

Gold Chapter 331

Chapter 331 – Spring Planting

Yu Xiaocao was currently thinking about what to do. This residence shouldn't only be used for half a month to live in while her brother took his exams. In order to get the most value from the purchase, she needed to do something else with it. Originally, she was thinking of renting it out to students who were taking exams. However, even with that idea the residence would stay empty for more than ten months out of the year! That was such a waste of an investment!

She really wanted to go back to her roots and open a braised food store. However, right now was not the right season for this as it would be hard to have a food-related business take off, especially something that relied on meat. It was just the start of spring, meaning it was the usual time for people to catch piglets for people to raise. Thus, there was a half a year delay before those piglets would be ready for slaughter. As for chickens and ducks, she also needed to wait for half a year...forget it for now, there was no need to think so much now. Once she got home, the whole family could get together and decide what to do!

The day of the prefectural exam approached quickly. With the experience of one set of examinations under their belt, Little Shitou and Qian Wen were both a lot more calm and collected this time around. At five in the morning, the doors to the prefectural examination yard opened. Because the exams were only across the street from them, the two of them ate breakfast and left the house at five in the morning. After undergoing inspections by the guards, they were seated according to their exam results. Everyone was given a small booth in the prefectural examination courtyard. This was another measure to prevent people from cheating.

The prefectural exam consisted of vocabulary, essays, and essays discussing political affairs. It was split into writing from memory, poetry and prose, and current affairs. Writing from memory posed no difficulty at all for Little Shitou. Furthermore, prior to the prefectural exam, Headmaster Yuan had personally instructed him and gave him tutoring on poetry, prose, and current affairs. Therefore, the other two sections of the exam were also passable for him.

There were a total of fifty people who qualified for the prefectural exams and they were split into two ranks. The top ten were considered the rankers. When they were being seated, Little Shitou was at the tail-end of the rankers and was number nine. During the examinations, the prefectural magistrate and many of the examiners had all taken note of this exam candidate who was the youngest of the bunch. They made sure to remember his name. When they were discussing the exam results and grading, they discovered that this cute and handsome little examinee had unexpectedly very good results.

They went back to review the sign up materials and discovered that he had studied at Rongxuan Academy, so his results were not surprising at all. Rongxuan Academy had produced many geniuses. An eight year old who could pass the county level examinations was not off the mark. Even a ten year old top scorer in the imperial palace examinations could be produced from them.

When they were looking at the results, Yu Bo deliberately waited over there. His name was also on the list. However, compared to the rank that Little Shitou received, he was only a B-rank and was only within the top forty. Someone who had passed the prefectural exam was someone who was halfway towards passing the entry-level exams as a whole. After passing the third in the series, only then was a candidate considered to be someone who had passed the county-level exams.

Originally, Yu Bo was full of self-confidence. However, after he saw his little nephew's results and compared it to his own, he had to admit that comparisons were the devil. He had been studying for over a decade yet he only scored at the back of the pack. His young nephew, on the other hand, had only studied for only two years yet he was able to score in the top ten!

He didn't believe that his own intelligence and efforts were any less than his nephew's. Instead, he placed all of the blame on the fact that Little Shitou was able to study at a famous school and he wasn't. Yu Bo even thought, 'If I was able to enter Rongxuan Academy last year, I would definitely have a better result than Little Shitou. Like at least the top three!' No one knew where his self-confidence came from!

However, the top three on the prefectural entry exams were all students from Rongxuan Academy. In fact, within the rankers, seven of them were students from Rongxuan Academy. Were they not giving other people a chance? Based on that, it wasn't surprising that many people did everything they could to enter the school!

Yu Bo restrained the raging jealousy within his heart and congratulated Little Shitou. The Yu Family's siblings also congratulated him. After setting the time when they would head back, they went their respective ways. As for where the Yu Family's siblings were living, Yu Bo didn't even bother to ask them.

The day after the results were published, the two siblings packed up everything to go back home. There were a lot of tasks waiting for them when they got back. The most important out of all of them was to get the corn crop sowed into the ground. Although the last entry-level exam was also in the prefectural city, it only happened in the autumn! The county-level exams only happened twice every three years and this year was the second of the two. Otherwise, they would have to wait until next autumn to take the exam.

When they got back, the courtyard was covered in a carpet of green liveliness. It made a person feel comfortable just from looking at it! The front courtyard was planted full of green leafy vegetables that were already ready to be harvested and sold. Under their agreement with Zhenxiu Restaurant, the vegetables were first sold to them to provide the Tanggu Town's and prefectural city's branches. Then, the remaining vegetables could be sold to their frequent customers in Tanggu Town. There were many buyers that had come over happily to inquire but they had to leave disappointed. If they didn't have to plant and breed corn, Yu Xiaocao would have wanted to use the farmland in Tanggu Town to plant early-growing green vegetables. Could make a lot of money ah!

That evening, the residence only had Madam Liu, Yu Caifeng, Liu Yaner, and Little Fangping. After asking, she found out that her father and her uncle had taken Liu Junping to the Yu Family's farmstead to prep the land. They had already plowed almost all a hundred mu and fertilized it too. They were just waiting for Yu Xiaocao to come back before they started planting the seeds.

Farming matters didn't wait for anyone. The next day, early in the morning, Yu Xiaocao rode her little red horse to her family's farmstead in town with the young royal prince accompanying her. All of the corn seeds had been transported to the storehouse there and there was always someone there watching over them every day.

The tenants on the farmstead regarded the owners with awe and gratitude. Last year there was the drought as well as the locust plague, so there wasn't any harvest to be had let alone enough to pay the rent. Even getting food to eat was a problem. Right about the time they were going to despair, the owners had waived them from paying rent and gave them a way to survive.

After managing to survive the winter with difficulty, most families had no resources left. Just as they were at an impasse, the owners appeared again. At first, the news that they brought, that they weren't renting out the land anymore, had hit like a bolt of lightning. Some people started crying bitterly right then and there, and everyone kneeled in front of the masters to beg. Tenant farmers all came from poor families and didn't have much. They had somehow managed to survive the autumn and winter seasons of last year. If there was no land to be rented, then they would truly have to go out on the streets and beg for food!

After the owners coaxed them all up and explained, they found out that the masters wanted to hire them to till the land. Those that did more work and did it well could get a reward. It was a bit like being hired on as long-term workers. However, the wages they offered were on the higher side and were quite fair.

When it was time to plow and fertilize the fields, everyone worked their hearts out. Even the women and older children in their families came out to help. There were a hundred and seventy or so mu to take care at this farmstead. All sixteen families here had been farmers for generations. Those who had more hands at home could plow around fifteen to sixteen mu. Those that had fewer could still plow three to four mu.

Most of the families on the farmstead were facing imminent starvation due to lack of food stores. Thus, Yu Hai made sure to hand out their wages on a daily basis. Those who plowed more and did a better job could receive more money. The families who plowed less or perhaps didn't do as good of a job would receive less or even no money. Thus, on the first day, there were some families who received a hundred copper coins while others only received twenty to thirty copper coins.

Even the people who only got twenty to thirty copper coins were quite satisfied. The current markets had reasonably-priced grain. Coarse grains were eight to nine copper coins a catty, so the money from a day's work could buy three catties worth of grain! If you added on the wild herbs that the children gathered, the family could still eat until they were half full.

However, those who only pursued speed and not quality on the first day learned their lesson for the second day and made sure to spend their time doing the job well. Sure enough, the money they received for the second day was a lot more than what they got from the first. As this happened, those who were trying to take advantage of the situation all settled down and began to carefully farm to earn money.

Within a dozen days, all a hundred and seventy or so mu of farmland had been carefully plowed. Weeds had all been cleaned up and the land had been fertilized. The fertilizer used was all human waste that had come from each family saving it up at home. Yu Hai set a price of five copper coins a cart for the fertilizer and bought it from all of the tenant farmers. The tenants didn't expect that the fertilizer created from their own waste could also be sold for money, so they were even more deeply grateful towards their employer.

When Yu Xiaocao arrived at the farmstead, she first met up with her father. After chatting a bit, the two of them separated to do their own work. Yu Xiaocao went into the storehouse to select seeds while Yu Hai gathered all of the tenant farmers up. With the manager of the farmstead there, Yu Hai, as the owner, didn't need to personally do these menial tasks.

Zhu Junyang followed Yu Xiaocao and watched as she first went to the farmstead's well and drew up a bucket of water. In actuality, Yu Xiaocao was using the action of drawing up water to conceal the fact

that she told the little divine stone to alter the well. The well water was now a very dilute form of mystic-stone water.

When he saw Yu Xiaocao struggling to carry the bucket of water, Zhu Junyang took the bucket over with a look of disdain, "Your arms and legs are way too weak. Aren't you afraid that this bucket of water will cause you to collapse?"

Head Steward Liu was shocked, 'Master is helping Miss Yu carry water? When did Master ever do such crude labor like this before?'

"Master, leave it there and let me take it instead!" Head Steward Liu hurried forward to take the bucket of water from Royal Prince Yang.

Yu Xiaocao didn't feel it was right for Head Steward Liu to do hard labor at his age, so she interjected, "Forget it, let me do it instead! The more I exercise, the stronger I'll get!"

"Alright, alright! Let's go, where are we taking this?" Zhu Junyang carried the bucket of water and ran forward. Yu Xiaocao had to run to catch up. Behind them was Head Steward Liu, whose face was wrinkled into a suffering frown.

When they got to the storehouse, Yu Xiaocao took out her bottle of already prepared 'special medicine' and poured it into the bucket to mix. Once done, she sprayed it on the corn seeds.

Zhu Junyang didn't quite understand what she was doing, so he asked, "What's the purpose of spraying this water on the seeds?"

"To prevent pests and disease from harming the plants ah!! Look, in the autumn, there were probably insects that laid their eggs in the soil. When spring gets warmer, those bugs will all come out and will start eating the roots and shoots of the crops. If I spray the seeds with this pesticide, we can avoid losing some of our crops!"

Yu Xiaocao was very earnest as she explained herself. In fact, the spiritual power within the pesticide could also increase the germination and survival rate of the seeds. These other factors were not easily explained to the young royal prince. If the young royal prince didn't follow her inside, she would have

directly sprayed the mystic-stone water onto them instead of going through the hassle of 'mixing pesticide'.

The seeds that had been sprayed with 'pesticide' were all delivered out into the fields. The tenant farmers took the seeds and watched the owner demonstrate the depth of the holes and distance between the holes. Following that, they started to enthusiastically sow all of the seeds into the ground.

Yu Hai and Liu Hu all had a decent amount of experience with this, so they were in charge of patrolling the land and watching over the process. They conscientiously recorded down every family's speed and quality of work. This was the first time that the tenant farmers had encountered the planting methods for corn, so some of them hadn't fully grasped on how to plant them. Yu Hai and the others identified those people and also patiently taught them the right method.

The efficiency of sowing on the first day was relatively low. The faster families had managed to plant about two mu worth and they received around eighty copper coins in wages. The ones who planted the least were Widow Li and her son. There were only two of them and her son was only around ten years old. Although the two of them were slow, they were very diligent and careful with their planting. In fact, Widow Li was afraid that they might plant the corn in the wrong distance, so she used a branch that she had broken into the correct length to measure as she slowly dug the holes. Yu Hai had seen everything they had done, so when they were getting their wages, they received forty copper coins in total.

Chapter 332 - First Trip to the Capital

Widow Li knew that the owners were taking care of her and her son, so she gratefully took the money but didn't say any extra words. There were a lot of widows in the world and she was afraid the people who did more work than her would start gossiping. However, she made sure to engrave the masters' kindness deep within her heart. Forty copper coins was enough money to feed her and son for several days. Her son, who had starved into a bag of bones and only had a large head on his shoulders, would finally be able to eat a filling meal!

The speed and quality of their work was closely tied with how much money they made. All of the tenant farmers were in good spirits. Every day they enthusiastically started working before the sun rose and reluctantly left when the sun finally set. Thus, all a hundred and seventy or so mu were very quickly plowed, fertilized, and sowed with seeds. Afterwards, the tenant farmers became nervous. All farmers knew that the busiest times of the year were spring plowing and the fall harvest. The rest of the time they mostly weeded the fields and watered the crops. The owners had said that corn was a type of plant that could endure droughts but not floods, so it didn't require a lot of water. They weren't sure if they would still receive a wage during the idle time of the year.

Before they could fret for too long, new work arrived . Royal Prince Yang had bought over eight hundred mu of farming land and needed them, the ones with experience, to teach the newbies how to till the land . The same wages that the Yu Family set would also be paid . The fields over there had already been plowed, but they weren't plowed as well as the Yu Family's fields . Furthermore, the lands weren't fertilized as much as the lands on the Yu Family's farmstead . It was too late to buy more fertilizer, so Yu Xiaocao could only increase the concentration of the mystic-stone water in order to guarantee that the output of the corn at harvest time wouldn't be too unsightly .

When all of the corn had been planted, Yu Hai paid the tenants a monthly wage based on how many workers there were in each family in order to make sure they were all taken care of . An adult worker could receive twenty copper coins . During harvest time, those who had a higher output would get a higher reward .

Royal Prince Yang naturally had his own managers to oversee his eight hundred mu . When he saw Yu Hai and his family making all of the management decisions, he wondered if he should give them a manager . In the future, they would have almost a thousand mu of farmland in Tanggu growing corn . If they all relied on the Yu Family to oversee them, would they be able to handle it?

Zhu Junyang especially transferred over Manager Nian from one of his farmsteads in the capital . He solemnly instructed him that he needed to follow all of the orders that Yu Hai and his family gave . If any issues arose in the corn fields, he needed to ask the Yu Family for guidance . Manager Nian noticed that his master highly regarded the Yu Family, so he silently reminded himself that he must treat them with the utmost respect in the future .

