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He had a cold and haughty gaze and a pair of beautiful and slender eyes. Under his tall, sculpture-like nose, his thin lips were pursed into a line. The sharp gaze and cold expression of the youth showed an unruly incisiveness and sharpness.

However, for some unknown reason, Yu Xiaocao could clearly feel that his coldness and aloofness was just a solid shell to protect his soft heart. To be armed with indifference at all times, he must be very tired, right? For no reason at all, she actually felt a slight sense of heartache...

The faint fragrance of tea lingered in the air of the reception hall. Zhu Junyang sat uninhibitedly at the main guest seat, slowly picked up the cup of tea, pushed away the green buds floating on the surface of the tea with the cup lid, and took a sip with his ruby lips—West Lake Longjing Tea. It wasn't a very valuable variety of tea, but it emitted a clear fragrance and had a mellow sweet taste that he had never tried before. Zhu Junyang looked down at the tea leaves in the cup. His thick and curled eyelashes were like a pair of butterfly wings, fluttering. He lowered his head and took another sip of the fragrant tea.

Yu Hai sat in a slightly restrained manner on the seat on the right of Royal Prince Yang. He had only seen and heard of such characters like princes and princess consorts in operas and storybooks. It was really a brand new experience for him to be in the same space as a royal prince. Yu Hai glanced at his younger daughter, who handled the situation with ease, and felt that, as her father, he must not disgrace her even if he couldn't help her. With this thought, he straightened his back and put on a slightly more serious expression.

After the young royal prince came in by himself, he hadn't said a word and just drank tea. Yu Xiaocao felt that she had several imaginary black lines on her forehead—This guy, he didn't specially come to the Fang Estate to drink tea, did he?

Seeing that the royal prince didn't have any intention to speak, Yu Xiaocao was getting somewhat impatient. She personally poured more tea for the young royal prince and said with a slight smile, "May I ask for the reason of Young Royal Prince's visit?" Such an awkward-sounding dialogue nearly caused her to bite on her own tongue. Yu Xiaocao rolled her eyes in her heart—It's so tiring to talk to these royalties!

Zhu Junyang clearly felt Yu Hai's slightly uneasy mood. He knew that this man, who looked very simple and honest, was the little lass's father. He looked at the fresh watermelon on the table in the reception

hall. It seemed like there were dewdrops on the leaves, so he must have brought it over for his daughter as soon as he plucked it this morning. He was a father who dearly loved his daughter ah!

He knew that the Yu Family's watermelons sold very well last year. But, he didn't expect the watermelons to mature so early in the year. If he remembered correctly, even in the warm south, it wouldn't be possible for watermelons to ripen so early.

"This watermelon..." After pondering for a moment, the reticent Zhu Junyang said two words and then turned silent again.

'What the heck! Not only did he come to drink tea, but now he also wants to eat watermelon? I didn't encounter a fake royal prince, did I?' Yu Xiaocao couldn't help but roll her eyes.

With the corner of his eyes, he caught a glimpse of the little girl's expression. Zhu Junyang suddenly felt that there was something wrong. Why couldn't he feel that lass's mood and thoughts?

Zhu Junyang's ability to pry into other people's thoughts wasn't the ability to read minds. Instead, he was able to be able to clearly perceive the other person's emotions such as joy, sadness, cruelty, and dislike. For example, Yu Hai's uneasiness at the moment. The stronger the emotion, the more it affected him. At times, when all kinds of negative emotions came at him, it would be so overwhelming that he would want to find a method to vent. For a period of time, he had used violence to vent, but that only enhanced his notorious reputation.

For more than a decade, there was barely any emotion that he couldn't sense. However, today, he actually couldn't detect the slightest mood change in the little girl in front of him. This both surprised and disturbed him.

While he was feeling puzzled, Yu Xiaocao had already asked someone to bring a knife, quickly cut open the watermelon, put it on a tray, and carried it over to the royal prince. Her big eyes were curled into a pair of crescent moons and the dimples on the corner of her smiling lips appeared from time to time. She said with a crisp voice, "Young Royal Prince, this watermelon is one of the earliest to mature in our fields. Try a slice!"

Zhu Junyang looked at her brightly smiling face, which was like a spring flower, and inwardly wondered the true meaning behind her smile. Was the smile genuine? Could she be plotting something that he

didn't know? He suddenly realized that without the perceptive ability that he detested, there was no sense of security within his heart...

He looked at the bright red watermelon, and then looked up and stared fixedly at the little person holding the tray, as if he wanted to look into the depth of her heart.

'Eh? Didn't the young royal prince want to eat watermelon? Why isn't he eating it after I cut it for him? Why is he looking at me? Is there something dirty on my face?' Yu Xiaocao couldn't help but free a hand and touched her clean, little face. The watermelon juice on her hand accidentally left a red mark her face.

The big pair of bright, limpid eyes in front of him blinked. It was often said that a person's eyes were the window to their souls. This pair of eyes didn't dodge his cold gaze. Her clear, pure eyes gradually eased his guarded heart. She was only a rural girl, who wasn't even ten, so how many ulterior motives could she have? Was he being a little too nervous and treating everyone like an enemy?

Under the gaze of those slightly doubtful eyes, he raised his hand, picked up a slice of watermelon in his hands, and slowly put it in his mouth. A slightly cool sweetness dispersed within his mouth. The taste of this watermelon... was sweeter and more delicious than all the watermelons that he had eaten before. As if all the negative emotions had been taken away by indescribable sweetness, there was only one word in his heart—enjoyment!

"How's the taste?" The little face that was filled with anticipation for praises and compliments appeared vividly in front of him. It seemed as if he would be condemned as a sinner if he didn't say a word of compliment.

After finishing the slice of watermelon in his hand, Zhu Junyang took another piece and gave a rare compliment, "It's pretty good!"

"Right! Isn't it?!" Yu Xiaocao's big eyes narrowed into a line like a cat that was satisfied with its owner's caressing, "I told you! Ordinary watermelons can't compare to the taste of the watermelons grown by our family. With just the size alone, it's already more superior than all the other watermelons in the Great Ming Dynasty..."

Hearing this, Yu Hai knew that his daughter's little love for boasting was acting up again. However, they were in front of the royal prince, so they needed to be cautious and not offend the lord. He quickly said, "Daughter, shouldn't we be a little more humble?"

The strong father-daughter affection came directly at Zhu Junyang. He looked at the slightly dull rural man. His heart was obviously full of timidity, but he was willing to take the risk of offending him to help his daughter. Compared to those officials who sold their daughters to seek honor, this was such a pure fatherly love ah!

The shackles in Zhu Junyang's heart seemed to have loosened a bit. There were positive aspects of the people in the countryside. Their simplicity, pureness, and kindness were things that had long been forgotten by those so-called nobles who had experienced officialdom for a long time. Due to this, his body and mind gradually relaxed at this time.

"Your daughter is right! Your family's watermelon is grown very well! I'll be returning to the capital in a few days, so load a cart for me to bring back as gifts!" Zhu Junyang said in a very matter-of-course manner.

'Load a cart? Is he paying?' Even without using his perceptive ability, Zhu Junyang could easily read the little girl's thoughts based on her obvious expression. 'Who is this prince? Would I not be able to afford a cart of watermelons? Even if I just randomly took out one of the small items brought back from the west, it will be worth more than a cart of watermelons! What does she take this prince as? Those tyrants who doesn't pay after taking something?' Zhu Junyang was so angry that he become amused!

"Royal Prince, may I dare ask, around many days will it be before you return to the capital?" Using their watermelons as gifts? It was such an honor to be valued by the royal prince. Yu Hai felt excited with just the thought of those nobles in the capital eating his family's watermelons and knowing that the Yu Family of Tanggu Town produced delicious watermelons. However, they wouldn't be able to harvest a lot of watermelons in the next two days. If the royal prince wanted them tomorrow, where would he find a cart of watermelon for him?

Zhu Junyang didn't want to think too deeply about Yu Hai's contradictory moods of excitement and distress, and said, "We will set out five days later! Is there something that you're troubled about?"

"No, there isn't!" Yu Hai finally felt relieved, "Five days later, the watermelons in the fields should be mostly ripened. There shouldn't be any problem with loading a cart!"

'Money, what about the money? Shouldn't you leave a deposit?' Yu Xiaocao blinked her big, bright eyes and looked expectantly at the young royal prince.

The corner of Zhu Junyang's mouth twitched a few times. Was money all this little lass thought about? She just hadn't stretched out her hands and directly asked for money! He took off the embroidered pouch tied around his waist and threw it directly onto the tray in Xiaocao's hands.

Yu Xiaocao stared at the exquisite embroidered pouch. It was shriveled up and didn't seem like there was a lot of money inside. As a royal prince, this guy shouldn't be too poor, right? Inside—could it be golden ingots? Wasn't that how it usually was in all the novels? Those high-ranking officials and noble lords all used golden ingots. A piece of gold was worth ten pieces of silver. It should be enough for the deposit, right?

What was with this little lass's gaze? Did she think that he gave too little money? How expensive would a cart of watermelons be? At most, a thousand taels of silver. Inside his embroidered pouch was a high-quality mutton fat jade pendant, which was worth at least five thousand taels of silver! Such ignorance!

'Aiya! This young prince is so poor!! But it doesn't matter. When I visit the princess consort in a few days, I can conveniently mention this matter and ask her to increase her youngest son's allowance. Aiya, I'm so kind and righteous! Doing good deeds without leaving a name...'

Thinking about the young royal prince's rich mother, Yu Xiaocao stopped worrying about whether there was enough money for the deposit. Seeing that the young prince had stopped after eating a few more slices of watermelon, she instructed a maidservant, who worked in the outer courtyard, to bring the watermelons to the bodyguards, so that they could have a taste. Since the watermelon had already been cut open, it would be a waste to just let them sit on the table. The imperial guards had been working very hard too!

The young girl was quite good at conducting herself! It should be noted that people also treated the imperial guards of the Prince Jing's Estate in a courteous manner and flattered them. Their status was even higher than those low-ranking officials in the capital!

"The corn kernels... have you planted them yet?" Zhu Junyang finally remembered the reason for his visit and asked.

Corn kernels? It wouldn't be that he regretted giving her the seeds and wanted them back, right? Yu Xiaocao looked at the young royal prince with a stunned expression.

Zhu Junyang sullenly said, "What's with your expression? There's no way that I, this prince, will take back something that I have given away. The ministers of the Ministry of Revenue don't know how to grow corn. I'm here to ask if you have planted them already, and the method of sowing!!"

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'Does he know how to read minds? How does he know what I was thinking when I didn't even say it yet?' Yu Xiaocao had inadvertently revealed the truth!

Zhu Junyang, 'You just don't have the words written on your face, but anyone can see what you're thinking, okay?'

"You have been living in town these days. If it delays the farming, you will be punished! Don't forget that you have already signed a military writ!!" Zhu Junyang couldn't help reminding her. 'Eh? Why am I talking so much today? What's going on?'

Yu Xiaocao raised her eyebrows and said with a smile full of confidence, "Rest assured! The corn has been planted for more than half a month. Isn't it almost up to the calves, Father?"

Yu Hai had to walk around the fields every day, so he naturally knew the progress of the corn like the back of his hands. Hearing her question, he quickly nodded and said, "Mhm! The leaves of the corns are already two fingers wide, and each stalk of corn has at least six or seven leaves. It should have already entered the jointing stage! Daughter, don't worry, with Father looking after it for you, there won't be any problems!"

Yu Xiaocao smiled brightly at her father, and then turned to Zhu Junyang and said, "Did you hear? Without being modest, I'll say that there's nothing that my family can't grow!! By the way, Father! I asked you to help me transplant the apple and persimmon trees. Have you moved them yet?"

"Yes, yes! Apples, persimmons, and grapes have all been moved! I also found a hickory nut tree in the mountains and moved it next to our yard." Yu Hai had never refused his youngest daughter's requests.

"That's great! In the future, when we're staying indoors during the winter, we can sit on the kang bed and eat delicious roasted hickory nuts! Father, you're the best!!" Yu Xiaocao pulled on her father's hand and shook it in a spoiled manner.

Yu Hai gently caressed his younger daughter's little head and smiled until his crow's feet appeared.

'Well, this pair of father and daughter has started chatting with each other now. It is really okay for them to leave me, this esteemed guest, hanging?' Feeling the deep affection between the father and daughter and seeing their interesting interaction, Zhu Junyang was reluctant to interrupt the warm scene.

"Miss Yu likes to eat hickory nuts? Then you must also like sunflower seeds?" Zhu Junyang didn't want to just be a spectator and couldn't help interjecting.

'Sunflower seeds? There are already sunflower seeds in this era? That's great! Eating sunflower seeds is my favorite thing to do in my spare time!!'

"Sunflower seeds? You have the seeds??" Yu Xiaocao eagerly asked.

'Sure enough, she knows about sunflowers! This little girl from the Yu Family must have some kind of secret, just like... the emperor also has a secret.'

Zhu Junyang's voice was cold but not callous. He slowly nodded and said, "That's right! Among the seeds that I brought back from the west, there's sunflower seeds. I heard that cooked sunflower seeds are edible! You can try it!"

"Okay, Okay!! Give me the seeds and I will try planting it!" Yu Xiaocao couldn't help cheering in her heart. Haha! Fortunately, she had transmigrated to the Great Ming Dynasty and had a senior transmigrator who liked to travel across the sea and look for treasures in the west. In the future, she could eat sunflower seeds. So happy!

Looking at the young girl's expression, which resembled a kitten who secretly ate a little fish, Zhu Junyang's mood had inexplicably improved. The most genuine things were the most touching! Perhaps, in Tanggu Town, he could relax wholeheartedly without having to stay away from the crowd.

