

Gold Chapter 251

Fields of Gold Chapter 251 - Unique Beauty

Zhu Junyang obviously didn't expect that the little girl would try to drive him away. Who gave her the courage to do so? However, it didn't seem necessary for him to sit here anymore. His lady mother was still waiting for him to invite someone back.

Zhu Junyang put down the teacup and said, "Actually, my visit this time was an order by my lady mother! There seems to be a problem with the camellia you gave her, so she wants you to go take a look!"

The camellias that she gave Princess Consort Jing? They were all nourished by the mystic-stone water, so their vitality should be even stronger than weeds. Why would there be a problem?

"Let's go then!" Yu Xiaocao put the teacup on the table, stood up, and walked out.

Zhu Junyang was slightly surprised to see her dressed so casually. He coughed a couple times and said, "You... you don't need to change your clothes?"

Usually, when Yu Xiaocao went to the princess consort's residence, she would either be helping to cook medicinal meals or tending the flowers and plants that were 'ruined' by Princess Consort Jing. Thus, she dressed very casually. Princess Consort Jing treated her like she was a junior member of her family, so she had never felt that there was anything wrong with visiting her in casual clothes.

Hearing Zhu Junyang's words, she looked down at her clothes, which was fairly proper. She didn't think that she needed to change, so she immediately replied, "Aren't I going to help with the flowers and plants? At that time, there will be mud and soil, so even if I changed clothes, they will get dirty anyways. This is fine!"

Zhu Junyang took a closer look at her casual attire. She wore a pink pomegranate skirt, light yellow jacket embroidered with butterflies and flowers, and several strands of tea rose colored ribbons on her waist. Her glossy black hair was combed into cute twin buns and adorned with pink pearl hair ornaments. There was a faint smile on her tender face, and her eyes were as clear as a stream under ice, untainted by the worldly dust...

Although it was a very common casual attire, it appeared more charming worn on a young girl who hadn't grown up. The little lass was born in a peasant's family, but she was more elegant and graceful

than those so-called noble young ladies in the capital. It seemed like she wasn't just wearing a homely outfit, but instead she appeared calm and magnanimous as if she had carefully dressed up.

Zhu Junyang was born in the imperial family, so how could he avoid attending banquets? Those noble young ladies in the capital viewed all of the banquets as a stage to show themselves. They wished that they could wear that most gorgeous clothes and the most expensive accessories. The scent of their make-up could almost cause a person to faint. They didn't care whether it was suitable for them, and as long as it was popular, they would paint it onto their faces. Their originally delicate and pretty faces became as stunning as a ghost's. Weren't they afraid of scaring people?!

In contrast, this young girl in front of him wore no make-up and appeared clean and refreshing. Such a real and pure appearance was more comfortable to look at!

“Young Royal Prince? Are we going? I need to rush back in the evening to make postnatal meals for my godmother!” Seeing that Zhu Junyang was still standing there and not moving, Yu Xiaocao urged him.

Moreover, the little girl wasn't frightened by his cold and indifferent appearance. She was quite brave. When he visited people, no one had ever dared to tell him to leave after serving him tea. There also wasn't anyone who dared to rush him with an impatient expression. Um... He was being treated like this by her, yet he didn't feel annoyed at all. Was he the 'masochist' that the emperor mentioned?

Seeing Yu Xiaocao turning around and glaring at him with impatience, Zhu Junyang touched his nose and obediently followed her. To pick up the guest, he had come out with the prince household's horse carriage. His lady mother had come out in a low-key manner this time, so their carriage was just slightly more lavish than other families'. But, in Xiaocao's eyes, it was quite flashy!

Stepping on the small stool placed by the servants of Prince Jing's Estate, Yu Xiaocao quickly climbed on the carriage. As soon as she was seated, the carriage slowly moved forward. To move so steadily, it really was worthy of being Prince Jing Estate's horse carriage. Also, the cushioned seat inside the carriage was padded with a thick brocade quilt and soft pillows on the back. Yu Xiaocao couldn't help sighing—it's better to be rich ah!

The estate that Princess Consort Jing stayed in wasn't very far from the Fang Estate. After a while, the carriage stopped in front of the estate. Yu Xiaocao didn't wait for the servant to set the stool and jumped down, scaring the servants around her. Miss Yu was an esteemed guest of Princess Consort Jing, so if she got injured, they wouldn't be able to take the responsibility ah!

Xiaocao jumped off the carriage like a nimble little monkey. Had it been one of those noble young ladies in the capital, Zhu Junyang would definitely think that she was boorish and lacked discipline. However, when it was this ten year old little girl, he felt that she was quite lively and cute!

Yu Xiaocao walked to the back garden with familiarity, and saw Princess Consort Jing squatting on the ground and poking at a camellia with a shovel, as if she was trying to loosen the soil around it. However, the shovel in her hands was too close to the camellia. It must have hurt many of its roots. Xiaocao sighed heavily in her heart. For these camellias to be able to survive until now, their vitality was really quite strong.

Without saying anything, Yu Xiaocao walked to Princess Consort Jing and squatted next to her. She took the shovel in her hands and said as she demonstrated, "Your Highness, when loosening the soil, be careful not to touch the roots of flowers and plants. In general, precious flowers and plants are more delicate. Once their roots are injured, they will likely wither and die."

Princess Consort Jing raised her worried and distressed face, frowned, and asked weakly, "Xiaocao, can these camellias be saved?"

While Xiaocao loosened the soil for the camellias, she saw obvious tea stains on the roots of each camellia. She gently pushed away the soil. Sure enough, she found that obvious damage to the roots of the camellias.

When facing Princess Consort Jing, who loved flowers but didn't know how to raise them and stubbornly wanted to tend them herself, Yu Xiaocao was really reluctant to make harsh comments. After all, Princess Consort Jing was also a fervent lover of flowers. She sighed and politely said, "Your Highness, it's best that you don't use tea to water the flowers in the future. Even if you really need to water the flowers with tea, please don't use hot tea, alright?"

After being seen through, Princess Consort Jing's face, which looked much younger than her actual age, blushed. She looked at her youngest son, who looked at her in surprise, and mumbled an explanation, "I forgot to water the flowers that day, so I took the teapot on the table and watered them with it. I... I really didn't notice that the tea was hot..."

Princess Consort Jing was apparently a noblewoman, who had been spoiled rotten by her husband and three sons. She was nearly forty, yet she still appeared like a young maiden from time to time. Yu

Xiaocao sighed again, 'Princess Consort Jing must have accumulated great virtue in her previous life for her to be so fortunate and happy in this life.'

Seeing his lady mother's flushed face and helpless expression, Zhu Junyang instinctively helped her out, "Lady Mother, we know that you didn't do it on purpose. Just be more careful in the future! Miss Yu, do you think that these camellias can be saved?"

As he spoke, he signaled Yu Xiaocao with his eyes, telling her to lie to his lady mother that the camellias could be saved. If they couldn't be saved, weren't the camellias found in the mountains by Xiaocao? He could find some time tomorrow and go to the mountains with her to see if he could find them. Since she could find them, there wasn't any reason that he wouldn't be able to.

Looking at the usually expressionless royal prince lifting his eyebrows and winking at her with his devilishly gorgeous face, if she didn't know better, she would have thought that he was trying to seduce her. Ay! When a good-looking person made an ugly face, there would also be people who admired it.

Yu Xiaocao said to Princess Consort Jing with a serious expression, "Your Highness, rest assured! Fortunately, you didn't water them with hot tea. Otherwise, even the Flower Deity wouldn't be able to save them. A portion of the roots of these camellias have been damaged, but with meticulous care, there shouldn't be any major problems."

When Princess Consort Jing heard this, her heart finally felt relieved. Although Yu Xiaocao's words were unpleasant to the ears, she had intentionally caused these damages, after all. She was feeling guilty, ashamed, and regretful in her heart, so she naturally didn't notice the disrespect in her words.

Zhu Junyang, on the other hand, inwardly raised his eyebrows. It seemed like the little lass was born bold ah. She even dared to secretly mock Princess Consort Jing. Was she really an ignorant peasant girl born from a poor, humble family? Who gave her the courage?

Yu Xiaocao didn't notice the inquisitive eyes behind her. After loosening the soil, she took the water bucket from the maidservant who was waiting beside them. While no one was looking, she dripped two drops of mystic-stone water inside. She scooped half a ladle of water and poured it moderately on the damaged roots of the camellias.

Zhu Junyang didn't know whether it was his illusion, or he had seen wrongly, but he suddenly felt that the camellias had become more spirited. The curled leaves of the most seriously damaged one seemed to have stretched out a little. Zhu Junyang touched his chin with a curious expression, 'This isn't logical

ah. How come these flowers and plants are so obviously different as soon as Yu Xiaocao deals with them? Is this little girl the Flower Deity?'

Pffft—Zhu Junyang was amused by his strange idea! Shouldn't the Flower Deity be gorgeous and covered with fragrance? How could it be such a thin and short little girl?

Yu Xiaocao also conveniently watered the flowers nearby. After that, she took the handkerchief that Meixiang handed her and gently wiped the water on her hands. She hesitated to speak as she looked at Princess Consort Jing.

Zhu Junyang saw that his lady mother was focused on the camellias and didn't notice Xiaocao's action and expression, so he quickly said on behalf of his lady mother, "Miss Yu, please feel free to speak."

Princess Consort Jing also looked at Yu Xiaocao and asked, "For these camellias, is there anything that I need to pay attention to in the future?"

"Your Highness, please forgive this commoner for being blunt. You should just leave the work of tending the flowers and plants to the gardeners!" Yu Xiaocao decided to speak honestly for those pitiful flowers. The entire Prince Jing's Estate was too lenient on the princess consort, so she would have to be the person to tell her the sincere advice that may be grating to the ear.

Princess Consort Jing's eyes, like Lin Daiyu's [1], were filled with a hazy mist, which made people feel pity upon looking at them. Yu Xiaocao was inwardly relieved that the princess consort was really a delicate person and not one of those annoying white lotus flowers [2].

"Xiaocao, you also think that I'm not suitable for raising flowers?" Princess Consort Jing frowned slightly, and her face was shrouded by light sorrow, which made people reluctant to tell her the truth.

Yu Xiaocao sighed heavily and said, "Love isn't just giving, but to give what is most suitable. Your Highness, as long as you stand in the flower room beautifully every day and appreciate the flowers, that will be the most sincere appreciation for flowers."

Princess Consort Jing didn't expect an ordinary young girl from the countryside to be able to speak better and more sentimentally than those refined young ladies. Unconsciously, she was actually attracted to the beauty of her description.

Fields of Gold Chapter 252

Perhaps it was the beauty of Yu Xiaocao's description that moved the princess consort, or maybe the princess consort had finally given up on the idea of personally raising the flowers. The next time Imperial Prince Jing came to Tanggu Town, he was accompanied by two of the best gardeners in Prince Jing's Estate.

After being moistened by mystic-stone water, the camellias finally survived. When the two gardeners arrived, they saw that the princess consort had casually planted the rare camellias, which would stun the world, in a corner of the garden.

To properly grow camellias, there must be suitable soil, proper temperature, proper amount of watering, adequate fertilizing, and regular pruning. But, one shall take a look at the camellias personally raised by the princess consort. There wasn't enough fertilizer in the soil. At this time, the temperature was rather chilly in the morning and at night. It was better to grow the camellias in a flower pot and move them indoors in the morning and evening. Who watered the flowers today? Did they want to soak the roots until they rot? Looking at the messy branches, it seemed like they hadn't trimmed them since transplanting them...

However, these 'abused' camellias bloomed in such a gorgeous and unrestrained way. There was a sense of unbridled wildness in their beauty. Although illogical, it seemed like Princess Consort Jing's nickname of 'flower killer' should be removed!

After the two gardeners came, if the camellia plants had expressions, they would surely breathe a big sigh of relief—there's finally an end to the endless torture! With the careful care of the gardeners, the camellias could finally display their beauty in their entirety to everyone. Princess Consort Jing lingered in the garden every day. She often stayed in the flower room for the entire morning, forgetting to eat and rest... This degree of obsessiveness caused Prince Jing, who finally had a break and came over, to be very jealous. He kept secretly grumbling to his two sons, 'Find a chance and secretly destroy those floras. They take up too much of my beloved wife's attention!'

In order to send Minister Liu, who came from the capital, back as soon as possible, the day after Xiaocao tended Princess Consort Jing's flowers, she returned to Dongshan Village. Little Shitou also followed her back. So, with Yu Xiaocao dictating, Little Shitou writing, and Yu Hai supplementing additional information, they swiftly summed up the methods of cultivation for corn and potatoes.

That day, Minister Liu, who couldn't wait any longer, didn't notify the young royal prince and arrived at Dongshan Village with the county magistrate. Just after the cultivation method was bound into a thin booklet, Yu Xiaocao's family had to go receive the high-ranking official from the capital—second-ranked official, Minister Liu.

Fortunately, Minister Liu had no official authority. He was just an ordinary old man dressed in plain clothes. Led by Yu Hai's family, he inspected the growing environment of the corn. He seriously couldn't believe that the corn, which had grown so well, was actually grown in such barren sand land. In the capital, he had used the best fertile farmland, the most adequate fertilizer, and meticulous care, yet that still wasn't as good as their piece of sandy land?