In Manager Nian's eyes, the Yu Family were in the same boat as him . Both of them were helping his master handle affairs . However, in the master's heart, the Yu Family was on a higher level than him . Manager Nian had been born and raised in Imperial Prince Jing's estate and had slowly climbed up the ladder . The higher ranked servants at the estate had a lot of power, while the lower ranked servants could only obey them unconditionally .

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When all of the seeds had been planted here, they received some news from the capital . The imperial farmsteads had also finished sowing corn in their fields . Royal Prince Yang was a bit worried now . Could corn seeds that hadn't been sprayed with pesticide grow as well as the corn crops in Tanggu Town?

He sought Yu Xiaocao and her father and explained that he hoped that they would go with him to the capital for a trip . Everything important here had mostly been done . The watermelon fields were being taken care of by Liu Hu's entire family, and the farmsteads with corn had the farmstead manager as well as the manager Royal Prince Yang sent over to oversee . There shouldn't be any issues arising . Thus, Yu Hai went back home to discuss this proposal with the entire family and then decided to go into the capital with Royal Prince Yang .

Yu Xiaocao had already altered all of the wells in the farmstead to contain a very low concentration of mystic-stone water . This would not only promote the growth of the crops but would also have good effects on the humans that drank it . Yu Xiaocao also, out of the kindness of her own heart, altered the wells in the lands that the young royal prince had bought . This would guarantee that all of the corn in Tanggu Town would grow well .

After all of the loose ends at home were taken care of, the father and daughter pair traveled along with Royal Prince Yang's entourage . All of the villagers had heard that the two of them had been invited by the royal prince to the capital to plant crops, and they were all extremely envious . The Yu Family truly had skill; they could even become famous from raising crops .

The vast majority of villagers had only traveled as far as the town . Those who had been to the prefectural city had boasted about it, so going to the capital was a whole other matter . The Yu Family members had been personally invited by the royal prince to go! If they completed the task well, perhaps they would even be rewarded with a residence in the capital or something . Perhaps the Yu Family was going to move to the capital in the future?

Under the envious gazes of their fellow villagers, the two of them climbed into the flashy carriage that the royal prince had brought over . The carriage left and traveled in the direction of the capital . Yu Xiaocao had brought along her little red horse . When she was in the mood, she would ride the tiny horse to appreciate the scenes round her . When she got tired, she would go into the carriage, drink a cup of tea, eat some snacks, and then take a leisurely nap . Once energized, she would go back on her horse and quibble with the young royal prince to pass the time .

The distance from Dongshan Village to the capital could be traveled in one day and one night if the person traveling was on a horse galloping at top speed the entire way . If they were on a carriage, traveling by day and resting at night, it took around three days of travel . Royal Prince Yang was afraid that Yu Xiaocao's body wouldn't be able to take a strenuous voyage, so they rested somewhat frequently in between .

In the evenings, they did their best to stop at a small town and find a nice inn to allow Yu Hai and Yu Xiaocao to rest after traveling the whole day . At noon, if they weren't trying to get somewhere, they would rest on the side of the road and prepare lunch to eat to their heart's delight . Thus, the journey was not as tiring as Yu Xiaocao had originally thought . Instead, it was like going on a scenic tour and occasionally camping outside to prepare food .

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Originally, Royal Prince Yang had prepared a residence for the two of them . However, when Fang Zizhen found out that his adopted daughter was going to the capital, he made sure to notify his wife well in advance . When the group of them was about five kilometers outside of the capital, they spotted Lady Fang with her maidservants anxiously waiting for them .

“Godmother, why did you personally come here? Where's Little Linlin?” Yu Xiaocao jumped off the carriage and threw herself at Lady Fang . She rubbed her head against her godmother's abdomen .

Lady Fang lovingly stroked her goddaughter's black and glossy hair and lightly laughed, “Little Linlin has recently been coughing, so he's at home with the wet nurse! I was afraid if I sent other people to wait, they wouldn't recognize you . Godmother finally was able to have you come over . Come, let's go home together!”

Yu Hai hesitated . The general wasn't in the capital, so it wasn't quite proper for him, an adult man, to stay at the general's estate .

As if she had anticipated Yu Hai's misgivings, Lady Fang said, “Linlin's father is currently finishing up his affairs at the port, so he'll be back the day after tomorrow at the latest . Brother Dahai, please take the general's estate as your own home . There's no need to be polite .”

Yu Xiaocao was in an unfamiliar environment, so she didn't want to separate from her father . She also said, “Father, you can live in the guestroom in the outer courtyard . In the morning, we'll need to go to the fields and we'll only get back late at night . If we get busy, we might even have to stay overnight at the farmsteads! If my godfather gets back tomorrow or the day after tomorrow and finds out you were living outside of the residence, he'd scold me to death ah!”

Lady Fang nodded her head from the side with a smile on her face .

Yu Hai pointed at his daughter and said, "Could your godfather even bear to scold you? I doubt it!"

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Royal Prince Yang interjected from the side, "If you guys don't want to live in the general's estate, I have a residence that's pretty close to the general's estate..."

Lady Fang hastily butted in, "Royal Prince Yang, please don't make things complicated . No one is an outsider here, so it's still best for them to live with me . "

Zhu Junyang knew that Yu Xiaocao had already made a decision so he didn't say anything more . He personally escorted the father-daughter pair to the entrance of the general's residence and tactfully declined Lady Fang's invitation for him to drink some tea . He then spoke to Yu Xiaocao, "It's been a rough two days for you . Go to sleep early, tomorrow I'll come in the morning to take you to the fields..."

Before he finished, a voice full of surprise hit his ears, "Older Brother Yang, you're back from Tanggu Town? Are you here to see me?"

Zhu Junyang immediately scowled and his face became as cold as ice . It was as if every cell in his body had been carved with the words 'no living thing shall come near me' . Yu Xiaocao was very curious now . Just what sort of person was this to make the young royal prince react so strongly?

Xiaocao inquisitively raised her head to look towards the sound and saw that, far away, a slender and beautiful young maiden, dressed entirely in red, was coming over gracefully with a look of surprise on her face . She had a head full of fine black hair that was tastefully wound up and secured with a dragonfly hairpin made of jade . A piece of red coral that was carved into the shape of a butterfly dangled in front of the middle of her forehead . Her skin was as pale as fresh milk and seemed to glow underneath the sun . This contrasted alluringly with her small red lips . The maiden also had large

almond shaped eyes that stared fixedly at Royal Prince Yang, as if he was the only thing in the world worth looking at .

“Wow! She’s so pretty . Young Royal Prince has such luck with women!” Yu Xiaocao quietly quipped underneath her breath as she covered her mouth to conceal her sniggering .

Zhu Junyang seemed to have heard her remark as he frowned even more deeply . His phoenix eyes slanted a warning glare at her . Just as he was about to say something, the young maiden clothed in red had already stopped in front of him . Her large eyes gazed at him with infatuation .

The frostiness on his face became even more apparent and Zhu Junyang didn’t even spare the girl in front of him with a glance as he spoke to Lady Fang, “Lady Fang, I’ve finished escorting them, so I will head out now!”

He shot another glare at Yu Xiaocao, who was snickering under her breath, and said, “I’m going to pick you up early tomorrow, so don’t sleep in!”

After he finished talking, he ignored the red-clothed girl as if she was thin air, went around her, and mounted his horse to leave . The young maiden swiftly threw out her hand and held on the reins in Royal Prince Yang’s hands . She raised her delicate face and pouted as if she was wronged, “Older Brother Yang, what did Xian’er do wrong to make you ignore me?”

Jiang Zixian was the youngest daughter of Princess Consort Jing’s second older brother and was younger than Zhu Junyang by a year . Princess Consort Jing had a decent relationship with her second sister-in-law . When she gave birth to her oldest son, her second sister-in-law had helped her for an entire month . When Jiang Zixian was born, Zhu Junyang, who was only one at the time, vehemently stated that he wanted to bring his younger cousin home . At the time, Princess Consort Jing cracked a joke, “Why do you want to bring her back? Do you want her to become your little wife ah?”

Because Imperial Prince Jing had power as well as status, Princess Consort Jing’s second sister-in-law was naturally eager to make a close connection with them . However, later on, Zhu Junyang underwent a shocking personality change at the age of five and became tyrannical and impetuous . He was willing to harm people at the blink of an eye . Princess Consort Jing’s second sister-in-law used the excuse that the household had gotten more busy to avoid spending more time with her . Thus, the issue of a betrothal was left at that .

However, in the past two years, Zhu Junyang had been awarded the title of a royal prince and had gone out to sea on behalf of the emperor to find high-yielding crops . He came back in triumph and the emperor rewarded him with many things . Furthermore, he had successfully grown corn and potatoes, which made the emperor regard him in a new light . Now he was the emperor's most highly regarded official . Consequently, Princess Consort Jing's second sister-in-law remembered the old joke from many years ago, so she would bring her youngest daughter over to visit Imperial Prince Jing's estate from time to time .

Jiang Zixian had seen her older cousin once while she was in the garden . His handsome good looks caused her to become instantly smitten with him .

Chapter 333 – Fated Relationship Between Siblings

From her mother's words, Jiang Zixian knew that they were hoping to betroth her to her older cousin, Brother Yang. The budding affections of the young maiden were soon all focused onto Zhu Junyang. One had to give the girl credit and nerve. She wasn't scared off by the notoriously temperamental and icy Zhu Junyang. In fact, she became bolder over time.

"Let go!" Zhu Junyang didn't even look at her. From the corners of his phoenix eyes, he faintly scanned over Jiang Zixian's hand holding the reins. The veiled threat within his voice was plain to all.

"I refuse!" Jiang Zixian, on the other hand, was not frightened off by his frosty tone. She puffed up her cheeks and her round eyes glittered with emotion, making her look miserable and pathetic. Yu Xiaocao, who was on the side watching all of this, felt pity rise up in her heart. The young royal prince was too cold hearted. How could he treat such a beautiful maiden in such a coarse way?

Zhu Junyang had nothing to say to Jiang Zixian. Young girls like her, who wanted to climb up the social ladder to get the lifestyle they wanted, were a dime a dozen in the capital. He had encountered way too many of them. What did it matter that she was his younger cousin? He could tell that she silently longed for the tasteful luxuries of Imperial Prince Jing's estate, envied the devotion that his lady mother received, and lusted for the rare flora in the garden...it was already merciful of him to not personally do something to a girl like her, who shamelessly threw herself at him, for the sake of their familial relations. On the outside, she pretended to be pure and kind yet her heart hid an ambitious salivating wolf. This was the evaluation Zhu Junyang had of almost all of the well-born maidens in the capital.

Zhu Junyang had run out of patience. He pulled the reins away with a gentle yet swift snap. Jiang Zixian only felt that her hand went numb and that she had lost control of herself. After stumbling back a few

steps and finally getting steady, it was already too late. Royal Prince Yang had already spurred his horse forward and was speeding away.

Jiang Zixian pursed her lips and her eyes flashed. Didn't her aunt say that Older Brother Yang liked girls who were pure, pretty and cute? Was she not adorable enough?

She scanned Lady Fang and Yu Xiaocao from head to toe and then looked at the sign inscribed at the gate of the residence which said 'Zhaoyong General's Estate'. A flicker of contempt went through her eyes, 'Just a third-ranked official. Why would Old Brother Yang become friends with these people?'

She looked at Xiaocao's lively large eyes which were as clear and limpid as a pure spring. A bolt of jealousy went through her. If she had such large eyes that could speak volumes, wouldn't her older cousin treat her better?

She then looked at the clothes that Xiaocao was wearing. Jiang Zixian's almond-shaped eyes roamed quickly and then a smile blossomed onto her face, "Lady Fang, your family's servant girl is so cute and lively. I lack a maidservant just like her. Can you sell her to me?"

Jiang Zixian's father didn't have a high-ranked office as he was only a fourth-ranked official in the Ministry of Ceremonies. However, her grandfather, who was also the father of Princess Consort Jing, was the Imperial Tutor and was one of the most respected teachers of the current emperor.

Although her husband was a military official and didn't need to fawn upon the imperial tutor or other imperial teachers, it was better to avoid unnecessary trouble. Lady Fang's tone toward Jiang Zixian was quite courteous, "Forgive me, Miss Jiang. The servant girl you're referring to is the adopted daughter of my lord husband."

The scorn within Jiang Zixian's eyes deepened. Everyone in the capital knew that General Fang had adopted a little farm girl as his daughter. This little girl was able to fawn upon Zhaoyong General and make him willing to adopt her. To have such schemes at such a young age, this little girl was truly something. Thus, Jiang Zixian let go of the idea of buying the little girl to get into Royal Prince Yang's good graces.

Yu Xiaocao raised an eyebrow when she saw Jiang Zixian leaving like an arrogant peacock. No wonder the young royal prince didn't like her. She acted one way towards him yet behind his back she was like an entirely different person. Were all of the noble-born maidens in the capital like her? Two-faced?

“Cao'er, don't be angry! There are some people who love to brandish the authority of their own relatives around. Their eyes are at the top of their heads. You'll get used to it after encountering a few more. However, when you encounter people like her, you don't need to back off one bit. After all, you are the daughter of this general's estate!” Lady Fang also disdained Jiang Zixian's actions and attitude. She was only the daughter of a fourth-rank official yet she acted as if she was an imperial princess. Did she truly believe that everyone would give away to her?

After giving orders to the head steward of the general's estate to take good care of Yu Hai, Lady Fang led Yu Xiaocao through the drooping flower gate to the inner courtyard. There were winding corridors paved with small pebbles. On both sides, the pear and peach trees were blooming beautifully. The whole courtyard was filled with gorgeous flora and luminous colors. In between the flowers were decorative rocks, small pavilions, and other unique statuary.

After passing by the second section of the residence, they arrived at a hall with three rooms. In the front was a large carved screen made of red sandalwood. They circled around the screen and arrived at the back hall that led to the entrance of the main wing's courtyard. The main wing had five rooms that were richly ornamented. On either side of the courtyard were the side wings. When they saw their mistress leading a little girl inside, all of the maidservants who were clothed in red and green quickly came up to greet them.

