

Gold Chapter 421

Fields of Gold Chapter 421 - Separate Dimension?

“Brother, do you think a seventh-level official is small? That's the same level as the county magistrate ah. That being said, the Yu Family has close ties with Royal Prince Yang. On the royal prince's feudal lands, even the prefectural magistrate has to give them some leeway! Right now, the Yu Family has a lot of clout in Tanggu Town!” Farmer Zhang expressed his feelings of envy and jealousy. How come such a good thing didn't fall onto him ah?

The younger man was about to say something when suddenly a skinny youth ran into the teahouse. The young man immediately stood up and welcomed the youth as he asked urgently, “Is there news already?”

The skinny youth picked up a cup from the table and guzzled it down. He used his sleeve to wipe his mouth and then started talking, “Obviously ah! Starting at noon today, Imperial Prince Jing's eighteen grain shops will all be selling corn seeds and will close after five days!”

“What about the seeds for wheat then? Are they being sold? I didn't bring a lot of money with me, so I don't know if I have enough...” Farmer Zhang started scrambling frantically as he didn't know what he should do next.

The skinny youth glanced at him and knew that this farmer was with his older brother-in-law and hurriedly said, “They will only start selling winter wheat after the autumn harvest. Right now they're only selling corn seeds and the price is so low that it's unbelievable. One catty is only five copper coins!”

The younger man pulled at his arm and said, “One of the prince's grain shops is on this street. Let's get there before the news gets out. That way we can get a place in line.”

The other peasant farmers who were in the teahouse eavesdropping also followed these two men after settling their bills. They all jogged in the direction of the imperial prince's grain shop. By the time they got there, they discovered that there was already a line with a dozen or so people in it at the front.

It didn't need to be said just how popular the imperial prince's grain shops were right now. Every single one had a winding line in front of it. Yu Xiaocao, who had just been given the title of a sixth rank official, was still lost in wonder! In her past life, she hadn't even acted as the class monitor. The highest position she got was when she was in the factories working and had been appointed a small group leader. Now, she suddenly became an official that was two levels higher than the county magistrate. Although she was only an official in the Ministry of Revenue in charge of farming affairs, it was still a ranked position.

Today, the official uniform that had been personally tailored for her——a small sized sixth level official's robe that was green-blue in color and had an embroidered heron in the front——had arrived. She changed into it while she was in her rooms and proudly walked back and forth with it on. While she was joking along with her maidservants, the palace sent down a decree for her to enter.

Good timing! She didn't even need to change clothing. What was the point of having official clothing? Obviously, when the emperor called her in, she needed to wear it right? Like this, she had the maidservants arrange her hair into a neat bun that was fastened with a jade hairpin and then boldly entered the Imperial Palace.

In the imperial study, only the emperor was there with his head lowered, reading documents. When Yu Xiaocao saw this, she immediately relaxed. If there were other court officials there who saw her wearing official's clothing, they absolutely would find her to be an eyesore. Since it was only the emperor seeing her, it absolutely couldn't be a big issue. At most, he would only want to talk about some farming affairs. She was very familiar with this stuff so there was nothing for her to be afraid of!

However, she would have never expected that the emperor's first words would scare her silly, "I'll say...old friend ah, when will you ever spill the beans to me eh?"

Apparently, as soon as Yu Xiaocao entered the imperial study, Zhu Junfan had immediately noticed her. At first, the little lass's every movement was quite cautious and she stayed obediently behind Su Ran like a little bird with her head tucked down. However, once she noticed that it was only him in the room, she suddenly straightened her back and became much more lively.

He pretended to be engrossed in the documents in front of him. The little lass was becoming more and more bold. She was looking around the imperial study as if she was on a tour. She craned her neck to look at the books on the bookshelves and then secretly touched a few items that were on the treasure shelf. She even bent down to take a whiff of the incense censer that was burning ambergris. 'Little girl, do you think the imperial study is like your own backyard ah? Just watch as I scare you a bit, you bold little thing.'

Yu Xiaocao felt her heart skip a beat and cold sweat immediately poured out of her pores. She stuttered, "What...old friend? Your Imperial Majesty, is your ancestral home in Tanggu Town?"

