

Gold Chapter 401

Fields of Gold Chapter 401 - Surprise Attack in the Rain

The weather at the end of spring had cool mornings and evenings. However, around noon, it was quite hot. The meat from the wild pig could not be left out for too long or else people would get sick from eating it. After getting Zhu Junyang's permission, Yu Hai gave one adult pig and one half-grown pig to the villagers. He even helped them to cut it into smaller chunks to divide amongst everyone there.

The villagers only brought food along with them that was easily stored. Other than a few people who brought some dried meat along, the rest of them only carried some coarse grain to whet their hunger. Now with two catties of wild boar meat per family, most of them were very grateful towards Yu Hai and Royal Prince Yang.

For the past two years, the villagers at Dongshan Village had pretty good lives and weren't as poor as they were before. In previous years, they were only able to eat some meat during the New Years. Now they were usually able to buy around a half catty of meat every couple of months so that their children could eat some. Two catties of wild pig meat were worth around a hundred copper coins on the market!

However, there were also people who had greedy hearts, such as Madam Zhang and her son, Yu Dashan. In their eyes, Yu Hai only strolled around the forest for a bit to get a lot of boar meat. That meant the Yu Family had been eating a lot of meat in these past two days! In contrast, they had only been eating wild vegetables, fruits and whatever they could scrounge. It was a worse living situation than the disaster year so they felt very resentful about this. A flame of hatred ignited in their hearts towards Yu Hai and his family!

At noon, Yu Xiaocao made a giant pot of twice-cooked pork and also braised the pig's head and intestines. Although she didn't have all of the spices needed, with the mystic-stone water on hand, the taste was still acceptable. She soaked the remaining boar's meat in mystic-stone water. The caves were relatively cool so it wouldn't be a problem to store the raw meat for one to two days.

However, when she was making lunch, Yu Xiaocao discovered that there was barely any white rice or white flour left. Everyone else could endure eating more coarse fare as they had lived through hard times before. However, the princess consort had grown up with a silver spoon in her mouth and had been pampered all of her life. Her complexion had become more sallow in these past two days. Her body was already weak to begin with and she wasn't able to sleep very well on the hard rock bed in the caves. If she couldn't eat well either, it was possible she wouldn't be able to endure much longer.

Yu Xiaocao brought this problem up to Zhu Junyang and analyzed the pros and cons. Yu Hai and Commander Zheng were also present. The group was silent for a bit before Zhu Junyang finally frowned

and said, "No need to worry. Tonight, I'll go into the village and snatch some grain to bring back! The estate's private army should be here by tomorrow or, at the latest, the day after tomorrow. Just endure another two days and then we'll figure things out!"

Yu Hai thought for a bit and nodded his head, "This morning there were red clouds all throughout the sky which means it will probably rain in the early evening. We can use the cover of the rain and strike when they are least expecting it! Our cellar at home has plenty of grain but I just don't know if the pirates moved it all out!"

Zhu Junyang lightly shook his head, "They probably haven't taken all of the grain! The leader of the Wokou pirates and a few of his close subordinates are all living in your residence. They need to eat and drink too, so they absolutely wouldn't take everything to the ships. This evening, we will also investigate their ships. The best case scenario would be to damage them. Once my family's soldiers arrive, they won't be able to escape even if they wanted to!"

Yu Xiaocao blinked her eyes and looked at him glowingly, "You want to damage their ships ah? I can help with this! I'm great at swimming so those little bastards definitely won't be able to spot me!"

"Not okay! This is work reserved for men, not something that a little lass like you can do!" Zhu Junyang gave her a look from his seductive eyes and immediately killed her hope in the cradle.

Yu Xiaocao glowered at him with wide eyes and remarked with disdain, "Someone who has lost against me has no right to decide what I can do!" Usually when she dove in the ocean, Zhu Junyang would also sometimes come along to swim a few laps. His swimming ability was cultivated hastily before he left for his journey to the western hemisphere, so he naturally wasn't as good as Yu Xiaocao, who had been born and bred by the ocean. Even if Xiaocao didn't have her cheat item, he still wouldn't be able to win against her.

"Cao'er, the royal prince's swimming abilities may not be that good but I, your father, swim very well, right? Just stay back here like a good girl and chat with Her Royal Highness to pass the time. This isn't a game!" Yu Hai was on the same side as Zhu Junyang as he also didn't want his daughter to go into a dangerous situation.

Yu Xiaocao pouted her lips and continued to fight, "Father, you also don't believe in me? Don't you already know my abilities by now? I can hold my breath longer in the water than you can ah! Let me go

ah, I promise that I'll listen to everyone's orders and I won't do anything out of the ordinary. You never know, I may be of big help, right? Father~~~~”

She knew that whenever she acted cute in front of her father, his heart would melt. So she deliberately elongated the syllables on that last 'father' she said in an adorable manner. It wasn't only Yu Hai who was affected, even Zhu Junyang felt his defenses collapsing at her act. The two men looked at each other and Zhu Junyang compromised, “You can come along too, but you must stay very close by my side. You're not allowed to act on your own and rush into danger. You're also not allowed to...”

“Alright, I know, I know!” Yu Xiaocao was very pleased with this development and casually waved a hand at him while making a funny face.

Zhu Junyang was speechless, “...”

This little lass only knew how to act cute and adorable around her father. When it came to himself, there wasn't the slightest bit of warmth or charm from her. Did she think he was a pushover? In the future, he needed to show her his strength in order to avoid being underestimated and disrespected!

Young Royal Prince, you were truly making too much of this! Everyone knew that chasing a wife required patience. You have only just started yet you want to show your dominance now? Patience...

In the early evening, a large rainstorm started as expected. The sky darkened into inky blackness and sheets of rain poured from the sky. The 'whooshing' sound of rain in the mountain forest permeated the air as if a waterfall had appeared nearby. Zhu Junyang put on his rain jacket that was woven in the afternoon and looked at the pouring rain outside of the cave. He then said to Yu Xiaocao, “The rain is coming down so hard, so you should stay here instead. Otherwise, you might get sick from the cold and wet!”

Yu Xiaocao was wearing a woven rush raincoat that was in a smaller size and even wore a large woven hat that was slightly too big for her. When she heard him saying this, she rolled her eyes and rebutted, “Why did you change your mind now? If I want to go to the ships and you don't allow me to go, aren't you afraid that I'll sneak along anyway?”

When he thought of how the little lass acted in the past, it was quite likely she would do that! Zhu Junyang felt his head start to throb with a headache. He couldn't help but remind her a few times, “Okay, but remember, you must be at my side the entire...”

“You're so annoying! You're like an old man, always repeating the same things and nagging nonstop! Let's go, it'll take us some time to get out of the mountains, we can't delay this mission!” Yu Xiaocao rudely interjected after becoming impatient.

Zhu Junyang could only helplessly close his mouth. The little lass couldn't be scolded or hit. He really could do nothing against her!

Yu Xiaocao's sharkskin swimsuit was in her room and she didn't take it with her when they fled up the mountain. Zhu Junyang made the decision to first go to the Yu Family to steal grain while also grabbing the little lass's swimsuit at the same time.

The storm came quickly yet settled down fast too. By the time they got to the foot of the mountain, the downpour of rain had already decreased into a misty small rain. Darkness had fallen and all of Dongshan Village was enveloped in the embrace of night. Zhu Junyang, Yu Hai and his daughter, as well as a dozen bodyguards from the mountain villa surreptitiously snuck closer to the Yu Family's old residence.

Perhaps it was because of the earlier storm but all of the pirates living in the Yu Residence had already gone to bed! The head of the Wokou pirates was living in the east courtyard of the residence, so that area was more heavily guarded. The west courtyard was more lackadaisical. There were only two pirates on night guard and both of them were yawning continuously. They stood listlessly under the eaves of the roof. From the main room and the side rooms, the sounds of roaring snores permeated the air.

These snores were a bit like a lullaby and made the people on guard feel even more sleepy. One of the pirates let out a giant yawn and rubbed at the water that came out of his eyes when he yawned. He addressed the other guard, “I'm going to lean against this wall for now and sleep for a bit. Keep an eye out. In a bit, I'll switch with you!”

After he spoke, he sat down on a small stool under the roof and leaned against the wall with his eyes closed. The other pirate struggled to stand up crookedly. The gentle sounds of rain lulled him until his eyelids felt heavier and heavier. Just as they were about to close, he opened them suddenly and stared listlessly into the air. Following that, his eyes slowly started to close again...after a few repeat cycles, his eyes finally closed completely...

In that split second, Zhu Junyang and Commander Zheng, who had been lying in the shadows in ambush, appeared in a flash. Each of them muffled one of the guards and then cruelly twisted their heads with a snap! Zhu Junyang quickly observed the area outside the room and then gave a look towards the

commander of the bodyguards. The two of them dragged the two dead pirates to a more hidden area—his little lass was a bit cowardly so he didn't want her to be scared at the sight of dead people!

The Yu Family's storeroom in the west courtyard had already been cleaned out by the pirates and the sounds of thundering snores could be heard from that room. Yu Hai made a hand signal towards them. The back courtyard had a more hidden cellar and there was quite a bit of grain, dried meat, and preserved ducks and chickens there. He didn't know if that had been discovered yet by the intruders.

Yu Xiaocao followed Zhu Junyang from behind and sneaked around like a thief on her tiptoes as she headed towards the back courtyard of her home. After the storm passed, it washed away all of the mud and dirt on top of the wooden door to the cellar. The wooden door was now apparent. Yu Hai used his strength to open up the door and came down the wooden ladder that was inside. The underground cellar still had grain stored. He pulled up a dozen bags of white rice and white flour and also grabbed a few air-dried ducks and chickens. He also filled a basket with chicken eggs to bring up.

When they exited the underground cellar, the rain had already stopped. Each of the dozen bodyguards had a bag of grain on their back and their hands weren't free either. They were all holding dried ducks, chickens, or baskets of eggs. They silently headed towards the west mountains with the stolen food. As for the pirates in the west courtyard, all of them were still sleeping like a bunch of dead pigs.

Zhu Junyang, Yu Hai, Yu Xiaocao, and Commander Zheng were the only four left in the residence. The moon gate between the east and west courtyard had been tightly closed. Commander Zheng jumped over the wall and then opened the gate. All four of them then entered the east courtyard.

The moon peeked through a crack in the clouds to reveal half of itself and curiously regarded these four people who were still up in the middle of the night. Yu Xiaocao used the light from the moon to look at the vegetables planted in the courtyard. All of the vegetables had been squashed into a giant mess into the ground. She felt a fire of rage light up in her heart. She wished she could incinerate all of these damned Wokou pirates right now to quench her rage!

“Don't feel bad, once my subordinates come over with my men, I will definitely slaughter all of these pirates as revenge for you!” Zhu Junyang casually held onto Xiaocao's small hand and squeezed it gently. Her small hand felt very supple and soft as if she didn't have any bones in it. The skin on her hand felt smooth and fine as if he was touching the best quality mutton-fat jade and it felt very comfortable in his hands. He didn't want to let go, what to do?

“Ahem, ahem!!” Yu Hai noticed that his daughter was being taken advantage of at this point. He didn't care that it was a royal prince doing it, he still felt upset and frowned deeply. He glared at the man who was holding his daughter's hand and it was as if there were flames coming out of his eyes. He wished he had a knife in his hands right now so he could cut off this Deng Tuzi's [1] hands immediately.

Royal Prince Yang couldn't continue to be brazen in front of his future father-in-law. Although he didn't want to let go, he still released his hold at the same time Xiaocao shook him off. Otherwise, it'd be very unlikely that the little lass would be able to push him away with just her little strength.

Xiaocao and Xiaolian's room was on the east side of the main room. They could hear the sounds of around seven to eight pirates snoring from that room.

Fields of Gold Chapter 402 - The Royal Prince Gets Seriously Injured

Zhu Junyang was furious. He had never stepped into his little lass's bedroom before yet these damned bastards were snoring in her room and lying down on the kang bed that she used to sleep on. That was not okay! These bastards all needed to die immediately!

Consequently, the whole room full of Wokou pirates was sent down to greet the King of Hell in their dreams with the help of Zhu Junyang and Commander Zheng.

Yu Xiaocao's room had been completely messed up by the pirates. Her better sets of clothing had been all moved onto the pirates' ship to bring back to their land. Even if they couldn't sell them, the clothing could be given to their own women to wear. As for Yu Xiaocao's and Xiaolian's old clothing, they had all been unceremoniously thrown onto the floor.

Their swimsuits had been stuffed into a corner of their room. It took a bit of searching for Zhu Junyang to finally find them. He had never expected that the first time he entered his little lass's room would be under circumstances like these. He looked at how the lass's bedroom had been defiled and had a sudden desire to poke more holes into these dead pirates with his sword.

However, after thinking a bit, he decided not to act on that impulse. How could the lass live in this room that had been dyed with blood? And all of these dead pirates...they needed to take them out to prevent Xiaocao from having misgivings about living here in the future. Right then and there, he came up with the idea that once the pirates were all eradicated he was going to take out money to have the Yu Family's old residence completely renovated. It wouldn't be comfortable for his little lass to live in a place where people were killed.

The seven to eight pirate corpses that were in the east room had all been moved out by Zhu Junyang and Commander Zheng and thrown into the nearby mountain forest for beasts to drag away. Inside the forest, Yu Xiaocao changed into her sharkskin swimsuit and then the four of them snuck out under the light of the moon towards the beach.

To get to the ocean required going through the entire village. When she saw that the vast majority of houses and residences had been burnt to a crisp in the village, Yu Xiaocao felt rage burning inside her. These bastards were really too evil. Stealing the villagers' things was one thing, but what was the point in burning down their homes? She also rejoiced that the villagers had all fled. Otherwise, those cruel and vicious bastards wouldn't have shown any mercy to them! The sorrowful sight in front of her further solidified her desire to sabotage all of the pirates' ships tonight.