“You must be the Young Miss. So happy that you're finally here. No wonder our mistress always misses you. When you two stand together, you truly look like mother and daughter.” The maid who spoke was clothed in pink and was about eighteen to nineteen years old. This girl was most likely one of the other two head maids of Yu Xiaocao's godmother.

As expected, Lady Fang pointed at the maid and laughingly scolded her, “You truly have a silver tongue! Everything you say makes people feel happy ah! But it is true! I, your mistress, and Cao'er have a relationship that is even better than most blood-related mothers and daughters! Cao'er, she is one of my head maids, her name is Linlang. There is also another head maid who is currently wearing green called Hupo. She has a quiet personality. Now you know all four of my personal maidservants, you can take the two that suit you the most and have them run tasks for you.”

Yu Xiaocao hurriedly waved her hands, “No need, Godmother. These older sisters are all your personal maidservants. If I took them away, who would take care of you? Godmother, listen to my idea first. If it

was only you around, then being short a maidservant wouldn't be an issue. However, you also have Little Linlin. If there were only two maids taking care of you and my little brother, where would they have the time? You also know what I'm like. Any two junior maidservants will do for me!"

Lady Fang wasn't convinced, "How could junior maidservants be as good as Zhenzhu, Linlang and the others?"

Sure enough, Linglong had a good grasp on how to arrange things. She smiled, "Mistress, I'll go help out Young Miss for a few days. During that time, I'll also train the junior maids so that they don't end up slighting her."

Lady Fang knew that Linglong was a very reliable person. After thinking a bit, she nodded her head, "Okay! You can go over to help and train a few maids until they are good enough. In the future, Cao'er will be spending more time in the estate! She absolutely cannot have too few people taking care of her."

When Linlang saw that Linglong had volunteered to take care of the young miss, she silently let out a sigh of relief. She smiled, "Linglong truly knows the mistress's heart best. Even things she hasn't said, Linglong can anticipate!"

In actuality, Linlang didn't take this goddaughter very seriously. In her eyes, Yu Xiaocao didn't even reach the level of her mistress's niece. At least that young lady was related by blood with the mistress. The daughter that the general adopted seemed to be petty and unsophisticated and was really not presentable to good company. What sort of profits could she make by staying next to this type of master?

Linlang wasn't the only one with thoughts like these. Many of the other junior maidservants in the estate also had the same misgivings. The personal maidservants by the mistress, other than Linglong, were all getting older. When they passed the age of twenty, they might be let go. If they were able to show their good sides to the mistress and entered her eye, they might be promoted to her personal maidservant.

However, there were also some junior maidservants who thought differently. Mistress usually treated this adopted daughter of hers with great importance. She not only sent off delicious snacks, beautiful clothes and jewelry to her on a regular basis, but she also constantly talked about her. If the young miss chose one of them, they would immediately become personal maidservants, meaning they would have to struggle for fewer years!

No matter what these young maids were thinking about, none of them had any power over any decisions. When Yu Xiaocao was picking out servants, she made sure to pay attention to the junior maidservants' eyes and expressions. She didn't pick any of those who evaded her or tried to avoid her eyes. She only chose a few who had honest and clean gazes and didn't really pay much attention to their outward appearances. However, in the end, the four maidservants she ended up picking were all beautiful and full of life!

Lady Fang was a bit worried that her adopted daughter had a simple and pure heart and only picked them by appearances. She was afraid she might have picked a few who had ulterior motives. She could tell that Royal Prince Yang treated her daughter differently than other girls. Her daughter's personality was a bit mischievous and lively. If these beautiful maids had other thoughts, she was afraid that...

Yu Xiaocao wasn't thinking that far. She watched as her four new personal maidservants all recognized her and was pleased with their looks. Who didn't like beautiful things?

At this time, the wet nurse came out of the side room holding the little master and went to Lady Fang's side. She smiled, "The little master is very close to you, Mistress. As soon as he woke up, he wanted you. If he can't see you, he won't be happy." Little Linlin saw his mother and stretched out his chubby little arms, begging for a hug.

Yu Xiaocao hadn't seen Little Linlin for more than half a year. When she saw her pleasantly plump, adorable, and cute little brother, she couldn't help but reach her arms out to try to hold the little guy. The wet nurse was a bit anxious and stopped her as she said, "Young Miss, don't be fooled by his young age, he's quite heavy. I'll hold him instead!"

Little Linlin's lips quivered when he wasn't able to go into his mother's warm arms. He was about to cry when he suddenly smelled his sister's innate body scent. He used his arm, which was about as thick as a lotus root, and held onto Xiaocao's neck and buried his face into her neck. He lightly sniffed at her and then raised his head. He pouted his tiny lips and planted a kiss on her face while also spreading his saliva on her.

Lady Fang felt very happy at the sight and grinned, "Oh ho, our Linlin still remembers his older sister. He knows that his older sister is the one closest to him other than his parents!"

The wet nurse also repeatedly nodded her head as she remarked in surprise, "That's right! The little master is only close with you, Mistress. Everyone else he treats as a stranger. He's never even kissed the Master before ah!"

Lady Fang pulled Xiaocao and her son into her arms and kissed her darling son, "Lin'er and Cao'er truly are fated to be together. If I didn't know Cao'er, then I wouldn't be able to get pregnant with Lin'er. Isn't the fact that Lin'er is close to his older sister a sign that they were fated to be together?"

When Linlang heard this, she was surprised. Something like this had also happened? It looked like the young miss's status in the mistress's heart could not be underestimated. In the future, she needed to be careful and not slight this young miss who just recently appeared. As these thoughts rolled in her head, the smile on Linlang's face became several times more sincere, "That's right, that's right! Our little master still remembers Young Miss. This must be a sign of the fated relationship between siblings, right?"

As the group of people laughed harmoniously, Little Linlin was in the middle of giving his older sister a bath with his saliva. After coating her face, he tightly wrapped his arms around her neck. No matter what anyone said, he refused to let go. Lady Fang felt a bit jealous inside and gently patted her son's fat little butt a few times.

Fields of Gold Chapter 334 - The Beauty Standard

Yu Xiaocao knew that when children were young, they perceived the world through their senses like animals. Little Linlin must've been attracted by the residual of spiritual power left behind by the little divine stone, and thus he unconsciously tried to get closer to her.

Little Linlin was almost one year old and was still drinking milk; however, they gave him some complementary food in addition to the milk. He had caught a cold in the past two days, so he began coughing. The best pediatrics doctor in the capital had visited them and prescribed some medicine for him. But the medicine was too bitter. Whenever he saw the dark substance in the bowl, he would start crying and refuse to cooperate. Even if they forced the medicine, he would cry, cough, and spit the medicine out. Therefore, he had been coughing for more than half a month, yet he still hadn't recovered yet.

When Yu Xiaocao witnessed the tragic scene of Little Linlin being forced to drink medicine, she hugged him distressfully. She asked the little divine stone to release some spiritual power in the sugar water and fed it to the little guy. The wet nurse standing by the side wanted to stop her, "The doctor said not to give the young master too many sweet things..."

Lady Fang shook her head at her and said, "Cao'er has also learned some medical skills. Last time when Lin'er was coughing, it was his sister who had someone deliver the medicine over. The remaining half bottle of medicine was taken by the empress and given to the little prince..."

The wet nurse's eyes brightened. She looked at Yu Xiaocao and said, "Young Miss, you should prescribe some medicine for the young master again. The medicine you prescribed is sweet, so the young master doesn't reject it at all!"

Yu Xiaocao asked to look at the prescription the doctor had prescribed for Little Linlin, confirming that the medicine was for fever, cough, and asthma. After thinking about it, she wrote down a prescription and asked a servant to get all the medicinal herbs in the prescription. Lady Fang took the prescription and looked at it: five catties of fresh loquat leaves, five ounces of *bulbus fritillariae cirrhosae*, ten ounces of lotus plumule, ten ounces of dwarf lilyturf, ten ounces of jujubes, five ounces of Chinese asparagus, ten ounces of *Rehmannia glutinosa*, ten ounces of Ningbo figwort, and two catties of refined honey. Most of the medicinal herbs used in this prescription were present in the doctor's prescription, so she allowed the servant to get the medicinal herbs.

Before dinner, Fang Zizhen rushed over. In the reception hall, they set up a table of a feast to entertain the father and daughter pair. Yu Xiaocao personally made a bowl of soft, tender, and smooth egg soup for Little Linlin. She added some mystic stone water, so Little Linlin happily ate it. The bowl of egg soup was quickly finished, and Little Linlin let out an 'ahhh' sound, indicating that he wanted more.

The wet nurse, who stood on the side, smiled as she wiped her tears and said, "Young Miss is indeed skilled in cooking. The young master has a bad appetite these days because we've been force-feeding him his medicine. He doesn't even want to drink milk. This servant's heart pained for the young master after seeing how much weight he has lost! This is the first time the young master has eaten so happily in more than half a month!"

After dinner, all the medicinal herbs had already been bought. Yu Xiaocao had the servants soak the medicinal herbs for two hours, and then boiled the herbs in a copper medicine pot. After that, it would be brewed on low heat while maintaining its boiling state. The medicine needed to be stirred from time to time and the floating suds would be removed. After boiling it for two hours, the liquid would be filtered out from the herbs, and then cold water would be poured into the medicinal dregs, so it could be reboiled. After boiling it in this manner for three times, the liquid medicine was poured all together and left to settle. Then the liquid medicine needed to be filtered three more times with four layers of gauze.

These steps were done by the maidservants who were in charge of brewing medicine. They took turns to brew the medication for the entire night and finally completed it. Early the next morning, after Yu Xiaocao got up, she began condensing the liquid medicine without eating breakfast first. As it turned into a paste, she added honey and rock sugar into it. She boiled the paste on low heat and continuously stirred it with chopsticks until it became sticky. Finally, the final product was packed in small porcelain bottles, which could be stored and eaten after it completely cooled down.

When Little Linlin woke up, Lady Fang had made a bowl of bulbus fritillariae cirrhosae and loquat leaf cough syrup for him to drink. Little Linlin was about to cry when he saw the reddish-brown liquid medicine, so Yu Xiaocao dipped the chopsticks in the medicine and placed it in his mouth. The little guy smacked his mouth and realized that it was sweet! The tears that had gathered in the corners of his eyes were gone as he looked at the liquid medicine with a hesitant expression.

Yu Xiaocao took the little guy and allowed him to sit comfortably in her embrace. She whispered softly, "Little Linlin, this is sweet sugar water. Do you want to drink it?"

Little Linlin still had a hesitant expression on his face. He wanted to drink it, but he was afraid that he would be deceived again. After he fell ill, he had been deceived so many times that he had become doubtful. What should he do if this bowl was also bitter medicine?

"Have a taste first. If it's bitter, you can just spit it out!" Yu Xiaocao scooped a spoonful of medicine with a spoon and blew on it, then she delivered it right in front of the little guy's mouth.

The little guy hesitated for a moment, before putting on a courageous front like he was heading to an execution ground; he opened his mouth and let the spoon enter his mouth. Yu Xiaocao tilted the spoon and poured the liquid into Little Linlin's mouth.

The little guy wrinkled his face and kept the medicine in his mouth without swallowing. However, he soon realized that the medicine wasn't as bitter and unappetizing as before. Instead, it was sweet and delicious, so he gulped it down. Lady Fang usually didn't spoil him and rarely gave him sweets. The sweet liquid medicine tasted pretty good. Little Linlin stared at the medicine bowl in his mother's hands.

Yu Xiaocao scooped another spoonful of medicine from the bowl in her godmother's hands. The little guy waited with his mouth wide open even before she put the medicine in his mouth. Just like this, spoonful after spoonful, the bowl of liquid medicine was almost finished. Little Linlin unexpectedly appeared to want more.

Yu Xiaocao wiped his mouth and smiled, "Let's leave some room for later. Older Sister will make you a bowl of vegetables and ground meat porridge later!"

In the Fang Family's glass greenhouse, besides precious flowers and plants, there were also lots of vegetables. Lady Fang specifically ordered the gardener to plant them after she returned from Dongshan Village. The gardener felt very helpless about this. He was very good at handling precious flowers and plants, and he even had a reputation for it in the capital. Yet he was unexpectedly sent here to waste his talents by planting vegetables! Fortunately, the few beautiful and hard to plant orchids in the greenhouse allowed him to clear his head and realize his value.

It wasn't necessarily bad to grow some vegetables in the greenhouse. At least, he and his masters would not lack vegetables to eat this winter. Being able to freeload some offseason vegetables was the only advantage of growing vegetables.

The ingredients that Yu Xiaocao used to make the vegetables and ground meat porridge were chicken and cabbage core. Chickens were rich in protein; it could strengthen the baby's physique and protect him from diseases. Cabbage cores were rich in vitamin C, which could effectively prevent young children from catching a cold. Of course, there was also mystic-stone water added in, which could strengthen the body and enhance the taste of the dish.

Everyone had a bowl of vegetables and ground meat porridge at the dining table. Not only did Little Linlin eat with relish, but his small bowl of porridge also wasn't enough for him. Lady Fang was also full of praise for the ground meat porridge, and everyone commended Yu Xiaocao's cooking skill.

After breakfast, the steward in charge of the outer courtyard came to report that Royal Prince Yang had come to visit. Yu Hai and his daughter knew that he had come to take them to Imperial Plantation. Yu Xiaocao carried an enormous earthen jar from her room, claiming that she had made this medicine that could protect against insects and diseases last night.

Linglong brought along a maidservant named Yingtao. Yingtao was one of the four maidservants chosen by Yu Xiaocao. She appeared to be around 14-15 years old and was very nimble. When she saw her young miss carrying the earthen jar from the room, she took the jar over and held it carefully.

