

## Gold Chapter 35

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Yu Xiaocao gleefully rushed forward. Her father stooped over and lifted her up in his arms. She sheepishly pushed a hazelnut into his mouth and grinned, "Father, I learned how to set traps! I even caught a giant wild hare in one of my traps! And it was still alive!"

Yu Hai didn't stint on his praise. "Our Cao'er is really capable. In the future, Father will just wait to eat the hares that you catch."

"Father, Father! We also caught a small roe deer! Look, it even follows us around without being lead. It's really obedient!" Shitou said sweetly. The little boy pulled on his father's trousers with one hand as he pointed at the dumb little roe deer that was running around him.

Yu Hai dropped his head to take a closer look at the small animal on the ground. Earlier, it was too dark for him to see clearly, so he had thought the creature was some other family's dog that came along. He had never thought that this was actually a baby roe deer.

Yu Hai set his daughter down and bent down to look at the roe deer. The little fellow's large dark eyes were wide open and confused. It glanced at his daughter and even started to rub its head on his daughter's legs...hey!

He had never seen a roe deer that wasn't afraid of humans before. Was it really because it had lost its mother and thought that his children were the same species as it? Dumb roe deer, dumb roe deer. Since it had 'dumb' in its name, it really couldn't be very smart.

"Cao'er, did you catch it or did Zhao Han catch it? We should never try to take advantage of others!" Yu Hai was very grateful to Zhao Bufan, who was also known as Older Brother Zhao, for taking him under his wing. Most of his hunting skills were learned from his good friend, so he was apprehensive that his youngest daughter was being unreasonable and was just asking other people for things.

Yu Xiaocao laughed as she shook her head. "I had just learned how to set traps today, so it was only beginner's luck that I managed to catch a wild hare today. This little roe deer is actually Brother Han's. We're helping him raise it for a couple of days! After a while, we'll send it back to him."

Yu Hai nodded his head in approval. "That's right, after playing with it for a few days, you should send it back. I'm not sure if this creature is easy to take care of or not, but you guys need to be careful. Don't let it die on your watch! If you two siblings really end up liking it, Father will trade some game tomorrow with the Zhao family to get it for you. You should never ask for someone else's stuff without offering something in return. Do you two get that?"

"Don't worry, Father!" Yu Xiaocao took a couple of hazelnuts from her bag and handed it to her father. "Try some! We found some earlier in the forest and Auntie Zhao sauteed them for us. They're really tasty!"

Seeing that his youngest son had a couple of hazelnuts falling out of his pockets, Yu Hai hastily bent down to pick them up and asked, "Did you two spend the entire day at Uncle Zhao's house? You didn't make any trouble for them, did you?"

"We went into town. Look! Second Sister bought me some pastries!!" Little Shitou had long forgotten his promise to his second sister and sold her out to their father.

Yu Hai's slowly frowned as he first looked at the pastries wrapped in oil paper and then his daughter. Where did they get the money to buy these pastries? Was it really the money left over from selling the abalone?

"Father, Brother Han trapped a lot of game today so he went into town to sell them. Since we had nothing better to do, we followed him. I also caught a hare today so I sold it. I got about a hundred copper coins for it, so I also bought some candy and snacks. This is what's leftover!" Yu Xiaocao naturally didn't reveal her larger stash of coins. Instead, she fished a small string of copper coins, about fifty to sixty coins worth, to show her father.

As Yu Hai lead his two children back towards the family residence, he continued to lecture, "You three kids are all daredevils! The oldest one among you is only twelve to thirteen years old and you all dared to go into town. What if some kidnapper got to you guys? In the future, if you want to go into town, wait until Father goes to sell game too. If either of you get tired, I can carry you for a bit." "We aren't tired! Grandpa Zhang from Xishan Village came by with an ox cart and we sat on it. Second Sister even gifted him a bag of snacks!" Little Shitou couldn't help but be a little obsessed over that bag of pastries.