Seeing the questions in Minister Liu's eyes, Yu Xiaocao said in a soft voice, "After the trial planting, it is proven that the crop corn isn't very picky with the type of land it is grown on and it also doesn't need meticulous care. As long as you make sure that it's not dehydrated and do a good job with weeding and fertilizing, it should grow very well!"

Minister Liu looked at the big gaps between the seedlings and couldn't help but ask, "Why don't you sow more densely? Wouldn't there be a higher yield that way?"

He set his eyes on Yu Hai, who was the head of the household, while Yu Hai looked at his younger daughter. Minister Liu quickly shifted his gaze over. Yu Xiaocao thought about it, and then said, "Lord, look at this corn plant, it's similar to the coarse grain sorghum that we eat. It should be able to grow very tall. If planted too densely, then they will affect each other. If it's not exposed to enough sunlight, then it probably won't grow very well!"

Seeing that Minister was like a curious child who wanted to say something, Yu Xiaocao quickly interrupted him, "Lord, it's our first time seeing and growing corn, so we're also still experimenting. It's just that we have more farming experience. We're mostly just using our previous experiences, so we can't really explain the logics. Like these potatoes, they look somewhat similar to sweet potatoes, and there's also some dirt on them. Thus, we tried to make it germinate, and then divided the sprouted potatoes into pieces and buried them in the soil. We also tried to grow them with the cultivation method of sweet potato seedlings, but we failed!"

Minister Liu was interrupted by her, but he wasn't angry and nodded repeatedly after listening to her. They also used cultivation method of sweet potatoes to grow the potatoes, but the seedlings died very quickly. So it turned out that they needed to cut the potato into pieces and bury them in the soil ah!

"Young lady, can you tell me in detail about how the corn and potatoes are grown?" Seeing that Yu Xiaocao had a clear train of thought, spoke articulately, and didn't show any sense of timidity in front of all these officials, Minister Liu looked at her with even more respect.

At this time, Yu Xiaocao took out the prepared booklet, which had Strategies for Trial Planting of Corn and Potatoes written on the first page. Minister Liu glanced at it, immediately took the booklet in his hand, and began carefully reading it.

In order to save trouble, Yu Xiaocao wrote out almost every detail of planting corn and potatoes. It originally wasn't hard to grow corn and potatoes, so as long as they weren't too stupid, they should be able to grow them.

Seeing that Minister Liu focused all his attention on the booklet, Yu Xiaocao couldn't help adding, "The spring crops have just been sown, so it shouldn't be too late to plant the corn and potatoes now..."

Before she finished speaking, Minister Liu immediately rolled up the booklet and carefully put it away, and then said to the Yu Family, "This old man will return to the capital now so as not to delay the farming! If corn and potatoes can really be grown and there's a high-yield like the emperor said, your family has done a great deed for the world! Rest assured, this old man will definitely put in a good word for you in front of the emperor at that time!"

After he said that, he said to County Magistrate Zhao, who came with him, "County Magistrate Zhao, let me borrow your horse carriage and bailiff. This old man isn't going back to Tanggu Town! Please help me bid my farewells to Royal Prince Yang!"

As he spoke, he got into the carriage that he had come in and urged the bailiff to drive directly to the capital. County Magistrate Zhao, who had been left in Dongshan Village, was completely dumbfounded. In order to increase his chances of interacting with the Minister of Revenue, he had only brought along one horse carriage, and now that horse carriage had been taken by Minister Liu. Dongshan Village was over a dozen kilometers away from Tanggu Town. He... How was he supposed to return to town ah!

"Official Zhao, if you don't mind, you can ride this commoner's carriage back!" Seeing Official Zhao's predicament, the kind Yu Hai offered to give him a ride. Due to his tact, County Magistrate Zhao's impression of the Yu Family improved.

He looked at Yu Xiaocao with admiration and asked, "How did you guys know that Minister Liu will come over to ask about the methods of cultivation, and make the preparations for it?"

Yu Xiaocao said with a smile, "Yesterday, when I went to Princess Consort Jing's residence, I saw the young royal prince. He spoke briefly with this commoner and mentioned the reason of Minister Liu's visit to Tanggu Town."

County Magistrate Zhao's originally slightly relaxed expression became solemn. She was able to freely go in and out of Princess Consort Jing's residence and speak with Royal Prince Yang, who cherished his words like gold and looked at people with an icy expression. It seemed like this little girl wasn't just simply Official Fang's goddaughter. It seemed like this Yu Family shouldn't be underestimated ah!

Yu Xiaocao didn't expect that her casual comment would cause the parental official of Tanggu Town to view her family in a new light. It was considered an unexpected gain!

While her father sent County Magistrate Zhao back, Yu Xiaocao quietly returned to her room and dug out her newly made sharkskin diving suit from the bottom of her wardrobe. After thinking about it, she wrapped it in a piece of cloth, held it in her arms and walked outside. Madam Liu, who was tending the garden in the adjacent courtyard, called her from afar, "Cao'er? You're not going back to town today? How many days can you stay at home?"

Hearing the anticipation within Madam Liu's voice, Yu Xiaocao's nose was slightly sour. She loudly answered, "Mother, I will stay at home for a few days this time! I will stay at home to spend some quality time with you and Father!"

Hearing that, Madam Liu felt elated in her heart. However, she also had to think for her daughter, "Cao'er, we're your parents, so there's no need to especially spend time with us! There needs to be people around your godmother, so I reckon that you should go back earlier."

Yu Xiaocao stood at the moon-shaped door connecting the two courtyards. Hiding the cloth bag that held the diving suit behind her back, she looked at Madam Liu, who was working hard in the vegetable field, with a grin and said, "Mother, don't worry. I have already prepped the medicinal meals. Lanxiang[1] has almost mastered how to cook the medicinal cuisine. It was Godmother who told me to stay at home for a few more days!"

"Alright, if it won't delay matters, then stay at home for a few more days! Shanhu asked me many times when you will come back. If you're free, go next door and play with her! That girl Linglong[2] will get married in winter. In the future, it won't be so easy to see each other!"

Time had passed by very quickly. It had been a year and a half since they separated from the main family. The wedding date for Linglong, who had been engaged for a long time, was quickly approaching. These days, the wife of the Zhou Family showed a reluctant expression from time to time. A daughter who one had raised for over a decade was going to be someone else's soon, so it was evitable that the mother would feel unwilling to part.

Fortunately, her daughters were still young. There were still several years before they had to look for a husband! But, now that she thought about it, there were only five to six years left. If her two daughters got married at the same time, that would be asking for her old life ah! How could grown daughters not get married? Wouldn't people talk behind their backs? Ay! If she could choose, she would rather only have sons and not daughters!

Yu Xiaocao couldn't understand Madam Liu's feelings at all. She spoke briefly with Madam Liu, and then made an excuse to go out. She chose a path with few people and arrived at the area that was best for gathering seafood, which only the Yu Family knew about. It was also the reef where they saved the young royal prince.

She found a concealed place and changed into the sharkskin diving suit. She put all her hair inside something that was made of sharkskin and was similar to a swimming cap. The waterproofing of the diving suit made of sharkskin was quite good, and it had a certain degree of warmth retention. However, it was still April after all. The sea water was still somewhat cool even in the afternoon.

After Yu Xiaocao changed into a diving suit on the reef, she carefully put her feet into the sea, and then took it out instantly. The sea water was really cold ah! What should she do?

Fields of Gold Chapter 253

The multicolored stone on her wrist exuded a soft, golden light, and gradually became a golden kitten with a proud appearance. It scorned, [If you're afraid of the cold, then look for the almighty Divine Stone ah! This Divine Stone can help you isolate the sea water, aren't you going to hurry up and thank me?]

When Yu Xiaocao heard this, she felt elated. She didn't need to suffer. 'Almighty Little Glutinous Dumpling! Long live Little Glutinous Dumpling!'

The little divine stone was connected with her heart. Hearing her heartfelt cheers, it was extremely pleased. It immediately emitted a faint golden smoke from the multicolored stone and enclosed Yu Xiaocao inside it. Fortunately, other people couldn't see this, or they would think that they saw a huge golden silkworm cocoon!

Yu Xiaocao tried to put her feet into the water again! Oh! As expected, she couldn't feel the slightest sense of coldness. When she took her feet out, there wasn't a single drop of water on it. Feeling delighted, Yu Xiaocao praised the little divine stone endlessly in her heart. The golden kitten, which the little divine stone transformed into, had an even more haughty expression and its head was nearly lifted up to the sky!

"Xiaobu——Xiaobu——" Yu Xiaocao called for her marine friend. This little dolphin seemed to have recognized her as its friend. As soon as she came to the sea, the little fellow would quickly swim over from the deep sea, shake its head, and wag its tail to greet her. At times, it would even perform 'jumping in the water' and 'singing' for her.

Sure enough, Yu Xiaocao didn't have to wait long for the cute little fellow. She hadn't seen it for the entire winter, and the little dolphin was a lot bigger than last year. If it was about the same size of a big dog last year, it was now about the size of a half-grown calf.

The little dolphin seemed to be very enthusiastic to see an old friend. It swam happily to the reef and left a 'kiss mark' on Yu Xiaocao's face with its long snout. Yu Xiaocao fed it the present that she brought for it—fish and shrimp raised with mystic-stone water. The little dolphin ate it with relish, 'This friend is really good. She brings delicious food for me every time. The fish and shrimp she brings are more delicious than everything in the ocean!

After eating to its heart's content, the little dolphin quickly swam to the bottom of the sea with Xiaocao, who had jumped on its back.

"Eh? There's someone diving and gathering seafood this early?" In the distance, Zhuang Xiaomo, who was diving in the sea, saw a figure in the sea and muttered to himself. He watched from afar and found that the person, who dived into the sea, didn't come up for a long time. He couldn't help but furrow his eyebrows, 'Did something go wrong?'

Zhuang Xiaomo hastily dropped his harvest and agilely jumped into the cold water. In the nearby villages, there were only a few people who were better swimmers than him. But, it was somewhat hard for him to endure swimming in the cold water.

When he reached the area where he saw the person, Zhuang Xiaomo plunged into the water and searched around. After coming up several times to breathe, he still didn't find anyone. Did he see incorrectly? Or did that person get caught in the deep sea?

Zhuang Xiaomo didn't give up. He searched for a long time until his body couldn't bear it any longer and had to give up. He went back to the shore, picked up his tools and harvests from the sea, and jogged home to change his clothes. On the way, he encountered his fellow villagers, and they all thought that the child had gone crazy for money. To go diving without a diving suit during this time of the year, that was almost the same as looking for death!

Zhuang Xiaomo lived in Nanyuan Village, and was raised by his paternal grandfather. When he was nine, his grandfather passed away and he became an orphan. Fortunately, he was a skilled swimmer, and could support himself by gathering seafood at the beach and fishing.

Yu Xiaocao, who had dived into the deep sea with the help of the little dolphin, had no idea that someone had dived into the sea to search for her in concern. At this time, she had arrived at a cluster of coral reefs, where many abalones were perched on.

Yu Xiaocao got off the dolphin, quietly swam closer to the coral reef, and measured them with her hands. She wasn't satisfied with the size of the abalones and shook her head in disappointment. Just when she was about to leave and look for other reefs, she suddenly saw, from the corner of her eye, an abalone about the size of her palm, which was over twenty centimeters long ah!

In comparison, weren't those one-head abalones and two-head abalones too inferior? (Author's notes: One-headed abalones are abalones that weigh one catty and two-headed abalones refers to two abalones per catty. Both are rare, high-quality abalones.) It was the best of the best ah!

With the tool for prying abalones (a blunt shovel), Yu Xiaocao carefully pried the abalone from the reef. She put it into the bamboo basket on her waist, and then carefully tied the mouth of the bamboo basket. After that, she searched thoroughly again and found a one-headed abalone.

Leaving that cluster of reefs, Yu Xiaocao swam slowly at the bottom of the sea, and from time to time, she picked up a sluggishly squirming sea cucumber. It was also the bigger the better for sea cucumbers. Dried sea cucumbers within thirty heads would be rated excellent, which meant that the weight of thirty-something dried sea cucumbers was one catty.

The ancient fishing techniques were backwards. The seabed was like an undeveloped virgin land, with abundant marine life everywhere. Yu Xiaocao felt as if she had arrived at a huge seafood market. She had a wide range of 'products' to choose from, and they were free!

At the bottom of the sea, Yu Xiaocao chose the seafood that she wanted, and the bamboo basket around her waist soon became full. She somewhat regretted that she didn't bring a big sack to hold the abalones and sea cucumbers.

Suddenly, the little dolphin swimming happily beside Xiaocao made a warning sound that as filled with unease and fear.

"What's wrong? Is there danger?" Yu Xiaocao swam vigorously towards the little dolphin. She believed the instinct of animals.

[Not really? It's just a big shark coming over!] The little divine stone's lazy voice emerged in Xiaocao's mind. From the corner of her eyes, Yu Xiaocao saw a golden figure. After getting a closer look, she didn't know whether she should laugh or cry. She had seen dogs swimming, but she had never seen a cat diving. 'Little Divine Stone, what are you doing?'

The great white sharks were quite fierce among the marine creatures, but since the little divine stone didn't have any sense of urgency, she didn't really need to worry about anything.

However, that wasn't what the little dolphin thought. It quickly swam towards Xiaocao. At this time, the great white shark's huge figure has appeared, and two rows of sharp teeth were exposed in its wide opened mouth.

The little dolphin screamed with fear and anxiety, but instead of leaving his good friend, Xiaocao, it swam even faster towards her. The shark had already noticed its 'prey' and swam towards them in a threatening manner, as if it was a school bully.

