

## Gold Chapter 381

### Fields of Gold Chapter 381 - Honesty

“Maybe I should do the talking.” Zhu Junyang recalled that his cousin, the emperor, had once said that if one wanted to win a lady's affections, the best one could do was to be sincere and honest with the other person and never hide anything from them, because women were very petty and they would remember it for the rest of their lives.

Although his condition seemed to have taken a turn for the better now, he was still unsure of how his illness would progress in the future. With Yu Xiaocao's cleverness, she would sooner or later catch a hint about his condition after a period of interaction. Since he had already decided to marry her, he might as well make everything clear from the beginning. It would definitely be best if she could accept him, but if she really could not, then they would maintain as they currently were. At most, he would stay single for his entire life.

Princess Consort Jing could tell that he seemed to have made some sort of decision, and that surprised her. Her son had finally found a girl that he was willing to get close to, even if she was currently still young, but all they needed to do was wait for her to grow up—it might be several years, but they could afford the wait.

But it seemed that her son was about to tell Xiaocao the secret he had kept for nearly two decades! Who would be willing to spend the rest of their lives with a large firecracker that could explode at any moment? If, at any day, he went out of control, she could be risking her own life! Her son was too impulsive—this act was equivalent to pushing her away!

“Yang'er, you...are you sure?” Princess Consort Jing sounded slightly anxious, and her voice tinged with hesitation.

Zhu Junyang looked seriously at his mother and slowly nodded, “I'm sure, Lady Mother. I can't hide this matter forever. Since I really intend to marry, I must show my sincerity. I trust Xiaocao—she's not the same as the other girls in the capital.”

Yu Xiaocao watched them cluelessly. What kind of riddle were they talking about? It seemed like Royal Prince Yang was about to tell her something important—so important that even Princess Consort Jing took it very seriously. Er...could it be that Royal Prince Yang was not the biological son of Imperial Prince Jing? Or was it some other secret of the imperial family? Could she choose to not listen?

Princess Consort Jing worriedly glanced at Yu Xiaocao, then she sighed lightly, "I won't say any more since you've already made your decision. Xiaocao, even if you can't accept what Yang'er will tell you later, please don't use it to hurt him. It's been difficult for Yang'er all these years...As his mother, I beg of you, no matter what, help him keep his secret, alright?"

"Er... since this secret is so important, I think...it's better if I don't know about it..." Yu Xiaocao stuttered as she mumbled.

"No! You must know!" Zhu Junyang felt that if he did not pick up the courage to tell her today, he might never have the guts to tell her. He tugged Yu Xiaocao's wrist and led her to the deepest part of the garden.

Yu Xiaocao tried to shake his grip off, but the young prince's hand was like a big pair of pliers. His grip firm yet light, so she did not feel pain. She tried to forcefully pull herself free, but her strength compared to that of Royal Prince Yang, who was skilled in martial arts, was like an ant trying to shake a tree. With no other choice, she gave up her struggle.

"There's no one here. You can say whatever you want to now!" Yu Xiaocao said in a somewhat sulky tone.

Zhu Junyang let go of her wrist, albeit a little unwilling to part with that delicate feeling in his palm. His lips thinned into a line as he structured his thoughts. He stared into Yu Xiaocao's eyes, "I... When I was five, I fell into a pond and almost drowned..."

Yu Xiaocao's eyes widened as many schemes from the plot of inner courtyard fight novels flashed through her mind. She blinked her clear, big eyes and carefully asked, "How did you fall in? And what about your servants? Did someone push you? What happened afterwards?"

Now that he had begun, Zhu Junyang felt that the following words were not so hard to say, "I was still young at that time. Moreover, I was frightened and I had fallen ill for some time afterwards, so I don't remember what happened during that time. I only know that after that incident, my lord father punished a concubine that was quite favored at that time."

"Your father must've found out that it was that wretch who wanted to harm you. That's weird, you have two older brothers, so why did your father's concubine target you instead?" According to inner

courtyard fight plots, shouldn't they first get rid of the heir who was going to inherit the princely title? There was no benefit to killing off the youngest son!

Zhu Junyang glared at her and said, "This prince was extremely charming when I was young, and Lord Father favored me very much! Every time he returned from court or after finishing his errands, he would first visit Lady Mother's courtyard and play with me for a while. That wretch thought that Lady Mother used me as an excuse to persuade Lord Father to her courtyard..."

"Oh... But I thought your father was loyal to your mother? Why did he still bring these messy women into the inner courtyard? You men are always eyeing the pot even though you're already eating from the bowl. You all want to be surrounded by women and enjoy the bliss of a harmonious harem!" Yu Xiaocao pursed her lips, making an expression that said 'all men are like this'.

'You're just a little girl, how many men have you met? You say that as though you have a lot of experience!' Zhu Junyang felt so stifled by her words he did not know how to continue. He tsked at her and asked, "Do you or do you not want to hear me continue?"

"Can I choose not to?" Yu Xiaocao's expression was full of reluctance, "I mean, if you really have to tell it to someone, there's definitely a group of outstanding girls that are lining up and willing to listen to you!"

"No! I only want to tell you and you alone! Others are not fit to know my secret!" Zhu Junyang scowled in annoyance. If it were anyone else, he would have had the servants take them away to be punished, but towards Yu Xiaocao, he had no way of doing it. It was like he was trying to catch a porcupine barehanded. He was filled with the feeling of helplessness.

Yu Xiaocao listlessly responded, "Alright, say whatever you wish, then. I'm listening!"

"You... What kind of reaction is that? Is it so hard to bear, listening to me speak?" A blazing fire raged in Zhu Junyang. He wanted to let it out, but he could not.

Yu Xiaocao rolled her eyes at him, her voice tinted with willful arrogance, "So are you going to tell me or not? If not, I'm leaving!"

Zhu Junyang took a deep breath. One of these days, he would definitely die of anger because of this infuriating little girl!

After he calmed down, he continued, "Since that time I almost drowned and fell seriously ill, I suddenly became able to sense certain people's emotions, and I'm especially sensitive towards others' ill intentions."

Yu Xiaocao's eyes bulged in shock, her gaze filled with a hint of excitement, "Wow! That means you obtained superpowers after overcoming a tragedy! And it's a perception-type superpower! So cool! This is very good ah!"

"Good? How is it good? The ill-intent of others will affect my emotions and make me lose all sense of rationality! For example, those people with ulterior motives that try to curry my favor have the lowest degree of ill-intent, and it's still tolerable as I'll only feel a little stifled in my heart. But if the other person has ill-intent but has yet to carry it out, it will make me want to rage. If the other party wants to harm me and the people around me, I will lose all rationality..." Zhu Junyang's brows furrowed, as though he was reluctant to remember how he managed to endure through that period of time.

"Maybe you were too young at that time and afraid of the sudden change to your body, so your emotions were strongly influenced. If you were already an adult, you shouldn't have such a big reaction to it. How badly has it progressed, your loss of all rationality?" Yu Xiaocao was affected by his emotions. She smothered that small excitement and started seriously helping him analyze the matter.

Zhu Junyang hesitated for a moment, glancing at Yu Xiaocao. Finally, he gritted his teeth and continued, "My first outburst was because of my lady mother's personal maidservant. She was feeding my mother a type of slow-acting poison, and the aura of her malice was so strong it engulfed me and devoured my rationality. At that time, all I could see was black, and I seemed to have lost control of my body. Not only could I not see and hear anything, but I also didn't know what was happening. When my lady mother's anxious scream made me return to consciousness..."

He glanced at Yu Xiaocao again, not knowing if the following details would scare the little girl who was listening to his story seriously. He pondered for a moment, but since he had already started, what was the point in only telling half of the story?

He decided to continue, "When I came to my senses, that maidservant was already dead and lying by my feet. In my hand, I was holding the sharp dagger my lord father gave me on my fifth birthday. My mother's personal maidservant...her head, her face, her body...had been stabbed until she was an

unrecognizable lump of flesh and blood. Both of her legs were broken at the knees, her carotid artery had been cut open and her blood bathed the floor..."

Once he finished, he solemnly watched Yu Xiaocao. He expected to see fear, terror or loathing on her face, and he had also mentally prepared himself to receive her disgust.

Against his expectations, this twelve-year-old girl displayed only a face of complete seriousness as her brows pinched together in deep thought. At last, she met his gaze boldly and unafraid, and analyzed in all seriousness, "Young Royal Prince, I think you have a mental disorder called post-traumatic stress disorder. It can manifest as a desire to kill, to attempt suicide or in self-mutilation..."

Where had she heard this from? It was probably a preview from some informative talk show broadcast that she had seen before. It should sound convincingly professional, right?

"You're...not afraid of me?" Zhu Junyang secretly breathed a sigh of relief. She was indeed different from others and worthy of being the person who caught his eye—deserving of him burning his own boats and telling her his secret.

Yu Xiaocao's eyebrows furrowed together as she met his gaze and asked, "Will you hurt me?"

"Of course not!" If he had the choice, he would rather hurt himself than let her suffer even a little injury or grievance.

"So? What is there to be afraid of?" Yu Xiaocao rolled her eyes in reply, and then her line of thought returned to his words, "What about afterwards? Has this kind of situation recurred?"

Zhu Junyang nodded, "Yes, a lot of times! I feel as though a demon lives in my heart. It'll appear occasionally, take control of my will and body and make me do some brutal things. Honestly, some people might not have deserved to die, but I killed them when I lost all rationality..."

Fields of Gold Chapter 382 - Are You Afraid of Me?

Zhu Junyang had suffered a lot these past years. He held others at arm's length because he was afraid that he would unintentionally hurt those that he cared deeply for when he lost control of himself. He was always on his guard against his sudden outbursts. This was why he did not dare to get close to his

family, did not have friends, and was only accompanied by a few old eunuchs who were skilled in martial arts.

Although his lady mother's heart ached for him and she showered him with her love, she would still unconsciously reveal her fear and pity of him. His lord father was constantly cautious of him. Both of his brothers distanced themselves from him, and his only older sister turned into a frightened rabbit every time she saw him, shying away from him for as far as she could manage. Perhaps they had all thought of him as a monster...

Fourteen years had passed since he was five years old. In these fourteen years, Yu Xiaocao had been the only one who actually treated him like a normal person. When she interacted with him, she was only respectful but not afraid. She would naturally display her emotions on her face; sometimes, she would also verbally shun him like a cat testing the sharpness of her claws. She would also secretly laugh because she managed to get a little benefit...

There had never been a person who was so carefree in front of him, who was so vivid and interesting in his eyes, and there had never been a person whom he would miss when they were apart, whom he wanted to get close to when they met, who made him care about her smile or every knit of her brows. He did not know if this feeling was called 'like', or if it could be called 'love'. He only knew that he would probably never experience happiness for the rest of his life if he let this person go.

"You...have you killed a lot of people?" Yu Xiaocao probed as she was curious.

That pulled Zhu Junyang back from his thoughts. He thought about it, then tentatively asked, "If I said yes, would you think that I'm cruel? That I'm a demon who is numb to killing?"

"I wouldn't say that you're a demon. You said so yourself that you only lost control and attacked those who wished to harm you and your family. This means the other person reaped what they sowed and died justifiably. However, the more people you kill, the more your mind and self-restraint will be affected. It's just like if a person first kills someone, they will feel panicked, afraid, guilty, remorseful...all kinds of feelings mixed together, but if they continued to kill more and more people, they would become numb towards killing and turn into a psychopath!" Yu Xiaocao felt as if she had suddenly turned into the 'king of analysis', and it filled her with a very high and mighty feeling.

Zhu Junyang continued to ask, "You don't think I'm a psycho? A demon? A devil?"

“Is that what they call you? That's because they don't understand you. Young Royal Prince, do you know what I think of you?” Seeing the young prince's nervous expression, Yu Xiaocao could not help but want to comfort him.

“What kind of person am I? Cold? Eccentric?” Zhu Junyang tentatively guessed.

Yu Xiaocao shook her head and said, “The young royal prince in my eyes is strong, handsome and heroic. You were born as the son of an imperial prince and was awarded the title of 'Royal Prince Yang' by the emperor. Originally, you should've been a person so high-up that we would never have the chance to meet, but yet here you are, standing among us, and you never once looked down on us because of our birth, nor have you ever bullied anyone simply because you had the authority to. You also don't disdain that our farmer's meals are simple. You stand with us under the hot sun and worry about our crops with us, and you never punish my family and I for misconduct. In the eyes of my family members, you're an amiable royal prince, and in my eyes, you're a friend that I can trust. Although, of course, given that you don't mind the difference between our statuses.”

“When have I ever cared about that?” Even though Zhu Junyang was very touched, he still maintained his haughty expression. His phoenix eyes glanced sideways at her, but quickly moved away the next moment.

However, he still could not resist absolving himself, “Disregarding the time at sea I fought back against the pirates and that last time when I went up the mountains to take down the bandits, I don't actually have a lot of lives on my hands. Ever since my lord father found out about my condition, he had asked imperial grandfather for an eunuch skilled in martial arts to accompany me. He'll forcibly stop me every time I lose control and start hurting people, even though he only waits for me to beat the other person until they're left with their last breath to act, saying that I'd be able to vent my anger without taking the lives of others. Just like this, I was even given the title of 'black-faced devil' by those cowards in the capital!”

Yu Xiaocao looked at him with a faint smile on her lips, “Then...have most of the wealthy children of the capital been taught a lesson by you?”

