The two loyal maidservants felt even more happy than if they had eaten the food themselves.

Lady Fang gently wiped the corners of her mouth with her handkerchief as she savored the delicacy in her mouth. Although she wanted to drink a few more mouthfuls, she restrained herself. She knew that no matter how delicious the food was, she still needed to control herself, so as to not spoil her appetite again.

Seeing Xiaocao reveal a sincere smile, Lady Fang lightly stroked her smooth and glossy hair and said in a gentle voice, "It must have been hard for you! These days, in order to let me eat some more, you have gotten thinner from the exhaustion! Moreover, your family have been busy with the construction of the house recently, so you have to go back to help your mother after cooking for me. I really don't know how I should thank you..."

"Godmother! There's no need to treat one family as two. You're my godmother, who is just like my birth mother. It's a special time right now, so who else would I take care of first? My mother has Auntie Zhou, Eldest Granddaughter, and my maternal grandmother helping her out. There's nothing for me to do even if I

went! Godmother, I'll be mad if you continue treating me like a stranger!" Xiaocao pretended to be angry and puffed up her cheeks like a toad!

Lady Fang smiled and said, "Alright, alright, alright! Godmother is wrong and you're right. There's no need to be courteous with family! You have been busy for the whole morning. Go back home to rest. I'm also tired, so I'll take a nap in the room..."

Yu Xiaocao helped her godmother to lie on the bed, and then covered her with a thin blanket. After she saw her close her eyes, she quietly left the inner room. She said to Linglong in a low voice, "Remember to check the time. Don't let Godmother sleep for too long, otherwise, she won't be able to sleep at night!"

Linglong agreed and escorted her out of the room. When she returned, she saw that her madam had opened her eyes again, so she said with a smile, "Madam, you're really someone who is blessed. Young Miss is so filial!"

With a smile on her face, Lady Fang lightly nodded and said, "The best thing that your general has done in his life is adopting Xiaocao as his daughter! This child brings happiness. Even Doctor Sun praised that her medicinal meals were beneficial to the general's health! If it wasn't because she didn't mind the trouble of altering the medicinal meals daily to help nourish our health, I'm afraid that it would be difficult for me to have my own child in this lifetime!"

Linglong quickly said, "Young Miss is such a good person, and she just happened to meet you and the general. This is also your blessing ah!"

Lady Fang slowly nodded her head, put both her hands on her belly, and raised the corners of her mouth into a cordial smile, 'Isn't this child also blessed? He isn't even born yet, but he already has an older sister who wholehearted cares for him.' Perhaps, this child would be her only child in this lifetime. Thus, she was relieved that he would be accompanied by such a kind, righteous, and capable older sister like Xiaocao!

When Xiaocao reached home, she saw the uncles, who came to help, having lunch in full swing. After several days of hard work, the brick wall in the open space next to them was already taller than a person. It looked strong and dignified. In Dongshan Village, besides the village head's family, there wasn't another family who would be willing to build a house with bricks and tiles. The villagers had started talking about it since the first batch of black bricks that Yu Hai ordered came.

There were some people talking about how after Yu Hai separated from the main family, he started selling braised food, growing early ripening vegetables and doing business with large watermelons. It seemed like he earned quite a lot of money. Otherwise, how could he afford to spend so much money building a brick and tile house?

After lunch, Old Yu, who was going to help at the old residence, met an old man who he usually had a good relationship with. When the old man saw him smiling until he had wrinkles on his face, he raised his voice and said, "Old Yu ah, you're going over to help your second son again? Your second son is really capable. He can hunt in the mountains, fish in the sea, farm and do business. There's nothing that he can't do! Old Yu, you can just wait to enjoy a comfortable and happy life in the future!"

Old Yu liked to hear these kinds of words. Second Son was building a new house, and he was also happy for his child. A black brick, tiled-roof house with five rooms, and there were also side rooms. Although the frame wasn't set up yet, it was apparent that the house would be magnificent in the future! He didn't live in the old residence, but when mentioning his second son, was there anyone who didn't give him a big thumbs up? This was such an honorable thing for his Old Yu Family ah!