He didn't need to be on guard at all times, and he didn't have to doubt everything. This kind of lifestyle might be more suitable for him... Unconsciously, the corners of his mouth curled up into a charming smile—After so many years, he had finally found the expression of 'smile' again.

"When I go back to the capital, I'll have someone send the seeds over! It won't be too late, right?" If Princess Consort Jing saw him speaking so much on his own initiative, would she be happy or jealous?

"No, it won't be too late!" With the mystic-stone water as her cheat, she could still grow the sunflowers even if she got them later. How many seeds would the young royal prince give her? Would it be enough to eat? Holding her small face, Yu Xiaocao smiled so much that only her two rows of pearly whites could be seen, and her eyes had disappeared!

"I want to see the growth of the corn and make a simple record." Zhu Junyang thought about how he left the troubled Ministry of Revenue behind in the capital and came to Tanggu Town to relax. If the emperor asked about it, he would have an excuse.

Yu Xiaocao, who was in a good mood, nodded incessantly and said, "Alright! Tomorrow I will accompany Young Royal Prince to the fields. Rest assured, there definitely won't be any problems with letting us grow the corn!"

After setting a time to meet and go back to Dongshan Village tomorrow, Zhu Junyang stood up and said goodbye, "If you guys can finalize a set of methods to cultivate corn and potatoes, this prince will report your meritorious deed. At that time, you will naturally be rewarded!"

Although she was afraid that her identity as a transmigrator would be revealed by her fellow transmigrator, the emperor, the rewards granted by the emperor must be extraordinary. Yu Xiaocao felt distressed in her heart. Should she take credit for this contribution or not?

The next day, the news that the royal prince would visit Dongshan Village had already spread throughout the village at rocket speed. After the village chief received this news from Yu Hai last night, he was so excited that he couldn't fall asleep for the entire night. With two large dark circles under his eyes, he started making preparations. He gathered the whole village early in the morning and held a meeting. The main point of the meeting was to remind the villagers to be more cautious and keep an eye on their own children, lest they offend the lord. Moreover, they also butchered pigs and sheep and gathered all the well-known cooks in the village to brainstorm and prepare a meal for the noble guest...

When Zhu Junyang arrived in Dongshan Village with the county magistrate, he could see from afar the villagers of Dongshan Village, who enthusiastically lined up to welcome the guests.

Yu Xiaocao rode on the little red horse that her godfather gave her and followed behind the young royal prince and the officials, looking carefree. As soon as they reached the entrance of the village, she saw Village Head Grandpa and the villagers kneel down immediately. She was so startled that she hastily urged the little red horse to move far away from them. Many of the villagers were her elders, so if she didn't avoid them, her life would be shortened.

Seeing his master's gaze, Zhu Junyang's personal imperial bodyguard, Wu Deshun, hurriedly dismounted and helped the white-haired village head up and said, "The royal prince is traveling incognito, so there's no need to be so ceremonious. Villagers, please get up quickly."

The village head, who had been helped up, was so excited that he burst into tears and said with trembling lips, "Your Highness has condescended to visit, this commoner doesn't dare to slight ah. This is something we should do!"

Someone who had studied for a few years was truly different. He sounded so reasonable. Yu Xiaocao got off her horse and went to find her family in the crowd. However, besides her eldest granduncle, Madam Zhang, and the Yu Dashan couple, she didn't see her own parents.

She crept into the crowd, came to her eldest granduncle's side, and asked in a low voice, "Eldest Granduncle, did you see my father?"

Yu Lichun glanced in the direction of Royal Prince Yang and saw that no one was paying attention, so he whispered, "Your parents are waiting at home—you must be careful and don't offend the noble lord."

From the corner of his eyes, Zhu Junyang saw the little lass going into the crowd like a nimble little squirrel and whispering, as if she was a kitten who was going to steal a fish. How could a person's expression be so lively and changeable? What an interesting fellow! He didn't realize that as long as Xiaocao was around, his eyes couldn't help but follow her.

Yu Xiaocao squeezed out of the crowd and arrived next to Village Head Grandpa, who was acting in a very respectful manner. With a grin, she looked at Zhu Junyang and said in a slightly chirpy tone, "Young Royal Prince, do you want to go directly to the fields, or rest at my house first?"

Wu Deshun looked at the sun. Like usual, he didn't bother the master with such trivial matter and replied on his behalf, "Since the weather is pretty good right now, let's go to the fields first..."

"This prince is tired after riding on the horse for so long..." Zhu Junyang suddenly wanted to see what kind of family raised such an eccentric little girl.

Wu Deshun quickly corrected himself and said, "Miss Yu, please lead the way!"

Yu Xiaocao obediently walked in the front, and behind her, a red filly, which hadn't fully grown yet, followed her step by step. Zhu Junyang noticed that the reins of the filly wasn't in the hands of the young girl, yet it followed her obediently. It was quite a tame and clever steed, which was perfect for a young girl like her.

Yu Xiaocao walked in the front, while Royal Prince Yang and his entourage followed behind. Behind him was the new county magistrate of Tanggu Town and the officials of the county yamen, and finally the village chief and several respected elders in the village. The large group quickly reached the old residence of the Yu Family.

Zhu Junyang looked at the brand-new brick and tiled house, which was extremely simple compared with the tall gated estates in the capital. It was a simple compound with a large open yard. There were green vegetables on both sides of the small brick pathway in the yard...

There weren't any complicated constructions, cascading pavilions and terraces, and precious flowers and plants. However, there was a sense of tranquility and warmth within its simplicity, which made it easier for people to open their hearts, put down all their complex thoughts, and return to the countryside and nature...

In front of the main room in the courtyard, under a blossoming peach tree, there were several different shaped stone stools beside a stone table, which was carved in accordance to the shape of the stone. There were cotton cushions of various colors on the stools, which showed a sense of warmth in the cold.

Yu Xiaocao looked at the large group of people coming over, and moved all the chairs and stools in the house. But there still wasn't enough seats. She scratched her head and said awkwardly, "Why don't... I go borrow some chairs from Auntie Zhou's house?"

"No need, no need! We can just stand!" Zhao Zixuan, the new county magistrate of Tanggu Town, hastily said. What a joke! Was there anyone here who could sit as equals with the royal prince?

In the end, other than Royal Prince Yang, everyone just stood around him like they were being punished. Yu Xiaocao thought it looked somewhat awkward, but the ancient concept of social ranking wasn't something that a little girl like her could change. She picked a plate of ripe tomatoes and several crispy and tender cucumbers from the garden in the backyard, and then cut a big watermelon that they had at home. She placed them all on the stone table and raised her eyebrows with satisfaction—this was the right way to entertain guests!

County Magistrate Zhao looked at the cucumbers and almost choked on his saliva—She actually served cucumbers to the royal prince. Wasn't that too weird?

"After walking so far, do you want to eat some watermelon to quench your thirst?" Yu Xiaocao picked up a slice of watermelon and warmly handed it to the young prince. Yesterday, at her godfather's house, this fellow ate a lot of watermelons and also ordered a cart, so he must like to eat it, right?

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However, she had misunderstood the young royal prince yesterday. Although the jade pendant in the embroidered pouch wasn't gold or silver, even she, who didn't know much about jade, could tell that it wasn't ordinary from its texture. She quietly showed it to her godmother in the evening. It was worth at least several thousand taels of silver ah! To buy a cart of watermelons with several thousand taels, he was indeed a member of the imperial family. So rich!

The watermelon that she cut today was relatively large, a total of twenty-something catties. The young prince definitely wouldn't be able to finish it himself. Yu Xiaocao, like the Child of Wealth, picked up a piece of watermelon and started distributing it.

Looking at the sweet-smelling watermelon in front of him, County Magistrate Zhao glanced hesitantly at Royal Prince Yang, and didn't dare to pick up the watermelon until he permitted. Zhao Zixuan was born in a poor family and didn't have any one of high status supporting him, so he had only gotten the position of a county magistrate at the age of forty. He finally got this rare opportunity to interact with a noble from the capital, so he naturally didn't dare to make any mistakes.

Seeing the county magistrate take the watermelon, the other officials of the yamen, who came to familiarize themselves with the noble guest, also took the watermelon and thanked the young girl. Not

only the officials of Tanggu Town, but Royal Prince Yang's servants and imperial bodyguards also got watermelons. Of course, the elders in the village also received a piece.

Due to the joyous scene in the yard, Zhu Junyang felt that today's watermelon was even sweeter than yesterday's. The sweetness went all the way to his heart. In a good mood, he picked up a cucumber, looked at it curiously, and began to chew on it. 'Mhm, the taste is pretty good, and it's crispy and juicy. Although it isn't as sweet as a watermelon, it has a distinctive taste.'

Poor child had never seen a freshly plucked whole cucumber. When he ate it in the past, it had been carved meticulously by the chef. Thus, he didn't know that this glossy green colored and delicious-tasting thing was what a cucumber originally looked like!

Seeing that the young royal prince was enjoying the cucumber, County Magistrate Zhao also picked up a cucumber and chewed on it like the royal prince. He couldn't help praising, "The cucumbers grown by Miss Yu's family are even tastier than the ones sold in the market! They all say that your family has a secret method of cultivation. Is it true?"

Yu Xiaocao got a tomato, took a small bite, and sucked the juice with relish. Hearing that, she said with a smile, "What secret method can there be? We're just tending the crops more carefully! It may be that our vegetables matured earlier and everyone is tired of eating cabbages and radishes in the winter, so they think that it's a fresh experience!"

After Zhu Junyang finished the cucumber, Zhu Junyang saw Xiaocao enjoying a tomato. He picked up a big red tomato and copied her by taking a small bite and gently slurping the sweet and sour juice inside.

"This... what is this?" Zhu Junyang couldn't help but ask curiously.

Yu Xiaocao excitedly introduced, "This is called tomato, and is also known as wolf peach! It seems to be imported from a foreign land, and is used as a decorative plant. In actuality, it is a kind of vegetable with high nutritional values. Unlike the rumors, it's not poisonous—oh, right! The unripe green tomatoes do contain some toxins..."

"What? It's poisonous??" The entourage was shocked. Wu Deshun grabbed the tomato in Royal Prince Yang's hands and had a terrible expression on his face.

County Magistrate Zhao's face turned pale, and he hollered, "How dare you!! You actually dared to poison the royal prince; do you know what crime that is?! Quick, quickly arrest her!!"

Yu Xiaocao, who was nibbling on the inner flesh of the tomato, was immediately held down by Royal Prince Yang's imperial bodyguards. The tomato in her hands fell onto the ground and rolled to Zhu Junyang's feet.

Zhu Junyang frowned slightly as he looked down at the small tooth marks on the half-eaten tomato. Seeing the apparently painful expression on Xiaocao's face, his gaze turned deep and his thin lips were pursed. Wu Deshun, who had worked under him for many years, knew that his master was really angry, so he hastily admitted his mistake, "This subordinate noticed too late, please forgive me!"

"Why are you guys arresting me for? Let go! Let go!!" Yu Xiaocao's arms were twisted behind her back, and their strength made her very uncomfortable. She struggled slightly and shrieked with a wrinkled face.

Yu Lichun, who had followed over, quickly knelt down in front of the cold-faced Royal Prince Yang and pleaded in a trembling voice, "Your Highness, this commoner has eaten tomatoes numerous times. It's definitely not poisonous! Royal Prince, please make a wise judgement!!"

The village head had also eaten the tomatoes grown by the Yu Family, so he also kneeled and pleaded on behalf of Yu Xiaocao, "It's true that tomatoes aren't poisonous. This commoner ate two this morning ah! There... there must be some misunderstanding!!"

Yu Xiaocao finally understood why she was being held down. She didn't know whether she should cry or laugh as she said, "If tomatoes are poisonous and I just ate it myself, wouldn't I be committing suicide because I'm tired of living? I have no enmities with the royal prince, so how would poisoning him benefit me?? I reckon you guys are too anxious. You guys don't have persecutory delusion, right?"

"Persecutory delusion? What's that?" Hearing the new term, Zhu Junyang made a gesture to tell his subordinates to let go. It seemed like he had often heard these weird and novel terms from the emperor before! This little lass wouldn't be a long-lost illegitimate child of the emperor, would she? Young Royal Prince, wasn't that thought too absurd?

Yu Xiaocao plopped down on the stone chair in front of him and angrily picked up another tomato. She waved it at the boorish guards, like she was demonstrating to them, and then fiercely took a large bite, as if the tomato was the bodyguards' flesh.

With her mouth stuffed with the tomato, she said in a muffled voice, "Poisonous? A ripe tomato is not poisonous!! How ignorant and unworldly!! Persecutory delusion is an illness here, always thinking that someone wants to harm yourself!"

As she said that, she pointed at her own head with her index finger.

Zhu Junyang also picked up a bright red tomato and placed it in his mouth, but he was stopped by his loyal guards, "Royal Prince..."

"Don't make a fuss! No one here will hurt this prince! Relax, otherwise, you'll really be a patient suffering from persecutory delusion!" With his eyebrows raised, Zhu Junyang was apparently in a good mood, and the tomato in his mouth seemed even more delicious.

After eating a stomach full of fruits, it seemed like it was time to get up and move. Zhu Junyang stood up, grabbed a tomato in his hands, and slowly walked out the yard as he said, "Come, it's time to look at the corn fields!"

When the group reached the corn fields, the Yu Hai couple and Liu Hu's family had just finished watering the over ten mu of land. There wasn't a lot of rain this spring. Fortunately, the Yu Family's farmland was close to a mountain stream, so it was convenient water the crops.

Waving his hands to stop Yu Hai and the others from kneeling down to greet him, Zhu Junyang personally went to the edge of the field and bent down to look at the corn seedlings, which were nearly up to his knee. It hadn't been twenty days since his return, but the corn had already grown so tall. It seemed like this crop, corn, grew pretty fast!