It was the same carriage as before. Yu Xiaocao stepped on the small wooden stool that the servants had placed in front of the carriage and climbed up the carriage. Seeing that it wouldn't be easy for Yingtao to get on the carriage with the earthen jar, she reached out and helped her up. Yingtao was originally

somewhat nervous, but she had now calmed down completely. Her master appeared to be someone with a good temper, so as long as she didn't make any mistakes, she probably wouldn't get punished.

The maidservants, who used to serve Miss Xia, used to privately say that Miss Xia appeared obedient and smart in front of the madam but she had a really bad temper when the madam wasn't around. If she didn't get what she wanted, she would beat and scold the servants. A maidservant had been marred by scars from her beating. Therefore, when she and the other maidservants were selected by Yu Xiaocao, they felt somewhat uneasy, for fear that they had to serve a difficult master.

Along the way, Yu Xiaocao noticed that the young prince was somewhat silent today and his complexion wasn't looking too well. Could it be that something happened when he returned to Prince Jing's Estate yesterday? Suddenly, she thought of the girl clothed in red that she had met yesterday. The desire to gossip was ignited within Yu Xiaocao's heart.

"Young Royal Prince, did the beauty chase you all the way to your house yesterday?" Had it been anyone else, even if they were beaten to death, they still wouldn't dare to converse with the young prince when he had such a dark expression on his face, let alone joke with him. 'Miss Yu is so foolishly brave.' Head Steward Liu glanced at her and ridiculed in his heart.

Zhu Junyang's face became even darker. When he returned home yesterday, he first took a bath and changed his clothes. After that, he went to greet his lady mother but discovered that Jiang Zixian, that disgusting person, was also there. He didn't know what ideas she had, but she convinced his mother to let her stay as a guest. Wasn't this forcing him to stay outside?

However, how could Jiang Zixian's thoughts escape Princess Consort Jing's eyes? But she still liked this little niece of hers; her appearance wasn't bad and her personality was somewhat similar to Yu Xiaocao. Moreover, she wasn't afraid of her son's ice-cold face. Could it be that her young son liked this type of girl?

Although Yu Xiaocao was good, she was very young. So it would take years for her to grow up. Jiang Zixian was about the same age as her youngest son. If it could work out between the two of them, Princess Consort Jing would be glad to see it happen.

Therefore, during dinner, Princess Consort Jing intentionally arranged Jiang Zixian's seat to be beside Zhu Junyang.

Jiang Zixian rarely had the opportunity to eat at the same table as Zhu Junyang, so she was eagerly and constantly adding more food to his bowl. She completely ignored the dark expression on Zhu Junyang's face from the beginning to the end.

This was a welcoming feast for Zhu Junyang, but Zhu Junyang left the table with anger. Due to a certain person's presence at this meal, the meal tasted like he was chewing wax. He just picked out the food that a certain person had placed in his bowl and didn't take a single bite of it. 'Jiang Zixian, are you sure you're not messing with this prince?' All the food she picked for him was food that he didn't like to eat!! Even if there were some that he liked to eat, he decided that he wouldn't like them in the future!!

Seeing how her youngest son was forcing himself to be patient, Princess Consort Jing wondered if she had unintentionally done something bad while bearing good intentions? It didn't seem wise to let Jiang Zixian stay as a guest. Would her son come up with all kinds of excuses to not come home because she was here? Based on Princess Consort Jing's understanding of her son, he was very likely to do such a thing!

He didn't have a good dinner last night, and he used work as an excuse to skip breakfast. Because he was hungry, it directly affected his mood. It would've been strange if Zhu Junyang's complexion had been good!

When Yu Xiaocao asked this, Zhu Junyang felt even more gloomy and he coldly snorted, "Are you blind? She's considered to be a beauty? If all the beauties look like her, even a pig will be considered more attractive than Diao Chan [1]!!"

Wow! She didn't expect the young prince's poisonous tongue to be quite effective. It seemed like he was normally quite merciful to her. Yu Xiaocao noisily asked, "May I ask you, Young Royal Prince, what is your beauty standard then?"

Zhu Junyang seemed to have never thought about this question. He frowned for a long time before he threw out a word: "Clean!"

Chapter 335 – Being Teased

Yu Xiaocao revealed a horrified expression on her face, 'Could it be that all the noble ladies in the capital appear bright and neat on the surface, but are actually sloppy beneath that facade? Do they not bath or brush their teeth?'

Zhu Junyang leaned forward and knocked her head that was outside the window of the carriage. The pent-up frustrations in his heart dissipated a little as he unhappily said, "What are you thinking! When I said clean, I don't mean on the outside. I meant their hearts; Their hearts have to be pure and they need to have a good temperament!"

"Oh... you also noticed that her intentions towards you aren't pure? But it's not surprising considering that you're handsome and have a very promising future. So it's very normal for you to attract the attention of young maidens, okay?" Yu Xiaocao explained to him.

Zhu Junyang frowned slightly and said, "But...everytime someone with ulterior motives approaches me, I feel irritable and I can't control myself. I want to pinch her throat and throw her out. What should I do?"

Yu Xiaocao blinked her big eyes and suddenly appeared surprised. She hesitated for a long time before she whispered, "Young Royal Prince, are you only like this towards women? What about men? If a handsome looking teenager approaches you, will you also become irritable and want to kill him?"

"I do! As long as those guys with ulterior motive are within three steps of me, I can detect it. Since they're also men, I don't need to take too much into consideration and just throw them out!!" Zhu Junyang looked up with his chin pointing towards the sky with a proud expression on his face.

Yu Xiaocao let out a big sigh of relief, patted her chest, and whispered, "That's good, that's good..."

Zhu Junyang seemed to have smelled that she was hinting at something, so he looked at her and asked in confusion, "What do you mean? Why do I feel like there's some other meaning behind your words?"

After giving him a lovable eye roll, Yu Xiaocao said, "We have such an iron clad relationship between the two of us, what kind of conspiracy would I plot against you? I'm just concerned about your sexual orientation. I was just afraid that you'll mistakenly enter the chrysanthemum door and fall deep into the sea..."

"Sexual orientation'? 'Chrysanthemum door'? What kind of nonsense are you talking about?? I've realized that you often say words that others don't understand. You and the emperor must share the same language!!" Zhu Junyang squinted at her and guessed at the possibility of that being true.

Yu Xiaocao shrank her neck and laughed dryly, “Young Royal Prince, you're wrong about that! The emperor is high above everyone else. He has a lot of knowledge from reading extensively; his mind holds more knowledge than anyone else...I'm just a small peasant girl who never studied and is illiterate. How could I share the same language as the emperor?”

She reminded herself in her heart that she was now in the capital, so she had to be careful when she spoke or did something. This way the other transmigrated person wouldn't be able to get a hold of her weakness. He was the supreme ruler of this era. Killing her would be like killing a little ant. Although she posed no threat to the emperor, she must still be careful. How could she know that the emperor had already long established and confirmed her identity? Like a cat playing with a mouse, he had been watching her movements secretly!

Just when Yu Xiaocao was staying silent because of her guilt, Head Steward Liu couldn't hold back and coughed twice. He quietly told his master, “Some of the wealthy people in the capital have special hobbies. They like to 'walk the back door'. They call a certain part in the behind the chrysanthemum. I assume the 'chrysanthemum door' that Miss Yu is talking about is related to this?”

Zhu Junyang was born and grew up in the capital, so he naturally heard of those dirty matters. He even had some experience himself. When he was a child, his appearance was beautiful and delicate and he liked to be alone. One day he left the house by himself and was taken away by an official who had such a special hobby. He had seen some unbearable sights. The filthy scene turned him violent on the spot and he killed the official that tried to do something to him. When his father brought him back, he was immersed in his own consciousness and almost couldn't ever wake up again!

Recalling such an unfortunate event, Zhu Junyang became extremely agitated. He jumped off his horse and dragged the carriage from the back to halt it. Then he charged into the carriage and twisted Yu Xiaocao's arm and asked, “Who told you these filthy things? If that person tells you such nonsense in the future, don't listen to them, lest you dirty your ears!! Tell me, who told you these things? I will personally dismember his body!!”

In Zhu Junyang's heart, Yu Xiaocao was a ray of light in the darkness; she was the warm sun in the severe winter. She was someone whom one could only meet by chance and not by force in this chaotic world. She was his only salvation. Whoever wished to pollute this simple and pure land will be his enemy forever.

When Head Steward Liu saw that his master had almost turned violent, he couldn't help but slap his mouth. Why did he have to run his mouth!!

Yu Xiaocao felt very uncomfortable because her arm was grabbed by the young prince. She tried to shake him off, but she couldn't. She was annoyed, "Let go! My arm is going to break, it's almost broken..."

Although Zhu Junyang was very clear about his strength and was able to control it within the range of what the little girl could bear, he still loosened his grip subconsciously. Yu Xiaocao successfully escaped and reprimanded him, "Men and women shouldn't touch once they're over the age of seven. We're not related to one another, so it's best if you keep your distance, lest I depend on you!"

Yu Hai, who was sitting next to Yu Xiaocao, carefully separated the two, and said, "Royal Prince, sometimes my daughter doesn't think before she talks. Please don't lower yourself to her level."

Zhu Junyang pushed him away, and looked up and down at Yu Xiaocao's thin, weak, and small body. He revealed a disdainful expression, "Just based on you? I don't have fetish for kids!! If you want to rely on me, then we'll talk about it in three or five years. Also, you must grow nicely, don't grow short on looks! When that time comes, I will have to reluctantly accept you..."

Yu Xiaocao was coldly glaring at him, her hair was standing on ends in anger. She was burning in anger as she raised her eyebrows and said, "Stop looking down on people, I will definitely grow into a beautiful lady in the future!!"

After she finished speaking, she touched her tall and straight nose, big bright eyes, and her small fan-like eyelashes... although her height was unremarkable, she was still a cute lolita. Her natural factors were pretty good, so when she grew up she can... that's not right! What did the guy just say? Accept her? 'You think I'm Hello Kitty because this old lady didn't show you my powers yet!!'

"Let me tell you this clearly. This lady will not be a concubine!! Even if I can't marry someone in my lifetime, I still won't wrong myself!!" Yu Xiaocao pointed at Zhu Junyang's perfect nose as she made her intentions clear in an imposing manner.

Zhu Junyang narrowed his long, narrow, and charming almond-shaped eyes slightly. He restrained the snickering in his heart and put on a deadly earnest face and said, "I didn't expect you to be big-hearted

even though you're so short! If you don't want to be a concubine, then I'll let you be a ranked concubine. This is good enough?"

Yu Hai expressed that he was very dumbfounded. The atmosphere just a moment ago was full of anger that was about to explode. How did the topic turn into a discussion about concubines and ranked concubines? His daughter was still young, and he needed to protect her from being taken away by a big wolf. Even if it was the Royal Prince, he won't... He was just about to express his opinion when he was pulled out of the carriage by Head Steward Liu. Yu Hai found that even though he was such a big man, he was unable to struggle at all in the hands of the old and weak eunuch. Could this be the martial arts that Older Brother Zhao talked about?

When he was pulled away, he could hear his foolish daughter screaming angrily, "Ranked concubine? Who would want to be your ranked concubine? Scram!!"

"You don't want to be a ranked concubine either? Then what do you want? Do you want to be an equal wife?" Zhu Junyang was in a good mood and the way he was speaking made her really want to beat him. "Let me think about it for a second... Okay, equal wife then equal wife! You need to be good to me in the future..."

Yu Xiaocao was furious, she threw the cushion in the carriage at Zhu Junyang's face. Stamping with fury, she shouted, "Keeping dreaming!! This old lady won't marry and share a husband with other women!! This old lady wants to be a pair for a lifetime! If you can't, then scam as far as possible!!"

The guards around that were in charge of protecting the carriage all had a constipated expression on their faces.

Just at that moment, a carriage passed by them. The curtains were lifted up, exposing a beautiful face. To be a pair for one lifetime, it was something every woman yearned for. What kind of woman would be able to express herself so bravely and clearly?

"Miss, it seems to be Royal Prince Yang's carriage. The old man standing by the side is Royal Prince Yang's head steward. People say he's a martial arts master!!" The servant beside the woman saw Head Steward Liu and stated this after pondering for a moment.

Royal Prince Yang? Wasn't it said that he was tyrannical and murdered people without blinking an eye? The woman frowned. It can't be, right? How could a person like that allow a woman to climb on his nose and scream in front of him? After thinking about it, she remembered that Royal Prince Yang's father and mother were an enviable pair in the capital. Maybe Prince Jing's affection had been inherited by his young son.

The woman thought about her own situation and was envious. To be able to say those words in front of Royal Prince Yang, this murderous star, she must be someone reliable. For a woman to be able to do whatever she wanted in front of a man, it meant that she held a special place in his heart.

The two carriages passed by and gradually got further apart. The woman could faintly hear the man's calm voice drifting in the wind, "So you want to monopolize my favor? Then from now on, you will have to be nice to me! My shoulders are sore, give me a massage..."

Listening to the man's voice, she realized his voice was full of the desire to pamper. She didn't know who the blessed woman was to be favored by Royal Prince Yang...

Yu Xiaocao, who was in the carriage, had just found out that she was being led by her nose. She calmed herself down and kicked Zhu Junyang out of the carriage and said coldly, "Dealing with you is beneath my dignity. In order to avoid arousing suspicions, please conduct yourself with dignity!"

Zhu Junyang expressed his regret and clicked his tongue. No wonder those loose men liked to take liberties with a lady from a good family. The feeling he got from teasing people was so damn pleasurable!! Wait, that was wrong!! It was only enjoyable when he teased this little girl!! It was a pity that she snapped out of it so soon; he thought he would've been able to get her to make promises with him!!

"Okay! Don't be angry!! I'm just teasing you!! You're just a tiny bean sprout, how could I eat you?" Young Royal Prince, why do you sound so carefree and relaxed? "We've arrived at imperial farmsteads, get ready to get off the carriage!"

