

Gold Chapter 341

Chapter 341: 341

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Hearing this, the empress quickly replied, "Little miss, I had been rash with my words just now . You . . . do you have confidence in treating the young prince's illness?" She was also recklessly finding doctors because she was anxious about the illness—how could a ten-year-old little girl be confident in her treatment when so many imperial physicians were solemnly consulting each other about it?

Although Yu Xiaocao thought that the emperor's voice sounded familiar, she did not dare to casually lift her head to confirm his identity . She frankly answered, "This commoner dare not simply come to conclusions . I must first see the patient to know..."

The empress wiped the corners of her eyes and nodded, "Then go and have a look . There's more hope with one more person . . . Chief Steward Su, are all the kitchen staff apprehended? Investigate carefully, I want to see which evil person dares harm my son!"

Zhu Junfan comfortingly patted the empress's back, softly saying, "The imperial physicians haven't concluded that it's poisoning, right? Be calm, the person who dares to harm my son will definitely be severely punished!"

Some old officials in court had mentioned the selection of concubines, but he had always used various excuses to push the matter away . In his previous life, he had accompanied his mother in watching a few palace intrigue drama series, in which three women were enough for an entire drama . Once the number of concubines increased, so would the drama! There was already enough infighting to give him a migraine even though as of now, he only had several concubines . If he had more concubines, he would probably want to flee the palace and the court . It was too scary—women's jealousy and their vigor to fight for favor!

Originally, he thought that the concubines in his harem fighting over his favor was just a small matter . He had a son and a daughter, and his son was smart while his daughter was obedient . He had planned to wait until the prince born of the empress had grown up and appointed him as the crown prince

before he had more children in order to prevent what happened during Emperor Kangxi's reign, in which nine of his sons fought for the throne and caused chaos within the palace and the court .

Since he didn't have many children, the concubines were still quite well-behaved and had not tried to scheme against the little prince and princess . He was also secretly gleeful over his smart decision, but who could have known that the little prince now displayed signs of poisoning . It was really a slap in his face ah!

Zhu Junfan had a cold expression on his face . If this really was a plan that stemmed from his imperial harem, he would definitely not be lenient in the punishment!

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Yu Xiaocao took two steps forward and stood beside Imperial Physician Zheng . Imperial Physician Zheng had already checked on the little prince and took his pulse, and he was currently discussing his opinions with the other imperial physicians . Seeing Yu Xiaocao approach, Imperial Physician Zheng did not scrunch up his face like the others . Instead, he warmly spoke, “Miss Yu, what are your thoughts on this matter?”

Yu Xiaocao had already heard most of the imperial physicians' discussions . The young prince only started showing symptoms yesterday, when his condition escalated quickly with fever and convulsions . Now, the little prince was unconscious . His breathing was faint, and he would occasionally go into shock . The signs of poisoning were obvious throughout his entire body .

The little divine stone used its power to scan the little fellow's body when she approached the bed . It laughed amusedly, saying, [This brat has been brought up with too much care, causing his digestive system to be weak . Now his stomach aches after eating something dirty...]

Yu Xiaocao turned to ask the imperial physicians and the little prince's servants, “Since yesterday, has the little prince experienced diarrhea?”

Disdain was written on the faces of the other imperial physicians . Of course, a young girl, who was around the age of ten, could only diagnose the illness as diarrhea . It was too bad that the little prince had not shown any signs of diarrhea ever since his illness began . The palace servants also answered as such .

Yu Xiaocao furrowed her brows, remembering that in her previous life, the child of her neighbor also once suffered from these symptoms . When they visited the district hospital, the doctor said that it was a more serious case of pediatric dysentery .

She noticed that the imperial physicians continued to discuss what kind of poisoning the little prince had gotten, and how they should cure it . Yu Xiaocao paused for a moment, then whispered to Imperial Physician Zheng, "Imperial Physician Zheng, perhaps...the little prince hasn't been poisoned!"

Imperial Physician Wang, who was most knowledgeable on poisons among the rest of the imperial physicians, laughed, "Little miss, this is the Imperial Palace, not somewhere you can simply fool around—you are responsible for every word you say! Will you be able to hold responsibility if the young prince's treatment was delayed because of you?"

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Imperial Physician Zheng knew that Yu Xiaocao had a certain grasp of understanding on some trickier diseases, so he patiently asked, "Miss Yu, what is your opinion?"

Yu Xiaocao thought carefully before saying, "I think the little prince has pediatric dysentery..."

The other imperial physicians looked over with an expression of disagreement . Imperial Physician Wang even disdainfully said, "Pediatric dysentery? Little girl, is your head in the clouds? We just told you that the young prince had no signs of diarrhea, and all symptoms point to poisoning!"

Against all the pressure, Yu Xiaocao explained, "There are mild and there are serious cases of pediatric dysentery, and both have different symptoms . The symptoms of normal dysentery are fever, constipation, mucus and blood, and nausea . In mild cases of dysentery, there are no obvious constitutional symptoms as the patient defecates three to five times a day and their feces are accompanied by mucus or a little blood . In serious cases of dysentery, the constitutional symptoms are a little more obvious—where the patient defecates at least ten times a day and his feces contain mucus and blood . He also experiences abdominal pain, nausea, and dehydration . "

Imperial Physician Wang impatiently interrupted her, “We all know of these simple pathologies, so don't waste our time . The little prince isn't experiencing stomachache, nor did he show any signs of diarrhea, not to mention mucus and blood accompanying his feces . How did you come to the conclusion that the young prince has pediatric dysentery?”

Yu Xiaocao looked at him solemnly, “Besides those that I have listed, there is also a kind of pediatric dysentery called 'bacillary dysentery' . It's abrupt and accompanied by symptoms such as fever, convulsions, unconsciousness, shock and breathing difficulty . The symptoms regarding the patient's digestive system usually only appear after 24 hours or sometimes, 36 hours . This illness is more serious and is usually seen occurring in children aged from 2 to 7 years old...”

Hearing her speak confidently, Imperial Physician Wang asked hesitantly, “Is there actually such an illness, or did you make it all up after hearing our discussions? Little girl, even if you wanted to take credit for this, you still have to be alive to be able to claim it! This is the Imperial Palace, and the patient is the child of the emperor and empress—you mustn't implicate us!”

Seeing as no one besides Imperial Physician Zheng believed her words, Yu Xiaocao retreated, saying, “Since Imperial Physician Wang said it so, I'll value my own life and stop commenting . All of you are very experienced imperial physicians, so you should have already come up with a way to treat the little prince from your discussions . If you fail to cure the little prince with your treatment, please try treating him from the perspective of treating pediatric dysentery!”

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The imperial physicians glanced at each other, still unwilling to believe the words of a ten-year-old girl . They then began treating the young prince with the method and medicine they had come up with earlier . Although they could not trace the poison, if it was poisoning, gentle detoxification should be effective .

The medicine was quickly brewed and fed to the young imperial prince . The imperial physicians nervously watched the little prince, hoping that his condition would improve .

"This is bad! The little prince is panting—it looks like he's short of breath!" A palace servant at the side softly exclaimed upon noticing the young prince's uncomfortable state . The imperial physicians quickly surrounded the little prince to give him emergency aid . Fortunately, the little prince's breathing returned to normal afterwards .

Not long after they fed the little prince his second bowl of medicine, everyone started to smell a pungent, rotting scent . The palace servants discovered that the young prince had lost control of his bowels, and the product of his diarrhea contains mucus and blood... The imperial physicians immediately remembered Yu Xiaocao's words from before, 'The symptoms regarding the patient's digestive system will only appear after 24 hours...' Were they wrong after all? Was it not poison, but actually just a form of pediatric dysentery?

The imperial physicians then decided to change the medicine to 'three huang dysentery relief decoction' [1] . Very soon, the medicine was brewed and fed to the little prince . Within the short period of half a day, the little prince had been fed a total of 3 bowls of dark, bitter medicine .

Yu Xiaocao resisted but still could not help herself from whispering, "Wouldn't it be faster if we administered enema instead?"

Imperial Physician Zheng secretly pulled on her sleeve while glancing in the empress's direction, whispering, "Are you mad to even consider enema? The little prince is going to be the crown prince in the future, and if there are no accidents, he will ascend the throne after the emperor abdicates . How could we use such a lowly method to treat his illness?"

Yu Xiaocao pouted, inwardly thinking: 'Is his pride more important than his life? But then again, if the little prince, who will be emperor in the future, knew that his anus had been violated, I really don't know what he would do . For my own sake, I should just keep a low profile...'

Zhu Junfan obviously heard what she had said as he gestured for her to go over to his side, whispering, "Will the method that you mentioned help treat my son's illness?"

Yu Xiaocao secretly glanced at the emperor . Then, her eyes widened in disbelief . Oh god! The emperor actually looks the same as the heir of Prince Jing—are they twins? That wasn't right! Prince Jing is the emperor's imperial uncle...could it be that the emperor's father was infertile, so he took in Imperial Prince Jing's son as his own? But that also didn't seem right! If it was like that, the news should've already spread wide and far .

So there was only one possibility—the emperor was travelling outside under disguise, and used the heir of Prince Jing's name . Yu Xiaocao turned her head around to glare at Zhu Junyang: 'This bastard even hid the truth from me! I won't cook good food for him in the future!!'

Zhu Junfan could tell from Xiaocao's expression that she had already recognized him, so he lightly nodded to her and said, "Since we already know each other, what can you not say openly?"

After much hesitation, Yu Xiaocao finally whispered, "Enema can directly transport the effective composition of the medicine directly into the colon and rectum to take effect without risking damage from digestion in the stomach and small intestines..."

"Imperial Physician Wang, go and brew the medicine for enema . I will personally administer it to my son!" Zhu Junfan only had this one son after all . Moreover, he had been personally involved in the growth of this smart son since he was born, so they were naturally closer to each other than ordinary fathers and sons of the imperial family . If his son were to blame someone for this, let that person be him! How could he consider so much when it was about his son's illness?

Since the emperor already gave out the order, the imperial physicians would not dare to disobey him . Imperial Physician Wang glared fiercely at Yu Xiaocao, then left to personally brew the medicine . Yu Xiaocao felt wronged: 'Why are you glaring at me? I wasn't the one who ordered you! If you don't want to do it, why don't you argue with the emperor? Don't you think it's too much to specifically choose this persimmon—me—to squeeze just because it's soft [2]?'

Fields of Gold Chapter 342 - Unable to Complain

The imperial physicians were also quite skilled as the little prince's conditions quickly stabilized. However, the empress was still worried and decided to make Yu Xiaocao stay in Jingyang Palace for a few days until the little prince recovered from his illness. In her heart, although Yu Xiaocao was young, she was still experienced in certain complex and difficult illnesses.

Take this case for example: it seemed like it was poisoning, but even with the involvement of all of the imperial physicians, they still could not identify the disease. When Yu Xiaocao came, she knew with only one look that it was not a case of poisoning, but instead was pediatric dysentery. Even in surgery there were specialized departments—perhaps she was more knowledgeable in aspects to pediatric conditions.

The imperial kitchen was falsely alarmed, and the concubines that had been suspected by the empress all let out a sigh of relief. If anything went wrong with the little prince, they would have to suffer the consequences! Although their conscience was clear, they still would not be able to pass their days peacefully if the empress hated them.

Once his son's condition stabilized, Zhu Junfan immediately began investigating into the cause of his illness. The little girl of the Yu Family had already said that the digestive tract symptoms only showed after 24 hours. If he thought back a day...his son seemed to have left the imperial palace for the maternal home of the empress—the Meng Residence.

He called over the people of the Meng Residence to be questioned and found out that when the little prince was there, the direct nephew of the empress, Meng Shuhuan, had brought him to visit the temple fair and they ate quite a lot of street food. Meng Shuhuan often practiced martial arts with the master at home, so his body was healthier and stronger. He was fine after he ran to the toilet twice after going home, but the little prince was brought up too carefully, so he immediately fell ill after returning.

As it was her own nephew's fault, even though the empress's heart ached for her son, she didn't punish the Meng Family. However, the empress's older brother, Meng Shuhuan's father, did. He beat him up and locked him in the ancestral hall to starve for 2 days. In the end, the matter was allowed to pass because the old madam pitied her grandson and pleaded for his pardon.

Since then, every time the little prince visited the Meng Residence, everyone would serve him with extreme care, especially in aspects to the food that he ate—it must be tested and tested again before they dared to serve it to the little prince.

Zhu Junfan felt that his son was too protected even though he was already 5 years old because he was brought up at the empress's side. As the future emperor, he should not be brought up by a woman alone, so when the little prince recovered, he was moved into Zhongcui Palace, which was next door. Two bodyguards skilled in martial arts were also placed by his side to teach him the ways to strengthen his own body. In order to cultivate the little prince's interest in martial arts, Zhu Junfan also got him a few companions of the same age to practice with. But this was all afterwards.

Back to Yu Xiaocao, who had been made to remain in the imperial palace. After she had bid her godmother farewell, she followed tiredly behind Chunhong, the maidservant that had been assigned by the empress to serve her. Zhu Junyang thought that she might be unfamiliar with the environment of the imperial palace, so he hurriedly said, “Don't worry! You're the honored guest of the empress, if the servants dare to neglect you, just tell me. I'll seek justice for you from the emperor!”

Chunhong, the maidservant, looked oddly at Royal Prince Yang. This well-known cold-faced royal prince of the capital even had such a considerate side to him. She then looked at the small Yu Xiaocao beside her who held a childish aura and thought, 'So Royal Prince Yang favors this type...isn't she a bit too young?'

Yu Xiaocao's gaze was filled with gratitude as she nodded, “Many thanks to the young royal prince! The little imperial prince's condition has already stabilized, so he should be able to wake up tomorrow! I can

then leave the imperial palace when he's about recovered...Older Sister Chunhong, would you happen to know an abandoned courtyard in the imperial palace that's full of weeds?"