He straightened his back and looked around. Ten or so mu of corn fields were stretching their leaves under the sun. Under the bright spring sun, there seemed to be a lively sprite jumping on each leaf.

"Not bad! You guys have grown the corn very well!" Zhu Junyang didn't stint on compliments and praised them sincerely.

Yu Hai was about to reply humbly, but his dear daughter, who was silly and bold, proudly said, "Of course! We don't fight uncertain battles. If we can't grow them well, then why would we be so bold as to sign the military writ?"

Looking at the little lass's complacent expression, Zhu Junyang felt—that today's sun was great, warm and brilliant. The scenery of the West Mountain nearby was pretty good. It was verdant and lush. Even the fields with the fragrance of soil seemed to have become more lovely...

His good mood lasted until he returned to the residence that Princess Consort Jing temporarily stayed. Princess Consort Jing looked at her son, who was walking over. Although he still maintained an expressionless face with his lips still pursed and eyes exuding coldness, she clearly felt that her son seemed to be in a good mood.

Her little Junyang went out early in the morning and didn't come back until the evening. Did something good happen that caused him to change from his state of a 'walking air conditioner'? Uh, she accidentally used the emperor's evaluation of her son. But, it was quite a vivid description!

Based on her understanding of her son, if she directly asked, she wouldn't be able to get any answers. She could only do it in a roundabout way by asking his subordinates. She glanced at her son, who was currently drinking tea, and then asked Wu Deshun, who was standing ramrod straight beside her, "Where did you go with the young royal prince today?"

Wu Deshun looked at his master and saw that the other party didn't seem to mind him answering, so he quickly replied, "In reply to Your Highness, today I went to Dongshan Village with Master and checked the Yu Family's growth of corn and potatoes."

"Oh, to Dongshan Village ah! I heard from Lady Fang that it's a good environment, surrounded by mountains and sea. Yang'er, what do you think?" Princess Consort Jing had heard Lady Fang praise Dongshan Village many times, so she yearned to visit the place. However, right now she was more curious about what good thing her son had encountered at Dongshan Village.

"Mhm, it's not bad!!" Ay, she shouldn't have asked this son of hers, who cherished words like gold. Look, he only said four words like he was already doing a big favor to others!

However, that didn't affect the communication between the mother and son. Princess Consort Jing had become accustomed to the conversation mode of her speaking to herself, "I heard that lass Cao'er say that the weather has gotten warmer now, so it's suitable to go up the mountains to dig for wild herbs, as well as set some traps to catch some pheasants and wild hares for a special meal. Also, when the tide is low, one can also gather seafood at the beach. Clams, scallops, oysters... If one's lucky, one can find sea cucumbers washed up on shore! Last time, that lass brought over some marine goods and made spicy stir-fried clams, steamed scallops with garlic, grilled oysters... I'm drooling just by thinking about it! You say, why didn't I meet Xiaocao first? In that case, the position of her godmother would have nothing to do with Lady Fang!"

Princess Consort Jing babbled, but didn't notice that her youngest son was listening attentively.

Zhu Junyang touched his chin. Spicy stir-fried clams? Steamed scallops with garlic? They sounded pretty appetizing! The meal he had at the Yu Family's old residence this afternoon was made by the little lass, under his order. The taste was extraordinary. Although they were all common homemade dishes, the taste was different and suited his taste even more than the dishes in the famous restaurants in the capital. He quietly pondered how to find a reason to try the seafood cooked by the little girl.

"Ah-choo!" Yu Xiaocao, who was lying with her limbs spread out on the kang bed after sending off the great lord, Royal Prince Yang, suddenly felt an itch on her nose and sneezed.

"Who is it? Who's scheming behind my back?" Yu Xiaocao rubbed her nose and murmured.

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Madam Liu set dinner on the kang table [1], poked her little head, and said with a smile, "What do you have that's worth scheming for? Could it be you got a cold from the cold winds on the field? Tomorrow, when you go into town, remember to go get some medicine from Tongren Medicine Hall."

Madam Liu was always worried about her youngest daughter's health. When she was born, the doctors all said that she wouldn't be able to survive. Although there weren't any problems in the past two years, how could one accurately predict an illness that was present since she was a fetus?

Several times, when her youngest daughter was close to dying from her illness, Madam Liu would always blame herself. She thought that her body was a letdown for causing Xiaocao to take medicine every day as a meal when she was young, letting her suffer for so many years. So Madam Liu preferred to indulge this daughter of hers. It turned out that their indulgence didn't make their youngest daughter spoiled but even brought more and more benefits to their family.

Madam Liu was convinced that her youngest daughter must be a treasure bestowed onto them by the heavens!

Yu Xiaocao turned over and sat up from the Kang table, and then she cleverly went to help her mother set the dishes and chopsticks. Ever since her godmother moved back to town because her due date was nearing, Xiaocao had stayed by her godmother's side. Although she had gone back to Dongshan Village from time to time over the month, the time she stayed at home was very short.

Every time she left, she would feel bad when she saw her parent's reluctant eyes. After transmigrating into this strange world, it was her parents that gave her the most selfless love and tolerance. This moved her and gave her a sense of belonging in the family.

Her acceptance of Fang Zizhen as her godfather, on the one hand, was because Fang Zizhen treated her well, on the other hand, it wasn't without uses. After all, this world was a vicious class society. If she wanted to openly do something and had no strong backing, she would more than likely become the target of some powerful people and eventually become their slave.

Fang Zizhen, who was a third-ranked general, had appeared at just the right time. After recognizing him as her godfather, Fang Zizhen wanted to give her the best of the world and treated her well from the bottom of his heart. Her godmother also treated her as if she were her blood-related daughter. Humans are emotional creatures. Yu Xiaocao naturally returned their treatment with sincerity. With the effects of the mystic-stone water, she healed her godfather's difficult problem and successfully got herself a new little brother.

Her godparent both said that she was a fairy bestowed by the heavens to help them, but it was more accurate to say it was love traded for sincerity. She treated them sincerely because of their love for her. The couple had entered her heart and became recognized as her 'family'.

Now that they had their own child, maybe she could quietly retire. After Godmother finished her month of confinement after childbirth, she could go back to Dongshan Village and accompany her parents, never leaving again...

The next day, Yu Xiaocao rode her little red pony. On both sides of the pony's back, she had tied several big watermelons with straw ropes. She was also carrying several muskmelons that had matured early in her hands. This year, Xiaocao had gotten several melon seeds and planted them in the melon field, which had gradually begun to mature.

Upon remembering the several fruit trees in the corner of the backyard, Yu Xiaocao's mood suddenly became better—she wouldn't have a lack of fruit to eat in the future. There originally weren't many fruits in this era, and even fewer are suitable to plant in the north. Fruits were a luxury that only the rich could eat. Although with her family's current financial conditions, they could also afford fruit, Xiaocao felt that it was a waste of money to buy those fruits, which weren't very tasty and was extremely expensive.

Since they had their own land, as long as they could find the seeds or seedlings of the fruits, and with the little divine stone present, there wasn't anything they couldn't grow. She had found that the taste of fruits and vegetables watered by the mystic-stone water had improved by more than a bit. So why not just do it?

Dongshan Village's villagers, who went to town in the early mornings for the early market, would see a little girl in elegant riding clothes, riding a little red pony that was trotting on the flat official road. Tied onto the pony's back, there would be heavy watermelons—this was Yu Xiaocao who had decided to go to town early in the morning.

Upon meeting the familiar villagers, Xiaocao would show a sweet smile and greet them. The villagers of Dongshan Village, thinking about yesterday's scene of welcoming the royal prince and the fact that her family was acquainted with a princess consort, naturally didn't dare to slight her. So they all answered with a sincere or fawning smile.

Madam Zhang, who was going to town to see her son, walked by. The corners of her mouth turned down as she glanced at the person and the horse. She looked steadily ahead and continued walking forward.

After the lawsuit, Yu Bo's reputation in town had gone down the drain. In this lifetime, he would never be able to enter Rongxuan Academy. With his moral conduct, even his original academy kicked him out, let alone Rongxuan Academy, where people were accepted based on their talent and moral integrity.

He was instilled with the idea that in the future he would obtain fame and become a high-ranking official since childhood. Naturally, he wouldn't give up the idea of studying, but in Tanggu Town, there wasn't any academy that didn't know his reputation. Who would accept him? Presently, Yu Bo could only follow his father-in-law, who was a county official and review the knowledge he had learned before.

Madam Zhang didn't learn from her previous actions. She believed that her son was delayed from his prospects by Yu Hai's family. If it wasn't for that girl, Xiaocao, then they would have just lost some money. They could earn the money back, but once a scholar's reputation was destroyed, he would lose everything. No, she couldn't allow her ten years of hard work to be thrown to the winds!

With the current reputation and status of Yu Hai's family in Dongshan Village, they weren't people who she could bully and control anymore. Besides, they still had something on her, Madam Zhang couldn't be rash. This time, she was going into town for her son's future!

Since the schools in town couldn't accommodate her son, then they would go to the prefectural city. The prefectural city was nearly a two-days traveling distance from Tanggu Town. It was impossible for her son's reputation to have reached every academy in the prefectural city, right? For the sake of her son's education, Madam Zhang didn't care about money. As long as her son could pass the examination and become an official, even if she had to live in harsh conditions, it would still be worth it.

Yu Xiaocao was very clear on the ancient people's respect for filial piety. Although her family and her oldest paternal aunt's family all know about Madam Zhang's vicious side, when all was said and done, the villagers of Dongshan Village didn't know. What appearances had to be kept were still kept.

"Grandmother, are you going to town to see my younger uncle? The road is quite long, why didn't you tell us so that my father could take you there with the carriage!" Yu Xiaocao came down from the horse's back and appeared like a very polite girl.

Madam Zhang was eager to tear the smile off her face and replied ambiguously, "Your family has climbed up a high branch. Why would you still care about this old lady's life or death? Let you guys take me in the carriage? I don't have that good fortune."

Several villagers, who were going to town with Madam Zhang, had an expression of disapproval on their faces. In their minds, they thought, 'Madam Zhang really doesn't know how fortunate she is. She has such a good son, even if he's not by blood, she should still try to win him over. What is she doing?'

Yu Xiaocao clearly saw the expressions on the villagers' faces out of the corner of her eye and smiled even more brightly. "Grandmother, what are you saying? Those who know will say that you understand our family is busy and doesn't have any time. Those who don't know will think that you have a problem with us! How about this, you can ride my pony and I can walk over, what do you say?"

"Yu Xiaocao, you clearly know I don't know how to ride a horse but you still want me to get on the horse. Are you thinking this old lady has lived too long and want me to fall to my death?" Madam Zhang craftily smiled and snorted.

Yu Xiaocao's face fell and with a face full of grievances, she said, "Grandma, how can you say that? I suggested it with good intentions..."

Madam Mao, who came with Madam Zhang, couldn't bear to see the old lady using her age as an advantage anymore. She came up and shielded Xiaocao behind her and said, "I've heard that Xiaocao wasn't treated well by you when the family had yet to separate. Today, I've finally seen it! Xiaocao is just afraid that you are tired and offered to let you ride the horse. It's enough that you don't appreciate it, yet you also distort her good intentions. How can you be a grandmother? Fortunately, Brother Yu Hai's family separated early. Otherwise, I wouldn't know what Xiaocao would've become with your treatment. It's said that Xiaocao was weak and sickly since birth, could it be caused by you, this harsh grandmother?"

Madam Mao's mouth was said to be invincible in the entire village! However, Xiaocao knew that she was the model of a sharp tongue with a soft heart, so the relationship between the two families was pretty good.

Madam Zhang's entire face turned red with Madam Mao's words, but she couldn't come up with any words to refute her claims. After all, the severe winter before last year, Yu Xiaocao was ill and she, the grandmother, was reluctant to give money for her to go see the doctor. When Xiaocao's father went to his eldest uncle's family to borrow money, everyone in the village knew about it. No matter how she argued, no one would believe her!

Madam Zhang wasn't a merciful person. She pointed at Madam Mao's nose and angrily said, "I'm talking to my granddaughter. What does it have to do with you, Madam Mao? You really are meddling, sticking your nose into other people's business! Oh... I know. Your Qian Family used Dahai's glory to get the help of Zhenxiu Restaurant and gained many benefits. You've gotten their help, so you have to speak up for them. That's why you've come up to take the scolding, right?"

In terms of quarreling, Madam Mao had never been afraid of anyone. She had been unhappy with Madam Zhang, who kept asking for trouble all the time, for a long time. So today, she definitely wouldn't spare her, "Oh! How come I can hear the jealousy in this? Brother Dahai is kind hearted so he has never refused to help anyone in the village when they go to him. Speaking of him, how can anyone in the village not praise him? Some people are so blessed that they don't know it. During his most difficult times, they separated from him and even hid the money that he used his life to get. Tsk~ To be brothers, yet using his older brother's money, that he used his life to get, to get relations. He deserved to be cheated! The heavens do have eyes, they are looking at us! People can't do the wrong thing, sooner or later they will be punished!"

Everyone in the village knew that Yu Hai was bitten by a bear while saving General Zhao. General Zhao gave the money that he got for the bear to Madam Zhang and asked her to use it to treat Yu Hai's injuries. The result? If Old Yu wasn't around, Yu Hai would've been left on the bed for the injuries to run its course.

This Madam Zhang really is cruel. When Yu Hai's family was injured, sick, and weak, she wanted to divide the family. After receiving the three hundred taels, which should've been used to save someone's life, she practically let them leave without anything.

She even said Yu Hai had personally asked to separate their families. Yu Hai was just too benevolent to expose her lies. Who didn't know the truth? In that situation, even if it was for his wife and children, he wouldn't have separated their families voluntarily.