Yu Xiaocao was sulking in the corner with her arms folded. It was really like an eighty year old mother being taunted by her child. If she combined her two lifetimes, then she had lived for more than 30 years, yet she was just teased by a hateful guy who was just 16-17 years old!! Damn it!! Zhu Junyang, wait for this old lady to deal with you!!

Fields of Gold Chapter 336 - Trip to the Imperial Plantation

“Your Royal Highness, you finally came!!!” Liu Jiajin, the Minister of Revenue, welcomed him with a delighted expression. After they politely greeted each other, he eagerly asked, “Did anyone from Tanggu Town's Yu Family come?”

Since he received the official documents that Royal Prince Yang sent from Tanggu Town and found out that corn grown in Tanggu Town had been bred with pesticides that prevented pests and diseases, Minister Liu's heart couldn't stay calm as if it was being scratched by a cat.

Last year, when they planted the corn, everyone on the experimental fields of the Imperial Plantation tended to the corn meticulously. Nearly all corn seedlings were carefully protected, but they still couldn't grow as well as the corn seedlings planted in the barren and sandy soil of Dongshan Village. When the locust plague came, the capital wasn't considered one of the worst-hit regions. It was just mildly affected, but the yield of corn was low, and the seedlings looked as if they were malnourished. Over at Dongshan Village, they had harvested the early-matured crop in a rush and reaped around 1,800 catties per mu. It was such a sharp contrast!!

Last year, they could say that they were inexperienced since it was their first time growing corn. But, if they still couldn't grow the crop better than those at Tanggu Town, where would he put his old face ah?! Therefore, when Minister Liu received the news, he immediately rushed to send a message to request for help. He hoped that the Yu Family would send someone to check if there was a possibility of saving the corn at the Imperial Plantation!

Zhu Junyang admired this white-haired old minister for his sincere concern for the livelihood of the common people. Originally, the Ministry of Revenue wasn't only in charge of agriculture. However, Minister Liu had devoted all of his energy into cultivating high-yield crops since last year. He wholeheartedly hoped that the common people could stop suffering from starvation a little bit earlier! Minister Liu was born in a poor family. Perhaps, he was able to understand the life of the common people due to his childhood experiences, and thus he was able to become an official who truly cared about the common people.

“Yes! She's on the carriage!” Zhu Junyang had just finished speaking when Minister Liu reached the side of the carriage.

The first to come down was Yingtao, who held a crook. Minister Liu looked at her and wondered when the Yu Family had a daughter so big in their family. At this time, he heard Yingtao voice a reminder, “Young Miss, be careful. The ground isn't very even, so let Older Sister Linglong support you.”

Just as she finished speaking, Yu Xiaocao had already jumped down from the horse carriage and giggled, "The ground here is considered pretty good already. When I went to catch wild hares in the mountain forest in the past, there were some places that were really hard to walk... Official Liu, how are you? We meet again!"

For some unknown reason, Minister Liu's anxious heart calmed down when he saw Yu Xiaocao. He said with a smile, "Miss Yu also came? This is great. Our corn can be saved!!"

Yu Xiaocao looked at the corn sprouting at the side of the road and reassured him, "Official Liu, you don't need to be too worried. The pesticide is only a preventive measure. If the corn is grown well, then the possibility of them being harmed by pests and diseases will be reduced!"

Minister Liu stared at the jar in Yingtao's hands and somewhat anxiously asked, "Is this the pesticide that Miss Yu made? There are over a thousand mu of corn and over fifty mu of potatoes planted in our plantation, is there enough pesticide?"

Yu Xiaocao didn't even need to think about as she said, "This is a highly-concentrated pesticide. We only need to add one drop of pesticide into each bucket. Adding too much, on the other hand, wouldn't be good for the corn seedlings! Official Liu, can you first show me the water source of the plantation?"

Minister Liu nodded and said, "Miss Yu, please..."

Zhu Junyang, who was on the side, interrupted their conversation, "Aren't we going into the farmstead to rest for a while and have a cup of tea first?"

Minister Liu came to a sudden realization and said, "Just look at this brain of mine. I'm only thinking about the corn fields. Come, Miss Yu, Yu... dear nephew, I should be around the same age as your father, so I'll just refer to you as my nephew!"

Yu Hai quickly replied, "Thank you, Official Liu, for such a great honor. Please do as you will wish..."

However, Yu Xiaocao glanced at Zhu Junyang and said, "Official business is more important. We came in the horse carriage, so I'm not tired! Official Liu, let's go check out the water source first."

As Minister Liu gladly led the way, he asked, "Is the water source related to the growth of the corn?"

Yu Xiaocao thought about it and said, "It's not too closely related! As you know, corn can endure droughts but not floods. If it's not as dry as last year, rainfall will be enough! It's just a precaution to check the source of water."

Minister Liu nodded in slight confusion and said, "Oh, ok..."

The Imperial Plantation was situated in front of a small mountain on the outskirts of the capital. The spring water from the mountain gathered behind the plantation and formed a natural lake. The Imperial Plantation was relatively large, so wells were dug out certain distances apart to fight against and prevent droughts.

Inside the lake, there were fish, shrimp, and other creatures. Yu Xiaocao didn't want to attract things like water monsters, so she didn't do anything to the lake. After she checked all the wells and changed the quality of the well water, she said to Minister Liu, "Although the water isn't quite as good as that of our Dongshan Village, it still meets the standard. Is there enough manpower? We can start working!!"

This time, Minister Liu had also brought along two vice ministers and the director of the Granaries Bureau. He was the boss of the Ministry of Revenue, so how could he take care of everything? Minister Liu turned his gaze towards the director of the Granaries Bureau.

Official Li quickly said, "There are over one hundred households in the Imperial Plantation, and there are over four hundred adult male workers. If it's not enough, this subordinate can borrow some people from nearby plantations."

The Imperial Plantation was in an area with good terrain and fertile soil. In addition to the Imperial Plantation, many rich and influential people also built plantations here. One of the neighboring plantations belonged to an idle prince in the capital. This idle prince was the younger male cousin of the emperor emeritus. He was also born from a farmer's family and had no special skills. After the founding of the new empire, he was bestowed the title of an imperial prince. He didn't have any authorities and only received an official's salary. If calculated seriously, Zhu Junyang would have to call him 'Granduncle'!

Yu Xiaocao thought about it and said, "No need! It's not heavy labor, so women and children around the age of eight can also do the work."

In fact, it wasn't a difficult task. They just had to add mystic-stone water into the water bucket, and then sprinkle it onto the roots of the corn seedlings. However, it took patience to irrigate the crops one by one.

Official Li gathered the workers together, and they busily fetched water and irrigated the crops. The whole plantation bustled with activity. Yu Xiaocao didn't stay idle either. She reckoned that the 'pesticide' that she brought over wasn't enough, so she pretended to brew a pot of pesticide with the herbs that she brought along. When no one was paying attention, she added a bottle of mystic-stone water inside and completed the task.

There were six to seven hundred people and over to thousand mu of farmland, so with each person working on around three mu of land, they were able to complete the job in a day. There were people from the Ministry of Revenue supervising the plantation. Zhu Junyang was afraid that Yu Xiaocao would be bored, so he suggested, "Although there isn't any big game in the back hills, wild hares, pheasants, and so on appear from time to time. Do you want to go take a look?"

The vegetation of Dongshan Village's West Mountain had been destroyed by the locusts, so the small animals had all run away. Yu Xiaocao hadn't been able to have a taste of pheasants again since last summer. She thought about it and said, "Okay! I have nothing to do anyway. If we can catch a pheasant or wild hare, then we can have an extra dish for lunch!"

When Yingtao heard that they were going up the mountain to catch game, she volunteered to go with them. Yu Hai was worried about his daughter being alone with the royal prince, so he followed her closely, for fear that his daughter would be deceived by the cunning wolf.

The hills behind the Imperial Plantation were full of green grass and covered in a vast sea of green. Yu Xiaocao had learned to track the steps of prey from Zhao Han. In the places that the wild hares and pheasants didn't appear, she didn't set up traps but left traces of mystic-stone water in the nearby thickets.

Zhu Junyang didn't bring any hunting tools, but this didn't affect him. He cut several bamboo poles, sharpened one end, and prepared to use it as a spear. The locust plague in the capital might not have been as serious as Dongshan Village, so from time to time, they would be able to see wild hares passing through the grass on the hills.

“There's not a lot of game here. Let's walk over there!” There weren't any vicious beasts on the mountain, so what did they have to worry about? Yu Xiaocao beat the bushes with a bamboo pole as she followed behind Head Steward Liu and Zhu Junyang.

Suddenly, there was movement in the grass not too far away. Yu Xiaocao picked up a small rock and threw it over there. Flapping its wings in panic, a colorful pheasant came out of the thicket and darted towards Zhu Junyang.

Zhu Junyang calmly hit the pheasant's head with the bamboo pole, and the pheasant stopped moving after fluttering its wings twice. Yingtao had never experienced hunting before. She rushed towards the game happily, and then came back holding the pheasant's wings, “Young Miss, it seems like this pheasant has fainted. This servant will tie its wings so that it can't run away when it wakes up!”

Yingtao tied the pheasant securely and put it into the basket that she was carrying.

[There are pheasant eggs over at the place that the pheasant just came out from!] The little divine stone lazily reminded her. Yu Xiaocao retracted her steps and walked back towards the relatively dense thicket.

Yingtao also curiously followed her. After Yu Xiaocao pushed away the bushes, she immediately exclaimed, “Young Miss, Young Miss!! There are pheasant eggs ah!! Seven or eight pheasant eggs!!”

Yu Xiaocao was infected by her joyous mood and laughed, “Hurry and go collect the eggs! For lunch, let's make 'stir-fried wild scallions and eggs'. It will definitely taste great!!”

Yingtao excitedly picked up the pheasant eggs and placed them in the basket. She carefully covered them with grass, and then asked, “Young Miss, we have pheasant eggs, but what's wild scallions?”

Yu Xiaocao took a few steps, bent down, and pointed at a long and thin plant in the grass. She said, “Look! This is wild scallion. Be careful pulling them out. It's best to also pull out the round rhizome underground.”

Yingtao was in high spirits. After she heard Xiaocao's words, she started pulling out the wild scallions with her butt sticking out. When the soil was hard, she would dig the soil with a small piece of bamboo and did her best to ensure the wild scallions were intact.

Seeing that Zhu Junyang and his servant had walked far away, Yu Xiaocao stayed to wait for Yingtao. This girl had never been in the mountains, so Xiaocao was afraid that she would get lost. This small mountain wasn't much compared with Dongshan Village's West Mountain, but if she really got lost, it would be troublesome to find her.

Zhu Junyang walked slightly deeper in and caught two wild hares and a pheasant. He also got a 'white-fronted pig' out of its hole. A 'white-fronted pig' was actually a ferret-badger. It was a small animal that lived in a cave and had delicious meat, and thus it was a good game.

At this time, Yingtao had already dug up quite a lot of wild scallions. Yu Xiaocao looked at the sky and then walked down the mountain along the path that they came from. When she passed by the places that she set traps in, she harvested two more living hares.

Chapter 337 – An Eyesore

In the spring, the mountain was lush with vegetation and had no lack of food. These wild hares and pheasants were very plump. At noon, the officials of the Ministry of Revenue were also able to eat a sumptuous meal of game thanks to them.

In the afternoon, there wasn't much that Yu Xiaocao needed to help with, so she walked around the Imperial Plantation like she was on a tour. Zhu Junyang was like a tour guide as he introduced her to the origin of the Imperial Plantation.

In the early days of the Great Ming Dynasty, the officials of the former dynasty either died or fled, and the farmsteads owned by those officials were returned to the imperial court. Most of the farmsteads were rewarded to meritorious officials. The former chief court eunuch, Chief Steward Cao, owned the largest plantation at that time. It had a total of over 18,000 qing [1]. It was difficult for the emperor emeritus to reward such a large plantation to others, so it was taken under the imperial treasury as the Imperial Plantation and managed by a trusted eunuch. In the Imperial Plantation, there were also a supervisor of the tenant farmers, low-ranking officials, and so on. Therefore, the eunuch was merely in charge of overseeing and hastening their work. The work in the fields still relied on the experienced supervisor and tenant farmers.

Along the way, corn and potatoes were planted in a small number of fields, and the rest were planted with spring wheat and rice. The Imperial Plantation had fertile soil, so the crops grew very well.

In the evening, most of the corn and potatoes had been irrigated with the 'pesticide'. Thus, Yu Xiaocao and her father went back to the general's estate on their horse carriage. Zhu Junyang didn't want to go back to face that disgusting woman, so he stayed at the general's estate for dinner and dawdled for a long time before returning home.

When he returned to the estate, Princess Consort Jing had already finished washing up and was preparing to go to bed. Disregarding the hints of Meixiang and the others, Jiang Zixian chatted with her paternal aunt with a flower-like smile. But, with an anxious heart, her eyes frequently looked towards the door.

Princess Consort Jing knew that her youngest son had gone to the Imperial Plantation for work, but it was weird for him to not return when it was already so late in the evening. She looked at her absent-minded niece and sighed in her heart, 'Perhaps I was wrong and should not have agreed to let my niece stay.'

In the past, when her son came back from Tanggu Town, he would accompany her for at least half a day. Even if her son was not good with words and barely spoke for the entire day, she could clearly feel her son's closeness to her.

But, when her son came back yesterday and saw Jiang Zixian, he looked as if he had just swallowed a fly. He didn't say a single word for the entire dinner and immediately left after eating. She heard that he went to the study in the outer courtyard and played chess with his lord father for most of the night. Today, he had gone out before dawn. He rushed around in a hurry as if there was a vicious dog chasing him.

She looked at the chime clock in the room, which was a rare item that her son brought back from the west. It was very convenient to check the time with this. Ay, it was almost ten o'clock. It was long past the time she usually went to rest, but her youngest son still hadn't returned. Moreover, this tactless niece of hers was still dawdling in her room...