The little dolphin had already arrived next to Xiaocao. With its back pushing her, it worked hard to sway its tail and desperately swam towards the distance. The great white shark swam very fast and the little dolphin had to take a person with it, so how could it out swim the shark? Seeing that the shark was going to catch up to it, the little dolphin made a desperate cry, but didn't give up on saving Xiaocao. One must admit that the loyalty of animals was sometimes much higher than that of people!

At this critical moment, a fist sized golden kitten blocked the shark's path. With its haughty expression and gorgeous hair, it was obviously the little divine stone!

It seemed like the great white shark had never met such a creature in the ocean. At first, it was stunned and swam around the little golden kitten for a moment. Staring at the tiny golden kitten with its fierce eyes, it seemed as if it wanted to figure out what kind of creature was in front of it and whether it was edible!

In the end, it gave up on the inquiry, opened its large, fierce-looking mouth, and swallowed the little golden kitten. A flash of disdain appeared within its eyes, 'The prey is so small that it's not even enough to fill the gaps between my teeth!'

Seeing the little golden kitten being swallowed by the shark, Yu Xiaocao pacified the little dolphin by patting it—don't worry, we're safe now!

The shark was quite pitiful! After a while, a big hole was ripped in its belly and a bloody kitten strutted out of it. It walked to Yu Xiaocao on its four paws and requested her to wash the blood on its hair.

Looking at the shark, who had flipped over and was completely dead, Yu Xiaocao felt she couldn't just let it go to waste. So, she cut off all the fins with a knife. The shark was very big, like a submarine. If all the fins were cut off, there would be at least ten or so catties of shark fin!

By the time Yu Xiaocao got on shore, it was already the evening. After the ebb tide period, the people who were gathering seafood beside the sea had already gone home. Therefore, no one saw Yu Xiaocao when she came on shore. She went back to the concealed area on the reef and changed her clothes.

Today's harvest was quite good. She got at least five catties of abalones, and even more of sea cucumbers. After making them into dried seafood, that should be enough for the Zhou Family to pay

tribute to the imperial court next month! Shark fin and fish maw were things that only experienced fishermen could catch, so Yu Xiaocao wasn't responsible for providing them.

With one hand holding the shark fins and the basket of abalones and sea cucumbers in the other hand, Yu Xiaocao sneaked into the yard. In her heart, she thought about how she should explain to her parents...

"Cao'er? Your mother said that you've been out for the entire afternoon. What were you doing?" Yu Hai had already returned from the town and was helping his wife cook in the kitchen! He, who loved his wife dearly, didn't care about the fallacy of 'men should stay away from the kitchen' at all!

Yu Xiaocao's eyes darted around, and then she immediately showed Yu Hai her harvest with a smile. She had an expression that said, 'Guess where I got these from?'

Yu Hai helped his daughter pour the abalones and sea cucumbers in the bamboo basket into a basin. He was shocked when he saw the marine goods in the basin! Yu Hai was a famous fishing expert in the nearby villages, so he was naturally also a good diver. However, he didn't think that he would be capable of catching so many top-notch seafood at once. Where exactly did this little lass get these from?

"Cao'er, stop trying to create suspense. Tell me, where did these come from?" Yu Hai couldn't help asking.

Yu Xiaocao blinked her eyes and had a smile on her face as she lied skillfully, "I met Third Young Master Zhou's subordinates at the village entrance. They told me to bring them back and ask Father to help make them into dried seafood."

The matter of the Zhou Family becoming imperial merchants who supplied the imperial court with dried seafood had been widely spread throughout Tanggu Town. Yu Hai was one of the best at making dried seafood in Dongshan Village. Thinking that the Zhou Family had collected seafood nearby and conveniently brought it over to ask for his help to make dried seafood, he didn't inquire any further.

However, Yu Hai was very curious in his heart, 'Who is so capable as to catch so many premium quality sea cucumbers and abalones? Why didn't I hear anything about there being such an expert nearby?'

Yu Xiaocao, who had handed the job of processing the abalones, sea cucumbers, and shark fins to her father, occupied her mother with Xiaolian at night. Yu Hai could only aggrievedly sleep on the same kang bed with his eldest son, Yu Hang! When his youngest daughter wasn't at home, he missed her. But, when she was at home, she would steal his wife away from him. Yu Hai felt so conflicted ah!

The next day, Yu Xiaocao, who finally had time to rest at home for a couple days, couldn't stay idle. She followed her father early in the morning and went to help in the melon fields.

For the Yu Family's first batch of watermelons, there wasn't really a lot of ripe watermelons. There were about three to five thousand catties every day. Since Wang Ergou often came to help and did his best to take care of the watermelons, he and her two maternal uncles naturally got priority for the watermelons!

Wang Ergou earned quite a lot of money from selling watermelons last year, so he bought an ox cart this year. Why did he buy an ox cart and not a horse carriage? It was more economical ah! Think about it, he could only sell watermelons for a little over a month every year. If he bought an ox cart, he could normally pull people to town, and when he was busy with farming, he could lease the ox cart to earn money.

Now, due to the Zhou Family's factories, the villages around Dongshan Village had become much richer than before. The people who needed to go to the town market didn't mind spending a few copper coins for a ride! The neighboring village's Old Ma's cart was full every day. He could earn money faster than working at the docks!

No one in the village had bought an ox cart except for the village head! The villagers of Dongshan Village, who began to open up their money pouches, all lined up to rent the village chief's ox when it was time to plow. For ten copper coins per mu, if it kept plowing for a day, then it could plow ten or so mu of land. He would be able to earn more than one hundred copper coins! One must say that when Wang Ergou's mind was used in the right way, he was quite clever in trivial matters.

When they reached the melon fields, Yu Xiaocao's oldest aunt's family had already begun working! Liu Hu and Oldest Aunt's eldest son was already very skilled with the task of picking out the mature melons. The father and son were in charge of plucking the ripe watermelons, while Xiaocao's oldest aunt and her daughter were responsible for taking the watermelons to the edge of the fields. Little Fangping obediently sat by the watermelons and looked after them.

Wang Ergou had already brought his ox cart to the fields and started working in the fields early in the morning. Seeing Yu Hai, he greeted him with a face full of smiles, "Brother Dahai, thanks to you, I'm going to make a lot of money!"

It might be because he had a son now, so he had a prospect in his life. Ergou'zi had gotten much fatter than last year, and his previously protruding mouth and monkey-like chin had changed. He looked much better with his round face!

Yu Hai smiled and said, "You worked hard to earn the money, so how is that thanks to me? Work hard and earn more money for your son and wife!"

Wang Ergou smiled so much that his eyes had disappeared. He nodded repeatedly and said, "Brother Dahai is right! I plan on building a house with the money I made from selling watermelons this year. Build a five-room house with a large yard!"

Yu Hai patted his shoulders and said, "Not bad, not bad! I have confidence in you!!"

At this time, Yu Xiaocao's two maternal uncles each drove a horse carriage over. They cooperated with a famous fruit store in the prefectural city. Every few days, they had to deliver two carts of watermelons over. In this way, they earned quite a lot of money from the price differences!

Yu Hai and Xiaocao also went down the field to look for mature watermelons. Due to the tight time and heavy task, Xiaocao asked the little divine stone to transform into a kitten and help. The little divine stone could clearly perceive the internal structure of each watermelon. Its power hadn't recovered enough yet, otherwise, it could share everything it sees and hears with Xiaocao. In other words, it could see the inside of the watermelon, so if they could share perception, Xiaocao would also have the perspective ability!

The little divine stone, who was just a step away from this state, had no choice but to move its poor little legs and shuttle through the cluster of melons, while Yu Xiaocao followed behind it. When it found a ripe watermelon, the little golden kitten would jump on top and meow. Xiaocao bent down, pretended to pat on the melon, and plucked it.

The one-man-one-cat cooperation became more and more tacit, and soon Xiaocao left her father far behind. In order to avoid repeating the work when picking watermelon, they were each divided a piece

of land to work on. Yu Xiaocao swiftly found all the mature watermelon in the mu of land that she was assigned to, and then she went to work on another piece of land.

Seeing his younger daughter's fast speed, Yu Hai was afraid that she had picked the raw melons. He went over worriedly and carefully examined the watermelons that she plucked. He was surprised to find that his younger daughter was not only more efficient than him, but none of the watermelons that she plucked were unripe. Thus, he was completely relieved now.

With the little golden kitten as a cheat, Yu Xiaocao finished picking melons in three mu of land alone, and successfully completed the task. Liu Junping was also afraid that she would have missed something due to her fast speed, so he followed behind her and carefully examined the melons again. He realized that there wasn't a single ripe watermelon in the areas that his youngest female cousin had walked by.

The admiration and doubts in his heart were forgotten due to the heavy work of loading the carts. After filling up Wang Ergou's and the Liu brothers' carts, there were still many watermelons left. Liu Hu suggested that he and his eldest son drive the carriage to town to sell the watermelons.

Yu Hai wanted to sell the watermelons to him according to the wholesale price, and let his older brother-in-law keep the money that he earned. However, Liu Hu refused! In his opinion, his family was living and eating at the Yu Family's, and he also owed them a lot of money for his medical treatments. If he took advantage of the Yu Family again and earned money with the Yu Family's carriage and watermelon, he would be worse than pigs or dogs!

Liu Hu intended to help the Yu Family sell the watermelons and give all the money that he earned to the Yu Family. Yu Hai knew that his older sister and brother-in-law were going through hard times, so how could he take advantage of his older brother-in-law? When neither could convince the other, Yu Xiaocao finally spoke up, "Father, Oldest Uncle! If you guys continue to argue, the melons will rot in the ground!"

Yu Caifeng glared at Yu Hai with a long face and said angrily, "Xiaohai! You're treating Older Sister like a stranger ah! Older Sister knows that you want to help me. However, as your older sister and older brother-in-law, if we take advantage of you when we can't even help you, how would we still have the face to stay in Dongshan Village in the future? If you continue to be like this, we'll move..."

Seeing the unhappy expression on his sister's face, Yu Hai quickly explained, "Older Sister, that's not what I meant. I..."

"Father, Oldest Aunt, I have a suggestion, so why don't you hear me out!" Yu Xiaocao saw that both sides were very persistent and didn't have the intention to take a step back, so she came up with an idea.

Yu Hai knew that his younger daughter had always been a clever child, and she must be able to think of a way to make the best of both ways. So, he nodded repeatedly and said, "Cao'er, what's your suggestion? Let's hear it."

"Father, Oldest Aunt! One thinks that Oldest Aunt's family has helped out a lot and felt sorry for letting her do free labor. The other felt that my father has helped you guys a lot, so you feel more at ease by doing some work..." Yu Xiaocao first analyzed the mentality of both sides.

Upon hearing that, Yu Hai and the Yu Caifeng couple nodded in agreement!

"Oldest Aunt, Oldest Uncle, what are your plans for the future?" Yu Xiaocao suddenly asked.

Liu Hu seriously thought about it for a moment and said, "I have discussed with your aunt. After the busy period for your family have passed, we will apply for a piece of land with the Village Chief, build a shack, and move out... Dahai, listen to me! I'm also an upright and dauntless man, so I won't rely on my younger brother-in-law to survive! If I did, wouldn't people criticize me behind my back?"

Without waiting for Yu Hai to dissuade him, he continued, "Don't worry, as a man, would I not be able to support my wife and children? When I was in the northeast, I often went up the mountains to hunt for game to improve our lives. As long as I don't go too deep into the West Mountain, there are still many preys! With my body, I'm not worried about not being able to find a job at the docks! Your older brother-in-law isn't as capable as you, but I won't starve your older sister and the kids!"

After several days of rest, Liu Hu's body had already completely recovered. He was a typical man from the northeast, who had a tall and sturdy build and was very strong! Yu Hai, who was also a head of a household, put himself in his older brother-in-law's shoes and thought that he was right. As a man, one couldn't rely on others all the time!

"Oldest Aunt, Oldest Uncle! I can understand that you guys don't want to burden my father, but we can't let you guys work for nothing ah! Look, the people who come to help pick the vegetables every day can make twenty copper coins daily. You guys helped plant corn and look after the melon fields, busily

working the entire day. If we don't do anything, we're afraid that the villagers will say that we're taking you guys as free laborers and working you to death!" Yu Xiaocao expressed her father's concerns. On the one hand, Yu Hai wanted to help his sister and her husband. On the other hand, he was afraid that people would gossip behind their backs.

Yu Xiaocao stopped briefly, and then said, "As the saying goes, 'even blood-brothers need to settle accounts without ambiguity'. Oldest Aunt, Oldest Uncle, how about this? In the past, we sold watermelons per unit. The big ones cost five taels, while the smaller ones were four taels. At the end, we sold the remaining ones for two or three taels! You can pull the carriage to the side of Zhenxiu Restaurant and tell the manager that it belongs to our family and that you want to set up a stall there. He definitely won't stop you! Since you're helping us sell the watermelons, we can't let you do it for free. For every watermelon you sell, we'll give you a commission of twenty copper coins. What do you think?"

Yu Xiaocao didn't want to take advantage of her relatives, but she knew that if the commission was too high, her aunt and uncle wouldn't definitely disagree. A watermelon for twenty copper coins, and there would be at least thirty to forty watermelons on a cart. If they pulled two carts to town daily, her oldest aunt's family could earn an income of at least a little more than one tael.