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The villagers nearby automatically imagined what happened afterward. The gazes directed at Madam Zhang all regarded her as shameless.

How could Madam Zhang listen to others talk about her youngest son? "Aaoo-" She rushed at Madam Mao.

Madam Mao was much younger than Madam Zhang. She was quite agile, so how could she be caught by Madam Zhang? Madam Mao flexibly dodged Madam Zhang's claws while still brutally talking, "What? Did I get it right and you're angry with embarrassment? All of our deeds are seen by the Heavens! In the future, you should quit doing those despicable acts. Whoops! You're old and should take it easy. Don't strain your back and blame me for pushing you! Everyone is watching, right? I didn't touch a single hair on her, if she falls or bumps into something, it has nothing to do with me! ...Since I can't afford to provoke her anymore, can't I hide? I'm leaving..."

Madam Mao took great strides and left like a gust of wind. After all, Madam Zhang was old. Although she had tried to scratch the other woman, she didn't even manage to touch Madam Mao's clothes and even tired herself out. How could the panting Madam Zhang catch up with the young Madam Mao? She could only stare at her departing back!

Madam Zhang saw Yu Xiaocao, who was standing at one side, and felt that the longer she looked at her, the more Yu Xiaocao looked like an eyesore. Madam Zhang angrily said, "Hurry up and go. Are you standing here to see a joke?"

Yu Xiaocao's goal had been achieved. "Grandmother, since you don't like me, I won't stay here and obstruct your view. Uncles and Aunties, is there anything heavy that I can take with me?" She said with a smile.

Upon hearing her words, they all shook their heads and said, "No, there's no need! Lady Fang is waiting for you to take care of her, how about you go first!" The villagers all saw such an obedient and clever child, how could Madam Zhang dislike her so much?

"Yes, yes! We didn't bring much stuff with us, we can carry it!"

"Your pony is already carrying so many things. If it doesn't grow under the pressure, won't you feel sorry?" This was someone that had a closer relationship with Xiaocao, so the person cracked a joke.

Xiaocao bid the villagers farewell with a smile and mounted the little red pony that was standing still. The little red pony seemed to be impatient. As soon as Xiaocao sat down, the animal trotted forward without any urging. 'This pony is strong!' was what it seemed to be telling the villagers.

When she caught up with Madam Mao, Xiaocao said a few words with her before heading toward the town without stopping. When she was about one kilometer from Tanggu Town, she came across Third Young Master Zhou, who was galloping at full speed.

In the past year, Third Young Master Zhou's position in the Zhou Family had risen. The old patriarch of the Zhou Family had been training him to become the next head of the household. Third Young Master Zhou had become even busier. Not only did he have to check on the businesses of his subordinates, but he also had to learn how to manage the family's business. The Zhou Family were Imperial Merchants,

who were in charge of buying materials for the Royal Court. Naturally, he couldn't be given the cold shoulder. Yu Xiaocao hadn't seen Third Young Master Zhou for many days already.

"Third Young Master, where are you going in such a hurry?" After the road from Tanggu Town to Dongshan Village was completed, other than the Second Young Master and the steward of Prince Jing's Estate, there weren't many people who could ride a horse or carriage. Yu Xiaocao and the Third Young Master Zhou had recognized each other from a distance.

Third Young Master Zhou fixed his hair that had been blown by the wind and sulkily replied, "This road leads straight to Dongshan Village, where else do you think I can go?"

"Oh! The busy Third Young Master is gracing our Dongshan Village with his presence!" Yu Xiaocao continued to tease.

Zhou Zixu rolled his eyes and said, "Can't you say something nice? I haven't seen you in so long, yet you still like to exchange barbed words with me!"

Yu Xiaocao smiled and said, "Ok, let's speak seriously? What do you need me for? Let's talk as we go!"

Zhou Zixu looked at her with a smile and said, "Why are you so confident that I'm looking for you? Can't I be looking for Uncle Yu?"

After saying those words, he turned his horse so he was beside Xiaocao's maroon red pony. The little red pony under Xiaocao was upset that Zhou Zixu's big black horse was so much taller than itself. Unlike its usual temperament, it turned its head to bite the big black horse.

Zhou Zixu, upon seeing this, hurriedly pulled on the reins of his beloved horse to take him over a few steps, not letting the little one succeed. "Yo! It's true what kind of owner will raise what kind of horse. This little guy actually dared to provoke my Black Cloud. It's got some nerves!"

Yu Xiaocao gently stroked the little red pony's mane, pacifying the animal. "Who told your black giant to show off its big head in front of Little Red. Only a fool would not resist after being bullied!"

Zhou Zixu laughed and pointed at her with his index finger. "You! Always with the misdirection! There's nothing wrong with Black Cloud being tall! It's Tiny that's green with envy! For being so small, it sure has a big temper! —It must be the result of your teachings!"

Yu Xiaocao rolled her eyes at him and said, "Tiny is at home! Last time I don't know who it was that had ideas for our little roe deer. Hmph!"

After Zhou Zixu became busy, he was afraid that his mother would be lonely. Thus, he made plans for the little roe deer in Xiaocao's home. He wanted the silly interesting little fellow to accompany his mother so she wouldn't be lonely.

Who knew that before Xiaocao could even open her mouth to refuse, the little roe deer ran off into the forests of the West Mountains until Zhou Zixu left. Afterward, every time he went to the Yu Family home, the little roe deer would either pee on his feet, rub dyed grass into his new clothes or stay away so far that he couldn't even get a glimpse of him... Zhou Zixu joked that Tiny was someone that remembered grudges, he can't be provoked just like his master!

When she mentioned the embarrassments of the past, Zhou Zixu rubbed his nose somewhat unnaturally. Remembering what he came for, he hurriedly said, "A while ago, Grandfather and I were busy with the selection of the new imperial merchants. With the trust of the emperor, we managed to keep our previous timber supply business despite strong competition. However, the emperor emeritus has ordered our Zhenxiu Restaurant to be responsible for the purchase of braised flavoring and dried seafood for the imperial kitchen."

"That's a good thing! Congratulations on your success, Third Young Master Zhou. You got the rights to purchase two materials with just one try. The Zhou Family imperial merchants' position will be very firm!" Yu Xiaocao knew that the profit of the imperial merchants was very sizable and that competition was very fierce.

The current head of the household, which was the first branch of the Zhou Family, was the nominal uncle of Third Young Master Zhou. However, he was actually his biological father and only had average abilities in business. The Zhou Family currently had the old patriarch managing everything, so they were still able to keep their standing. But the old patriarch was getting older with every passing year, so how long could he hang on for? This was also the reason why the old patriarch was rushing to teach Third Young Master Zhou everything.

Fortunately, Zhou Zixu showed extraordinary business abilities while he was still young. This time, he was able to get the internal supply of braised flavoring and dried seafood. All of this occurred because

Zhenxiu Restaurant had made its place in the capital. Everyone knew about the osmanthus duck and roasted chicken from Zhenxiu Restaurant. Even the emperor emeritus often left the palace to have a meal and he would also pack some to take back. It was said that he was taking it back to give some to his precious grandson—the current emperor—as a reward.

Last summer, Yu Xiaocao also occasionally went into the ocean to get some top-grade abalone, sea cucumber, etc. All of this seafood was sold to Third Young Master Zhou. Third Young Master Zhou got the best value out of the gourmet seafood by putting them on a seafood feast auction at the Zhenxiu Restaurant in the capital.

Alright! Even the emperor was notified, who then privately visited Zhenxiu Restaurant. He then met the gluttonous emperor emeritus and the two of them dominated the seafood feast auction. Actually, it was the emperor emeritus who revealed his identity, and thus, the competitors naturally gave up without taking any actions. Although the seafood feast auction didn't get to the price that Zhou Zixu wanted, the goal had been achieved.

All the officials, rich businessmen, and the children of the aristocratic families present crowded Zhenxiu Restaurant. The emperor emeritus didn't enjoy the seafood feast alone; he invited the officials above the third rank present to share the feast. Most of the seafood in Zhenxiu Restaurant was delivered on ice. However, the best grade of seafood was freshly caught seafood that was still alive.

Everyone knew that transporting live seafood was extremely difficult. During transportation, normally seafood will die or turn smelly. However, these abalone and sea cucumbers were given mystic-stone water and, as such, they had a strong vitality. When they arrived in the capital, they were still alive and jumping around. Naturally, their taste would also be better than those transported by ice or dried. As soon as that glutton, the emperor emeritus, ate some, he noticed the difference. Therefore, the Zhou Family easily became an imperial merchant family who were given a second good to monopolize.

It was very simple to supply the braised flavoring. Head Chef Wang, who was transferred to the capital's Zhenxiu Restaurant, was personally able to make some and send it to the palace. However, seafood was not easy to supply. Although the emperor emeritus was gracious and only asked them to supply dried seafood, most of the high-grade abalones and sea cucumbers lived in the deep sea. Even the most experienced fisherman could only get it by chance. Would ordinary abalones and cucumbers be able to enter the eyes of the emperor emeritus? If they gave lower quality products, would the Zhou Family still have a way to live? Without any other options, Third Young Master Zhou could only go to Dongshan Village to get reinforcements.

After hearing Third Young Master Zhou's reason for visiting, Yu Xiaocao frowned for a moment. "The high-grade abalone and sea cucumber, as you have said, can only be found by chance...Is there a fixed supply amount that the palace has requested?"

"The emperor emeritus also knows that high-grade seafood is hard to get and requested only half a catty a month. Ordinary seafood requires five catties..." Third Young Master Zhou said with a gloomy face.

The four seafood treasures were all separate categories of seafood. Due to the difficulty in hunting them, they were all very expensive. The price given by the palace was fair. With the Zhou Family's connections, it wasn't hard to get ordinary seafood. However, obtaining high-grade seafood, especially abalone and sea cucumber, was causing the Zhou Family a bit of trouble.

Yu Xiaocao quickly calculated in her head. It took two to three catties of fresh seafood to make one catty of dried seafood. Since the palace requested half a catty a month, then, in one year, they would need to give six catties of dried seafood. Converting it back to live abalones and sea cucumbers, that would be eighteen catties at most. Eighteen catties of high-grade abalone and sea cucumber, to other people, would be as hard to get as ascending to the heavens. For Xiaocao, on the other hand, who had a cheat, it could be easily done in a few days.

"The emperor emeritus also said that live abalones and sea cucumbers should be provided at least once a month in the summer. They have to be high-grade!" Third Young Master Zhou cried without tears. The emperor emeritus must wanted to force the Zhou Family to die! It was no wonder that those other imperial merchants, who used to supply seafood to the court, looked at the Zhou Family as if they were waiting to see a joke. Third Young Master Zhou only knew how hard it was to get high-grade seafood when his grandfather told him when he got back.

In the past, the Yu Family had sent top-notch seafood to him every few days or so. He had thought abalones and sea cucumbers were easy to get. Sob sob sob, he was so wrong. What should I do? Save me, Uncle Yu, Xiaocao...

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"Alright! Stop trying to look so pitiful, you look like such a wuss!" Yu Xiaocao slanted her eyes at Third Young Master Zhou, who was biting on his handkerchief and sobbing pitifully. She couldn't help but make fun of him again.

Third Young Master Zhou placed his hands on his heart as tears pooled in his eyes. The expression on his face was mournful and it looked as if he was accusing Xiaocao of having a heart of stone!

Yu Xiaocao swiftly calculated what was needed and then carelessly waved her hand at him, "Stop pretending! Isn't it just half a catty's worth of dried seafood every month?! I'll talk to Father when I get back home. You also know that my father is a good hand at gathering and catching seafood. There's nothing too difficult for him!"

The tears in Third Young Master Zhou's eyes momentarily evaporated and the wretched-looking expression on his face also disappeared. He looked at her with trust in his eyes and nodded his head, "After hearing your words, my heart is at ease and I now have a plan! Xiaocao, your family is truly my savior, my lucky star..."

"Enough, enough! I'm back home, so you should go do what you need to do ah—oh right, when do we need to start supplying the dried seafood?" Yu Xiaocao reliably asked for the crucial detail.

Worry crawled up Third Young Master Zhou's face again as he said, "It's been almost a month since the emperor has bestowed us with this position, so then the dried seafood requirements start next month...now the seawater is a bit cold and it's not a good time for people to go out to sea, what do you..."

Yu Xiaocao verified with the little divine stone silently first and then waved her hand in dismissal at the youth, "Alright, I know! At the beginning of next month, come to my family's residence to receive the dried seafood..."

Third Young Master Zhou asked somewhat hesitantly, "At this time of year, can Uncle Yu really handle it? Xiaocao, I don't want Uncle Yu and your family to have something happen because of my family's situation..."

Yu Xiaocao felt very grateful inside yet kept a tranquil expression on her face as she mildly replied, "My family still has some dried seafood at home. Originally the plan was to eat that seafood ourselves but my parents thought that it would be too wasteful for us to eat something so expensive. We only ate some once during the New Year celebration but since then they couldn't bear to eat anymore. I estimate we probably still have around one catty's worth..."

"Xiaocao, you guys are truly my saviors!!" If Third Young Master Zhou wasn't currently riding his horse, he likely would have ran over and held her hand out of supreme gratitude...ahem ahem, men and

women should not touch when they give or receive things. Since they were both on their respective steeds, he could only use the windows to his soul—his eyes, to express his gratitude and respect.

Yu Xiaocao gave him a look full of dislike and said, "Wipe that disgusting expression off your face. Just looking at it gives me the chills!"

After settling the problem of next month, Third Young Master Zhou was in an incredibly good mood. He noticed that they were both about to enter through Tanggu Town's gates, so he enthusiastically invited Xiaocao over for a meal.

