

Gold Chapter 27

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Everything immediately turned to chaos. Someone went to call the doctor, while another ran out to buy medicine, and so, hundreds of coins flew out of Madam Zhang's purse. Spending money was bad enough, but her husband also whisked her aside and scolded her profusely. Furthermore, up until the day her third son's family left to go back to town, her youngest daughter-in-law regarded her with contempt.

Afterwards, Madam Zhang sank into a gloomy depression and almost ended up ill from her pent-up feelings. From then on, she just pretended that the chit, Xiaocao, was invisible. No matter what the little girl did, the old woman would ignore it as if she had never saw it. Luckily the brat, other than mealtimes, kept to her own devices and didn't cause other problems that Madam Zhang found hard to abide. For the sake of saving money, she could endure anything!

"Mother, mother!" Madam Li's obese figure hurriedly came back into the courtyard from outside. As she crossed the threshold, the fat woman almost tripped and fell over.

She looked around the entire courtyard furtively like a burglar before she pulled Madam Zhang into a nearby room. She mysteriously said, "Mother, haven't we spent a lot of money on the household recently? I feel bad for you!! The entire Second Branch really eats too much. Their four children eat almost as much as three adults combined!"

Madam Zhang felt her temper rising again and complained in agreement, "Exactly! A whole bag of coarse grains disappears in a matter of days. Money flows out this household like water from a river. It's driving me crazy, and my mouth is full of sores from worry. Second Son's wife comes off as honest, but how come she's not relieving the burden at home?"

Madam Zhang complained as she slapped her thigh rhythmically. Her entire face was creased with resentment.

Madam Li replied in an empathetic tone, "That's just how it is! Second Son's wife pretends to be busy on the surface. She even tells outside people that she is the only one who does housework at home. Is there anyone who doesn't view her as a good wife? On the other hand, outsiders only call me lazy. However, mother-in-law, you have become an evil mother-in-law who treats her daughter-in-law poorly in the eyes of others!"

Madam Zhang gnashed her teeth together in anger and snarled, "That vile little wretch. She turned out to be such a malicious woman! I'd misjudged her!"

Seeing that her aim had been achieved, Madam Li came to the true purpose of her visit, "Mother, the only reason why she's doing this is because she has a lot of children. In the future, she'll have plenty of people to support her, right? However, I definitely have a method to reduce her confidence."

"The fact that she has many children only means that she's able to have them. Unlike you who could only lay one egg without any other progress!!" Madam Zhang had always felt bitter that her eldest daughter-in-law only gave birth to Heizi alone. However, now was not the time to pursue this topic. The old woman continued to ask, "What sort of method? I'd like to hear it."

"My older brother from back home told me that the carpentry shop in town was looking for an apprentice. Second branch's Xiaosha isn't young anymore and, as an apprentice, he'll eat and live away from us. That will save us from feeding another person's portion of grain, and, in the future, he'll be able to make a living as a craftsman." Madam Li's spit flew out of her mouth as she spoke.

Madam Zhang frowned, "Carpentry shop? Is that the one owned by Zhang Ji? I heard that Shopkeeper Zhang Ji is really cruel and that apprentices in that store keep changing. Some of them had even become permanently injured and disabled, if..."

Madam Li's waved a plump hand dismissively. "Those are just rumors. My older brother knows Shopkeeper Zhang personally and said he's usually very friendly. Otherwise, how could he have such a thriving business? He just has high expectations for his apprentices, that's all. Who doesn't want to find an apprentice that is more competent and hardworking, right?"

After thinking a bit, Madam Zhang had to conclude that the second branch's Xiaosha was not a lazy boy. Sending him out to become an apprentice wasn't a bad idea. After all, in several years, the boy would be able to do woodworking and could make a lot of money.