With the yield of her family's watermelons, there was enough to be sold for at least a month. At that time, her oldest aunt's family could use the money earned from selling watermelons to build a decent house. Oldest Aunt had already decided to settle down in Dongshan Village, so it necessary for her to have a house of her own! Oldest Uncle wanted to build a shack, which would be fine in the summer and fall. However, with the winter temperature in the north, they would freeze to death!

Yu Caifeng wanted to say something else, but her eldest son stopped her by pulling on the edge of her clothes. Liu Junping whispered in his mother's ears, "Mother, let's just do as Younger Cousin said! We don't have the ability right now. We will have a long time to repay their kindness in the future! Even if we continue to argue until the evening, there still won't be any results!"

Yu Caifeng felt conflicted for a moment. She knew that once her younger brother made a decision, even eight horses wouldn't be able to pull him back. Xiaocao's suggestion should be her younger brother's biggest compromise. As her eldest son said, they still had a lot of time ahead of them. If her younger brother's family needs help, she could help them do more work. During the farming seasons, the whole family could go help out. They could slowly repay their kindness!

Fields of Gold Chapter 255

In the end, both sides took a step back and accepted the plan proposed by Xiaocao. It was getting late, so Liu Hu and his son swiftly loaded a carriage and headed to Tanggu Town. The father and son initially

thought that they wouldn't be able to sell many five taels watermelons. Who would have thought as soon as they entered the town with a cart full of watermelons that they would be constantly asked if the watermelons were for sale? Were the watermelons from the Dongshan Village's Yu Family? Where were they selling them?

The horse carriage soon arrived near Zhenxiu Restaurant. Liu Hu went in and told the head manager what Xiaocao had taught him. The head manager not only agreed, but he also sent a worker to help set up the stall. After that, he gallantly ordered ten watermelons as today's free fruit trays!

The stall wasn't even set up yet, but one third of the watermelons on the cart had been sold. Liu Hu held five ingots, which were worth ten taels each, and felt as if he was in a dream.

In fact, he didn't even have time to stay in a daze. When last year's customers heard the news, they hurriedly sent their servants over to buy the watermelons, for fear that they would be too late and return empty-handed. In front of the stand that Liu Hu and his son had just set up, they were suddenly surrounded by over ten people. There was someone shouting for two, and another person who wanted to buy five. The scene was chaotic!

Liu Hu and his son protected the watermelon on the stand, for fear that they would be smashed by someone. At the same time, they shouted at the top of their lungs, "Don't push! Don't push! Everyone, stop pushing!!"

The head manager of Zhenxiu Restaurant couldn't stand it anymore and quickly came to help, saying, "Please line up to buy watermelons! There is enough for everyone! If this cart is sold out, you can make a reservation first. Another cart will be sent over in the afternoon!"

When Liu Hu and his son heard that, they said in agreement, "Yes! That's right! Line up, please line up! We won't sell them to those who aren't lined up!!"

Most of the people who came to buy watermelons were servants of respected people in town, and some of them knew each other. Hearing Zhenxiu Restaurant's head manager say that there was enough for everyone, and at the latest, they would be able to buy them in the afternoon, they stopped frantically rushing forward like earlier.

Soon, a crooked line was formed in front of a simple stall. The street was regarded as street that sold luxury products in Tanggu Town, which was visited more often by the rich. Moreover, all the shops were furnished in a rather fancy manner. People were usually dismissive of stalls that were set up with several pieces of boards, like Liu Hu and his son's.

Pedestrian on the street looked over with curious gazes. Suddenly, a girl's excited scream resounded through the skies, "Wow! Watermelon, watermelon!! Older sister of the Zhuang Family, I told you that it's about time for the Yu Family to start selling their watermelons! Today is indeed a worthwhile trip!!"

Eldest Young Miss Zhuang moved to the side with her maidservant, for fear that others would know that she was with this idiot. Wasn't it just watermelon? It wasn't like they had never eaten it before, so was it necessary for her to be so excited?

Eldest Young Miss Zhuang would never admit that the watermelons that her eldest brother brought back from the capital couldn't compare with the Yu Family's. They didn't taste good and there wasn't enough edible flesh inside. They were so small, and the price was too expensive!

"Qiu'er, go ask if the watermelons are from the Yu Family. What's the price this year?" Although Eldest Young Miss Zhuang disliked the unpresentable watermelon stand, she missed the taste of the Yu Family's watermelons. So, of course, she was reluctant to leave.

The maidservant in a green dress beside Eldest Young Miss Zhuang quickly agreed and ran to the stall to inquire. Next to her, it was the second steward of the Yao Estate's turn to choose watermelons. He glared at her and said, "If you want to buy watermelons, go line up in the back! They won't sell it to you if you're not in line!"

Qiu'er ignored him and asked the questions that her young miss told her to ask. She looked at the few watermelons left on the carriage and returned to her young miss with a worried face. She said, "Young Miss, the watermelons sold at the stall are indeed from the Yu Family, but... we might not be able to get any today!"

Miss Wang held her bulging purse and stared at the decreasing number of watermelons. In order to be able to eat to her heart's content this year, she had saved up money for more than half a year. These days, in order to check whether the Yu Family's watermelons were up on the market, she found reasons to wander on this street every day. Even the soles of her shoes were about to be worn-out.

'The Yu Family's watermelons are finally here, but I can't buy them. What a pity ah! Oh, that's right! Didn't the Yu Family accept reservations for their watermelons last year? If I order two today, I will be able to eat the juicy and delicious watermelon by tomorrow at the latest! I need to quickly line up now!!'

Miss Wang didn't personally line up with a group of servants. She handed the money to her little maid and told her to quickly get in the queue.

Seeing that the queue was getting longer and longer, the head manager suggested that Liu Hu and his son put forth a 'purchase restriction'—each person could only buy two watermelons at most. Even so, the forty-some watermelons on the carriage were quickly sold out. Moreover, they didn't have time to categorize them by size. As soon as the watermelons were placed on the stand, they would immediately have a buyer. The customers acted very swiftly as if they were afraid that the watermelons would be taken by the people in the back if they moved too slowly. Liu Hu only needed to collect the money!

Those who didn't get to make a purchase continued to wait in line to make a reservation. Liu Hu and his son didn't know how to write, so the head manager got a staff of the restaurant to help them record the orders. During the registration process, Liu Hu told his son to wait there while he hurriedly drove the horse carriage back to Dongshan Village.

There were still at least two carts of the watermelons picked in the morning. Yu Caifeng, who was weeding in the nearby corn field, saw that her husband had returned after only half a day and curiously asked about it. When she found out the blazing popularity of the five taels watermelons in town, she couldn't help but be dumbfounded, 'The townfolks are indeed rich. In Dongshan Village, even if the whole family worked hard for a month, they still might not have enough money to buy a watermelon. They would be reluctant to even eat fine rice and wheat flour, let alone those expensive things!'

Under Liu Hu's urge, Yu Caifeng didn't have time to be in a daze and quickly helped load the cart. There was a total of over fifty watermelons on the cart. By the time the second cart of watermelons arrived in town, it was already afternoon. Many of the servants, who made reservations at the stall, were afraid that they wouldn't be able to get their products in the afternoon, so they just waited there without eating.

Liu Hu's second cart of watermelons was just enough for the orders made in the morning. Those who got the news later could only make reservations for tomorrow!

When the second cart was also sold out, the sun was high above their heads! Following Yu Xiaocao's instructions, the father and son carried the heavy silver to the Zhou Family's bank and exchanged them for banknotes. After that, they drove the carriage back home.

The father and son were extremely thrilled! They had never seen so much shiny silver ah!! Two carts of watermelons were sold for a total of four hundred eighty-five taels! Fortunately, the bank wasn't very far away. Otherwise, they would be extremely exhausted just by carrying the money over!

"Father, we sold ninety-seven watermelons today. Younger Cousin said they will give us twenty copper coins for each one. Doesn't that mean that we can get about two taels?" Liu Junping clenched his fist with slight excitement.

Liu Hu was silent for a long time before he sighed and said, "Junping, you must firmly remember your uncle's kindness to us! In the future, pay more attention to their family's affairs. We owe them a big favor!"

In Liu Hu's opinion, an adult laborer, who worked hard for an entire day, would only be able to earn thirty-five copper coins. The father-son pair had merely traveled to town twice and didn't do much heavy labor, yet they were able to make nearly two taels of silver. This was his younger brother-in-law's family helping them ah!!

When they got home, Liu Hu and his son placed 4 one hundred taels banknotes, 1 fifty taels banknote, and thirty-five taels of silver in front of Yu Hai's family. When Yu Hai gave them the share that they deserved, Liu Hu didn't refuse anymore. His family engraved this kindness deeply into their hearts. Once the other party needed them, his whole family would do whatever they could to repay them.

With the help of Oldest Aunt's family, Yu Xiaocao didn't have to be like last year when she was so busy that her heels barely touched the floor. When the watermelons were finally up on the market, the merchants and villagers, who they previously made a deal with, all began to buy wholesale watermelons from the Yu Family.

Prince Jing's Estate sent watermelons as gifts, and helped some people find a business opportunity. They inquired about the origin of the watermelons and traveled all the way to Dongshan Village in search of the Yu Family. They wanted to use their status to suppress the Yu Family so that they would only supply watermelons to their own family.

This merchant was closely connected with an idle prince of the imperial family. With the assumption that his status was far superior than them, wouldn't it be very easy to take control of a little peasant family?

This merchant was quite unlucky. When he went to threaten the Yu Family, Royal Prince Yang had just happened to come to Dongshan Village for an inspection and caught him in the act.

Royal Prince Yang knew that the member of the imperial family that this merchant was close with was his imperial uncle, who didn't care about anything and was obsessed with cultivation of Taoism. He had a good relationship with the Prince Jing Estate. This merchant was the younger brother of one of his concubines. He always used the prince's name to dominate the market, and specially picked businessmen with no special background or support to suppress. Unexpectedly, he was actually trying to bully his people today!

Zhu Junyang didn't notice that he had automatically taken the Yu Family under his wings. In his opinion, the Yu Family was currently working for him and contributing to the imperial court. The merchant was merely the younger brother of a concubine. Who gave him the courage to act atrociously here?

With Zhu Junyang's violent temper, he immediately ordered his imperial bodyguards to arrest the tactless guy, escort him to his imperial uncle, and explain the situation. Imperial Prince Cheng had long been dissatisfied with this idiot. He always used his status as his younger brother-in-law to cause trouble outside, bringing dishonor to his face! He immediately ordered him to be beaten with a wooden plank, and then he kicked him and his older sister out of the estate.

Zhu Junyang saw that the Yu Family had picked more than enough watermelons every day and heard from Xiaocao that watermelons could be kept for at least half a month, so he had his subordinates transport several carts back and sell them in a fruit store under his lady mother's name. Not to mention that it wasn't the season for watermelons to be on the market, even if it was the time for watermelons to be sold, the price in the capital would be multiple folds higher than that of Tangu Town.

To hoard a rare commodity and sell it at a high price! The capital didn't lack wealthy royalties, high-ranking officials, and noble lords. It was often said that one might be able to randomly throw a rod and hit several fifth-rank officials on the street in the capital, let alone rich merchants. The business of Princess Consort Jing's fruits and candied fruits store suddenly boomed.

This store's shopkeeper was also an excellent businessman. The quantity of watermelons delivered was limited. Thus, he unknowingly used the 'hunger marketing' strategy of later generations and adopted

the measure of limited sales. Only twenty watermelons were sold each day, and each person could only purchase one watermelon per day.

Fields of Gold Chapter 256

There were people lining up in front of the fruit shop every day. It was not my turn today, nor tomorrow, but it would be my turn the day after tomorrow, right? For a while, it was hard to get a melon in the capital.

Those who had a good relationship with Prince Jing's Estate tried everything possible to buy a watermelon. Fortunately, Princess Consort Jing wasn't in the capital or there would've been more for her to be troubled by. She was hiding in Tanggu to avoid the disturbance, but it was bitter for Prince Jing. Imagine always being blocked at the entrance of the court hall after getting off court every day, even those incidental acquaintances all came up to try to exploit their connection with him by acting friendly. All so they could buy some stupid watermelon! When did so many of his colleagues turn into foodies?

"Your Highness Imperial Prince Jing, please stay..." Prince Jing, who was rejoicing that there was no one waiting for him in front of the court, had decided to leave before the people behind him came out. Unexpectedly, a familiar voice stopped him.

Looking back, it turned out to be the iron-faced prime minister, Yuan Mufan [1]. The two of them had no connection in the past. Due to a radical and steady difference in their political opinions, they often competed in court until their faces and ears were red. When meeting out of court, they kept up appearances of incidental acquaintances. Prime Minister Yuan wasn't usually someone who paid attention to the desires of food, so why was he stopping him?

Yuan Mufan face was slightly red from Prince Jing's confused gaze. He coughed to cover up his embarrassment. If possible, he didn't want to ask others for help, moreover, it was for such an unspeakable reason. But, he had no other choice since filial piety was greater than the heavens. In order to get his father stay in the capital for a few more days, and let him, as a son, show filial piety, he was willing to risk being embarrassed!

"Let talk somewhere quieter!" Prime Minister Yuan took Imperial Prince Jing to a nearby teahouse. He asked for a private room and ordered a pot of quality tea.