Zhu Junyang raised his eyebrow. The expression on his face was a little charming, a little bad and wholly captivating. He noted the stunned look in Yu Xiaocao's gaze, and he could not help but smile, “I'm not the kind of person that initiates fights. The people that I hurt were all people with ulterior motives. It's as you said; it became harder and harder to control my emotions and even a small prod could make me lose my senses. As my skills in martial arts became increasingly good, Head Steward Liu Fusheng could

no longer single-handedly subdue me. That's why every time I go out, I will always be accompanied by a few imperial guards that are skilled in martial arts.”

“Oh, no wonder you always create such a fuss every time you come to Dongshan Village! So it wasn't to protect you, but instead to prevent you from harming others! Now that I think about it, I recall that there seemed to be a time when I felt that you were acting a bit odd. At that time, your body seemed to be exuding a dense cloud of blood, and it was so dense it almost enveloped me. It was such a stifling feeling. Luckily, you quickly recovered after I made impromptu jokes. My little heart thumped so hard that time because I was so scared!” As though in a trance, Yu Xiaocao recalled that scene from that time—that feeling as though she had fallen into hell almost made her hair stand on end.

Zhu Junyang appeared to have a slight impression of that as he nodded, “That time, you were the one who pulled me back from the raging darkness. It was the first time in my life that I was brought back to my senses before my outburst began. Although we weren't as close to each other then as we are now, you, little lass, still left a deep impression on me.”

His gaze was so warm and gentle, so different from the usual haughty and foolish young prince. What to do, men who were gentle, warm and handsome were the hardest to resist!

Yu Xiaocao shifted her gaze and started a somewhat safer topic, “Young Royal Prince, we should analyze your condition. I feel that your initial outbursts were because you were too young and afraid of the unknown. When your fear reached a certain limit, it would find a way to break out. Think about it, being able to sense the true intentions of others isn't actually such a bad thing!”

“What is it if it isn't a bad thing? A good thing?” Zhu Junyang vexedly glared at her. It sure was easy for her to say such a thing since she was not in his shoes!

Excitement tinged Yu Xiaocao's voice as she said, “In my opinion, it is a good thing! Consider this, you'll be able to sense if the other person holds any bad intentions towards you without the other person knowing at all. We'd be able to take precautions before the other party strikes. We could even create a set-up and wait for them to take the bait, and then capture both the criminal and the goods together. You could get rid of all your opponents through legal means. Isn't this good?”

Zhu Junyang fell into deep thought, 'Xiaocao is right!' His ability wasn't so scary at all. If he sensed that the other person had ulterior motives, he could choose to distance himself from them, and if the other person has bad intentions, he would know about it earlier and be able to take precautions and avoid a

lot of overt and covert schemes. Why did he reject this ability from fear, even until he was strongly influenced by it?

“We could even 'pretend to be a pig to eat the tiger' by feigning to trust the other party and then launch a counterattack when they decide to carry out their schemes! Even just thinking about it feels so exhilarating!” Yu Xiaocao got more and more excited the more she thought about it. That was a superpower—an ability to read minds!

Zhu Junyang's eyes shined with a smile as he watched the excited little lass, asking, “What is 'pretending to be a pig to eat the tiger'? You want me to pretend to be pig? You're actually insulting me, aren't you?”

Yu Xiaocao rolled her eyes at him, “Uncultured people are without fear! 'Pretending to be a pig to eat the tiger' is an idiom. It means you pretend to be weak initially to lure in others' attention and make them bite the bait. Then, strike while they have their guard lowered. Simply said, it's concealing your true abilities and pretending to be stupid to lower the guard of your enemy so you can easily take them down.”

“Oh...then why is it pretending to be a pig and not something else? Like a little rabbit, a lamb, or a fawn? These are weak animals too, and they're much cuter than a pig.” Zhu Junyang was full of curiosity towards this new and unfamiliar idiom.

Annoyed, Yu Xiaocao waved her hand dismissively, “You ask me, but how am I supposed to know? Anyway, it's either an idiom, or a colloquialism. It's not like I created it!”

Zhu Junyang leniently smiled, “Don't you say enough of these bizarre words? Could I even punish you even if you admitted to creating them?”

Yu Xiaocao did not want to debate over those modern words and phrases she often used subconsciously, so she changed the topic, “Young Royal Prince, would you like to try to see if you can read the minds of others?”

“How do I try?” That urge to try in Zhu Junyang's heart could not be ignored. Mind-reading? Did that mean he would be able to sense the thoughts of others? If he was able to clearly hear the thoughts of others, wouldn't he be able to better make early precautions and 'pretend to be a pig to eat the tiger'?

Yu Xiaocao bit her lip and thought hard about it, saying with uncertainty, "Why not...try to focus and think 'I want to know what Yu Xiaocao is thinking about!'"

Zhu Junyang did as she said, and poured all of his focus on her while he chanted in his heart... Unfortunately, it was of no use. He shook his head, "It doesn't work!"

Yu Xiaocao made a disappointed expression, scratching her head. She mumbled to herself, "It shouldn't be...Aren't you able to sense the other person's emotions? This is clearly a type of sensing ability..."

Zhu Junyang was suddenly reminded of something as he hurriedly said, "I think I messed up the person I'm testing this on. I can't sense any of your emotions, so it's completely within reason that I can't read your thoughts. Why don't we test on another person?"

Yu Xiaocao's eyes lit up, grinning, "You can't sense my thoughts? That's good! No one likes to be seen through by another person, it's like being stripped of your clothes—so embarrassing! Is there anyone else that you can't see through except for me?"

Fields of Gold Chapter 383 - An Agreement?

"Nothing else, it's only you!" Zhu Junyang couldn't help but step forward and reveal a genuine smile when he saw how happy the little lass was, "As far as I'm concerned, you're the only one!"

Fudge! Did he have to say something that sweet? Yu Xiaocao felt her tiny heart thumping. Beautiful people truly moved one's heart! Apparently even handsome men could do the same? Xiaocao wasn't a true twelve year old girl as her inner self was already an 'old woman' who was past thirty. In front of a young and innocent youth, should she really speak her thoughts?

"Uhhhh...you really can't read the thoughts in my heart?" Yu Xiaocao decided that she was still considered a good person as she managed to suppress the salivating wolf in her heart and changed the subject. She tried to hypnotize herself, 'This sister cannot see the handsome boy in front of me, can't see him, can't see him...'

Zhu Junyang took a step forward and lowered his head to look at Yu Xiaocao who was right beneath his nose. His voice took on a magnetic quality as he alluringly said, "The last person I would try to trick in this world would be you..."

Yu Xiaocao raised her eyes and realized that stunningly handsome face was only a small distance away from her. She swallowed down her saliva and retreated two steps. Since she wasn't paying attention,

she stumbled over a stone while backing up and felt her body start to fall. 'I'm screwed! Behind me is the fake mountain in the garden. If I continue to fall towards it, my head will definitely get a large hole in it.'

Was her life going to end like this? It looked like she was fated to falling. In her previous life, she had fallen down something and died. It looked like this time was...

Just as the back of her head was about to hit a jutting out portion of the fake mountain, Zhu Junyang reached out an arm and used his hand to protect her head. His other arm was wrapped around her delicate waist, as if they were in the middle of ballroom dancing.

The young royal prince's warm breath gently hit her face and Yu Xiaocao looked up to see his straight nose. She idly thought that only people who had undergone plastic surgery in Korea could have a nose so perfectly shaped. She then raised her gaze and saw his pair of phoenix eyes. They were as clear as a mountain spring and had an intriguing depth to them. The slightly slanted up corners of his eyes added to his seductive look and caused her heart strings to gently throb. He also had perfectly sculpted red lips, and she was sure that they would feel very soft when kissing...Yu Xiaocao felt her heart pounding even faster, even faster than if she had just run a kilometer. It was as if she couldn't catch her breath anymore.

At this moment, Zhu Junyang was slightly shocked at how weak and delicate the waist in his right hand felt. The little lass was truly too thin. She must have been too busy lately. She always worried about everything going on in the Yu Family and she usually didn't eat enough...once she married him, he needed to take good care of her and let her body heal. He would take care of the usual issues at home and all she had to do was to eat and chat to her heart's content. When she was happy, she could go into the kitchen to make a few dishes for him!

As he was lost in his thoughts, he could smell a light fragrance coming off of the little lass's body. It was very hard to describe the smell. It didn't smell like flowers yet it seemed more refreshing than flowers. It also didn't smell like fruit yet it was more attractive than fruit...perhaps it was just the natural smell of a girl?

Zhu Junyang slightly came closer and his nose was almost touching Xiaocao's face. Xiaocao felt very conflicted inside. This body of hers hadn't even reached the age of twelve. If she got kissed now, wouldn't that be a bit too early? 'Young Royal Prince, you are defiling a young girl who hasn't even reached her majority! That's a major crime!'

Just as Yu Xiaocao was contemplating whether she should push away the young, she didn't expect the young royal prince to sniff the area by ears a bit instead of kissing her. It was like he was a large dog. How embarrassing! Luckily, she didn't broadcast her thoughts earlier. Yu Xiaocao bitterly glared at him—  
—Young Royal Prince, you're worse than a beastly animal!

“Oh my!” The sound of Meixiang's voice could be heard not too far from them. The two of them simultaneously moved their heads over to look and saw Meixiang's back.

Yu Xiaocao noticed their positioning and realized that the posture that they were in could cause other people to have a misunderstanding. She quietly reminded the prince, “Why haven't you let me go yet? This is so embarrassing!”

“How is this embarrassing? Do you think this prince is not worthy of you?” Zhu Junyang very gently supported Xiaocao up and lightly fixed her messed up hair as he sternly said.

Yu Xiaocao rolled her eyes at him and softly replied, “Didn't you want to try out whether you have the ability to read people's thoughts ah? Don't we have an experimental subject right in front of you? Quickly try!”

After hearing her suggestion, Zhu Junyang focused his eyes on the back of Meixiang's head. A stream of clear thoughts transmitted back into his head. He couldn't help but say it out loud, “Oh my goodness! So embarrassing! I accidentally came across the young master and Miss Yu kissing each other...the young master is truly too much. Miss Yu is only twelve and hasn't reached the age of majority, how could he possibly start messing around...”

The more Zhu Junyang said the angrier he became. His eyes staring at the back of Meixiang's head seemed to be spewing flames now. 'You little wretch of a servant. Just what type of eyes were you using to see me kissing Xiaocao ah? And then you even dare to say bad things about me in your heart. Who gave you the guts?'

Meixiang covered her mouth and turned around suddenly. Her face was full of surprise as she looked at the young master. 'I'm screwed. It looks like I wasn't careful and accidentally said what I was thinking out loud. What should I do? Did the young master hear what I said? Will he get angry? Will I be able to still keep my life?? However...how come it didn't sound like my own voice earlier? When did my voice become so deep?'

On the other hand, Yu Xiaocao was very excited and she pulled on Zhu Junyang's sleeve. She lowered her voice as she mysteriously said, "Success! You really are able to look into people's hearts and hear what they're thinking! In the future, if there are people who have malicious thoughts towards you, you can easily figure out why and then craft a plan to go against them! Your ability is too freaking awesome! I'm so envious ah!"

"What is 'freaking'...is this a word that young girls should be saying ah? You should stop saying such crude and unrefined words in the future!" The excitement Yu Xiaocao had was infectious, and Zhu Junyang felt the anger he had towards Meixiang lessen. He raised his hand and knocked it a few times on the little lass's head.

Yu Xiaocao covered her head with her hands and retreated a few steps. She scrunched up her face in anger and growled, "I grew up in the rural, uncultured farmland, so I don't know how to say things elegantly like you wealthy nobles do. If you think the words I use are unrefined, then go find someone else to talk to ah! I don't need to accompany you!"

The little lass turned her head and left, but didn't choose the right direction at first. Before she walked far, she discovered that she was heading towards a dead end and then angrily came back. As she passed by Zhu Junyang, she even pretended to accidentally not notice his foot and deliberately stomped on it.

Zhu Junyang thought the little girl resembled a blowfish when she was all puffed up with anger. He good naturedly pulled on her elbow in amusement and said, "Alright ah! Your little temper is quite large! You even stepped on my foot. You're only doing this because you know I won't get mad at you, right?"

"Hmph, you're a high and mighty young royal prince, the youngest son who Princess Consort Jing loves the most. You obviously can do whatever you want to other people! If you don't like it, then hit me ah!" Yu Xiaocao wondered if she was relying a bit too much on his favor.

The smile disappeared from Zhu Junyang's face as he intently looked at her. He used a hand to raise her chin and said, "In the future, don't keep referencing our statuses. I don't like it! You also know that I never treated you differently just because I have a higher rank. On the contrary, you always manage to surprise me and change the way I view things. So, there's no need to lack self confidence or be unduly humble. I believe that you're a good match and that's the only thing that matters!"

Yu Xiaocao pushed aside his hand in annoyance and grumbled, "What's wrong with your eyes? I'm not lacking self confidence at all! And what do you mean you believe that I'm a good match? I haven't even agreed to anything!"

“You already know my most inner secret, so do you think it's going to be easy to get rid of me?” Zhu Junyang replied calmly, as if the little lass in front of him was already his prey that he had cornered. It seemed as if he enjoyed seeing her struggle.