"That's right! At the time of the separation, it was clearly stated in the contract that he only needed to give us some coarse grain every month as a show of his filial piety! However, Second Son is a kind and upright person. He doesn't forget to show filial respect for his elders even when he's well off. He automatically changed the monthly coarse grain to fine grain, moreover, he also gives us five taels for groceries! Ay! Villagers of Dongshan Village eat homegrown vegetables and catch our own fish in the sea, so why would we need so much money for groceries? I wanted to give the money back to him, but Second Son refused. He told us to save it up, so if we want to buy something in the future, we won't be short on money!" Old Yu was obviously showing off as he spoke.

He had originally thought that after that incident his second son's family would be estranged with him, but he didn't expect that Second Son's family still treated him with filial respect and secretly gave him five taels every month. After he found out about Madam Zhang's true colors, he continued to live in a seemingly harmonious manner with her for the sake of his third son and youngest daughter.

However, he couldn't let Madam Zhang be the only one in control of the family anymore. When it was time for him to make decisions, he wouldn't be indecisive again. He had secretly saved up all the money that Second Son gave him. Third Son and Youngest Daughter weren't his only children; he also had his eldest daughter, who had been married off far away!

Ay! His eldest daughter was still mad at him!! It had been over a decade, except for returning once when Second Son got married, she had never come back to her maiden home over all these years. At that time, she only spoke with Second Son and ignored everyone else!

It was understandable. Eldest Daughter was such a strong person, yet Madam Zhang married her off far away to a poor, remote place. Moreover, the person she married was a widower who was a lot older than her. At that time, he had also been foolish. Why did he listen to Madam Zhang's words and didn't inquire carefully about the person? By the time the bridal sedan arrived at the door, it was already too late... Ay! When he thought about it now, he was seriously sorry to Cuiyun and had wronged Cuiyun's two children ah...

Speaking of the northeast, when he went to town last time, he had heard a businessman, who came from there, say that there was no rain in the northeast this spring and summer, which was an omen of severe drought ah! He didn't know how his eldest daughter was doing now... No, he had to ask someone to send a message over to ask about the situation. If there was really a drought, he would tell his daughter, 'Although your mother is gone, you still have your maiden family.'

As he greeted his fellow villagers along the way, Old Yu had arrived at the old residence. The first thing he saw was his nephew, Yu Jiang, and his eldest grandson busily weighing seafood. There was a very long line in front of them. Other than the villagers of Dongshan Village, there were also some unfamiliar people from the neighboring fishing village.

The person in charge of collecting seafood in the neighboring fishing village had randomly raised the price and collected seafood that wasn't up to standard. The seafood wasn't preserved properly, so it was often stinky and rotten. As a result, the purchasing staff of the Zhou Family's factories cancelled the acquisition point. Therefore, the villagers of the neighboring fishing village had to travel over five kilometers to Dongshan Village to sell their marine goods.

For collecting seafood, they could only earn several dozen copper coins per catty, but they were able to collect a large amount of marine goods ah! He made a rough calculation in his heart. With just the seafood acquisition alone, Second Son's family could earn several taels as income in a day. Yu Jiang could probably get at least a little more than a tael daily, right?

Ay! Had Madam Zhang not been pretentious and gone overboard in her actions, Second Son would have probably taken familial affections into consideration and given Yu Jiang's task to Dashan, which was much better than fishing! Dashan had a lot of strength, but his fishing skills weren't enough as good as his. After working hard and being exhausted for the entire day, they still couldn't earn much money...

But, what was the point in talking about this now? With the things that Madam Zhang had done, it was already fortunate that Second Son didn't blame him, let alone help Dashan!

Old Yu saw that people in the yard were busily eating lunch, and the strong aroma of meat drifted over with the wind. The corner of Old Yu's mouth twitched, and he thought, 'Second Son is building a house, but is the food being provided too good? Not only is there meat for every meal, but there was also iced sweet mung bean soup to drink. Even if he has money, he shouldn't spend it so recklessly. I have to remind him next time!' Old Yu didn't enter the courtyard. After nodding at Yu Hang, who greeted him, he picked up a shovel and started shoveling the mud!