"Your second sister did the right thing. When someone else helps us, we need to give something in return. If we only want to take advantage of others, who will help us in the future when we're really in a bind?" Yu Hai began to instruct his children.

Before long, the three of them entered their family courtyard. At this point, the sky had turned completely dark. Autumn nights in the north tended to be on the chillier side. The rest of the Yu Family, other than the second branch, had long retired to their own rooms to rest. The east-sided room was the only one that had a faint glimmer of light still shining.

"Cao'er and Shitou, you two must be hungry. Your father kept a steamed roll behind. Mother can heat it up for you on the small mud stove and then the two of you can share it!" The advantages of having a mild-mannered mother in this life were suddenly apparent. Her previous mother, in her old life, would also heat up leftover food for her if she got home late from playing outside. However, the food also came with a serving of scoldings as well.

Little Shitou carefully peeked his head out of the room before quickly closing the door. He opened up the bag of pastries and started to divide the snacks out to everyone. Although the little boy loved eating sweet and soft pastries, he didn't have the habit of enjoying them alone.

The packet made of oiled paper had six pieces, so he gave everyone at home a piece each. He stared at the remaining piece for some time, hesitating, before he finally said, "This piece will be saved for Older Brother."

Yu Hai and his wife's expressions noticeably dimmed after hearing Shitou. The room sank into an awkward silence. After quite a while, Yu Hai finally sighed and said, "Don't save it. We don't know when your older brother will be able to come back, and these snacks can't sit out for too long. The three of you should split the piece and eat it instead. Next time when Father goes into town, I'll buy some more for your brother to eat."

Yu Xiaocao thought of how exhausted and weak her older brother looked when she saw him earlier. Her heart ached and she quietly said, "Father, let's bring Older Brother back, okay? He's not as comfortable there as he is at home, right?"

"I also want to bring your older brother home, but..." After they brought him home, what then? There would be fight waiting for them if they did that.

Yu Xiaolian snarled furiously, "Our grandmother and Eldest Aunt always think we're a bunch of parasites! But we're not eating from their bowls! Every piece of game that Father sells is enough to feed us for several months!"

Xiaocao sat heavily on the kang bed and mumbled, "If we could split off from our family, that would solve the problem!"

Xiaolian's eyes lit up before they quickly dimmed again. She shook her head and said, "Our grandmother would never agree! She's counting on our father's money making abilities to pay for Younger Uncle's schooling fees..."

"What are you two saying? The family does not split as long the parents are alive! Your grandfather and grandmother are both still here! Talking about dividing from the family is asking for others to gossip behind our backs. Never talk about stuff like this outside!" After baking the steamed roll until it was crisp on the edges, Madam Liu split open the bun and added some salted vegetables to it. She then handed the food to Xiaocao and her brother.

Madam Liu put her piece of the pastry back into the oiled paper bag as she wanted to leave it for her children to eat tomorrow. However, when her attention was caught elsewhere, Xiaocao popped the piece into her mouth.

Creeeeek——

The sound of the wooden door opening abruptly stalled the festive atmosphere in the room. Madam Liu hastily swallowed the pastry in her mouth and her hands flew to her face in a fruitless effort to wipe off any crumbs without being conspicuous.

All five pairs of eyes immediately looked over towards the door. Although there was a crack, they couldn't see anyone there. When they gazed down, they found a pair of large ears poking up from a small head that inquisitively stretched in to inspect the room.

When the limpid and dark eyes found Yu Xiaocao, the slender and delicate animal completely stepped into the room. It shimmied towards Xiaocao and used its head to nudge at her ankle, as if it was a puppy asking for a bone to eat.

"Wow! So cute!!" Yu Xiaolian thought her heart was about to burst as she bent down to pick up the little creature in her arms. One hand caressed the animal's head as she snuggled her face into its soft fur coat.