Chunhong stopped in her steps and looked at her weirdly, asking, "Miss Yu, whatever for do you ask for this place? This servant will daringly advise you, it's better to be ignorant of the matters of the imperial palace's inner court."

Royal Prince Yang was also puzzled, "Xiaocao, what do you want to do with a courtyard full of weeds?"

Yu Xiaocao smiled, "I remember there's a prescription that helps in treating pediatric dysentery, and one of the ingredients is a kind of common wild herb. There's a high possibility that I can find this type of wild herb in a courtyard full of weeds, that's why I asked."

Chunhong was one of the empress's most competent maidservants. Once she heard it was to find an ingredient that could aid in the treatment of the little prince's illness, she naturally did not dare to delay, "Miss Yu, this servant will go and inform the empress. I will bring you there once I get the entry plate!"

As long as it was beneficial towards the little prince's condition, there was nothing the empress would not agree to. Chunhong obtained the entry plate and led Yu Xiaocao in the north-west direction. The further they went, the more remote and desolate the surroundings became. Since the founding of the nation, there had been successive years of war which had emptied the treasury, so how could there be money for the renovations of the palaces? The imperial palace of the Great Ming Dynasty was still the same one as the previous dynasty, and as the concubines in the imperial harem were only so few, there were still a lot of palaces that were empty, even though some eunuchs and maidservants were left to take care of the cleanliness. But as they proceeded further north, they saw fewer people, until eventually there was almost no one around.

"Older Sister Chunhong, where are we going?" Yu Xiaocao saw that more and more weeds grew in the cracks between the bricks under her feet, and the nearby courtyards seemed more and more dilapidated. Even the imperial palace had such a run down side!

Zhu Junyang whispered, "The cold palace of the previous dynasty is in front. The emperor emeritus and the emperor have been merciful, so it has always been empty..."

Chunhong found the old eunuch, who looked after the cold palace, to open the rusted, copper padlock. Once they pushed open the door, their view was immediately filled with overgrown, waist-high grass.

Half of the house had already collapsed while the other side was crumbling. It looked as though they had arrived at a ruin!

Zhu Junyang pulled out a sturdy stalk of grass and swept it about in the weeds to chase away all creepy-crawlies. Yu Xiaocao followed behind him arduously, trying to identify the wild herb amongst the weeds. Chunhong was filled with fear seeing the cold palace in such a state of disrepair, so she only led Yu Xiaocao to the doors of the cold palace before she stopped in her tracks.

The good thing was, the purslane that Yu Xiaocao was looking for was pretty common. Very soon, she found purslane among the weeds and speedily harvested it. The sky was beginning to darken, and the cold palace was not a good place to hang around, especially when there were rumors about the many imperial concubines who had died unjustly here...

With Zhu Junyang's help, Yu Xiaocao managed to harvest enough purslane within half an hour. Once they returned to Jingyang Palace, she also asked the empress for some cane sugar, saying it was important for the medicine. Since it was to be fed to the little prince, without a doubt it needed to be checked by the imperial physicians. The ingredients that Yu Xiaocao required to make purslane candy was simple. It only required purslane and cane sugar.

Aside from being a common wild herb, purslane was also used to reduce swelling, cool and detoxify the body. In her previous life, the child of her neighbor also took purslane candy along with the medicine they got from the hospital. It was said that purslane also had antibacterial properties, so it was quite useful to suppress the Shigella bacteria.

Purslane and cane sugar could not kill anyone anyway, so she might as well give it a try! With some mystic-stone water, the effect would definitely be enhanced!

Yu Xiaocao followed a 5:1:1 ratio by first pounding the purslane to juice and boiling it with mystic-stone water. She then added cane sugar to the mixture, made it into a candy bar, and cut the candy bar into smaller pieces each weighing about 3 grams.

When the purslane candy was brought to the empress, she saw that it did not look pleasing and asked doubtfully, "This candy can really treat my son's illness?"

Yu Xiaocao smiled, “Rest assured, Your Imperial Majesty! This candy is extremely helpful for the little prince's illness. Moreover the taste is sweet and will be easily accepted by the little prince. If you feel uncertain about this, it can be taken along with the medicine prescribed by the imperial physicians. There are no side effects!”

The imperial physician added, “Your Majesty, purslane is indeed beneficial towards alimentary diseases, especially dysentery. The common folk often consume purslane as a wild vegetable!”

Since the commoners could eat purslane as a wild vegetable, then it was definitely not poisonous. The empress then put down her worries and carefully asked about the dosage of the candy.

Yu Xiaocao thought about it for a moment after inquiring about the little prince's age, then said, “3 pieces per dose, and 3 doses a day. The little prince should recover after 7 days.”

At this moment, a booming voice resounded from outside the palace door, “How is Little Hanwen? My good great-grandson, your great-grandfather has come to see you! What have his servants been doing, to let my good great-grandchild suffer so terribly!”

Hearing this voice, the empress hurriedly stood and went up to plead guilty, “Imperial Grandfather, it is I who had been unthorough and caused Hanwen to suffer. Please lay down your punishment, Imperial Grandfather!”

Seeing the empress's tired complexion, the emperor emeritus, Zhu Huaiyong sighed, “Rise up. Although the illness is on the child, the pain is on the mother's heart—it's been hard on you these past few days. Has Little Hanwen's condition improved? What do the imperial physicians say?”

The empress explained in detail to the emperor emeritus about the little prince's illness and the treatments. Zhu Huaiyong's worried heart finally settled down after he knew that the little prince was out of danger.

“Eh? This little girl...Isn't this the daughter of the Yu Family in Dongshan Village? You're finally willing to come to the capital? What good food did you make today? Let me taste...” As he said this, the emperor emeritus snatched a piece of candy off the plate that Yu Xiaocao was holding and popped it into his mouth.

“Mm...it's quite sweet, although it's still somewhat lacking in comparison to the desserts served in the palace. Empress, the reason you called her into the imperial palace couldn't possibly be to make these few pieces of candy, right?” While he was talking, the emperor emeritus picked up another piece of candy again and chewed on it.

The empress helplessly reminded him after a moment of hesitation, “Imperial Grandfather, that is the medicinal candy that Miss Yu had made for Hanwen. It can cure pediatric dysentery...”

The emperor emeritus felt embarrassed once he heard this. He actually took the medicine for his great-grandson as candy! He coughed a few times and glared at the silent Yu Xiaocao, “You little girl, why didn't you tell me?”

Seeing the emperor emeritus's true identity, Yu Xiaocao couldn't complain at this point. Why did these imperial personages all like to travel to Tanggu Town? First, it was the 'heir of Prince Jing' who had turned into the emperor, now it was Fifth Lord who revealed himself as the emperor emeritus.

Yu Xiaocao felt wrongly accused at the emperor emeritus's words. 'Your old hand is too fast, alright? You've already swallowed the candy even before anyone could remind you. You have quite a sweet tooth, even though you're so old!'

Fields of Gold Chapter 343 - Recovering From the Illness

It was already past dinner time, and the emperor and empress worried that their son wouldn't be in the mood to eat. The chefs in the imperial kitchen, who were still badly shaken, began to arrange for the dinners for their masters in the Imperial Palace. Tonight, the meals for all palace halls were nearly an hour late, but no one dared to have any complaints.

Chunhong led Yu Xiaocao to the side hall of Jingren Palace, which was the palace hall that she was going to temporarily stay at. The layout of the side hall was simple and elegant. A gold incense burner had smoke curling out of it, emitting a sandalwood fragrance. The hollowed-out, carved lattice window had shadows of swaying flowers passing through it. The tables and chairs were made of red sandalwood with extraordinary and exquisitely carved designs.

In the inner chamber, there was a babu bed with a light green double-sided embroidered sheer curtain sewed with patterns of flora and insects. A brocade quilt embroidered with clouds and flowers covered the bed along with a pillow of the same color. Beside the bed, there was a carved shelf that was as high as the roof. All of the exquisite patterns on the shelf was a work of art. In the room, there were two rows of autumn yellow colored yellow pearwood chairs carved with six horned dragons and longevity patterns. Beside the chairs, there were fruits and snacks placed on top of the lacquered water chestnut

flower shaped high-end table... With one glance, one could tell that this room had been meticulously cleaned up.

Chunhong pointed to the two palace maids behind her, who were wearing pink palace maid outfits. She smiled and said, "These two were sent by the empress to serve you, Miss Yu. The taller one is named Xinyu, and the shorter one is named Sizhu. Miss Yu, are you hungry? Eat some snacks first. Xingyu, go to the imperial kitchen with Sister Xiazi of Jingren Palace to get Miss Yu's meal."

Yu Xiaocao was really hungry. Since morning, she'd only eaten a bowl of fish porridge and a couple of small steamed meat buns. At noon, the emperor and empress didn't mention eating since they were too busy saving the little prince. Who would dare say they were hungry at that time? Now, she was so hungry that her chest was stuck to her back.

When she heard this, she didn't hold herself back. With Sizhu's help, she cleaned her hands and sat on the carved yellow pearwood chair. She picked up the pastry that was on a blue and white porcelain plate decorated with twining lotuses and began eating it with small bites. It was made by an imperial chef, so of course, the taste of the pastry was very good. It had much smoother and finer mouthfeel than many of the pastries outside.

After eating the snacks and drinking a cup of scented tea, her stomach finally felt better. About an hour later, Xingyu brought back the dinner. It might be because the meal was prepared in a hurry, so there were only several simple dishes in the food box. It tasted so good that Yu Xiaocao accidentally ate until her tummy was bloated!

With a full stomach, she took a petal bath and changed into new white underclothing under the care of Sizhu and Xingyu. At this time, Chunhong came in with a small package in her hands. She smiled and said, "The general's wife sent someone over with a change of clothes for Miss. The underclothing you are wearing was made in a hurry by the Sewing Department. If you aren't used to wearing it, this servant will help you change it."

Yu Xiaocao watched as Xingyu took the package from Chunhong and placed all of the clothes inside into the large cabinet one by one. The maidservants in the palace were indeed well trained. They were better at serving than her maidservants. When she thought of how she had to do everything by herself in Dongshan Village, Yu Xiaocao couldn't help but think, 'It's good to have money and power ah! I can just be a lazy worm who bum meals without doing anything. So happy!'

Yu Xiaocao fell asleep in the soft and fragrant bedding. Xingyu and Sizhu, these two little palace maids, watched her happy sleeping posture and smiled secretly. They helped cover her with the quilt and quietly closed the door as they left.

She slept till dawn. After eating breakfast, Yu Xiaocao was taken to the empress's palace with a happy and glowing complexion.

As soon as the empress saw her, the smile on her face became even brighter. She waved at Yu Xiaocao to come closer and gently held her hand. She said with a smile, "I didn't expect a little girl like you to have such skills. The young prince woke up in the middle of the night and made a racket over being hungry and wanting food. I was afraid that his stomach was still too weak, so I didn't give him anything but three pieces of the candy you made. This morning, the imperial physician said that he could eat some porridge, and that the young prince seemed to be in good spirits! This was all thanks to you ah!"

Yu Xiaocao was terrified, so she said modestly, "Empress, you're overpraising me! This is the combined contributions of the imperial physicians. Xiaocao dares not claim credit!"

"Xiaocao, was it? Don't be so humble. I have a clear view of the situation!" The empress had some lingering fears in her heart. If they had followed the detoxification method given by the imperial physicians, she didn't know how much her little prince would have to suffer. When she gave birth to the prince, she had harmed her body and might not be able to have another child in her life. If something happened to Hanwen, she didn't know if she could endure it!

Fortunately, when Chief Steward Su went to invite Imperial Physician Zheng, he also brought along the little lass of the Yu Family. This little girl from the Yu Family was her son's lucky star! The empress immediately rewarded Yu Xiaocao with many precious jewels, jade pendants, and valuable fabrics.

Yu Xiaocao shyly thanked her for her kindness and asked Linglong, who Madam Fang had left behind to serve her, to help her put them away. Yesterday, when Madam Fang left, she was afraid that Xiaocao would be lonely and that the maids serving her wouldn't be useful, so she left Linglong in the palace to accompany her.

"Empress, the little prince has woken up and wants to see you!" Qiubai, the empress's head palace maidservant, came in and said with a smile, as the empress was lovingly holding Yu Xiaocao's hand and talking to her.

The empress took Yu Xiaocao's hand, stood up and said, "Xiaocao, come with me. Hanwen should meet his savior." Upon hearing this, Yu Xiaocao hurriedly said she dared not to consider herself as the young prince's savior.

The little prince was resting in the side hall beside the empress's palace hall. Imperial Physician Zheng and the doctors of the Imperial Hospital saw the empress come in and hurriedly kneeled. After the empress said, 'Rise.', she asked about the little prince's health in detail.

Imperial Physician Zheng replied, "The young prince is no longer in danger. However, the symptoms of dysentery haven't all been cured yet, so he still needs to take several doses of medicine..."

The empress nodded and said, "I understand the principle of 'illnesses come quickly and go away slowly'. Just try your best to cure the little prince's illness as soon as possible."

After she said this, the empress walked into the inner room and saw the little prince leaning against a pillow with an unhappy and foul expression.

"My dear son, what's wrong? Who made you unhappy?" The empress's soft voice was filled with love. She sat down beside the young prince and stroked his soft hair.

With a pale complexion, the little prince appeared somewhat weak. He flung himself into the empress's arms and acted spoiled, "Imperial Mother, can't I just eat candy and not drink those bitter medicines?"

The empress was about to say something, but Zhu Junfan's voice sounded from outside, "Bitter medicines have a better effect. Hanwen, is this how Imperial Father usually teaches you?"

The little prince hurriedly sat up straight and looked serious when he heard his father's voice. His round eyes, however, looked at the empress beggingly.