“Pretending, always pretending!! Are you still going to pretend that you don't know what I'm talking about? Peking roasted duck, braised food, Buddha jumps over the wall, and those large watermelons as well as the early ripening vegetables...even an idiot would know that you are from the same place as I am!” Zhu Junfan propped his chin up in an unruffled manner and watched as the little lass revealed expressions of unease and fright.

“That uh...this subject, no, this official had found an old cookbook that was damaged...” Yu Xiaocao still attempted to defend herself but her excuse seemed quite pathetic at this moment.

“Beloved Official Yu, deceiving the monarch is a crime worthy of death!” Zhu Junfan revealed an emperor's presence and stared at her fixedly like a tiger staring at its prey. It made Yu Xiaocao feel as if she was under a lot of pressure.

Yu Xiaocao lowered her head and slumped her shoulders. She had always known that once her old transmigrator friend, the emperor, had suspicions towards her, she would be pulled out of the dark by the tail. Struggling to death was of no use, so she could only brace herself as she answered, “Whatever Your Imperial Majesty says will do...”

Zhu Junfan saw that the little lass was now acting like a depressed little bunny and had an expression that showed she had accepted her fate. He grinned, “Why do you need to act all down and depressed ah? I'm not a tiger that will eat you, right?”

“You are the emperor and I am only a tiny official who has just stepped into office. In your hands, I don't even have the chance to struggle so I can only accept my fate and die.” Yu Xiaocao felt her heart quiver with anxiety. She wasn't sure how this old transmigrator friend would act and how he would treat her.

“Accept your fate and die? Why would I want to kill you? Did you do anything that is worthy of death? Or were you an evil bastard in your past life and murdered dozens of people?” Zhu Junfan ridiculed her as he replied.

“You are the evil...” The word 'bastard' didn't leave her lips as she raised her head to look at the shining dragon robe on the other person. She immediately shut her mouth and shrank back like a frightened quail.

Zhu Junfan laughed noiselessly for a moment before he finally relieved her worries, "Don't worry ah! As long as you don't commit any heinous crimes, we will not kill you! We are quite delighted to encounter another transmigrator after so long, so why would we kill you for no reason?"

Yu Xiaocao let out a long, relieved sigh and felt her body relax completely. Zhu Junfan looked at her and then asked, "Old friend, what did you do in your past life? What happened to make you transmigrate over to here? What year and month did you transmigrate over on?"

When she saw that Zhu Junfan's attitude seemed quite gentle, not at all like those transmigrators who were afraid of fellow transmigrators stealing their thunder and wanted to kill them as rivals, she felt her fears melt away. She paused for a second and then obediently replied, "In my past life, I was a very ordinary commoner. I didn't even graduate from middle school when I had to go out to work. Later on, I opened up a braised food store and the business went quite well."

At this point, she paused and thought of her younger brother's exciting and dignified wedding. She smiled bitterly and shook her head, "That day, it was my younger brother's wedding. I was so happy that I drank an extra two glasses of alcohol. When I was going down the stairs, I wasn't careful and fell. Once I woke up, I found out that I had transmigrated into the body of a poor little fisherman's daughter."

"You also drank alcohol before you transmigrated over? Aish, I was out with my roommates celebrating at a restaurant on the night of our graduation. I didn't even finish a bottle of beer when my head became dizzy. When I woke up, I was being born in the turmoil and chaos of war. Looks like you replaced a soul while I was reborn into an infant. But we were both put into this situation by alcohol ah!" Zhu Junfan let out a sudden sigh.

He had just graduated from a prestigious university and was about to go out into the world to do something big. However, he never expected that his soul would be sent into a different world and that he'd become a tiny infant that only knew how to cry. It was truly such a letdown! Even more annoying was that the previous dynasty's emperor was still making his last struggle to keep his throne. He, who had just been born, had to flee with his new mother under the protection of some soldiers like a bunch of homeless vagrants. He almost died from this struggle! Luckily, his new grandfather very quickly managed to overthrow the dynasty and established the new Great Ming Dynasty. Only then did his life stabilize a bit...

"Old friend, when did you transmigrate over?" Zhu Junfan asked out of curiosity.

"Around October 18th 2017, likely right as the 19th started." Yu Xiaocao had originally been planning on going home that night to go online and listen to her leader's lecture. However, tragedy happened

instead. Sigh, her younger brother must have also been upset. His wedding day was now the anniversary of his older sister's death.