In a dark and secluded area of the reef, Yu Xiaocao easily slipped into the ocean and seemed to become one with the water. It was as if she had turned into a cute dolphin, swimming swiftly in the ocean. Zhu Junyang couldn't catch her even when he tried and could only stare blankly as she swam further and further away to become a hazy black dot in the distance.

'Didn't we agree that you were going to stick close to me ah? You forget your promises so quickly!' Zhu Junyang couldn't vent his temper right now. Fortunately, Yu Hai's swimming abilities were decent and he stuck closely to Xiaocao in the water. Only then did the prince feel his anxiety drop.

Once they got to the bottom of the Wokou pirates' ship, the father and daughter pair were both like oysters and clung tenaciously to the bottom of the ship. With chisels in their hands, they forcefully started to chip at the hull.

[Little Divine Stone, are you there?] Trying to damage the hull of the ship underwater was truly an arduous task. Yu Xiaocao couldn't help but try to find some outside help.

[Don't talk to me, this divine stone doesn't have much energy and I'm currently in the middle of cultivating...] The little divine stone thought that it personally contributed a lot to the previous events, so it decided to use this as an excuse for the near future to not help.

[Such nonsense! You helped me a lot this last time and you managed to save so many lives at the Tanggu Docks and Dongshan Village. You must have gained a lot of energy for these deeds so it's more likely that your cultivation has increased tremendously and your energy restored! Stop making excuses and start helping out now!] It'd be more surprising if Yu Xiaocao believed the lying stone's words.

It was getting harder and harder to fool its master. The little divine stone rolled its eyes. However, Xiaocao wasn't wrong at all. At this time, the little divine stone had gained a lot of energy and the fetters on its body had loosened again. With its cultivation increased, now it could form a material body and speak!

This time its ability to make a physical form wasn't like the past when it could only become a little kitten. As long as it wanted to, it could take the form of a child around three to four years old and also make ordinary people around it hear it talk. This was already a great improvement. It was confident that, before long, it would regain all of its cultivation, break through its chains, and travel to the heavens, leaving behind this godforsaken place. It could finally return to Goddess Nuwa's side...

It accepted its fate and channeled some spiritual energy into Xiaocao's arm. Yu Xiaocao suddenly had supernatural strength in the arm holding the chisel and the damage she inflicted upon the hull increased. After a few more pushes, a giant hole appeared at the bottom of the ship. Ocean water rushed into the ship and the hole became wider and wider. The ship slowly started to sink...

The Wokou pirates, who were on the ship guarding it, very quickly discovered that there was something wrong. Sounds of them jabbering could be heard and some went down into the ship to patch the hole while others looked over the sides of the ship. The other three people weren't like Xiaocao with the little divine stone to help them breathe underwater. Very soon, one of the pirates on the ship had spotted Zhu Junyang swimming in the water.

"The enemy is attacking! There are people in the water attacking the ships!" The pirates on the ship hollered. Following that, the sounds of a few people dropping into the water could be heard. A dozen or so pirates who were good at swimming headed towards the four people to pincer them.

If they were on dry land, these dozen or so pirates wouldn't be able to do much against Royal Prince Yang. However, in the water, Zhu Junyang was like a tiger who had its fangs pulled out and he couldn't put up a real fight. Yu Xiaocao swam up to him and pulled on his arm to take him towards another ship in the water. Yu Hai did the same for Commander Zheng to help the other man swim. Naturally, with another person dragging them down, their speed in the water decreased. The pirates who were swimming after them slowly caught up.

At this time, a group of little dolphins swam over and used their heads to push the humans through the water. Among them was the little dolphin that was Xiaocao's good friend, Xiaobu. Apparently, every time Xiaocao entered the water she emitted the tell-tale signature of spiritual energy, which spread

throughout the water. Xiaobu was able to sense it very quickly and always swam over to find her to meet up.

With the help of the little dolphins, the speed of the four people increased again. They were able to evade the pirates in the water and damage all of the hulls of the other ships that the Wokou pirates had brought over. The number of pirates in the water increased steadily and it was starting to get hard to avoid them. Zhu Junyang and Commander Zheng encountered a few of them and ended up getting injured in the process.

At this time, another batch of pirates were swimming over. Yu Xiaocao made a hand signal towards her father, hinting that he should take the heavily injured Commander Zheng back to land. She, on the other hand, stuck onto the little dolphin's back and secretly headed towards one of the Wokou pirates. Yu Hai was so worried that tears almost came to his eyes. It was such a dangerous situation and his daughter didn't have any skill at fighting. If she was discovered by the pirates, she was done for!

However, he was currently holding onto Commander Zheng, who had lost consciousness. If he didn't bring the heavily injured man to land to get treatment, the commander of the bodyguards would likely perish here. Yu Hai wasn't able to leave behind a wounded person so he could only swim towards land with his heart in his mouth.

Zhu Junyang's eyes almost popped out of his head when he saw her actions. This Yu Xiaocao was really too disobedient. Was this the time to play around? If she wasn't careful, she would end up losing her life...however, despite his worry, he didn't have any methods left for him any more. He was currently tussling with two pirates and couldn't break free from their grasp. Since part of his attention was on that lass, Xiaocao, he wasn't careful and ended up getting stabbed in the leg by one of the pirates. Fresh blood dyed the water around him and started to spread throughout the ocean.

Perhaps it was because the little dolphin swam around the pirate's line of sight, but Xiaocao found it very easy to sneak up on him. The chisel in her hand flashed with a cold light. If someone was looking closely, they would be able to make out a faint golden hue on the tool. The chisel, which had been strengthened with the little divine stone's spiritual power, wasn't an ordinary weapon anymore.

When she was about a meter away from the unsuspecting Wokou pirate, she jumped off the little dolphin's back and silently swam to the pirate. The chisel in her hand flashed and she stabbed it towards the left side of the pirate where the heart was located. It slid into the pirate as if the person in front of her wasn't made of flesh and blood but of tofu instead. The tool embedded itself deeply into the pirate before coming up. Dark colored blood oozed out of the pirate. That pirate didn't even have the chance to struggle before he sank into the deep ocean waters.

This was the first time she had killed a human being in both of her lives. Yu Xiaocao didn't have any time to feel scared or any other emotion when another pirate started swimming in her direction. She hurriedly climbed back up onto the little dolphin's back and had the creature bring her far away. With the little divine stone helping them out, the little dolphin shot off like an arrow from a bow into the water. In a moment, the two of them swam a great distance.

After circling around the scene, Yu Xiaocao came back as she wasn't convinced that the young royal prince's water skills were good enough. She saw that he was currently entangled with two pirates and didn't have the chance to surface to breathe more air. Those two pirates were likely trying to keep him underwater so that they could drown him in the ocean.

In actuality, Zhu Junyang felt like his chest was about to explode from lack of air. His movements gradually slowed down and the wounds on his body increased. He felt like this was the day when his life would be over. The only bit of regret he had in his heart was that he wouldn't have the opportunity to marry Yu Xiaocao and have her become his wife anymore. Sigh...perhaps it was his destiny to spend his life alone, the bane of everyone's existence...

He felt his mind starting to turn dark as bubbles spewed out of his mouth. As his body got heavier and heavier, there was a force that seemed to bring him up. He wasn't sure if it was an illusion or real. When he couldn't hold onto his breath any longer, the substance he breathed in wasn't seawater but fresh air!

Yu Xiaocao had attacked one of the pirates who was besieging the young royal prince and then went underwater to drag the drowning Zhu Junyang away. She then directed the dolphin to swim in the direction of another pirate. Xiaobu seemed to have its heart linked with hers and swam over to drag the two of them away. It swam very quickly to escape with them. She hadn't fed the little dolphin with mystic-stone water in vain.

Zhu Junyang, who was able to breathe again, gradually regained consciousness. When he opened his eyes, he saw Yu Xiaocao's delicate and pretty little face. The expression on that little face looked quite solemn and her pair of large eyes seemed to have a hint of concern. Was she worried about him? Zhu Junyang couldn't help but wonder about this.

Unexpectedly, Xiaocao looked over at this time and met his eyes. When she saw that he was awake, the little lass seemed to let out a sigh of relief and then fiercely glared at him. Zhu Junyang revealed a dazzling smile at her and he didn't even notice the pain of his wounds anymore.

He was currently so close to his little lass and could feel warmth coming off the other person. In addition, it seemed like her body was giving off that particular smell of a young maiden...Eh? Apparently he wasn't dreaming, he...really could breathe underwater! He moved his nose closer to Xiaocao and deeply inhaled. It smelled so good. It was a scent that could clean a person's heart and he couldn't help but want to smell more.

"Are you a dog ah?" Zhu Junyang's breath tickled the back of Yu Xiaocao's neck. Xiaocao couldn't take it anymore. If this guy wasn't injured, she would have pushed him away long ago.

Fields of Gold Chapter 403 - Inhumane

Eh? The little lass could actually speak underwater? Zhu Junyang was even more surprised and his eyes opened wide. This was truly unbelievable! His little lass was too awesome. She not only could speak normally and breathe underwater but he also gained the same skills when he was by her side...perhaps Xiaocao was the reincarnation of the ocean's Dragon King's daughter? Although it seemed a bit far fetched, he couldn't help but think along those lines in the face of the impossible.

Yu Xiaocao pulled Zhu Junyang onto a shallow reef as if she was dragging a dead dog. The Wokou pirates in the water had long been left behind by her. On the dark and silent reef they watched as the ships, which were not far from them, slowly sank into the sea. The ship that they had damaged first had already sunk down and its masts almost weren't visible.

Since Zhu Junyang had lost quite a bit of blood, his head felt very dizzy and heavy. He leaned against a rock and a smile appeared on his ghastly white face, "Although it was dangerous, we still managed to complete our mission perfectly!"

Yu Xiaocao didn't give him a happy look and instead scrunched up her face, "Perfect? Just what was perfect about any of this? It was so perfect that you almost lost your life and became shark feed!"

The smile on his face became even more enchanting and there was a hint of trying to obtain favor in it, "I owe a lot to you for today, Xiaocao. Otherwise my life really would have been lost in this section of seawater. Tell me, how can I thank you properly?"

"Hmph! Who was the one who said that I don't know martial arts and would only slow the group down so you didn't want to bring me along?" Yu Xiaocao trembled as she began to settle her previous grievances.

"It was my bad! I apologize to you for looking down on you!" Zhu Junyang followed her lead and the look he had in his eyes as he gazed at her had become extremely gentle. The little lass absolutely had

some kind of secret. If she didn't want to talk about it, then he was just going to pretend he didn't notice it. He was willing to bury her secret deep within his heart and not say a peep.

Yu Xiaocao slanted a look at him and began to make her request, "Then...in the future if something else like this comes up, will you still refuse to let me come along?"

"Uhh...that really depends on the situation. If it's too dangerous, then it's better if only men like me go. As a lass, all you need to do is hide behind me..." Zhu Junyang immediately refused the request. No matter what, he didn't want his little lass to get her hands stained with blood and he was even more reluctant to have her be put into dangerous situations.

Yu Xiaocao glared angrily at him, "Before we came, that's what you said but look what happened, ah? If there wasn't a little lass like me along, wouldn't all of you men be an easy banquet for these Wokou pirates?!"

"Ahem ahem...how could I become an easy banquet? It's not as though those Wokou pirates are completely savage and are willing to eat raw meat..." Zhu Junyang had lost all of his face so he hemmed and hawed. It took quite a bit of effort for him to sit up on the reef and move his arms and legs. When he was in the water, his wounds had ached furiously and he thought that he had been seriously injured. However, now he discovered that these were all superficial wounds. Although the injured areas were all a bit white from being in the water, none of them were serious.

Zhu Junyang felt quite puzzled by this discovery. He was pretty sure he remembered that there were a few serious injuries. In fact, one of the pirates had hurt him near his heart. How come there weren't any problems there right now? He felt his chest. It ached a little but other than that minor pain, he didn't have any other feelings.

The little divine stone, which was on Yu Xiaocao's wrist, felt quite proud. It arrogantly boasted to its master, [This divine stone saved your man, how are you going to thank this stone?]

[What are you being so arrogant for, speaking like the prince? Where did you learn this from? Saving a person's life is more meritorious than building a seven-level pagoda. This is also something that will help you regain your cultivation and spiritual powers. This is a mutually beneficial act for you to do. That being said, that fellow is absolutely not my man!] Yu Xiaocao was not going to fall for its act. This stone must have some sort of crazy request on mind so she needed to prevent it from acting up.

[Hmph! This divine stone is generous and open-minded so I won't bother to quibble with you!] However, she didn't expect the little divine stone to let it go so easily. Yu Xiaocao didn't know that this fellow was currently smugly thinking, 'Apparently saving the young royal prince is as helpful in increasing my cultivation as saving my master herself. My master is still in denial, hmph hmph! In the future, we'll see what happens to you.' The little divine stone didn't say anything else and went back into the multi-colored stone to continue cultivating.

All of the more serious injuries on Zhu Junyang's body had been healed by the little divine stone while Yu Xiaocao swam through the water with him. The remaining injuries were mostly some superficial wounds that would heal after resting a bit. The only other issue was that he had lost too much blood, but that was easily fixed. When they got back, Xiaocao just had to make him some medicinal cuisine to nurse his body back to full health.

“Oi! At this time, all of the Wokou pirates who were on the ships should be grouping up on land to start looking for us! If we leave now, we will probably be caught by them. What do you think we should do now?” Yu Xiaocao used her foot to lightly kick at Zhu Junyang's leg as she asked.

Zhu Junyang thought for a bit and proposed, “It's probably better if we circle around to the neighboring village. Although there are probably Wokou pirates there, most of them should be sleeping. If we're careful, there should be no problems!”