Yu Xiaocao unconsciously frowned again and she stopped playing around. She seriously looked at Royal Prince Yang and solemnly proclaimed, “Young Royal Prince, don't be so hasty in making your decision. Perhaps you think I'm interesting because so far I am the only person you've encountered that you can't mindread. You're intrigued about this and that's the only reason why you want to become closer to me! Or maybe, in the not-so distant future, the person that you're fated to be with will appear. At that time, you'll finally know that romantic love was different than what you used to think!”

“I don't believe I'll be able to encounter anyone who is more suitable for me than you. After all, if I had to live with someone who I can easily mindread at any time, a woman who had no private thoughts, wouldn't that be incredibly boring?” Zhu Junyang was more and more certain that Yu Xiaocao was his fated partner that was decreed by the heavens. She was his soulmate.

Yu Xiaocao scratched her head and somewhat irritably said, “Who knows? You might encounter another woman very soon who you also can't mindread, and she might be even more suitable than me, right? If you already made your decision, how could you face your actual soulmate when she comes? And then how would you treat me? I've already stated that I will never share my partner with someone else!”

Although he couldn't feel any thoughts or emotions from Yu Xiaocao's heart, Zhu Junyang could readily tell that she was feeling a bit uneasy and jittery. He somewhat blamed himself for this, 'Did I push too hard and too fast with this little las? Maybe I should give her some time and space to think it through herself.'

Even though he was convinced that Xiaocao was the person he had been waiting for, he didn't want to give the little lass too much pressure. He could only say, “Don't worry! I'm not going to force you to do anything! I'll wait until you reach your majority. There's still three to four years to go. I'm confident that in that time period you will be able to see my true heart. However, you need to promise me that you won't hide from me. Let's keep our interactions the same as they were before, okay?”

Yu Xiaocao thought for a bit and decided she could only do that. She unhappily nodded her head and then looked down, “Guess I can only do it this way!”

Zhu Junyang snorted and then pointed at the little lass's forehead, who looked like a dispirited and bullied little rabbit and said, “How come you sound so unenthusiastic ah? It's as if you're some nobly

born maiden and I'm a wild youth from the rural countryside who's not worthy of you. How come you seem so reluctant to be paired up with me?"

"Is it that obvious ah? I thought I was doing a good job at hiding it!" Yu Xiaocao felt listless, as if she was a tiny delicate flower who had just undergone a large blustery storm.

Zhu Junyang pointed at her unhappily and then addressed Meixiang, who was slowly approaching them from behind, "You, what do you need?"

Meixiang shifted a few steps with her head lowered. Both of her hands were by her side, clenched up in anxiety, as she quietly said, "Her Highness told me to come over and see if you and Miss Yu were finally done talking in private..."

Fields of Gold Chapter 384 - Image Change

"Act normally and don't pretend that you're a little abused wife. Seeing that makes me feel angry!" Zhu Junyang was interrupted by Yu Xiaocao, so his fury towards Meixiang had pretty much disappeared. However, in regard to the misunderstanding, he was a bit regretful that he didn't take advantage of the situation and peck the little girl's tender face. Tsk tsk tsk, the lass hadn't reached twelve years old yet. Wouldn't it be a bit too early for that?

Meixiang silently rejoiced that Miss Yu was there when she saw that the young royal prince didn't explode. Otherwise...her mother, who was an inner steward at Prince Jing's estate, would only be given her corpse!

"Am I truly that vicious ah? That I'll just kill a person without any warning?" This was the first time that Zhu Junyang had peeked into a person's inner thoughts, so he had trouble stopping it. Poor Meixiang was his experimental subject.

Consequently, Zhu Junyang felt his temper rising again. Apparently, in the hearts of these maids, he was even more beastly than mere animals and was almost a man-eating monster! 'Look at you, Meixiang. Usually you act very normally around me, never showing that you're scared, and you treat me with respect. Apparently it was all a ruse ah!'

Yu Xiaocao covered her mouth and giggled like she was a little mouse who had succeeded in stealing some grain. Apparently, it was like what the young royal prince described. All of the people around him were afraid of him. Even Older Sister Meixiang was the same. The maid normally acted as if nothing was wrong when she was with the young royal prince, yet she had also inwardly thought that the prince had a vicious nature.

Xiaocao suddenly thought that the young royal prince had quite a pitiful life these past few years. There wasn't anyone by his side who treated him sincerely. Even the servants and maids around him acted as if they were constantly on thin ice. It wasn't surprising that his temper only became more and more irritable! If she was in his shoes, she likely would have gotten depression from all of this.

Meixiang was in the front and she increased the speed of her steps. 'How did the young master guess exactly what I was thinking? This is too scary! Next time, when I need to give the young master a message, I should just give the task to Lanxiang and Zhuxiang ah. Argh! Although I'm one of the most trusted personal maids of Her Royal Highness, I have quite a bit of pressure on me.'

Zhu Junyang stared at Meixiang's back with such intensity that it seemed like he was drilling a hole. 'Meixiang, you brat. Lady Mother sent you to talk to me, and it's her way of showing how much you're valued. Yet, you're not grateful at all. Am I a man-eating monster ah?'

Yu Xiaocao couldn't take it anymore and pulled on his clothes as she stifled her desire to laugh, "Alright ah, you can stop observing Older Sister Meixiang. She's going to be scared to death at this rate! As long as the other person doesn't have any malicious intentions towards you, it's not a bad thing if they revere and respect you."

Zhu Junyang discovered that, when he turned his head to look at Yu Xiaocao, Meixiang's thoughts became obscured again. Perhaps it was because he wasn't focusing on the maid. He felt like he was starting to slowly grasp how to control his ability. In the future, wouldn't it be as easy as pie for him to look into another person's thoughts?

He revealed a brilliant smile at Yu Xiaocao. It was as if a thousand flowers suddenly blossomed in the middle of a wintry tundra. It was so stunning that Xiaocao was enthralled for a moment.

Zhu Junyang felt as if the dense haze within his heart had suddenly been dispersed completely by a refreshing breeze. He had never felt so open and free before in his life! He really needed to express his gratitude to his little lass. She was the one who dragged him away from the edge of the abyss. The little lass was truly his lucky star!

“You...don't need to smile like that. I feel goosebumps coming up seeing it!” Yu Xiaocao found it hard to accept the sudden change in Zhu Junyang's demeanor. The young royal prince had never smiled so sincerely before and it made his smile more enchanting and gorgeous. The smile was so stunning that it made it hard for a person to look away. If he was a female, he would definitely be a devilish beauty who could cause the downfall of a country!

“I'm incredibly happy and in an extremely good mood! I have never felt so light and free before in my life! Xiaocao, this prince wants to thank you properly. Whatever you want, please tell me!” The sound of Zhu Junyang's was perceptibly brighter than before. Meixiang could also tell that the young master was in a good mood and also felt happy for him! Yu Xiaocao's eyes lit up and her face seemed to glow with an inner light as she asked, “You'll really do anything that I ask for ah?”

A thought quickly flashed through Zhu Junyang's head and he frowned. He immediately squashed the little lass's hope, “The only thing I cannot do is to stop pursuing you. I don't care if you believe me or not, but I don't want anyone but you in this life!”

For a second, Xiaocao's face dimmed and she frowned as she mumbled to herself, “Don't say it so confidently. Who knows if one day a great beauty will appear and steal your heart? At that time, wouldn't that be a slap to your face?”

“Are you sure the great beauty you're talking about isn't a large, salivating wolf? She's even going to steal my heart...even if a dozen large wolves appear, I can escape from them without a scratch!” Zhu Junyang knocked the little lass on the head as he snorted in amusement. He really didn't know what to do with her sometimes!

In the front, Meixiang secretly slowed her steps and looked back to take a peek at the interactions between the young master and Miss Yu. She thought, 'Looks like the young master is being sincere. This is a good situation that other people can't even hope to fish up. Why is Miss Yu so reluctant to accept this?'

The young master treated Miss Yu very well. There were so many maidens in the capital of the proper birth and rank, who were also more beautiful than Miss Yu, that wanted to get closer to the young master. However, the young master always disdained these young ladies and only Miss Yu had caught his eye. She wasn't saying that Miss Yu wasn't good either but she felt like that the young master deserved someone better. Unfortunately, what was really infuriating was that Miss Yu didn't appreciate how good she had it. Meixiang felt a bit aggrieved on behalf of the young master.

During that second where Zhu Junyang turned around, he could feel Meixiang's thoughts very clearly. It looked like the maid Meixiang wasn't too bad after all. 'This prince will generously forgive all of her mistakes from earlier!'

"Look at you ah, aren't you secretly reading Older Sister Meixiang's thoughts again? Oh ho...I know, Older Sister Meixiang must have been complimenting you in her heart. Otherwise, why else would you look so smug?" Yu Xiaocao surreptitiously pinched Zhu Junyang's arm. She was very curious as to what made Zhu Junyang look so pleased.

She thought that the volume of her voice was soft enough but didn't expect Meixiang's ears to be that sharp. When the maid heard this, she immediately jumped forward a few steps and then turned around with a scared expression on her face as she looked at the two people behind her. Tears immediately filled her eyes as she knelt in front of Royal Prince Yang as she hurriedly explained, "Miss Yu, please don't send me to my doom! May the heavens smite me if I have any untoward thoughts to the young master. Young Master, please believe me...my mother has already found a good marriage partner for me. Once I reach the proper age, I was going to ask the princess consort if she could do me a favor and let me go. I promise that I have never had such vile thoughts in my heart!"

Yu Xiaocao was flabbergasted by the maid's reaction. She was only joking, so why did Older Sister Meixiang react in such a frightened manner? Wasn't maids falling in love with their masters a common plot point in a lot of novels? Was it necessary to be that scared? Zhu Junyang glared at her in disapproval and reassured Meixiang, "You can get up. Miss Yu was only joking! Don't take it to heart!"

When he saw the confusion on Yu Xiaocao's face, he couldn't help but explain, "In the future, don't make jokes like this. Two years ago, there was a maid who had climbed into my bed and I broke all four of her limbs before I threw her out of the residence. When I punished her, I called all of the maids in the estate over so they could all see the consequences of having impure thoughts. After that happened, it became peaceful around me..."

Meixiang couldn't help but shudder when she thought of that maid who had been punished. The aftermath resembled a broken rag doll, with all four limbs going in monstrous directions. That maid used to be one of the most trusted by the princess consort and was also the most beautiful out of all of the maidservants in the residence. Furthermore, she had a glib tongue.

Perhaps the young master had been more courteous and tolerating of the princess consort's personal maids, which caused that maid to have ambitious thoughts. Unexpectedly, she took advantage of a time when the princess consort sent her to give the young master some nourishing soup and had added an aphrodisiac to the soup. The young master had found out though...

It was rumored that the maid's legs and arms couldn't be set properly, so she could only lie on a bed, handicapped, for the rest of her life. That maid's family members had taken her away and she died a few days later. She also heard that the maid's older brother and older sister-in-law thought that it was too much trouble to care for her, so they deliberately starved her to death...

“It's not a bad thing for other people to admire you! That young girl only longs for some romance and you also have such devastating looks. Is it necessary to be that angry ah?” Yu Xiaocao didn't think his reaction was correct. Her eyes flickered a bit and she mysteriously said, “Young Royal Prince, you're already at the right age. Don't tell me that the princess consort hasn't prepared any maids to share your bed yet?”

When Meixiang heard this, she started to walk faster as she thought, 'Why is this road so long? First she says that the young master looks handsome and then she starts talking about bed-servants...Miss Yu, can you stop trying to tweak the tiger's whiskers so often ah? Playing with fire can lead you to getting burned. Don't pull me into this too.'

Zhu Junyang stopped moving and lightly grabbed onto Xiaocao's arm. There was an unidentified emotion in his slightly slanted eyes as he gazed into the little lass's eyes. He gently said with the hint of a smile, “Cao'er, in your heart, what do you think of my looks? I want to hear your true thoughts.”

Eh? Meixiang stopped for a bit. 'It looks like the young master has opened his mind ah! Miss Yu had talked about his appearance yet he didn't get angry and even wanted to confirm her thoughts. Hold on! Did the young master get his soul switched out by something and is now being possessed by a spirit?'

Yu Xiaocao was dazzled at the sight of his devilishly handsome face. She licked her lips and found herself entranced by him. She replied in a bewitched manner, “One word: beautiful. Two words: very beautiful. Three words: devastatingly extraordinarily beautiful!”

Zhu Junyang knocked her head in a displeased manner and growled, “As a true man, the word 'beautiful' isn't necessarily a compliment! Choose a different adjective for this prince!”

“Who said that 'beautiful' isn't a compliment for men? Young maidens love flower boys the most, okay ah?” Yu Xiaocao grumbled as she used her little hand to rub her head that had turned red from being hit. She silently cursed, 'You have so much strength yet you don't even hold back a little for me. My head is going to have a lump because of you!'

Zhu Junyang raised an eyebrow and replied, "Then...am I the type that you love the most?"

"Uh...who wouldn't like people who are incredibly beautiful? However, this type of 'love' isn't the romantic type of love!" Yu Xiaocao noticed that there was a trap waiting for her so she hurriedly obscured her words. She then quickened her steps as if she wanted to escape this situation. 'Little lass, you're even more slippery than a loach. If I'm not careful, she might just slip away. It's not a problem, I have plenty of time on my side and lots of patience to tussle with her. There's no need to say more at this point as there's no way a tiny thing like you will prevail in the end!'