That night, during mealtime, Madam Zhang disseminated the news to all of the people. "Xiaosha is diligent and sensible. He also learns things quickly. Who knows, maybe in a couple of years he'll be able to finish his apprenticeship and then make his own money. With a skilled trade he'll have a much more stable future than relying on the winds and waters to make a living. The carpentry shop is only looking for one apprentice, otherwise, I would also have Heizi go too. In the future, the two cousins could take on work or open a store, wouldn't that be a good life?"

The rest of the household didn't have any opinions, but Yu Hai was a bit hesitant. "Mother, I've heard that carpentry apprentices spend a long time doing rough and heavy work. Xiaosha is still small, I'm afraid that he doesn't have the strength to lift and work the heavy wood."

The old woman's expression darkened and put her bowl down on the table loudly. "He's already eleven, you still think he's small? In two years he'll be able to marry a wife!! Second Son, you cannot spoil your kids! Mother is trying to treat you guys well. Carpenter Wang back in my hometown worked every year to build other people's furniture. He always had plenty to eat and clothes to wear. He has a better life by far compared to us!"

Yu Xiaocao looked anxiously at her older brother who was being left out like a tasty piece of meat. Inwardly she cursed, 'It's not just Carpenter Wang who has a better life. Most villagers eat better and wear better clothes than us. We don't live like this because we don't have money, it's because you're too stingy, Grandmother. You only care about Younger Uncle. Trying to send out such a young child out to become an apprentice, you're truly too heartless!'

She used some force to poke at her bowl of bean soup and muttered, "If this is such a good opportunity, why don't we send Brother Heizi first? He's older than Older Brother by three years and is about the size of an adult. He's still bumming at the village provoking random cats and dogs all day, shouldn't he go out and learn something?"

Madam Li promptly jumped in and scolded her, "This is an adult conversation, how could children participate? Second Brother-in-law, how could spoil your kids so badly?"

Madam Zhang wanted to yell something but managed to resist and swallowed it back down. Instead she said, "Heizi has a poor personality, what can he do? If we sent him out, he would only be sent back in a couple of days. If we're talking about ability, Dahai from a young age was always skillful with his hands. When other people were weaving baskets, he only watched them a bit before he learned it. Xiaosha is like his dad and wouldn't be bad at learning a skill."

"Mother, I wasn't saying I don't want him to go. I just want to wait two years to give him time to mature. Once he has grown in height, then he could go..." Yu Hai said goodnaturedly. He still felt worried about his little boy who had slowly grown under his eye.

Madam Zhang interrupted him, blurting, "Do you think this carpentry house is owned by us? Do you really think you can just let your kid come and go as you please? Other families whose kids are apprentices all sent them when they were young. Once he's older, he'll be slow at picking things up, who would want him then?"

As Yu Hai was about to reply, the previously silent Yu Hang calmly interjected, "Father, grandmother is right, I'm no longer a little kid anymore. Learning a craft isn't a bad thing for me. The neighboring village's Er Shuan was an apprentice before. He told me that as long as one was clever, quick and diligent with one's hands, then there wasn't much suffering to be had. I want to go!"

Yu Hai knew that his oldest son, who usually seemed quiet and dull, had big aspirations and ideas. He thought for a bit and decided that letting his son try wouldn't be a bad thing. If it didn't work out, he could spend a couple bits to bring his son back home. Seeing how enthusiastically Eldest Aunt was pushing her older brother to be an apprentice, Yu Xiaocao felt that there was something fishy about the whole situation. However, she couldn't pinpoint what exactly was wrong with the idea. She could only watch helplessly as her elder brother packed his things in a cloth and was sent to go to the town's carpentry shop.

In a flash, the blistering hot summer days had passed and cool and refreshing autumn had leisurely arrived. Right now was just the time to harvest the soybeans and sorghum from the fields, and everyone was brimming with joy from the harvest season.

The Yu Family was a model example of a fisherman's household. They focused heavily on fishing and hunting and only had three acres of sandy soil which were planted with the high yielding crop of sweet potatoes. It wasn't yet the time to harvest those, that was about a month away.