The empress touched his little face, feeling sorry for him. She turned and looked at the emperor and said, "Your Majesty, our dear son is still sick! He understands these principles, so he will understand if you just tell him calmly."

"A loving mother is more likely to nurture a good-for-nothing son! Feijia, we only have this one son. He's going to take on important tasks in the future, so we can't let him do whatever he wants!" Zhu Junfan walked over and touched his son's forehead, putting his heart to rest.

"Son will be obedient. I'll drink the medicine on time and won't eat random food anymore. Imperial Father, don't scold Imperial Mother anymore..." The little prince's soft, childish voice and timid expression made him look very soft and adorable.

The empress, who was very moved, hugged her son and said with teary eyes, "Good boy, Hanwen really is Imperial Mother's darling son!"

Looking at the pair of loving mother and filial son, Zhu Junfan couldn't maintain the stern expression on his face anymore and showed a faint smile.

At noon, when drinking the medicine, the little prince didn't throw a tantrum and obediently drank the medicine. However, the medicine was too bitter and carried a strong flavor of traditional Chinese medicine. With a miserable expression, the little prince resisted the opposition he had in his heart. He took a deep breath and swallowed it in a couple of mouthfuls. However, after coughing a couple times, he ended up vomiting most of the medicine, which he had swallowed with much difficulty.

The little prince burst into tears, "Imperial Father, Hanwen didn't do it on purpose! The medicine is too hard to drink. Can I not drink it..."

Tears also flowed down the empress's face. She used her handkerchief to wipe them away, and then she looked at Yu Xiaocao, asking, "Xiaocao, if he doesn't take the liquid medicine and just eat the candy you made, would it be able to cure the little prince's illness?"

Yu Xiaocao stood up and calmly said, "May this commoner ask the little prince some questions?"

With his obsidian-like bright eyes, the young imperial prince looked curiously at Yu Xiaocao, who was several years older than himself. He couldn't help but ask, "Who are you? Did you make the candy that can cure the illness? You're so young. Are you a doctor, too?"

Yu Xiaocao looked at the little prince, who was almost the same age as Little Doudou, with a gentle and sweet smile. She said in a soft voice, "Your Highness, I'm also the doctor who examined your illness! I'll

ask you a few questions. If the answers are satisfactory, then you don't have to drink the bitter medicine anymore ah!"

As soon as the little prince heard this, he quickly gathered his attention. He nodded his head and said, "Ok, Ok! Quick, please ask!"

Yu Xiaocao gently pointed to his belly and asked, "How many times has your little belly hurt since this morning? How many times have you gone to the bathroom?"

"My belly ached three times, and I went to the bathroom two times... Last night, I used the bathroom more often and it hurt a lot more. It feels better now!" The little prince was a little shy, but he answered Yu Xiaocao's questions seriously.

The little prince's physique was pretty good. Normally, he seldom got sick and his body had no resistance to drugs. Thus, after several doses of drugs from yesterday and over the night, the dysentery bacteria in his body was largely suppressed.

Yu Xiaocao nodded her head satisfactorily and asked, "Did you eat your breakfast like you were supposed to? What did you eat?"

The little prince pouted and answered discontentedly, "I could only have the plain white porridge they prepared. There wasn't any taste in my mouth, so I didn't want to eat. I just ate half a bowl... I'm a little hungry now. Little Doctor, can I eat pastries?"

Yu Xiaocao smiled and said, "Young Imperial Prince, you were unconscious for all of yesterday without consuming even a single grain of rice, so you need to eat plain white porridge to nourish your stomach. You can have some pastries that can be easily digested... As for lunch, you can have some seasoned purslane salad with porridge or some razor clam seafood porridge..."

The little prince's eyes brightened. He rubbed his belly and asked, "What's razor clam seafood porridge? Is it good? Imperial Mother, I want to have razor clam seafood porridge for lunch..."

Fields of Gold Chapter 344 - Showing a Bit of Her Skills

The empress looked at Yu Xiaocao with a questioning gaze. Yu Xiaocao smiled and said, "Razor clams are a kind of shellfish. They taste delicious and have a high nutritional value. It can help with deficiencies and also has some therapeutic effects on dysentery."

"A type of shellfish? It takes around two days to get to the oceanside on horseback from the capital. It's a bit unrealistic for my imperial son to have seafood porridge for lunch!" The empress frowned and blamed herself for not being able to give her son what he wanted.

Yu Xiaocao saw this and hurriedly said, "There should be razor clam meat in the dry goods store. It has some of the same effects if you soak it before cooking it in the porridge. However, it's effects are not as good as fresh razor clams."

Zhu Junfan was normally strict with the little prince, but he was very worried about his son's illness. Upon hearing it was good for his son's illness, he immediately ordered, "Su Ran, send people to quickly go on horseback to go oceanside to buy razor clams! You will personally leave the palace in person and go to the Zhou Family's dried food store to buy dried razor clams. Our imperial son must have seafood porridge before dinner."

The little prince pouted and quietly said, "What about lunch? Are you gonna let me have plain white porridge again? There's no flavor, it's so hard to drink..."

The empress softly comforted him, "Doctor Yu said that you can have it with some seasoned purslane. Your stomach can't handle eating anything else right now."

"What about the medicine? Can I stop drinking bitter medicine now?" The little prince looked at Yu Xiaocao with expectant eyes and pouted. He looked very cute.

Yu Xiaocao managed to barely restrain her desire to pinch the little guy's cheek and nodded, "If your stomach doesn't hurt in the afternoon and you don't have to run to the bathroom, then you don't have to take the medicine. Eating the purslane candy alone should be fine then!"

The little prince rubbed his stomach. When he heard that he didn't have to drink the bitter medicine, he happily said, "My tummy hasn't hurt for a while, does that mean I'm getting better?"

"Almost! Eat a few more days worth of candy to stabilize your condition..." Yu Xiaocao was very patient with children. For a sick child, the little prince didn't cry or make a fuss. He could be considered a very

sensible child and very cooperative little patient. Sure enough, the children of the imperial family matured earlier.

"Emperor, Consort Li has brought the little princess to come visit the little prince!" Rong Sheng, the head eunuch of Jingyang palace, respectfully reported the new guests with a lowered chest and a hunched back.

An unnecessarily white face, respectful eyes and brows, a humble smile that wouldn't change for a thousand years, and a chest that would never straighten out—this was the image of an eunuch in Yu Xiaocao's mind. Su Ran's gentle and refined manner, being neither humble nor arrogant, didn't match the word 'eunuch' in any way.

Consort Li looked like she was in her twenties. She was wearing a light green palace dress that was embroidered with butterflies fluttering among flowers. The broad hems of the dress were embroidered with layers of a decorative pattern and her hair was coiled into a winding bun such that she exposed her temple. Her light makeup revealed her delicate beauty, and her lips had a thin layer of rouge swiped on. She looked like an elegant chrysanthemum in the fall, with a lingering charm.

Her hand was lightly grasped with the hand of a small girl, who was clearly younger than the imperial prince. She looked like a pretty little porcelain doll and was dressed in a light pink dress embroidered with gold threads. It made her skin seem even more luminous than snow. The little girl resembled a cute little dumpling and was incredibly adorable.

The three or four-year-old little girl followed her consort mother and elegantly greeted her imperial father and her imperial mother. Then she quietly and gently stood in front of the sickbed and spoke to the little prince in a milky-sweet voice, "Imperial Brother, is your illness better now?"

The little prince only had this one younger sister, and their relationship was considered pretty good, so he nodded and said, "Don't worry Younger Sister. With the exception of my tummy hurting occasionally, there aren't any other problems!"

"If your tummy hurts, let Imperial Mother rub it for you. Last time when Danyi ate too much and my tummy hurt, it got better after Consort Mother rubbed it..." Zhu Danyi, the little imperial princess, looked at her imperial brother cutely as she 'seriously proposed' a solution.

"Was Younger Sister being gluttonous again? You must've sneaked behind Consort Li's back to eat. Don't do it in the future. Lying in bed and being unable to move like I am is the result of eating random food!" Two little ones had a conversation like this face to face.

The emperor was handsome, the empress was dignified and graceful, and Consort Li was elegant and beautiful. Thus, their children's looks would naturally be first class. In addition, they were young and their voices were sweet. This made them extremely cute. Yu Xiaocao smiled unconsciously as she watched the two children interact.

Xiazi, one of the palace maids, came back from the Imperial Kitchen. With a puzzled expression, she said, "Empress, the chefs in the Imperial Kitchen have never seen purslane and don't know how to prepare it. In your opinion..."

The empress looked towards Yu Xiaocao and earnestly said, "Xiaocao, it seems that I will have to trouble you again..."

Consort Li had a surprised expression on her face. When did the empress ever treat someone so politely? The other was still a child who was only around ten years old. What made this little girl so special?

Zhu Junfan solved the puzzle for her by saying, "The little prince's life was saved thanks to Xiaocao! She's skilled in the difficult and miscellaneous diseases that children can get..."

Consort Li heard these words and had her own thoughts about it. To be able to be recognized by the emperor and empress meant that the lass had real talents. When children were young, it was inevitable for there to be headaches and fevers. It would be good for the little princess if they made friends with a doctor who was skilled in pediatric medicine. With this in consideration, Consort Li's gaze toward Yu Xiaocao carried some politeness and sincerity.

Yu Xiaocao gave the three giants of the Imperial Palace a proper salute and followed Xiazi to the Imperial Kitchen. Once she was out of Jingyang Palace, Yu Xiaocao's steps became lighter. She breathed in the free air. Being in front of the empress and emperor was too constraining. Yes or no? She felt as if she were shackled, thinking twice before she could do anything. To be with the emperor was the same as living with a tiger, it wasn't a good feeling.

When they arrived at the Imperial Kitchen, the purslane was already prepared. Chunhong had taken several eunuchs and palace maids to pick it, bring it back and clean it for use.

Yu Xiaocao first ran boiled water over the purslane to remove any vegetal smell and then used cold water to clear away the sticky liquid before chopping it up. Once the pot was hot, she put in some sesame oil and stir fried the purslane to make it fragrant. She added a bit of salt to season and then took it out of the pot.

Washed superior japonica rice was put into the pot and then water was added to boil. The stir-fried purslane was added. The whole mixture cooked over low heat until it became soft and tender. Only then was it ready to be taken out of the pot.

While the purslane porridge was being simmered over a small fire, Xiaocao began to make the seasoned purslane salad. This was relatively simple. The purslane was first blanched in boiling water and then it was rinsed with cold water several times to get rid of the sticky juice. Afterwards, it was cut into sections and put onto a plate. A bit of salt, some garlic sauce, some sesame oil was added to the dish and it was done!

Just as the purslane porridge was finished, the emperor emeritus appeared in the doorway of the Imperial Kitchen, peering in. A little eunuch, who was helping the cooks, noticed him. Then the entire Imperial Kitchen proceeded to kneel down. Yu Xiaocao also knelt down in confusion.

"Get up all of you! Continue with what you have to do!" The emperor emeritus noticed Yu Xiaocao in the crowd. His eyes brightened and he scooted over to her with a smile.

Looking at the food box held by Xiazhi, who was beside her, the emperor emeritus coughed softly and asked, "Is this meal personally made by that girl Yu Xiaocao?"

Xiazhi hurriedly replied, "Yes, Your Imperial Majesty!"

The emperor emeritus looked at the food box and considered what to say to let Xiazhi leave the food box behind. Yu Xiaocao seemed to have seen his thoughts and said, "Emperor Emeritus, the little prince can't eat anything else right now. This subject has made purslane porridge with seasoned purslane salad, which can help the prince recover from his episode of dysentery."

The emperor emeritus made a serious face, nodded and said, "Has the little prince not had lunch yet? Why haven't you hurried and sent it over? Can you afford to starve my dear grandson?"

Xiazi shivered in fear and left with the food box in hand. The emperor emeritus was really subject to quick changes in his moods. In the future, she would have to be careful around him.

The emperor emeritus saw that Yu Xiaocao was turning around, preparing to leave. He immediately gave his accompanying guard a meaningful glance. The guard reached out and stopped Yu Xiaocao. Yu Xiaocao looked back at the emperor emeritus in surprise.

The emperor emeritus coughed a few times in embarrassment and said, "Lass, aren't you interested in opening a braised food shop in the capital? You're pretty skilled at making braised pig head meat; it's a waste to not open a braised food shop!"

Yu Xiaocao considered it carefully and shook her head, "To be honest, Imperial Majesty, this subject intends to open a braised food shop, but not in the capital."

The emperor emeritus frowned and asked in surprise, "Why not? There are many rich people in the capital. You could reach out on the streets and grab a handful of them easily. There's also an open market for a braised food shop in the capital!"

"However, not all the aristocratic families are like you, Imperial Majesty, who likes to eat braised pig's head meat! There are many influential families in the capital who view pork as vulgar food. Most of the ingredients for the braised food made by my family are pig's heads and pig's offals. No matter how good the taste is, those aristocratic families, who value reputation and fear becoming a joke for eating vulgar food, won't buy it. There will even be some people who will mock those who buy braised foods, saying that braised pig's head meat is the food of the poor..."

Yu Xiaocao has considered this quite a lot. The officials in the imperial court who came from common civilians or humble families were still alright. However, the older noble families were all protective of their public images. They only mingled with men of letters and posed as lovers of culture. Those people would definitely not become one of the customers of the braised food shop.

The emperor emeritus had contempt toward those aristocratic families who pretended to be lofty and noble. What were they pretending for? Many of these aristocratic families had hundreds of years of

history, yet they were gradually declining. Who were they putting on airs for? What was wrong with eating pork? What was wrong with enjoying braised pig's head meat and intestines? He was the emperor emeritus yet even he, the noblest of them all, could eat it, so why couldn't they eat it? The food of the poor? He wanted to see just who dared to say to his face that this was food fit only for poor people.

