

Gold Chapter 33

Chapter 33

Yu Xiaocao noticed his eyes darting around as he spoke and understood that his injury was not that simple. She recalled the short story that she read in elementary school called "Vanka [1]". In the story, apprentices were free sources of labor who were often cruelly beaten for the smallest reasons.

Looking at her eleven year old older brother's thin figure and emaciated face, Yu Xiaocao knew that his life at the carpentry shop wasn't very good. As she answered Yu Hang's series of questions, she took out the cloth bag that she used to wrap the shepherd's purse stuffed buns,

"Everything is fine at home. Brother Han taught me how to set traps to catch wild hares. I earned one tael from selling the game today. Eldest Brother, you don't have to worry. If you're unhappy staying at the carpentry shop, then come home. Our family has enough food for everyone, including you..."

"I'm doing great here! The head craftsman often praises me for being a good worker and that I work hard to learn the skills. He also said that he will teach me how to plane wood in a few days! In two years, when I graduate from apprenticeship, I'll be able to get a salary and support our family. By the way, why did you guys come here?" Yu Hang swiftly changed the topic as he secretly rubbed his injured leg, which ached from being hit.

Little Shitou took a piece of candy out of the oiled paper bag, stuffed it into his older brother's mouth, and grinned, "Zhenxiu Restaurant's young boss also treated us to a meal! A table full of food for just the three of us. Eldest Brother, I saved half a chicken for you. It was made with ginseng. You should quickly have a taste!"

"Brother Han, thank you for bringing my younger brother and sister to visit me. However, it's too far from the village. Xiaocao's health isn't very good, so she can't walk such a long distance. You guys don't need to come again." Yu Hang didn't take the chicken soup Xiaocao handed over and thanked Zhao Han. After that, he turned to warn his younger siblings.

Xiaocao shook her head and said, "It's fine. On the way, we encountered Grandpa Zhang, who delivered firewood to town. We borrowed this basin from Zhenxiu Restaurant, so you should hurry up and drink the chicken soup. If you can't finish the chicken, then wrap it in the oiled paper. It won't spoil even if you leave it until the evening. I also brought steamed buns for you. They were just freshly cooked before I left, so I got two of them for you..."

Xiaocao could tell that her older brother wasn't being treated very well at the carpentry shop, so she decided to frequently send food over to him in the future.

"I have a lot to eat and drink here, so I'm already tired of eating steamed buns. You guys should just take the steamed buns back to eat yourselves. Don't send me any more food in the future. The meals provided by the carpentry shop are pretty good!"

Yu Hang hid the fact that he ate hard bean pancake with cold water every day because he didn't want his family to worry about him.

If Yu Xiaocao was really an eight year old child, she would have definitely been fooled. She deeply sighed within her heart and pretended to be angry,

"What? Are you already used to eating good food and are now looking down on our family's coarse grain buns? Even if they provide good food here, it can't be compared to the good intentions of our family. Take it quickly! Otherwise, I'll be angry!"

Yu Hang had wanted to say something, but choked up. His heart was filled with familial warmth as he quietly held the cloth bag that his younger sister had forced into his hands. It had been nearly three months since he came to be an apprentice. He was often scolded and beaten by the shop's worker and craftsmen. Even though he was often dizzy and weak due to hunger, he still had to perform hard and heavy labor every day. Thus, his entire body would be sore and painful every night. There were also times when he almost couldn't endure any longer... However, he would always think of his family during those difficult times. He would remember his mother's gentle smile, his father's encouraging gaze, and his younger siblings' cute smiling faces...

The only reason he had sustained for so long was because of his family!

"Yu Hang! Where the hell did you go? Until when are you going to slack off? The shop's order of timber arrived. Aren't you going to get back in here to work? It's such a waste to feed you lazy bums..."

The owner of the carpentry shop, Shopkeeper Zhang, looked out and examined Xiaocao and Shitou's attire. He twitched his lips in disdain, and then yelled fiercely at Yu Hang.

Yu Hang held the cloth bag tightly in his arms and forced a smile, "Our Manager Zhang appears like a mean person, but he's actually very nice. He usually treats us very well... I need to go in to work. Be careful on your way back. You don't need to send food over in the future. I'm fine..."

"Why aren't you in here yet?! If you don't want to work anymore, then scram! A piece of junk that just wastes food!" Manager Zhang impatiently berated, as if he was ordering a submissive animal.

Yu Xiaocao looked at her older brother's back as he hastily ran inside. She decided in her heart that she will take Yu Hang home as soon as possible. Apprentices had no freedom and human rights. Furthermore, even their self-esteems were trampled on by others. Thus, she would be the one to protect her own family!

Little Shitou held the bag of sweets within his hand, but it was as if the candies had lost all its sweetness. The little fellow seemed to be holding back his emotions as he raised his head to look at his second sister and said,

"Second Sister, if only there was a way to make people grow up more quickly. If I'm a grown up, I can be like our father. I can catch a lot of game and earn money to support our family. That way, other people will not look down on us and Eldest Brother will not be bullied by other people..."

Yu Xiaocao caressed his little head and wanted to give him an approving smile, but she sighed deeply instead.

"Older Sister, Brother Han, where are we going now?" Little Shitou had already lost his initial excitement as he walked with his head bowed.

Zhao Han noticed that the siblings weren't in a very good mood. He pondered briefly and said, "It's still pretty early right now. After we deliver the fish to your younger uncle, we can just casually roam the street."