There was no concrete at this time. Bricks were made of yellow mud with strong adhesion, and it was mixed with cut up rice straws. Houses built with this were also quite sturdy! Old Yu felt that he somewhat owed his second son, so he had come over to help since the first day of the house construction. Furthermore, he never ate at the old residence, as if this was the only way to mitigate the guilt in his heart.

After eating lunch, Yu Hai came out with the villagers who came to help and saw Old Yu working under the hot sun. Yu Hai hastily put his straw hat on Old Yu's head and said, "Father, why did you come so early? The sun is really strong right now ah. It's fine to work later when it's not as hot ah!"

"In the summer, it's hard to say when it will rain! It's better to quickly build the house while it's a good day. Don't you also need to quickly finish building the two rooms beside the old residence before the autumn harvest? The heavens won't wait for anyone. We, fishermen, are used to working under the sun, so this little sun is fine." Old Yu wiped off his sweat and continued to work.

When the others saw this, they were naturally embarrassed to rest. Liu Pei climbed onto the scaffold made of bamboo poles and said as he plastered mud on the bricks, "Uncle Yu, you can rest assured! We'll go back a little later today. The walls of the house are almost done! We should be able to install the beam tomorrow!"

Old Yu spit into his palms, held the shovel in his hands, and kept shoveling mud into the bamboo basket. He nodded and said, "Mhm! Let's aim to install the beam tomorrow! Second Son, the beam installation is an important matter. Have you prepared the firecrackers? Did you buy all the ingredients needed for the meal to entertain the guests?"

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Yu Hai carried a load of mud and walked over to the brick wall. He turned his head and said with a smile, "Father, don't worry! It's all ready and hanging in the well in the backyard! Xiaocao has been preparing the osmanthus duck since yesterday. It should be ready by this afternoon."

Liu Shuanzhu licked his lips and made a gluttonous look, saying, "We are in luck! Osmanthus duck is a famous delicacy in Zhenxiu Restaurant. Even if you get in line to buy it, you might not even be able to get it. It's very expensive too! In our village, how many people can afford to spend more than ten taels on a duck? With Xiaocao's blessing, we can also enjoy the treatment of the rich. Xiaocao's cooking skill is as good as the chef of Zhenxiu Restaurant."

At this time, Xiaocao carried over a bowl of sweet mung bean soup. Upon hearing their conversation, she smiled sweetly and said, "Uncle Shuanzhu, thank you for your praise. Niece is very happy to hear it! However, we have to be humble to avoid being seen as arrogant by outsiders if they heard us. For the sake of your praise, I must show off my skills tomorrow so that Uncle Shuanzhu will anticipate the next meal after finishing the first meal."

Liu Shuanzhu smiled brightly and said, "No, that won't do! If you support my appetite like that, I won't have any excuse to come over to your house for dinner once your house is built. At that time, it'll be so hard to eat your auntie's pig food ah!"

Shuanzhu's wife, who had come over to see if she could help, heard her husband's words. She immediately put on a posture of a teapot, pointed at Liu Shuanzhu, and spluttered, "Liu Shuanzhu, are you saying my cooking is like pig's food? Then don't eat it in the future!"

Liu Shuanzhu shrunk his neck, approached his wife, and meekly asked in a low voice, "Wife, why are you here?"

"Why can't I come here? If I didn't come, how would I have known you are insulting me behind my back?" Shuanzhu's wife glanced sideways at her husband. Seeing that he was acting flatteringly and apologizing in a decent manner, she said, "Recently, our father's appetite hasn't been very good because of the summer heat, and he wants to eat century eggs. Is it true Xiaocao's family have the century eggs and biandan sent from the Zhou Family's factories? I want to buy some for our father and improve his appetite."

Shuanzhu's wife was talking about Liu Shuanzhu's father, who had gotten ill several days ago. He just got a bit better, but it was still hard for him to eat. It was rare for him to crave for something, and the family's living conditions were better now, so Shuanzhu's wife came with the money.

"Dear, you are so nice! It is the blessing of three lifetimes for me, Liu Shuanzhu, to be able to marry you!" Liu Shuanzhu's wife was a very good person. She treated her in-laws as if they were her biological parents, so Liu Shuanzhu's parents praised their daughter-in-law's filial piety wherever they went.