"Xiaocao, let's talk about opening the shop later! Look, the Imperial Kitchen just happens to have a pig's head. Can you help with the braising?" The emperor emeritus was gluttonous, going out of the way to order the Imperial Kitchen to have the pig's head prepared.

After all, this was a recipe that Yu Xiaocao came up with. Although the skills of the imperial chefs in braising the pig's head weren't as good as Yu Xiaocao herself, it was still better than having nothing. The emperor emeritus, who loved to eat braised pig's head, always had the Imperial Kitchen braise one every month, which allowed him to sate his craving.

Yu Xiaocao, who saw that the pig's head and the seasonings were already prepared, smoothly braised the pig's head since it wasn't too difficult at this point. The pig's head meat was added with all kinds of braising ingredients and cooked slowly in the pot. By dinner time, it would almost be ready.

She took into consideration that the emperor emeritus was old and a bit overweight. Since she suspected that he would have the three common ailments [1], she also added three drops of mystic-stone water into the pot when no one was paying attention. This way, the marinated pig's head would taste better and be beneficial for the body.

Fields of Gold Chapter 345 - Assisting with the Treatment

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Yu Xiaocao also braised the pig's feet and knuckle that she found in the kitchen. In her previous life, aside from the pig's head meat, the top 3 best-selling dishes of her braised food store also consisted of braised pig's feet.

Not that she was boasting, but she had excellent control of the fire when braising the pig's feet. With just one bite, one could feel the chewiness of the pig's skin and the soft, tender texture of the meat. Every mouthful was filled with flavor and it was a guarantee that whoever ate it once would definitely want to eat it again. As for the braised pig's knuckle, it glistened golden red, the bone was fragrant while the meat was tender and delicious. It was intact and the soup was thick but not greasy; the emperor emeritus would definitely like it!

Once she finished instructing the imperial kitchen staff to watch over the fire, Yu Xiaocao left, following behind the emperor emeritus. When she got back to Jingyang Palace, she saw the emperor and the

empress smiling pleasantly. Seeing Yu Xiaocao, the empress waved for her to go over, then affectionately held her small hands. She said with a smile, "Xiaocao, you're quite capable even though you're very young! Not only do you know how to treat illnesses, you also have amazing culinary skills! Hanwen had thoroughly enjoyed the porridge and small dishes that you made. Although there wasn't a lot of porridge, there were still two bowls of it and I was afraid that he would stuff himself full, so I didn't let him finish it all. When Hanwen ate the porridge, he said that his stomach felt warm and it was very comfortable as the slight pain in his abdomen also receded. This folk remedy is still quite effective even though it doesn't use expensive herbs!"

Yu Xiaocao humbly replied, "The little prince is just sick of eating plain porridge. Purslane is just a type of common wild vegetable, and its texture and taste are also just so. However, a lot of wild vegetables also have some medicinal qualities. Many civilians who cannot afford a physician will counter the illness with these wild vegetables and herbs. Over time, they slowly became remedies for certain diseases."

The empress smiled as she looked at her, feeling that although this little girl was young, she was tactful in the way she spoke and acted. So she became more sincere and affectionate towards Yu Xiaocao. Waking up from his afternoon nap, the young prince was more spirited and, after taking another three pieces of purslane candy, he eagerly asked Yu Xiaocao, "My tummy doesn't hurt anymore, so does it mean I don't have to drink that bitter medicine anymore?"

Yu Xiaocao nodded and spoke in a gentle voice, "It's alright to not drink the bitter medicine, but I have to check your tummy..."

"Alright! You can check my tummy! I've really recovered, I don't need to drink the medicine anymore!" The little prince also risked everything just so he could avoid drinking the bitter medicine.

Yu Xiaocao glanced at the empress. Once she got her approval, she lifted the little prince's shirt to reveal his small, round belly. Inwardly, she came to an understanding with the little divine stone and placed the multicolored stone on her right wrist on the little prince's lower abdomen. If someone else saw this, they would surely notice that the multicolored stone emitted a golden ray of light that slowly enveloped the little prince's abdomen.

Yu Xiaocao pretended to check him as she pressed on a spot and asked him if it hurt, and pressed another spot a moment later and asked if he had the feeling of wanting to defecate...The little prince felt as though her touch was magic, as wherever she pressed, the discomfort of his abdomen would disappear, as if all of it was brought away by her small hands.

Only after the little divine stone used its power to treat the little prince did Yu Xiaocao say to the eager empress and young prince, "You're almost completely recovered. Medicines are also part poison, so you can stop the intake of medicine. The medicinal diet will be enough for the next few days."

At this time, the eunuch of Jingyang Palace reported the arrival of Su Ran and Royal Prince Yang. Zhu Junyang focused his gaze on Yu Xiaocao the moment he entered Jingyang Palace. Seeing that she was alright and even smiling, he nonchalantly shifted his gaze away.

After he greeted the empress, he gifted the bedridden young prince an automatic toy horse to relieve boredom. The toy horse was about the size of an adult's palm, and inside it there was a mechanism that, after being wound up, enabled the little horse to walk by itself on a table. The new toy quickly gained the attention of the little prince as he played with it and laughed from time to time.

Su Ran brought with him a bag of dried razor clams. Once the empress saw that, she turned towards Yu Xiaocao and said apologetically, "Razor clam porridge...I still have to trouble you, Xiaocao."

Yu Xiaocao hurriedly stood up and said, "It's not a bother! However, the razor clam porridge will need some time to cook, so this commoner girl will take my leave first."

Even though the empress was amiable towards her, living in a society where social class was extremely strict and facing the class with the authority to control the life and death of other people still made Yu Xiaocao uncomfortable. She would rather stay in the imperial kitchen and suffer the grease and smoke than converse another word with the empress.

Seeing Yu Xiaocao leave Jingyang Palace, Zhu Junyang also took his leave. With large steps, he caught up to Xiaocao who was being led by Xiazi to the imperial kitchen. Hesitantly, he said, "Actually...it's alright if you don't want to do it..."

Yu Xiaocao glanced at the astonished Xiazi, and then smiled at Zhu Junyang, "Don't you know me? I like the process of cooking. When you were at Dongshan Village and ordered all those difficult dishes, didn't I also try to make them for you too? I was born for a hardworking life, if you wanted me to sit idly, I would feel ill at ease. It was I who asked to help cook the little prince's porridge."

Zhu Junyang saw that there was not a trace of reluctance on her face and smiled, saying, “You dare mention that? In Dongshan Village, this prince ordered ten dishes but it's already considered good enough if you made me two! Only you have the guts to fool me!”

Yu Xiaocao stuck out her tongue at him. Her eyes gleamed with mischief as she said, “This commoner girl was born into a farmer's family, and only knows how to cook some common dishes. The sea cucumber and abalone dishes that you ordered all required expensive ingredients. Even if we caught them, we would rather sell them for money, how could we be willing to try them? Be smarter the next time and order some more ordinary dishes, only then can I guarantee to satisfy you!”

Xiazi looked even more astonished. 'Who can tell me whether this man, who's smiling and whose gaze is filled with affection and indulgence, is actually the cold royal prince who everyone in the capital shied away from? He wouldn't have been possessed by something, right? Also, the little miss of the Yu Family, you don't take the royal prince seriously, do you? You actually dared to use such a casual attitude to talk with the moody prince? Are you seeking an early death?'

The thing that made her jaw drop even more was that the cold Royal Prince's expression was not cold at all. His face lit up with a smile and his voice was gentle as he said, “Alright! In the future, I will order only the dishes that you can cook!”

The moment they entered the imperial kitchen, Zhu Junyang could smell the strong fragrance of braised meat wafting in the air. “Xiaocao, you braised pig's head this afternoon? If so, I must find an excuse to stay, I want to eat the pig's ear strips with chili oil that you made.”

“You brat! The braised pig's head was requested by me, your grandfather—it's all mine, don't even try to snatch it from me!” Ever since the braised pig's head had gone into the pot, the emperor emeritus had been loitering around the imperial kitchen. When he smelled the fragrance, he could not help but come inside and have a look, but when he heard that Zhu Junyang was about to steal his pig's ears, he felt unhappy and began to protect his food.

However, Zhu Junyang was not afraid of his imperial grandfather, and immediately began to bicker, “Imperial Grandfather, it's such a big pig's head, can you finish it all? Aren't there two pig's ears? You're so generous, wouldn't you give your grandson one?”

Zhu Huaiyong scrutinized his little grandson, feeling that he was different from before. Previously, he would only scowl and leave, how would he say these words that sounded like he was acting cute? Also, his cold gaze was comparatively livelier than before. Had his grandson's illness been controlled? Which divine doctor was so skilled?

To avoid provoking his little grandson, the emperor emeritus made a pained expression and hardened his heart, "Alright! Seeing as you're so well-behaved today, I'll award you one pig's ear..."

Zhu Junyang pressed on, "Imperial Grandfather, this grandson also likes to eat pig's snout..."

"No! You can only have one pig's ear. I won't give any more! If you say any more, you won't even get the pig's ear!" The older the emperor emeritus was, the more childish he became. The attribute of protecting his food also increased in vigor with his age.

Yu Xiaocao saw that these two were fighting over a pig's head until their faces turned red, so she hurriedly advised, "If you think one pig's head isn't enough, you can tell the imperial kitchen to prepare a few more pig's heads. We can stew the meat in braising sauce overnight, so you can thoroughly enjoy your meal tomorrow. Although, the weather is quite warm nowadays, so the braised dishes shouldn't be kept overnight. If you can't finish it, just award it to others!"

The emperor emeritus was full of reluctance and mumbled, "I have an icehouse in my temporary imperial residence, if I can't finish it, I'll just keep it frozen there and reheat it whenever I feel like eating it! ...Little girl, how long do you plan to stay in the capital? I want to eat vermicelli pork stew, chicken and mushroom stew, and northeastern mixed stew!"

In his previous life, Zhu Huaiyong was a true man from northeast China. Since his transmigration, he had rarely been able to eat authentic northeastern dishes and had missed them quite dearly. Even in his dreams, he dreamed of eating those northeastern signature dishes.

Yu Xiaocao thought about it, then said, "I will probably have to stay in the Imperial Palace for a few more days to ensure that the little prince is fully recovered before I can leave. For these few days, just tell the imperial kitchen to prepare the ingredients for the dishes that you, Emperor Emeritus, want to eat and I will make them for you. It's just that, this commoner girl isn't sure that my cooking will suit your taste."

"Of course, it's to my taste! With your skills in making braised pig's heads, how can any of the dishes you cook be bad?" The emperor emeritus grinned and nodded. In his heart, he thought that he would stay in the Imperial Palace for these few days, so he gave the order to stay in Ningshou Palace tonight.

The old eunuch, who had served the emperor emeritus for decades, already knew the emperor emeritus's thoughts. Inwardly, he said to himself: 'Ever since the emperor emeritus abdicated his throne, he was either travelling and sightseeing, or he stayed in the temporary imperial residence in the outskirts of the capital; not one day did he stay in Ningshou Palace, which had been prepared for him for seven to eight years. Who could have thought that he would be willing to remain in the Imperial Palace for an ordinary meal? The allure of good food must not be underestimated ah!'

Yu Xiaocao began preparation to make the razor clam seafood porridge. The few old imperial cooks of the imperial kitchen shooed away those eunuchs who acted as assistant cooks and came up to her to assist her. They were obviously trying to covertly learn her recipes while watching from the side! However, Yu Xiaocao had not planned to keep the recipes of the seafood porridge, braised pig's head and northeastern dishes to herself. She was only going to stay in the capital for a few days, and in her opinion, the emperor emeritus was quite interesting. He was intimate with the people and did not carry himself in a haughty manner. Thus, she was quite willing to leave the recipes of some of his favorite dishes to him.

Fields of Gold Chapter 346 - Free Labor

She first soaked the dried razor clams in some water and then rinsed them with some boiling water. After all of the grit and sand was washed out, they were finely minced. Then she instructed one of the imperial chefs take some fresh shrimp, peel and clean them before cutting them into small pieces to use.

After the rice was washed, it was put into a large deep pot to simmer into congee. The minced dried razor clams, shrimp, and some ham was also put into the pot to stew slowly. Since the little divine stone had healed the little prince in the afternoon, she knew that his stomach would be able to digest more, so she was able to put more delicious ingredients in the food. After the congee finished cooking, she sprinkled some crushed roasted peanuts on top to add an additional layer of flavor. A little bit of sesame oil was also drizzled on for the same purpose.

Throughout the entire process, Yu Xiaocao didn't try to hide any of the steps from the imperial chefs. When they had questions, she even patiently explained her reasoning. Thus, the impression the imperial chefs had of this little girl, who knew how to make many odd things, had improved a lot. Other than the noble masters in the palace, these old imperial chefs didn't really put anyone else in their eyes. However, they now treated Yu Xiaocao with a lot more respect and reverence.

That night, the three great personages of the palace ate to their delight. It was said that the empress was very fond of the braised pig trotters, while the emperor liked braised pork knuckle and also enjoyed braised pig head meat. However, the emperor emeritus hogged most of the braised pig head meat and only gave the emperor a miserly tiny portion. The emperor emeritus ate more than half a large plate of braised pig head meat by himself and almost finished all of the sliced pig ears seasoned with chili oil. He couldn't bear to give the leftovers to the eunuchs and palace maids, so he had the servants carefully

pack the food up and had it stored in an ice cellar. He stated that he planned on eating the rest at his next meal.

The young prince was also very pleased. He ate two small bowls of seafood congee and still wasn't satisfied, so he also ate a goblet of razor clams stewed with egg. He was so stuffed afterwards that he had to stroll around his rooms several times with a palace maid to help with digestion. Only then was he allowed to go to bed. All of the imperial physicians were amazed at the speed of the little prince's recovery. Usually, a patient would need at least a few days to recover from even the mildest bout of dysentery. However, only two days had passed yet the prince had made almost a full recovery and no longer needed to take medication. Was it because the Yu Family's little girl's recipe for medication was really that good? Even Imperial Physician Wang, who had some resentments towards Yu Xiaocao, had to admire the efficacy of the girl's medicine recipe.