"Zhuxiang, is Lady Mother asleep?" Just as Princess Consort Jing was feeling regretful, her youngest son's low voice sounded from outside the door.

Jiang Zixian, who sat on the edge of her bed, suddenly jumped up. When she saw Princess Consort Jing's surprised and discontented gaze, she embarrassedly sat down again. She said with slight embarrassment, "Older Aunt, Brother Yang's work is too tiring, and only came back at this time..."

"The emperor believes in him, and thus entrusted him with the important task of growing corn and potatoes. Due to the natural disasters last year, many good crops were wasted. If it fails again this year, the emperor will probably put the blame on him..." There was a slight sense of worry within Princess Consort Jing's tone.

Jiang Zixian's eyes shifted and said, "I think Older Brother Yang can hand over the task. Aren't there the officials of the Ministry of Revenue? Brother Yang is born with a silver spoon in his mouth and has never done any farm work, so why does he need to take this thankless job?"

In her opinion, Zhu Junyang's management of the Imperial Plantation's experimental fields was just a job in which he had to deal with bumpkins. No matter how capable he was, there wouldn't be a chance to show it. Moreover, he would become one of those lowly farmers that the nobles speak of. It was a degradation to his own status and a disgrace to the education class!

Zhu Junyang was slightly surprised when he heard that his lady mother hadn't gone to bed yet. However, when he entered his mother's bedroom and saw Jiang Zixian lingering inside, Zhu Junyang fully understood the reason. In his heart, he felt even more disgusted with this woman, who would do anything to achieve her goals.

"Lady Mother, why are you sleeping so late today? Didn't the imperial physician warn you? With your health, you can't stay up too late and can't be too tired." As if Jiang Zixian, who frequently winked at him, didn't exist, he said in a slightly complaining yet caring tone.

"I'm not tired..." Before Princess Consort Jing had finished speaking, she yawned, and tears flowed out of the corners of her eyes. She smiled sheepishly.

"Older Brother Yang, it's all my fault. I was chatting too amiably with Aunt that didn't I realized that it was already so late..." Jiang Zixian took this opportunity to move closer and looked at Zhu Junyang with a pair of big eyes that were like a pool of clear spring water.

Zhu Junyang's face turned cold. He looked at Meixiang and Lanxiang, who were serving in the room, and reprimanded, "Are you two dead? Certain people are tactlessly lingering here, yet you guys don't know to drive them out? If anything goes wrong with Lady Mother's health, will you be able to take responsibility?"

"Your Highness, please don't be angry. These lowly servants know that we're wrong!!" Meixiang and Lanxiang felt very aggrieved within their hearts. They had reminded Miss Jiang more than five times, but Miss Jiang kept diverging the conversation. She was a guest, so they couldn't exceed their authority and kick her out, right?

Jiang Zixian, who stood one step away from Zhu Junyang, was dying of embarrassment. Older Brother Yang was too inconsiderate of other people's feelings. No matter what she was still his younger cousin, why did he have to speak so unpleasantly?

Zhu Junyang still treated her like air and said to the two maidservants, "Since it's the first offense, I will let you guys go this time. If it happens again, you two will definitely be severely punished!!"

Princess Consort Jing saw her two maidservants kneeling on the ground and shivering like frightened quails. Although her heart slightly ached, she knew that her son was just using this matter as a pretext to vent his anger in front of Jiang Zixian.

"Thank you very much, Your Royal Highness!!" Meixiang trembled with fear as she stood up. She walked to Jiang Zixian and said in a low voice, "Miss Jiang, Her Highness needs to rest now. Please come back tomorrow."

Jiang Zixian felt as if she had been slapped in the face and it burned painfully. She didn't have any face to continue staying here, so she hastily bid farewell to her aunt and quickly left. If it had been other people, there was no way that they could continue staying in the Prince Jing's Estate after this incident. However, Jiang Zixian was too eager to climb up the social ladder, and thus shamelessly stayed...

Princess Consort Jing looked at her niece's back figure and lightly sighed, "Lass Xian was such a lovely child. How did she turn out like this after growing up? Yang'er, don't worry. In a few days, Lady Mother will find an excuse to send her back."

“Lady Mother, why are you letting just any random cat and dog stay at home? If you're bored, then you can have Younger Uncle Shao's family's Lass Yue accompany you!” Zhu Junyang expressed the dissatisfaction in his heart.

Princess Consort Jing knew that the 'Lass Yue' who her son mentioned was the legitimate daughter of her youngest full-blooded brother. She had just turned nine, and she was clever, sensible, and very likeable. If her son said that Lass Yue was a good person, then it must be true.

“Yang'er, do you dislike Lass Xian because she fancies you?” Princess Consort Jing teased.

With a face of disdain, Zhu Junyang said, “If she simply liked me, I wouldn't hate her so much. She is filled with ulterior motives, yet she still feigns an ignorant and innocent appearance, which is so sickening to see!”

Princess Consort Jing wanted to put in a good word for her niece, but when she remembered her son's special ability, she swallowed back her words. After a moment of silence, she said to her son, who was about to stand up and leave, “I heard that Lass Yu has come to the capital. Invite her to the estate someday. I've been eating the medicinal meals that she prescribed, but I keep feeling that it's not as effective as the meals that I ate in Tanggu Town. If she doesn't mind, I want to ask her to check my pulse and see if we need to change the prescription.”

As she spoke, she observed the details of her son's expression. Sure enough, when she mentioned the little girl of the Yu Family, the expression on her son's face softened and his gaze seemed to have become warmer. There was always one thing to overcome another. It seemed like her son had completely fallen into the hands of the lass of the Yu Family. 'Ay! How old is that young girl this year? Eleven, right? It doesn't seem like she understands these matters yet! My son also isn't someone who knows how to coax women. He seriously makes me worry...'

“Lady Mother's health is important. Tomorrow, I'll personally go invite her over. Xiaocao is always thinking about Lady Mother, and she even asked about you today!” Zhu Junyang couldn't help but put in some good words for Yu Xiaocao in front of his mother.

Princess Consort Jing looked at him meaningfully, and then said, “I heard that Dongshan Village was one of the major disaster areas of last year's locust plague. I don't know what happened to the flowers and plants in the valley. Did they also get destroyed? Yang'er, how is our mountain manor in the West Mountains? It would be nice if we can go there to avoid the heat in the summer!”

Zhu Junyang replied, “The construction of the mountain manor is almost completed. If it hadn't been delayed due to the locust plague last year, we would have been able to move in already. A wolf pack came down the mountains last autumn. If Son hadn't just happened to be there, I'm afraid that the Yu Family would have also been harmed... Fortunately, the dozen or so wolves have been wiped out. The wolf fur mattress that Son brought back was a present from Yu Xiaocao to show her respect to you!”

Princess Consort Jing already knew about the wolf pack incident, but she still had lingering fears when hearing about it again, “Although it's convenient to dig wild herbs and hunt for game when living at the foot of the mountains, it's still quite dangerous. Tell your lord father to send a group of guards to defend the mountain manor. If the Yu Family needs help, we can help them out since we're living close by. Yang'er, was there a lot of work today? Are you tired?”

“I'm not tired. I was just accompanying them. We mostly relied on Xiaocao's pesticide... Lady Mother, it's getting late, so you should quickly rest. If there's anything else you want to say, we can continue talking tomorrow.” Zhu Junyang saw Princess Consort Jing's face appeared slightly tired, so he quickly helped her lie down and covered her with the brocade quilt.

Princess Consort Jing enjoyed her youngest son's rare thoughtful action and said with a smile, “Good, the experimental fields in both locations have been cultivated. You should be able to stay in the capital for a few more days this time, right?”

Zhu Junyang thought about it and replied in a slightly sly manner, “If there aren't any irrelevant people being an eyesore in front of me, then I can spend more time accompanying Lady Mother at home. If Lady Mother has someone to accompany you, there's still some matters that I need to take care of at Tanggu Town, so Son will have to stay there until there is complete peace and quiet at the home!”

Chapter 338 – First Visit to the Prince Jing's Estate

Princess Consort Jing jokingly scolded, “Stinky brat, you dared to threaten your lady mother. Be careful of your lord father spanking your bottoms!! Alright, Lady Mother understands. I will send your younger cousin back as soon as possible.”

Looking at her youngest son's broad and straight back, Princess Consort Jing's heart was filled with emotions. Her son had finally grown up. He could gradually control his emotions without being affected by the negative energy that he perceived. Didn't her son appear quite cunning and amusing with his childish 'threat' earlier?

Early the next day, Jiang Zixian missed another opportunity at the dining table again. Her aunt told her that Older Brother Yang had gone out early in the morning. Was Older Brother Yang really this busy? He must be avoiding her! She refused to accept this. With her beautiful appearance, alluring figure, and excellent schemes, there was no way that she couldn't get Royal Prince Yang!!

In the main courtyard's parlor room of the General's Estate, Yu Xiaocao carried the chubby Little Linlin with slight difficulty to the dining table. She looked strangely at Royal Prince Yang, who sat calmly at the table, and joked, "Young Royal Prince, could it be that the breakfast at the Prince Jing's Estate doesn't suit your taste so you're bumming a meal at our General's Estate?"

"This child, is that how you should speak to Royal Prince Yang?" Lady Fang glared at her in disapproval, and then smiled at Royal Prince Yang, "This lass is used to speaking casually, so please don't take it to heart."

Zhu Junyang's gaze didn't even shift as he nodded seriously and said, "The chef in the Prince Jing's Estate is definitely not as skilled as Xiaocao."

Yu Xiaocao rolled her eyes at him and said, "Who are you coaxing? You think I don't know that your family's chef came from a family of imperial chefs. His culinary skills are even higher than that of the chefs at Zhenxiu Restaurant. Heh heh... are you hiding here because you can't endure the attention of the beauty?"

Zhu Junyang looked at her, raised his eyebrows, and said, "Can't endure the attention of the beauty? Where did you learn such an impudent remark? It's enough to just mention it here in this parlor room, lest other people heard you and say that the young miss of the general's household acts in an undignified manner!"

Yu Xiaocao curled her lips, made a funny face at him, and said, "Since you're evading the topic of our discussion, I must have guessed correctly!! Who would have thought that the young royal prince has the potential of being 'a handsome man who causes calamity' ah!"

Seeing that she was speaking more and more outrageously, Lady Fang patted her shoulders twice and said, "What 'a handsome man who causes calamity'? I have only heard of 'a beauty who causes calamity'! Why do you have so many weird phrases in your brain? Cao'er, if you continue to speak so recklessly, I will invite a senior palace servant to teach you some proper etiquette!"

“There's no need, right? I have a new project, so I need to go back to Dongshan Village in two days...” Yu Xiaocao's face instantly turned pale. When she heard about a senior palace servant teaching her manner, she thought of the scene of the ugly old palace servant pricking the female lead with needles in My X Princess [1].

Zhu Junyang thought of those noble young ladies who all seemed as if even their breathing were calculated. They all seemed to be exactly the same, which was extremely boring. Hence, he said, “Actually, Xiaocao is very good right now. She's carefree like a little wild horse, so there's no need to restrict her.”

Yu Xiaocao blinked her eyes at the young royal prince and nodded in agreement, “Yes, that's right! I think that those so-called noble young ladies are all really fake, like they're wearing masks. They're not living in an unrestrained and free manner at all, so there's nothing to be envious about.”

Lady Fang also felt that her daughter's temperament was pretty good and was just somewhat eccentric at times. She thought about it and said, “After this year's autumn harvest and when it isn't as busy at home, you come to the capital again. I'll teach you how to engage in social activities and some etiquettes of interaction. You should also know some of the rules of the imperial palace. There's nothing bad with learning a little more!”

Zhu Junyang nodded and said, “Mhm, that works!”

Yu Xiaocao lowered her head to look at Little Linlin's chubby hands and thought, 'We can think about the matters in autumn when it's autumn.' The project that she had in mind should be implemented by autumn. At that time, she could just come up with another excuse to avoid coming again!

Little Linlin, who was nestled within his older sister's hands, saw the fish porridge in front of himself. His eyes immediately lit up, and he stared at the bowl of porridge without blinking. He patted Yu Xiaocao's arm with his plump little hands and mumbled, “Eat, eat...”

Little Linlin, who was almost one year old, had begun to learn to speak. Lady Fang never expected that she had taught him to say 'father' and 'mother' for such a long time, but her son's first word ended up being 'eat'! He would definitely grow up to be a foodie.

Seeing the skinny Yu Xiaocao holding a chubby baby and her fair hands had turned red from the patting, Zhu Junyang felt somewhat displeased in his heart, "Isn't there a wet nurse? Why are you always taking other people's jobs? Would they be able to take their wages with ease?"

The wet nurse, who stood on the side, sweated profusely within her heart. She quickly tried to take the young master back, but Little Linlin didn't cooperate. 'Older Sister's embrace is so comfortable ah. It's fragrant and soft. Older Sister feeds me yummy food. I don't want the wet nurse: I want Older Sister!!' Little Linlin desperately pushed away the wet nurse's hands, and anxiously cried, "No, no!!"

Zhu Junyang stood up. With his hands under the little guy's armpits, Zhu Junyang picked him up and stuffed him into the wet nurse's hands. Little Linlin kicked his chubby little legs, but when he turned and saw the dark-faced royal prince, he pouted in fright. He turned his body and looked in the direction of Yu Xiaocao, "Sister! Sister——"

Lady Fang felt sad in her heart. She took her son and carried him in her embrace. She tapped his small nose and said, "You little heartless fellow. Your older sister has only come for two days, yet you already got bribed by her tasty food. I have taught you to say 'mother' for so long, but you still haven't learned it. However, you can say 'sister' quite clearly ah!"

Linglong laughed on the side, "Madam, this shows that Young Miss and Young Master are fated. You should be very happy that they have such a deep sister-brother relationship."