Yu Xiaocao considered his plan and then nodded, “Okay! Then we'll just circle around to the neighboring village...I don't know if Zhuang Xiaomo was able to escape or not.”

Before the pirates arrived, they had already made a plan with Zhuang Xiaomo that they would wait an hour for him to meet up with them. When everything happened, they still hadn't seen that youth appear. Xiaolian had already mentioned him several times. That little lass was only twelve yet there was spring love in the air already? It was clearly puppy love ah! Sigh, the ancient people definitely matured too early!

Zhu Junyang felt a burst of sourness rise up in his heart and his face darkened. He grumbled peevishly, “My injuries are so serious yet you don't seem to be worried about me for one bit. In fact, you seem to be more worried about that other fellow who has nothing to do with you!”

“Zhuang Xiaomo isn't someone unrelated to me! He's the future son-in-law that my parents both want!” Before Yu Xiaocao had finished what she was saying, she had been pulled into an icy cold hug.

Perhaps he had lost too much blood but Zhu Junyang felt like his entire body was chilly and his head was spinning. He locked the little lass into his arms and sourly remarked, "The son-in-law that they want? That stupid, good-for-nothing, tanned young fellow? How could he compare to my stunning good looks, skillful martial arts and boundless future?"

"Pffftt..." Yu Xiaocao sprayed out a laugh and forcefully pushed him away. When she saw Zhu Junyang stagger after being pushed, she reached out to support the weakened youth as she said, "Just why are you being so jealous right now? Zhuang Xiaomo is someone that my mother wants for Xiaolian's future husband. You're so tyrannical so how could my mother possibly try to find someone else for me besides you?"

Only after hearing that did the jealousy in Zhu Junyang's heart slightly settle down. He pretended to be very weak as he leaned against Xiaocao's shoulder, but he was also afraid that his weight would push her down and make her too tired. On the nearby reef, Commander Zheng had left a secret message hinting that they had already gone back to the West Mountains.

The two of them relaxed and circled around the sandy beach to avoid the Wokou pirates searching for them. They got to the vicinity of Zhuang Xiaomo's village. In the distance, using the hazy light of the moon, they could see some human-shaped figures dangling from the large tree at the mouth of the village. When they got closer, Yu Xiaocao almost vomited from the sight. The figures hanging from the tree were all the villagers that the pirates had slaughtered. They must have been dead for at least two days as their corpses were giving off a dense, rotten scent. After the storm from the evening, all of them had swelled up and didn't resemble people anymore.

Didn't Zhuang Xiaomo run back to warn the villagers that the pirates were coming? How come there were still so many villagers who had been brutally killed? However, how could she know that the village chief of Zhuang Xiaomo's village refused to believe the words of a youth who was half grown and didn't take any of it to heart. Other than the few families who had a good relationship with him that had packed and fled to the nearby hills, the other villagers didn't prepare anything and had met their doom when the pirates arrived.

This village was smaller than Dongshan Village but it still had around eighty to a hundred villagers usually. From the looks of it, at least fifty to sixty of them had been brutally murdered. Yu Xiaocao had also noticed that there were almost no young women among the corpses that were hanging on the trees. Anyone with a brain could tell what had happened to those women. The Wokou pirates were too cruel. Stealing the villagers' belongings was one thing yet they also had to viciously slaughter innocents and rape helpless women! Yu Xiaocao felt simultaneously disgusted and afraid. She ground her teeth in rage.

Zhu Junyang lightly covered her eyes and gently comforted her, "Xiaocao, don't worry! All of these lives will definitely be paid back for you! I will definitely make sure that these bastards pay blood for blood!"

Yu Xiaocao sniffed and then helped him to circle around the village along a tiny muddy trail. They headed towards the West Mountains. Since Zhu Junyang had been injured, their speed was very slow. By the time they entered the mountain, the first rays of light from the sun had just peeked over the horizon. The sounds of birds chirping gradually filled the air.

Her head was still filled with the mournful images of the village. Fortunately, the village chief of Dongshan Village had trusted her and the Yu Family and made a wise decision. His decision saved all of the lives at Dongshan Village. Their lost possessions could be slowly earned back but people who lost their lives could never come back!

The two of them silently trudged through the forest with difficulty. Suddenly, Zhu Junyang stopped moving and made a gesture to her, telling her to be quiet. He was listening to the sounds in the vicinity.

"What's wrong? Did you hear something? Is it a person or animal?" Yu Xiaocao immediately became nervous. Could it be the Wokou pirates had chased them into the mountain? Although Royal Prince Yang was very skilled at fighting, he had been heavily injured. If they were in the water, she might have some skills to get them out of a bad situation. However, on dry land, she couldn't be of any help. What should they do? What should they do?!

Zhu Junyang pointed at a large tree behind them and helped her climb up. He followed up behind her with a lot of effort and they used the dense tree leaves to cover up their figures.

Before long, the figure of an adult man appeared underneath the tree and a familiar voice could be heard, "So weird, I'm pretty sure I shot that animal. How come I can't find it now?"

"There's a blood trail here. If we follow it, we will definitely find it. Xiaomo, don't be in a hurry. That dumb roe deer absolutely can't run for too far!" This was the voice of the adult man. Yu Xiaocao wasn't very familiar with it.

However, she could already guess the identity of this man and the worry within her heart gradually dissipated away. Zhuang Xiaomo wasn't too stupid. At least he knew to hide in the deep mountain forest. Luckily, he didn't lose his life. Otherwise, she wasn't sure how to break such news to Xiaolian.

"The crisis is over, it's Zhuang Xiaomo and the others!" Yu Xiaocao quietly informed Zhu Junyang. Zhuang Xiaomo, who was under the tree, suddenly raised his head to look at the leaves above him. His dark and bushy eyebrows slowly came together in a frown and he also slowly raised the bow in his hands in the direction of the tree top.

"Oh ho! This fellow has some pretty good ears on him. Too bad he's on the older side. If he was able to get formal training when he was young, he absolutely wouldn't be any less skillful than Zheng Yun and the others!" Since the other person had already spotted him, Zhu Junyang naturally also raised his voice.

Yu Xiaocao rolled her eyes at him and revealed her small head from the cover of the leaves as she hurriedly said, "Zhuang Xiaomo, it's me, Yu Xiaocao!"

When he heard her voice, Zhuang Xiaomo lowered the bow in his hands. The few men behind him only discovered that the tree was hiding people after they heard the sound of Zhu Junyang's voice.

Fields of Gold Chapter 404 - It'd be a Shame to not Touch

Zhu Junyang jumped off the tree and the effort caused the wounds on his legs to split open. He grimaced from the sudden pain. Yu Xiaocao scrambled down from the tree and didn't forget to remark caustically, "Serves you right! Trying to show off when you're injured, must hurt a lot!"

Zhuang Xiaomo had a slight smile on his face as he looked at Yu Xiaocao, "Xiaocao, how come you're over here? You didn't flee with the rest of the villagers into the mountain?"

"We were destroying the Wokou pirates' ships!" Yu Xiaocao briefly summarized what they did and reached out to support Zhu Junyang. She was currently regretting that she didn't bring any of her wound balm along.

Zhuang Xiaomo noticed that Royal Prince Yang was deathly pale and hurried over to support him as well, "Your Highness got injured? Is it serious? I know a type of medicinal plant that can stop bleeding and I just saw it earlier. Older Brother Jiang, could you go pick some for us please?"

The man who had been called Older Brother Jiang made a noise in assent and headed back in large strides. The other villagers smiled kindly at them and continued to follow the blood trail of their injured prey.

Zhuang Xiaomo asked again in concern, "It was only the two of you? That's way too dangerous! Xiaocao, are you alright ah?"

"You also know how well I swim. I won't speak of other things but as long as I want to run away, there's no one else who will be able to catch me in the water! This guy's swimming skills are too lousy and had been caught by the pirates. He got injured when fighting with them." Yu Xiaocao gave Zhu Junyang a faint look of dislike.

Zhu Junyang felt helpless as he couldn't refute her statements. He was a high and noble royal prince and had defeated plenty of enemies before. Now he was like a downtrodden phoenix who was no stronger than a chicken. Getting injured wasn't a big deal but he had lost a lot of prestige in front of his little lass and even received her disdain. He could tell that his desire to become a manly husband in front of her was going to be a hard journey!

"Then...did you guys succeed?" Zhuang Xiaomo vehemently hoped that Xiaocao and the others were able to damage the damned pirates' ships beyond repair. His heart was filled with hatred towards the pirates. Last night, he and a few other villagers had snuck into the village and saw the grisly scene of the dead villagers. Almost all of the men, women, elderly, and children of the village, other than a few young women, had been brutally killed and their bodies unceremoniously hung up. As for the women who had been taken by the Wokou pirates, they were currently living a life worse than hell...

"With me, the graceful white shark, at the scene, we definitely wouldn't let any ship go. We sunk all of the ships outside our village. We didn't leave a single ship afloat for those disgusting dogs! I also killed quite a few of those bastards in the water! I only regret that I couldn't kill a few more!" Yu Xiaocao once again recalled the images of those slaughtered villagers as she righteously remarked.

Zhuang Xiaomo's voice filled with emotion and he sniffed a few times before he said, "I'm so useless. I tried my best to convince the village chief for a long time but I didn't get his trust. The village chief said that our two villages are pretty close to the port's authorities so the Wokou pirates wouldn't dare to attack us. He refused to believe my words! Since it was futile, I could only convince a few families who were close to mine one by one! By the time we had hastily packed some things, it was already past the time for me to meet up with you guys. Furthermore, the pirates had silently snuck into the village so the

only thing we could do was flee into the mountain and find a cave to hide in. Perhaps those Wokou pirates were only preoccupied with killing the people in the village and didn't find out that they were missing around thirty more people. That's probably how we avoided being chased by them...oh right, are you guys okay? Xiaolian...she's not injured right?"

Yu Xiaocao lightly shook her head and sighed, "Everyone has their own fate, so don't blame yourself Xiaomo. Don't worry, all of us are doing well. As for whether Xiaolian is doing well or not, you can come with us and see for yourself, right? We stole a bunch of grain yesterday night, so how about you come with us? That place is spacious and also safe..."

Zhuang Xiaomo thought for a bit and then nodded his head, "We're currently hiding too close to the village, so we've all been living in fear for the past two days that the pirates will come after us. Once Older Brother Jiang comes back, I'll ask him and the others if they want to come with us!"

Older Brother Jiang came back very quickly and he had a few herbs in his hands that had thorns on it. Yu Xiaocao swiftly cut off the thorns and used her hands to mash the plant into a paste while also secretly adding some mystic-stone water. She then put the mixture on Zhu Junyang's wounds. His originally painful wounds immediately felt a cooling sensation covering them. Zhu Junyang was very surprised at the efficacy of this medicinal plant that was commonly found in the mountains. How could it be so effective at treating external wounds that it was even better than the Snow Jade Wound Balm from the Imperial Palace?

He couldn't help but eye the little lass who was helping him bind his wounds. This absolutely had to do with something from her. Zhu Junyang felt a bit helpless. This lass didn't know how to disguise her actions one bit. If someone else found out, what good could happen of this? It looked like he needed to help her create a smokescreen in the future. Otherwise, the little lass might fall into the trap of some unscrupulous person!

By the time all of his wounds had been poulticed with the medicinal herb, the other men who had been chasing after the dumb roe deer returned with their prey on hand. When these people heard that there was a safe and spacious hiding place and that they could get some grain, they immediately were tempted.

Yu Xiaocao went to the cave that these people were hiding in. It was a small and cramped dark little cave that was harboring around thirty-some villagers. There wasn't even enough space for these people to lie down, so they could only sit to sleep at night. These people had pretty much finished all of the grain they had brought with them. Most of them were listlessly leaning against the stone walls. When they saw that their menfolk had caught a roe deer, all of their eyes started glowing with the light of hunger.

Only after they ate could they have the strength to travel. The roe deer only weighed around a few dozen catties, so everyone only got around one catty's worth of meat in the end. With some food to whet their hunger, these people all quickly packed up their belongings and followed behind Yu Xiaocao and the prince to slowly head towards the hidden valley.

At this time, Zhu Junyang was feeling a lot better and his body regained some energy. On the whole journey back, he didn't end up slowing them down at all. Yu Xiaocao supported him the whole way in order to reduce the amount of effort he had to use.

By the time it was noon, the group of people finally arrived at the outskirts of the dense and foggy forest. A few bodyguards from the mountain villa were all waiting for them anxiously.

Last night, when Princess Consort Jing found out that her youngest son was going to bring some people to attack the Wokou's ships, she felt anxious and jittery the whole night and couldn't sleep. When she saw Yu Hai come back with Commander Zheng, who was quite skilled, on his back, she didn't see her youngest son with them. She became even more worried. If it wasn't for some maids pulling her back forcefully, she likely would have left to go find her son herself!

Zhu Junyang was brought in by a few of the bodyguards. Princess Consort Jing noticed that her son was deathly pale and rushed up anxiously to ask about his wounds. Zhu Junyang briefly went over what happened and said that his wounds were all superficial and had been treated already, so he wasn't in a bad condition. Only after he walked a few steps to let his mother observe him did Princess Consort Jing finally relax.

Yu Xiaocao, on the other hand, was currently busy helping the other villagers settle in. Fortunately, the caves in this area were all linked so these people didn't have to squeeze in with the hundred or so villagers from Dongshan Village. After she helped them settle in, Zhuang Xiaomo impatiently followed Xiaocao from behind to arrive at the Yu Family's cave.

When the youth saw Yu Xiaolian bustling about making food, he finally relaxed and was convinced that she was safe. Madam Liu spotted him and hurriedly pulled on his hand to ask how he was doing. She had been concerned about him for these past two days and she fretted about whether he had encountered something bad.