Zhu Junfan nodded and then casually said, "You were later than me by about three months. I transmigrated over in July...old friend, tell me the truth, when you transmigrated over...did the god of transmigration give you a big golden finger?"

Yu Xiaocao's pupils suddenly narrowed and both of her hands tightened. How could such a small movement escape the discerning eyes of Zhu Junfan, who had been an emperor for seven to eight years? A flicker of joy flashed in him and he urgently followed up to ask, "What sort of golden finger is it? Is it a separate dimension with a spiritual spring where you can plant vegetation?"

Originally, Yu Xiaocao was quite nervous and on edge. When she heard this, she opened her eyes in disbelief and couldn't help but say, "Your Imperial Majesty, is the hole in your head a bit too big ah?"

Not a single change in expression escaped Zhu Junfan's gaze. When he saw this, he felt a bit disappointed. If it wasn't a separate dimension, then what was it?

"Old friend, don't worry ah. I'm not one of those shameless people who's going to steal your treasure. Just obediently tell me what it is and stop hiding it! If you don't have a separate dimension with a mystical spring, then how are you able to grow crops so well? It doesn't seem to matter what type of plant it is either. In your hands, even the most common wheat doubles its output at harvest. Also, there's the watermelons. They are sweeter than the ones sent for tribute and are even more delicious than the ones I ate in my previous life! If you don't have a mystical spring, then how can you, someone who had worked and was a small business owner, possibly come up with methods to craft medicinal pills and tinctures that are so effective? Tell the truth and stop trying to resist!"

Yu Xiaocao glanced at the multi-colored stone that was strung on her wrist with colorful string. She reluctantly said, "What separate dimension, that stuff doesn't exist! I'm willing to vow an oath to the God of Transmigration. If I have a separate dimension and I'm not telling, then let me fall into an endless circle of reincarnation with all of my memories!"

'Reincarnate with all of your memories? Are you sure that's not a reward instead of a punishment?' Zhu Junfan gave her a pointed look. However, judging by the little lass's attitude, he was pretty sure that she didn't have a separate dimension. Then just what sort of golden finger did she have?

Zhu Junfan looked in the direction that the girl had gazed at earlier. On her pale wrist, there was a colorful stone the size of a marble strung on some braided colored string—the little lass loved money but didn't like to wear gold, silver or jade. Was her special item somehow related to this small stone?

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Yu Xiaocao, whose heart was filled with unease, noticed that the emperor's gaze had fallen on the multicolored stone on her wrist. She hurriedly hid her hand behind her back in a seemingly guilty manner and said, "There's no separate dimension. There really isn't another realm!"

In Zhu Junfan's eyes, her reaction seemed like a clumsy denial that resulted in self-exposure. He felt even more certain that there was something with the multicolored stone.

The little divine stone's scornful voice sounded in Xiaocao's mind, [What are you afraid of? With this Divine Stone here, would I let you get bullied? With my current power, I'll immediately abolish him if he dared to harm you! But, according to this Divine Stone's probing, the other party currently doesn't have any malice towards you. Tut tut, this fellow has a pretty character. In the face of such a big temptation, he unexpectedly doesn't have any intention of taking it for himself!]

After Yu Xiaocao heard what the little divine stone said, her heart somewhat relaxed. The little divine stone was right. The emperor just didn't have any intention of taking it for himself at present, but if he continued to misunderstand, he might change his mind one day. After all, the possession of a realm that defied all laws, or a spiritual spring that could resurrect people, were a major challenge to one's heart.

He was the high and majestic emperor. In this ancient society, the supremacy of the imperial family was the norm. Even if she had the protection of the little divine stone, she couldn't let him feel suspicious about her. After all, she just wanted to be a dutiful little peasant girl. She didn't want to live a life where she had to flee to the end of the world if she murdered the sovereign.

Since it turned out this way, it would be better to be honest than let him think that she had a law-defying realm! A celestial stone that could improve one's health and accelerate the growth of crops should be much less tempting than a law-defying realm, right?