Prince Jing took a sip of tea and dismissed the server making the tea. Seeing that Prime Minister Yuan wouldn't speak, he asked directly, "What is the problem, Prime Minister Yuan? If there is anything I can help you with, I definitely will!"

Imperial Prince Jing inherited the retired emperor's frank personality and hated the garrulous traits of the scholars.

Prime Minister Yuan gritted his teeth and said what he wanted in one breath. It turned out that the prime minister's father, the great scholar Yuan Sinian, was finally back in the capital. After living in his son's house for a short while, he insisted on returning to Tanggu Town, upon hearing that there wasn't a place selling watermelons in the capital. He kept saying, "That lass Xiaocao's watermelons should be ripe now. I haven't had that girl's braised pig's head meat in so long. I wonder what kind of specialty she created for her brother this week..." The only thing he thought about was food!

The prime minister's youngest son, Yuan Yunxi, came back to the capital to prepare for the autumn examination. Our Headmaster Yuan originally agreed that he would wait until his grandson finished his exams before going back to Tanggu Town. Even so, he couldn't sit still as soon as he heard about watermelon. He had already sent people to Tanggu Town to buy some, but the time it took to make the trip and come back was at least five or six days. However, his father was becoming more and more impatient. It was no wonder that people said one's temper would become more like a child's as one got older.

"Your Highness, can you... please give me two watermelons from your fruit shop?" His face was red with shame. It had never occurred to Prime Minister Yuan that he would have to go ask someone for watermelons one day.

For the sake of his beloved wife's fruit shop, Prince Jing had been utterly exhausted recently. In his opinion, if he quickly sold all those troublesome watermelons, then he wouldn't have to think about it and he wouldn't be offending anyone. Prime Minister Yuan's character had always been very upright and his filial piety for his father couldn't be more commendable. Imperial Prince Jing couldn't refuse him, so he readily agreed. With two watermelons, the iron faced prime minister would owe him a favor. It was a good deal ah!

"Go to the princess consort's fruit shop and take two watermelons to the Prime Minister's Estate. Remember, don't go in through the front and get it from the back of the store. Just say that it's this prince's order!" He immediately ordered his bodyguard.

Prime Minister Yuan cupped his hands and bowed gratefully at him. Prince Jing lowered his head and took a sip of tea. Putting down his cup, he said, "Brother Yuan, if there isn't anything else..."

"Thank you very much, Your Highness. I will prepare some good wine one day, please come then, Prince Jing." Prime Minister Yuan also was in a hurry to get back to his estate to see if his father was throwing a tantrum about wanting to go back to Tanggu Town again.

After Imperial Prince Jing left, Prime Minister Yuan didn't stay for long before hurrying back to his estate. As expected, our Headmaster Yuan, who had a small baggage in his hand, was impatiently letting someone prepare a carriage to take him back to Tanggu Town, regardless of how others tried to stop him.

Seeing that his grandfather's stubborn temper was acting up again, Yuan Yunxi didn't dare to try too hard to stop him. He just said, "Grandfather, I have already sent people to line up to buy watermelons. If you leave today, you won't be able to eat the watermelons!"

"Once I get to Tanggu Town and tell the lass Xiaocao, I can eat as much watermelons as I want. Why do I wait in line for two days for one watermelon? It's not even my turn too!" Yuan Sinian heard that a batch of watermelons were shipped to the capital from Tanggu Town two days ago, so he happily sent people to go buy them. In the end, since the shop was backed by Imperial Prince Jing, they didn't have to show respect to Prime Minister's Estate. After waiting for two days and not even getting a watermelon peel, Yuan Sinian was extremely angry. Once he was back in Tanggu Town, he would buy a lot of watermelons; one to eat, one to throw away, and one to use as a ball to kick!

"Grandfather, it's our turn to eat in the private room of Zhenxiu Restaurant. If you leave, you won't be able to eat the food there!" Yuan Yunxi, who grew up beside his grandfather, naturally understood his foodie nature. If he wanted him to stay, he had to use food as the offensive!

Yuan Sinian became even angrier at the mention of the capital's Zhenxiu Restaurant. His beard was blowing as he said, "The kid from the Zhou Family isn't very loyal! To go so far as to not leave me a personal private room, and I have to wait in line to eat in the private room!! In Tanggu Town, as long as the lassie Xiaocao says something, I can go eat whenever I want, what need is there for me to line up?"

Yu Xiaocao's position in Tanggu's Zhenxiu Restaurant was equivalent to that of half a boss. Thus, she had her own private room. She didn't need to wait in line to eat or to entertain guests. However, there were very few opportunities for her to go eat, and she didn't have many friends who could make her treat them at Zhenxiu Restaurant, so the room was usually left unused.

When Yu Xiaocao went to deliver food to her younger brother, she would always give his benefactor, Headmaster Yuan, a share. Once, she heard the cute old foodie complain that he couldn't get a place to eat in the Zhenxiu Restaurant, so she generously lent her private room to him.

In other words, Headmaster Yuan could freely use Xiaocao's private room in Zhenxiu Restaurant whenever she wasn't using it, which was the same as Headmaster Yuan having an appointment-free private room in Zhenxiu Restaurant. This allowed the little old man to show off in front of his friends for a while.

At Zhenxiu Restaurant, besides the Zhou Family, only Xiaocao had an exclusive private room. How enviable was it to be able to eat at Zhenxiu Restaurant without having to wait in line and without reservation? Headmaster Yuan felt smug for a while due to the envious gazes of his friends.

After arriving in the capital, all the preferential treatment disappeared. Headmaster Yuan felt disappointed...

Just when Yuan Sinian was persistent on leaving, Prime Minister Yuan arrived with the man who was delivering the watermelons.

"Father! The watermelons have been bought! I must try the watermelons that Father has been praising. How would it taste?" With a gentle smile on his face, Prime Minister Yuan didn't seem to see the small baggage in his father's hand and had someone carry the watermelons into the reception hall of outer courtyard.

Yuan Sinian recognized that the watermelons in the servants' hands were planted by the Yu family with a glance. The watermelons in the capital were small and unpalatable. For watermelons, he still had to eat those of Tanggu's Yu Family's.

Upon seeing the watermelons, he seemed to have forgotten he was going back to Tanggu. His feet were automatically and spontaneously attracted to the watermelons.

When Yuan Sinian heard his son's words, he hummed and said, "When you eat it, you will understand! At that time, you can't steal mine!"

Prime Minister Yuan's mind was at a loss whether to cry or laugh, "Do you think I'm the same as you!"

In the capital, watermelons were cut from the middle and eaten with a spoon. Yuan Sinian was instructing the servants in high spirits on how to cut the watermelons into triangular pieces. Unable to hold himself back, he took a piece and bit into it. 'Yes, that's the taste! Sweet to the heart!'

From the corner of his eye, he saw his son's surprised expression. He said nonchalantly, "Unfortunately, the watermelon isn't as fresh! If it was just picked from the ground, it's crisper and sweeter."

After finishing one piece, he saw that his son was taking another piece and hurriedly stopped him. "Didn't you say you wouldn't steal mine? Trying one piece is enough. How can you be addicted already?"

Prime Minister Yuan looked at the watermelon that weighed at least fifteen or sixteen catties and replied in a helpless manner, "Father, you can't eat such a big watermelon alone! If you eat watermelon that has been left out for a long time after being cut, you will get a stomachache!"

Yuan Sinian glares at him and said to Yuan Yunxi, "Yunxi, send half to your mother and sisters-in-law in the back courtyard and let them taste it. Watermelons are cooled in nature, so tell your sisters-in-law to be careful and don't let the children eat too much."

Yuan Yunxi was the youngest son in the family. He had just turned seventeen years old this year. He had two older brothers and two older sisters. Both of his brothers were married and had children, and both sisters had also gotten married. His eldest brother's child had just turned three, and was especially cute at this time. Headmaster Yuan, being a great-grandfather, would think about the little guy whenever he had some delicious food.

Yuan Yunxi's brothers had jokingly said that only this little guy, whose hair hadn't even grown in yet, could snatch food from the 'lion's mouth'!

Because of these two watermelons, the Prime Minister's Household managed to keep the old urchin, who had been crying to go back to Tanggu Town, from leaving.

However, Royal Prince Yang, who was in Tanggu Town, didn't realize the trouble he had caused his father just because he wanted to make some convenient pocket money. Later, Prince Jing wrote a letter to Princess Consort Jing and ruthlessly complained about his youngest son.

Royal Prince Yang, at this moment, was sitting in a garden full of vegetables, drinking tea and enjoying the sight of new greenery. In contrast to his leisure, poor Yu Xiaocao was working hard in the kitchen due to the 'great buddha' in the yard.

"Yu Xiaocao, this prince wants to eat tomatoes!" At the end of spring, there weren't many fruits to eat. The Yu Family's tomatoes were sour, sweet and juicy, which tasted better than many of the fruits that Zhu Junyang had eaten.

These days, Zhu Junyang used the excuse of official business to come to the Yu's house to eat every day. This guy's mouth was very picky, if Yu Xiaocao didn't personally cook, then he would always find something wrong with the food. The village head, who wished he could put up offerings for this guy, repeatedly asked her to treat the royal prince well.

Fields of Gold Chapter 257

Yu Xiaocao, who was making 'honey abalone' angrily shouted at him, "If you want to eat it, then go and pick it yourself, alright?"

Today, when Royal Prince Yang saw the abalones that were drying out in their yard, he casually ordered the dish 'honey abalone'. Yu Xiaocao finally had a chance to go into the sea to help Third Young Master Zhou prepare the portions needed for the palace next month. All that hard work was ruined by his one word... it looked like she would have to go into the sea again these few days!

Madam Liu, who was acting as an assistant, glanced at her and whispered, "The other person is a royal prince, a member of the imperial family. Just because he has a good temper, it doesn't mean you can take advantage of it. Regardless of his identity, the visitor is a guest. If the guest has any requests, the host should try to satisfy them. That is hospitality."

After scolding her daughter a few times, Madam Liu put a piece of firewood in the stove and stood up. She walked over to the kitchen door and said, "Our family's Cao'er has a childish temper, please don't take offense. I'll go help you pick..."

Zhu Junyang was also curious about the vegetable plots in the backyard. He put down his cup, slowly stood up, and said to Madam Liu, "No need. I'm currently idle and have nothing to do. I'll go to the backyard and take a look. Go ahead and continue your work!"

Zhu Junyang left the capital on the orders of the emperor this time. He could stay until the corn and potatoes were ripe. Therefore, Head Steward Liu, who closely served him, also came. What did it mean to closely serve? Naturally, it meant that he will be wherever the master went.

"Master, let this old servant go pick it!" Although the royal prince still only had one expression on his face—that is to say, there was no expression, Head Steward Liu could hear his master's politeness toward Madam Liu from his tone.

His master never said false words to people. There were no exceptions, even for the so-called noble ranked women of the capital. Why did the prince make an exception for this Madam Liu, who was just a countrywoman? For the past few days, Head Seward Liu observed that it was not only Madam Liu that his master treated differently. What did the Yu Family have for the prince to regard them specially?

Could it be the matter of Yu Hai saving the master's life? That didn't seem right! Before the prince went out to sea, he had already met the Yu Family at the pier. At that time, he still had a cold and cool attitude and didn't pay them any attention. Was it possibly because the Yu Family had helped the prince with his problems, and could grow corn and potatoes? The men under the master were much more capable and had made outstanding contributions, yet the master never praised them for doing a good job? Just what magic potion did the Yu Family give his master?

Head Steward Liu was just in the middle of puzzling, and his master had already passed through the round doors into the backyard, coming to a more open vegetable field.

Unlike the leafy green vegetables planted in the front yard, the vegetables in the backyard were more abundant. On the surrounding walls, there were many sponge gourds with yellow flowers on them. On rows of bamboo racks, there are long fresh green beans, jade green cucumbers, fresh and tender calabashes, and golden pumpkins...In the well-planned vegetable field, the purple eggplants had a mysterious luster in the sunlight, the red and green pointy peppers covered the branches, and the tomatoes were like little lanterns sticking out of the leaves. The entire backyard was filled with the joys of harvest.

Seeing that his master's cold personality was gradually warming up, Head Steward Liu was rather relieved. It seemed that the master had an affinity for the rural scenery. Maybe after staying here for a while, the master will gradually turn back into the carefree little boy from when he was a child...

While Head Steward Liu was moved to the point that his nose tingled, Zhu Junyang had picked a tender cucumber from the cucumber rack and chewed it up in his mouth.

As soon as Head Steward Liu saw it, he hurried forward, "Master, let this servant wash it for you before you eat it!"

"No need, I saw Yu Xiaocao eat it like this last time!" Zhu Junyang took another bite. The crispy and tender cucumber was full of juice, refreshing and thirst-quenching.

'That little girl is used to living in the countryside. If she eats unclean food, it's alright. Master, you are delicate and pampered. If you get a stomachache, what will we do?' Head Steward Liu said in his mind.

At this time, Zhu Junyang came to the tomato field. Searching carefully, he finally found a red and colorful tomato under a cluster of thick leaves. The Yu Family didn't have to worry about selling their vegetables. There were many carriages that came to buy them every day. Tomatoes can be eaten raw or cooked. Naturally, they were one of the more popular vegetables for the rich people in town. To be able to find one or two out of the vegetable fields that didn't get sold was considered lucky already.

Zhu Junyang could care less about his new shoes that were dirtied by the newly watered soil. With a sense of achievement, he found five ripe tomatoes in the tomato field. He returned from the backyard content, with a tomato in his mouth and the rest in his pocket. He looked very casual and at ease.