Yu Xiaocao rolled her eyes. This morning, she had left very early from Dongshan Village. Although Little Red was a young and small animal, it had been raised on mystic-stone water, so it wasn't any slower than an adult horse. At this time, wasn't it still around eight in the morning? What kind of meal did he want to treat her to? She had already eaten breakfast and it wasn't time for lunch either. It was obvious that he wasn't being sincere since he wanted to treat her to a meal now.

"I need to head back after getting my supplies so I can make some medicinal cuisine to nourish my godmother's body. I'll take a rain check on this meal! That being said, when can't I get a table at Zhenxiu Restaurant? Anyway, you've already set aside a private table for me, so I can use it whenever I want. Therefore, you treating me to a meal doesn't have much meaning!" Yu Xiaocao had a slightly smug yet sweet expression on her face.

On one of the side streets was Zhu Junyang, who had gone out early to help his mother buy some side dishes. He coincidentally came across this scene. He looked at the small, porcelain-skinned face that still had traces of baby fat on it. Under the warm light of the beautiful morning that had clouds drifting by, her face looked extremely full of life, especially her pair of vivid and limpid doe-like eyes. Her eyes seemed like they could speak volumes and were full of a mystical spiritual energy. He had never seen a little girl before who was more real or adorable than her. She seemed to have some sort of magnetic attraction coming off of her, no matter how far away she was, she could always draw his attention...

As if she could feel his gaze on her, Yu Xiaocao moved her pair of lively eyes in his direction. The two of them made eye contact in the sea of bustling people.

People walked to and fro on the bustling street, and there was no lack of rich people dressed to the nines in fine brocade. However, Royal Prince Yang seemed to be the only one that mattered. Everyone else in the area melded into the background, while he seemed to be glowing. His mere presence attracted multiple looks from all of the young maidens and matrons in the area.

Yu Xiaocao calmly stared at Zhu Junyang, who wasn't standing far away. In her previous life, even the most attractive and handsome teen idol celebrities couldn't hold a candle to Royal Prince Yang's looks. He had a fine nose, as if it was sculpted by the best plastic surgeons, and extremely attractive, lightly-pink lips that were on the thinner side. His sword-like eyebrows were full and arched perfectly on his face. There wasn't a part of his body that wasn't perfect!

The more attractive part of him was that air of slight apathy that came off of him. He was a solitary man in a vast world, as stately and independent as a mountain. Occasionally, in his cold eyes, there would be a flash of loneliness that could draw a person to drown in that pair of deep eyes.

In her previous life, Yu Xiaocao was the epitome of a person who was drawn to looks. Her favorite celebrities were the teen idols who had beautiful and handsome faces. Consequently, she couldn't help but appreciate people who were extremely good-looking.

Ever since Zhu Junyang had reached the age of twelve to thirteen, he always had the admiring gazes from young, well-bred maidens following him. About four to five years ago, he had found it harder and harder to endure those adoring yet calculating stares. His special ability made him be able to feel every little bit of attention that was on him.

All of the well-off young ladies pretended to be shy and timid on the outside. However, all of them were acting. Despite their virtuous and gentle exteriors, they all hid calculating and scheming hearts. Some of them liked him because of his looks; others liked him because of his status as the Third Young Master of Prince Jing's Estate. And then, there were even some who wanted to get close to him because of his lord father's power and prestige...

He had never encountered a person like this little girl in front of him, who purely appreciated him as his own person. It made him feel like he was the most flawless jade, the most moving landscape. Her appreciation didn't have a hint of an ulterior motive. Within his dark and icy heart, a ray of blazing light seemed to have appeared, cutting through the dense murkiness and warming his entire body.

Yu Xiaocao noticed that the young royal prince had a jar full of pickled vegetables. She dismounted from her horse and walked towards him with a genial smile on her face. She greeted him, "Young Royal Prince, you're out so early to help the princess consort to buy side dishes ah!"

The princess consort really enjoyed the appetizers from the pickled vegetable stand that Xiaocao had invested into, especially the sweet and sour crispy radishes. Every day, when she ate her congee, she needed to eat some to help her finish the meal. Otherwise, she wouldn't be able to eat much. Xiaocao calculated the number of days that had passed since the last time she had brought some radishes, that she had personally pickled herself, over. It was around the right time to get more. She had been busy these past few days with helping her godmother and younger brother settle down, so she didn't have the time to send some more to the princess consort.

Zhu Junyang silently looked at her without even nodding or shaking his head. It looked like he had no intention in replying to her. Yu Xiaocao knew from the princess consort's stories that her youngest son had an eccentric personality and didn't like to talk. So, she didn't hold the expectation that he might talk to her.

Just as she was about to find some words to say farewell, the young royal prince unexpectedly opened his mouth, "Mhm! This stand's products are even more delicious than the ones in the capital!"

Well that was obvious, just look at who they got their recipes from! Xiaocao silently joked inside and a somewhat arrogant expression showed up on her face. Little Jiang's family's pickled vegetable stand was no longer located in that desolate and remote food market anymore. They had not only moved into main food market but also rented a larger area to sell their goods.

A while back, Xiaocao had written a few more pickled vegetable recipes for them. Little Jiang was very talented at making pickled vegetables. The pickled vegetables he made after following her recipes were almost at her level. Thus, the Jiang Family's pickled vegetable stand's reputation had long spread throughout Tanggu town. In addition, their pickled vegetables were tasty and priced affordably. No matter how rich or how poor someone was, everyone was able to afford their products and enjoyed eating them. Every day the line of people waiting to buy pickled vegetables at the stand almost rivaled the line of people at Zhenxiu Restaurant waiting to buy osmanthus duck and roasted chicken. Xiaocao's dividends naturally increased with every passing month. The little girl's personal savings had multiplied again!

Zhu Junyang was somewhat puzzled when he noticed the slightly proud expression on Xiaocao's face. Suddenly, he remembered that his lady mother had told him that the pickled vegetables they had been eating for the past couple of days had been personally made by this little girl. Perhaps...

"Does your family own the Jiang Family's pickled vegetable stand?" That couldn't be right. If it was owned by her family, why wouldn't it be called the Yu Family's pickled vegetable stand instead? Zhu Junyang became even more confused.

When she saw the puzzled look on the young royal prince's face, Yu Xiaocao became even more proud. The corners of her mouth lifted up and she raised her tiny nose towards the sky. She snorted and then stated, "Although the pickled vegetable stand isn't owned by my family, it's still related to me! Many of the pickled vegetables they sell were all thought up by me. The sweet and sour crispy radishes and wine-pickled soybeans in your hands are examples of my handiwork!"

The wine-pickled soybeans were savory, spicy, and had an aroma of wine. Zhu Junyang immediately liked these pickled soybeans from the first time he ate some. The sweet and sour crispy radishes were tasty and crisp, so they were his lady mother's favorites. Both of these, however, had been crafted by the little girl in front of him who hadn't even reached the age of ten. It was hard to say whether people should praise her for being talented or admonish her for being too dazzling.

"I really want to open up that little skull of yours and find out how many weird and eccentric ideas you have in there..." Young Royal Prince, was it really okay for you to say such scary things with such an admiring tone?

Yu Xiaocao immediately covered her head with one of her hands and pretended to panic, "You're not allowed to open it up! If you don't open up my head, you still have the opportunity to find out what else I know. However, if you open it, then the only thing you'll see is the whitish-gray color of my brains..."

Zhu Junyang wasn't unfamiliar with bloodshed. In the time period before he was able to control himself, he had an explosive temper and had ended up hurting a lot of people. However, those people all deserved the pain! Regardless, he had seen the aftermath of his violence before. Whenever he thought of that happening to this odd yet lively little girl in front of him, Zhu Junyang felt his heart ache in rejection!

"With this prince around, who would dare to harm you?!" A wave of brutality surfaced within Zhu Junyang's body and rushed out. His pair of icy eyes suddenly seemed to be overwhelmed by a sea of red. Next to him was his bodyguard of many years, Wu Deshun, and the other man's heart fell to the ground as he thought in despair, 'We're screwed! Master has lost control of his temper again! There are so many people on the street, who knows how many will be injured? Master only took me along today when he went out, but I'm not able to hold him back ah!!'

"Eh? Weren't you the one who said that you wanted to open up my skull ah? How come you suddenly forgot this?" Xiaocao's voice was as clear as a raindrop, and it managed to pour into Zhu Junyang's consciousness. In an instant, the rage building inside of him was washed away into smoke.

Her heavenly voice caressed him and pulled Zhu Junyang's reason back into the forefront. Reason gradually returned into his eyes and the smell of brutality emanating from his body gradually dissipated into mist. Wu Deshun was astonished and his mouth fell open until it could hold two chicken eggs, 'Oh my god! Master was somehow able to control himself! I have never seen something like this before, where he was able to pull himself back from the abyss! This...could this be related to the little girl in front of me?'

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Wu Deshun knew who Miss Yu was. She was an ordinary little girl from a farming family and had a good hand at cooking. She was a bit more bold than other little girls and also more clever. Nothing more than that...and that was his previous impression of her. Now, he saw her in a completely different light. With one sentence, the little girl had the ability to bring his master back from the depths of brutality back into reason. This was something that only her royal highness, the princess consort, was capable of! Perhaps, that little girl had a special place in his master's heart? A place that almost came up to the princess consort's?

As soon as that thought popped up, Wu Deshun felt horrified! His master had only seen this little girl a couple of times before, right? Could it be the legendary 'love at first sight'? That couldn't be true. The little girl only looked around ten years of age. Could his master possibly have tastes that ran towards the youthful??

As for Yu Xiaocao, she was actually not as serene and ignorant as she seemed on the outside. Her heart was thumping in her chest as if it was about to jump out. She had truly thought she was one step from losing her life in that earlier scenario. The murderous aura that came out of the young royal prince seemed like an implacable wave, one that she could instantly drown in. His bloodshot eyes didn't look like eyes that belonged to a human. They more closely resembled the eyes of a savage beast!

Regardless, she wasn't a true ten year old girl. Her previous life had been hard and she was well versed at dealing with difficult situations. Thus, she knew that it was important to stay calm and cool. During that instant when everything was about to suffocate her, she battled fiercely to keep her voice as natural as possible. She did so because she had a hazy feeling that the sound of her voice had the ability to placate a person's heart. Luckily, she had gambled correctly and managed to save not only her own life but also all of the lives of the people around them!

That pair of fierce eyes, which still faintly emitted a crazed aura, fixedly stared at Xiaocao's slightly wan little face. Drops of sweat bloomed onto his forehead. Had he almost lost control of himself in front of her? He truly didn't want to hurt her yet the opposite effect had occurred.

He did his best to recall what had happened in those moments when he was about to lose control. He had always thought that ability of his, the one that he detested bitterly yet had no choice but to accept, shouldn't be allowed in this world. Perhaps he was wrong, perhaps the thing that shouldn't exist in this world was himself? The more he tried to become closer to a person, the easier it would be for him to hurt that person. That little girl had given him moments of light and freedom, and he didn't want to destroy her in a pique of insanity. Perhaps the right choice would be to stay far away from her!

Zhu Junyang hadn't yet realized that he had finally found another person that he wanted to protect, other than his parents and his siblings. Perhaps his heart, which didn't know what love was, only wanted to protect that girl who was so precious and sincere...

Wu Deshun noticed that his master wasn't speaking, so he secretly wiped his forehead that was crowded with sweat. He whispered, "Miss Yu, my master was only joking with you earlier..."

Eh? Such a grim and unfeeling master could actually crack a joke? That seemed...not right!

"You...should quickly leave!" Zhu Junyang reinstated his usual cold and apathetic demeanor. His icy eyes didn't dare to look towards that other pair of clear, limpid eyes that seemed to see right through a person's soul.

Yu Xiaocao lightly curled her lips as she thought, 'Even if you didn't try to shoo me away, I would still gladly leave now! With that unpredictable temper of yours, the more time I spend with you, the more likely I'll get hurt! This little baby was truly scared to death earlier!!'

"Alright! I still need to cook some medicinal cuisine for my godmother, so I'll take my leave now! Feel free to shop around." Yu Xiaocao did her best to keep a natural looking smile on her face as she lightly conversed with the young royal prince before she left. Although her movements looked unhurried, she was actually thinking, 'I need to get away from this crazy dinosaur!'

Zhu Junyang watched as that slight figure on a tiny horse slowly disappeared into the distance. His heart felt as if it had a hole in it, and he wasn't quite sure why he was feeling so irritable. Once his uneasy emotions surfaced again, Zhu Junyang didn't dare to spend any more time on the streets and went directly back to the residence.

That night, Princess Consort Jing found out what had happened from Wu Deshun. Her youngest son had almost lost control of himself on the streets. She felt both anxious and joyful at the same time. When she found out that Yu Xiaocao was able to calm her son down from the brink of snapping with a single sentence, her hands suddenly froze.

In these past ten years, she was well aware of what her youngest son was like when he lost control of himself and fell into the influence of negative emotions. Other than herself, no one else had the ability to bring him back into reason.

Ever since her youngest son started studying martial arts with the estate's private tutor, he progressed quickly. Zhu Junyang had a natural talent for this and also had Steward Liu privately instructing him as well. By the time he was twelve to thirteen years old, he was able to fight a match with his martial arts teacher, who was going all out, and let it go to a draw.

Since he was such an expert, whenever he lost control, he would naturally cause rivers of blood to flow. Although all of the people Zhu Junyang harmed deserved it in his eyes as they all harbored bad intentions, no one else knew that. If it wasn't for the people in Prince Jing's Estate doing everything they could to suppress the rumors, his bad reputation for being indiscriminately violent would have long spread throughout the capital. However, there weren't any walls in this world that didn't let in wind. She really didn't know what sort of consequences her son would face once one of these situations became known to the public.