Yu Xiaocao bit her lower lip hard, and a faint taste of blood spread in her mouth. As if he could see the struggles within her heart, Zhu Junfan just stared at her silently with a calm gaze. Seeing that her fists were tightly clenched as if she had made a decision, he finally spoke up, "What? You've decided? Do you want to be honest and receive a lighter sentence, or refuse to confess and get a harsher punishment?"

"If I refused, would Your Imperial Majesty cut off my head?" Yu Xiaocao had calmed down a lot as she asked in reply.

Zhu Junfan seriously pondered for a couple seconds, and then laughed, "Since I became the emperor, I vowed to be a wise ruler. It seems to contradict my ideals if I want to kill you merely because of the separate dimension in your hands. So...I won't kill you. No matter how tight one's mouth is, the Ministry of Justice seems to be able to pry it open. Do you want to go have a tour?"

"No need! I'm still underage, so it's bad for a pre-teen's mental and physical health to see such a bloody scene!" Yu Xiaocao was somewhat curious about the top ten tortures of the Ming Dynasty and Qing Dynasty, but she would politely decline the offer to see it in person.

Zhu Junfan curled up his lips and said, "Pre-teen? In your previous life, even your younger brother was married, so how can you be underage? Who knows, you might even have a few kids. Stop pretending to be young."

"You're the one who has a bunch of kids! I'm still a single young woman, who has passed the average age of marriage! I don't even have a boyfriend, so where will I get a kid?" Yu Xiaocao bravely glared at him.

"You're a single young woman passed the average age of marriage, yet you're still shamelessly pretending to be underage?" There was finally someone who he could talk in a casual manner with, so Zhu Junfan started to joke with her.

Yu Xiaocao pouted and stubbornly said, "I'm young at heart! To be able to always keep a pure childlike innocence is very rare and commendable, don't you think so?"

"Alright! Let's stop talking about all this nonsense! Quickly tell me about your separate dimension. What does it look like? How big is it? What did you plant inside? Do you have hybrid rice? Wheat that can produce a thousand catties per mu?" Zhu Junfan really had no intention of taking the realm for himself. In his opinion, the possession of a treasure was predestined and couldn't be forced.

Yu Xiaocao rolled her eyes and interrupted the emperor's series of questions. She said in a stern and serious manner, "Emperor, I really don't have any separate dimensions!!"

“Then what is that little rock on your wrist? Don't tell me that it's just a normal little rock!” Zhu Junfan stared at her wrist with a 'stop lying' expression.

'You're a little rock. Your whole family are little rocks.' The little divine stone rolled its eyes and sharpened its claws on the side.

After briefly thinking about it, Yu Xiaocao took the multicolored stone bracelet off her wrist, walked forward, and handed it to him. She said, “Your Majesty, you have sharp eyes. This is indeed not an ordinary stone. It said that it is a multicolored stone left from when Goddess Nuwa mended the sky. After tens of thousands of years of cultivation, it had gained intelligence and spirituality, and could transform into a human form. It could also talk...”

After Zhu Junfan heard this, he thought, 'This little stone has become an immortal ah!' He took the stone and thoroughly examined it with an incredulous expression, “Hey, my fellow transmigrator friend, even if you want me to believe that you don't have a separate dimension, you don't have to fabricate a fantasy story to lie to me ah! I might believe you if you tell me that a monkey will come out of the rock. But to say that this stone has cultivated into an immortal, hehe...do you think that I'm a fool!!”

[Dummy! Fool! Stupid! Take your dirty hands off of me! Why are you touching me? How can a vulgar mortal like you disrespect this Divine Stone?] The little divine stone's young yet haughty voice suddenly emerged within Zhu Junfan's mind. He trembled with fear and threw the multicolored stone on the ground. Xiaocao quickly stepped forward, picked up the little divine stone, and gently wiped it.

The voice sounded in Zhu Junfan's mind again and seemed to be filled with anger, [D*mn it, you actually dared to throw this Divine Stone! If I don't let you have a taste of my power, you won't understand why the flowers are so red!]

“Little Glutinous Dumpling, don't!” From the little divine stone's tone, Yu Xiaocao knew that the little fellow was really angry, so she hastily stopped it. However, before she finished speaking, the gold-coated carved wooden chair that Zhu Junfan sat on suddenly scattered into a pile of wood. As for him, the emperor wearing his imperial robe, he was now sitting awkwardly within the bits of wood awkwardly with a bewildered expression on his face.