Game was at its peak in autumn. Every fall, the Yu Family no longer allowed Yu Hai to go out to sea to fish and instead had him stay back home especially to hunt. Almost every day he went up the mountains to hunt. Sometimes he would partner up with Hunter Zhao, but more often than not, he was on his own.

Yu Xiaocao tried to capitalize on her father's favor and tried her best to persuade him to take her with him. However, after thinking about all of the dangerous animals he'd encountered throughout the years and his daughter's sickly body, Yu Hai explicitly refused. He only consoled her by promising her he would always leave a piece of game for her.

Eating the same thing every day, even wild game, would get cloying after a while. Now that her immediate family had enough to eat every day, Yu Xiaocao was no longer preoccupied with eating and

drinking. She needed to earn money. As long as she had money, there was nothing she needed to worry about. Unfortunately, at this present time, she could only earn money surreptitiously. If they could separate their branch from the rest of the family, then she could make money much more easily. Unfortunately, most families in the ancient world never divided their households, so the hope for this happening was quite uncertain.

Furthermore, since Yu Xiaocao was only eight years old, her options for making money were so limited that it was pitiful. With that compounded with the need for secrecy, she really had a hard road ahead of her. Out of desperation, she switched her attention to the multicolored stone that was on her wrist. The divine stone noticed her gaze and leapt out to confront her: [Don't think you can use me as bait. I'm the magnificent stone that was used to patch the heavenly skies, how can I be used in such a humble manner?]

Yu Xiaocao replied, slightly embarrassed, "Little Glutinous Dumpling, do you think I have any other options? You once said that every time you helped me, your master, the purity and speed of absorption of spiritual power would increase for you. Being used as a magical fish bait is helping me! Otherwise, how else would my whole family have bodies that are now so strong and healthy? Where else would you find such a chance to display all of your powers?"

The celestial stone had previously, in a pique over the nickname 'Glutinous Dumpling [1]' chosen by its weak owner, refused to acknowledge Yu Xiaocao for several days. Later on since the little girl refused to repent, the stone had to begrudgingly allow itself to be called by such an unimpressive name. It was really quite depressed by this outcome.

Under Yu Xiaocao's persuasions, the multicolored stone started to waver on its stance. Every time it helped its master, it could feel the Goddess of Spirits' restrictions loosening a tiny bit. Afterwards, the purity and amount of power it could absorb would also improve. If it wanted to break through the Goddess of Spirits' chains, shatter the void, and return to Goddess Nuwa's side, it needed to help its master do more good things.

At its current state, there were very few opportunities that it could help its master with. Acting as fish bait for Xiaocao really hurt its pride as a divine stone. But for the sake of accelerating its power intake to get back to Goddess Nuwa's side, it was willing to be fish bait.

While the stone was making a decision, Yu Xiaocao had already prepared a rope. Brother Han had promised that he would teach her how to set traps today. If she had Little Glutinous Dumpling's help, then she would definitely hit bank every day. [Having me help you...it's not an impossible request!] As before, the stone sent out its spirit in the form of a golden kitten floating in the air. At this moment, it

was pointing its little ears back and had an unwilling look on its face. [However, you need to bathe me every day in the water from that valley's creek with the fish. That place's water aura is much more pure compared to other sources.]

"Okay, deal!" Xiaocao reached out a hand in an attempt to pet it. A golden kitten about the size of a ping pong ball was really too cute. It made her heart melt. However, the celestial stone proudly blocked her hand with a pair of wings that were made of light from its back. Light flickered as it dodged her caresses, and it twisted its little head to ignore her.

"Second Sister, why didn't you call me? I almost overslept!" Little Shitou's clothes were crookedly put on, and the little boy carelessly wiped his face as he ran. On the way, he picked up a carrying basket and followed Yu Xiaocao out the door.