He stomped the dirt off his feet and stomped toward the kitchen instead of sitting at the stone table. He rushed inside and hurriedly said to the busy Yu Xiaocao, "Yu Xiaocao, I want to eat scrambled eggs with tomatoes!"

Yu Xiaocao, who was struggling with the honey abalone, didn't seem to hear him as she was trying to mix the sauce over and over again. Yu Xiaocao didn't know how to make everything. In her previous life, she had made a lot of homemade dishes and she had some talent at cooking, so naturally, the taste of the food was quite good. However, abalone was very precious and her home wasn't near the sea in her previous life, so she hadn't seen much abalone, let alone cooked with it.

Thankfully, the current Head Chef of Zhenxiu Restuarant, Yang Feng, who was also the apprentice of the previous Head Chef Wang, once made honey abalone in front of her. It didn't look hard when she saw him make it, so why was it so hard now that she was making it?

"Yu Xiaocao, I'm talking to you. Are you deaf or mute?" Ever since he had further contact with the Yu Family, Zhu Junyang had also become more and more impolite with Yu Xiaocao. He used to politely call her 'Miss Yu'. Now, he not only called her directly by her given name, but he also ordered her like she was his servant. He always commanded her to do either this or that; Yu Xiaocao was almost annoyed to death by him!

"Neither deaf nor mute! The cook can't be distracted while cooking, otherwise, the food that comes out won't be edible! Young Royal Prince, go stay where you are supposed to stay!" Yu Xiaocao had also found out the truth about the Young Royal Prince's temper. He looked ruthless, but he wasn't actually that aloof and didn't seem that bad-tempered. At least, after being in contact with him so much, she had never seen him really lose his temper. Yu Xiaocao, who didn't have the consciousness of someone from the lower class, was speaking more impolitely to him the more tired she became.

Madam Liu and the rest of the family broke out in cold sweat from her antics from time to time. The royal prince looked young but he wasn't easy to get along with. If she infuriated the royal prince, getting hit with wooden planks would be the lightest punishment she would receive while losing her life could be the harshest punishment. Wasn't this how the plays always turned out? Their little daughter was really brave to challenge the royal prince's bottom line over and over again.

"I think the kitchen is a pretty good place. Staying here wouldn't be bad!" Zhu Junyang didn't get angry and even made a rare joke!

Head Steward Liu was so surprised that his chin could have dropped to the ground and hit his foot. This...was this the cold faced prince who scared children into crying and the one who wouldn't allow strangers close to him? When did he change his personality ah?

Yu Xiaocao was speechless for a moment, "Alright. If you're not afraid of breathing in oily smoke, then you can stay all you like!"

Zhu Junyang watched as she poured the sauce for the third time and couldn't help but say, "There are dishes that you can't make! Actually, I'm not actually that picky. When I was on the boat, I even ate raw fish. Don't be nervous, just cook it until it's not raw anymore. I won't think what you made is bad!"

In truth, he only said that because he didn't want her to keep attempting only to face failure again and again. Yet, the words that came out of his mouth still made her want to beat him up!

Yu Xiaocao ignored him and finally blended the flavor that she wanted. Only then did she peel the abalones, wash, and scored them with cross-shaped lines on top. Next, she put them in a bowl and added egg whites and starch before evenly mixing it together. She then steamed the abalones for a few minutes in the pot. The abalones she caught was on the larger side, so they needed to be steamed longer before they were cooked all the way through.

She cleaned the fresh mushrooms that she found from the coral, cut them into small pieces, and quickly blanched them in boiling water before taking them out. Then, she sauteed them in oil with ginger, scallion, and garlic. Afterwards, she added the seasoning she had just mixed using savory broth, salt, pepper, MSG, and sesame oil, and simmered the whole mixture into a thick sauce. After the abalone was steamed, she poured the sauce on top. The sweet-smelling honey abalone was finally done!

"It smells authentic, I wonder how it will taste?" Zhu Junyang gently sniffed the fragrance floating in the air and praised.

Yu Xiaocao walked over to him and took the tomato from his hand. She rolled her eyes and said, "This is my first time making it, so I can't guarantee if the taste is good or bad. Make do with it and eat it! Young Royal Prince, our family is just an ordinary family. In the future, can you please not order dishes with abalones or sea cucumbers?"

"Oh! Are you complaining to me? Your family is just ordinary farmers, yet ten carts of vegetables and seven to eight carts of watermelons are sold every day. Even if a business in town is booming, their monthly income can't match the money your family is making in a day. I just ate some of your abalones and your heart is already hurting? Stingy!" In front of Yu Xiaocao, Zhu Junyang was no longer the cold-faced prince with few words, one wrong move and he could become a chatterbox! Head Steward Liu had a frightened expression— he couldn't have followed a fake prince, right?

Yu Xiaocao had a glib tongue, so of course, she wouldn't lose to him, "Young Royal Prince, we are only making money these past few days. Watermelon is only in season for at most one more month. With just vegetables, how much money can we earn? We, the common people, depend on the weather for

food. When we have money, we have to think about the days when we won't have any money. Unlike you, your salary isn't going down while you are walking around and free-loading meals off of people. You have a royal occupation, so how can you know the sufferings of the common people ah!"

Zhu Junyang knew about the Yu Family's situation. When they hadn't separated from the main family, they didn't have enough to eat or wear and had to work and be scolded...Thinking of this lass being on the verge of dying several times due to serious illnesses, a tender and protective feeling rose from his heart.

Zhu Junyang softly said, "Don't worry! As long as the corn and potatoes grow well, the imperial court definitely won't treat you badly! With your family's talent in farming, I can help put in some good words with the emperor. Maybe, he'll approve you to be an agricultural official. At that time, you guys can also eat public meals and receive an imperial salary!"

"No, please don't!" Yu Xiaocao's face was so frightened as if he were a monster. Stepping to the side a bit, she continued, "Young Royal Prince, I know that you are trying to be kind, but us, common people, have no roots or foundations in the imperial court. Even if we become a small official, in the ranks of the court, we are still cannon fodder. Let's not do this, alright?"

Fields of Gold Chapter 258 - Changes

"Who said you guys had no roots? I will be your backer, who would dare to touch my people?" With a cold face, Zhu Junyang started emitting cold air. However, he was interested in the words 'cannon fodder'. He wanted to ask what they meant but he was afraid the little lass would say that he was ignorant, so he stayed silent.

"Yes, yes, yes! You are powerful! No matter how powerful you are, you still have to eat right? Here, scrambled eggs with tomatoes!" While talking, Yu Xiaocao had quickly cooked up the last dish. Just as she was about to bring it over to the stone table in the courtyard, Zhu Junyang, that door god, blocked the way, so she slipped the vegetables into his hands.

Zhu Junyang looked down at the bright red and golden 'scrambled eggs with tomato', and then looked at Xiaocao who had turned around to scoop out the rice. 'What does she mean? Is she telling me to take the dishes out for her? This lass's courage is growing bigger and bigger; she even dares to order this prince around!'

When Head Steward Liu saw this, his expression changed and he hurriedly rushed over to take the dish out of his master's hands. Head Steward Liu's heart shuddered and he thought, 'My little ancestor, how can you order the Royal Prince to take the dishes? Isn't this just asking a venerable old man to go hang himself—to go seek death?'

Unexpectedly, his master didn't appreciate his actions and dodged his hands. He carried the plate in one hand, held his other hand elegantly behind his back and walked out of the kitchen.

"Get out of the way! Here comes the rice!" Yu Xiaocao's voice rang out just as Zhu Junyang set the dish of scrambled eggs with tomatoes down on the table.

When he turned around, he saw that the lass, as if she was doing acrobatic, holding a big bowl of rice in one hand and had a teetering plate on top of two adjacent bowls in the other hand. Without thinking, Zhu Junyang reached out and took the plate of 'stir-fried spoon worms with chives' on top.

As if he had seen something extraordinary, Head Steward Liu's eyes almost fell out of his eye socket. They could say the dish just now was given by Miss Yu, so his master just brought it out. However, his master actually took the initiative to help Miss Yu with the dishes, this.. this... should they check to see if the master had been substituted by someone?

When Yu Xiaocao passed by Head Steward Liu, he grabbed her and quietly whispered, "Miss Yu, if you have any work, feel free to tell me. Don't be embarrassed about it...."

Yu Xiaocao saw that most of the dishes were already brought out so she waved her hand and said with a smile, "There's nothing for you to do. You can just sit and wait to eat the meal!"

How could the servant just sit and wait to eat, while the master serves the food? Did he still want to live?

"Young Royal Prince, do you want to have steamed bun or rice?" Head Steward Liu wanted to say something else, but he was interrupted by the clear and melodious voice of Yu Xiaocao. Seeing that his master had looked over, and even glared at him, Head Steward Liu tactfully closed his mouth.

Not only was Zhu Junyang not angry at Xiaocao for letting him bring out the dishes, but he also thought it was a new experience. . When eating at home, there were usually people serving them, so it looked comfortable and relaxed. But, in fact, there was a lack of ambiance. Unlike his family, even Yu Hai, who

came back from the fields, helped distribute the bowls and chopsticks. The feeling of the whole family working together gave off an overflowing sense of warmth.

After helping bring out the two dishes, Zhu Junyang suddenly felt he was no longer a high-ranking prince nor the enviable third son of Prince Jing, but instead he had integrated into the warm family and became a part of them.

"You guys, there's no need for a separate table. Just eat with this prince!" Zhu Junyang expressed an 'it's a great honor for you to eat dinner with me' attitude. In actuality, he had longed for the atmosphere of smiling and talking while eating, like the Yu Family.

Yu Hai was going to decline, but Yu Xiaocao wasn't going to act courteous with him. She merged the two tables of dishes into one, and quickly set up the stools. Zhu Junyang looked Yu Hai and blocked his words of refusal with a simple, "Sit down."

Head Steward Liu was numb already. Ever since coming to Dongshan Village, the master had become less and less like himself. Looking at the little master, who he had watched grow up, he felt that, with the Yu Family, the master felt more and more human. This didn't seem to be a bad thing.

"You don't need to wait on me here, go eat!" Zhu Junyang saw Head Steward Liu standing behind him, holding chopsticks and ready to try the dishes for poison, so he sent him away.

Head Steward Liu's eyes became tearful, he could finally eat a hot meal. The Yu Family's meals were all cooked in one pot, there was a portion set aside for him from every dish. Head Steward Liu usually insisted on serving the master himself, so by the time it was his turn to eat, the food had already gotten cold. Head Steward Liu was old and his stomach wasn't as good as when he was young. After a cold meal, he would always have a dull pain in his stomach.

When he was in the estate, it wasn't as bad. As the Head Steward, his disciples and followers, who had a good eye for things, would help him heat the food. However, when he got to the Dongshan Village, the master didn't even want to bring him along, much less other people. Head Steward Liu could only bear it.

He looked worried at the young master, who was eating and sitting among the Yu Family, and discovered that the master was able to do as they were doing, happily eating. Head Steward Liu finally felt relieved and sat down at the wooden table on the side and slowly ate.

"Father, didn't Third Young Master Zhou take over the supply of dried seafood for the imperial palace? He wants to make a contract with us. All the high-grade abalone and sea cucumber we catch in the future will be sold to the Zhou Family! They'll buy it at a high price!" The Yu Family didn't have rules where they couldn't talk while eating. They were usually busy with their own matters, so they could only get together when they eat. Due to this, they always talked about their matters at the dinner table.

Yu Hai glanced at the royal prince, who was seriously eating his meal, and cautiously said, "Even if we don't make a contract with the Zhou Family, with their care for us, we can still sell the high-grade seafood to his family!"

In Yu Hai's opinion, the Zhou Family really did treat them well. When they hadn't separated their families yet, the Zhou Family paid high prices for their quarry. When opening the factories and hiring workers, they trusted them to help. Also, the business of collecting spoon worms and oysters allowed them to earn them quite a bit of money in one year. In his honest opinion, if they took care of his family like this, then if he had something good, he naturally would think of them as well.

"It's just that the high-grade abalones and sea cucumbers aren't easy to come across! The Zhou Family can't just rely on our family...." Yu Hai thought his swimming skill was pretty good, but he still wasn't sure about being able to catch abalones and sea cucumbers.

"Don't worry, they definitely won't just rely on to us! Let's just try our best! Father, my swimming skills is pretty good now, I can go to help you!

"You? No way! How many times have you been in the sea? The deep-sea has many dangers, not only do your swimming skills have to be good, but you also need to have good physical strength. If you run out of energy in the middle of a dive, no one will help you, it's too dangerous!" Yu Hai adamantly refused.

Zhu Junyang glanced at Yu Xiaocao and couldn't help saying, "The sea isn't for horsing around. In the future, don't go into the sea so often!"

Yu Xiaocao glared at him. With bad intentions, she gave him a chopstick full of chives. She smiled and innocently said, "Young Royal Prince, try the stir-fried spoon worms with chives. It's delicious!"

During these past few days, Yu Xiaocao had noticed that the cold Young Royal Prince's mouth was very picky. He didn't touch vegetables like chives, onions, and garlic that had a strong taste at all.

Seeing that the young royal prince was gradually furrowing his brows as he looked at the chives in his bowl, Xiaocao felt very proud of herself. 'Humph! We are talking about family matters, what are you cutting in for? Ha, serves you right!'