Suddenly, Zhu Junfan's eyes widened and his expression was full of disbelief. It turned out that a faint golden light had emerged from the multicolored stone on Xiaocao's wrist and slowly turned into a golden baby. The little baby was chubby and only wore a little red top. Its exposed limbs looked like

lotus roots, while its hair was tied up like a launching rocket. It looked like it had come out of a New Year painting.

The little baby appeared very pleased with itself as it snorted, "You dared to disrespect this Divine Stone. Do you know how powerful I am now? If you do it again, I won't let you off so lightly."

"Xiao...Xiaocao, quickly pinch me. Am I dreaming?" Zhu Junfan was completely stunned to see a little baby appear out of nowhere. It was too mystical, wasn't it?

After hesitating for a second, Yu Xiaocao immediately went forward and stretched out her hand to harshly pinch the emperor's cheek. She felt very satisfied in her heart, 'At the present time, I'm probably the only one to have a chance to pinch the emperor's face. Such a good feeling ah!'

Zhu Junfan, who had seen through her thinking, helplessly smacked away her hand, which was torturing his cheek. He said, "You're really pinching me just because I said that!"

"Heh heh, wasn't it an imperial edict by you, the Emperor? How can this lowly commoner not comply? This lowly official received an imperial edict to pinch you ah!" With a slightly crafty smile, Yu Xiaocao spoke in a very right and confident manner.

"Who told you to pinch my face? It's all red now. How am I supposed to see people later? Can't you give me some face, my fellow transmigrator?" Zhu Junfan rubbed his painful face as he glared sulkily at the young girl. She really didn't treat him as the emperor ah!

Yu Xiaocao nodded and replied in a matter-of-fact manner, "Alright, I'll pinch somewhere else next time."

"You want to do it again?" Zhu Junfan stared at her with a fierce gaze, revealing a domineering force. This caused the young girl to finally realize the difference between their statuses. She immediately stepped back and stood a safe distance away.

"Tell me, what exactly is that thing?" Zhu Junfan asked as he pointed at the little baby who was walking around and touching the things in the imperial study.

Seeing that the other party still spoke in a disrespectful manner, the little divine stone was infuriated. It put one of its hands on its hip like a teapot and scolded, "How dare you! You dared to speak of this Divine Stone in such a manner. It seems like your fall earlier was too light..."

"Alright, alright, alright! I'm wrong. You're not a thing, okay?" Zhu Junfan felt very wronged. He was the emperor, but the little girl didn't take him seriously and even pinched his face. This unknown thing scolded and punished him whenever it liked. Was there anyone more wronged than him?

"Humph! Foolish human, this Divine Stone is a disciple of Goddess Nuwa. I was ordered by Goddess Nuwa to cultivate in the mortal realm!" The little divine stone picked up a crane and evergreen ornament and scratched the crane's mouth. 'Humph! Little White Crane looked down on me because it's Goddess Nuwa's mystical mount. It also called me a slow-witted and obstinate stone. See if this Divine Stone doesn't break your beak so that you can't speak!'

Zhu Junfan glanced at Yu Xiaocao with eyes full of questions. Yu Xiaocao nodded at him and said, "Little Glutinous Dumpling, which is the Divine Stone's current name, accidentally recognized me as its master. Had it not been for it, I would have died a long time ago and wouldn't have the chance to be reborn into this era. Once it accumulates enough merits, it will leave this world."

Zhu Junfan, on the other hand, thought of another matter. He ceased his brows and had a gaze full of worries, "Based on what you're saying, the reason you're able to produce high-yield crops has a lot to do with it. If it leaves, then..."

Yu Xiaocao thought about it and said, "The spiritual energy that the little divine stone emits while it cultivates can gather in water and help accelerate the growth of crops. It's thanks to the little divine stone that my family early-ripening vegetables can be harvested in early spring. It's also responsible for the high yield of my family's corn and wheat. However, there's still several decades before it's time for it to leave. If we carefully cultivate it, we will definitely be able to produce high-yield crops. I have already told the tenant farmers at the farmstead to collect bigger wheat ears, and if we also grow them meticulously... I believe that the output of wheat will increase in a few years. A yield of a thousand catties per mu isn't just a dream..."