Yu Xiaocao picked up Little Linlin's personal bowl and broke the fillet into smaller pieces. She scooped up a spoonful and carefully checked whether there were any bones inside. The fish porridge was made with snakehead fish, which didn't have a lot of bones. However, it was still better to be more careful since it was being fed to a child.

"Come on, follow Older Sister and call—Mother...Mother..." Yu Xiaocao lured the little fellow with the fish porridge.

Sure enough, Little Linlin was lured by the fragrant smell. All of his attention was focused on the spoon, which he was very familiar with, "Eat, eat... Sister... Eat!"

His cute appearance was seriously too adorable, but Yu Xiaocao didn't compromise. She suppressed her smile and said, "You can only eat the fish porridge if you learn how to say 'mother'! Come, follow me—Mother... Don't grab it. If you don't call 'mother', Older Sister will eat up all of the fish porridge!"

As she said that, she delivered the spoon to her own mouth. Seeing this, Little Linlin immediately became anxious and turned to look aggrievedly at Lady Fang. He pointed at Yu Xiaocao, who had already put the fish porridge into her own mouth, and complained tearfully, "Mother—eat... eat..."

When Lady Fang heard her son calling her 'mother' for the first time, she was so elated that tears welled up in her eyes. She softly said, "Good, good! Since our Lin'er wants to eat fish porridge, Mother will feed the fish porridge to Lin'er!"

Yu Xiaocao washed the spoon with boiled water, and then she scooped up another spoonful of the porridge. This time, she didn't tease the little fellow and directly delivered it into Little Linlin, who was waiting to be fed. Yu Xiaocao had woken up early in the morning to make the fillet porridge in the small kitchen. The porridge was soft and aromatic, while the fish was delicious and tender. So, it was the best supplementary food for children.

After Little Linlin ate the various supplementary foods that Yu Xiaocao made these two days, he didn't even drink milk anymore, which saved him from the painful experience of weaning.

After he finished the bowl of fish porridge, Little Linlin burped and continued to stare at other people's fish porridge. Lady Fang was afraid that he would overeat, so she didn't dare to feed him anymore and told the wet nurse to take him back to his room.

"Don't forget to feed Little Linlin the medicine!" Yu Xiaocao couldn't help but remind her.

When Little Linlin heard the word 'medicine', his face instantly wrinkled up and he looked as if he was about to cry. The wet nurse quickly coaxed, "We're not eating it. Our Young Master won't eat that bitter medicine, but we're eating the sweet sugar water instead. You just ate it last night. Did Young Master forget?"

When the sugar water was mentioned, Little Linlin's tears immediately stopped like it was tap water. 'After drinking the yummy sugar water, my throat feels very comfortable and I won't cough anymore!'

While the wet nurse prepared the loquat leaf cough syrup, Little Linlin stared fixedly at her as if he was supervising her to ensure that she didn't change the sugar water into the bitter medicine. When she tried to feed him the first spoon, he still had his lips pursed together. He lightly touched it with his lips, and then licked his lips. After he confirmed that it was indeed sweet, he drank it in big mouthfuls.

Yu Xiaocao watched from the side and said with a smile, "Godmother, Younger Brother is really smart. He already knows that he needs to guard against others deceiving him at such a young age!"

Lady Fang showed a gratified smile on her face, but then sighed and said, "It's just that he has a weak constitution, and thus easily falls ill."

"Children have weak immunity. I know a prescription for enhancing one's immunity. In the next two days, I will make it into a honey paste. Mix it with some water and drink it at least three times daily." What honey paste? In actuality, it was just an excuse to cover Yu Xiaocao's usage of the mystic-stone water. Adding honey would give it a sweet taste, which children favored.

Zhu Junyang was bored to death as he sat on the side. Seeing that she had finished breakfast and feeding medicine, she should have time to pay attention to him now, right? He cleared his throat and said, "Xiaocao, Lady Mother knows that you have come to the capital, so she wants to invite you to come visit to our estate."

"It's our negligence. When we were at Tanggu Town, Her Highness took great care of us, so it's only right and proper that we visit her." Lady Fang asked Royal Prince Yang to wait for a moment. She picked a set of clothing for Yu Xiaocao to change into, and then had Hupo comb her hair into a cute and lovely hairstyle. After that, she personally prepared a gift that was neither too conspicuous nor disrespectful, and took her goddaughter to Prince Jing's Estate.

Royal Prince Yang, who rode on a tall steed, followed behind the General's Estate's horse carriage all the way to the Prince Jing's Estate. Some of the noble young masters in the capital recognized Royal Prince Yang. Upon seeing that it wasn't Princess Consort Jing's carriage, they were very curious about who would have such a great honor to be personally escorted by someone favored by the emperor.

They entered the Prince Jing's Estate through the side entrance. Meixiang had been waiting by the festooned gate. When she saw the mother and daughter pair, Meixiang smiled politely and said, "Lady Fang, it has been a long time since you have come to chat with Her Highness. Our mistress really misses you ah!"

With a smile, Lady Fang politely replied, “My child is still young, so it's hard to leave him alone! I'll personally apologize to Her Highness when I see her later!”

Yu Xiaocao followed behind her godmother with a smile and quietly listened to the two of them exchanging polite greetings. However, her eyes weren't idle. It was a rare chance to come to the Prince Jing's Estate, so she would treat it as a tour. The courtyard was surrounded by green walls and lush weeping willows. With flower filled corridors on all sides and decorative stone mountains along the pathways in the courtyard, the entire courtyard appeared elegant and magnificent...

Chapter 339 – Ugly

Fine and lush vegetation, dazzling and precious flowers, pavilions and terraces, carved railings and beautiful buildings... Yu Xiaocao felt like she could barely take everything in with her eyes. Zhu Junyang coughed twice and said with a smile, “Pay attention and don't make it seem like you're a country bumpkin who came to the town for the first time.”

Yu Xiaocao freed up some time to throw daggers at him with her eyes. She snorted twice and said, “So ignorant! I'm Granny Liu visiting the Grand View Gardens [1]! Besides, what's wrong with country bumpkins? Country bumpkins don't eat, drink, or use anything that belongs to you, so how are they in your way? On the other hand, you, the dignified Young Royal Prince, often bums off meals at a country bumpkin's house empty-handed!”

Meixiang secretly glanced at her young master and saw that he actually had a smile on his face. It seemed like he had been amused by Miss Xiaocao's words. Her young master was really tolerant of Miss Yu. Had it been another person, that person would have already been frozen to death by the cold air that he emitted...

“Older Brother Yang, you're back ah!!” Zhu Junyang was just about to say something when a red cloud drifted out of the flowers and trees, and rushed directly at him, “Ahhh, save me! Brother Yang quickly catch me...”

Based on the distance that Jiang Zixian calculated, if Older Brother Yang stood at the same place without moving, she would be able to fall right into the strong arms of Older Brother Yang. However, it was under the premise that Zhu Junyang didn't move. Could he not move? Of course not!

Zhu Junyang had long detected Jiang Zixian's little plan. Before he got attacked by the fragrant wind, he gently grabbed onto Yu Xiaocao with his right hand and moved to the side... Yu Xiaocao felt a tight grasp on her left arm, and her feet didn't even touch the ground as she drifted a few steps to the side. When she looked down at her feet, she saw a girl dressed in red lying face down beside her feet. She knocked her forehead on the small path paved with bluestones and emitted a loud 'bang' sound.

'Tsk tsk, it must hurt a lot!' Yu Xiaocao grimaced and quickly moved several steps to the side, lest she got caught in the crossfire.

Seeing stars before her eyes, Jiang Zixian felt stinging pain on her knees, arms, palms, and forehead. What happened? She was somewhat muddled due to the fall. She was about to fall into Older Brother Yang's embrace and was just about two centimeters away, so how did she fail? That wasn't right!!

Zhu Junyang practiced martial arts, and thus he could jump onto the roof in a blink of the eye, let alone merely moving a few steps to the side.

Jiang Zixian's maidservant was also stunned for a moment. She hastily went forward and hurriedly helped her young miss stand up. Jiang Zixian's carefully matched clothing had become untidy, and her meticulously combed hair had become disheveled. Her makeup had also gotten dirtied by the soil on the ground. Most importantly, there was a scratch on her nose and a bruise on her forehead, which made it appear as if she had a horn on her head.

Jiang Zixian couldn't pay heed to the pain on her forehead and nose. Her almond-shaped eyes brimmed with tears as she looked pitifully Older Brother Yang, who was one step away from her. She choked with sobs, "Older Brother Yang, why didn't you help me when you saw me falling? It really hurts ah!!"

She said the last sentence with a whiny tone that had quite a dramatic effect when accompanied by her dirty face. Yu Xiaocao quickly hid behind her godmother with her head bowed and shoulders shaking uncontrollably. She knew that it wasn't nice to laugh at others at this time, but she really couldn't help it ah!!

Zhu Junyang turned a blind eye to the pitiful-looking young girl in front of him. Instead, he looked at Jiang Zixian's two maidservants with cold eyes and said with an icy tone, "Is this how you two serve your master? It's such a flat bluestone path, yet you can still let your master trip? Such incompetent servants, shouldn't you two get flogged and sold already?"

As if they were suffering in the bitter cold and surrounded ten thousand years of ice, the two maidservants felt piercingly cold from the outside to the inside. They kneeled down in front of everyone and shivered like frightened quails. They could hardly speak and could only repeatedly ask for forgiveness, "These lowly servants know our mistakes. Young Royal Prince, please spare these lowly servants this time..."

Zhu Junyang snorted coldly, and with a toss of his sleeves, he walked past them, saying, "You two aren't servants of the Prince Jing's Estate, so there's no point in begging me!! Lady Fang, Xiaocao, Lady Mother is admiring the flowers in the rear garden, so let's go over."

"Young Miss, please spare us. Young Miss..." When the two maidservants heard this, they hastily kowtowed to Jiang Zixian.

Jiang Zixian covered the bump on her forehead with her hand as she looked at Zhu Junyang's back obsessively and muttered, "Older Brother Yang was angry at you guys because he was worried about my injury, right? Mhm, that must be it!! What are you two wretches still doing on your knees? Hurry up and help me freshen up again. I still need to go accompany my aunt to appreciate the flowers!"

While Jiang Zixian returned to her room to wash up, Meixiang had led the group to the rear garden of Prince Jing's Estate. In the garden, a clear stream, which appeared like a jade belt, zigzagged through the depth of the flora and under the various arched bridges. It moved towards the decorative stone mountains and flowed swiftly into the gaps. With holed cornices, carved ridges, and painted sills, the pavilion was faintly discernible among the rich flowers and trees in the garden.

In the pavilion, a woman dressed in purple took fish feed from her maidservant's hands, leaned against the white jade railing, and watched the various koi carps fight for food. With a somewhat leisurely expression, she appeared even more graceful and poised.

"Your Highness, Lady Fang and Miss Yu are here!" Meixiang's crisp voice sounded along with the melodious sound of birds. The bird in the cage stopped singing for a few seconds, and then started singing again.

"Chuxue, you haven't visited in a long time. I almost thought that you have forgotten about me, this friend of yours!" At Tanggu Town, Princess Consort Jing and Lady Fang interacted frequently and became close friends. Thus, they intimately called each other by their names.

Lady Fang smiled and said, "Your Highness must be joking. No matter who I forget, there's no way that I'll forget you! You borrowed several pots of rare orchids from me, so how can I forget!"

Princess Consort Jing laughed and said, "Well, Xia Chuxue, it seems like you only care about those several pots of flowers ah! Could it be that the affection between the two of us can't even compare with several pots of orchid flowers?"

Lady Fang jested, "How could that be? With our deep friendship, Your Highness will definitely be willing to lend me your eighteen scholar camellia and camellia japonica to appreciate for a few days, right?"

Princess Consort Jing regarded the eighteen scholar camellia and camellia japonica as treasures. After she returned from Tanggu Town, she had specially invited two florists, who were skilled in cultivating camellias, to tend the flora. Even Lady Feng had only seen them once or twice. Normally, Princess Consort Jing seldom showed them to others and treated them like precious treasures.

Princess Consort Jing glanced at Lady Fang with her phoenix eyes, hmped twice, and said, "You ah! You're someone who won't let yourself be taken advantage of at all! What's the big deal with lending you the two pots of camellias for several days? Anyway, Xiaocao gifted them to us as a form of filial piety. By the way, Xiaocao, was that valley badly damaged? Can the flora be saved?"

Yu Xiaocao was holding a cup of tea and watching the two dignified women quarrel when their conversation suddenly shifted to her, which resulted in a delayed response. After being stunned for a few seconds, she showed a bright smile and replied, "Rest assured, Your Highness. I purposely went to check at the beginning of spring. Most of the flowers and plants had grown new branches and buds. However, I don't really know much about flowers. When Your Highness's mountain manor in the West Mountain is completed, I'll take Older Sister Meixiang and Older Sister Lanxiang to transplant more camellia flowers back."

Hearing that the camellias in the valley weren't badly damaged, the concern Princess Consort Jing had eased and the smile on her face had become brighter. When Zhu Junyang saw that his lady mother's mood had become better than usual, he said to Yu Xiaocao, "Xiaocao, my lady mother's health has become a lot better after consuming the medicinal meals you prescribed. But, recently, it seems like the effects of medicinal meals aren't as obvious as before. It is time to change the prescription?"

When they were at Tanggu Town, it was Yu Xiaocao who cooked the medicinal meals for Princess Consort Jing, and thus mystic-stone water was added in it. Later, when Princess Consort Jing was taken back to the capital, she had prepared herbs needed for the medicinal meals, which were all saturated

with the little divine stone's spiritual power. Counting the days, it seemed like those medicinal herbs were almost used up, and thus it wasn't surprising that there was a reduction in their effectiveness.