Meixiang, who was leading the way, had a better idea of how the young master and Miss Yu interacted now. She really couldn't figure out just how Miss Yu caught the young master's eye. Personality wise, Miss Yu was like a willful little kitten, always scratching at a person's clothes. Yet the young master always held onto her little claws and acted as if he couldn't bear to say a harsh word to her or punish her. Thus, in Meixiang's heart, the previous image she had of the young master as a cruel and vicious youth had temporarily evaporated.

Fields of Gold Chapter 385 - Loyal Dog

After she had finished discussing their situation with the young royal prince, there wasn't a lot of change in her day to day life. The only difference now was that the prince started to seem more and more like a big friendly dog. Sometimes, Yu Xiaocao thought that the royal prince resembled Little White a lot. In front of others, they were both arrogant and aloof. However, as soon as she wiggled her hand at them, they would rush over with their tails wagging.

It was time to switch from the thick padded winter jackets to thinner spring clothing. The wheat flowers in the fields had fallen off and the wheat heads were soon plump and full with kernels. All of the tenant farmers on the Yu Family's farmstead started to smile more and more brilliantly. No one, including the oldest people there, had ever seen such plump wheat heads before. This year they would definitely have a large harvest! If the winter wheat had a good harvest, that meant that they would be able to have a more comfortable living situation for the upcoming half year! Ever since they started following their current masters, their lives had gotten better and better and they had more hope for the future!

At the start of spring, the tenant farmers, who had some extra cash on hand, either caught a couple piglets or a couple dozen chicks to raise at the advice of their masters. When the animals got bigger, they wouldn't have to worry about selling them. The masters had told them that they would buy these animals off of them at the highest market price.

Furthermore, at the start of the season, a lot of people went into the uncultivated lands not far from the farmstead to plow and sow them with some sweet potatoes. Even if they didn't end up eating the sweet potatoes, they could still be used to feed pigs. No one was the owner of those uncultivated lands and the owner of Tanggu Town and its surroundings was Royal Prince Yang, who had a good relationship

with their masters. Thus, they didn't have to worry about problems from using these bits of land. The tenant farmers on the Yu Family's farmstead were all proud and confident when other farmers, who were down on their luck, came to ask if there was any space. This was the first time that they had some pride in who they were.

Other than the Yu Family's and the royal prince's stewards, very few people knew that the eight hundred mu plantation that was adjacent to the Yu Family's farmstead had already been transferred over to Yu Xiaocao from Royal Prince Yang. When the deed with her name written on it was given to her, Yu Xiaocao had a dumbfounded expression on her face.

This...they hadn't even gotten to the point in their relationship where they were considered to be dating, yet he had already given her some of his assets to her? Wasn't he afraid that after she took his things she would have a falling out with him? However...the man was a young royal prince and wasn't to be trifled with. If she tried to do that, it was likely that it would come back to bite her! Yu Xiaocao expressed that this was a lot of pressure to handle. In the future, if they did have a falling out, it'd be very difficult to split up the assets again.

However, if she didn't take the land, the young royal prince would act angry. But what if she didn't care? Then he would change his methods and become pitiful and act cute! Yu Xiaocao admitted that she had no defenses against this type of attack. She very quickly caved at the face of a handsome youth acting cute in front of her. Thus, Yu Xiaocao now had a plantation with eight hundred mu of land among her personal possessions! She had changed her fate from a poor farmer's girl into a wealthy landowner ah!

Once the wheat became golden and the bumper crop was ready to harvest, Yu Xiaocao was given more helpers from the young royal prince. Some of these people were estate stewards who had more than ten years of land management experience and others were old servants who had lots of varied experience in other areas...in short, after all of these people were sent to their respective positions, Yu Xiaocao and the rest of her family had a lot less work on their hands.

The weather gradually warmed up, so Yu Xiaocao often went to the seaside in her free time. She would sometimes gather seafood with the other village children or drag Xiaolian along to put on their sharkskin swimsuits and swim in the ocean. Occasionally, they would even have a friendly competition with other good swimmers in the area to see who could dive deeper.

Zhuang Xiaomo was from a nearby fisherman village and was around fifteen to sixteen years old this year. He was a well-known diving expert and could be found diving from the end of spring to the start of

autumn every year. He was always able to dive deeper than the average person and harvest a good amount of seafood, such as abalone or sea cucumbers. Because of his skill, he could often sell his gathered seafood for a good price.

From time to time, he would travel over to Dongshan Village to sell sandworms and oysters. The Yu Family had a pretty good impression of this honest and kind-hearted youth. Sometimes, they would even invite him over for a meal. Yu Hang had such a good relationship with him that they almost acted brotherly in nature. The two of them often chatted about everything and anything. When the Yu Family was busy, he didn't take himself as an outsider and would always lend a helping hand if he could.

As her daughters slowly grew up, Madam Liu started to pay more attention to this tanned youth. Zhuang Xiaomo's parents had passed away when he was young and the grandfather who raised him had also died during the last winter. As someone who had been abused and scolded by her mother-in-law for more than ten years, Madam Liu naturally hoped that her daughters would not walk down the same path that she did. Whoever married Zhuang Xiaomo wouldn't have to please a mother-in-law or deal with any sisters-in-law either. Furthermore, his wife would be able to manage the household as soon as she married in. This was the ideal scenario that most mothers hoped for their daughters, right?

Thus, Madam Liu kept her eye on Zhuang Xiaomo. The more she observed, the more she had a feeling that this youth wasn't always coming over for pure intentions. In fact, he always smiled more brightly and his eyes looked more joyful whenever he saw her eldest daughter.

This youth's taste was actually quite good. Madam Liu wasn't being over-confident. Xiaolian was very hard working and was probably considered one of the most industrious young girls in all of Dongshan Village. Although Xiaolian was only twelve this year, she had more money in her personal savings than Madam Liu. Furthermore, once the construction on the harbor finished and the shops there were built, Xiaolian's dowry in the future would likely be one of the biggest in all of Dongshan Village.

However....Xiaolian was only twelve and there was already someone eyeing her to be his wife. Madam Liu felt simultaneously sad and proud at the same time. Both of her daughters were outstanding, so how could she possibly keep them by her side for a few more years? She had originally thought to keep her daughters with her until they turned eighteen, but the young royal prince didn't seem like the patient type either. Was her oldest daughter also not going to be able to spend an extra two years by her side?

As their mother, her heart was full of contradictory thoughts. Although she didn't want them to leave her so soon, she also didn't want them to lose out on finding the best possible husband. Madam Liu fretted to and fro about this.

Zhuang Xiaomo treated Xiaolian with utmost courtesy. Every time the two sisters went to their secret swimming and diving spot, he would always somehow appear. From time to time, he would dive and come up with a beautiful whelk shell or a colorful piece of coral or a delicate little sea star. He always found an excuse to give them to Xiaolian. Since he was afraid that she wouldn't accept his gifts, he also always gave something to Xiaocao as well. However, it was pretty obvious that presents he sent to Xiaocao were a level lower than the ones he gave to Xiaolian.

Most of the time, Xiaocao would go find the little dolphin that was now grown up to play with. Sometimes she would sit on the dolphin 'submarine' and dive into deep areas. Along the way, she would grab some superior level seafood for the Zhou Family. Every time she dove, she never came back empty handed.

Royal Prince Yang, who was becoming more and more clingy with time, would always show up in Dongshan Village whenever he didn't have any tasks to do in the capital. Although the emperor continued to regard him with increasing importance and gave him a lot of tasks, the prince was always able to finish these requests quickly and find some time to run to Dongshan Village.

The emperor had a whole new level of respect for his younger cousin's ability to handle work. Many of the tasks that other people saw as difficult or impossible were, in his hands, always finished well. Consequently, more and more work fell onto Zhu Junyang and he became the perfect example of: 'the most capable person always does the most work'.

Finally, Zhu Junyang privately protested to the emperor. He stated that the emperor was delaying him from pursuing his future wife properly. Only then did the emperor come to a realization, 'So that brat was working so hard to finish his tasks so he could have extra time to go hug a beauty ah! After investigating, I found out that my old transmigrator friend caught his eye! He has good taste! I can't delay my younger cousin's future happiness, so as his older cousin, I need to help him.' Thus, Zhu Junyang finally was able to break free from his imperial cousin's unending work requests.

He went to the beach a few times with Yu Xiaocao. Whenever he saw her happily frolicking in the water like a fish and playing gleefully with the little dolphin, Zhu Junyang felt that all of his hard work and difficult times had been worth it.

Before he went out to sea, Zhu Junyang had spent a whole month diligently learning how to swim properly. Sometimes he would also go into the water and gather seafood with Xiaocao. He would even hoard all of the seafood he got and then have Xiaocao make him a seafood feast later on to eat.

However, once he found out that his swimming skills, which he had suffered to obtain, was nothing in front of Xiaocao's abilities and that he was only holding her back, he readily became a mere observer on the side. He sat on the beach and silently watched as Xiaocao easily swam and played in the ocean waters.

At first, whenever Xiaocao disappeared underwater for a long time, he would feel worried and couldn't help but dive in himself to look. However, every time he did so, Xiaocao would always surface far away and cheerfully wave at him. Gradually, he got used to the long time that Yu Xiaocao spent under the water. However, he was never able to not feel concerned.

When Zhuang Xiaomo appeared, at first, Zhu Junyang felt like he had a crisis on his hands. In his heart, Xiaocao was perfect, so there would definitely be other people besides him who could also see her perfection. Luckily, he had already grasped his ability to read people's hearts, so he easily found out that the person Zhuang Xiaomo liked was his future older sister-in-law——Yu Xiaolian.

Yu Xiaolian looked about seventy to eighty percent similar to Xiaocao. Her skin was a bit more tanned and her eyes were slightly smaller. Furthermore, she had a more 'sturdy' figure compared to Yu Xiaocao. Zhu Junyang couldn't understand why Zhuang Xiaomo liked Xiaolian better——just what sort of taste did the other youth have? Obviously, when you compared the two sisters, Xiaocao was the better of the two, okay?

However, how could Zhu Junyang understand that in the eyes of Zhuang Xiaomo, Xiaolian was the better choice? Xiaolian had a healthy and strong body and was very hardworking with the ability to endure hardships. Thus, to Zhuang Xiaomo, she was the perfect wife candidate. As for the delicate and weak Xiaocao, who somewhat resembled Lin Daiyu [1], she was nowhere near as attractive as her older sister.

Naturally, there were also quite a few families who were eyeing the Yu Family's financial circumstances and Xiaocao's talents. Those people secretly hinted to Xiaocao's mother that they were interested in a betrothal arrangement. However, they were all firmly rejected by Madam Liu with the excuse that her daughter was still young and that she wanted to keep her by her side for a few more years. Unfortunately, someone had appeared next to Xiaocao that they couldn't get rid of even if they wanted to, a giant...boss! Madam Liu really felt quite helpless at the situation.

If they had to be honest, everyone in the Yu Family didn't see Zhu Junyang as a good husband candidate. He was 'too rich and noble to be a good husband' in the Yu Family's eyes. From their perspective, Zhuang Xiaomo, who had a similar background to them, was the type of husband they wanted for their daughters.

The noble and wealthy families all had a gazillion rules and traditions. Could their adorable and silly youngest daughter, who had never been restricted in any way or bullied since they split from the main branch, endure such a life? Which rich families didn't have a house full of concubines swarming around? Even if the royal prince promised and vowed that he wouldn't bring in another woman to fight for favor with their daughter, how could they believe a man's words?

In the future, if their youngest daughter was wronged in any way, their family's status was much too low compared to his. Even if they wanted to give her justice, they wouldn't be able to ah!

Zhu Junyang felt very misunderstood. He had a very good understanding of the thoughts that were running through the minds of Xiaocao's parents and her siblings. However, no matter what he promised, no one was willing to believe him. Was he really that unreliable in their eyes? In the Yu Family's hearts, was he really a worse choice than Zhuang Xiaomo, who was the orphan son of poor fishermen?

He was the son of the high and mighty Imperial Prince Jing and had been personally given the title of a royal prince by the emperor. In court, he was seen as one of the most promising officials, yet he was losing to a fisherman. Zhu Junyang felt very indignant at all of this, 'None of you see me in a good light, huh? Then I will definitely show all of you, just what type of person I really am!'

And thus, Zhu Junyang was now going down the road of becoming a husband who pampered his wife, a monster who was even better at treating his wife well than Imperial Prince Jing...

Fields of Gold Chapter 386 - Popular

In the early morning, the silvery singing of birds woke up the sleeping earth. The little rooster that was in the back courtyard raised its head and puffed its chest before it valiantly stretched out its neck to crow, 'cock-doodle-doo'. At the front and back of the house, all of the deep green leaves on the vegetables in the garden had shimmering drops of dew shining on them.

In between the rows of vegetables, there were a few matrons dressed in plain, patched clothing. They were picking the vegetables industriously and using clean water to wash the dirt off before placing them in bamboo baskets. These baskets would later be loaded onto carts that came from town.

At a corner in the front courtyard next to the residence, there was a grapevine twined onto a wooden frame with bunches of grapes heavily hanging. There were a few bunches that had ripened early and the deep purple fruits seemed to glitter like crystals and emitted a sweet aroma. The sight of these grapes made the matrons tsk in wonder and one of them commented, "Madam Liu, your family's soil is really very good. Anything you guys plant turns out well and even ripens early. Like these grapes for example. Anyone else planting them can only harvest them at the start of autumn to eat. Your rack of grapes will probably be ripe in a couple days ah?"