At this time, Zhu Junyang had just exited his lady mother's cave and had seen the whole interaction between Madam Liu and Zhuang Xiaomo. Jealousy surged in his heart. He walked up to Yu Xiaocao and pouted towards Madam Liu and Zhuang Xiaomo as he remarked in a voice full of jealousy, "Your mother is so biased. I got injured but I didn't hear a single word of concern from her..."

Yu Xiaocao raised her eyes to look at him and suppressed the laughter bubbling up, "Young Royal Prince, how old are you this year?"

Zhu Junyang couldn't make heads or tails of her unexpected question. He lowered his head to look at her and he had a perplexed look in his seductive eyes. However, he still obediently replied, "I'm nineteen ah...I'll say, you really don't care about me ah. You don't even know how old I am!"

"I can't believe you remember you're nineteen ah! I had thought that you were nine years old from the way you're acting! Isn't it a bit too childish of you to get jealous over something like this?" Yu Xiaocao had a slight smile on her face and the dimples on her rosy cheeks were barely visible.

Zhu Junyang felt his face flush from her teasing and he pinched her cheeks as he helplessly said, "You ah! You wouldn't feel comfortable if you don't tease me at least once a day, right?"

Yu Xiaocao snickered and then changed the subject, "I have some wound balm made by my pharmaceutical workshop. I'll give you a bottle and you can have Older Sister Meixiang rub them on your wounds."

"Meixiang is currently helping my lady mother rest and is too busy..." Zhu Junyang looked hopefully at Yu Xiaocao, as if he was a little kid trying to beg for a piece of candy.

"Isn't there also Older Sister Lanxiang ah?" Yu Xiaocao didn't fall for his excuse.

Zhu Junyang immediately replied, "None of them have the time..." As he talked, he slanted a look at the servants who were cheerfully waiting around. All of the servants, whether they were male or female, immediately began to pretend to be busy and bustled around the two of them doing random tasks.

Yu Xiaocao speechlessly glared at him and then brought him into her family's cave. She had him take off his clothes until he was only wearing his underwear and instructed him to lie down on one of the stone beds.

Yu Xiaocao didn't even have a hint of a blush on her face. She first used the mystic-stone water to help him wash his wounds clean and then carefully spread some of her special wound balm on all the injuries. As she spread the ointment on him, she also didn't forget to sneakily make a few passes on Zhu Junyang's well-muscled abdomen. She thought in admiration, 'The young royal prince looks thin but he has a great body. He's the type that looks skinny when clothed but has a finely sculpted body when unclothed.'

"Ahem ahem! Are you done touching me? Are you pleased with what you see ah?" Zhu Junyang had a slight flush on his cheeks. His little lass was definitely different from other girls. When confronted with a half-naked adult man, she not only didn't have any sign of bashfulness or embarrassment, but she also had a hint of admiration in her eyes. Her unruly little hands had been feeling his abdomen to and fro. He was pretty sure he didn't injure that area...

Yu Xiaocao calmly helped him put on his top clothing as if she was in no way related to that earlier little lecher who had been feeling the young royal prince up. She even nodded her head righteously, "Mhm mhm! You have a great body!"

Zhu Junyang didn't know what to do with her. Was his little lass still too young to understand some things ah? She didn't seem the least bit concerned in the differences between men and women. Sigh...she was still too young.

"Lass, in the future, if there are any men who are half-naked in front of you, you must immediately hide. If you're able, you should hit them stoutly too..." Zhu Junyang couldn't help but give her a few reminders. He was afraid that one day his little lass might be spirited away by a big, perverted wolf.

Yu Xiaocao rolled her eyes at him and revealed an expression on her face that basically said: 'do you think I'm an idiot?'. She then said, "Then...aren't you half-naked in front of me now? You don't even have your pants on. Shouldn't I be beating you up right now ah?"

Fields of Gold Chapter 405 - Total Defeat

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Zhu Junyang choked on his own saliva and coughed a few times, "How could those people compare to me? What type of relationship do we have? In the future, I'm the person who will be marrying you..."

"Don't be so sure, you still haven't passed the tests yet! Who knows if another beautiful maiden will catch your eye and you'll forget all about me ah!" Yu Xiaocao ruthlessly pushed aside the still bare chest that had come over to her. She was getting ready to leave the cave to eat lunch. From the previous

evening until now, she only had a small piece of roe deer meat and it was only roasted plainly over a campfire. It couldn't be considered to be very appetizing.

However, her arm was suddenly held captive by him. She raised her head to look at Zhu Junyang, who had a solemn and serious expression on his face. He reiterated, "I won't be interested in anyone else, so stop hoping for anything else. Just wait obediently for me to marry you!" When he finished talking, he moodily put on the clothing that the servants sent over and flung his arms as he left.

Angry now? Yu Xiaocao shrugged her shoulders and followed behind him to leave the cave. Her whole family was waiting for her to eat lunch. The spread was quite splendid. There were bowls of glistening white grains of rice, a plate hand-shredded dried chicken, a plate of stir-fried common purslane, and tureen of egg drop soup. Zhuang Xiaomo had also been invited over for the meal, and Xiaolian had even somewhat shyly served him a chicken leg.

The rice that they had painstakingly stolen back yesterday night had already been divided to the other villagers. Regardless of whether they were men, women, elderly, or children, every person had been given five catties of rice and two catties of white flour. It was enough for everyone to eat for the next two days. The remaining surplus was stored in one of the outer caves. They had just divvied up grain rations to Zhuang Xiaomo and the others, so there was still enough left to use for another two days.

After they finished lunch, Zhu Junyang slept so heavily that it was almost impossible to wake him up that evening. Yu Xiaocao had used the medicines within her box and the mystic-stone water to simmer a pot of tisane that could replenish the blood and restore the body. She was planning on making sure he drank some every day for the next three days.

Who would have expected that he would disappear the next morning and even took a dozen bodyguards with him? The note he left behind said that the troops from the imperial prince's residence had already arrived last night and that Head Steward Liu had come over to report this himself. When Head Steward Liu saw the scattered wounds all over his master's body, he silently rebuked himself for not going along with the master. However, even if there were ten of him in that situation, he likely wouldn't be of much help to his master. After all, his swimming abilities were too average. He was the type of person who was considered a hero on land and a useless nobody in the water.

Yu Xiaocao was quite relaxed about all of this. The young royal prince had told her that he had brought over half of the imperial prince's troops along, which was around eight hundred soldiers. The Wokou

pirates at Dongshan Village only had a hundred or so people on their side. The pirates would absolutely be slaughtered and captured with these well-trained troops fighting against them.

The pirates, who were having the time of their life at Dongshan Village, would have already left if Watanabe Hiroshi had listened to the urgings of his advisors. Over a dozen of their comrades had somehow passed away that night and even their ships had been sunk. What did that mean? It meant that there was a highly skilled enemy around them! If this enemy wanted their lives, it would be easy for this mysterious person to kill them.

Unfortunately, Watanabe Hiroshi was a very conceited individual who was very concerned with his image. They hadn't completed their mission of sweeping away loot and even lost all of their ships. In front of General Yamaguchi, did he still have any prestige left compared to his other rivals? Although he lost the loot, he needed to make up for his lost reputation. He was determined to enter the mountain forest to attack the villagers after resting for one day. He was aiming to do the same as the other pirates in the neighboring village: slaughter every single villager and be able to vent his temper!

Such a hubristic individual wasn't willing to listen to any of his advisors, who urged him to meet up with the general at the docks. In fact, he even heavily slapped one of his most trusted advisors for insubordination. All of the people around him felt quite helpless. They were stuck with a leader who was blinded by arrogance, so they could only go down with him.

Before Watanabe Hiroshi could gather all of his remaining men, the troops from the imperial prince's estate descended like a bunch of avenging gods and gave them no chance to fight back. The Wokou pirates dropped their weapons in an attempt to flee in panic when they saw their opponent's superior numbers and massively better training. However, Dongshan Village had long been surrounded by the soldiers from the estate. No matter how the pirates tried to run, they couldn't escape from the troops.

Before an hour had passed, the battle had ended. The pirates in the village had either been killed on site or captured. Zhu Junyang remembered the grisly sight of the neighboring village. If his lass hadn't been playing in the ocean when she did and discovered the Wokou pirates approaching, then those people who were dead, hanging on the tree, might also...

Zhu Junyang didn't dare to think further down that line. He had almost lost his little lass. The more he thought, the more resolute he became to take an eye for an eye. No matter how the pirates begged for mercy, not a single one of them was left alive. All of them had been unceremoniously hung from the old elm tree at the mouth of the village!

The two bodyguards who came with him had already gotten a good understanding of the situation at the neighboring village. Once the battle at Dongshan Village ended, the imperial prince's troops immediately headed out to the other village. The pirates, who had already gathered all of the loot they wanted, were now trapped by the soldiers on the beach and not a single one was able to flee. The pirates on the ships could tell that things were not going well and were about to make a run for it. However, the archers in the troops shot fire arrows at the ships. After the rain of arrows fell, all of the ships burst into flames. Not a single ship out of the four in the water had a good outcome.

In the past three days, Yu Xiaocao's godfather was unexpectedly unable to come by to check up on her. This meant that the situation at the docks wasn't going too well. Zhu Junyang led the eight hundred soldiers under his command and rushed to the docks majestically.

The dozens of ships worth of pirates under General Yamaguchi's command were all warriors from his own clan who had undergone strict training. They were brave and not afraid of death. Furthermore, they had the advantage in numbers. The most important fact was that they were good at battles on the water and knew when to attack and retreat. If their opponents had a tight defense and the situation wasn't optimistic, the pirates would just flee into the water! Consequently, the county's soldiers and troops sent from the town and prefectural city weren't able to gain an advantage over the Wokou pirates. Thus, the whole situation had fallen into a stalemate.

General Yamaguchi wasn't an arrogant idiot like Watanabe Hiroshi. When he saw that the imperial prince's private troops, who were all well-trained, were coming over from the direction of Dongshan Village, he knew that things had turned against him. The Tanggu Docks were heavily guarded and they weren't able to crack such a tough nut in a short period of time. Thus, he sounded the order to retreat.

The dozens of pirate ships headed to the deep ocean to flee. The ships from the prefectural ships caught up to them as they ran and, after a tempestuous battle at sea, ten pirate ships were lost. The rest had finally managed to escape from the prefectural city's ships and sped off. By the time Zhu Junyang and his private troops got to the docks, they could only watch the pirate ships disappear into the horizon.

"Looks like you know how to run fast!" Zhu Junyang cursed towards the deep ocean and then walked towards General Fang, who looked quite downtrodden and exhausted.

Fang Zizhen rubbed at his tired face and bowed toward Royal Prince Yang before he hastily asked, "How's Dongshan Village right now? Are my daughter and the others doing alright?"

“The villagers from Dongshan Village fled at the right time and all of them are safe deep within the West Mountains. Unfortunately, the neighboring village wasn't as lucky. Almost all of the villagers there were massacred!” Zhu Junyang couldn't help but sigh at the thought.

Commander Sun came over with one of his assistants and greeted Royal Prince Yang, “Royal Prince, you came at just the right time! Those Wokou pirates are too cunning. They always made a ton of feints and never committed, which made it very tiring for us to defend. Luckily they saw that the winds weren't behind them and finally left. If this battle with them was prolonged, we wouldn't have enough men here in the county to fight. Otherwise, we wouldn't have begged for immediate help from everyone in our vicinity.”

“The emperor has already sent troops over and I'm pretty sure they'll arrive within the next few days.” Zhu Junyang was quite satisfied with the speed of his family's private troops. He exchanged a few other words with Commander Sun yet his heart was still thinking about his little lass who was hiding in the mountains. Thus, he very quickly took his troops and left the docks.

Fang Zizhen also said his farewells to Commander Sun so he could go to Dongshan Village to take a look. He was originally responsible for overseeing the construction of the harbor at Tanggu and it wasn't his job to repel the pirates and defend the town. However, as a general, he couldn't stop himself from butting in when there was war on the horizon. Thus, he stood out at the first moment to help fight against the pirates. Commander Sun promised him that he would bring up his bravery and deeds to the imperial court later on.

Fang Zizhen clearly didn't care about any of this and waved a hand at the other man. He mounted his horse and rode behind the royal prince as he inquired about his goddaughter's circumstances. When he found out that his little lass had helped to sink four to five pirate ships and even saved the prince's life, he guffawed loudly. He stroked the whiskers on his cheeks and proudly announced, “This is truly an example of how an excellent father has an excellent daughter ah! My daughter is truly a woman beyond comparison and is not less than any man!”

Zhu Junyang silently roasted the older man in his heart, 'What do you mean about your daughter? Her surname is Yu not Fang and she's not even blood-related to you. What's the point of you being proud about this?'

The eight hundred men from the imperial prince's private army were now stationed in the remains of Dongshan Village. The first thing that Zhu Junyang did when he got back was to bring some people along to destroy the Yu Family's old residence. The bastard pirates had slept in these rooms and he couldn't bear for his little lass to live in such a place anymore! If the lass objected to this decision, she could go

find him! He was more than willing to take out money to have them rebuild a bigger and better residence for her family.

Fang Zizhen was quite perplexed when the prince destroyed the residence. After finding out the details, he, as her godfather, also raised his hands up in support. So what if they didn't have a place to live in for now? Not a problem, he had a large residence in town for them. Not only could it easily handle the whole Yu Family, but it could also easily handle her Oldest Aunt's family too. There was plenty of room for everyone!