Zhu Junyang stared at the chives in the bowl as if he was going to war with it. After looking for a long time, he finally moved. He stuffed all the chives into his mouth, drank a big mouthful of soup, and directly swallowed without chewing.

'Humph! This lass must've done it on purpose!' Zhu Junyang glared at Yu Xiaocao. 'Returning her kindness', he picked up some shredded ginger and put them in Yu Xiaocao's bowl. Zhu Junyang had long noticed that every time that lass eats a meal, she always picked out the ginger and put them on the table.

Seeing that the little girl was up to her old tricks of picking out the shredded ginger, Zhu Junyang said with great dignity, "It's this prince's first time picking up food and giving it to another person. This is a great honor to you, so you must eat it and not throw it away! Otherwise... Humph, don't blame me for punishing you!"

'Humph! Seeking revenge for such a small grievance!' Yu Xiaocao's thoughts were full of complaints toward him. She mixed the shredded ginger with the rice and ate it with a bitter face. Zhu Junyang and Yu Xiaocao were even now!

Yu Hang looked at his younger sister's dissatisfied expression, which looked like she wanted to continue provoking him. Thus, he hurriedly touched her with his feet under the table. His youngest sister's courage was really too big. Who was the person sitting across the table? The Great Ming Dynasty's Royal Prince Yang, a member of the royal family. We, ordinary people, couldn't wait to put up offerings for him or hide from him, yet why was she constantly looking for trouble?

Receiving her older brother's warning, Yu Xiaocao pouted and picked at her rice. Her little mouth was like a bloated frog trying to hold itself up. Zhu Junyang gazed at the little girl with a hint of a smile.

In this way, Royal Prince Yang came to 'inspect' Dongshan Village every three or five days, saying it was to record the growth data of corn and potatoes. In reality, his ulterior motive was the food and warm atmosphere of the Yu Family.

Princess Consort Jing was also aware of the changes in her youngest son. Her youngest son used to be indifferent to everything except her, his mother. It was like he was isolating himself in a circle and choosing endless loneliness as his company. Princess Consort Jing always felt that if it continued like this, she would eventually lose her son...

These days, her son seemed to be busy, diligently running to Dongshan Village. Every day, he would head out early in the morning and come back at night. Where did he eat lunch? Did she even need to ask? Her youngest son had been a picky eater since he was a child, he would never eat anything that didn't suit his taste. Besides that little girl of the Yu Family, who else would have that talent?

After a few days, her son's thin cheeks were filling out more and more every day. Although he still seemed cold and indifferent, that uncomfortable deathly aura of his was slowly dissipating, making him look more 'human'.

She wasn't saying that her son wasn't human, but like a ten-thousand-year-old cold iron, her youngest son used to be a big block of ice, making it hard for people to get close. Now, he was becoming more affectionate and talkative. He talked more and more frequently about the little girl of the Yu Family...

Fields of Gold Chapter 259

The days went by, one after another, and spring slowly walked to its end. The start of summer was imminent. The Yu Family's corn fields all had stalks of corn standing up straight like soldiers. Each leaf from the stalks of corn looked like a finely crafted sharp sword made from the finest green jasper; all so perfect that it looked like it was from the heavens. At the apex of the stalks, there was a tassel of male flowers, and they bunched around, looking like messy hair on the bodyguards.

For the past month, because Royal Prince Yang was particularly diligent and came by often, Xiaocao lessened the amount of mystic-stone water she used to avoid rousing his suspicions. Corn had always been a drought-resistant crop that feared floods. Even though there was less spring rain this year, it didn't influence the growth of the corn at all.

Zhu Junyang looked at the corn plants that were as tall as a man and had Head Steward Liu [1], who accompanied him, record what the male flowers looked like and the time period that they had appeared during the growth cycle.

The Yu Family's watermelons had been on the market for almost a month, so there wasn't a lot left in the six mu of fields. The leftover watermelons weren't very large, but their taste was not compromised.

Zhu Junyang strolled into the watermelon fields and stooped down to pick one out of the remaining melons. He had Steward Liu hold onto it as they headed back to enjoy it.

Behind them, Yu Xiaocao, who acted as their little assistant, curled her lips. This young royal prince truly didn't consider himself to be an outsider anymore. He picked the watermelons as if they were his own things.

"Xiaocao, can the male flowers that grow at the top of the corn plants also produce fruit?" Zhu Junyang remembered the news he had gotten from the capital. The Ministry of Revenue had followed the methods that the Yu Family had come up with to grow corn. It had been about a month and they were only now jointing. He had looked at the specimens sent over. Although they looked quite good, they still were quite inferior to the ones grown by the Yu Family. Could it really be true that the Yu Family had more talent at cultivating crops than other people?

Yu Xiaocao rolled her eyes at him and rudely replied, "Those who are ignorant are seriously too scary! People are split into men and women, flowers are the same. Since these are male flowers, how could they possibly bear fruit ah?"

Thwap!

Zhu Junyang lightly used the palm of his hand to slap the back of the little lass's head. The tone of his voice didn't have a hint of intimidation as he stated, "You're quite a bold little thing. Who are you accusing of being ignorant now? Looks like this prince normally indulges you too much. You are truly too cheeky now! You're lucky that I'm a magnanimous person. If it was anyone else, you would have lost your little life already!"

Steward Liu, who was standing at the side with a notebook in his hand and the watermelon in the other, looked at the faint smile on his young master's face. He felt immensely comforted inside, 'The heavens have eyes; they allowed my master to meet the only person who dares to joke with him, the harmonious and sweet Miss Yu.' Throughout this past month, he had observed the two and discovered that his master could only wholeheartedly relax when he was with Miss Yu. This was the only time that his master would occasionally show the appearance and mannerisms of a seventeen year old youth.

Yu Xiaocao held her head as she angrily stared at him. She raged, "You hit my head again! If you end up causing me to become stupid and an idiot from this, I'm going to make you take responsibility! You absolutely need to take care of me for the rest of my life!!"

Be responsible for the rest of this little lass's life? A hint of laughter appeared in the depths of Zhu Junyang's eyes. He gave her an already peeled chestnut and guffawed, "Stop trying to falsely accuse this prince! You've always been a stupid idiot, how can you blame me for this? You want to make me take responsibility? This prince is not a stingy person. With your tiny stature, someone who eats as much as a kitten, this prince can afford to raise dozens of you!"

"Do you think you're raising pigs ah? You even want dozens..." Yu Xiaocao accidentally insulted herself and she only realized it when the words came out of her mouth. Aiya, how did this happen? Did she really become stupid after getting hit by this guy?

The smile on Zhu Junyang's face widened and he looked at her from top to bottom. He revealed an expression full of disdain, "Pigs? Your figure is so slight and small, with no meat on it, if you were a pig, you'd be a skinny piglet. I'm pretty sure no one would want to take such a skinny piglet home to raise. This prince will be merciful and tackle such a difficult job of raising such a skinny piglet. Once you become more plump, I can slaughter you for meat..."

Yu Xiaocao hopped up and down in rage as she snarled, "Eat, eat, eat! You eat until you burst open!! And you still want to eat meat. Be careful that you don't eat so much that you become a big, fat pig and you can't even walk anymore!!"

"This prince exercises every day, so it doesn't matter how much meat I eat, I won't get fat. No need to worry!" The more he looked at Yu Xiaocao hopping up and down with a lively spirit, the better his mood became.

This private argument seemed to be going nowhere. Yu Xiaocao decided that a good woman never fought with a man. She walked into the melon fields to find a ripe watermelon. Suddenly, a dark shadow scuttled by her feet. It scared her that she let out a cry in surprise and jumped a few feet to the side.

"What's wrong? What's wrong?! What happened?" Zhu Junyang took giant steps forward and quickly arrived by her side. Because he was in such a rush, he had accidentally smashed a couple small watermelons that weren't yet ripe under his feet.

"It looked like a badger!" The badger that Yu Xiaocao talked about was very similar to the badger-like creature that was written by Lu Xun [2]. It was good at digging and lived in a cave in the mountains and fields. It liked to eat plants and vines but also ate insects and some other small animals.

Zhu Junyang searched through the melon field and spotted the nimble little creature not long after. His hand flashed quickly and the badger that was scurrying away quickly let out a short scream before it fell onto the ground, unmoving.

Wow! What sort of nifty concealed weapon did he have? Yu Xiaocao picked up her skirts and gracefully stepped over every melon before she arrived at the dead as doornail badger. The badger didn't have any signs of a large wound on its body. Instead, it only had a mark of being hit on its head. She carefully looked around the surrounding area and finally found the so-called concealed weapon. It was an ornamental thumb ring made of turtle shell.

He was able to hit a badger so hard that it died from such a far distance. Furthermore, the turtle shell thumb ring didn't look damaged at all. His strength and dexterity was not something a normal person could compare to. Yu Xiaocao held the turtle shell thumb ring in one hand while the other hand lifted up that badger, who had stepped into disaster just by walking by. She walked back to Zhu Junyang's side and regarded him with eyes that glowed with admiration, "Young Royal Prince, you know martial arts? Is this the legendary inner power ah?"

Under the undisguised admiration in those brilliant gem-like eyes, Zhu Junyang felt his ears grow hot. He pretended to be calm and icy as he replied, "This prince has studied martial arts since I was young. What's so weird about knowing martial arts? I only killed a badger, nothing to be proud of, right?"

"Hee hee! Young Royal Prince, if you're ever unemployed in the future, then you can change professions and become a hunter. You absolutely won't starve to death!!" Yu Xiaocao picked up the fat and plump badger and waved it in front of Zhu Junyang. She revealed a row of tiny white teeth, "Today, we'll eat this badger for lunch!" Zhu Junyang frowned as he looked at the coal black badger with a look of dislike. He curled his lips, "Such an ugly creature, and dirty to boot, is edible?"

It was as if the admiration and worship in her eyes were only a misperception. Yu Xiaocao regarded him with dislike again, "Inexperienced and ignorant! Let me tell you, a badger's meat is very nourishing. If you eat it frequently, you can strengthen your body!"

Zhu Junyang seemed to really enjoy crossing verbal swords with Yu Xiaocao, "A stinky badger can make you this happy ah! Don't you guys have a lot of game in the West Mountains ah? On another day, this prince will let you experience my astounding hunting efficiency. At that time, make sure you tell me what you want to eat, this prince will get it for you!"

Yu Xiaocao's eyes immediately brightened, "Is that true? You're not pulling my leg, right? Whatever I want to eat, you'll get ah?"

Zhu Junyang glanced at the devious smile at the corner of Yu Xiaocao's lips and he had a bad premonition. However, as a manly man, he couldn't go back on his words. He could only brace himself and say, "As long as the West Mountains have it, this prince will definitely be able to hunt it down!"

"I want to eat tiger meat, the paw of the black bear, leopard's tail, shark meat...I have never eaten any of these, so I really want to try some ah!" Yu Xiaocao put on a fake-innocent expression on her face. How come it seemed like she was really asking for a spanking?

The muscles on Zhu Junyang's face fiercely twitched as he let out a strained smile, "I think you've bitten more off than you can chew, eh? You dare to instigate me, this prince, to go hunt ferocious beasts eh? What are your intentions? Furthermore, do you guys truly have sharks that live up in the West Mountains? Let alone shark, getting you some fish up there isn't bad either!"

Yu Xiaocao made a funny face at him. She was only idly saying stuff. How could she possibly make him take such a dangerous risk?

"Yu Xiaocao, do the West Mountains really have tigers and leopards?" Men seemed to love to take risks. Zhu Junyang had missed the annual autumn imperial hunt, and he heard of one of the generals under his command taking his thunder. He felt quite uncomfortable. It was said that that fellow had been quite lucky and had come across an injured tiger. A blind cat had hit a dead mouse, yet it allowed him to win! If the West Mountains had tigers, he wanted to hunt one down and let all of those generals underneath him recognize him for his prowess!

Yu Xiaocao thought for a bit and shook her head, "I am also not sure. I heard the older generation say that they had once heard the roar of a tiger. Most of the fierce beasts live deep within the mountains and the vast majority of people don't dare to go in there, so it's natural that no one has seen any! However, I do know that bears live in there. My father had met one before..." He had almost lost his life from that bear!

Yu Xiaocao gripped her fists tightly when she remembered that scene again. Her father had been lying on the bed and the doctor had given him a death sentence. Everyone around them had a look of despair on their faces. She gripped her hands so tightly that the turtle shell ornamental thumb ring cut painfully into her palm.

Yu Xiaocao looked down at the object in her hand and said, "Here's your ornamental thumb ring!" She displayed it in front of Zhu Junyang.

Zhu Junyang looked at the imprint on Yu Xiaocao's palm and also recalled Yu Hai's previous misfortune. At that time, Yu Xiaocao was only eight years old and must have felt very helpless and worried. He wanted to say something to comfort her yet he didn't know what was right to say. He thought for a bit and then said, "The thumb ring is dirty now, so take it as a reward! Don't you want to eat bear paws ah? Another day, this prince will get some for you. Do you know how to prepare it?"

"Don't know how...however, the head chef at Zhenxiu Restaurant probably knows how! When the moment comes, let's go eat at the restaurant and have Older Brother Yang Feng make it for us. We can also order some of their specialities and happily eat a delicious meal together!!" Ever since her godmother had finished her one-month confinement, Yu Xiaocao spent less time in town nowadays. Her godmother said that she was going to return back to the capital soon in order to prepare for Little Linlin's hundred day ceremony.