Her youngest son was almost seventeen years old, so he was already at the age to talk about engagement and marriage. She had her eyes on a couple of well-bred maidens in the capital, but she truly didn't dare to suggest a marriage with any of their families. It was because her youngest son's temper was like a bomb that was about to explode at any time. As his mother, she also couldn't stay by his side all the time, what if...she didn't even want to contemplate what might happen!

In addition, her youngest son didn't seem to be very interested in any of the eligible young women in the capital. Some of the bolder maidens have tried to get closer to him, but he never seemed to have a stable mood at those times. If this continued, what could be done? Zhu Junyang's future marriage prospects was a problem that truly worried Princess Consort Jing a lot!

However, today she had heard from one of her son's personal bodyguards that the Yu Family's young girl was able to bring her youngest son back to reason with one sentence. Princess Consort Jing's eyes lit up. It was as if she was someone who had previously lost her way in a maze but now knew which direction to go.

The Yu Family's daughter eh? Uh huh! That little girl was quite likeable! Although she was born in a farmer's family, she didn't have the airs and pettiness of someone from a lowly birth. When she was interacting with her, the little girl was neither servile nor overbearing. Her manner was naturally cordial and made people feel comfortable. She was also talented at cooking medicinal cuisine...the most important part was that she was able to calm her youngest son down! The more Princess Consort Jing thought the more she thought that the little girl was the perfect person to become her son's future wife.

What about her status? That absolutely wasn't a problem!! Prince Jing's Estate wasn't a family that was mired in tradition and insisted on a bride with a high position!! That being said, wasn't the little girl the adopted daughter of General Fang? The emperor himself highly trusted and valued General Fang. Once construction on the Tanggu Harbor was finished, General Fang was naturally going to get a promotion. Then that little girl would also have her status rise. She would become the daughter of a third ranked official. In the eyes of outsiders, that was more than enough to match with her son, and it would actually be a very good match!

What about age? A man being five to six years older than his wife wasn't considered outrageous, right? There were couples in the capital that had a twenty to thirty year gap between the man and woman! Furthermore, wasn't General Fang almost ten years older than his wife ah? The two of them had a great relationship and were a loving couple envied by many people. That being said, having the man being older was a good thing; he would know how to take care of his wife then!

However, the little girl was only ten years old right now. If her son wanted to bring this bride back, he would have to wait a few more years. Waiting was fine. As long as he had a goal, it was still much better than waiting around with no goal and despairing!

Now that she had a solution to her youngest son's marriage problems, Princess Consort Jing felt as if a weight had fallen off her shoulders. She felt giddy and light inside. She didn't worry about whether these two had any feelings for each other! She knew her son's personality. If he really didn't care about that little girl, why would he snap back into reason after hearing one sentence from her?

As for whether Yu Xiaocao wanted to marry her son, Princess Consort Jing also didn't think this was a big problem. Familiarity bred fondness. In the future, she was going to create more opportunities for them to meet more frequently. Her son's looks were similar to hers, so he was quite handsome ah! She was quite convinced that there wasn't anyone in this world who could resist such a stunningly handsome face!

Your Highness, was this called self confidence or narcissism?

Before Princess Consort Jing could make an opportunity for her youngest son to meet the little girl again, Zhu Junyang sped back to the capital with a few of his bodyguards. He had neglected his duties back at the capital in order to take a break to visit his lady mother. If a resolute person wanted to take ahold of this, then he would be in a lot of trouble. Even being a relative to the emperor might not save him from something like that.

Luckily, his trip to Tanggu Town wasn't without any progress. The Yu Family's astonishing ability to grow the new plants was more than enough to get him out of this problem. Zhu Junyang lowered his head to look at the corn seedling that was wrapped with some cloth at the bottom of its roots. He had taken this from the Yu Family's fields. When that little girl found out that he was bringing it back to the capital, she especially gave him a bottle of water and reminded him repeatedly to water the roots with a few drops from time to time. This was to avoid the corn seedling from dying of thirst.

Zhu Junyang couldn't help but smile whenever he remembered that little girl reminding him. She had such an adult expression on her tiny little face. Eh? Why was he thinking about that little girl again? Didn't he already make a decision to stay far away from her and that the best thing to do was to stop thinking about her too? Zhu Junyang frowned fiercely. What was going on with his emotions?

Since he was afraid that the corn seedling wouldn't survive the journey, Zhu Junyang spent all of his time traveling, eating and resting on the road. The route that usually took three days to complete ended up only taking them less than two days. He had just gotten back home, washed up, and changed when the emperor summoned him to the palace.

Inside the imperial study, Jianwen Emperor pointed at the table full of notebooks accusing the royal prince for misconduct. A faint smile was on the emperor's face as he remarked, "Junyang ah, look at this! It hasn't been half a month and you've already caused this much trouble for me! Some of these are accusing you of taking advantage of my favor while others are accusing you of neglecting your duty. A few even accuse you of not regarding me, the emperor, with respect...do you have an explanation for me?"

Zhu Junyang didn't feel any displeasure coming off of the emperor. He calmly looked around the imperial study. Among the few trusted aids and officials was the Minister of Revenue, who looked quite worried. Zhu Junyang stayed expressionless within this atmosphere that smelled faintly of malice. He placed the flower pot within his hands lightly on the table in front of the emperor.

The emperor looked at the vigorous plant within the pot and then cracked a joke, "What is this? Are you giving me a present in front of all of these officials? And in such a grandiose and confident manner? I don't think there's another person as bold as you, Zhu Junyang. If you want to bribe us, then you need to tell us just what this precious plant is, right?"

"Corn!" Zhu Junyang cherished each word that came out of his mouth like it was worth gold. His love of silence really made the emperor want to smack him a few times. Do you dare to say this even more abruptly?

The Minister of Revenue's eyes lit up and he scurried closer to look at the plant carefully, "Royal Prince Yang, are you saying that this stalk is a corn seedling? Prince Yang, you were able to plant and grow corn?"

The few plots of land that were set aside on the imperial farms did not have their experiments go well. In some of the plots, the corn seedlings grew sparsely and were quite fragmented. Those fields had a very low yield. The other plots of land produced plenty of corn seedlings, but they weren't vibrant and lively. All of them were yellowing as if they didn't get enough nutrition. Some of the more experienced farmers sighed when they saw this and then said that it looked as if they might not even produce enough corn to get the seeds they used back.

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The emperor himself had said that corn was a high-yielding crop that wasn't picky about the type of land it was planted in. But how come when it was put into the Ministry of Revenue hands, they couldn't even grow enough to return the seeds they spent? All of the officials had fretted non-stop throughout this past half a month. The minister himself felt like more than half of his hair had gone white from worry!

The emperor cared about the country and its people. He especially cared about the people's livelihoods. If the high-yielding crop, corn, was ruined in their hands, then they didn't know if they could still keep the officials' hats on their heads!

Today, the Minister of Revenue had finally seen hope in the form of one stalk of corn. Although it was only a single stalk, it had a healthy vibrant green color and was growing very vigorously in the pot. Apparently it wasn't because corn couldn't be grown in their country; it was because they were using the wrong methods!

"Royal Prince Yang, may I ask you how you planted this stalk of corn?" All of the resentment the Minister of Revenue had towards Prince Yang momentarily disappeared into thin air.

An old man in his fifties, who had wrinkles all over his face, was staring avidly and adoringly at Royal Prince Yang. If the youth didn't have a strong heart, then he would probably have nightmares later on that night!

He shifted slightly to the side and glanced at an official who emitted waves of malice—this was Imperial Censor Yang. Zhu Junyang wondered idly when he had offended this censor with an iron face. He didn't think he had beaten up this man's son before, right?

"Royal Prince Yang, this corn seedling looks quite healthy. Looks like a lot of effort has been put in, right?" The person who had just spoken was the Left Commander-in-chief Du. He had a decent relationship with Prince Jing.

Zhu Junyang looked at his older cousin, the emperor, who was sitting behind the notebooks criticizing him and was avidly watching this entire scene. The youth replied with an expressionless face, "In reply to Your Imperial Majesty, this stalk of corn wasn't actually planted by me. As for the methods used, this official only knows a little."

"Eh? It wasn't planted by you? Then where did this stalk come from? Don't tell us that this stalk came from a kernel that had inadvertently fallen to the ground, germinated, and grown ah!" The Jianwen Emperor, Zhu Junfan, raised an eyebrow and switched out the hand that was cradling his chin as he looked at his cousin with eyes sparkling with excitement.

His little younger male cousin had always seemed like a tiny adult since he was a child. His face was always serious and unexpectedly always had a distant expression on it. Who knew that his youthful good looks combined with his constipated expression would give off a slightly adorable impression. Zhu Junfan was older than his cousin by almost ten years, so he had loved teasing him since he was young. Being able to see his cousin's angry and also 'I'm not lowering myself to your level' facial expressions was truly too funny and interesting!

Zhu Junyang had long gotten accustomed to the emperor's odd idea of fun, so he knew how to handle him. He replied in an icy tone, "At the docks, I met a little girl from a farming family and gave her family some seeds to let them experiment. This corn was planted by that girl's farming family!"

"A girl from a farming family? How old is she? Is she beautiful?" Zhu Junfan's eyes abruptly lit up. His little cousin had plenty of admirers in the capital due to his remarkable looks. However, he was as slow

as a block of wood and didn't understand the fairer sex. No matter who he was interacting with, he would always regard them with that cold and detached expression. Who knew how many fair maidens had gotten their hearts broken by him! This guy had unexpectedly paid attention to a girl from a farming family and even gave her a gift. Did springtime finally come for his cousin?

'Emperor, we're discussing official business right now. Why does it look like you're more interested in gossiping, just what are your intentions?' Zhu Junyang's eyebrows slowly went up his face as he stiffly said, "In reply to Your Imperial Majesty, that girl from a farming family has not yet reached the age of ten. As for whether she's beautiful or not...this official doesn't know what standards you are using to determine beauty!"

'She's not yet ten?? Who would have thought that his younger cousin had pedo urges ah!!' The emperor rubbed his chin somewhat wretchedly and continued, "My standard of beauty? As long as you don't think she's ugly or irksome, that's considered beautiful!"

The image of that tender little face, dark and lively huge eyes, a petal of a mouth that liked to smile, and her bevy expressions that drew a person's eyes suddenly came to his mind. Zhu Junyang's icy cold look became gentle as he nodded his head, "Neither ugly nor irksome!"

The Minister of Revenue became anxious the more the emperor went off topic! He rubbed his hands incessantly and he finally couldn't help but interrupt the conversation, "Royal Prince Yang, this corn was planted by that girl's farming family?"

Zhu Junyang didn't have any ill will towards Minister Liu, who was only trying with all his heart to complete their task. He looked at the other man in the eye and nodded, "This girl's farming family is famous in the area for being experts at growing plants. The family's vegetables are all ripe out of season, so they sell it ahead of the other farmers! At this time, their family's watermelons are also ripe and they even taste better than the ones found in the capital! This time when this official went to Tanggu Town, I also wanted to find out if this family was able to grow the corn that we've had so much trouble with. Sure enough, they didn't disappoint this official..."

'Eh? There must be something...going on.' His younger cousin, who usually regarded his words as if they were gold, unexpectedly was quite talkative when he was describing the little farmer's girl! (Zhu Junyang's thoughts: Emperor, how come you only selectively hear me talking about that little girl? This official is obviously describing how her family knows how to raise crops!)

'That can't be right!' Springtime in the northern parts of the country was on the colder side. At the beginning of spring, there was still frost early in the morning and late at night, how could they possibly be able to grow green vegetables? As for watermelons, weren't they a summer crop? It was barely the middle of spring, yet their watermelons were already ripe...perhaps, the little farmer girl's family had someone who had transmigrated over and knew how to craft greenhouse-like canopies? That can't be right either! This era currently didn't have any plastics technology, how could they make a canopy? Perhaps, the little farmer girl's family had someone who had a special magical space where they could plant crops? Didn't the novels frequently write that transmigrators often had these magical spaces when they crossed over ah?!

Zhu Junfan firmly believed that there were definitely other people besides himself and his imperial grandfather who transmigrated over to this world. He had always kept an eye out and looked for other transmigrators like him. Did he finally find one?

"Junyang ah, who in that little girl's family is better at planting things? How could they possibly make plants grow and ripen out of season?" Zhu Junfan was in good spirits, so he asked for more details.

Zhu Junyang thought for a bit. Yu Xiaocao was able to recognize corn in a glance and even knew the method to plant it. There were two possibilities. The first was that she had already seen corn before. The second was that she was somehow similar to his older cousin, the emperor, and knew of the existence of corn despite no one else in the country knowing about it! Xiaocao also apparently didn't want the emperor to find out that there was something different about her. Although he wasn't sure why, he also didn't want the emperor to become interested in the little girl. He shook his head, "This official also doesn't know the answer. I only know that the little farming girl's family's vegetables are all taken care of by her mother, whereas she takes care of the watermelons along with her father."

"Ehh? Junyang, you seem to know quite an amount of details regarding her family's circumstances!" His younger cousin was the type of youth who turned a blind eye to the number one beauty in the capital, yet he knew so much about this little farming girl. If people claimed that there wasn't more to the story, even a fool wouldn't believe that!

Zhu Junyang nodded his head confidently, "That little farming girl is also the adopted daughter of General Fang! When Lady Fang was in Tanggu Town, she often spent time chatting with my lady mother."

Although Zhu Junyang's words provided a reason as to why he knew so much about this girl's family, Zhu Junfan still felt that his younger cousin had a different type of attitude towards her. However, feelings and emotions weren't something that could be rushed. That little girl was only ten years old. Judging

from his younger cousin's expression, he was pretty sure that he was still far from coming to a conclusion. 'Take your time, everything will become clear in the future!'