During the time that Yu Xiaocao was in the palace, she had to spend some time almost every day in the imperial kitchens to make two dishes that the emperor emeritus personally ordered. The dishes she made for him included: sweet and sour crispy pork, dry-fried pork strips, pickled vegetables with fatty meat and blood sausage. The emperor emeritus ate until he was completely satisfied. He praised the food, stating that these dishes were more delicious than all of the northeastern cuisine dishes he had during his entire life. In fact, the emperor emeritus had previously traveled all throughout the country in an effort to find the taste of his hometown. Unfortunately, he was never able to satisfy his cravings before.

There was a reason why Yu Xiaocao knew how to cook northeastern cuisine dishes. In her past life, her mother was from the northeast. Before her mother passed away, the family's financial circumstances were considered decent, so her mother often made some authentic northeastern dishes to eat. She had helped her mother cook in the kitchen and learned the ways to make this type of cuisine. Many years had passed then and she was now finally able to recreate the foods from her memories. These dishes all held the flavors of the food her mother used to make, such a good memory...

She taught every single northeastern cuisine dish she knew to the imperial chefs. The master opened the door, but cultivation progress depended on the individual person. It was up to the chefs to rely on their own talents to see if they were able to make these dishes up to par with the emperor emeritus's tastes.

The young prince had his common purslane rock candy as treatment. In addition, Yu Xiaocao created menus of food for him, so gradually his body recovered. In the imperial kitchen, Yu Xiaocao came up

with some new snacks, such as animal crackers, cakes filled with jam, sheep's milk pudding, and egg tarts. The food she made changed almost every day and never repeated itself.

Once the young prince was able to get out of bed, he followed Yu Xiaocao like a little tail every day. When he saw her, he was even more happy to see her than when he saw his father or mother. The empress felt some pangs of jealousy while the emperor laughingly scolded him for being a foodie and an ungrateful brat...

After her sixth day in the palace, the imperial physicians announced that the young prince's illness had completely healed. Thus, Yu Xiaocao also took her leave and left with a bunch of valuable presents given to her by the emperor and empress. The young imperial prince reluctantly said farewell to her at the steps of Jingyang Palace and waved his little hands, looking forward to her next visit.

Prior to entering the Imperial Palace, Yu Xiaocao had been preoccupied with the conundrum on what to do with the Yu Family's residence in the prefectural city. It had a very good location, so leaving it empty was such a waste. Now, she finally came to a decision. She decided to open a braised food shop in the prefectural city. It would be a regular shop and would have a place to also sell roasted chicken and duck as well.

However, the thing giving her the most trouble at the moment was where to get the raw ingredients. The locust plague had just happened. Although the prefectural city's area wasn't particularly hard-hit by the disaster, there were still significant losses. Almost all of the farmlands had sharp decreases in their crop outputs. Without grain on hand, the families that raised pigs and chickens had all slaughtered their animals prior to the start of winter.

Although the weather had been good at the start of spring and the grass had started growing, how could families that raised poultry rely only on grass to feed their livestock? Spring was a time when people still relied on their stores of food, and many commoners were having trouble filling their stomachs let alone have any extra grain to raise chickens. Thus, she had a problem. If she wanted to open her braised food shop, she needed to start raising chickens and pigs now. However, her family had over a hundred mu of fields to tend and their vegetable stand to manage. If they started to raise a lot of chickens and pigs, she was afraid there wouldn't be enough people at home to do the work...

After thinking things through, she finally came to a decision. She was going to write a letter to her father, who had gone back home after escorting her to the capital, to tell him to buy some land near the foot of the mountain from the village chief so they could construct a piggery. Enclosed with the letter was also a blueprint she drew for the piggery.

Spring plowing had just ended so her three maternal uncles weren't very busy. Thus, she planned on having them go to the villages that weren't as hard hit by the disaster to buy and catch as many piglets as they could. Afterwards, they could spread the piglets among families they were close to raise. The Yu Family would provide the food to raise these pigs. Once construction on the piggery was finished, they didn't need to worry about getting more piglets in the future.

As for who would take charge of raising the pigs, she had also thought this through. Currently, the business at the docks was slow, so she was planning on having Xiaolian bring Eldest Maternal Aunt and her youngest daughter over to help with managing the piggery. As for compensation, if Eldest Maternal Aunt didn't want to get paid on account of familial relations, then she planned on giving her two large fat pigs at the end of the season. Right now there was a shortage of grain, so there weren't many people raising pigs. Thus, pork prices would only continue to rise and not fall, at least until the next year. Two large fat pigs could be sold for at least a few dozen taels each!

A thick envelope was soon delivered into Yu Hai's hands in Dongshan Village. The Yu Family always completely supported his daughter's plans. Before long, the piggery was quickly built up. Yu Hai took some strong fellows from the village and together they worked to build a tall stone wall around the piggery. The stalls of the piggery were simple. They were constructed with lower stone walls and on top was a wooden roof to shield the stalls from rain and snow. There were a total of forty-some small stalls constructed in the end. At the perimeter wall, they also constructed a simple two room dwelling for the people looking after the pigs that was built completely of stone. Inside was also a kang bed and everything was constructed very sturdily.

Yu Xiaocao longed to go back home but she still couldn't leave the capital because her younger brother's first birthday celebration was around the corner. Her godfather and godmother both treated her like their true daughter. When she was in the Imperial Palace for those few days, her godmother was so worried that she didn't sleep well and ended up with canker sores in her mouth. She also became markedly thinner. Yu Xiaocao had previously missed Little Linlin's hundred day celebration. If she missed his first birthday as well, it wouldn't be good.

Before long, it was the day of Fang Haolin's birthday celebration. Because Fang Zizhen had been well regarded by the emperor this year, other than his close friends and family, there were a lot of other colleagues who came by to participate without an invitation.

Zhu Junyang had come over early in the morning and he was currently in the kitchen being used as hard labor by Yu Xiaocao. He, Head Steward Liu, and two bodyguards were all assigned a large basin of cream for them to beat!

That's right, Yu Xiaocao was planning on giving an enormous three-layer cake to Little Linlin as his birthday present. How could she make a birthday cake without whipped cream frosting? If she was able to buy whipped cream frosting in the Great Ming Dynasty, that would have been the best. However, since none was available to buy, she could make it herself ah!

When she was in the imperial kitchen, Yu Xiaocao discovered they had cow's milk there. It was rumored that the emperor had brought over dairy cows from foreign countries to the country when he hadn't taken the throne yet. These cows were all raised in the capital's farmstead and provided the imperial kitchen with different types of dairy products.

Yu Xiaocao had asked the empress to give her a lot of cow's milk from the imperial kitchen. Making whipped cream required a lot of milk. Furthermore, she also needed eggs, vegetable oil and white sugar. Other than the milk, the rest was easy to obtain.

In order to make whipped cream frosting, the person making it needed to whip it constantly at a high speed. Yu Xiaocao originally planned on asking her godfather for a few bodyguards to help her. However, who would have thought that Zhu Junyang would voluntarily come to the door and act as free labor. It'd be a waste not to use him.

Yu Xiaocao took out a few large and sturdy basins and first placed some egg whites in them. She had Zhu Junyang and the others continuously whip the egg whites in one direction. The four of them all were skilled martial artists who had beaten many experts in the capitals. They all stone-facedly used the bamboo tools in their hands to whip the egg whites.

Once the egg whites were foamy, Yu Xiaocao told them all to stop. She added a bit of milk, oil, and sugar and then had them continue. Zhu Junyang leveled an angry glare at her. If he wasn't looking forward to trying her new food creation, he would have long thrown a tantrum and stopped working. Anyone who was willing to give him orders willy nilly truly had guts! Zhu Junyang vented all of his pent up anger into whipping the egg white mixture.

When Yu Xiaocao saw him working 'so hard', she heavily praised him and instructed the other people to follow his lead in order to work hard to reap rewards. Head Steward Liu had a face full of suffering as he thought, 'My little ancestor ah, please stop adding fuel to the fire. Can't you see that his royal highness has an expression so dark it's dripping ink ah? When the master loses his temper, it's more scary than natural disasters and fierce beasts ah!'

When Yu Xiaocao saw that the mixture in Zhu Junyang's basin had thickened, she quickly told them all to stop. She then added an appropriate portion of milk to each of their basins, as well as more oil and sugar. Then, she happily gave them a few compliments before hinting that they had to continue.

While the four people were crafting the whipped cream frosting, Yu Xiaocao had mixed up the cake batter and poured it into three separate pans. The pans were placed into the oven and she had Yingtao keep an eye at the heat. She continued to instruct Zhu Junyang and the others how to make the frosting.

After adding more milk, oil and sugar another two times, Yu Xiaocao saw that the frosting was at the right viscosity. She took the bamboo beater from Zhu Junyang's hands and gently tested the texture of the frosting. When she saw that the frosting didn't deflate, she proclaimed that they were done making it.

Fields of Gold Chapter 347 - Exposed

Zhu Junyang let out a heavy snort and waved his sleeves as he left. Head Steward Liu used a finger to point at Yu Xiaocao a few times before he sighed and also followed his angry master out of the Fang Estate's kitchen.

Yu Xiaocao pursed her lips and quietly muttered, "Didn't he just whip some frosting up? Is it necessary to be this angry ah?"

Yingtao cheerfully stated, "Miss, you're the only one who can order Royal Prince Yang to do things! Although His Highness looks quite scary, I never would have thought that he's that easy to talk to ah!"

Easy to talk to? If the people who had been beaten up by Royal Prince Yang could hear her say this, they would have all retorted vehemently, 'Are you blind? How can Zhu Junyang, that black-faced devil, be easy to talk to? You're not the one who was beaten until you were bedridden for a few months, right?'

After the cake finished baking, Yu Xiaocao first cut it into three circles of differing sizes and spread on a layer of frosting. Then, she prepared a piece of oiled paper, rolled it into a triangular shaped tube, and poured the whipped frosting into it. Using her pastry bag, she squeezed out beautiful flower decorations on the cake. In her past life, Yu Xiaocao had worked at a pastry shop prior to opening her braised food shop. Because she had skillful hands, all of the cakes she decorated were praised.

At first, she was a bit unfamiliar with this process. As she continued, the skill came back to her and each consequent flower was more beautiful than the previous and more lively. Since the season wasn't right, there weren't any ingredients available for her to use as food dye. Thus, all of the icing flowers she squeezed out were a pure white color. However, Yu Xiaocao had the servants take out some preserved

jams from last year from the ice cellar. There was bright red strawberry jam, orangey-yellow tomato jam, purple grape jam...she also used some spinach juice mixed with honey to create a green colored dye.

With these five colors available, she used them all to gently brush onto the flowers' edges. The whole cake immediately became bright and lovely. Yingtao and another head maid, Muxi, stared in awe at all of the stunning flowers on the cake. Their eyes were opened wide as they took in the sight.

The cake had three layers and the first layer was about twenty inches in diameter. The second layer was around sixteen inches and the topmost layer was around twelve inches. Each layer was decorated with carefully crafted icing flowers. The top layer had some writing on it written in red jam that said, 'Happy 1st Birthday to Fang Haolin'. In addition, there was a cartoon figure underneath the words that was colored with different jams. It looked almost exactly like Little Linlin.

The grabbing ceremony had already finished. Fang Haolin had lived up to expectations and grabbed a tiny wooden knife. This caused everyone to exclaim 'like father like son'. For the banquet, they invited the head chef of the capital's Zhenxiu Restaurant—Liu Bi, who was personally in charge of cooking. This caused many guests to be pleasantly surprised because the head chef of Zhenxiu Restaurant was very hard to book. He only took three jobs in a month and the waiting list had already extended to next year...

The banquet for the Fang Family was crafted at the highest standards offered by Zhenxiu Restaurant. Roasted chicken, fruit-scented roast duck, salt-water duck...all the hit dishes were available. Thus, the guests ate until they were stuffed and complimented the food endlessly.

The last course that came out was the present that Yu Xiaocao had prepared for her younger brother—whipped cream cake. When the gorgeous and elegant cake was presented out to the guests, everyone was stunned silent. They were speechless not only because the cake was beautiful and incredible beyond belief, but they were also silently ashamed that they had never heard what a 'whipped cream cake' was before.

The cake was quickly sliced into small triangular pieces and every guest was given a piece. The guests, who were originally stuffed beyond comparison, all tasted a bite. The rich flavor of the cream and the sweet delicate taste of the cake melted into their mouths. The cake had a bouncy texture that they had never had before. Thus, how could one small slice satisfy the craving of everyone?

The whipped cream cake was most favored by the female guests. After finishing one slice, the noble madams and young maidens were all too embarrassed to ask for a second helping. However, they all clamored to know where this cake was bought from. The texture of the cake was divine and the look was elegant and beautiful. They needed to know where to get this ah!

However, when they found out that this cake was a present given by the Fang Family's adopted daughter to her little brother, all of their hearts fell down. If this cake was bought from a shop, it didn't matter if the price was high and the demand was outrageous, they would still be able to buy it one day. However, the creator was the daughter of the Fang Family. Although she was only adopted, they couldn't just demand her to spend half a day to craft another cake just to sate their cravings ah!

When they left, all of these ladies and maidens had a bit of regret on their faces. When their husbands and fathers asked them why, they could only laugh helplessly. Fang Zizhen was a rough person yet the daughter he had adopted had some skills. She not only cured the young imperial prince's illness, bringing her to the attention of the empress, but she also had culinary talent. Even the old glutton, the emperor emeritus, unceasingly praised the food she made. Now she had the ability to make novel desserts that had never been seen before.