His washing ceremony and full moon ceremony were all done in Tanggu Town. If she didn't do his hundred days ceremony in the capital, then her godmother's good friends, her godfather's close friends, as well as the declining Xia Family that wanted to fawn on General Fang...would have all come over to give them their congratulations already!

Zhu Junyang's eyes smiled as they roamed around that adorable little face. She described everything happily, as if the bear paws were already within her grasp and all she needed to decide was on how to eat them! Mhm! When he had the chance, he probably could go into the mountains to take a look. Perhaps he might really get an unexpected haul there!

Yu Xiaocao finally finished her thoughts on how to eat the bear paws. She waved the badger in her hands. The bright light from the sun made her smile seem exceptionally brilliant as she said, "Without bear paws around, let's eat this guy first! Do you want to eat stewed badger meat or braised?"

"What's your favorite way of preparing it?" Zhu Junyang rarely considered other people's likes and dislikes. If he was in his usual frame of mood, he would have said 'braised' without a thought for other people's feelings.

"Stewing is nutritious, whereas braising has a deeper flavor! Both have their advantages!"

"This prince wants to try both!"

"Then I'll stew half and braise the other half..."

.....

Under the sunlight, there were two figures slowly disappearing in the distance. One was tall, the other short; one was sturdy, the other delicate...

Fields of Gold Chapter 260 - Intuition

The time, when the male flowers grew on the corn, was the most crucial part of land management. At this time, all of the leaves on the corn were loose and large and the stalks were thick and sturdy. Only by having that could the kernels grow as large as possible, leading to a good harvest later on.

Yu Xiaocao had her cheat device, the little divine stone, so none of this was a problem for her. The Yu Family's fields were filled with healthy and mature corn stalks. Disease and lack of nutrients were not issues for them. All they were waiting for now was for the female flowers to recede and the male flowers to mature and let pollen loose.

Yu Xiaocao's family's six mu fields of watermelon were now completely sold out. In total, they managed to make more than fifteen thousand taels from those fields. Watermelon wholesalers were mostly the few families that had good relationships with them. There were other wholesalers that came from other parts of the country due to the Yu Family's reputation, but because there was a limit to how many ripe watermelons there were in a day, they could only get one to two carts of watermelon.

Royal Prince Yang would send a few carts back every ten days to pick up melons. He didn't take advantage of the Yu Family and bought the watermelons according to their regular wholesale price: large ones for five taels apiece and small ones for three taels a piece. He then hauled them back to the capital, where they could be sold for double their price there with plenty of people lining up to buy some. Prince Jing was being bombarded at every step by his colleagues, who were trying to enter through the back door to buy watermelons, so he took sick leave and went to Tanggu Town to 'recuperate'.

When the emperor heard of this, he curled his lip and silently cursed the other man, 'What is this being 'annoyed by other people' ah? More likely that he misses his wife too much, right?'

After more than a year's work on it, the vast majority of basic construction on Prince Jing's manor, which was on the West Mountain, had been completed. On the west side of Dongshan Village and in the vicinity to Yu Xiaocao's home, there was a long stretch of stone steps that snaked up the West Mountain. Behind the trees in the forest, one could vaguely see the outlines of the red and green glazed roof tiles that glittered under the sunshine.

A tall and lofty figure slowly went down those steps. Gradually, the person's appearance became more clear: a face that seemed to be perfectly carved, an exceptionally handsome figure, and a pair of strong eyebrows above a pair of aloof eyes that would occasionally flicker with the icy coldness from an ice age. The mountain breeze lightly lifted a few strands of his murky black hair and made his azure blue robes flutter. It was as if the God of War himself was descending from the heavens.

At the foot of the mountain was Xiaocao, who finally had some leisure time. Zhou Shanhu and some other village girls around her age had successfully pestered her into gathering wild mushrooms with them. It had rained the previous night and all of the wild mushrooms in the soil shot up through the soil. They resembled a glade of tiny umbrellas.

Zhou Shanhu raised her head and saw the azure figure walking down. She couldn't help but quietly exclaim, "Oh look! His Highness the Royal Prince is descending the mountain!! He looks too handsome!!"

Zheng Xiaocui, another village girl, clasped her hands over her mouth to muffle a giggle. She teased the other girl, "I heard that the royal prince isn't married yet and has no concubines. If you fancy him, then have Auntie Zhou send you over to become his concubine..."

"You silly lass, be careful that I don't rip your mouth apart!!" Zhou Shanhu was older than Xiaocao by a year and was already eleven years old. After a few more years, she could get engaged. Xiaocui's words made Shanhu feel simultaneously shy and angry, so she started tickling the other girl.

Liu Yingzi, who was the daughter of Liu Shuanzhu, a good friend of the Yu Family, quietly whispered into Xiaocao's ears, "That Royal Prince looks so scary. He has a knife-like intensity in his eyes and it makes me tremble to see them! Whoever becomes his wife or concubine would have to stare at that frozen face all day. If they don't get scared to death, then they'll definitely freeze to death!"

“There's one advantage to this. In the summer, he can decrease the temperature around you and cool the air down ah!” Qian Wen and Qian Wu's younger sister, Yafang, blinked her eyes in a silly manner as she quipped with a grin.

Yu Xiaocao covered her mouth with her hands as a “pfffttt” inadvertently came out. In her eyes, the young royal prince was only a paper tiger. He looked fierce but wasn't scary at all. However, it was only in her midst that Zhu Junyang was able to relax and tolerate her little antics.

“Master, looks like Miss Yu is over there...” Head Steward Liu had sharp eyes and was able to spot Yu Xiaocao within the group of girls around her age. He made sure to bring this up to his master.

Ever since Zhu Junyang was given the duty of monitoring the crops in Dongshan Village, his heartless second brother had escaped. He didn't even say a word before he ran away to enlist in Old General Zhao's army at the borders. Consequently, the responsibility of monitoring the construction of the West Mountain manor fell to Zhu Junyang.

Furthermore, Her Highness, the princess consort, had sobbed and complained to her youngest son, stating that all of them never cared about their parents' feelings and only cared about themselves. Her complaints covered his second older brother secretly enlisting in the army as well as him going out to sea. All of these had caused a lot of pain and suffering for her...

Zhu Junyang, who was the unlucky recipient, felt so haggard from his lady mother's nagging that he used the excuse of completing his official work and left early that morning to escape to Dongshan Village. After riding up the West Mountain, he did a quick look around to inspect the progress of the manor's construction and then descended. As he climbed down, he was scheming, trying to figure out what difficult dishes he could order for lunch from that little lass, who was always posturing in front of him.

After hearing Steward Liu's prompt, he looked towards the sound of giggles and laughter in the distance. Sure enough, that familiar skinny and weak-looking figure was currently bent over and looking for something in the grass.

“What are you looking for?” The dozen or so stone steps that were left were easily traversed by Zhu Junyang. The little girls, who were raucously talking, didn't notice that the topic of their conversation, the young royal prince, was only a few feet away from them.

When they heard the sound of that hard, icy voice, the little girls were so scared that they all trembled. They even forgot about their own baskets as they all scampered off.

Yu Xiaocao straightened herself and looked at the young royal prince who had somehow crept up behind her. She laughed, "I thought that there was some ferocious beast coming, but apparently it was you ah! Look at you, scaring all of the other girls away."

From the corner of his eye, Zhu Junyang faintly looked at the group of little girls who were hiding. Irritation bubbled up within his heart. He addressed Yu Xiaocao, who was ignoring him while she continued to pick mushrooms, "In the future, spend less time with them. All small-minded and petty, not worth the effort!"

Yu Xiaocao almost pelted the mushroom in her hand at his face. She looked displeased as she replied, "Young Royal Prince, you have a lofty status and position. Naturally, us wild commoners are nothing to you. Please keep your distance in order to avoid this commoner's pettiness from sticking to your body."

Even if Zhu Junyang didn't have his special ability, he would be able to tell that Yu Xiaocao was quite angry. He asked in a puzzled voice, "This prince wasn't talking about you, why are you throwing a temper tantrum ah?"

"They are all of my friends. If you don't respect them, it's the same as not respecting me!" Yu Xiaocao puffed up her face and angrily glared at him before she turned around and only let him look at the back of her head.

Zhu Junyang frowned and then looked in the direction of the little girls again. His ability told him that within that group of girls, there was at least one of them that didn't have pure intentions. He was afraid that that girl would end up influencing or harming Xiaocao, so he wanted to warn her but he didn't know how to explain.

Awkward silence prevailed for a bit and then he finally said, "You must be cautious when choosing your friends! If you're not, you might end up harming yourself as well as causing problems for other people..."

When Yu Xiaocao noticed that he was being quite serious, she placed the mushroom in her hands into the basket and looked him in the eye, "Do you know something? Is there someone in that group who wants to hurt me?"

“Whether or not she'll hurt you, I can't tell at this moment. However, someone within that group of girls doesn't have pure motives. You need to be careful...” Zhu Junyang was afraid she would end up getting hurt in the end, so he ended up giving her a warning.

“Them? One of them doesn't have pure motives?” Within the group of four girls, three of them were all considered Xiaocao's close friends. Zhou Shanhu had a bright and open personality and didn't have any shrewdness. Qian Yafang was the youngest of the group, and she was sweet and adorable. Liu Yingzi had a straightforward personality and acted like their older sister. She was very good at taking care of others. The only girl she didn't know well was Zheng Xiaocui. All she knew was that she was Liu Yingzi's neighbor and that the other girl had tagged along once she found out Liu Yingzi wanted to gather wild mushrooms. All of them were young little girls around the age of ten, who among them could have ulterior motives such that word even got into the young royal prince's ears?

Yu Xiaocao sidled along closer to Zhu Junyang and beckoned to him with her hand to have him place his ear closer to her. She quietly whispered into Zhu Junyang's ear, “Did you hear something from somewhere?”

“No!” Zhu Junyang felt like his ear was itchy and hurriedly straightened up. He shifted a bit to the side and pasted an icy expression on his face. If someone looked closely at his face, he or she would notice that the tips of this handsome youth's ears were slightly red now.

Yu Xiaocao leveled a glare at him and said, “If no one told you anything, then how do you know that one of them doesn't have pure motives?”

Zhu Junyang naturally couldn't tell her about his own strange ability as he was afraid that she would regard him as a freak in the future. He could only earnestly say, “Intuition!”

“Pfft—” Yu Xiaocao almost choked on her own saliva. She laughed as she said, “Young Royal Prince, when did your gender change?”

“Gender change? What do you mean?” Zhu Junyang had a feeling that this wasn't a good term so he looked at her alertly.

“Female intuition, female intuition. Naturally, only women will believe their own intuitions. Young Royal Prince, when did you also become so irrational?” Yu Xiaocao didn't quite know what to say at this point.

When Zhu Junyang saw that she didn't take this to heart, he didn't pursue this topic of womanly feelings. He cautiously warned her, "If you don't take this to heart, I have to tell you that this prince's intuition has always been very good. By relying on my innate intuition, I've been able to avoid a lot of plots against me! This prince is warning you out of the kindness of my own heart, it's up to you whether you want to believe me or not!"

Zhu Junyang glanced at the group of little girls not far from them. He didn't know what those girls were doing but he could tell that they were gesturing and talking about something! Just who was the culprit that wanted to scheme against Yu Xiaocao? He needed to keep a close eye on that unruly little brat! However, he would have never expected that the girl's target wasn't Yu Xiaocao but was him instead...

Yu Xiaocao didn't think she had anything that was worth someone else plotting against her. When she noticed that the young royal prince's mood seemed to be a bit down, she hurriedly interjected, "In a moment, I'll go buy a rooster from Auntie Zhou's house. For lunch, I'll make you some chicken stewed with mushrooms along with some flat bread. Although these dishes are examples of country cooking, they taste quite good!"

"Okay! I also want to eat some 'sour and spicy pig intestines with vermicelli'!" Zhu Junyang liked strongly flavored foods, so last time he ate a plate of sour and spicy pig intestines with vermicelli. The dish had numbing, spicy, savory, aromatic, sour and a fatty without being greasy taste. It hit all of his favorite points and since then, he could never forget that dish.

Earlier he had warned this little lass out of the kindness of his own heart, yet she laughed it off. Therefore, for lunch, he needed to make things difficult for her, so he ordered a Zhenxiu Restaurant speciality dish, 'sour and spicy pig intestines with vermicelli'. When she wasn't able to make it, then he would laugh at her.

However, he would have never expected that sour and spicy pig intestines with vermicelli was a dish that Zhenxiu Restaurant had spent five hundred taels to get ahold of the recipe. And it was from Yu Xiaocao herself!

At lunch, he devoured the authentic and incredibly delicious sour and spicy pig intestines with vermicelli. Only then did a thought pop up, 'What sort of relationship does this lass have with Zhenxiu Restaurant? How come she knows how to make almost all of their special dishes, and make it even more tasty than them?'

Zhu Junyang, who had been unable to trouble Yu Xiaocao with his requests, started to be picky again, "This chicken stewed with mushrooms is such a commonplace dish. If you could switch it for a wild pheasant instead, I'm sure it will taste much better. Tomorrow, this prince will give you a hand and hunt some delicious game for you to make into food!"

When Yu Hai heard this, how could he possibly let the royal prince get into a possibly dangerous situation? What if Royal Prince Yang had an accident in the vicinity of Dongshan Village? Other than himself, even the entire Dongshan Village would be implicated by this ah!