Yu Xiaocao thought about it and asked, "Your Highness, can I take a look at your recent pulse records?" She still wasn't very skilled at examining one's pulse. However, there was an imperial physician who stayed exclusively at the Prince Jing's Estate. The monthly pulse conditions should all be recorded.

Princess Consort Jing told Lanxiang to retrieve the pulse records from Imperial Physician Zheng, and then she had Zhuxiang bring over some easy to digest pastries. After she warmly told Lady Fang and Yu Xiaocao to eat some snacks, she also ate some ejiao cakes.

A joyous atmosphere was overflowing in the pavilion when Jiang Zixian came over with her maidservants. When she walked up the steps, her two maidservants held onto her arms gingerly for fear that their young miss would trip again or sprain her ankle. Even if the royal prince wouldn't do anything to them, his grim gaze was enough to frighten them.

When Princess Consort Jing saw the swelling on her niece's forehead, she quickly put down the pastry in her hands. She worked hard to suppress her laughter and asked, "What happened? I didn't see you for a moment, yet you turned out like this?"

Jiang Zixian couldn't help but look at Zhu Junyang. She timidly pretended to be pitiful and said, "Aunt, it's Older Brother Yang's fault. He clearly saw me falling, yet he didn't even help me. He caused me to fall and end up like this... It really hurts ah!!"

Zhu Junyang coldly glared at her and interjected before his lady mother could say anything, "You look so ugly after the fall, yet you're not embarrassed and still come out to scare people? It's not your fault that you're ugly, but it's wrong for you to come out to scare people! Do you think that other people won't have nightmares at night?"

Jiang Zixian, who originally looked like she was about to cry, immediately turned into a weeping beauty. She had such a bad fall, yet Brother Yang was still making cynical remarks. So... so annoying!! She remembered how she looked in the mirror earlier: bruised forehead and scraped nose...

Ah, she was doomed! She had only wanted to appear in front of Older Brother Yang more frequently while he was home and enhance their relationship. However, she never thought that she would end up

with this ugly appearance. Brother Yang had seen everything, and he disliked her now. What should she do? What should she do?'

Princess Consort Jing noticed her niece's embarrassment and quickly said, "You're already injured like this, have you let the imperial physician check on you? You mustn't be careless about the wounds on your face! If you leave a scar, you'll end up with it for the rest of your life!!"

Jiang Zixian became even more anxious. In her own opinion, her biggest advantage against her female cousins was her good-looking appearance. With a scar on her face, even if Older Brother Yang didn't mind, it would still be impossible for her to be his main wife. If he married a woman with a scar on her face as his wife, Older Brother Yang would be ridiculed by others!!

She hastily left the garden and told her maidservant to call for Imperial Physician Zheng...

Chapter 340 – Got Poisoned?

"The eyesore finally left!!" Zhu Junyang's attitude relaxed a lot and the expression on his face softened considerably.

Princess Consort Jing looked at her own son and lightly shook her head. It seemed like inviting her niece to stay at home was the worst move that she had ever made. Fortunately, she had seen through the situation early on, and it shouldn't be too late to repair the situation. Princess Consort Jing bowed her head in deep thought, trying to think of a reason to send Jiang Zixian back.

On the side, Yu Xiaocao widened her eyes and stared at the young royal prince, as if she was in disbelief. Zhu Junyang glared back at her with a displeased expression and grumpily said, "What are you looking at? Even if you continue to stare, flowers still can't bloom on my face!!"

Yu Xiaocao's gaze stayed on his handsome face for a moment, and then she joked, "Flowers can't blossom on your face, but... your face is originally more pleasing to the eyes than the most beautiful flower in this garden..."

"Cao'er!!" Lady Fang secretly glanced at Princess Consort Jing. Was it really alright to say such frivolous words in front of his mother? Though... Royal Prince Yang's face was indeed pretty good-looking... She pretended to scold her, "What nonsense are you saying? How can a young maiden say such words?"

Princess Consort Jing stared at her son's face for a moment, and then chuckled, "Chuxue, don't scare the child! Xiaocao is just speaking truthfully. Among my three sons, Yang'er resembles me the most. But, since he's a combination of the good points of me and my lord husband, if he was a girl, he would definitely look more beautiful than when I was young."

With a helpless expression, Lady Fang said, "Cao'er isn't that young anymore. Those who grow up faster are already graceful young maidens. How can she call a man handsome right in front of him? It's just that she's normally close with Royal Prince Yang. Had it been someone else, they would probably think that she's crazy about men!"

Yu Xiaocao pouted and said with an aggrieved expression, "Godmother, Daughter can tease the young royal prince because we're familiar with each other. If it was someone else, I wouldn't be so impetuous... Sir Su Ran is very good-looking, but I would just secretly look at him a few more times and wouldn't go up to him and say, 'Sir, you're really handsome.' It would be weird if I don't get beaten up!"

"Haha... If someone says that I'm very good-looking, it just means that she has good taste! Why would I be unreasonable and hit others?" A gentle voice sounded among the flowers. On the small path paved with bluestones, a tall figure slowly approached.

A modest gentleman was like a refined jade. Only the tenacity, gentleness, delicacy, and implicitness of jade could describe the endless charm that Su Ran slowly emitted, right? The pure and outstanding man leisurely walked out of the flowers and trees, as if he was those banished immortals flying in the paintings...

Seeing that Yu Xiaocao's eyes were fixed on another man, Zhu Junyang felt as if there was a big piece of cotton stuffed in his heart, and that feeling irritated him. He quietly tugged at Yu Xiaocao's hair that was hanging loosely behind her, which caused her to glare at him in anger. Zhu Junyang raised his eyebrows, 'As long as her eyes aren't focused on other men, I don't mind suffering a little and getting glared at a few more times.'

As the head steward court eunuch, Su Ran was in charge of the training and assessment of the emperor's personal imperial bodyguards and the imperial guards. Thus, Princess Consort Jing naturally didn't dare to put on airs in front of him. After they exchanged some polite greetings, Princess Consort Jing sat down with a proper smile on her face and asked, "Is Chief Steward Su visiting for official business or..."

Su Ran withdrew the smile on his face, and with a slightly stern expression, he said in a low voice, “The reason that Su Ran came to the Prince Jing’s Estate without notice is to ask for help!!”

Princess Consort Jing was shocked. She swiftly stood up and asked, “For help? What does Chief Steward Su mean? Perhaps, in the palace...” Princess Consort Jing thought of all the dirty things that could have happened in the Imperial Palace. The current emperor was a brilliant ruler who was loved by the people and supported by all officials. Why would there be a need to ask for help?

Su Ran glanced at the grim expressions on Lady Fang and Royal Prince Yang, yet saw the muddled expression on the face of the little girl of the Yu Family. He quickly calmed them, “Your Highness, Princess Consort Jing, please don’t worry too much! It’s a matter of the Eastern Palace. The young imperial prince got poisoned, and the imperial physicians in the Imperial Palace don’t know what to do. I want to borrow Imperial Physician Zheng of Prince Jing’s Estate to go there and have a look...”

When Lady Fang heard that it was a secret matter in the palace, she quickly stood up and said, “Your Highness, I just remembered that there’s some matters that I need to deal with at home, so we shall take our leave...”

“Lady Fang, please stay.” Su Ran looked at Yu Xiaocao, who had also stood up with a foolish expression. He said in a low voice, “I heard that your daughter has studied medicine for several years, and she has a unique understanding of medicine...”

Lady Fang could no longer worry about offending Chief Steward Su, and replied in a fearful manner, “My daughter has only studied medicine under the village doctor for less than a year, and she usually just treated the villagers’ minor illnesses and injuries. The one in the palace has a precious status. With my daughter’s feeble medical skills, we don’t dare to be conceited and show our slight skills in front of the imperial physicians!!”

It had been eight years since the emperor ascended the imperial throne at the age of twenty. Normally, he was diligent in government affairs and wasn’t immersed in the affairs of the inner palace. At present, including the empress and imperial concubines, there were only six or seven people in the imperial harem. The emperor currently only had two young offspring, one prince and one princess. Thus, it was apparent how precious they were. Moreover, even the imperial physicians weren’t certain about the imperial prince’s condition. If Xiaocao got involved, wouldn’t that be the same as the God of Longevity hanging himself—wanting to die earlier?

The smile on Su Ran's face had faded, and those familiar with him would all know that he was angry. His voice still sounded gentle as he said, "Lady Fang is being too humble. Who was the one who nursed Princess Consort Jing's health? How was Lady Fang able to give birth to the young son in your family? If Miss Yu has feeble medical skills, then there aren't any highly skilled doctors in the world anymore!! Lady Fang, Su Ran know what you're worried about. Rest assured, since it was I, Su Ran, who brought her into the palace, I will definitely bring her out. I, Su Ran, will guarantee with my life..."

Lady Fang wanted to make her last attempt at getting out of this situation, but Su Ran spoke again, "Lady Fang, if you continue to delay the young prince's illness, neither of us can bear the responsibility!!"

Lady Fang could no longer voice her refusal. With tears in her eyes, she looked at Yu Xiaocao, who didn't really understand the situation. She gently caressed her head and choked with sobs as she said, "Cao'er, you got implicated because of Godmother!! Godmother will accompany you into the palace. If... Godmother will accompany you!!"

Imperial Physician Zheng had already been invited over by a servant. Without further delay, Su Ran hastily went out of Prince Jing's Estate with Imperial Physician Zheng and the mother-daughter pair. When they mounted the carriage, he turned his head and saw Royal Prince Yang following them. He had wanted to say something but ended up swallowing back his words.

The horses galloped at full speed and the horse carriage also moved at full speed. Fortunately, Prince Jing's Estate wasn't too far from the Imperial Palace. They soon arrived outside of Donghua Gates. In consideration of the aged Imperial Physician Zheng and young Yu Xiaocao, Su Ran had prepared sedans. They rushed all the way to the Eastern Palace.

Lady Fang had already patiently explained the situation to Yu Xiaocao when they were on the carriage. The young imperial prince was poisoned, but the imperial physicians didn't dare to make a rash conclusion. Thus, they wanted to consult with Imperial Physician Zheng, who was born of a family of imperial physicians from the previous dynasty. She, on the other hand, was unlucky to have been at Prince Jing's Estate at that time, and thus was taken as an extra helper.

Yu Xiaocao stared at the multicolored stone on her wrist and communicated with the little divine stone in her mind. After she received the guarantee 'as long as there's still one breath, this Divine Stone will be able to drag him back from the King of Hell', her anxious heart finally relaxed. However, it was quite exciting today. It was her first time visiting the Prince Jing's Estate and she got to tour around. Was she going to have a one-day tour for her first visit to the Imperial Palace? Yu Xiaocao felt strangely excited at the thought that she was about to see a real-life emperor, empress and imperial prince.

Zhu Junyang noticed the change in Yu Xiaocao's emotions. He bent down and whispered into her ears, "Don't be scared, this prince is here! No one will dare to do anything to you!! At that time, if you can treat him, then do your best. If you can't, then just stand on the side! This prince will support you regardless!!"

The emperor was a wise monarch, so he definitely wouldn't do the same thing as the emperor of the previous dynasty, killing multiple people for the sake of one person. The empress might act irrationally because of grief, but even if he had to give up his position as the royal prince, he would still protect Xiaocao. Besides, there would be a lot of imperial physicians there at that time. He reckoned that Yu Xiaocao wouldn't be needed. She was just a random passerby...

Jingyang Palace was the palace hall that the empress resided in. The imperial prince was still young, so he lived with his imperial mother. In a couple of years, when he was bestowed the title of crown prince, he would have to move to Zhongcui Palace next door. When Imperial Physician Zheng entered the door, he was taken to the dragon and phoenix bed by the other imperial physicians to examine the unconscious imperial prince.

With reddened eyes, the empress appeared haggard, and her eyes were fixed on her son, for fear that something bad would happen to her son the moment she looked away. The emperor stood behind her and held onto her shoulders, as if he was conveying strength and courage to her.

Su Ran walked to the emperor and whispered into his ears. Zhu Junfan looked towards Yu Xiaocao, remained silent for a moment, and then nodded.

Since Yu Xiaocao entered the Imperial Palace, she held her hands in front of her abdomen and looked down with her head bowed. She had the appearance of 'I'm a good kid and you guys can't see me'. Su Ran came up to her and softly said, "His Majesty called you to go over!"

'Emperor? Oh my god! I'm going to see a real-life emperor soon!!' Yu Xiaocao was so excited that she could barely walk. Su Ran thought that she was scared, so he kindly comforted her, "Don't be afraid. The emperor is very approachable. You're just being called over to answer a few questions."

Yu Xiaocao looked back at Lady Fang and saw a slight trace of fright in her eyes, yet she still tried to calm down and give her a comforting smile. She turned her eyes to Zhu Junyang. He had a calm and gentle

gaze that seemed to have the power to appease one's heart, as if it was saying, 'This prince is here, so what are you afraid of!!'

Yu Xiaocao's heart slightly relaxed and her steps also became lighter. According to the palace etiquettes that her godmother taught her on the way, she quickly performed a proper bow when she saw the hem of a bright yellow robe, "This commoner, Yu Xiaocao, greets the Emperor and the Empress. Long live the Emperor. May the Empress live for thousands of years!"

There seemed to be a ball of fire within the empress's heart. She didn't even look at Yu Xiaocao and said with a voice full of impatience, "Why is Su Ran bringing a little girl over at this time? Isn't that just causing more trouble? Aren't you going to hurry up and take her out!!"

Zhu Junfan hastily patted her shoulders and softly said, "Miss Yu has studied medicine since she was young, and knows some intricate prescriptions. The young son of the General Estate's Lady Fang, who got whooping cough, was cured by her. Last time, when our son was coughing and refused to drink medicine, he had also gotten better after taking the medicine brought back from the General's Estate. When Su Ran went to Prince Jing's Estate, she just happened to have been invited over to nourish Princess Consort Jing's health, so he also brought her along."