The fact that Zhaoyang General's daughter had great culinary skill quietly spread throughout the noble and wealthy families of the capital. That same day, the master of the Imperial Palace, Zhu Junfan, had also heard of the 'whipped cream cake' that Yu Xiaocao made. He raised an eyebrow—Looks like I have another clue eh? Such a good old transmigrator friend!

Just as he was about to summon Yu Xiaocao to the palace again to 'have a deep conversation' with her, the girl had already said her farewells to her godmother and left the capital with Fang Zizhen, who was going back to the harbor. The two of them were on the road back to Tanggu Town.

When Zhu Junfan got the news, he silently cursed inside, 'Little lass, you're escaping quite quickly! However, I'm not in a hurry. It's not like the little lass can run away forever. In the future, I'll have to slowly 'punish' her!'

Yu Xiaocao was riding on her little red horse next to her godfather. Behind them were some of Fang Zizhen's personal bodyguards. The little red horse wasn't very big yet it had a lot of energy and was able to keep up with the pace set by Fang Zizhen's beloved horse.

Fang Zizhen's beloved horse wasn't as valuable as the legendary Ferghana horses, but it was still a good horse. The little red horse that Yu Xiaocao rode was the one that he gave her. However, at the time, he

had thought that his daughter was young so he mostly picked out a horse that had a gentle and serene nature. Who would have thought that his daughter had picked up a diamond in the rough? The little red horse was quite a good horse!

Since Yu Xiaocao was worried about her family's piggery, they spent the entire journey on horseback and they even ate lunch on horseback. At night, even Fang Zizhen's beloved horse was already exhausted, let alone the horses of his bodyguards, which were on the verge of collapsing! However, that little red horse that caught no one's eye was still going on strong and full of energy. Naturally, this was definitely related to the fact that Yu Xiaocao had raised this horse of hers on mystic-stone water for a long time.

At the speed that they were traveling, they would be able to get to Dongshan Village by noon the next day. Yu Xiaocao had noticed that the horses the bodyguards were riding on were not up to par and was afraid they would delay her journey, so she secretly gave them some mystic-stone water that night. The next morning, the bodyguards, who were certain they couldn't travel at the same pace as yesterday, were all startled to see that their horses were acting as if they had eaten a bunch of stimulants as they were full of energy. It was quite a surreal experience—Did people come over at night and switch their horses over for fresh ones? Fang Zizhen looked at his daughter, who was currently grooming the little red horse. In his heart, he had a feeling that the changes in the horses had to be related to her. His daughter was skilled in medical arts. Perhaps she fed them some medication to relieve fatigue?

Fang Zizhen was the same as Yu Hai and doted upon his daughter to his bones. Although he had his doubts in his heart, he didn't voice them. For the past two years, he had discovered that his adopted daughter had out of the ordinary abilities, so he was sure she had a big secret. However, none of this influenced the love and trust he had in her.

They had been in the capital for more than half a month. Before they left, Yu Xiaocao went to the Imperial Plantation with Royal Prince Yang to see that the corn and potatoes were growing very well. With the wells of mystic-stone water at the farmstead, it'd be more surprising if they didn't grow well! However, the spiritual energy at the wells could only last for one year. She would have to deal with the following year when it came!

When they got to Tanggu Town, neither of them stayed somewhere to rest. Instead, Yu Xiaocao and her godfather went their separate ways. Fang Zizhen went to the docks to oversee the continued construction while Yu Xiaocao went back to Dongshan Village. Fang Zizhen was a bit worried about his daughter going back alone so he sent a bodyguard with her.

They traveled at top speed. By the time they got to Dongshan Village, they were just in time for lunch. When Yu Hai and his wife saw their exhausted and travel-worn youngest daughter, they both put down

their bowls to help. Madam Liu went into the kitchen to heat up some water for her daughter to wash herself while Yu Hai led the bodyguard to take a seat to eat some food.

“Grandfather, everyone should eat first and don't let the food get cold!” Yu Xiaocao laid down in exhaustion on a chair under the grape trellis in the courtyard and gulped down a few mouthfuls of mystic-stone water. Gradually, she felt the bone-deep fatigue disappear from her body.

Madam Liu swiftly heated up some water and had her daughter wash her hands, face, and neck. After Yu Xiaocao changed into a clean set of clothing, Madam Liu quietly asked, “Are you hungry? If you want to eat something, Mother will make it for you!”

“Mother, there's no need! Lunch is already made, so I'll just eat with everyone else okay? It's not like I'm a guest!” Yu Xiaocao wiped her body quickly. After changing into a set of clean clothes, she stretched leisurely. It was still best to be at home ah! In the capital, she had to be aware of her every word and action at all times as she didn't want to lose face for her godparents. It was quite exhausting ah! Now that she was home, it was as if the air was filled with the smell of freedom and comfort!

Madam Liu had a smile full of tenderness as she said, “You truly aren't a guest, but isn't there a guest waiting outside?”

Yu Xiaocao had to admit that was true. The bodyguard had given his all to escort her back home, so she should make something good to thank him for his work. She left the room and saw that the bodyguard was already sitting next to the table full of food and eating happily in the open courtyard. The capital didn't have many fresh vegetables around. Those who were able to have green vegetables at the table either had lands with hot springs or greenhouses to cultivate vegetables. In front of a table full of fresh green vegetables that were tasty and well cooked, the bodyguard couldn't stop himself from eating!

When he heard Yu Xiaocao ask him if he wanted anything else, Zhu Xiao quickly swallowed down the mouthful of lettuce greens with oyster sauce and shook his head, “Miss, no need to cook something especially for me. The food here is very good and is more than enough to fill me!”

Yu Xiaocao thought for a bit and still had her mother stir fry a plate of grasshopper sauce and also make a plate of chives stir-fried with sandworms. Zhu Xian saw that the portion sizes were generous and thus opened his belly to eat more. Older Brother Li Li was right, the Yu Family's food was very delicious. If he could eat such sumptuous food every day, he would even be willing to go down to the fields every day to help the Yu Family.

The Yu Family didn't have the custom of 'staying silent during mealtimes', so Yu Xiaocao found out how the piggery at the foot of the West Mountain was doing as she ate. The construction on the piggery was pretty much done. Her three maternal uncles had all gone out and came back with a total of forty to fifty piglets. These piglets were all given to some families that they had a good relationship to raise in their stead for now.

“Our family doesn't have much experience with raising pigs, so I think we shouldn't raise too many for the first year. What do you think? Are these piglets enough for now?” Yu Hai had a few misgivings about raising pigs. They ate a lot of grain, so would they be able to afford this? If they raised too many, they didn't have enough people at home to go out and cut fishwort for them to eat. How would they be able to keep feeding all of them?

Chapter 348 - Huifang's Idea

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Even a wildfire couldn't completely destroy grass; it grew again when the spring breeze blew . Weeds had the most tenacious grip on life . Even though it was just the start of spring, in the front and back of the village and all over the mountain, there were wild weeds and herbs growing . The village kids were all able to cut a basket of them without much difficulty .

There weren't enough people in the Yu Family but there were plenty of village children that had nothing to do! If they set the price at one copper coin for two baskets of fishwort, there would probably be many children who were willing to do a little bit of work to earn some snack money .

After Yu Xiaocao analyzed the situation, the rest of the Yu Family also thought that it wouldn't be difficult to raise a hundred or so pigs . Her three maternal uncles continued to help with buying and catching piglets in the other villages . Before long, construction on the piggery had finished . It had tall and sturdy walls and spacious pig stalls neatly laid out in a row . They transferred water from a mountain spring using bamboo tubes and filled a pond in the piggery that was constructed out of stone . . . everything was just about ready .

The little piglets had been moved into their new home . Each pig stall had five fat and noisy little piglets . Out of the twenty pig stalls, there were still half that were empty!

Xiaolian, Eldest Maternal Aunt and her daughter had all come back from the docks . Last year, their business at the docks had been heavily affected by the locust plague . First of all, their braised food business had to stop as none of the butchers in the area had any pigs to slaughter . Thus, they only occasionally encountered pig heads and offal .

Although the Yu Family didn't lack grain, everyone else in the area wished they could break one copper coin into two . How could a worker at the docks buy a bowl of noodles to enjoy if his wife and kids were all starving at home?

Eldest Maternal Aunt and older cousin Liu Feiyan had already returned back to Xishan Village . However, once Eldest Maternal Aunt heard from her husband that the Yu Family was making a piggery and wanted her to help manage it, she was just waiting for their summons . Once the piggery was finished, she quickly packed her things with her youngest daughter and the two of them went to the piggery and set up their living space .

Currently, the piglets were still small and didn't need a lot of food . Eldest Maternal Aunt and her daughter, Xiaocao and her sister, and Old Yu, who was becoming more energetic with each passing day, all went out every day with sickles and baskets on their back to cut fishwort in the area around the piggery . Furthermore, they also had the Liu Family's three cousins coming around to help from time to time, so there were enough people gathering food for the piglets for now .

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In order to guarantee the pigs would grow fast, feeding them only fishwort was not enough . The Yu Family had a bunch of coarse grain stored from the winter that they pretty much hadn't touched . With white rice and wheat flour around, who would want to eat coarse grain? They also had the sweet potatoes they had harvested from last year that had been turned into dried sweet potatoes .

Other than the corn set aside for seed, they also had around a thousand catties of corn which had been ground into cornmeal . The family left a portion to be used to make porridge while the rest was used to feed the pigs . If that old fellow, the Minister of Revenue, found out Yu Xiaocao had used corn to feed pigs, he'd probably be so infuriated that he'd have an aneurysm and then be reborn!

They also had a lot of bean flour, millet and other coarse grains stored in the granary . Old Yu fretted over the stored grain as he was afraid that when summer arrived the grain would attract pests . Thus, he sighed and lamented constantly about this .

Yu Xiaolian and Eldest Maternal Aunt and her daughter were in charge of preparing the food for the pigs . In the corner of the piggery was a small building crafted of bamboo that had a stove with five large burners . Five large pots were on those burners and were currently cooking . The three of them were very used to doing work in the kitchen, so preparing enough food for fifty to sixty little piglets wasn't considered a difficult task .

Yu Xiaocao also came over every day to help . The most important task she had on hand was to make sure that the water cistern had mystic-stone water added to it . By using water with a very low concentration of mystic-stone water to cook food for the pigs, it created food that the pigs not only liked to eat but it also kept them healthy and growing quickly!

Zhu Junyang, who was in the capital, somehow found out that she was raising pigs in a piggery . Thus, he sent someone over to bring over a few dozen piglets and a few carts full of rice bran, wheat bran, millet, and other coarse grains to feed them . The piggery now had around a hundred and twenty little piglets .

Yu Xiaocao calculated after receiving the pigs . If they sold one pig a day, then by the time the first pig they caught left the gates, then it'd be around the New Years celebrations . Thus, she had her maternal uncles stop buying piglets .

With a hundred and twenty piglets now, they needed a considerable amount of fishwort to feed them every day . Xiaolian and her Eldest Maternal Aunt and cousin had enough work on their hands preparing the food for these piglets, so they definitely didn't have enough time to gather fishwort . They ended up hiring the twelve year old Liu Yaner to help them .

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The family also had to move up the plans on buying fishwort from other people . Yu Xiaocao found her good friends Zhou Shanhu, Qian Yafang and Liu Huifang and told them that they were planning on

buying fishwort at a price of one copper coin per two baskets . The three girls, who had nothing better to do, all proclaimed that they were willing to do this .

In the past, when circumstances permitted, all hard working folks would catch a couple of piglets at the start of spring to raise until the New Years . Then, they could either slaughter them for meat or sell them for money . The three girls' families had all done this before, so they were all very used to gathering fishwort . In one day, they could gather at least four baskets of fishwort while working leisurely .

When they found out that the Yu Family was planning on buying at least thirty baskets of fishwort a day and that the number would increase, the three girls negotiated between themselves . They decided that the three of them would work on gathering fishwort first . If they got to the point that they couldn't handle it, didn't they also have brothers and sisters at home? Once the pigs got larger and needed even more fishwort, then they could find other people to also help .

They did as they promised . That same day, Zhou Shanhu and the others all received a bamboo basket from the Yu Family and went out with sickles to gather fishwort at the foot of the West Mountain . Qian Yafang brought along Qian Wu, who wasn't very willing, while Liu Huifang brought along her younger brother and sister too . Only Zhou Shanhu had no one else to bring with her, but there was nothing she could do . Her older brother had gone off with her father to peddle goods on the street and her sister had already gotten married . Her mother needed to take care of a flock of small chicks, so she was the only one with nothing to do at home .

On the first day, Zhou Shanhu made three copper coins and Qian Yafang made five copper coins . Liu Huifang and her siblings earned nine copper coins in total . After they gave the Yu Family the fishwort and got paid, those who had baskets that weren't quite full would have those baskets settled during the next day's work .

After a month of work passed, Liu Huifang and her siblings didn't expect that they had earned three hundred or so copper coins . In order to earn money nowadays, there were many people hungrily staring at the few open work positions available . If people encountered a bad boss, they could only earn ten or so copper coins for one day of backbreaking labor .

Thus, when Liu Huifang gave her mother the months' worth of money, Shuanzhu's wife asked in surprise, "Huifang, where did you go to earn so much money?"

In the past, three hundred copper coins wasn't considered a lot of money . Those who worked hard when the tide receded to dig up sandworms could earn about this much in one day if they were lucky .

However, last year was a disaster year . Thus, the beaches near Dongshan Village were now filled with people every day . Most of the beaches had been scoured completely clean and almost all of the sandworms had disappeared in the area .

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Every day, after finishing her chores around the house, her daughter would take her younger brother and younger sister out to play . Whenever she asked, her daughter said that she was going to find her good friend, Yu Xiaocao, to play with . Thus, Shuanzhu's wife didn't think much of it . However, she would have never expected that her daughter would come back in a month with three hundred or so copper coins .