“That's right ah! Are these grapes a new variety that ripen early that the royal prince brought back from the western hemisphere?” Another young matron asked in a voice full of envy. Who didn't know that the royal prince regarded the Yu Family highly? No one knew just how the Yu Family caught his eye, but he came over every day!

Madam Liu bent over and pulled all of the weeds out of one area. She smiled at the women working, “I also don't know where this grape vine came from. When that girl, Xiaocao, planted it, I said that she was doing work for nothing as it wouldn't live! It was only planted last year but this year it's already grown a lot of grapes. When the grapes are ripe, each of you can bring two bunches back home so your children can taste them.”

“No need! If your family's grapes entered the market now, I'm sure that people would buy them even at one tael a bunch! Tanggu Town has plenty of people with money to spare!”

“That's right, that's right! They even scramble to buy watermelons for five taels a piece. This year, your family planted over a dozen mu of watermelons and it still wasn't enough to keep up with the demand. Especially the prefectural city's demand. Cart after cart of watermelon was sent there and each cart earned around one to two hundred taels. That's not watermelon anymore; they're all pure money!”

This was also something to be envied but not obtained! The Yu Family had the talent at cultivating watermelons. It was said that in the neighboring village, there was a wealthy landlord, Li Sancai, who had heard that the Yu Family from Dongshan Village had made a fortune from planting watermelons. No one knew where he had gotten the seeds from, but he planted a few dozen mu of them. However, the Yu Family's watermelons had all sold out now yet his watermelons were only about the size of a fist. Furthermore, these watermelons were few in between and couldn't compare to the yield of the Yu Family's.

Madam Liu only smiled but didn't say anything in response to these matrons. Her family had made quite a bit of money by selling the early ripening vegetables, watermelons, and braised food. Naturally, there were a lot of people who were envious. With the royal prince as their backing, no one dared to do any nasty tricks. However, there were plenty of people who tried to reproduce their success, like the neighboring village's Li Sancai. Perhaps that man had gotten a batch of seeds that weren't good which caused his melons to grow poorly. She didn't know whether they would be better once they were ripe...

The matrons' discussions became louder and louder, so Yu Xiaocao opened the door to her room while rubbing the sleep away from her eyes. She used her other hand to ruffle through her hair, and it was obvious that she was still quite groggy.

There were a couple matrons in the field who had male children at home around Xiaocao's age, so their eyes lit up when they saw her. Immediately, their voices became much more welcoming. Haixing's wife grinned until her eyes became a line and said, "Oh! Xiaocao's becoming more and more beautiful with time. Look at her little face, so white and tender. She resembles a well-bred young woman more than those daughters of the wealthy families in town!"

"What is that phrase...a natural born beauty! Dahai's wife also has good looks. In fact, all of her children are perfect specimens. Dahai's wife, is your Xiaosha fourteen this year? It's almost time to find a wife for him..." In these past two years, the Yu Family had become one of the wealthiest families in the village. As their children got older, they became the target of everyone who had marriageable children and were now being eyed like a prime piece of meat by this pack of 'hungry wolves'!

Madam Liu looked at the matron who had asked the question with a somewhat embarrassed manner and sighed before she said, "You all don't know my children's personalities. Every single one has their own opinions. As their mother, I can't lightly make this decision without asking for their own opinions!"

Haixing's wife's eyes opened wide as she stated, "Since ancient times, don't all parents with the help of the matchmaker decree the marriages of their children? As their mother, if you don't take charge of this issue, who else would be able to?"

"That's right, that's right! Dahai's wife, it's not that I'm trying to use my seniority to lecture you, but you and Brother Dahai spoil your children too much! In all of our families, if our children don't listen to us, then we would beat them! Didn't both of my older girls have their marriages decided by their father and me? And look at them now, aren't their lives pretty good?"

The matron who had asked about Yu Hang's marriage prospects earlier was the wife of the village chief's nephew. Everyone called her Older Brother Zhimin's wife.

"That's because you know how to raise children and love your girls, so you made sure to find them families that would take care of them." Another matron next to her, who had a good relationship with her, interjected in a flattering manner.

Zhimin's wife revealed a proud and smug smile and didn't seem modest at all as she stated, "Since we're on the topic of raising children, then I won't be shy in saying that all of my daughters are good hands at both farming work and household work. Especially my youngest daughter. She has a fine hand in embroidery. She recently made a pillow cover that was embroidered with ducks playing in the water and it sold to the embroidery shop in town for one tael. The shop even said that they would definitely take her work in the future!" After speaking, she used a self-satisfied expression to glance at Madam Liu.

Madam Liu was concentrating on her task at hand and didn't notice. Xiaocao, on the other hand, was currently washing her face and hands underneath the grape trellis and saw everything. She silently laughed inside. Recently, her brothers and sister were as popular as peach blossoms. Her older brother, who was growing handsome and had a steady and hardworking temperament, was the current target of a lot of people. However, she had a hunch that her older brother had a glimmer of a liking towards Older Sister Huifang. In the future, she needed to find some time to question him a bit.

When Zhimin's wife saw that Madam Liu wasn't responding, she felt a bit upset inside. As the mother of the girl, she wasn't supposed to be the one to send out feelers. However, the Yu Family was truly too popular right now. Xiaosha, as the oldest son of the Yu Family, also looked very reliable.

Xiaoyun was her youngest child and had older brothers and sisters above her, so she pretty much had never done hard labor in her life. Other than embroidery, she only knew how to cook a few basic dishes. If she got married to a regular family in the village, she would need to work on the farmland and do housework. She truly couldn't bear for her youngest daughter to do that!

Thus, she eyed the Yu Family's oldest son as her future husband. With the Yu Family's current financial circumstances, they could easily afford to buy two servants to do all of the hard labor. Therefore, when her youngest daughter married over, she could have an easy and comfortable life!

As these thoughts went through her head, Zhimin's wife continued, "Dahai's wife, you need to be careful when deciding Xiaosha's future bride. He's the eldest of the family and everyone says that the eldest sister-in-law is like a second mother. You need to find a gentle and virtuous girl, someone who's generous, kind-hearted and filial. Otherwise, all of his younger siblings, as well as you two when you get old, will suffer in the future..."

There were people in the village with rude and unreasonable wives who ended up kicking their husband's parents out from the home. Thus, Zhimin's wife's warning wasn't entirely unwarranted.

“Older Brother Zhimin's wife, just directly say that you think that your family's Xiaoyun and Xiaosha are a good match. What's the point in skirting around the subject and doing verbal gymnastics ah?” The matron who piped up also had a daughter at the suitable age. When she heard Zhimin's wife pointed hints, she became unhappy. Wasn't it obvious that she was insinuating that her daughter was virtuous and generous while other people's daughters were rude and unreasonable shrews?

The right situation hadn't unfolded yet, so how could Zhimin's wife allow her spoiled youngest daughter's reputation to get ruined? She glared at the other matron and replied, “I was only mentioning this to remind Madam Liu out of the goodness of my own heart since my husband and Brother Dahai have a good relationship. Why did you bring my daughter Xiaoyun's name into the mix? My Xiaoyun has a sweet appearance, is good at the womanly arts, and also has a gentle personality. She's never gotten into any conflicts with anyone. Such a sweet and obedient daughter, I want her to spend an extra couple of years by my side ah!”

The other matron sneered as she thought, 'Yes, your daughter has never gotten into any conflicts with anyone, but why don't you also mention that your youngest daughter is so shy that when she encounters an outsider, she blushes and can't even say a word? A girl from a farming family has been so spoiled that she's like a young miss from a wealthy family. She can't do hard labor or coarse housework. We're all farming families, so who would marry their son to a girl like her?'

This matron personally thought that her own daughter was good. Her daughter had a lot of strength and could even do the work of the man! However, she conveniently forgot that her daughter also had the figure of a man, with broad shoulders and big muscles. From the back, one might even mistake her for a man...

All of the matrons gleefully gave their own opinions to Madam Liu on the topic of 'how to choose the perfect wife for the eldest son of the family'.

“Huifang, why are you here so early?” The sound of Yu Hang's voice could be heard from the main gate. When the matrons heard him talking, they all craned their necks to see.

They saw Liu Shuanzhu's eldest daughter, Liu Huifang, with a small bamboo basket on her arm. She was smiling sweetly at the Yu Family's eldest son as they talked.

“Older Brother Xiaosha, you didn't go to help with the seafood buying business today ah?” Liu Huifang's eyes were sparkling and there was a light flush on her cheeks. She had the figure and liveliness of a young maiden, and, under the glow of the morning sun, looked so lovely that she could make someone's heart skip a beat.

Yu Hang didn't notice that he had unconsciously revealed a gentle smile and his voice had also become gentle and warm, "The seafood buying business has already been transferred over to Eldest Granduncle's family for now. Recently, I've been helping my father in the melon fields."

"Speaking of the watermelon fields, I haven't yet thanked Older Brother Xiaosha for giving my family a watermelon that other time. I had never eaten such sweet and delicious fruit before in my life!" The snacks of the children of farming families were usually only limited to the surplus they had from their own trees or fields. Most of them couldn't bear to spend money on them, especially fruit that was so expensive they could scare a person!

The smile in Yu Hang's voice became even more apparent as he softly replied, "As long as you like it! My younger sister planted a peach tree in the back courtyard and they've ripened in the past couple of days. In a moment, you should bring a basket home...for your parents and siblings to taste."

"Didn't Xiaocao say that she wanted to use the peaches from that tree to make canned peaches and peach jam ah? Did you ask for her permission before you give away her peaches to other people?" Liu Huifang's voice was very crisp and clear and seemed quite cheerful.

The sound of Yu Hang chuckling could be heard, "My youngest sister isn't a petty person. She naturally wouldn't be too stingy to let go of a few peaches. That being said, you're her good friend. Even without me mentioning it, she would definitely give you a few ripe peaches to take home to try."

The matrons in the courtyard all exchanged looks after seeing this interaction. Haixing's wife only had two boys in their teens in her house, so she wasn't very interested in Yu Hang's marriage. She flashed a teasing look at Madam Liu and said, "Looks like we don't need to be worried about Xiaosha's future marriage. It looks like he already has his eye on a girl."

Fields of Gold Chapter 387 - Unexpected Fleet of Ships

Huifang had a steady and hardworking temperament and also had a good relationship with her daughter. If she caught the eye of her son, Madam Liu would definitely be very happy.

Before she could speak, Zhimin's wife unhappily spoke, "Haixing's wife, you can't just say things willy nilly! Shuanzhu and Dahai are good friends so it's natural that their children are well acquainted with each other. What's wrong with them talking to each other? As their elders, we shouldn't gossip needlessly as we don't want to inadvertently tarnish the reputation of the girl!"

Haixing's wife sneered in her heart as she thought, 'You've been advertising your daughter with every sentence you say, so aren't you afraid of damaging her reputation?' She then deliberately commented, "I think the lass Huifang is pretty good. Last year, during the hard period, she even had the guts to catch one hundred to two hundred chicks to bring back home to raise. This year she has even more chickens at home. She even used the money she made last year to build a stand-alone chicken coop and yard to raise them! I heard that these few hundred chickens are all taken care of by her and her younger sister alone. Shuanzhu's wife doesn't even have to do anything!"

Zhimin's wife's eyes started to sprout fire and glared fiercely at her as she said, "If you think she's good, then how come you don't go ask her to become a wife of one of your sons? Isn't your oldest son about the same age as Huifang?"

"What are you saying? My son is younger than her by a year! That being said, her family may not think my Xiaochun is a good match..." Haixing's wife glanced at Xiaocao, who was quietly eating breakfast underneath the grape trellis, and then returned a fierce glare at Zhimin's wife.

Zhimin's wife was about to say something when the two topics of their conversation walked in. Liu Huifang politely greeted them by saying 'Auntie' to all of the matrons present. The other matrons, who were enjoying the show, all warmly responded back. Only Zhimin's wife neutrally replied with a 'mhm' and instead treated Yu Hang with a much more warm and welcoming greeting.

"Older Sister Huifang, you're giving us some more chicken eggs again? Didn't we say that you don't need to send any more to us ah? My family has a few hens at home and they also lay around five to six eggs a day, so we have more than enough to eat!!" Yu Xiaocao put down the bowl of congee in her hands and came over. Her voice had hints of rebuke but her attitude towards Huifang was very warm and close.

Liu Huifang grinned as she placed the basket on the stone table under the grape trellis and picked one grape that was half purple and half red in a matter-of-fact manner. She didn't even bother to wipe the grape before putting it in her mouth. After swallowing the sweet and juicy fruit, the smile on her face became more broad as she said, "Didn't you say yesterday that you were going to make peanut and sesame flaky pastries ah? My younger sister and I are salivating over the prospect of you making them, so if we don't give something back, how could we just take the food that your family makes?"

"Older Sister Huifang, you're being too polite! Alright, since you said it that way, then I'll have my older brother take you to the back and pick some peaches. When the pastries are done, you can bring some

back!" Yu Xiaocao transferred the eggs into another basket and then stuffed the now empty basket into her older brother's hands.

Liu Huifang snatched that empty basket back and smiled, "I still have a couple hundred chickens clucking and waiting for me to get back to feed them. How do I have the time to wait for you to finish making the flaky pastries ah?"

As she talked, she placed the basket at the crook of her hand and walked towards the gate. Yu Xiaocao shouted towards her, "Then...in a moment, when the pastries are done, I'll have my older brother send you guys a batch. There's also the peaches. They are quite sweet this year, so I'll have my older brother pick a basket for you..."