When Shuanzhu's wife heard this, she smiled and said, "My parents passed away early, so I couldn't treat them well. Father-in-law and Mother-in-law treat me as if I were their biological daughter, so if I didn't treat them as my parents, then am I still human?"

Although the ancient people attach great importance to filial piety, there were still cases of the mistreatments of parents-in-law by their daughters-in-law. There weren't many daughters-in-law like the Liu Family's, who got along so well with their parents-in-law.

Shuanzhu's wife bought ten century eggs from Xiaocao at the market price. Xiaocao didn't plan on taking her money, but Shuanzhu's wife insisted, and said that if Xiaocao didn't take the money then she wouldn't take the eggs!

Speaking of the Zhou Family's century eggs, the demand for them definitely exceeded the supply. The shop that sold the century eggs in town had a long queue every day, and they also had to limit the purchase quantity. Although century eggs factories were also opened in the prefectural city and the capital, the supply still wasn't enough for the capital and the prefectural city. In the entire Dongshan Village, Xiaocao's family was the only ones who didn't lack century eggs. Other people either didn't have the time to line up or were unwilling to buy it; after all, century eggs were much more expensive than duck or chicken eggs.

Thanks to Yu Hai's popularity and the fact that the two meals served each day were dishes that even the rich couldn't buy at Zhenxiu Restaurant, there was an endless stream of people coming by to help. Naturally, the progress of the house construction was much faster than expected!

"With beams on the roof, there will be food in the house. If the roof doesn't have beams, then even the domestic animals won't prosper." When building a house, installing the beams was just as grand as the ceremonies for marriage. On this day, almost all of the villagers of Dongshan Village had come to celebrate.

Choosing the main beams for the roof was a very important matter. First, when choosing the wood, it had to be hard and durable. It was also important that the trees chosen had the same thickness from

top to bottom, and that they were perfectly straight. Even if the tree was just slightly bent, it wouldn't be usable at all. Ever since Yu Hai decided to build a house, he began to walk around the dense forests of West Mountains and chose a lot of trees for making beams.

The highly respected village chief presided over the beam installation ceremony. First, Yu Hai and his family put up offerings, lit incense, and prayed that the beam installation would be done safely and smoothly. On the main beams, there were auspicious sayings such as 'May the household thrive and prosper'. The Eight Diagrams was also drawn on some of the beams to pray for the family's prosperity and safety.

Yu Jiang led a group of youngsters and lit a string of firecrackers, which crackled loudly and created a festive atmosphere. With a cry of 'prosperity with the beam installation', the beam was lifted up. The strong youths of the village carried the beams for the roof and used ropes to pull them up. When pulling, they had to pull with equal strength. Otherwise, the beam would be uneven, which would be very unlucky.

Beam installation was a very important event. The friends and relatives who came to congratulate them all received gifts such as steamed buns, meat buns, and pastries. After putting up the beams, the steamed buns and meat buns would be thrown by the people standing on the roof, which was called 'Scattering Flowers on the Beam'. The villagers present would then rush to get these buns. While grabbing the buns, someone commented, "Only the Yu Family would be willing to use white flour steamed buns and meat stuffed buns for their beam installation ceremony."

Yu Hai happily laughed at the lively scene before him, because it meant the more people there were, the more money they would earn.

The relatives of the Yu Family and Liu Family were busy greeting the guests who came to celebrate. The women went into the kitchen to help cook. The Yu Family had prepared more than a dozen tables for the all-day banquet. Everyone who came today could sit at the table, whether they were old or young, male or female, and even if they didn't bring a gift. The beam installation ceremony was originally meant to be a lively and auspiciousness event, to express a yearning for a better life.

Many years later, the villagers of Dongshan Village still talked delightedly about the Yu Family's all-day banquet. Even the Yu Family hadn't expected that the main chef of the Zhenxiu Restaurant, Head Chef Wang, who was one of the best cooks in the Great Ming Dynasty, would come by and offer to personally cook for them.

The head of the Zhou Family's second branch, the fifteen year old Third Young Master Zhou, not only did he personally come to give his congratulations, but he also brought over two carts full of food. Among them were fifty roasted chickens, fifty osmanthus ducks, and countless century eggs.