"Emperor, this official would like to go to Tanggu Town, I ask Your Imperial Majesty for permission!" Minister Liu couldn't be patient anymore and immediately kneeled down in front of the table. Someone was able to grow corn and do it extremely well. Minister Liu wished beyond reason that he could grow a pair of wings right now and fly to that person. He needed to figure out the right method to plant corn and write down all of the details!

Everyone had to admit that Minister Liu was truly an official who cared about the country and its people. He was the type of man who would never give up to complete his goal of bettering the world.

"Minister Liu, are you trying to steal this task away from me?" For some reason, Zhu Junyang didn't want Minister Liu to go there. He wasn't sure why he felt this way, but he thought it was because if the other man went, he would be taking the task away from him. That wouldn't do! He finally had a good excuse to go to Tanggu Town to accompany his lady mother, he absolutely could not allow the other man to steal this away from him!

There was another secret hidden within a corner of his heart; a secret that even he himself wasn't aware of just yet—if he continued to have this task, then he would be able to spend more time with her under a proper excuse.

Psh! Didn't you say that you were going to stay far away from her? The mind and the heart often had opposing desires, wasn't that right?

Minister Liu let out a flabbergasted noise for a while before he finally spoke, "Royal Prince Yang, this old official isn't trying to steal your glory. I merely want to find out the proper method of planting corn as soon as possible..."

"Enough! You two can stop bickering!! Minister Liu, we know that you only have the people's best interest in your heart. However, this task was originally given to Royal Prince Yang to finish. The little girl and her entire family are also more familiar with him, so it's still better to leave the task to him."

Since his younger cousin was interested in the girl, Zhu Junfan naturally had to create some opportunity for him ah! There was a common saying: 'familiarity breeds fondness'. The more time his younger cousin

could spend with the girl, the more he'll understand the emotions of his heart. However, that little girl was really too young right now. His younger cousin had to wait at least five to six years before he could do anything! He had to wait! Emperor, was it really alright for you to take pleasure in your younger cousin's conundrum?

Minister Liu felt as if there was a cat scratching at his insides. He truly wanted to see with his own eyes how corn was grown. He stubbornly continued to ask for permission, "Emperor, please give permissions for this official to go along with Royal Prince Yang when he next travels to Tanggu Town!"

"Alright! Permission granted!!" Zhu Junfan had a good understanding of the Minister of Revenue's stubborn personality. If he didn't let him go, the old man might become so anxious that he became ill. The fact that Minister Liu was very meticulous in his duties wasn't a bad thing!

The corn that Zhu Junyang brought back from Tanggu Town was a potent weapon against the officials who accused him of misconduct—this prince wasn't neglecting his duty to see his lady mother, this prince was managing official business! This prince only went to Tanggu Town to figure out the method of planting corn, being able to see my lady mother was only just a perk, that's all...

Royal Prince Yang, don't you feel even the tiniest bit ashamed for telling such a lie?!

Just as Zhu Junyang was about to leave the imperial study, his older cousin, the emperor, suddenly interjected, "Junyang ah! Didn't you mention that the little farming girl's watermelons are ripe now? Did you bring any back?"

Zhu Junyang and all of the other officials within the study felt like there were black lines on their foreheads: Emperor, was it really alright for you to overtly demand goods from your officials?

Zhu Junyang glanced down and sternly said, "This official rushed back here as fast as I could, so I naturally couldn't bring much over. The bodyguards who are still on the road will bring some watermelons over. Once the melons enter the capital, this official will personally send some over to you."

It was okay to wait a couple more days as long as he got watermelon to eat! Zhu Junfan grinned contently and then waved a hand, hinting that the prince could leave now.

As he left the imperial palace, Zhu Junyang had a stormy expression on his face which made people want to stay away from him. Naturally, none of the other officials wanted to try their luck. However, Minister Liu could not be considered a man who went with the crowd. He scampered over and inquired, "Royal Prince Yang, were you telling the truth when you said that the family grows vegetables at the start of spring and watermelons that can be eaten now?"

"Who would dare to lie in front of the emperor? Deceiving the monarch is a serious crime!" Zhu Junyang snarled back in a bad temper.

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Minister Liu still tactlessly continued, "When the watermelons get there, could you possibly give this old man one? Don't misunderstand me, this old man isn't asking for one because I want to eat it. I want to research it a bit, find out how just how exactly they're able to ripen watermelons out of season. Could it be a new breed..."

Under the barrage of Minister Liu's questions, Zhu Junyang started to feel a bit impatient. He wrinkled his good looking eyebrows and glared at the man before he said, "Won't all of these questions of yours be answered when you arrive at Tanggu Town and meet the Yu Family?"

After finishing, he turned around and only let Minister Liu see a tall straight back. If it was any other person on the receiving end of this, that person would have hated the prince. However, Minister Liu reacted differently. He patted his hat as if he suddenly realized something and muttered to himself, "I was being too literal! You are right, Royal Prince Yang. Once I get to Tanggu Town, won't I know everything?"

The Left Commander in Chief, Official Du, guffawed and said, "Congratulations, Official Liu. You have finally solved a big problem. Let's go and drink a couple cups of wine tonight?"

"Another day ah, this old man needs to go back and organize some questions I have regarding planting crops. When the moment comes, the Yu Family might be able to help this old man figure out some other problems ah! Sure enough, the emperor is truly right—all of the experts are hidden within the people ah!" Minister Liu wiped away the worries from the past dozen days and grinned as he smoothed his beard. He then clasped his hands behind his back and strolled towards the exit of the palace.

Official Du looked at his slowly disappearing back and chuckled as he shook his head. Imperial Censor Yang, on the other hand, lowered his head and walked out, keeping his thoughts close to himself.

The next day, the watermelons that Zhu Junyang had used a piece of mutton-fat jade to buy had finally arrived in the capital. He fulfilled his promise and first went into the imperial palace to present six large watermelons. His older cousin, who had just received a big bonus and had a shameless personality, tsked his tongue when he saw them, "I'll say, Junyang ah, you transported a large cart of watermelons, but you only give us six of them. You're really too stingy, eh?"

The muscles on Zhu Junyang's face twitched as he complained inside, 'You think that's too little? Then don't ask for any ah! If you want more, then you can send people out to buy more ah! It's not like you're lacking for money!'

"Zhu Junyang ah! Is that new store, Treasure Pavillion, opened by you? Some of the imperial censors are accusing you of abusing your position for personal gain. They claim that when you went out to sea to help us find the new crops, you also smuggled a lot of treasures from the distant lands. What do you think about that, eh?" Zhu Junfan had one of his personal eunuchs cut one of the watermelons into pieces. When he saw that the watermelon looked exactly the same as the ones in his previous life, Zhu Junfan felt so moved that he almost cried crocodile tears.

The watermelons of this world were just too crappy. Although they were sweet and their taste wasn't too inferior compared to the ones in his previous life, they were truly too small. The amount of edible red pulp in these watermelons were quite little as the inside flesh was criss-crossed with red and white flesh. It made him, a person who was somewhat obsessive-compulsive, feel uncomfortable whenever he looked at the insides of a watermelon. To him, a watermelon should only look like the ones in front of him: full of delicious red pulp and black seeds ah!

Before his cousin could reply, the emperor picked up a piece and crudely took a large bite. Immediately his mouth was filled with sweet, fresh juice that cooled his body. For a moment, it allowed him to fall into his previous life's memories and reminiscence fondly.

In his past life, he was the epitome of a science and engineering man. His looks were nothing special and he wore a pair of glasses with very thick lenses. His major was shipbuilding at the time and, after he graduated, he found a job that paid him enough that he wouldn't starve but also not enough to become rich on. By the time he was in his thirties, he still didn't have a girlfriend. Unexpectedly, an accident occurred when he was testing one of the ships and he ended up transmigrating over into this world, becoming the grandson of an emperor.

Even more fantastical was that his imperial grandfather was also a transmigrator. In fact, prior to coming over, his 'grandfather' was also a great and well-known commanding officer of a military command in his country. His imperial grandfather had replaced the original Zhu Yuanzhang and overthrew the previous Yuan Dynasty in this world. As a funny joke, he decided to call this dynasty the 'Great Ming Dynasty' and also claimed that his surname was Zhu because he 'didn't want to change history'. However, the old man didn't think about the fact that by transmigrating over he had already changed history, right?

Huh? Somehow his thoughts had gotten quite sidetracked! This watermelon's taste was quite delicious!! The person who planted this watermelon was likely someone who had transmigrated over from his old world ah! Then how should he reward him (her)?

“Emperor, this official doesn't believe that I was taking advantage of my position for my personal gain! Did Your Imperial Majesty forget the words you told me before I went out to sea?” Zhu Junyang's intuition told him that the person who was accusing him of misconduct was likely Imperial Censor Yang. He frowned and didn't bother trying to explain too much.

Prior to the start of his journey to the west, the emperor had personally promised that, other than the goods he specifically wanted, everything else would be considered his own! All of the money that was used to buy these goods from overseas had also come from Zhu Junyang's personal purse. He only bought the items that caught his eye. How did that become taking advantage of his position for his own personal gain?

Zhu Junfan naturally wouldn't forget what he had previously said. However, these words were only said privately between the two of them, so no one else knew. Treasure Pavillion's goods were not only novel but also expensive. Thus, it had attracted quite a lot of business. No wonder there were some people who were jealous and coveted it.

“Let's not talk about that anymore! Tell us more about that little farming girl's family's affairs. Has there been anyone in her family who has almost walked into the gates of hell, survived the catastrophe, and then ended up with a vastly different personality?” As long as the person didn't transmigrate into an infant, transmigration would always leave some clues. Which member of the Yu Family was his old transmigrator friend?

Zhu Junyang thought for a bit before he stated, “One could say that the Yu Family are people fated to have trouble and misfortune in their lives. Before they split from the main family, they were abused by their respective stepmother/step-grandmother. Xiaocao and her mother have always had poor constitutions. Xiaocao's father had been savaged by a bear when he was hunting in the mountains and almost died! Luckily, after they split from the family, they managed to stabilize their situation through

their own hard work. If I had to guess who had a big personality change, Xiaocao's father is no longer unquestioningly filial to his stepmother. Does that count?"

'Could Xiaocao's father possibly be my fellow transmigrator? To be able to grow crops so well, was he possibly a farmer in his past life? Wait, my younger cousin doesn't seem like his usual taciturn self when he was talking about this little farming girl's family ah! He had only been in Tanggu Town for a few days yet he knew almost everything about this girl's family. Even if someone claimed that this wasn't fishy, no one would believe that person!'

"Junyang ah, you know quite a lot about this Yu Family!" Zhu Junfan didn't forget to make fun of his younger cousin as he continued to eat watermelon.

Zhu Junyang was about to explain when a flutter of footsteps interrupted him. Shortly thereafter, a young and childish voice spoke, "Imperial Father, Imperial Father, what are you eating?"

Right after that, a tiny little figure dashed through a cluster of flowers and climbed up the tall steps with great effort, his little legs pumping. The child rushed into the octagonal shaped pavilion and hugged Zhu Junfan's leg. A closer look revealed that this was the eldest imperial prince who had just reached the age of three.

"Where are your manners? Did you greet your imperial father properly?" Soon after, the eldest prince's mother—Her Imperial Majesty, the empress, came in. Her voice held a bit of a gentle rebuke in it.

The eldest prince, who had already climbed up onto his imperial father's knees, was staring at the watermelon on the table with large, blinking eyes. He softly said, "Greetings Imperial Father. Imperial Father, you have worked hard—Imperial Father, what is this? Does it taste good?"

Last summer, the little fellow was quite young. Watermelons were a type of cold food, so the empress didn't dare to give him any to eat. This was also the reason why he didn't know what watermelons were.

"This is a watermelon. Your royal uncle brought it back from Tanggu Town! Do you want to try some?" Zhu Junfan believed that he was a compassionate father as could be seen by the fact the little boy automatically climbed up onto his knees. In his eyes, the ancient people's thinking of 'hugging the grandson but not hugging the son' was complete nonsense! When he saw his son's pitiful look towards the watermelon, his heart softened unconsciously.

Currently, it was the end of spring and it was still a bit chilly in the early morning and evening. The empress hurriedly interjected, "Emperor, Wen'er is still young and his digestive system is still weak. I'm afraid it's not good for him to eat cold foods..."

Zhu Hanwen was afraid that his imperial father would be persuaded by his imperial mother's words, so he hastily acted spoiled, "Imperial Father, Wen'er only wants to try one small bite, just one bite...Wen'er is already three yet I haven't tried any watermelon before. Wen'er is so pitiful..."

Zhu Junfan found himself immensely entertained by his antics and pinched the little boy's face. He looked at the empress and laughed, "Where did this little fellow learn this from? He even knows how to act pitiful to get sympathy!"

The empress replied with a helpless expression on her face, "I also don't know where he learned this. In the past, I've never seen him act like this before!"

"Such a clever little fellow! Takes after his imperial father, me!" Zhu Junfan used a small knife to take off a piece of watermelon that was the size of a person's thumb and then put it next to his son's mouth. He repeatedly warned, "Let it sit in your mouth for a bit. Once it's warm, then you can swallow it. You can only have one piece. If you eat too much and end up with diarrhea, then you won't be able to eat watermelon in the future!"

Zhu Hanwen cleverly nodded his head and opened his mouth wide to allow his imperial father to deliver the watermelon inside. He obediently let it sit in his mouth while the tip of his tongue came out to enjoy the sweet taste. It made him so happy that he closed his eyes in pleasure.

The little fellow held the watermelon in his mouth for a long time before he finally slowly chewed and swallowed it. He couldn't help but praise the melon, "Imperial Father, watermelon is so delicious. Wen'er wants to eat more, what should I do?"