Liu Huifang told her how she was getting paid for helping the Yu Family gather fishwort every day . Shuanzhu's wife sternly looked at her and said, "I'm not even going to mention the good relationship between you and Xiaocao . However, just with your father's good friendship with your Uncle Yu, we should be helping them without taking their money ah! Come, Mother will return the money back to Xiaocao!"

Liu Huifang wasn't that concerned about the money as she patiently explained, "Mother, you also know what type of people Uncle Yu and Xiaocao are . If I didn't take their money, they absolutely wouldn't let me help them . Instead of having them find other people, it's better for us to stuff each basket until they are bursting full of fishwort . That way, it'll prevent Xiaocao giving out money and not receiving enough fishwort in return . "

Liu Shuanzhu, who was in the courtyard drying out the fishnets, heard his daughter's explanation and remarked in approval, "Wife, Huifang is right . You also know how Brother Dahai doesn't like to take advantage of other people . If we don't take his money now, he'll likely find some other way to compensate us even more in the future!"

When Shuanzhu's wife heard this, she hesitated for a few seconds before she finally said, "Since your father said this, then I guess we'll just keep this money?"

Liu Shuanzhu was similar to Yu Hai as he also loved and pampered his children, “Our Huifang, Xiaoying and Tiedan’er are all hard working . We’ll give them ten copper coins each as spending money! Let’s also buy a few catties of white flour and cut a couple catties of chives from Brother Dahai’s place . Tonight, we’ll eat some chive pockets!”

When the three kids heard this, they all started cheering in glee . Shuanzhu’s wife laughed and then glared at her husband, “You ah, is there anyone else who spoils their children so? Making some chive pockets is one thing, but you also give them some spending money! Children have loose hands, so giving them money is the sure fire way to lose it!!”

Liu Huifang placed the ten copper coins into her own embroidered purse and somewhat indignantly said, “Mother, I don’t agree with what you said! Younger Sister Xiaocao is younger than me, yet all of the money in her family is in her hands and I’ve never heard of her spending money recklessly! Also Xiaosha (Author’s note: Yu Hang’s nickname) and Xiaolian all keep the money that they earn . Even Little Shitou has his own savings . Have any of them spent their money unwisely?”

Yingzi also nodded her head in agreement, “That’s right, that’s right! Xiaocao is so amazing! She herself has said: ‘Money is made by earning, not by saving . Those who know how to spend money are the ones who know how to make money!!’ Look at how Xiaocao’s family spends money . They’re never stingy . Even last year, during the disaster, they ate white rice and white flour and had meat at every meal...”

Shuanzhu’s wife pinched her daughter’s face and said, “Who among us can compare to that lass Xiaocao? Every idea that comes out her head is a money-making method . Yingzi, if you can be half as good as her, then you can manage all of the money at home!”

Yingzi thought for a bit and replied somewhat in discouragement, “My head is not as good as Xiaocao’s, I can’t think of any methods to make money...”

Liu Huifang hesitated for a moment and then said the idea that had been ruminating inside of her for a long time for the adults in her family to hear, “Father, Mother! I want to get some small chicks and bring them back home to raise! I heard Xiaocao say that the reason why she’s raising pigs is because she wants to open a braised food store in the prefectural city . I thought for a bit and I think that a braised food shop can’t only sell braised pork . Braised chicken and duck should also be a good thing to sell too, right? We don’t have a lot of people in our village raising chickens, so if we’re able to get them, we won’t have to worry about not selling them...”

Liu Shuanzhu stopped what he was doing, thought carefully a bit, and then nodded his head, "Our daughter has a good idea!"

"How is this a good idea? The child's dreams are bigger than reality, yet you, as her father, also want to dream so big! Who doesn't want to raise chickens? Even if you can't sell them off when they get big, they can still lay eggs to make money. However, the problem is, who has enough extra grain lying around at home to feed all of these mouths ah?!" Shuanzhu's wife thought that both her husband and daughter were not reliable enough.

Liu Shuanzhu considered this for a bit before he replied, "If we can't currently, I'll borrow Brother Dahai's horse cart and travel farther to buy a cart full of coarse grain home. Along with some wild grasses, with our family's situation, we should be able to afford to raise around a hundred and eighty chickens without any problems."

Last year he had gone shark-hunting with Yu Hai a couple of times. After the money came to hand, he also enlarged and updated the family's home. Right now, one side of their now larger courtyard was being used to grow vegetables. They could lay some stones at the other side and craft a few straw shacks to make a big chicken pen.

Fields of Gold Chapter 349 - An Old Topic Comes Up Again

The Zhou Family's factory continued to buy chicken eggs from the nearby villages to create preserved eggs, so they didn't have to worry about not being able to sell their eggs. There was also a good market for the chickens too. Didn't the Zhou Family, who lived next to Brother Dahai, become rich from raising chickens? Fortune favored the bold, leaving only scraps for the timid. Liu Shuanzhu thought that raising chickens was a very good idea.

Shuanzhu's wife still wasn't completely convinced and had her oldest daughter, Huifang, go ask Yu Xiaocao. In her heart, Yu Xiaocao was a golden grass [1] that knew how to make money. If she agreed, then raising chickens was truly a risk-free method to earn money.

When Liu Huifang got to the Yu Family's residence, Yu Xiaocao was currently pondering on what to do next. If they opened a braised food shop, only selling braised pork was not enough. They also needed to prepare some other dishes, like chicken, duck, and vegetables to sell. Vegetarian dishes were easy enough. Her family grew vegetables and then, in a while, the markets would also have plenty of vegetables for sale. Ducks were also easy to get. Their neighbor, Madame Mao, had bought and bred over a few hundred ducklings to raise this year. Every day they herded the ducks into the pond behind the house to free feed and at night they were fed some wild grasses, so they didn't have to use much grain to keep them.

However, the Zhou Family's chickens were not as easy to keep. Luckily, Zhou Shanhu's father and older brother peddled goods, so they traveled quite a bit. They were able to bring back some cheaply priced rice husks and wheat stalks back. Even with this, the Zhou Family still couldn't raise too many chickens. They only had a hundred or so chickens. Let alone Zhenxiu Restaurant, even Yu Xiaocao's braised food shop needed a larger supply of chickens than this!

When Older Sister Huifang came over to tell her that they wanted to raise chickens, Yu Xiaocao naturally applauded their plans wholeheartedly. Furthermore, she promised Huifang that they would buy her family's chickens at two copper coins above the market price, so they had to only sell chickens to them.

Liu Huifang was finally able to relax. She smiled and then leveled a look at Yu Xiaocao, "Our two families have a good relationship, so there's no need to be so polite. When the time comes, just buy our chickens at the market price. We can't always take advantage of your family, right? I can't chat anymore, I need to go back and tell my parents to start getting chicks."

The days passed and the Yu Family's vegetables had been pretty much sold out. In a blink of an eye, their dozen or so mu of watermelon fields had reopened. Although they planted a lot more watermelons this year, a lot of people came by from the nearby towns and the prefectural city to discuss doing business with the Yu Family. They didn't need the Yu Family to ship the watermelons as they were willing to come get them themselves. The watermelons would be sold to these people at a wholesale price.

Liu Hu's whole family continued to sell watermelons in town. Those who could afford watermelons definitely didn't lack money. Although last year was a disaster year, it didn't affect the blazing popularity of watermelons one bit. In about a month's time, Liu Hu's whole family had earned several fold more than they did the previous year; they received two hundred taels in profit!

Last year, the royal prince had transported a few carts of watermelons and caused a sensation in the capital. Fang Zizhen was inspired by this. He privately negotiated with Xiaocao's three maternal uncles. They were in charge of transporting the melons while he would be in charge of finding a market in the capital. The profits would be split fifty-fifty.

The watermelons sold in the prefectural city were priced higher than the ones sold in Tanggu Town. Thus, if they went to the capital, the price would go up even more. With such profits in front of them, they'd be lying if they said they weren't tempted. The Liu Family's three brothers calculated it out and decided it was worth it! The Fang Estate provided the horse cart, while the three brothers hired a few

guards from a business that provided escorting services for merchants. They transported the melons to one of the dowry shops of Xiaocao's godmother. From spring to the start of summer, the Liu Family's brothers had gone back and forth to the capital five to six times and earned almost a thousand taels for their efforts.

In the blink of an eye, it was now midsummer. The spring crop of corn was now ripe. Although there wasn't a lot of rainfall until now, the corn was not affected one bit as it was a drought-hardy crop. In addition, Yu Xiaocao had emphasized that the crops only be watered with the best water from the wells. Thus, the corn on the Yu Family's farmstead grew very well.

Now that it was ready to harvest, Yu Xiaocao accompanied her father to keep an eye on the town's farms. For the past two months, Royal Prince Yang had been busy with something, so she hadn't even seen him once. Right before they were going to harvest, he finally came over in a hurry.

“Oh ho! Looks like you've enjoyed the easy life so much in the capital that you were reluctant to leave eh?” Yu Xiaocao couldn't help but crack a joke when she saw Royal Prince Yang, who had gotten thinner and tanner since she last saw him. Despite these changes, he was in good spirits.

Zhu Junyang narrowed his beautiful phoenix eyes and indifferently scanned her, “Do you think I am like you? Always looking for ways to slack off and enjoy life instead of getting ahead?! This prince had gone to Tuolai Mountain to clean out some bandits!”

A band of violent bandits had formed at Tuolai Mountain and slaughtered and burnt out villages indiscriminately. All of the commoners in the area suffered immensely. Taian Prefecture had sent up a report, asking for help from the court. Zhu Junyang recommended himself and took a group of elite soldiers out. They entered the depths of the mountain and completely defeated that group of bandits. The prince was highly skilled at martial arts and talented at commanding troops. Although he didn't bring a lot of men with him, he managed to defeat a large group with a few men and completely caught the whole group of criminals in one swoop!

Yu Xiaocao listened to Head Steward Liu's detailed descriptions about the campaign against the bandits. Her pair of eyes immediately started shining with delight. Wow! A young hero with incredible skills. She had finally met a true expert!

“Young Royal Prince, are you able to traverse a river in one step and go across the snow without leaving prints? Are you able to use leaves as throwing knives and kill a person? Are you able to perform earth-shattering feats and sweep everything in your path? Are you...”

“Stop, stop, stop! What sort of nonsense are you talking about? It sounds like you think martial arts experts are like gods, but that's not possible! From what you're saying, a few experts would be able to destroy a whole city, right?” Zhu Junyang really wanted to crack open the little lass's head and figure out what was in there. How could she have such ridiculous ideas?

Yu Xiaocao thought and decided he was right. Martial arts experts weren't gods. Those who had the skills to dominate the skies were likely only found in wuxia novels, right?

After looking at the heavy ears of corn that were on the corn stalks, Zhu Junyang personally pulled off an ear of corn and peeled off its outer leaves. The glistening yellow kernels of corn were densely packed together in neat rows and each kernel seemed to be plump and full of juice. The corn on the fields today was not in any way inferior to the ones that were harvested by the Yu Family last year.

The hired temporary workers on Royal Prince Yang's eight hundred mu corn plantation were all doing their best. The wages given to them by the master were high and harvesting corn wasn't something that required a lot of skill. Even women and half-grown children could do this work. In any case, the wages paid out was based on the weight of corn harvested every day. The more a person harvested, the more money he or she received. Thus, the temporary workers all enthusiastically did their jobs. They were often in the fields before the sun came up and only left when they couldn't see the corn anymore.

The Yu Family's farmstead only had around a hundred mu and were taken care of by sixteen families. Their wages were based on how many catties of corn each mu produced. Those who were in the top three could get a bonus of five taels, three taels, or one tael respectively.

Although Widow Li and her son didn't have a lot of land to take care of, the amount of corn per field they produced was in the top three. First place went to someone else but they managed to get second place and received three taels as a bonus. Widow Li and her son immediately kneeled in front of their masters. If they hadn't followed the right master, they would have probably starved to death at the beginning of spring.

In the past two months, they not only received money during spring plowing but they also got a salary every month. After subtracting the costs of food, they still had some surplus money leftover. During a time where there wasn't much surplus grain to be had, the two of them were still able to eat until they were full every day. This was something that they had never thought was possible in previous years. The two of them not only had rosy cheeks, but they also gained some weight and no longer looked like starving refugees.

Feeling the weight of the three taels in her hand, Widow Li couldn't believe that this was happening! The money glistened with a gentle silver light and she had never seen so much money before in her life. After the bout of happiness passed, she suddenly felt scared. Recently, the farmstead wasn't very peaceful. She and her son were only a widow and a half-grown child. Having this much money around wasn't necessarily a good thing!

"Master, would it be possible for you to help us exchange this money for some grain or cotton cloth?" Widow Li quickly made up her mind and made the decision to spend this money on goods that she and her son needed.

Yu Xiaocao also thought of their situation and took the money as she nodded, "Okay! I'll help you save this money for now. When cotton cloth comes on the market, I'll help you exchange some of the money for it as well as some coarse grains! If you two need something urgently, then you can take the money back from me..."

Under the eyes of everyone present, she took the money from the widow. Once the group of people dispersed, Xiaocao secretly found Widow Li again and returned the money back to the older woman as she grinned, "You should hold onto the money yourself, that way it'll be easy for you to spend it when needed. Now, everyone thinks that I've taken the money for you, so you don't need to worry about other people with bad intentions thinking about it!"

Widow Li was grateful to the bottom of her heart. The master's daughter had a clever mind and a kind heart. With such a master, it was truly the fortune of a lifetime for her and her son. Yu Xiaocao didn't realize that just a simple action done by her had caused the two of them to be hell-bent and forever loyal to her...

