

Gold Chapter 40

Chapter 40

[How many times have I told you? What I'm absorbing is what you humans can't absorb, spiritual energy. It didn't affect the effects of the medicinal herbs at all! Yet, you still refuse to believe me. The spiritual energy of the medicinal herbs from Old You's house was pitifully little!] The little divine stone began to bargain.

[Alright! The next time I go to town, I will take a detour to Tongren Medicine Hall and let you absorb as much spiritual energy as you want!] Finding another sweet potato, Xiaocao focused all her energy to deal with the big sweet potato and casually responded to the Divine Stone. After all, who knew when she would visit town again.

Madam Liu, who had never tried to shirk from work or responsibility, bent down and ceaselessly dug for sweet potatoes. She secretly thought: 'In the previous years, the biggest sweet potato that came from this piece of sandy soil was no bigger than the size of a palm. Yet this year, it seemed as if the sweet potatoes are filled with gas, each bigger than the next.'

She originally thought that the sweet potato that her youngest daughter had just dug up was already considered the best. But she hadn't expected that the sweet potatoes that she dug up afterwards were also not any less inferior to the sweet potato that her youngest daughter had dug up. Some had even surpassed the size of the 'potato king'.

"Mother, the size of this year's sweet potatoes is much bigger than last year's. It seems like we'll be able to harvest a lot more sweet potatoes this year, too!" Yu Xiaolian felt that this was unbelievable. It was the same plot of land as last year and the seeds came from the sweet potatoes from the previous year. However, why did it seem as if this year's harvest of sweet potatoes were in a competition? They were each bigger than the next!

Madam Li had only just begun digging when she sat down and began wiping her sweat. She lowered her head and looked at the size of her family's field of sweet potatoes. All the meat on Madam Li's face squished together as she smiled and said, "Younger Sister-in-law, this year, the sweet potatoes will definitely be high-yielding. Do you think Mother will give us some to roast and eat?"

In the past, when the harvest wasn't abundant, the sweet potatoes would be beaten into thin slices and put out to be dried in the sun. After that, it would be grinded into powder and served together with the other coarse grains throughout the entire winter. Pancakes made from sweet potato powder were

sweet and chewy. It tasted much better than the pancakes made from the crude millet flour and weird-smelling bean flour.

Every year, the few remaining small sweet potatoes would occasionally be boiled in a basin. The boiled sweet potatoes tasted very soft and sweet. It was a pity that they couldn't eat much because it easily caused acid reflux. The sweet potatoes tasted even better when roasted. However, Madam Zhang thought that it was too wasteful since a portion of the scorched skin of the sweet potato must be thrown away.

"Eldest Aunt, you have already rested for a long time. Quickly get up and dig for sweet potatoes. There are so many sweet potatoes. If we don't finish digging today, my grandmother would be angry. When that happens, we won't even be able to eat sweet potato skin, let alone roasted sweet potatoes!"

Yu Xiaocao held contempt for this lazy and greedy Eldest Aunt. Both she and Xiaolian had already dug a pile of sweet potatoes, yet her eldest aunt had barely dug up two before she sat down and stopped working. It was impossible for people to refrain themselves from mocking her!

Madam Li picked up a small sweet potato and wiped off the dirt on the sweet potato with her sleeve, which was of an indescribable color. With her big mouth, she loudly gnawed at the outer skin of the sweet potato. While she gnawed off the skin with big mouthfuls, she also didn't forget to excuse herself and she said,

"It's only five plots of land! We will definitely be able to finish digging today. If I rest for a bit, it wouldn't delay anything. This year's sweet potatoes are not only big, but it's also sweet. It tastes better than the sweet potatoes from the previous years."

Yu Xiaolian glared at her. She knew that they can never rely on Madam Li when they harvest sweet potatoes every year. Yu Xiaolian raised her head to look at her younger twin sister. She couldn't help but say, "Xiaocao, rest for a little bit before you start digging again. Don't tire yourself out."

Madam Liu straightened her waist and lightly wiped away the droplets of sweat on her forehead. In a caring voice, she said, "Cao'er, you have never done farm work before. Why don't you go sit at the edge of the field and play? Your sister and I can finish the work."

In her past life, Yu Xiaocao was also accustomed to doing farm work. Although her family had never planted any sweet potatoes, there was no technique or skill needed to dig sweet potatoes. In just a few moments, she had started to dig for sweet potatoes. After nursing her body for four to five months, and with the exercises she got by climbing the mountain and going out to sea, she was no longer the same Yu Xiaocao whose legs would go soft after walking two steps. She smiled at her mother and continued the work at hand without delay.

"Hey, Second Sister-in-law, what type of fertilizer did your family use this year? All your sweet potatoes are so big. Look at that! This sweet potato should at least weigh seven to eight catties!" After Yu Jiang finished digging the sweet potatoes in his family's field, he came over to help Madam Liu. However, when he saw the football-sized sweet potatoes on the ground, he couldn't help but become stunned.