Zhu Junfan was a person who stuck to his words. He shook his head and stated, "Today, you can only have one bite. Didn't I just say that earlier?"

Zhu Hanwen didn't make a fuss and nodded his head obediently. After all, he was still a child, so he still stared at the watermelon on the table. He carefully asked, "Then...can Wen'er eat another bite tomorrow?"

Zhu Junfan pinched his little nose and chuckled, “Wen'er is such a good boy. As a reward, tomorrow you can also have another bite of watermelon!”

“Okay! Thank you Imperial Father, you are too good to me! Wen'er loves you very much...” In front of his enlightened father, Zhu Hanwen became a lot more vivacious. Compared to his imperial mother, who restricted him at every turn, he liked his imperial father much more.

Zhu Junyang watched from the side and observed the warm family reactions between the three of them. Suddenly, his thoughts wandered back to that little village near Tanggu Town, the simple and crude looking stone table, the delicious food, and the loving and warm household...if his life could be that simple and pure, he would gladly abandon everything he had now for that.

Other than sending some watermelon to the imperial palace, Zhu Junyang gave the rest of the watermelons to his lord father. He had never been the type of person to utilize human emotions and connections to his advantage. All of the families who had good relationships with Prince Jing's Estate were all given a present from them—two large and round watermelons. Among the people who received them was the Left Commander-in-chief, Lord Du, who had spoken up for Zhu Junyang in the imperial study.

Minister Liu had also received the gift from Prince Jing's Estate, and these watermelons were especially picked out by Zhu Junyang himself. Minister Liu's whole family ate the stunningly sweet watermelon. All of them were flabbergasted that their father (husband), who normally never tried to toady himself up, somehow had a good relationship with Prince Jing. Did he finally see the light and understand the way the world worked after spending decades as an official?

Zhu Junyang stayed in the capital for two more days before he finally received imperial orders to leave. Minister Liu from the Ministry of Revenue had already impatiently arranged everything and was merely waiting to leave the capital.

Because they had a court official with them who didn't know how to ride a horse, it took the group of them three whole days to get to Tanggu Town.

When they entered Tanggu Town, Zhu Junyang threw Minister Liu into the hands of the county magistrate of Tanggu Town to entertain. He himself returned to his mother's manor in the town.

Princess Consort Jing, who was in the garden admiring flowers, pretended to be weak and ailing as soon as her people told her that her youngest son had arrived. She pasted on a worried expression on her face. Meixiang, who had stepped out to steep some flower-scented tea, noticed her mistress's obvious change when she came back. She was quite puzzled, 'She was doing fine just earlier, why did she suddenly become so different now?'

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She raised her head and saw the young master coming over. Realization immediately struck her—the princess consort must have another devious plan, for some reason, to torment the young royal prince.

"This son greets Lady Mother! What part of Lady Mother's body is bothering you?" Zhu Junyang raised his eyes and immediately noticed that his mother looked ill and sickly, so he asked out of concern.

Princess Consort Jing hugged her chest and lightly shook her head, "Yang'er, don't worry. Mother isn't sick. However, I'm just not in a good mood!"

When Zhu Junyang previously stayed a few days in Tanggu Town, he had discovered that his lady mother's condition had really gotten better. Every day he and his second brother accompanied her, so his lady mother was very happy and full of smiles. He was only gone for a few days; why did his lady mother look so ill and downtrodden again? Was it because she wanted to have him stay by her side and was pretending to be ill and sick again?

"Lady Mother, I'm here in Tanggu Town under imperial orders, so for the next few months I can stay in town with you. If you have become bored of staying here, then I, your son, can take you to the beach to watch the sunrise, go to Dongshan Village to look at the construction progress of our villa on the West Mountain, or, if your body is up for it, I can also take you hunting in the West Mountain to let you relieve your mood?" Zhu Junyang cared deeply for his mother, who had given him her entire heart and soul.

Princess Consort Jing's eyes immediately lit up and she almost forgot to continue her act of being a worried mother. She happily asked, "Really? You can spend a long time in Tanggu Town now?"

When Zhu Junyang nodded in assent, Princess Consort Jing suddenly remembered her mission of the day. She retracted the smile on her face and then wailed and signed over a wilting camellia by her side.

Zhu Junyang now knew why his lady mother was unhappy. Apparently, his mother had, once again, almost destroyed another valuable camellia. His lady mother didn't have any talent in raising flowers, yet she still insisted on having his lord father help her find valuable plants and flowers for her to look after. However, every single plant that she personally took care of had the exact same outcome—death. Even the most experienced gardeners couldn't bring dead flora back to life. For the sake of her treasured flowers, his lady mother had shed many tears when they inevitably died. Apparently, his lady mother's favorite camellias also didn't escape her curse.

"Lady Mother, don't feel sad. I will have people help you find some more valuable camellias..." Zhu Junyang stooped down to look at those camellia plants. One of them looked in quite bad condition as its leaves were mostly dried up and yellow. He wasn't sure whether the others were still savable.

Princess Consort Jing let out another sigh, "These camellias were all given to me from Xiaocao, who found them in some ravine or valley of the dangerous West Mountains. I am truly a murderer of plants. I even managed to harm these wild and tenacious camellias...oh right, Xiaocao had once said that if these camellias fell ill, I could find her to help. Yang'er, these camellias are my treasures. Go to the Fang Estate and invite Xiaocao back to help me look at them. Perhaps they can be saved."

'Camellias are your treasure, so what does that make your son ah?' The corners of Zhu Junyang's mouth twitched as he recalled what his mother had said when she was trying to stop him from going out to sea. She repeatedly nagged and stated that he was her treasure, her darling baby, and he couldn't have any accidents befall him. At the time, those words sounded a bit corny, but now, when did his status within his mother's heart had become lower than some camellia plants?

The sight of his mother's lowered head with tears spilling out made Zhu Junyang's heart soften. He repeatedly reassured her, "Lady Mother, don't feel sad. I will go invite Miss Xiaocao over now. Her family members are all experts are growing plants, so she might be able to save these plants. Just wait a moment, I will come back very quickly with her."

Only after Zhu Junyang left the garden did Princess Consort Jing lift her head. There wasn't a hint of worry or sadness on her face. 'Stupid brat, I even harmed my most cherished camellia flowers for the sake of creating a chance for you. Look at me working earnestly for your future ah! You must live up to my expectations by spending plenty of time with the little girl and gaining her good impression.'

However, she had to admit that the camellias Xiaocao gave her were truly quite tenacious. She had ignored them for several days, not giving them any water, yet they still looked lush and bloomed beautifully. It gave her no choice but to grit her teeth and pour some boiling hot tea on top of them...she wasn't sure if these valuable and lovely camellias were still able to be saved. She still wanted

to arrange a flower fair when she got back to capital and show these flowers off in front of that Lady Feng!

When Zhu Junyang arrived at the Fang Estate, Yu Xiaocao was right in the middle of playing with the newborn lying on the bed! The little fellow was only a couple weeks old yet his body was quite sturdy. When he was awake, he would always incessantly kick his legs to amuse himself. Occasionally, he'd even let out a few cries of happiness.

"Second Sister, Little Linlin is so plump and pudgy, which makes him look super cute. He also has a good temperament, not at all like Fatty's little sister, who cries all the time. She cries in the morning and cries at night. She cries if you hold her and cries if you don't. Fatty is so annoyed he could die, so he tries to stay as far as possible from her." Today was Little Shitou's regular break from school. He didn't go back to Dongshan Village and instead went to the Fang Residence to see his second sister and take a peek at the new baby.

The little baby's skin was very soft and his hands were tiny ah. He even had two tiny little dimples. His bright dark eyes were wide open, roaming around everywhere to look around. The baby was too adorable. Little Shitou was no longer the youngest in the family, and he felt a wave of brotherly feeling for the little fellow as he held the baby in the arms, reluctant to put him down.

Yu Xiaocao watched as her younger brother held onto her tiny baby brother and felt that the scene was bursting with cuteness ah! If she had a camera at this moment, she truly wanted to record the scene in front of her.

"Eldest Young Miss, Prince Jing's Estate's Third Young Master has come to pay a visit and asked to see you." The servant, Lingzhi, who came by to announce the visitor, was a maid that was arranged by Lady Fang to serve her adopted daughter. She was around twelve to thirteen years old in age. Although she wasn't very beautiful, she was quite clever.

'Prince Jing's Estate's Third Young Master? The young royal prince? Didn't he go back to the capital to report on his mission? When did he come back? Why did this guy come to find me instead of spending more time with Her Highness, the princess consort, in town?'

Yu Xiaocao ordered the wet nurse to keep a good eye on her two younger brothers and then went to her godmother's room to inform her. After passing through the alley next to the garden in full bloom, she arrived at the reception hall in the outer courtyard. When she entered, the first thing she saw was the young royal prince holding a cup of tea as he delicately sipped from it. It was as if he had a special

liking for the tea at the Fang Estate. The tea prepared for the outer courtyard also used spring water that had some added mystic-stone water to it. Naturally, the flavor of the tea brewed from this type of water tasted better than those brewed with plain water. Could this guy be here to bum tea off of her?

"I was unaware that you were coming over, Young Royal Prince. Please excuse me for not going out to meet you, I ask for forgiveness..." Why did the polite words that came out of Yu Xiaocao's mouth seemed to sound a bit off?

Zhu Junyang felt a bit upset at hearing these words. He placed down the tea cup and took a quick look at Yu Xiaocao. He noticed that she was wearing casual clothing, as if she didn't take him to be an outsider. Immediately, his mood brightened. He faintly said, "I'm here for official business of the emperor. This prince will be inspecting and observing the growth of corn. In the future, we will have many opportunities to meet face-to-face, there's no need to be so polite!"

'He's here on imperial orders? The emperor already knows that my family knows how to grow corn? Is it possible that the emperor now suspects me of being a transmigrator after getting some information from the young royal prince? I'm screwed. If I knew earlier that this would cause a problem, why would I even bother trying to grow corn or potatoes? I've walked into this trap myself!'

Yu Xiaocao cautiously asked, "The emperor? What did the emperor say? You didn't just repeat all of my boasts, word for word, to him, right?"

"Your boasts? What boasts?" Zhu Junyang seemed perplexed by her questions.

"That I knew the right method to grow corn ah! Young Royal Prince, just think a bit, this corn was brought back by you from overseas. Our country has never had such a plant before. This lowly commoner only thought that my family was a good hand at farming, so I bragged a bit. If you said all of that to the emperor, wouldn't the emperor accuse me of the crime of deceiving him ah?" Yu Xiaocao was afraid that her fellow transmigrator would easily crush her like an ant for the sake of preserving his power. What should she do? What's to be done?!!

Zhu Junyang noticed that her face had turned white from fright and that her pair of lively eyes were filled with fear and unease. He hurriedly comforted her, "Did you watch too many plays? Although you bragged quite a bit, you still managed to grow the corn, and even quite well. The emperor is very pleased! Don't worry, the emperor won't accuse you of the crime of deceiving him for such a small matter!"

"Young Royal Prince, what did you tell the emperor? Can you repeat it for me to hear?" Yu Xiaocao sat on a chair crafted of nanmu wood [1] and inquisitively looked at Zhu Junyang's direction.

When he saw the hope and anticipation on that little face, Zhu Junyang somehow lost all of his resistance. He repeated back everything that was said between him and emperor when he was in the imperial study. Not a word from that conversation was dropped.

Yu Xiaocao attentively concentrated. This Young Royal Prince was quite steady and didn't push her into the spotlight. She could tell from the emperor's words that he had some suspicions but he didn't know which family member to suspect. Apparently, in the future, she needed to be more subdued in order to avoid drawing disaster to her family!

"Many thanks, Young Royal Prince. After hearing everything, this commoner feels much better! Young Royal Prince, please don't worry. The corn fields at home are being watched over by my father and my older paternal aunt's family. Nothing will go wrong with them. When you have time, you can also go over and take a look. If you don't have time, we also won't slack off!" Yu Xiaocao believed that the young royal prince only came over to Tanggu Town for purely official matters, so she said a few words to comfort him.

The young royal prince suddenly remembered that Minister Liu was currently staying at the county magistrate's place and stated, "The Minister of Revenue, Minister Liu, also received imperial orders to come here. He's a very easy person to deal with. As long as you give the method of growing corn to him, in great detail, he will be satisfied!"

The Minister of Revenue? He personally came here to learn the method to grow corn? Apparently, the transmigrator's example of being diligent has also trickled down to his officials; they were all so hard-working. Yu Xiaocao nodded and said, "Tomorrow, I will go back to Dongshan Village and help arrange everything with my father. We'll write down the method to grow corn. That way, when we give it to Minister Liu, won't it simply matters a lot?"

"This is even better!" Zhu Junyang drank another sip of the excellent tea and then asked, "This tea has the flavor of biluochun [2], but it somehow seems more mellow and rich than biluochun. Just what type of tea is this?"

Yu Xiaocao straightened herself in her seat and grinned, "Young Royal Prince, you guessed correctly. This is biluochun. However, the water used to brew this tea was gathered from a mountain spring located deep within a bamboo forest within the West Mountain. That's the reason why you feel like it tastes different. If you like it, then you can bring a bucket of mountain spring water back..."

Uhhh...he was a lofty and magnificent young royal prince from Prince Jing's Estate. If word came out that he snatched a bucket of spring water from a host's home to bring back himself, wouldn't he become the laughingstock of other people? Even his lady mother would tease him for ages about this, let alone other people. Zhu Junyang rapidly shook his head and stated that he didn't need any!

When Yu Xiaocao noticed that he had finished his business, she thought that the young royal prince was going to leave. She sat with him for a little while longer and found out the prince didn't seem to want to go yet. She picked up her cup full of tea and asked, "Young Royal Prince, you...do you still need something else?"