When the Dongshan villagers descended the mountain and saw the ruined remains of their homes, they all started to wail inconsolably. Many of the older folks revealed dumbfounded expressions as they had no idea what the future would hold. Most of the families here were fine and had enough money on hand to rebuild their homes. However, there was a portion of families who didn't have a lot of resources and were so poor that they were happy just having enough food to fill their stomachs. Where would they get the money to rebuild their house?

Yu Xiaocao felt very sympathetic towards these people and wanted to help them in some way. However, she was also afraid that once she opened her mouth, more things would come tumbling towards them. While she hesitated, Zhu Junyang proclaimed, "Tanggu is under my feudal jurisdiction, so you are all technically under my governance. We cannot stop disasters in their tracks and can only endure and survive through hard times. Every family who had their homes ruined will get thirty taels from me!"

He had decided on the amount of money to give to these villagers after consulting with the Yu and Liu Families. Xiaocao's Oldest Aunt had a house made out of bricks and tile and it was one of the only homes, other than the Yu Family's and village chief's, to be constructed this way. They spent no more than twenty taels to build their residence. In the countryside, people crafted their own mud bricks to build a house and only needed to invite some people over and pay them in food for their help. Houses made of straw were even more simple as rice straw was an even cheaper construction material. A five-room house made of rice straw didn't require spending more than ten taels to build.

When the Dongshan villagers heard his announcement, all of them were deeply grateful. Under the lead of the village chief, they all kowtowed and proclaimed their thanks to the prince.

Zhu Junyang lightly waved a hand and had them stand up. He then glanced at Yu Xiaocao with a proud look in his eyes.

At this time, Yu Xiaocao was currently puffing up her cheeks in anger as she sulked moodily. Her family's residence was perfectly fine just a day ago. How could it become destroyed and become a pile of ruins in just one day?

Fields of Gold Chapter 406 - Rebuilding the Residence

Zhu Junyang's explanation was that when the troops were fighting with the pirates, they weren't careful and ended up damaging the residence.

Bah! Nonsense! Who would believe that? Were you driving a bulldozer around when you were fighting the pirates? Yu Xiaocao didn't believe a single word of his lie. This fellow must have done this on purpose! But why would he do such a thing? He destroyed the residence that her whole family lived in and they were now homeless, yet he wanted her to be grateful. They didn't even have a gate left standing!

“What should we do now? Do we have to live in town now?” Yu Xiaocao glared at Zhu Junyang as she fretted over this. Although their residence in town wasn't large, it was spacious enough that the main wing could house her immediate family. But what about her Oldest Aunt's family? And her Eldest Granduncle's family? Were they...supposed to be like the other villagers and raise a temporary awning to live in?

Xiaolian came over, puffing with anger, as she furiously exclaimed, “Our family's piggery hasn't been destroyed and we still have around a hundred pigs left in there! Those bastard pirates only concerned themselves with taking food and didn't even feed them. Other than the ones they slaughtered, there are still a decent number of pigs that died from sickness and starvation. The remaining pigs are so hungry that they're staggering when they walk!”

Senior Servant Yang, who was in charge of the piggery, was quite distressed, “Those evil bastards! We had three hundred pigs and the pirates only left us with this many! Miss Xiaolian, is there still pig fodder and feed in the piggery? We can't have anything else happen to the remaining a hundred so pigs...Old Man, let's go. Come with me to take a look!”

“I'm going along too!” Xiaolian was quite concerned about the pigs they raised. Luckily, most of the pigs that died of starvation or sickness were the smaller pigs that had just been caught this past spring. The pirates had killed a few of the older ones and half-grown ones to eat. The rest of the pigs only became thinner.

The piggery was the building that had been preserved the most out of all of the village. It was able to house around twenty some workers and had storerooms filled with wheat bran and rice bran. None of the feed had been touched. The remaining pigs in the piggery all squealed weakly. Senior Servant Yang

and her husband immediately lit up the stoves in the piggery and started to make pig feed. Perhaps the pigs were able to smell the scent of food but all of them started to cry and squeal in hunger.

Zhu Junyang watched as Yu Xiaocao conversed with Zhuang Xiaomo and the rest of his village, "The dead from your village have already been buried. That place isn't suitable for human habitation anymore. What are your plans?"

The village chief of Dongshan Village thought for a bit and then proposed, "If you guys don't mind, you're all welcome to live in Dongshan Village ah! I'll divvy out some land for all of you and then you can start building your homes..."

Zhuang Xiaomo didn't really care. He was fine as long as he had enough to eat and a place to live. That being said, if he could now live in Dongshan Village, he'd be even closer to Xiaolian. What problem would he have with that?

The remaining six families first discussed this amongst themselves and then decided to become a part of Dongshan Village. Their reasoning was simple. Dongshan Village was one of the most famous villages in the area for being prosperous and the village had Yu Hai's farming business that was doing very well. The Yu Family often gave the villagers opportunities to make more money. Furthermore, Dongshan Village was the closest village to their old village, so those who didn't want to be too far away from their old home thought that this was the best solution. Furthermore, if they settled down here, Royal Prince Yang wouldn't discriminate against them and would also give them thirty taels a family to build a new house!

Right then and there, the village head divvied up some plots of land for Zhuang Xiaomo and the other families. Zhuang Xiaomo had been given an area close to the West Mountain and was only about two to three hundred meters away from the Yu Family's old residence. The tanned youth was quite pleased with this arrangement.

After mourning for a bit, all of the villagers started bustling about again. The men started to cut trees to build temporary shelters with their women helping them. The elderly took the children to scrounge about the remains of their old homes to see if they could find anything usable. Although the royal prince was willing to subsidize them, they had gotten used to scrimping and saving. The more they could save the better!

Yu Xiaocao's Oldest Aunt's family and Eldest Granduncle's family were all planning on building temporary shelters in the vicinity of their homes. That way it would be easier for them to keep an eye on

things when the houses were being built. The Yu Family was also concerned about their businesses in the village and didn't really want to move into town. Zhu Junyang warmly invited them to go live in the mountain villa but had been resolutely refused by Yu Xiaocao. He glared at her sulkily after that.

Fang Zizhen was still concerned about the harbor. When he saw that his daughter was fine, he headed back to the docks. Before he left, he gave the key to the Zhao Family's residence to Xiaocao and said, "I already took a look and my martial uncle's home hasn't been touched. If you guys don't want to go into town, you can live there instead!"

It looked like there were no better options available. Yu Xiaocao took the key and then spoke to her Oldest Aunt and Eldest Granduncle, "The worker rooms in the piggery are still empty. Oldest Aunt, Eldest Granduncle, if you guys don't mind the odor of the piggery, you all can live there for now."

Summer was about to come and the rainy season was imminent. Temporary shacks naturally weren't as comfortable as living in the piggery, which had been sturdily built with bricks and had a tiled roof. Yu Caifeng thought for a bit and said, "I need to go back to the prefectural city's braised food shop to oversee some things. Yaner and Junping are still young so I'm not sure they can handle everything. How about...we let your Oldest Uncle handle the house getting rebuilt here and I take Fangping back to the prefectural city to check on things?"

Earlier, their two families had discussed things over. The whole village was now casting mud bricks so no one had the time to help anyone else. The two families decided to hire some bricklayers from the town to rebuild their homes. Neither of them lacked money. In fact, they were planning on rebuilding their residences next to each other to become neighbors. This way, it'd be easier for them to check up on each other and help when needed. They only needed to spend money on the bricklayers' wages to have them work on their house. Thus, Liu Hu alone was more than enough to oversee things.

Yu Lichun discussed things with his sons and they felt that Xiaocao's proposal was quite good. They packed up their luggage and left with Erya to go live in the piggery. All of the other people in the village watched enviously as they left. In their eyes, having a proper roof over their heads was the most fortunate thing at this time.

Madam Zhang and her son sidled up and tried to get a handout. They both knew that Old Yu was the most softhearted out of all of them and so they found him, "Old Man, for the sake of our previous relationship as husband and wife, can you give us something? Dashan also called you father for more than thirty years."

Old Yu had finally seen the truth. This mother and son pair could flatter you like the gods when they needed something from you. However, once you had no value to them, they would kick you to the side of the road as if you were a stray dog. If he still fell for these fair-weather folks' tricks, he would truly be the dumbest idiot in the whole village.

“Don't even think about it. The piggery is Dahai's whole family's business. They can let whoever they want to live there. It's none of my business.” Old Yu put his hands behind his back in preparation to go to the Zhao Family's residence at the foot of the mountain with his son.

Madam Zhang grabbed onto his arm and pleaded, “You're Yu Hai's biological father, isn't his property your property? How could he not dare to listen to you if you say a word? The word 'filial' will stop him in his tracks! Old Man, I noticed that Yu Hai listens to everything that the lass, Xiaocao, says. I heard that the lass even has all of the housing deeds, business contracts and money in the family. Just think, she's a bad investment and who knows who'll she marry in the future! You can't just let all of that money go to an outsider in the future! You're the head of the family so you need to set down some rules. You can't just let the younger generation just walk all over you!”

“What's wrong with Xiaocao having all of those assets in her hands? The family's early ripening vegetables, watermelons, the cooperation with the Zhou Family, and stores in the prefectural city...which of these weren't ideas that came from Xiaocao first? The vast majority of money from the family had all come from her. Even if she took everything as her dowry when she got married, no one in the family would say a word! Is handling the money you made yourself considered being rash and arrogant now? Then, are you saying that if we give everything to you instead, pay for all your living expenses, that's not being rash and arrogant??”

Old Yu only planned on living out the rest of his days leisurely with the Yu Family. Other than helping out here and there, he had no desire to meddle with anything else. His grandchildren had their own ways of life. As an old man who had been a fisherman for all of his life, it was better if he didn't interfere too much!

“Just look! I wasn't implying that at all, I was only thinking for the Yu Family as a whole...”

Before Madam Zhang could continue on her attempt to persuade him, Old Yu interrupted her, “As an outsider, you have no need to be concerned with my Yu Family's affairs! Since we were a married couple for so long, I'm going to give you some advice. You two don't really have much going for you in the village. It'd probably be better if you both went into town or the prefectural city and rented a place to do some small business there. You'll also be able to keep an eye on Xiaobo then. I can't say anything else but I know that Xiaocao's pickled vegetable store in the city is doing quite well. The city is so large so

you'll easily be able to find a small market to sell some pickled vegetables. Doing that is better than just getting by in Dongshan Village.”

For the sake of his life, Yu Dashan disregarded his mother and lost his wife. All of the other people who had lost contact with their loved ones hadn't had any news even now. It was possible that their family members were gone forever. For the past few days, all of the villagers side-eyed or glared at Yu Dashan whenever they saw him. Their pointed looks stabbed him and made him feel low. If he continued to stay in Dongshan Village, he'd never be able to lift his head again.

When he heard Old Yu's proposal, he was quite tempted and said to his mother, “Mother, what Uncle Yu is saying makes sense! Aren't you always fretting about Youngest Brother ah? We can do some business in the prefectural city and also take care of Youngest Brother. That way he'll be able to focus on studying. During the next period, he'll be able to pass the exams and become a county-level official. I'm pretty strong and I can find some work in the city to supplement some income for us...”

Madam Zhang was persuaded by his viewpoint. After receiving the housing subsidy, the mother and son pair left for the prefectural city the very next day. Later on, the people back in Dongshan Village would occasionally get some scattered news about them. It was said that they had found a small residence to rent with other people in the southern district of the prefectural city where commoners lived. They had started buying some popular pickled vegetables wholesale from the Yu's Pickled Vegetable Shop and were selling them at a nearby market. Their business was decent and they made around a tael of income every month. Yu Dashan went out every day to do hard labor and his standard of living had improved compared to when he lived in the village. All of this was in the future!

In Dongshan Village, there were people everywhere crafting mud bricks and laying them out under the sun to dry. Everyone wanted to build their house before the rains started. The Yu Family expanded their construction plans at the old residence. They were building a residence that had three interlinked courtyards and the front and back courtyards had been expanded considerably too. Altogether, it was around four to five mu in size. The Liu Family was building their new residence next to the Yu Family and they also decided to have a large courtyard and tall walls. The Liu Family had two sons, so they were planning on constructing a two courtyard residence that had three main rooms with two storage rooms in each courtyard. It was going to be very spacious.

Currently, construction had just started on both of their residences. They had hired the best bricklayer from town. In addition, Xiaocao's Third Maternal Uncle also came over to help.

When the Wokou pirates were coming, Eldest Maternal Aunt and her daughter, who had been working at the piggery, hurriedly packed all of their things and ran back to their village. Because they were afraid

that the pirates might slaughter their way to Xishan Village, they told the news to their village chief. Xishan Village's village head was an old veteran from the battlefields. Thus, he instructed the villagers to pack up their valuables and some food in preparation to flee to the mountains. He also organized the strong adult men in the village and had them patrol the area around the village. As soon as they saw any sign of the pirates, they could warn the village and they could all run for the mountains as fast as possible.

Fields of Gold Chapter 407 - Her Family's Concern for Her

Luckily, Xishan Village was quite a distance away from the ocean and there was the West Mountain in the middle. Thus, the Wokou pirates didn't go there. When they got the news from the Yu Family that the pirates had been defeated, Liu Cunjin took his two sons along with him on the very next day to bring a cart full of grain and daily necessities.

The Yu Family's residence had been pushed over by a particular person but most of their belongings hadn't been destroyed, so they could still use them after picking them up. However, a lot of these supplies had been taken over by one of the men of the household, who distributed them for use to the villagers who had less. Currently, the daily necessities that they were using at the Zhao Residence had been newly bought by that same man. Other than the grain they had taken away on that rainy night, there was still more than enough grain and other food still stored in the underground cellar for them to eat.

The food and necessities that her maternal grandfather and uncles brought over was a token of their concern and love for them. Naturally, they couldn't make them take it back. Yu Hai and her two uncles spent a lot of time moving all of the goods from the cart before they finally finished bringing everything to the residence halfway up the mountain. There were pros and cons to living halfway up the mountain. The con was that it was more difficult to move heavy goods there, which required quite a bit of energy.