"That young fella, Zhao Han, caught it! Little Shitou really liked it, so he let him bring it back to let him play and raise it for a couple of days. The little critter must be hungry, otherwise, it wouldn't have stepped into the room." Yu Hai explained on behalf of his youngest daughter and son.

Yu Xiaolian hugged the roe deer tightly, which was no larger than a month old puppy, and seemed reluctant to let it go. "The courtyard still has some fishwort I gathered today. Let me get some to feed it! This little creature is so obedient and doesn't seem to be afraid of humans at all!" Unfortunately, she misjudged. When Xiaolian got back after picking out the freshest and most tender fishwort from the bunch, the little roe deer only sniffed it for a bit before it turned its head away arrogantly. Its eyes looked pitifully at Xiaocao and it started to struggle to get back on the ground.

Xiaolian was afraid of dropping the animal, so she placed it back down. She waved the wild grasses in front of it but the roe deer ignored her completely. It was only focused on achieving its goal, which was to get closer to Xiaocao.

Xiaolian sighed in disappointment, "It only likes younger sister! It must be because younger sister was the one who brought it back!"

Yu Xiaocao took the handful of grass from her hands and teased, "The little roe deer probably likes cleanliness and rejected Xiaolian because it thinks this fishwort is too dirty to eat right now!"

She took out the jar that held the mystic-stone water and washed the grass in it. She then offered the fishwort to the roe deer again and the little creature acted completely different. This time, it rushed over and ate the grass in large mouthfuls.

"It really is a roe deer that likes to be clean!" Little Shitou giggled until he started to hiccup. He also grabbed a bunch of fishwort and rinsed it in the water. After it finished eating the food in Xiaocao's hands, the roe deer smelled more of that delicious stuff that was more tantalizing than a mother's milk and skipped over to Shitou. It also started eating the fishwort in Shitou's hands.

Xiaolian learned from her siblings' examples and used the rest of the mystic-stone water to wash the remaining fishwort. Yu Xiaocao felt a bit forlorn as she watched: 'This spendthrift girl used two full bowls of mystic-stone water. That was seriously something very valuable!'

Ever since she had access to mystic-stone water, Xiaocao would always give everyone in her family a bowl to drink. The effects were naturally astounding. First, let's not discuss the effects on her own body. Her mother, Madam Liu, also had a weak constitution. After drinking mystic-stone water for a full two months, her body had improved immensely even though it still looked very thin. Madam Liu recently got soaked with some fall rain. Had this had happened before the mystic-stone water, she would have had a great illness. This time, however, she only needed a bowl of ginger soup to strengthen her body and didn't even get a sniffle.

Yu Hai also mentioned that he had recently become more strong. In the past, when he used to bring game that weighed about a hundred catties down from the mountain to the town, he would be so exhausted from the effort he needed to rest on the kang bed for hours. Now? It was as if he did nothing strenuous. In fact, he could add a thirty to fifty catties more to his load without any problem.

Thinking of all the benefits, Yu Xiaocao silently held the empty jar and went to the kitchen to fill it completely with water that had been previously boiled. She carefully took the five colored stone from her wrist and let the rock sink into the jar. The spirit of the divine stone came out of the multi-colored stone and swam leisurely in the water.

If the rest of the occupants of the room could see this now, they would all be stunned speechless. Why would there be a golden colored kitten in their water pitcher? Moreover, it was constantly flailing in the water, as if it was almost drowning.

The little divine stone muttered resentfully. [Protest, protest! There's not enough spiritual energy here! Not having ginseng is one thing, but who wants crappy well water? This spirit wants spring water from the bamboo forest in the mountains!] "Can you just be content with your situation? Mystic-stone water is really useful for us, and ultimately, won't you also benefit? If you continue to make a racket, I'll just throw you into that little creek and never pick you up again!" As Yu Xiaocao fed the little roe deer, she also mentally threatened the arrogant divine stone.