Liu Huifang heard that Xiaocao kept mentioning Yu Hang, so she turned around and gave her a somewhat embarrassed glare. Then her face flushed when she saw the mischievous glee on the younger girl's face. She then fled the courtyard in quick steps, as if there was a rabid dog chasing after her. Yu Xiaocao laughed in the courtyard and Yu Hang poked at her small face and said, "What's so funny? You made her angry from your teasing!"

"Tee hee, Older Brother, do you feel bad for her?" Yu Xiaocao grinned until her eyes became lines and gave her older brother a knowing look.

Yu Hang was a bit flustered from the look in her eyes. The handsome youth felt both embarrassed and angry so he snapped at her, "Stop speaking nonsense!"

"Mother—Older Brother's yelling at me!" Yu Xiaocao immediately became a tattletale and puffed her cheeks like a little blowfish. After thinking a bit, she then roguishly said, "Hmph! In a moment, when the flaky pastries are done, I'll personally go over and give them to Older Sister Huifang. You won't have the chance to get into her good graces then!"

"Do whatever you want to do ah! Stop pulling me into this!" Yu Hang felt a bit bashful when he noticed that his sister had seen through his intentions. Since Huifang's family was raising chickens, he often went over to their residence to buy chickens with his father. Thus, he spent more and more time interacting with Huifang. Yu Hang was also getting older and was reaching the stage where he became interested in girls, so he started to have an impression of Huifang. If he had the opportunity to have a conversation with her, he would feel incredibly happy within his heart. However, after being teased by his younger sister, he felt a bit resentful but he didn't reject these feelings.

After they finished eating breakfast, Yu Hang stepped into the kitchen and watched as Yu Xiaocao made flaky pastries. Before long, he was given the task of beating the eggs. After thinking a bit, he realized that they were missing a person in the residence today and asked, "Eh? How come I didn't see Royal Prince Yang today? Doesn't he always come over very early usually?"

Yu Xiaocao was currently crushing roasted peanuts into small pieces and she pursed her lips, "Him ah! He went back to the capital a few days ago. You've been busy in the melon fields these past few days, so I guess you didn't notice earlier?"

Yu Hang resisted for a bit and then he finally couldn't stop himself from roasting the other youth, "I'll say ah, how much free time does Royal Prince Yang have? He spends at least half a month each month on his lands. Does he not have any tasks to do in the capital now?"

Yu Xiaocao had never bothered to find out just what type of work Zhu Junyang had to do. She thought for a bit and then guessed, "Perhaps...he's just an idle royal prince? With a title and lands, isn't it normal for him to spend more time on his own lands?"

After hesitating for a bit, Yu Hang finally asked the question that had been tormenting him, "Younger Sister, in the future...will you marry Royal Prince Yang ah?"

"If he still wants to marry only me by the time I turn eighteen, then I'll marry him! What else can I do?" If there was a man who was willing to wait for her for that many years, that meant that it was worth it right? That being said, now that he's managed to control his inner demon, the young royal prince didn't really have any large flaws besides being a little arrogant from time to time. She was willing to be merciful and grant him his wish of marrying her!

Yu Hang lightly sighed and then softly asked, "Younger Sister, do you like him? I really don't want you, for the sake of preserving our family, to sacrifice yourself..."

Yu Xiaocao stopped what she was doing and then looked at him in surprise, "Is that what you've been worrying about ah? Don't worry, even if I refused the young royal prince's request, he wouldn't threaten our family for this. He's not that type of person! I'm still young, so I'm not sure whether or not I like him that way. In any case, I don't hate the fellow right now! So, Older Brother, you don't need to feel guilty towards me! That being said, am I the type of person to silently suffer?"

Yu Hang thought for a bit and then lightly shook his head. With Royal Prince Yang's status and power, he was always afraid that he would force his younger sister to do something. As her older brother, he was powerless to do anything about it, so he felt quite helpless and resentful about this.

Yu Xiaocao continued to comfort her older brother until he finally looked a bit more cheerful. After she finished baking two patches of flaky pastries, Yu Xiaocao sent him off to give a batch to the Liu Family along with some peaches. She then called Steward Yingtao over from the other room and sent her to the West Mountain's residence with a box of flaky pastries.

After Xiaolian finished inspecting the piggery, she came in from the gate. Currently, they were raising around three hundred pigs in the piggery and they were all about half grown. Everyday they ate so much food that it surprised everyone. All of the more hardworking children in the village would always cut a few baskets of fishwort to sell to the Yu Family so they could earn a few copper coins as spending money. Ever since Royal Prince Yang sent them some capable stewards and senior servants over, Xiaocao also sent one of them to the piggery. That person managed the piggery very well and it was even better than when Xiaolian was there last year.

"Younger Sister, right now is low tide, do you want to go diving right now?" Recently, Xiaolian had spent a lot of time in the water with Xiaocao and Zhuang Xiaomo, so her swimming abilities had also gone up a notch. Her diving skills had also improved perceptibly.

Xiaocao wanted to go out to the deep sea to dive to find some superior grade abalone and sea cucumbers. If she went out with Xiaolian and Zhuang Xiaomo, it'd be hard to shake them off. She shook her head, "I won't go today. Go see if our neighbor Shanhu wants to go and bring her along instead!"

The current mentality of people was that men and women should not touch when giving or receiving things, and it was quite embedded within society. If Xiaocao didn't go along, Xiaolian definitely wouldn't go to the beach with Zhuang Xiaomo as they'd be a single man and woman together alone. Although Xiaolian was still a young girl of twelve, there were still differences between men and women. She was afraid that other people might start gossiping about this.

Xiaolian remembered that Zhuang Xiaomo had told her yesterday that he wanted to take her to an area that had a lot of seafood underwater. If she suddenly changed her plans today, she was afraid that he would wait for no reason. After thinking a bit, she changed into her swimsuit underneath her outer clothes and then took her bamboo basket with her as she went to go find Shanhu next door.

Not long after Xiaolian left, Yu Xiaocao also secretly changed into her swimsuit and left in a different direction to go to the beach. She found a secluded area and then stashed her outer clothes into a small

rocky cave. Then, she dove and swam in the water like the descendant of a fish. Before long, a gray-blue dolphin about two meters long appeared and gleefully swam circles around her as if it was a little dog who hadn't seen its master for a long time.

A small golden light next to Xiaocao gradually became bigger and then formed into the shape of a little cat. The little dolphin curiously used its long mouth to poke at the golden kitten but was pushed back by the little divine stone's claw. The cat could swim and actually swam very well. If other people saw this, they would definitely think they were only dreaming or in a fantasy world.

With the little divine stone by her side, Yu Xiaocao didn't need to worry about having to surface up to breathe. In fact, even the increasing water pressure that occurred as she dove deeper wasn't a problem. She climbed onto the little dolphin's back while the kitten stayed on her shoulder and the three of them swam deeper into the ocean.

Before long, Yu Xiaocao had filled up her little bamboo basket with seafood. This time, her harvest was truly too good and full of variety. In the deep ocean waters, the little golden kitten gave off a golden glow and she could see everything in the ocean very clearly. Giant abalone and fat sea cucumbers came to her hands easily. Yu Xiaocao also caught a one meter long lobster that weighed about a catty. It was going to be the perfect supplement to the Yu Family's table.

[Master, not far from here, there's a giant fleet of ships in the ocean! They have a somewhat bad smell coming off of them!] The little divine stone seemed to sense something and gave her a warning.

Fleet of ships? If she was remembering correctly, they should still be in the waters that were owned by the Great Ming Dynasty, right? If these were ships from the Great Ming Dynasty, the little divine stone definitely wouldn't be giving her a warning. She needed to surface up and take a look. Yu Xiaocao was a very brave little girl and patted the little dolphin's head and directed it to the surface. The little dolphin very obediently swam in the direction she wanted.

Fields of Gold Chapter 388 - Incoming Bad News

She was able to see the ships now, so Xiaocao slid off of the little dolphin's back and quietly got closer to one of the ships that was currently moving. She pulled onto a rope that was dangling down and attempted to climb up. After a few tries with no luck, she asked the little divine stone silently, [Little Glutinous Dumpling, can you help me hear what they're saying?]

The golden little kitten dimmed down the light coming off of its body and now resembled a kitten that was not even a month old now. It lightly jumped onto the deck of the ship and boldly walked towards one of the men that was dressed strangely. After it carefully listened for a bit, the little divine stone sardonically stated, [What kind of weird language are they speaking? Can't understand a single word.]

It transmitted the language that it could not understand to Yu Xiaocao as it also made fun of the man's appearance and dress, [At the top of their head, they shaved a section, which makes them look like balding old men. The rest of the hair on their head is gathered into a small queue and pinned into a topknot, and they have a tiny beard left at the lips. They even wear wooden clogs...]

Yu Xiaocao felt her heart fall for a second, 'This is the dress and attire of the historical Japanese ah! These Japanese ships in the waters of the Great Ming Empire are definitely not here for a good reason! Oh right! In the historical Ming Dynasty, weren't there raids by Wokou pirates [1] ah? Are these the ships of the Wokou then?'

[Little Glutinous Dumpling, do you have any way to understand what they're saying? This is a very important manner that can change the lives of many people!] Yu Xiaocao was very anxious and hastily asked the little divine stone.

The little divine stone hesitated for a moment and replied somewhat reluctantly, [With my current cultivation level and amount of spiritual power, if I wanted to enter a human's consciousness, it'd be very difficult. Originally, I'd be able to speak very soon. If I immerse myself in the other person's thoughts in the way you want me to, I'm afraid I won't even be able to maintain my kitten form anymore...]

Yu Xiaocao dithered for a second and then said, [Didn't you say that by helping me, your master, your cultivation and spiritual powers would grow a lot? Furthermore, it would also loosen the fetters on you by a lot. If you really do what I ask you to and are able to help me greatly, you will not only help my family but you will also be saving the lives of countless people. This is a very big virtue ah!]

[If only it would happen like you said! This divine stone doesn't expect much, as long as it comes out even, then I will be satisfied!] The little divine stone wasn't convinced that it would be very helpful to its master to find out what the pirate was thinking.

However, its consciousness was linked to its master's, so it could clearly feel the waves of worry coming off of Yu Xiaocao. Although it was quite reluctant to do so, it followed its master's wishes. A small condensed stream of spiritual energy went into the ear of the pirate that looked like the leader of them all and read the man's thoughts.

[These people are all from a country across the sea from us. They had a very bad earthquake in their country and a lot of people died. This warrior kidnapped some of the fishermen from our country and found out that our country is having a larger bumper harvest, so they decided to attack us during harvest time. Master, things are looking bad! Their target is...the Tanggu Harbor and all of the nearby villages...]

The little divine stone's usage of energy was astounding. Before long, Yu Xiaocao could only intermittently hear its thoughts. After it was done talking, the little divine stone transformed back into a ray of golden light and returned back to the multicolored stone on Xiaocao's wrist, falling into a deep sleep.

However, the information the stone found out was more than enough! She observed the direction the fleet of ships was heading towards and saw that they truly were going towards the harbor. There were around ten ships speeding in the direction of Dongshan Village. Yu Xiaocao felt scared and troubled. There were over a few dozen families in Dongshan Village, which meant that there were at least a hundred to two hundred villagers living there!

This critical information could not be delayed. Yu Xiaocao had the little dolphin swim back at top speed to bring her back to the shore. Although the little divine stone was now in a deep rest, the protections it formed for her were still active, so Xiaocao wasn't harmed by the water pressure or force. Thus, she was able to go back faster than the ships were moving.

Yu Xiaocao first went back to the area where Xiaolian usually dove into the water. Using her intuition, she was able to find Zhuang Xiaomo, Zhou Shanhu and Xiaolian together. She dove under water and signaled Xiaolian to surface. Once they surfaced, she hurriedly spoke, "Quickly, quickly go inform the village chief that Wokou pirates are coming!!"

"Wokou pirates??" The person who spoke was Zhuang Xiaomo who was treading water next to them. He revealed an expression of disbelief and hesitantly said, "Are you sure that these are Wokou pirates?"

"Wokou pirates are very cruel and vicious. I heard the older generation mention that these pirates have no sense of humanity and will kill anyone they see and steal anything from anybody. They also rape women and burn down entire villages!" Zhou Shanhu also came over and exclaimed as she shook her head with her hands over her mouth.

Yu Xiaocao took a deep breath and forcefully calmed herself before she said, "I guarantee these are Wokou pirates. The clothes they're wearing aren't the type that citizens of the Great Ming Empire would wear and I couldn't understand a single word they were saying. They looked very cruel and had large

knives at their waists ah! Older Brother Xiaomo, quickly go to your village and tell this information to your village chief and then leave. You should pack up your things, whether they believe you or not, and come to our house!”

Zhuang Xiaomo forcefully nodded his head and assented, “Okay! I will warn the village chief and then come back to join you guys! If I'm late, there's no need to wait for me and stay in danger.”

Yu Xiaocao watched as he scrambled onto land and started sprinting towards the neighboring village. She also hurriedly swam to shore and didn't even bother to change into her clothes as she ran towards the village holding her clothes.

She suddenly thought of her godfather who was currently at the docks supervising the construction, so she said to Xiaolian, “I'll go to the village chief's home myself. You should go home first and tell Older Brother to ride Little Gray to the docks to inform my godfather so he can collaborate with the magistrate's soldiers. Tell Mother and Father to pack everything that's valuable and necessary so we can leave...”