When the people who came to give their congratulations smelled the delicious fragrance, they couldn't help but swallow their saliva a few times. Several youngsters were so impatient that they kept scratching their ears and cheeks, and ran through the crowd like monkeys. They only quieted down when the adults in their family kicked them on their bottoms and threatened to send them home to eat leftover steamed buns if they didn't behave.

There wasn't another all-day banquet more sumptuous and delicious in Dongshan Village. In the decades that followed, the Yu Family's all-day banquet almost became a legend and was widely known by later generations.

Do you know how much a table of dishes cost at Zhenxiu Restaurant? With roasted chicken and osmanthus duck, a table cost at least one hundred taels. Fifty tables at the banquet meant at least five thousand taels!! The villagers of Dongshan Village sat on mats and looked dizzily at the delicacies. They felt as if they were in a dream and didn't move their chopsticks for a long time.

Old Yu sat at the main table next to the village head, who was nervous because Zhou Zixu, the future head of the Zhou Family, was also present! Also present were Yu Hai's in-laws—Xiaocao's maternal grandfather and maternal uncles. Yu Hai and Fang Zizhen also sat at the table as the hosts. From time to time, they went to the other tables to toast the guest and make sure they were eating well. Fang Zizhen provided the wine, which were all procured from the prefectural city. The villagers of Dongshan Village would be happy to drink a sip of bad wine, so when faced with good wine worth several dozens of taels, they were drunk before even taking a sip of the wine.

The villagers of Dongshan Village had never eaten such a delicious meal before. How they wish they could chew all the bones of the roasted duck and swallow them. Even the stir-fried vegetables are better than meat. As expected of a famous chef! The sumptuous meals were all swept clean, and even the onions and ginger in the dishes were picked and eaten. It wasn't that not enough food was prepared, but that everyone was holding their bloated stomachs and crying. It was very difficult to eat such delicious food a second time in this lifetime. If they didn't make room in their stomach to eat, they would regret it later!!

There were ten tables set up for the all-day banquet. A total of five rounds of meals were served, from noon to sunset.

After installing the beams, the house would be finished soon. For the sake of the house's beauty, Xiaocao asked the craftsman specially to make upturned cornice. The craftsman was specially requested from Imperial Prince Jing's mountain manor, but she didn't get them for free. Lady Fang sent Princess Consort Jing a pot of Eighteen Scholar camellia.

Lady Fang's maidservant, Linglong, has some knowledge of flowers. Xiaocao took her to their secret base and transplanted many valuable flowers and plants back. With just the orchids that Lady Fang loved, there were already three or four kinds that she had only heard but not seen before. However, they were all famous species that were difficult to find!

As soon as Lady Fang was in a good mood, her appetite got better and her portion size increased. While Xiaocao was happy for her godmother, she didn't forget to tell her to not overdo it, to avoid difficulties where the child would be too big! Lady Fang was thirty-five years old. In this era, she was an old woman with a pearl in her stomach! If the child was too big, it will be difficult to give birth. In this era, with the level of medical care and no cesarean section, encountering difficult deliveries would be a close shave with death! Fang Zizhen listened to what his goddaughter said, and became nervous. He strictly controlled his wife's portion size, and often personally paid attention to it. Ay, it was so worrying! He would be worried if his wife didn't have an appetite, but he also had to worry about her overeating!

The days passed by quietly. With the help of the heavens, there wasn't much rain this summer. Just before the autumn harvest, the Yu Family's five-room brick and tiled-roof house was finally completed!

The high walls were built with stone and was absolutely solid, so there was no fear of the wild animals on the mountain coming down. The Yu Family's old residence was too close to the West Mountains. Old Yu said that when he was little, wild animals often came down the mountain. A hungry wolf had jumped into their home and bit his sleeping Second Uncle to death. The entire family was awakened by pained screams. When he came out with a club, his second uncle was already bitten into an unrecognizable state and died soon after. When they first split from the main family, Yu Hai was worried about the safety of his family! Looking at the high stone walls, those wild animals wouldn't be able to jump into their house unless they had wings!