Madam Liu shook her head and replied with a smile, "The fertilizer we used this year was the same as the previous years. It's made from the same manure from our family. Perhaps, we have such a good harvest this year because the weather is really good for the crops."

Yu Jiang picked up the hoe that Madam Li had thrown on the ground. He skillfully began to dig up the potato, said, "If the reason is because of the weather, then why is my family's harvest the same as last year's? So, good weather can't be the reason. Second Sister-in-law, if there is a secret recipe to produce a bountiful harvest, please don't conceal it from me!"

Yu Xiaolian knew that Third Uncle liked to joke around so she said, "Third Uncle, if we have a secret recipe, would we hide it from our own family? The fertilizer that we used this year was made by my mother and I. It's certainly the same fertilizer as last year. As for why there is such a large harvest this year, we also don't know."

'You don't know, but I know!' Yu Xiaocao thought inwardly. With her head lowered, she continued to work and said, "Didn't Mother say that when we farm, we depend on Heaven to eat a meal. Perhaps, Heaven sees that my family is pleasing to the eye, so the Heaven gave us a high yield this year."

"Hey! I didn't expect that our family's Xiaocao takes after your Third Uncle, we both like to tell jokes. Will the Heaven also be bias towards certain people? However, the Gods probably saw that your mother and siblings never had enough food to eat. Thus, it's justifiable if the Heaven gives you some more food."

Yu Jiang had long been displeased with his second uncle's second wife. He was part of the younger generation and wasn't part of the second household, so he couldn't say anything. He could only help the

pitiful Second Sister-in-law and her children do some heavy work as much as he can. He tried to help out as much as possible.

"Your family will probably harvest at least around 2,000 catties from your family's field, which is much more than the harvest of other families! If our field is able to produce half of the amount your field produced, then I will be laughing!" Although his speech showed that he was envious, his hand never stopped working. He was certainly a real professional when it came to manual labor. His working speed was faster than three people combined.

Yu Dashan and Yu Hai came to help in the afternoon after they returned from fishing. So, with the extra helpers, and Third Uncle, who was a free and efficient laborer, they were able to finish before the sky turned dark. All the sweet potatoes in the five fields had been dug up and placed in the wheelbarrows to be transported home.

When Madam Zhang, who always put on a long face, saw the mountains of sweet potatoes piled up in the courtyard, she beamed like a flower. It was estimated that this year's sweet potato harvest had unexpectedly reached 3,000 catties. This was more than twice the amount harvested last year.

Facing such a big harvest, Madam Zhang finally relented and left a portion of the smaller sweet potatoes in the cellar to be steamed or boiled to eat for the winter. Taking advantage of the early winter sun, the remaining sweet potatoes were cut into pieces and dried in the sun. When needed, they could grind it into potato powder.

"This is all thanks to the good fortune of the current emperor." Old Yu looked at the mountain of sweet potatoes with a sense of satisfaction, as if he would never need to panic as long as he had food on his hands. "When I was young, during a famine, I had to eat tree barks and grassroots. When I'm extremely hungry, I would even eat dirt to fill my stomach. At that time, many people had died of hunger!"

Old Yu stopped for a moment and appeared to be caught up in the memories of his past as he continued, "After sweet potato was imported from abroad, we had also experienced another famine. The sweet potatoes produced high yields and could be stored for a long time. Hence, the sweet potatoes and the sweet potato flour, as well as sweet potato vines, had helped us survive the dreadful three-year famine. It saved us from being starved to death."

Madam Zhang also nodded her head and said, "That's right. Sweet potato is indeed a good crop. However, eating sweet potatoes and sweet potato flour twice a day will make the stomach bloated. There will be a lot of pantothenic acid in the stomach. The sweet potato will also make you fart and give

you heartburn. It's really difficult to bear. It would be really nice if there's a crop that's high yielding and doesn't give you heartburn!"

"Don't be unsatisfied with what you have! You already have something to eat and yet you're thinking about this and that!" Old Yu glared at the woman, and then continued to watch them slice the potatoes into thin slices.

There weren't many kitchen knives at home, so even the sickle and the iron pieces from the hoe were used. However, there still wasn't enough tools for everyone to use. Moreover, their cutting speed was also slow. When would they ever be able to finish cutting 10,000 catties of sweet potatoes?

Yu Xiaocao remembered that in her previous life when her neighbor cut sweet potatoes, the tool she had used was a razor blade with a single side that has open blades on the edge of the blade. The blade would be fixed in the middle of the wooden board. When a big sweet potato was pushed down on the blades, the sweet potatoes would be cut into slices. Moreover, it was also very safe to use since it wouldn't easily injury your hands.

Yu Xiaocao discussed it with her father for a while. The next day, when her father returned from the town, he had bought a few blades that she had requested. After working on it for the entire afternoon, her skillful father finally finished making a few sweet potato slicers.