Xiaolian nodded her head and sped off home in larger strides. Zhou Shanhu's face was ghostly white and she was scampering along behind her. Her father and older brother were out peddling goods and it was only her mother and her at home...it was urgent, she needed to inform her mother to pack everything first. Going with the Yu Family was definitely the safest route!”

By the time Yu Xiaocao reached the village chief's residence, she was already completely out of breath. She placed the multi-colored stone at her chest and a cool feeling trickled into her lungs. Her chest, which felt like it was about to explode earlier, finally calmed down a bit. She found the village chief and told him how she had dove deeply and swam out to sea and coincidentally discovered the pirates' ships. She told the older man every detail she could think of.

The village chief frowned deeply and asked half in disbelief, “Are you sure they were Wokou pirates and not some fishermen from our country out there?”

“I am absolutely sure!! The ships that I saw looked exactly alike to each other and there were at least thirty to forty of them total. Furthermore, they looked very big. I surreptitiously swam closer to one by diving into the water and I could faintly hear the people on the ships talking. I couldn't understand a single word that they were saying! Then, I climbed up from the tail of the ship and saw that the people there were wearing completely different styles of clothing than us. They also had large knives and swords belted at their waist...I heard my grandfather saying that in the previous dynasty we had attacks

from Wokou pirates, so I thought I needed to tell this to you first. Village Chief, time is running out, please come up with an idea ah!" Yu Xiaocao did her best to weave a story but she was afraid the village chief wouldn't believe her. She was so worried that her entire head was covered in sweat.

The village chief knew that although Xiaocao was young, she was quite steady and would absolutely not do something like this as a prank or joke. He thought for a bit and decided it was better to be safe than sorry. Wokou pirates were always incredibly cruel and this wasn't a small issue!

This was the first time this year that he had sounded the large bell at the entrance of the village. All of the villagers very quickly assembled over at the entrance of the village chief's residence and were all avidly discussing just what the village chief called them all over for. Last year, when the bell was sounded, it was right before the locust plague hit.

The village chief very simply outlined what Xiaocao had told him and instructed the villagers to quickly go back and pack their things in preparation to flee to the mountains!

When the villages heard the news, lively discussion immediately arose. A lot of people didn't believe Xiaocao's words and thought that she must have seen things incorrectly. Some of them thought that she was making a big deal over nothing. Consequently, there were only a few people who went back home to start packing.

Yu Xiaocao felt her anxiety rising. The pirates were about to come and the villagers were still debating amongst themselves. She thought for a bit and saw the person who was the best at climbing trees, Goudan. She pointed at the tallest tree in the village and said, "Goudan, go climb to the top of the tree and look. You should be able to vaguely see the fleet of ships from up there. In any case, I already warned everyone. It's up to you guys if you want to believe me or not!"

At the end, she also added one more thing, "Think about what happened last year with the locust plague ah! What happened to those people who didn't end up believing the news? Now, it's not just a matter of losing money or grain, your choices can determine the fate of all of the people in your family!"

At this moment, Goudan, who had climbed to the very top of the tree, sputtered from above, "They're there! I can see more than a dozen ships on the horizon and they're heading in the direction of our village! I still can't see very clearly if they are Wokou pirates or not..."

When people heard Goudan's shouts added onto what Xiaocao just said, most of the villagers felt more confident in her news. It was just as the village chief stated: "Better to be safe than sorry". If the ships

coming were truly pirates, getting ready and hiding in the mountains was the sensible thing to do. If they weren't, it wasn't as if they would lose much, other than getting scared out of their wits.

When the village chief saw everyone running back home, he couldn't help but remind them of a fact, "Make sure to only pack what is necessary and the valuables that are light. You're not going to be able to bring everything along. Losing some possessions is not the end of the world. What's important is to preserve your own lives! In an hour, everyone needs to assemble. Whoever's late, don't blame the rest of us for not waiting!!"

Once Yu Xiaocao saw everyone moving, she waved to the village chief and then sped off to her own family. On the way, she passed by the Zhou Family and saw Auntie Zhou sighing over the few hundred chickens she was raising.

"Auntie, take the chickens into the mountain thickets. Whatever can be saved is better than nothing! Take along the valuables that you can bring along but don't be greedy. Keeping your life is the most important thing!" Yu Xiaocao couldn't help but give the older woman a reminder.

When Yu Xiaocao got home, she saw all of the Yu Family members, other than Yu Hang who went to the docks and Little Siitou who was studying in town, congregated in the courtyard. All of their hired workers for the pharmaceutical workshop and piggery had gone back to their respective homes to pack. Yingtao and the stewards that Royal Prince Yang had given her each had a bundle of stuff in their hands as they fearfully waited there.

"Did someone tell Oldest Aunt's family?" Yu Xiaocao noticed that her oldest paternal aunt's family wasn't there and had to ask.

Yu Hai gave her a reassuring look and said, "Erya went there to tell them, they should be back very soon!" Just as he spoke, his older sister's entire family all came in with packs on their back as they rushed into the courtyard.

Fields of Gold Chapter 389 - The Wokou Pirates Land

"What about Imperial Prince Jing's residence on the mountain? Did anyone inform them?" Although there were a decent amount of guards there, the pirates also had a lot of people and they were cruel. Without the self-proclaimed martial arts expert Royal Prince Yang there, it wouldn't be safe for Princess Consort Jing to stay in the villa.

Senior Servant Yang, who was in charge of the piggery, hurriedly stepped forward and said, “When we got the news, my husband went to the mountain residence immediately. At this time, the princess consort should be almost done preparing!”

Yu Xiaocao looked around the courtyard and saw that everyone was carrying a packed up bag that wasn't too big so they could easily flee. It was likely they only packed the most valuable items in their residences for this trip. Yu Hai and Liu Hu had a bit more in their packs. Other than daily necessities, everyone also carried around twenty catties of grain, a steel pot, and some utensils. They didn't know how long the pirates would stay and when they could finally come back. It was likely they needed to spend several days in the mountains, so the Yu Family and Liu Family needed to bring enough grain to last!

Yu Xiaocao entered her own room and packed two simple sets of clean clothing. She also took out the banknotes, silver bits, and some jewelry along. After thinking a bit, she also took her medicine box. Inside she had medicines to treat colds and other mild illnesses. In addition, she had medications to stop bleeding.

Before long, Princess Consort Jing and her twenty-some imperial bodyguards came down the mountain. Along with the twenty-some senior servants, stewards, and maids, her entourage made a grand sight and was much larger than the combined Yu and Liu Families.

Princess Consort Jing appeared exceptionally calm and she looked over everyone in the courtyard before she spoke to the now serene Yu Xiaocao, “When we came down the mountain, we saw that those people with questionable backgrounds were already very close to land. Have you decided everything yet? Are we really going to flee into the mountains? Don't people say that there are a lot of ferocious beasts in there?”

Yu Xiaocao came up and held onto Princess Consort Jing's arm reassuringly as she gently said, “Please don't worry, Your Highness! We're not going deep into the mountains, so we should not encounter any vicious beasts.”

“If we're on the outside part of the mountain and the pirates come and find out there's nothing to take, won't they chase us up the mountain to find us?” One of the bodyguards, who looked on the younger side, frowned and remarked somewhat pessimistically.

Yu Xiaocao considered his question and then replied, "I know a ravine in the mountain that is pretty well hidden and the entrance is easily guarded and hard to attack. We should go there to hide. Even if the Wokou pirates find the entrance, with you guys protecting it, it'd be hard for them to get through."

Princess Consort Jing gave her a knowing look and then asked, "Is that the ravine that has a lot of wild camellias and orchids? If that's the place you're talking about, it should be very well hidden."

After she finished, she then gave a penetrating look at her two personal maids, Meixiang and Lanxiang. These two maids had once gone with Xiaocao to that ravine and they brought back a few rare specimens. However, the next time when they tried to go there themselves, the two maids couldn't find the entrance of the ravine again. Meixiang had said that they clearly remembered every twist and turn to get there but they just couldn't find the entrance again. It was as if that ravine had suddenly disappeared into thin air.

Yu Xiaocao nodded and agreed, "Yes, other than that place, I can't think of another place that is suitable to hide a few hundred people!"

"A few hundred people? We need to take along all of the men, women, children, and elders from the village along? The more people there are, the more chances there are for mishaps. Miss Yu, you need to make sure you know what you're doing!" The commander of the bodyguards didn't seem to approve of this idea of bringing so many civilians along. The frown on his face became even more apparent.

"We're all from the same village and some of us are even related to each other. We can't just leave them alone to fend for themselves. Since we have the ability, what's wrong with helping them?" It had been almost four years since she transmigrated over to this world. Other than a few special people in Dongshan Village, the vast majority of villagers were all pure-hearted and adorable. Their simple ways of life and warm interactions with each other caused Yu Xiaocao to consider this place more and more like her home. When danger was approaching, she couldn't abandon any of them, even if they had treated her poorly in the past.

The Yu Family was already done preparing, but the people in the village were a whole other matter. The villagers were all running around in a panic. Many people couldn't bear to let go of anything that was of any value, especially those of the older generation. Every needle and thread in the house required money to buy them, so they even brought along old bamboo baskets with holes in them.

It was getting closer to the time to leave and there were a whole bunch of people standing in front of the village chief's home. The village chief saw a fellow with a giant pack on his left shoulder and a large

wicker basket crammed full of items on his right. The man could barely walk as he staggered down the road and stumbled in the group. The village chief was incensed and scolded them, "Right now we're running for our lives, not moving! Do you think you'll be able to climb mountains and hide with all of that stuff you're bringing ah? You're just a sitting duck waiting for the Wokou pirates to catch you and then rip you apart! Everyone, open your bags for me now! Other than money, you should only be carrying along two changes of clothing and three days worth of food. Everything else, you need to throw away!!"

When he saw the villagers looking at each other stupidly but not doing anything, the village chief's temper exploded again, "If you guys don't want to listen to me, that's fine! You are all in charge of yourselves! I'm not going to bother anymore, alright? Figure things out yourselves! Second Son's wife and Third Son's wife, you're both in charge of taking care of the kids. Give all of your packs to your husbands and follow me!!"

When the villagers saw that the village chief wasn't going to be in charge of them anymore, they immediately panicked. A lot of the villagers started opening their packs and taking out the stuff that wasn't that important. After cleaning out their bags, they found a place to hide the other items. Although the packs were still pretty heavy, they no longer hindered their movements anymore. Once they finished reorganizing their belongings, these villagers pulled their families along to follow the village chief as they headed towards the West Mountains.

Those who still couldn't bear to throw anything else away staggered behind the group of people. Before long, they were at the back of the pack. Among them was Madam Zhang and her family.

Madam Zhang carried a giant bamboo basket on her back. Other than grain, she also packed a bunch of daily necessities. She even couldn't bear to leave behind some ceramic tiles at home and also packed that. Naturally, she carried all of the cash at home on her body. Even Madam Li didn't know where her mother-in-law had hidden the money.

Behind Madam Zhang was Yu Dashan, who was carrying a giant wrapped pack. It was very obvious that they had packed even the large blankets at home. Yu Dashan currently resembled a small mountain and he could only walk a couple steps before huffing and puffing like an overburdened ox.

Madam Li carried a lot less than the other two people, but her body was fat and soft. She was usually very lazy and did the very minimal to get by, so she wasn't used to walking so far and started to breathe heavily from exertion. It was obvious that she couldn't handle traveling so far along with thirty catties of luggage.

Gradually, these three people started to lag behind and were at the very back of the fleeing villagers. They walked one step forward and staggered for the next three. It was quite difficult for them to press on. Madam Li also kept turning back every three steps to mumble about her son, who was working at the docks. She was praying that there wouldn't be anything bad happening there.

At this time, the village chief's family had already reached the foot of the West Mountains. In front of the Yu Family was Princess Consort Jing and her entourage of servants and bodyguards. After seeing the twenty or so strong and vigorous bodyguards, the village chief's heart settled down a bit.

The village chief came forward and bowed respectfully to the princess consort before he spoke to Yu Hai, "Dahai, although you haven't gone up the mountain much these past two years, you still spent a few years with Young General Zhao hunting there. I'm sure you have a much better idea of the terrain and area in the mountains than me. Where do you think would be a good place for a couple hundred villagers like us to hide in there?"

Yu Hai didn't even have the chance to reply when a person jumped down from the nearby tree. It was the commander of the bodyguards, Commander Zheng. He had been observing the movements of the fleet of ships this entire time and, surprisingly, he had a pair of binoculars in his hand.

The look in the commander's eyes was grim and he had a slightly worried look on his face as he yelled, "The fleet is about to land and they are truly Wokou pirates! All of them have knives or swords at their belts and they're not here for a good reason! Your Highness, we can't delay any longer, it's time to go!"

The Yu Family lived at the foot of the West Mountains and their residence was on a higher piece of land. When the village chief heard the report from the commander, he looked in the direction of the ocean. Sure enough, there were around a dozen ships on the coastline and he could see around a dozen of people running on the beach. They were headed towards the direction of the village in a very aggressive manner.

The village chief then turned to look at the villagers and noticed that there were a dozen families who still persisted in carrying heavy luggage as they staggered in the very back. He screamed at those people, wishing his voice could become as loud as a megaphone, "Are possessions more important or your lives more important?? The Wokou pirates have already landed. Before long, they're going to catch up with us! Throw away those giant bags on your backs, running away is more essential!!"