“Your family's residence also got destroyed by the Wokou pirates? Ai! These evil bastards are truly too inhumane. They not only steal things from us but also destroy our homes!” Liu Cunjin wiped the sweat off of his face and took the tea that his granddaughter offered. He guzzled the liquid down in one gulp. The tea from his daughter's home was very good and was even better than a pot of fragrant tea that cost a few taels from the tea houses.

Madam Liu sighed for a bit and then said, “Steal our things and destroy our homes? They also kill people ah! The neighboring village chief didn't believe Xiaomo's warning. Other than the few families who had a good relationship with him and fled into the mountains, the rest of the villagers had all been slaughtered by the pirates. Their corpses were hung on the tree outside the village and were exposed to wind and rain. From far away you could smell the ghastly stench. It was truly too horrifying! Now, no one can live in the neighboring village for fear of plague!”

When Liu Cunjin heard this, he felt immense relief and joy in his heart, “Luckily that lass Xiaocao was swimming in the ocean that day and encountered the Wokou pirates' ships. Otherwise...”

“Of course! The village head and all of the villagers said so too. They said that our Xiaocao is the savior of the entire village! If it wasn't for me and her father stopping them, they would have wanted to erect a longevity plaque to her in the village!” Madam Liu had a hint of pride in her voice.

“Maternal Grandfather, there are even some people who claim that my second sister is the reincarnation of the child, Shancai, who is the disciple of the Goddess of Mercy. This is the reason why she can come up with all of these methods to make money as well as saving everyone. They even claim that my second sister was ill in her childhood because it was hard for her young body to support such a reincarnated spirit. Don't you think all of this is funny?” Little Shitou came over to join in on the fun and brought over a small wooden stool to sit next to his maternal grandfather. When he heard them chatting idly, he also interjected his thoughts.

Madam Liu laughed as she pointed at his head, “Go, go, go! What are you doing here? Everyone is just idly chatting so don't gossip along!”

“Younger Sister, I feel like there's some truth in what people are saying! Xiaocao is still very young yet she knows how to make such delicious food and come up with so many methods to make money. Even I, as her relative, can benefit from her skills!” Liu Pei grinned as he drank his tea while he voiced his agreement with Little Shitou.

In Little Shitou's heart, his second sister was omnipotent. He nodded his head repeatedly, “I also feel like Second Sister is the reincarnation of a little immortal girl. In fact, she must have been a very powerful immortal girl too...”

Liu Pei quipped, “If your second sister is the reincarnation of an immortal girl, then you, Shitou, are the reincarnation of the Wenqu star [1]. At such a young age, you passed the exam to become a county official and even scored high enough to become a granary official. In the future, won't you be able to take first place in the imperial examinations?”

Little Shitou remarked bashfully, “It's only with the help of my teachers...that being said, it's not easy to place first in the imperial examinations, right? My school's headmaster said that as long as I work hard, it shouldn't be difficult for me to place in the top ten. The worst that I'll place would be within the top twenty!”

The little fellow was still young so he wasn't able to hide things very well. Thus, he proudly told the adults in the room what his master had told him a few days ago. After getting numerous compliments from his maternal grandfather and uncles, he felt a bit embarrassed and fled to the kitchen to watch his second sister cook food.

Liu Cunjin had a gratified look on his face as he smiled, "Seeing that all of you are fine, I can finally relax again! In the past, I wasn't in favor of you marrying into the Yu Family. Everyone says that having a stepmother means having a stepfather. You suffered so much for those years and even your children were thin and sallow. Your mother and I didn't feel good seeing that. However, we weren't well-off at the time and couldn't help much...luckily, you guys finally split from the family and your husband is a hard working man. Your children are sweet and obedient. Seeing that your life is going well, your mother and I can finally relax."

Liu Cunjin loved his youngest daughter a lot. Originally, he wanted to find a husband from her in their own village who came from a decent family. With her three older brothers around, his youngest daughter absolutely wouldn't be taken advantage of. Who would have thought that Dongshan Village's Yu Hai would take a liking to her?

The matchmaker had made it seem like Yu Hai was a match made in heaven. He was good at fishing and knew how to hunt to subsidize the family. His family had a five-room house that was newly built and he was an honest and kind man...the only thing the matchmaker didn't mention was that he had a selfish, vicious and heartless stepmother. At that time, he should have stuck to his guns and adamantly refused. Otherwise, his daughter wouldn't have to suffer so much for all of these years!

Madam Liu's eyes became hot and she pulled at her father's rough, large hand. As if she was a young maiden again, she swayed back and forth and said, "Father, Daughter is unfilial and made you worry so much!"

"Silly lass! Living well is the best way of showing your filial respect to me and your mother! Quickly wipe away those tears, your children are watching." Liu Cunjin patted his daughter's hand and continued, "I see that your family's old residence is expanding again. I know you don't lack money at this point, so I won't say anything. Your older brothers and I don't have much to do at home, so we'll stay around and help you for a few days."

Madam Liu used the back of her hand to wipe away her tears as she shook her head, "Father, this time, the royal prince found an experienced bricklayer in town to build our residence. Even my husband can't do much to help. You're getting old, so in the future, leave the hard work to my older brothers..."

"Don't think that because I'm in my fifties that I can't do much. This body of mine is still sturdy and your second older brother can't even compare with me in the fields. In the future, if you guys need help, please ask us! I'm your father and they're your blood-related brothers, so don't take us to be outsiders!" Liu Cunjin knew that his daughter's family had a good life now. However, as a father, he couldn't help but worry and always wanted to help. The feelings of parents were always so!

Liu Pei also nodded his head repeatedly, "Father is right! We are your blood-related siblings. If there's anything going on, just say a word!"

This year, the Yu Family planted all of their fields in Dongshan Village with watermelons. The two brothers, Liu Pei and Liu Han, had rented a shop in the prefectural city. One of them went back and forth between Dongshan Village and the prefectural city to transport the melons, while the other manned the shop and sold the melons. In a month, they made three to four hundred taels!

He had originally planned on collaborating with his second younger brother to buy that shop. That way, when his younger brother-in-law expanded his early-growing green vegetable business, they could buy them wholesale from him and sell them at this stall. However, he didn't expect that his second sister-in-law was short-sighted and refused to take out five hundred taels to buy the store. She was afraid that they'd lose all of their hard earned money in this investment.

At the time, he only had around seven to eight hundred taels on hand. The owner of the store had originally set a price of a thousand and two hundred taels for the shop. He had painstakingly managed to haggle down to a thousand, but he didn't have enough money on hand. After talking to Yu Hai, his younger brother-in-law didn't say anything and gave him five hundred taels to buy the shop now. As for the money that was left, once he made enough money, then he could return it!

With the shop on hand, his wife had bought some braised food from Xiaocao's braised food shop. Every day they could make around a couple hundred coppers to one tael. At this rate, even if they weren't able to sell the early-ripening vegetables, they'd be able to make all of the money they spent to buy the shop in four years.

When his second sister-in-law found out, she immediately regretted her decision and argued with them to also take a share. Where was she when they needed them? At the time, she refused to take out the money as she was afraid of losing it. Now that she saw them making money, she insisted on cooperating

with them. Who was willing to spoil such a person? His father had lost his temper right then and there and his mother had scolded his second sister-in-law later privately. Only then did the woman calm down.

However, towards his younger brother-in-law, who helped them during their times of need, Liu Pei felt immense gratitude. Although they refused his thanks, he couldn't forget their kindness. In the future, when he had the chance, he would definitely repay them.

Liu Han had a clumsy mouth and didn't like talking. At this time, he also spoke up, "Younger Sister, if there's anything you need help with, just tell me. I don't have much else but I am strong and willing to do hard work."

Liu Han never said anything about the help his younger sister's family had given him but his heart knew what he owed. His wife was working in the Zhou Family's factories because Xiaocao had introduced her to the managers. She made around one tael per month as salary and could also bring some vermicelli and century eggs home from time to time as bonuses. All of the other matrons in the village envied her endlessly. He was only a peasant farmer who knew how to tend his fields. After collaborating with his eldest brother to sell watermelons, they had made a few hundred taels each in the past two to three years. This was something that they would have never dreamed of in the past!

Although his wife had been the one to stop him from collaborating with his eldest brother to buy a shop, he had his own ideas now. He was planning on using their money to buy land. He would plant and take care of any land he could. The rest he could rent out to other people. That way, they'd have an additional source of income each year. If it wasn't for his youngest sister and brother-in-law's family, his whole family would only have those few plots of land to take care of and would have to live very frugally! Even his petty and small-minded wife was also very grateful to his younger sister's whole family.

When Madam Liu saw that her father and older brothers all sincerely wanted to help her, she felt warmth bubble up in her heart. Her maternal family's living situation had gradually improved over time. Even her youngest older brother had made quite a bit of money working at the docks. Since her family was rebuilding their residence right now, her youngest older brother didn't say anything and packed all of his gear to come over to help. Right now, no one in their family needed to oversee the work on the house as her youngest older brother had taken charge of everything. With her youngest older brother taking over, as an experienced bricklayer, no one would dare to goof off or try to use shoddy materials to fool them. It relieved a lot of work for their usually busy family.

When the Liu Family's father and sons saw that there wasn't much they could help with, they finished lunch and decided to head out. Madam Liu wanted her father to spend a few days with her but he refused, "Right now you guys have a lot going on, so I won't add to the trouble. Once your house is done, your mother, I, and your brothers and sisters-in-law will all come over to celebrate! At that time, if there's nothing going on, your mother and I will spend a few days with you."

After Madam Liu heard her father's thoughts, she didn't try to convince him again. She escorted her father and older brothers down the mountain and reluctantly watched as they left.

Fields of Gold Chapter 408 - Gold-filled Summer Harves

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The imperial army arrived the day after the Wokou pirates retreated. The leader was Commander Fang, who went on the ocean voyage with Royal Prince Yang. He was appointed the title of Zhenhai General and led ten thousand elite soldiers to guard the coastal area of Jinwei Prefectural City.

Not only that, but there was also a guarding station set up every ten kilometers along the coastal area, which was guarded by one hundred soldiers. At each location, they were required to build a watchtower, and two people were on watch for every shift. A guarding station was set up near Dongshan Village, and the watchtower was built on the cliff that Xiaocao and the others often gathered seafood at.

When the group of soldiers passed by Dongshan Village, the villagers only dared to watch afar for fear that they would get into trouble. Since the guarding station was so close to the village, the village head was afraid that the soldiers would use their authority to force the villagers to give them things from time to time! If Xiaocao could read his mind, she would definitely tell him, 'Village Head Grandpa, you're thinking too much. With the great Buddha Royal Prince Yang in our village, they wouldn't dare to 'pluck a tiger's whiskers' even if someone lent them some more courage!

The guarding station was located on the ruins of a neighboring village. The herbs and other substances to prevent pestilence had already been sprinkled throughout the village. The soldiers fixed the few remaining houses in the village and used them as basecamp. Every day, they went back and forth between the cliff and the basecamp, and worked hard to build the watchtower. The watchtower wasn't only a lookout, but when there was a situation out in the sea, they would light up a beacon to convey the message.

When Yu Xiaocao occasionally dived in the sea, she would look at the cliff from afar. The construction of the watchtower progressed rapidly and looked different every day. She didn't know if she was overthinking, but she always felt that there was someone watching her on the cliff. Could it be that the soldiers of the guarding station were monitoring her because they thought that she was a spy? After that, Xiaocao didn't dare to dive near the cliff to gather seafood. She was afraid that the soldiers

monitoring the sea would find out about her secret. After she dove into the water, she would tell the little dolphin to take her into the deep sea, and she would only emerge from the water at that time.

This year, the amount of seafood that the Zhou Family had to pay tribute to the imperial court had increased, so Xiaocao had to make time to go to the sea a few more times. She had a rich harvest every time, and at times, she would also bring back a big lobster and some deep-sea fishes for her family to enjoy.

After moving into the Zhao Residence, they lived even closer to the mountain manor, which made it much more convenient for Zhu Junyang to bum off meals from them. Every summer, he was able to eat good food and endless delicious seafood such as 'sea urchin lobster roll', 'grilled salmon', 'tuna and lettuce rice ball', 'fried yellow croaker', and 'grilled cod in oyster sauce'... These dishes, which he had never seen before, made him sigh when eating them, 'How am I supposed to live in the future without that lass Xiaocao?' Thus, for the sake of being able to eat good food in the future, Royal Prince Yang clung onto Yu Xiaocao even more tightly.

The foundation of the house in Dongshan Village had just been completed, and the winter wheat in the farmstead had matured. Yu Hai handed the task of supervising to his third brother-in-law, while he went to the front line of harvesting with his oldest son, youngest daughter, and the royal prince's entourage.

Of course, as the owners, they didn't need to personally harvest the wheat. The supervisor of the tenant farmers stood behind them with a bright smile as he reported the growth of the wheat. This year, the wheat in the fields had grown very well. Not only were the ears of the wheat bigger than the neighboring plantation, they were also very full. According to his years of experience, the output of wheat probably exceeded five hundred catties per mu!

It shall be noted that, unlike in her previous lifetime, this wasn't a time period when it was easy to produce over a thousand catties of crops. The yield of wheat generally ranged between two hundred to three hundred catties. An output of more than three hundred catties was considered a high yield. As for five hundred catties, that was something that had never happened before! Yu Hai, as the owner, expressed his satisfaction and openly praised the supervisor.