Yu Xiaocao was very pleased with the amount of corn harvested this year. There were more ears of corn harvested this year compared to the last and the production had sharply increased as well. Her family's farmstead had yields around 2600 catties per mu for the highest ones and the thirty or so fields that produced the least still yielded around 1800 catties per mu, which was still considered high yield in this era. Royal Prince Yang's plantation's yields were a bit lower. The highest had around 2200 catties per mu and the lowest was 1600 catties per mu. The Imperial Plantation had very fertile land, so the corn that was planted there had around the same yield as the highest producing fields at Royal Prince Yang's plantation.

When the news came out, the entire court erupted. The Great Ming Dynasty was used to grain yields of around two hundred to three hundred catties per mu. Finding out that corn could produce yields around a thousand catties per mu seemed like a fairytale. No wonder the emperor had been looking for this high-yielding crop for a long time.

Due to the weather and soil conditions, the northern parts of the country had lower crop yields compared to the southern parts. The commoners there had to live with half-empty stomachs. This was a problem that had bothered Zhu Junfan for a long time. He wished to allow the people of the Great Ming Dynasty to all be able to eat their fill and dress properly. If corn could be widely spread throughout the north, the people there would finally be able to eat properly and have a peaceful life. This would also stabilize the Great Ming Dynasty greatly.

Zhu Junfan decided that next year they would further increase the cultivation of corn in the capital. Then, the bitterly cold northern areas could start to plant corn and potatoes as well. As the capital and northern areas became the new heart, they could gradually spread these new crops to the rest of the country. He was sure that within a few years, corn and potatoes could be widely cultivated throughout the country.

Because of all of this, the emperor was very pleased and heavily rewarded the officials in the Ministry of Revenue and Royal Prince Yang. Zhu Junyang not only obtained the vast majority of rewards but he had also been given the town of Tanggu to be under his command. Naturally, the revenue from the new harbor would be given directly to the imperial purse!

“Emperor, perhaps you have forgotten a few people. Aren't there some people who also deserve to be rewarded as well?” Royal Prince Yang once again reminded the emperor in court.

Zhu Junfan cheerfully looked at his younger cousin. Wasn't his younger cousin taking a bit too much interest in the Yu Family's daughter? His younger cousin had never cared one iota for the nobly born maidens in the capital, yet he took very good care of the little lass from the Yu Family. There was something fishy about this!

“We know of whom you're talking about. Isn't it about how the Yu Family made a lot of contributions to the planting of corn? We have thought about this, how about we make them officials and have them continue to help the court progress?” Zhu Junfan already made a decision. The success of corn and potatoes was heavily intertwined with the handiwork of his old transmigrator friend.

Fields of Gold Chapter 350 - Debate

“This official believes that the growth and output of the crops is somewhat related to the methods used but it's not a big correlation. Imperial Majesty, you have also said that corn is a high-yielding crop. Without the Yu Family's help, the yields likely wouldn't be as high as now, but they wouldn't be too low either. I believe that we can give the Yu Family a reward, as for an official position...Emperor, please reconsider!”

Imperial Censor Yang had previously been scolded by the emperor in regards to the issue surrounding the lass from the Yu Family, so apparently he had a grudge against the whole family now. Last time he was opposed to giving the female an official position and now he opposed to any member of the Yu Family becoming an official.

Before Zhu Junyang could speak, Minister Liu of the Ministry of Revenue opined, "Imperial Censor Yang, you are wrong! The emperor himself has once said: 'Without proper investigation, one cannot come to a premature conclusion!'. You were born and bred in an official's family, so I'm pretty sure you've never stepped foot into a crop field. Thus, how could you know what is a normal yield of a field of grain? If the same type of crop is planted, such as wheat, in the same type of land but is managed by a different person, there could be a difference in tens or even hundreds of cattles at harvest. This is the reason why the Ministry of Revenue solicited experienced farmers to help with the planting of these new crops."

"Experienced? Official Liu also said that the difference is in 'experience'. Corn and potatoes are all new crops that were transported across the ocean. How could the Yu Family have had previous experiences with them?" Imperial Censor Yang coldly huffed. He had always regarded Minister Liu, who had been born in a poor family, with contempt and had never liked him.

Minister Liu's stubborn personality also came out as he jutted out his face to say, "Regardless, the Yu Family came up with the correct planting method. This year, they had personally come over to supervise the crops being planted in the Imperial Plantations. The facts show that the crops planted last year during the disaster did not have as great a yield as this year. This official has brought over the records written by the ministry. Emperor, please investigate!"

Su Ran took the documents from Minister Liu and placed them in front of the emperor. Zhu Junfan carefully looked them over and discovered that the yields of the corn fields not only increased significantly but even the growing cycle from germination to harvest had also decreased by around twenty days. He rubbed his chin in contemplation. How did his old transmigrator friend manage to change this?

From what he knew, the little lass only went over once to the Imperial Plantation. The only thing that changed was that the little lass had brought over the so-called 'pesticide' solution to treat the plants. Apparently, this pesticide had to be linked with how the crops grew! Did this little lass, like the protagonists of the novels in his previous life, have access to a secret space that held a mystical spring? Could the spring water improve the growth of plants?

Zhu Junfan felt as if he was thinking too much into this and wanted to laugh at himself. He brought himself back to reality and had Su Ran disseminate the documents to the rest of the high-ranking officials. The facts spoke louder than words. The Yu Family was truly skilled in the ways of raising crops!

When the Minister of Works reviewed the documents, he cautiously said, "Imperial Majesty, this official also admits that the Yu Family is talented at farming. However, there are plenty of people who are talented in the world that are in different areas. If raising crops is enough to raise someone to officialdom, then wouldn't famous and well-known craftsmen also become officials too? What about merchants? Would they too become officials?"

Official Zhang, who had already been promoted to a second ranked official and had a way with politics, hurriedly interjected, "One must evaluate merits before rewarding. What has the Great Ming Dynasty placed the most importance on now? To allow the common people to have enough to eat and warm clothes to wear. That is the way to stabilize the country! The Yu Family managed to raise the high-yielding crops, corn and potatoes, very well. This is a great contribution to the country and I believe that we can break the rules of officialdom for them!"

Imperial Censor Yang snorted coldly and stated, "Official Zhang, corn and potatoes were the high-yielding crops that the emperor and Royal Prince Yang found. Since they are high-yielding crops, I believe that the output of these crops won't be low even without the Yu Family! Emperor, I believe that the Yu Family is just taking advantage of the circumstances!"

Minister Liu leveled an angry glare at Imperial Censor Yang, "Official Yang, how come you also didn't take advantage of the opportunity when corn and potatoes first came to our country to get some more honor for your name?"

Imperial Censor Yang's eyebrows came together heavily, "I'm not greedy for positions nor power! This official is also not in charge of farming affairs, so why should I take on unneeded trouble?"

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"All of you, stop debating!" Zhu Junfan pinched the bridge of his nose after getting a headache from hearing all of these old men argue back and forth. He transferred the source of calamity back to his younger cousin, "Royal Prince Yang, what's your opinion on all of this?"

"The Yu Family is clever and also has talent. We can come to a conclusion next year! Next spring, we can have the crops grown in both the capital and Tanggu Town. The Imperial Plantation will still be managed

by the Ministry of Revenue while the plantations in Tanggu Town will be managed by the Yu Family. At this same time next year, we will have our conclusive results!” Zhu Junyang was supremely confident in Yu Xiaocao's abilities. He was convinced that without Yu Xiaocao, the yields of corn and potatoes could not be this high!

Zhu Junfan also thought that there was no point in continuing to dispute. They would just use this method to settle the problem! He immediately agreed to Royal Prince Yang's proposal.

Zhu Junyang looked out the corner of his phoenix eyes and gave Imperial Censor Yang a glance before he said, “I hope that when the time comes and the facts are there for all to see that Imperial Censor Yang will have no more objections to the emperor's decisions!”

“If the high-yield of the corn is indeed related to the Yu Family, this old official will accept it wholeheartedly!” Imperial Censor Yang believed that he had finally succeeded in preventing the Yu Family from getting an official's position, so he triumphantly bowed towards Royal Prince Yang. After the herald announced “court is dismissed”, Imperial Censor Yang proudly walked out of the throne room, acting like a rooster who had just won a fight.

The Yu Family's farmstead in Tanggu Town had already been planted with soybeans. Currently, all of the families on the farmstead had extra cash on hand, so the fields were distributed and rented out like previous years. Each family was able to rent lands and the rent was only forty percent of their crops. All of the families on the farmstead felt immense gratitude to their masters. In the past, their previous masters were considered pretty benevolent for only taking fifty percent as rent. Now, their current masters were not only kind, but they also emphasized with the poor families and helped them survive the hardest time. They also decreased the rent...every single tenant farmer rejoiced that they were now with a good master!

When the corn was harvested, Royal Prince Yang went back to the capital. Yu Xiaocao discussed things with the steward he left behind and decided to also plant his eight hundred mu plantation with soybeans. In autumn, after the harvest, they could discuss then whether he wanted to plant some winter wheat or to leave the land fallow to allow it to plant corn next spring.

The scorching hot summer was about to arrive and the mountain residence of Imperial Prince Jing had finished construction, so Royal Prince Yang escorted his mother over to let her take a holiday. The residence was constructed halfway up the mountain and was surrounded by verdant vegetation and stunning scenery. Inside the residence was delicately constructed pavilions and gorgeous gardens. A small stream wound through the beautiful interior, and it looked as if the trees inside could reach the

clouds in the sky. The fake mountain and rocks also improved the beauty inside...Princess Consort Jing immediately fell in love with this residence.

The residence in Tanggu Town that they had bought from County Magistrate Wu's wife had been renovated and turned into the royal prince's residence. Tanggu Town was now under Royal Prince Yang's jurisdiction, so how could he not have a place to live there?

However, Royal Prince Yang very rarely lodged in his Tanggu residence. When he was in the area, he always accompanied his mother at the residence on the West Mountain because it was easier for him to bum a meal from the Yu Family! If people found out that Royal Prince Yang, who was famed for being a filial son, only lodged with his mother at the mountain for this reason, they would have all of their mouths wide open in surprise!

After rain fell, the air in the mountains was cool and moist. When a light breeze blew by, it cooled the scorching hot summer air a bit. Royal Prince Yang was currently pompously sitting at the Yu Family's dinner table. When he saw the simple and light looking food on the table, he frowned in slight disdain. In the summer, the Yu Family mostly ate foods that were light and easy on the stomach. It's not that they couldn't afford to eat meat but it was because no one could stomach greasy food in the heat!

"Where's the grasshopper sauce, huh? Go stir-fry a batch for me!" Zhu Junyang wasn't happy at a meal without meat. He glanced at the vegetarian dishes on the table and ate two mouthfuls before he issued his request.

Yu Xiaocao pushed at the rice in her bowl as she mumbled, "There's no more..."

"No more? Is there really none left or are you being a stingy little girl?" Zhu Junyang was apparently not in a good mood today.

Yu Xiaocao rolled her eyes at him and stated, "If I was that petty of a person, how could I let you bring back jars of grasshopper sauce every time you go back to the capital? The locusts were only gathered last summer and autumn and we've eaten them for an entire year. Do you really think we'd have any leftover now?"

Zhu Junyang frowned in discontent. If he had known earlier that the grasshopper sauce had run out, then he wouldn't have allowed his father and older brother to eat any the last time he was in the capital. He sulkily picked up another portion of dry-fried string beans with his chopsticks and angrily

stuffed it into his mouth and chewed in frustration. If a foodie couldn't eat the food he craved, the consequences were quite dire!

Yu Xiaocao thought for a bit and then said, "After we finish eating dinner, I'll take you to catch cicadas. Fried cicadas are also very tasty and delicious. You'll probably like them!"

Zhu Junyang placed his chopsticks down on the table and stood up, "Then what are we waiting for? Let's go now!"

Yu Xiaocao rolled her eyes at him again, "It's still too early. We need to wait until it starts getting dark. You can only catch cicadas when the larva crawls out of the ground and shed their skin! If you go too early, you're just wasting your time. Quickly finish your rice. You're so big now yet you leave food on the table? Little Doudou is only five years old yet he doesn't leave food..."

Zhu Junyang pushed the remaining half a bowl of rice into his mouth and finished it in a few bites. Yu Xiaocao leisurely finished her dinner and then calmly helped Madam Liu clear off the table and clean. Zhu Junyang stared at her back the entire time. If his eyes had turned into lasers, the back of Yu Xiaocao's clothing would have long started smoking!

After waiting for a long period of time, the sky finally got dark. Yu Xiaocao lit up a small lantern and held it in her hand as she gestured at the young royal prince, "Let's go ah! Time to catch some cicadas!"

"I want to go. Older Cousin, bring me along too!!" When Liu Fangping found that there was something fun to do, he also pestered her to let him go. Zhu Junyang glared at him, 'Little brat, why are you sticking along?!

Yu Hai was a bit concerned, "It's dark, what if you guys encounter a wild beast? Cao'er, you only know how to cause trouble!!"

Yu Xiaocao rubbed Little Fangping's head and then pointed at Zhu Junyang cheerfully, "Don't we have two experts with us, the young royal prince and Head Steward Liu, ah? That being said, we're only going into the thickets at the foot of the mountain and we won't be going into the mountain."

Then, she spoke to her older brother, older sister, and older cousins, "If you guys want to come along, bring a lantern! Once we catch some cicadas, I'll fry some for everyone to eat tomorrow!"

Zhu Junyang sent someone to the residence to grab two glass lanterns from the walkways. Lanterns made out of glass produced more illumination, making it more suitable to see at night.

With nothing much to do, everyone wanted to have some fun. Thus, they not only had Liu Fangping as a little tail but also Liu Junping, Liu Yaner, Yu Hang, and Yu Xiaolian. The rest of the children came along with lanterns in their hands and the group left in high spirits. They went to the Qian Family's gate to find Qian Wu. Qian Wu was unwilling to be left out so he also came along with his younger sister, Qian Yafan, with lanterns in their hands.