Yu Xiaobao saw Madam Zhang, who was at the very back and looked very old and haggard. She indifferently looked away. She walked to Princess Consort Jing and supported her into a chair sedan that

was being carried by two strong and vigorous servants. She then motioned at the Yu and Liu Family to follow and started to head towards the mountain thickets that she was very familiar with.

When she was close to the piggery, she blew a clear and resounding whistle. A black figure suddenly appeared and whizzed towards her. On a closer look, it was Little Black, who had already reached the height of a grown man. He wagged his giant bushy tail and gleefully circled around Yu Xiaocao a few times. Once he got her approval, he followed her from behind with satisfaction and couldn't bear to leave her.

Out of the two young wolves, Little White had a more untamed personality and often disappeared into the forests in the mountains to run around like a little tyrant. From time to time, he would come back to Xiaocao with some prey in his mouth. Most of his time was spent exploring the West Mountains. One time, he had apparently encountered a leopard and killed it, bringing it back. However, he also had some leftover injuries from that fight. Xiaocao used some mystic-stone water and herbal medicines to treat his wounds. Before long, his injuries had healed. This fellow very easily forgot his past wounds and pain. When the wounds just scabbed over, he ran back to the mountainous forests to play around again.

Little Black, on the other hand, was closer to humans. Every day, he was in charge of guarding and watching the piggery, so he ended up getting fed by the steward, senior servant, and Xiaolian who were there. His figure was becoming more and more like a pig's. This fellow really knew how to sell himself and act cute. Although he was already taller than Xiaocao, every time he saw her, he needed her to hold him a bit. Despite the fact that Xiaocao could no longer hold him up, she still needed to hug him and stroke his head and body before he was finally satisfied. If she wasn't already certain, it would be hard to guess that this fellow was a true and full-blooded wolf!

Yu Xiaocao walked at the front with Little Black. On each side of her, there were two bodyguards with their swords unsheathed to open up the way. Right behind her was Princess Consort Jing's sedan with the commander of the bodyguards and a few of the more expert imperial bodyguards around her. They had her encircled tightly within their protection. Following them was the Yu Family and Liu Family. Eldest Granduncle Yu Lichun's entire family had also been pulled up by Old Yu and was traveling along with the rest of their group.

Currently, in the eyes of the villagers of Dongshan Village, the Yu Family and the Liu Family were in the safest position because the remaining dozen or so bodyguards from Imperial Prince Jing's residence were protecting the area around them. All of the bodyguards who were at the mountain residence were handpicked and experts at fighting!

Fields of Gold Chapter 390 - Moments of Danger Reveal a Person's True Heart

The group had over a hundred people and most of them were the elderly, women and children. Flurries of activity bustled within the group. The sounds of children crying, women scolding, and the men urging them on merged into a cacophony...the sounds startled all of the birds in the area, causing them to flee into the air.

The village chief, who was following the Yu Family closely, looked back and saw the mess. He couldn't stand it anymore and raised his voice to scold all of the villagers, "Every man in the household, become the man! Control your wife and children! You guys are so noisy, is it because you're afraid that the Wokou pirates don't know where we are ah? If you guys lure these pirates to you, no one's going to care whether you live or die!"

The words of the village chief were very quickly disseminated throughout the people. Within moments, the noise settled down. Occasionally the sound of a child crying could be heard before the parents shushed their child. A voice sounded from the group, "Aren't there about a dozen bodyguards who are skilled from Imperial Prince Jing's mountain villa ah? Would they really just watch as we die in front of them?"

The village chief glanced at the bodyguards, whose expressions hadn't changed, and coldly laughed. He replied back in the direction of the sound, "Just what type of status do you have that you want the Imperial Prince's bodyguards to save you? They are here to protect the princess consort. How thick faced are you to bring yourself up to the level of the princess consort? Cut the crap and use your energy to flee, alright? If the Wokou pirates catch you, then you can find out if the bodyguards will help you or not, okay?"

The nearby villagers looked at the cold and indifferent expressions on the bodyguards and anxiety swirled within them. Who was so stupid to provoke these bodyguards at this time? If these soldiers decided to leave them to fend for themselves, the West Mountains were very large and it was likely they would get lost within moments. If they ended up rushing into the territory of ferocious beasts, they didn't even need to wait for the pirates to catch up before they would be torn into the pieces tonight by animals!

Yu Xiaocao, who was at the very front, thought that the person asking sounded like Madam Zhang. She sneered inside, 'Do you think you're the sun ah? And that the earth has to rotate around you? You want the Imperial Prince's bodyguards to protect you? Gosh, what type of crazy ideas do you have in your mind? Stop dreaming ah!'

She was currently traversing through a bunch of vegetation that was about as tall as a person. The bodyguards next to her were using their swords constantly to cut any plants that were in the way so that

the princess consort's sedan could pass through without any issues. As this continued, the speed of the fleeing group had slowed down.

There were still a few people lagging behind in the back because they were not willing to lighten their packs and leave any items behind. Thus, they struggled through the thick vegetation. Suddenly, in the very back, Yu Dashan could faintly hear the voices of people that were speaking in a foreign language. The sounds did not seem very far from him.

Yu Dashan was so scared that his legs trembled. He threw down the giant pack on his back and raced for his life as he ran forward. He ran and screamed at the same time, "The Wokou pirates have caught up. Quickly run ah! The pirates are here..."

The two women with him, who had been unceremoniously left behind, were stunned for a moment. Neither Madam Zhang or Madam Li had ever thought that Yu Dashan, who usually acted very filial and loving to his mother and wife, would actually leave the two of them, one an elder and one a weak woman, behind and only be concerned for his own safety.

Madam Li very quickly regained her wits and she turned her head around to look at the thick forest behind her. Although she couldn't see any pirates in the back, she could hear the sounds of them approaching. Because Yu Dashan had run away screaming his head off, the pirates were able to pinpoint the direction that the villagers were fleeing in. Thus, a hundred or so pirates were now running in their direction.

Madam Li imitated Yu Dashan's actions and also threw away all of the possessions she was holding. With her load lightened, she glanced briefly at Madam Zhang, who still had a giant wicker basket on her back, and huffed and puffed as she took off for her life. Her only thought was this: 'As long as I can pass more people, I'll be safe.'

Madam Zhang was so distraught by the events that tears almost dripped down her face. She was now very regretful and angry. She hated her eldest son, who she had taken care of for more than a dozen years. Despite her affections for him, he was willing to throw her away, his old mother, at the face of danger to save his own skin. She was regretful about her previous actions. By being so cruel, she had severed all relations she had with Yu Hai and his family. If she had treated them better in the past, with Yu Hai's kind hearted temperament, he absolutely wouldn't act like Yu Dashan and leave her behind cold-heartedly. Instead, the one who would be protected by the bodyguards in front would be her.

The people around Madam Zhang were all throwing away their belongings without a single thought and scattering around in a panic as they absconded for their lives. She couldn't care about her possessions anymore either. At any rate, all of the family's money was on her body, so the rest of the items didn't amount to much! She threw off the giant bamboo basket onto the ground and quickened her steps forward as she crookedly stumbled up the mountain trail. She did her best to catch up with the other villagers. She didn't want to be left behind and become the first sacrifice to the Wokou pirates.

“What should we do? The pirates are about to catch up! We can't just watch as they harm and kill all of the other people in Dongshan Village ah!” Yu Hai heard the panicked noises behind them and couldn't help from clenching his hands into fists.

Yu Xiaocao frowned seriously and chewed on her lips before she spoke to the commander of the bodyguards, “Commander Zheng, with our current speed, I'm pretty sure that the pirates will very quickly catch up to us.”

The commander of the bodyguards unsheathed his long sword and nodded, “Miss Yu, you don't need to worry about that. Continue to lead the way ahead and I will take a few brothers along to the back to intercept the Wokou pirates. This will give everyone some more time to run away...”

Yu Hai suddenly volunteered, “I'm very familiar with these mountain forests and I also know how to hunt and stalk prey in this area. I'll go with you guys!”

When Madam Liu heard him say this, she stumbled a step and a feeling of panic bubbled in her heart. She couldn't stop herself from crying, “My husband...”

Yu Hai smiled reassuringly at her and said, “Wife, don't worry! In these woods, I can't brag about anything else but I know how to hide and conceal myself very well. If things are looking bad, I will make sure to retreat very quickly. Don't worry, I won't do things out of pride and greed and try to be a hero when I'm not!”

The commander of the bodyguards also comforted her, “Madam, don't worry! As long as I am here, I will make sure to keep Brother Yu safe and sound! Although there are a lot of pirates chasing after us, they are mostly familiar with battles on the open sea and don't know how to fight in thick forests. We won't directly confront these pirates!”

Madam Liu's face had turned as white as a sheet out of fear. She knew her husband had already made his decision and that he wouldn't listen to her. She could only nod her head weakly and implore him to be very careful. He needed to remember that his family still had many weak and elderly members waiting for him to come back!

Madam Liu was currently beside herself with worry. Her eldest son had gone to the docks to report on the situation during such a dangerous time. Her younger daughter had said that there were quite a few pirate ships headed towards the direction of the docks as well. It was pretty obvious that that area would also be full of danger. Now, her husband had volunteered himself to head straight into danger himself. How could she not be concerned about them?

When Yu Hai left with Commander Zheng and the other bodyguards to the back, Yingtao and the wife of the steward who was in charge of the piggery, Steward Zhao's wife, came up to support Madam Liu on each side. They followed closely behind Princess Consort Jing's sedan. Princess Consort Jing also turned her head back to say a few comforting words. Inwardly, the princess consort was not as serene as she seemed. However, whenever she saw Yu Xiaocao, a tiny little girl, confronting the crisis in front of them with a cool head and leading the way, she also felt her heart settle down too.

Yu Xiaocao was also worried about her father going back to confront the Wokou pirates. However, the pirates were catching up to them and there was already not enough time for everyone to flee to the hiding place in that hidden ravine. They needed someone to create an opportunity for them to get more time. Although those bodyguards were highly skilled, they still weren't as familiar with the terrain of the forests of the West Mountain as a native. With her father leading the way, they would be able to complete their mission much more easily.

In order to ensure her father's safety, she sent Little Black and Little White to go protect her father. Both of the two wolves now had the bulk and strength of an alpha wolf. Although Little Black usually liked to act cute and play with humans, he could actually fight a bear on his own without any difficulties!

As the group steadily trudged forward deeper into the forest, the people in the back couldn't help but squeeze closer to the front. The originally loose group of villagers was now all bunched up tightly. Yu Dashan had been fleeing like a madman earlier and finally caught up with Imperial Prince Jing's group of bodyguards in the front. He forcefully squeezed through people to get closer to the Yu Family's group.

"Don't hold me back and let me through. I'm also surnamed Yu and I am the older brother of Yu Hai!" Yu Dashan was ordinarily a dull and wooden man but now he had completely changed. His eyes were completely red as he fought against the bodyguards preventing him from breaking through the circle. He desperately wanted to go into the inner protected area.

Old Yu was also currently worried about his son and eldest grandson. When he heard the commotion, he slowed down and headed back to where Yu Dashan was currently struggling against the bodyguards. Old Yu looked behind Yu Dashan and disappointment crawled onto his face. He sighed and shook his head, "Dashan...you actually left your mother and wife behind while you ran ahead. You...are you still human ah?"

"How am I not human? Those two are both deadweights and would only pull me back. One's old while the other's fat. If the pirates caught up, all three of us would die! Why can't I run for my life? Preserving one life is still a life!" Both of Yu Dashan's eyes were bright red and it looked like he had lost all reason within his head.

Yu Caifeng shot a look of disgust at him and said, "Are you worthy of the name Yu? You're such an unfilial and selfish man, stay farther away from us. Don't dirty our eyes here!"

"I was your father's son for more than thirty years and took the surname Yu for over thirty years. As a daughter who married out, what qualifications do you have to determine whether I'm worthy of the name Yu??" At this point, Yu Dashan was snapping at anyone who was available as if he no longer cared about offending others.

Old Yu let out another sigh and said, "In times of crisis, one can truly see a person's true nature. If you had brought your wife and your mother along with you, I would shamefully speak up for you and ask the princess consort to show mercy and let you guys stay with us. However...you're someone who's even willing to throw away your own mother. What qualifications do you have to have me to plead for you? I'm not that thick-skinned!"

Old Yu then looked at Yu Dashan deeply in the eye while a complicated feeling arose in his heart. He had originally thought that Yu Dashan wasn't the same as his mother and that he was a straight bamboo sprout that had grown out of a crooked one. However, now he knew that they were truly mother and son. They were cold and selfish to their very bones! He shook his head and turned around to leave. No matter how much Yu Dashan begged or what he said, Old Yu didn't turn back.

As this was happening, Yu Hai led the head of the bodyguards and another ten men who were very skilled through the forest. They very quickly reached the back of the fleeing group. Madam Zhang saw him and opened her mouth but in the end didn't say anything. She instead stamped her feet along and did her best to follow the rest of the people.

Yu Hai only indifferently glanced at her, as if she was a stranger that he didn't even know. He looked at the terrain around them and then addressed the commander of the bodyguards, "The situation is urgent. Judging from the sounds of the Wokou pirates, they should be able to get here in about fifteen minutes. We should set a few traps nearby that are large enough to catch large animals and wait for these pirates to fall into them!"