Yu Xiaocao used the damaged clothes that they could no longer wear and made a few pairs of thick gloves. With the thick gloves, they don't have to worry about getting their hands cut with the tool.

Madam Liu put on the tattered gloves and lifted the wooden board of the tool. Then, she picked up a big sweet potato and placed it on top of the blades. With a hard push, a moderately sized sweet potato pieces fell down from the blades.

Madam Zhang also tried out the tool and gave them a rare compliment, "This tool is really convenient to use. Not only does it quickly cuts the sweet potatoes, but it also doesn't require a lot of effort. It's pretty good!"

Madam Li, who was interested in the new tool, had also become diligent for a couple days and cut a few hundred catties of sweet potatoes.

Thanks to the sweet potato cutting tool, they were able to cut the 10,000 catties of sweet potatoes in less than ten days. Originally, it would be hard to even finish cutting 10,000 catties of sweet potatoes in a month. But with the combined efforts of the women and men at home, as well as the cutting tool, they were able to quickly finish the task.

While they were cutting the sweet potatoes, a few villagers dropped by their house and saw their sweet potato cutter. After they inquired Yu Hai about the sweet potato cutter, they went to the blacksmith in town and got a few pieces of razor blades. Then, they asked Yu Hai to help them make the sweet potato slicers when he was free. Which family didn't have some relatives in other villages? Soon, the usage of the sweet potato cutter spread from Dongshan Village outward to the other villages.

In the future, every time it was sweet potato harvest season, people would often talk about the Yu Family from Dongshan Village. Yu Xiaocao would have never imagined that the small invention that she had pirated from someone else would make the Yu Family's reputation soar around the nearby villages. She had only made the sweet potato cutter for the convenience of her family. Yu Xiaocao was currently pondering about what tasty food she should make with the sweet potato flour.

With the combination of the meager experiences she had in her previous life and her own improvisation, she was able to come up with many recipes that used the coarse grain as the base ingredient.

For example, there were already several ways to make sweet potato noodles [1].

The simplest way to make the noodles was to use a big grater (Author's note: Yu Xiaocao had asked her father to get this grater from the blacksmith when he went there to get the razor blades.) to shred a freshly kneaded sweet potato dough above a pot of boiling water. The noodles made like this would be thick. The thickness would be the same as a child's finger.

But in all honesty, without any condiments and oil, a big bowl of such noodles wouldn't be filling at all. Shortly after eating it, the stomach will soon rumble in hunger.

The most delicious type of noodle dish was noodles served with thick gravy. The first step would be to use a flour sifter to filter out fine sweet potato flour. Next, warm boiled water should be mixed into the flour while kneading the dough into a ball. Above a pot of boiling water, shred the dough with a file and let the sweet potato noodles fall into the boiling water. As the firewood underneath the stove continues to burn, the person shredding the dough must finish swiftly, or else the noodles inside the pot would dissolve inside the water.

However, making noodles required a lot of strength. She was only able to make the noodles when her father was home. Even though Yu Hai had great strength, every time he made the noodles, droplets of sweat would cover his entire body. There were around a dozen people in the Yu Family. To ensure that everyone would get to eat, Yu Xiaocao had to cook a big pot of noodles every time she made the noodles. Thus, even as winter approached, Yu Hai's clothes would still be drenched with sweat.

However, the cooked noodles would come out sparkly and translucent. When eaten, the noodles had a smooth and chewy texture. When the noodles were combined with clam soup, minced chives, and a bit of spice, the dish was extremely satisfying to eat. This was the classic example of a sweet potato noodle dish.

Another way to make it was to cut the freshly kneaded dough into strands of noodles on the chopping board. After making the noodles, just put them in a pot of boiling water. Once the noodles were cooked, it could be directly eaten. The noodles that were made this way would still be tasty and sweet. Soup stock could also be added to the noodles to make it into noodles with gravy. However, the texture for noodles made with this method weren't as smooth and good as the ones cooked directly in boiling water.

There was also another way to eat it, which was a combination of both thin and thick noodles. First, the sweet potato dough would be wrapped with the wheat dough to make handmade noodles. After cutting the dough in half, the black and white dough would be very apparent. When eaten, the noodles would have the tenacity of the wheat flour, and the smoothness and exquisiteness of the sweet potato flour. The noodles could also be eaten along with a broth of the eater's preference. This type of dish was also a delicacy. But there was a stingy old lady watching her at home. Unless her younger uncle returns home with his family, she wouldn't let her touch the wheat flour.

In addition to this, the sweet potato flour could be used to make flatbread, pancakes, or steamed cornbread. It could also make into steamed vegetables buns, dumplings, and more. With Xiaocao's ability to make various dishes from the sweet potato flour, the Yu Family rarely went out to buy food in the winter.