Before the harvest, Yu Xiaocao had requested the tenant farmers cut and put aside the wheat stalks with longer ears and fuller kernels. When planting wheat next year, they could plant these kernels in a separate plot of land and see if the yield could reach a new high. The output of five hundred catties per mu hadn't reached Xiaocao's ideal results. It would be even better if the yield per mu could reach up to a

thousand catties or more, like in her previous life. In this way, the people of the Great Ming Dynasty wouldn't have to worry about not having ample food and clothing.

Seeing this, Zhu Junyang also told the steward to instruct the long-term workers to look for wheat stalks with longer ears and fuller kernels in his eight hundred mu of farmland and put them together with Xiaocao's collection. After threshing, it actually exceeded one hundred catties, which meant that they could open up fifty to sixty mu of land as experimental fields.

It was always sunny recently. After she asked the little divine stone and found out that it wouldn't rain for half a month, the summer harvest began vigorously. For the tenant farmers of the farmstead, each household had a portion of land that they were responsible for, and they worked especially hard when reaping the wheat.

In less than five days, more than one hundred mu of wheat had been harvested, threshed, dried, and transported to the granary. With a rough estimation, they yielded six hundred catties of wheat per mu in the superior farmlands and five hundred catties per mu in average farmlands. Even in the inferior farmlands, they were able to harvest more than three hundred catties per mu. The entire plantation was overjoyed!

In this way, not counting the rent that they gave to the owners, on average, they still had more than two hundred catties of grain per mu. Those with more labor force in the family were divided forty to fifty mu of land to work on, so wouldn't that mean that they could receive nearly ten thousand catties of wheat? This was only for one season, so if they added the corn harvested in autumn... Oh my god! They wouldn't be able to finish everything even if they ate wheat flour and white rice daily!

But, of course, they definitely couldn't consume this high-yielding wheat. Xiaocao planned on leaving the wheat as seeds for next year. She wanted to see if the kernels improved by mystic-stone water could be even more high-yielding next year. As a result, after all the seeds had been threshed, the Yu Family bought all of the wheat kernels from the tenant farmers at market price.

The news about the high yield of wheat at the Yu Family's farmstead swiftly spread in the vicinity. The first to contact Yu Hai was the Zhou Family's steward, who was in charge of the ritual fields. The Zhou Family and Yu Family were business partners, so he was considered an old acquaintance of the family. After they exchanged greetings, the steward directly revealed the intention of his visit, "Master Yu, our patriarch heard that your family had a good harvest of wheat, so he wanted to ask where you guys got the wheat kernels."

Yu Hai had wanted to say that they were just normal wheat kernels, but he was stopped by his youngest daughter. Xiaocao smiled as she pushed the responsibility onto Royal Prince Yang, "Our plantation's wheat kernels were awarded to us by Royal Prince Yang. At that time, the kernels appeared to be the same as ordinary wheat kernels. We didn't expect it to be so high yielding."

Royal Prince Yang had once gone to the western hemisphere and brought back many seeds of high-yield crops. This was something that nearly the entire Great Ming Empire knew about, let alone Tanggu Town. The steward from the Zhou Family pondered for a moment, and then asked, "Then...can Master Yu give some kernels to the Zhou Family? We're willing to pay a lot of money!"

Yu Hai looked at his daughter, and when he saw her nod at him, he asked, "May I know how many kernels the Zhou Family wants?"

The steward pondered for a moment, and then said, "The Zhou Family has five hundred mu of ritual fields. The first branch has three hundred mu of fertile farmland under their name, while the second branch..."

"Steward Liu, it's also our first time planting and harvesting wheat, so we don't have a lot of seeds on hand. We can only provide you seeds for the five hundred mu of ritual fields." One mu of land would require between fifteen to twenty catties of seeds. The Zhou Family would need almost ten thousand catties of seeds for just their ritual fields. The Yu Family's farmstead collected a total of seventy thousand catties of seeds. If they let Steward Liu continue on, they would have to share one-third of their seeds with the Zhou Family alone. After making a rough calculation within her heart, Yu Hai interrupted Steward Liu's words.

When Steward Liu heard that they could only give them seeds for the five hundred mu of ritual fields, he was worried that he had only accomplished half of the task that the patriarch assigned him. He wanted to try to get some more, but Yu Hai firmly stated that they would only provide ten thousand catties of seeds, and nothing else!

Yu Xiaocao just stood at the side with a smile. If the first branch of the Zhou Family had treated Third Young Master Zhou better, then she might have put in a good word for the Zhou Family and given them a little more wheat kernels. However, the Zhou Family's first branch was a group of weirdos, who often bullied Third Young Master Zhou and his mother. The eldest master of the Zhou Family would occasionally use his identity as the birth father and attempt to control the second branch. It was great that their plantation didn't have a good harvest of grains. It was none of her business! As for the farmlands under the name of the Zhou Family's second branch, would her father not give Third Young Master Zhou face if he asked?

They had finished negotiating the price of the fine seeds. Since fine seeds could produce double the amount of normal wheat kernels, the price would be at least several folds higher. For example, normal wheat kernels cost ten copper coins per catty and twenty catties of seeds could be planted in one mu of farmland. Thus, it would be a total of two hundred copper coins. Three hundred catties of wheat could be harvested in one mu of fertile farmland. The market price of wheat was five copper coins per catty, so one mu of farmland could reap 1500 copper coins, which was seven or eight times more than the investment.

Their family could produce six hundred catties per mu with ordinary wheat kernels. If they changed it to fine seeds next year, the output would definitely be higher. If calculated based on a yield of six hundred catties per mu and an income of three taels per mu, then she could earn fifty copper coins with one catty of seeds. Shouldn't be too much, right?

Steward Liu calculated in his heart, and then said with a smile on his face, "Master Yu, isn't it somewhat expensive? Look, your family's seeds only yielded double that of ordinary seeds, but the price is five times higher. Aren't you asking for too much?"

Yu Hai felt that this daughter had set the price for too high, but he just smiled and didn't say anything. Then he turned his gaze to his youngest daughter.

Yu Xiaocao looked at him with a gaze that said 'don't worry', and then she said to Steward Liu with a smile on her face, "Steward Liu, let me make the calculations for you and you can consider whether this is a good deal. The yield from ordinary wheat kernels can only earn one tael per mu, but our family's fine seeds can earn three taels per mu. For ordinary wheat, you will need to plant twenty catties per mu. For our fine seeds, you just need to plant fifteen catties. That is to say, if you invested 750 copper coins, you can earn three taels per catty. The net income will be 2250 copper coins. For five hundred mu of ritual fields, you can earn 1125 taels... If you just used ordinary seeds, you guys can at most earn a little more than 600 taels. It's nearly doubled the money ah!"

Steward Liu took the abacus from the worker behind him and did the calculations. Sure enough, they could earn nearly twice as much on the same fields. Only a fool wouldn't accept this deal!

Fields of Gold Chapter 409 - Vegetable Production Base

Steward Liu hesitated for a moment and wondered if there was a possibility for the other party to lower the price. At this time, Yu Xiaocao spoke up again, "Steward Liu, you also know about our family's relationship with your future head of the household. How about this? We'll give your third young master face and sell one catty of seeds for forty copper coins! However, we'll need Steward Liu to keep this a secret and tell outsiders that you bought them for fifty copper coins per catty!"

After removing ten copper coins per catty, they had taken off a total of one hundred taels for the five hundred mu ah! Steward Liu looked at Yu Hai. Upon seeing that he didn't have any objections, he thought, 'Everyone says that the one who truly manages the Yu Household is the family's youngest daughter. Many of the best-selling and delicious dishes of Zhenxiu Restaurant, which was the starting point of Third Young Master's success, are made by her.'

In the past, he had thought that the rumors were exaggerated. How could a little girl have such capability? She was just being pampered by her family, and thus they gave her all the credit. But, after today, he really believed it! One hundred taels wasn't considered a small sum of money for any families of peasant origin.

This was especially true for Dongshan Village, which had just experienced the burning, killing, and looting of Wokou pirates. The entire village had to rebuild their houses. With one hundred taels, they could build a decent house! However, the little girl didn't even discuss this matter with her family and made the decision to lower the price herself. Moreover, her father appeared to be quite used to this behavior. It seemed like there was a reason as to why the mother-son pair of the second branch was on friendly terms with Miss Yu.

Steward Liu thought to himself that he mustn't slight this young girl in the future. He must treat her like how he treated his masters. Weren't the workers in Zhenxiu Restaurant, who had a good relationship with her, all promoted to management level positions? He had been in charge of the ritual fields for over twenty years, so he should move somewhere else...

With that thought in mind, he appeared somewhat more respectful as he said with a simple, "No need, no need! With the good relationship between the Yu Family and our master, you definitely wouldn't demand an outrageous price. If Third Young Master finds out that this old servant tried to bargain with Miss Yu, he will definitely strip me of the position of a steward! Let's just agree on the price of fifty copper coins per catty!"

Yu Xiaocao raised her brows. So there were really people who didn't take advantage of others even when given the chance ah! Since Steward Liu was so tactful, she wouldn't let him go back empty-handed. Yu Xiaocao didn't say anything else in regard to the price and agreed on the price of fifty copper coins per catty. Then she weighed ten thousand catties of seeds for Steward Liu. Steward Liu smoothly paid five hundred taels for the seeds.

Before leaving, Yu Xiaocao quietly gave him fifty taels, saying that it was for all the hard work that Steward Liu had done. Steward Liu was very stunned and hurriedly gave it back to her, “No, this won't do! If the masters know that this old servant had embezzled the money for the seeds, wouldn't they skin me alive?”

Yu Xiaocao quickly offered him a reason to accept the money, “Look at what you're saying. How is this considered embezzlement? Didn't you already pay for the seeds? You have been working hard the whole day, so this is for you to get something to drink...”

“No, no! This old servant has worked at the ritual fields for over twenty years, I have always kept my hands clean. Miss Yu, please don't lead others to commit crimes! If someone finds out, this old servant's reputation will be completely ruined!” With a mournful expression, Steward Liu tightly clenched his sleeves, for fear that she would forcibly give him the money.

What a joke! His primary goal was to befriend the Yu Family, especially Miss Yu Xiaocao. Although fifty taels was a large sum and about the same as his annual salary, he couldn't lose the main goal because of small gains ah! He knew that as long as Miss Yu put in a good word for him in front of Third Young Master then he could walk on a smooth road in the future!

Seeing that he really didn't want to take it, Yu Xiaocao had a slightly better impression of Steward Liu. She thought about it, and then took out several pills from her pouch. There were pills for diarrhea, cold, and coughing. These were good medicines that were hard to buy even if one lined up in front of Tongren Medicine Hall, especially after that stinky guy Zhu Junyang promoted her family's workshop. Now, they were short in supplies. She heard that the price of one pill in the capital's Tongren Medicine Hall had inflated to one hundred taels.

One must admit that this wasn't an unreasonable price. Tongren Medicine Hall's medicine pills and wound balms were very effective. For example, one might not be able to completely cure a cold even after drinking bitter medicine for three to five days. However, the illness could be completely cured after taking a pill, or if more serious, two pills. It was the same for the wound balm. When injured, one just needed to put some on the wound, and it would immediately stop the bleeding and pain. The chance of inflammation was also greatly reduced. The wound would be completely healed after three to five days. If it was some other wound balm, it would take at least eight to ten days to remove the scab!

The capital didn't lack rich people, so they would definitely be happy to spend a hundred taels in exchange for less suffering. Especially for those big merchants with thriving businesses. If they were healed a day earlier, wouldn't they be able to earn a day more of money? The pampered children of noble families couldn't stand the torture of illness. For pills that could get rid of illness, not to mention one hundred taels, but they would be willing to buy it even if it was more expensive.

Allegedly, that person in the palace was already eyeing Tongren Medicine Hall for the next selection of imperial merchants. They had already decided behind closed doors that all kinds of pills and medicinal syrups would be appointed as tribute to the Imperial Palace!

Within the entire Tanggu Town, only a few families could afford to use the pills. Patriarch Zhou was getting old, so his health had been deteriorating. Thus, they had prepared several of these pills at home for emergencies. When the young masters and young misses of the first branch coughed a little, they would clamor about wanting to drink the sweet medicine.

Among the servants, only the capable people around the patriarch and matriarch could occasionally be awarded with a pill. For people like Steward Liu, who had been assigned to manage the ritual fields in the remote suburbs, they had never even seen the pills before. Could Steward Liu not be excited to see Miss Yu take out five pills? Logically speaking, he should refuse. But he really didn't want to refuse. These were good medicines that couldn't be bought even if one had money ah!

Recently, his father had a craving for cold food and ate too much iced watermelon, so he had an upset stomach. After taking several doses of medicine, there still wasn't any improvement in his condition and it seemed to be worsening. The doctor said that his father was old and his organs were aging, and thus even a minor illness might kill him.

When Steward Liu came out today, his father was already bedridden with an ashen complexion. Among the pills given by Miss Yu, there were two that treated diarrhea. Refusing to accept them might cost his father's life ah!

After struggling for a long time, Steward Liu gritted his teeth and accepted the five precious pills with trembling hands. He wasn't even forty years old yet, so he could strive for his future again in the future. However, he only had one father. He would never come back after leaving!

Seeing that Steward Liu had accepted the pills, Yu Xiaocao breathed out a sigh of relief. This Steward Liu was too timid and overcautious. He had to think for so long before accepting the pills that she casually made! It almost seemed as if he was afraid that she would go tattle to Third Young Master Zhou about him accepting bribes!

It should be known that the pills that she casually made were much more effective than the pills produced in the workshop. On one hand, there was a higher concentration of mystic-stone water. On the other hand, during the process of making the pills, the spiritual energy of the multicolored stone on

her wrist had flowed into the medicine. The unassuming pill was two or three times more effective than the pills made in the workshop!