The three quickly found Yu Bo's rented residence. He had gone to the academy and wasn't at home. Xiaocao politely declined her younger aunt's, Madam Zhao, warm offer to stay. After she left with Zhao Han and her younger brother, they began strolling on the street.

The main road of Tanggu Town's three streets was lined up with restaurants and inns. Right now, all the biggest restaurants and inns were owned by the wealthy Zhou Family.

Some of the wealthy noblemen, who had been traveling by sea, would stay and rest in Tanggu Town after they arrived ashore. The streets were full of noblemen dressed in fine clothes and mounted on groomed horses. It was also quite common to see exquisite horse carriages accompanied by maidservants and senior servants.

With enjoyment and satisfaction, the siblings observed their surroundings as they walked.

Little Shitou held the pastries that his sister second brought with one hand, while he messily ate the candied hawthorn stick in his other hand. His big eyes seemed insufficient to take in everything, as there were so many new and interesting things to see in town.

"Huh? Second Sister, isn't that Uncle Zhao and Father?" With the hand that held the candied hawthorn stick, Little Shitou pointed at the bustling crowd ahead. He looked more carefully and confirmed, "It really is our father! Second Sister, let's quickly go over..."

Yu Xiaocao swiftly stopped her younger brother and shook her head in disapproval, "Why are you going over? If Father finds out that we sold game, can we still keep a secret purse? If all the money goes into our grandmother's purse, then we'll have to starve and freeze in the winter!"

Little Shitou looked at the pastries and candied hawthorn stick in his hands. If his grandmother took all the money, would he still be able to eat the sweetly-sour candied hawthorn and the sugary maltose candy?

"Second Sister, what should we do?" Little Shitou worshipped his second sister, who seemed like a completely different person ever since she injured her head.

When he followed her, not only could he eat meat, but he could also earn and save money. Even their grandmother didn't dare to discipline her. Second Sister was also a very generous person. She was willing to buy expensive pastries for him to eat. Thus, he decided that he would firmly support all decisions made by his second sister in the future. It was an unshakeable promise that he would keep for thirty years!

Yu Xiaocao had unexpectedly gained her younger brother's loyalty with just some crude pastries and candies hawthorn that cost around a dozen copper coins. No wonder he was a little foodie!

Holding onto her younger brother, she pulled on Zhao Han's sleeve and swiftly dodged into an alley. If she hadn't moved quickly, she would have been caught by her father.

"What's wrong?" Zhao Bufan, who was carrying a male deer, couldn't help but ask when he noticed his close friend, Yu Hai, looking back from time to time.

There were several small game hanging on Yu Hai's tall body. With slightly creased brows and pursed lips, he muttered hesitantly, "Just now... I think I saw Xiaocao and Shitou..."

"Your second daughter and youngest son? Are you sure? How could they possibly walk so far to town when one of them has a weak constitution and the other is only five? You probably saw someone who looked similar to them and made a mistake." Zhao Bufan would have never thought that his own son would bring two young children to town to sell game.

The supposedly weak Xiaocao was extremely bold and leisurely shopping after she successfully avoided her father.

[Master, Master! I can sense spiritual energy nearby. It's on your right side. Quick, take me over to check it out!] The little divine stone was so anxious that it forgot its pledge of 'not acknowledging Xiaocao as its master'. The energy nearby was quite strong, so if it could absorb the energy, then it would be even better than bathing for ten days.

Yu Xiaocao hastily looked towards her right. 'Isn't this a pharmacy? Could it be that this pharmacy also sells elixirs that helps with cultivation?'

"Tong—Ren—Tang... Second Sister, I can recognize these characters!" Little Shitou's face was a sticky mess after he finished the candied hawthorn. He looked up with a smiling face, as if he wanted to be complimented and loved.

Her younger brother can read? Of course, he should be praised. Yu Xiaocao generously complimented, "You're worthy of being my younger brother. You were actually able to read! Tell me, where did you learn it from?"

Little Shitou grinned happily and proudly said, "Second Sister, Eldest Brother learned a lot of words from our younger uncle. After that, he taught the three of us. I can recognize over two hundred characters... You injured your head, so you probably don't remember anymore!"

"Although I can't remember some things clearly, I can still recognize these characters." It was a lot more convenient since the original host also recognized a few words.

Little Shitou nodded and said, "Second Sister, when learning to read, you were the fastest learner among the three of us! Younger Uncle said you probably have excellent retentive memory. If you were a boy, our family would definitely send you to study at the academy."

Xiaocao noticed his envious tone, so she caressed his little head and said, "Our Little Shitou is also very smart. You're only five, but you can already recognize so many words. Don't worry, your older sister has money. I'll send you to study at the academy next year. It will be the same if you come back to teach me after you learn how to read."

Little Shitou recalled that the rich young master gave his second sister an ingot, which should be enough for a year's tuition. The little fellow smiled even more brightly since there was hope that he could go study.

Zhao Han, who was silently walking behind the siblings and protecting them, was surprised to see Yu Xiaocao entering the pharmacy, "Xiaocao, are you not feeling well? If you're sick, you must go treat it. You mustn't delay it and don't be afraid of spending money..."

'You're the one who's sick!' However, Yu Xiaocao was somewhat doubtful of the medical skills of the village's barefoot doctor, Doctor You. When she transmigrated into this body, it was already in such a dire state. Hopefully, there wouldn't be any lingering effects from her past illnesses. She should let the doctor in town take her pulse, so she could either treat her illness or be at ease.