Therefore, when Steward Liu fed his father the pill upon returning home, his father's diarrhea immediately stopped, and his complexion also became more healthy. Half a day later, he was able to get up from his bed and stroll around the fields. His body was even stronger than before he fell ill. Steward Liu regarded the remaining pills as holy medicine. These pills could save their lives during critical moments!! It was no wonder that so many wealthy families scrambled to buy Tongren Medicine Hall's pills. Even if they had a lot of money, it couldn't revive a life ah!

How could the news of the steward of the Zhou Family buying fine seeds from the Yu Family's farmstead be kept a secret from those households who kept a close eye on the high-yield wheat kernels? There were quite a lot of rich people in Tanggu Town. Even for those who got rich from doing business, who didn't purchase a few hundred mu of fertile farmlands when buying property? It was necessary to have all these real estates, okay?

The second household to buy fine seeds was the Yao Family, who only bought vegetables from the Yu Family. Steward Yao had already been promoted to a trusted head steward who served the patriarch. But after all, he was more familiar with the Yu Family, so he was sent to talk with the Yu Family.

He didn't bother Yu Hai, who was busily working in the fields, and directly went to find Yu Xiaocao, who was planting corn. He greeted her with a smile, "Long time no see. How are you doing, Miss Yu?"

"Steward Yao ah! It's been a while since I have seen you. I heard that you have been promoted to a head steward. Congratulations ah!" Yu Xiaocao congratulated him.

Steward Yao waved his hands and humbly said, "Wasn't it all thanks to the Yu Family? Your family's vegetables helped me gain some merit in front of our old master. Thanks to our old master's kindness, he has transferred this old servant to serve him directly. It's a pity that more than half of your family's vegetables had been destroyed by the Wokou pirates... Since we aren't able to buy the Yu Family's vegetables, our old master's appetite has greatly reduced. During meals, he would always sigh in front of the dishes! Miss Yu, when will the construction on your house be completed?"

"It's still too early ah! However, we have decided to open up some space for a vegetable garden at our plantation. We will plant vegetables of the current season that will be specially sold in the Tanggu area. Leafy greens have a short growth period, so they might be on the market in about half a month!"

Yu Xiaocao had long wanted to expand the scope of their vegetable cultivation. The few mu of land in their courtyard at home gradually didn't have enough supply to provide to the Zhenxiu Restaurants in Tanggu Town and the prefectural city. Except for old customers like the Yao Family, they had stopped selling vegetables to the rich families in Tanggu Town. Cries of discontent could be heard everywhere from those who were used to eating the Yu Family's vegetables.

Now, the Zhou Family had opened up another branch of Zhenxiu Restaurant at the harbor. It was even bigger than the ones in Tanggu Town and the prefectural city. Furthermore, it was a big hotel that provided lodging, food, and bathing. Third Young Master Zhou had freed up some time to go to Dongshan Village and pestered her to overcome all difficulties to ensure that she could provide vegetables for the Zhenxiu Restaurant at the docks. He wanted to strive for a good start. He wanted those visiting merchants to think of Zhenxiu Restaurant whenever they came to Tanggu Docks... In this way, the expansion of vegetable cultivation was imminent!

Fortunately, the Yu Family's farmstead was closer to Tanggu Town and the prefectural city than Dongshan Village. Moreover, there was an official road right in front of the plantation connecting Tanggu Town and the prefectural city, which made transportation more convenient. After discussing with her father, they first plowed ten mu of vegetable garden in the plantation and found two meticulous and loyal families to manage it. In the future, the vegetable fields in the farmstead needed to provide vegetables to the restaurants and families in Tanggu Town and the prefectural city. Dongshan Village was located closer to the harbor, so the vegetables grown at home were specially used to supply the Zhenxiu Restaurant at the docks!

Fields of Gold Chapter 410 - Complete Loyalty

Yu Xiaocao acted without delay and called over Widow Li and her son and the family of the matron, whose husband broke his leg when the Yu Family just bought the plantation. After the husband's leg recovered, he had a slight limp, but it didn't affect his ability to work. The two families were very grateful to the owners for they took care of them, and thus they were more loyal than the other tenant farmers.

In particular, Widow Li and her son, who were divided three mu of land last autumn, had tended the fields meticulously. When it was time for harvest, they even got first place in the village. With an average yield of six hundred eighty catties per mu, they were awarded with one tael per mu by the masters. In addition, there were also over one thousand catties of fine wheat kernels. They had earned an income of thirteen taels within half a year.

Allegedly, the masters would also buy the kernels of corn, which would be harvested in the latter half of the year, back at market price. In this way, they could make at least twenty-something taels in a year. This was something that Widow Li and her son had never dared to imagine. After working for a few more years, her son would have enough money to get married!

When Widow Li and her son and Liu Dazhuang's family (Author's notes: The tenant farmer who walked with a limp.) were called over by the masters, all the tenant farmers in the plantation discussed animatedly, "They are the two families with the least labor force and they aren't responsible for a lot of fields. Do you think that the masters are planning on kicking them out and hiring new people?"

"That can't be, right? The master and young miss are so kind-hearted. When distributing farmland last year, they even counted women and older children, who are capable of working. Didn't Widow Li and her son get awarded by the masters?"

A tenant farmer, who was jealous of her family being rewarded, curled up her lips and said, "Their family of two only need to take care of three mu of farmlands. Had it been me, I would have done better than them! Widow Li and her son received a dozen or so taels, so even if they got kicked out, they wouldn't be penniless."

"In fact, although Liu Dazhuang is crippled, it doesn't hinder him from doing farm work. His son is also sixteen, and thus can also be considered an adult worker. His wife is also a capable worker. So they probably wouldn't have their land taken away and kicked out, right?"

There were sixteen families in the farmstead now, and none of them wanted to leave the Yu Family's plantation. There was no need to mention the kindness of the masters. During the locust plague, they not only refused to accept rent, but they also subsidized them by hiring them as long-term workers. While the tenant farmers in the nearby villages and other plantations became emaciated and sold their children and women, they were able to live a good life without worrying about food and clothes.

This year's summer harvest was even more gratifying. The family with the lowest harvest also got a dozen or so taels as income. The supervisor's family, who had the most land, earned eighty taels when they sold the seeds they reaped! In this way, their family could earn one hundred taels in a year!

It was eight lifetimes of blessing for them to be able to follow the Yu Family ah. They would soon be able to live a good life! In a few years, they would have earned enough money to buy some property nearby. They would no longer be tenant farmers without a house and farmlands! This was all thanks to the owners. They had gotten high-yield seeds for them to plant, so even after they paid the rent, they still had a lot leftover.

The tenant farmers at the plantation were mostly people left behind by the previous owners. At that time, they just had barely enough to eat. After paying rent, there were at most a hundred or so catties of grain per mu leftover. Each catty could only be sold for four to five copper coins, so they could only earn five to six hundred copper coins per mu. The tenant farmers reaped wheat, but they were reluctant to eat wheat flour. Instead, they exchanged them for coarse grain in order to somewhat fill their stomachs.

It was different from the present. Now, each family could earn a dozen or so taels. They wouldn't be able to use up the money even if they ate wheat flour throughout the year! With money, they no longer had to worry about not being able to fill their stomachs. Moreover, they could also occasionally buy some meat back to satisfy the kids' craving. They didn't have to dig around for money to celebrate the New Year, and they could buy some clothes for their families every year...

When the tenant farmers saw Widow Li and Liu Dazhuang getting called over by the owners, they felt sorry for them. Everyone understood that the masters naturally had the rights to choose to hire people who could work. It was just that these two families were short-handed and weren't of much help to the masters...

Widow Li and her son felt very uneasy right now. Had it been the previous owners, they would have long been driven out when her husband died. The current master and young miss were kindhearted. Not only did they keep them, but they also considered them as second-class laborers when dividing land to them. Although three mu of fields wasn't a lot, she and her son wouldn't starve to death if they carefully tended the fields.

Widow Li was shocked by their income after the summer harvest. She felt very uneasy within her heart. Could it be possible that she was dreaming? Would she wake up and realize everything was fake?

When she heard that her family and Crippled Liu's family of three were called over privately by the masters, her heart instantly sank. Could it be that the masters thought that their families were burdens and wanted to drive them out? When she looked at Cripple Liu's family of three, she saw that they also looked very alarmed and anxious.

Yu Xiaocao saw the anxious expressions on the faces of both families. She quickly reassured them, "Don't worry. I called you guys over because I have a new job for you!"

Widow Li and Liu Dazhuang's families all looked at each other. In the end, Widow Li timidly asked, "Young Miss, you... aren't you doing to drive us out?"

“Drive out? Why would I? Your two families are doing a good job taking care of the lands distributed to you. Your families are within the top three in terms of harvest. Wouldn't it be a loss to our farmstead if we kicked such capable people out?” Yu Xiaocao was slightly stunned, but she quickly showed a reassuring smile and calmed the hearts of the two families.

When the two families heard this, the big rock on their hearts immediately fell to the ground. Liu Dazhuang finally had a smile on his dull-looking face. He rubbed his hands and asked, “Young Miss, we'll do whatever you want us to do! We are very relieved to be able to work for Master and Young Miss!”

Yu Xiaocao looked at him with a calming gaze and said, “Have you guys heard about Dongshan Village's early-maturing vegetables?”

Liu Dazhuang was a man, so he would work odd jobs in his spare time. He quickly nodded and said, “Yes, I've heard about it! I heard that the Zhenxiu Restaurant in town uses vegetables from Dongshan Village. At the beginning of spring, one plate of sautéed vegetables cost one tael ah! The wealthy and influential families in town also scrambled and competed to buy Dongshan Village's vegetables. The town's Patriarch Yao is very famous in town because all his vegetables were supplied by Dongshan Village... Unfortunately, the range of vegetable cultivation in Dongshan Village was too small to provide vegetables for everyone in town...”

Yu Xiaocao looked at him approvingly. Seeing the shocked expression on Widow Li and her son's faces, she said, “You guys should know that we're from Dongshan Village...”

Liu Dazhuang widened his eyes and couldn't help shouting, “Young Miss, could it be that those vegetables came from the master's family?”

“That's right! The early-maturing vegetables came from my family. Had we not made money from selling vegetables and watermelon, how would we, normal farmers, be able to own a plantation in our lifetime?” Yu Xiaocao wasn't afraid of letting them know more about her family. If she wanted them to work for them wholeheartedly, she must give them confidence that they could live a good life!

“Watermelon? The best-selling watermelon in Dongshan Village is also from your family?” Not only Liu Dazhuang, but even Widow Li, who rarely went to town, couldn't help but exclaim. The masters' family was too capable. In just a few years, they had transformed from ordinary farmers to owners of a plantation. It was no wonder that everything that the masters planted were in great demand. Even their wheat output was higher than others. The two families were even more determined to live a good life by following the masters!

“Young Miss, just let us know what you want us to do!” Liu Dazhuang declared his resolution first.

“Yes, that's right!” Widow Li also hurriedly replied for fear that the young miss would dislike her slow response and not give them the new job.

Yu Xiaocao nodded with a smile and said, “As you guys know, Dongshan Village has just experienced a disaster and most of the vegetables have been destroyed. If we want to start over again, I'm afraid that it will take up to next spring. There's a lot of land in our farmstead, and there are a lot of places suitable for growing vegetables. So...”

Liu Dazhuang immediately understood and asked, “Young Miss, do you mean...you want our two families to help manage the vegetable fields?”

She didn't expect that the dull-looking Liu Dazhuang was quite clever! Yu Xiaocao liked to work with smart people because it wasn't as tiring. She looked at him with approval and said, “That's right! I believe that your two families are experienced in growing vegetables, so it shouldn't be difficult for you guys to tend the vegetable fields, right?”

“Not hard, not hard!” Widow Li quickly replied. She had heard that the Yu Family had a shortage of vegetables, so there was definitely a market for it. Which family in the farmstead didn't grow some vegetables in the front and back of their house? As long as they carefully took care of the vegetables, would it even be possible to not grow them well?

Yu Xiaocao smiled and said, “Rest assured! We won't grow too much in the first year; each family will start with ten mu. Don't worry, my family's vegetable seeds have been improved, so they don't need to be fertilized. They also aren't afraid of pests and diseases. As long as you work diligently, they just need to be watered and weeded every day! Don't worry about the water. I'll ask my father to hire someone to dig two wells next to the fields, which are specially used for the vegetable fields...”

'No need for fertilization and pest control? Can the vegetables grow well?' The two families were full of doubts, and their expressions naturally revealed their feelings. Yu Xiaocao didn't explain either. They would know after the vegetables were grown!

The next day, Yu Hai asked a well-digging craftsman to dig a well next to the selected vegetables fields. Since they were in a hurry to plant vegetables, Yu Hai gathered the tenant farmers in the farmstead and

had them plow the twenty mu of land first. Widow Li's family and Liu Dazhuang's family were given eight mu and twelve mu respectively. They stayed in the fields for the entire day. They loosened the larger clumps of soil with hoes and carefully weeded the fields.

Although the young miss said that they didn't need to fertilize the fields, the two families still took out most of the manure that they had saved up for over half a year. After drying and crushing them into powder, they scattered them over the fields. The young miss had said that 10% of the field's income belonged to them.

Liu Dazhuang had asked around and found out that they could earn at least a dozen or so taels a month per mu of vegetable field. Didn't that mean that they could earn at least one tael per mu each month? Twelve mu of land would be twelve taels, so with the exception of four or five months that would be too cold to grow vegetables, their families could earn an annual income of eighty to ninety taels! Moreover, this was calculated based on the least amount they could possibly receive. The price of vegetables would be several times more expensive at the beginning of spring, which meant that their income would also increase several folds!

Widow Li felt even more motivated to work after hearing his analysis! If they took care of the vegetable fields meticulously, then they would have a higher output and earn more money. It would be worth it even if it was somewhat tiring!