"Good! We were right about you!! Whether the people in our country can fill their stomachs will depend on you... Oh right, without the divine stone's spiritual energy, can the seeds from the crops you grow still be able to produce a high yield?" Zhu Junfan expressed his worries.

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Yu Xiaocao had already gotten a confirmation from the little divine stone, so she replied without hesitation, "At present, if we plant the wheat kernels transported from Tanggu Town, the output should be the same, or even higher, than that of our farmstead. As for the second generation of seeds, I reckon that there will be a reduction in the yield. After all, Little Glutinous Dumpling's power in the seeds will gradually dissipate after multiple generations of planting."

"Doesn't that mean that if we want to maintain a high yield, we must buy seeds from you at least once every two years?" A worried expression appeared on Zhu Junfan's face. If it was like this, then the output of the crops would return to the previous state when the stone goblin accumulated enough merits.

Yu Xiaocao nodded and said, "Therefore, we must try to breed high-yield seeds and not rely entirely on Little Glutinous Dumpling ah!"

Zhu Junfan pondered for a moment, and then asked, "You're brazenly wearing such a precious cheat on your wrist, aren't you afraid of being robbed?"

Yu Xiaocao glanced at him, and then replied with a spurious smile, "Won't people be more suspicious if I hid it? This multicolored stone looks beautiful, but isn't it still just a stone? I made it into a bracelet and wore it on my wrist, so if others asked about it, I would just say that it was blessed by an eminent monk. Like a safety amulet, it will protect me to grow up healthily. Who would be so shameless and steal a pretty-looking rock? I'm not an idiot who would publicize that I found a treasure. At present, other than myself, you, the Emperor, are the only one who knows about the magic of the multicolored stone."

Her meaning was very obvious. As long as the emperor didn't have any bad ideas, there wouldn't be anyone else eyeing the multicolored stone!

"Oh? You really trust me, your fellow transmigrator, so much? Aren't you afraid that I will suddenly change my mind and steal it from you?" After getting a clarification from her, Zhu Junfan had the urge to tease this eccentric little transmigrator friend again.

"You're the knife, while I'm the fish. What can I do when you're so lucky? You transmigrated into the imperial family and even became the emperor, so would I dare to not answer your questions honestly? Like you said, those who lie to the emperor will be executed!! Moreover, at present, the little divine stone's power only works on crops. Your Majesty, with your noble status and busy schedule, you can't actually go work in the fields yourself, right? It's better to have little commoners like us help you with these types of hard labors!"

Yu Xiaocao acted in a very fawning manner. Well, he was the emperor after all. Since she was in a feudal society ruled by the imperial family, she must know her place. She shouldn't forget who she was just because they came from the same place. If she really did that, then she would probably die really quickly! Of course, she also didn't have to always flatter the emperor like everyone else. After all, for someone who was in such a powerful yet lonely position, there would be times when he would want to relax for a moment. It was quite tiring to always act high and mighty.

“Oh? Does your multicolored stone really only work on crops?” While Xiaocao was talking, Zhu Junfan had seen the baby, who was gnawing on his cup, roll its eyes at her and had a dissatisfied expression. Thus, he couldn't help but ask.

Yu Xiaocao glared at her pig-like teammate, sighed, and resignedly said, “It can also do some other things like strengthening one's body! It can enhance the effects of medicine! It can help brighten and smoothen one's skin...and so on.”

Zhu Junfan casually fiddled with the ruler in his hands and asked in a seemingly casual manner, “Oh? Only these and nothing else? For example...something like bringing the dead back to life?”

Yu Xiaocao widened her eyes and made an incredulous expression, “How is that possible! The little divine stone has limited spiritual power, so how can it do something of law-defying? It won't be able to do that even after returning to its heyday!”

Zhu Junfan curled up his lips as he looked at the young girl's slightly exaggerated expression. He pointed at the little baby, who was currently drinking water from a ceramic teapot and lightly chuckled, “Then...how much power will it have when it returns to its heyday?”

“Who knows! After all, it only has less than one percent of its power now.” Yu Xiaocao didn't dare to get deeper into this topic. She was really afraid that her fellow transmigrator would suddenly want to take the little divine stone.

Zhu Junfan tapped his fingers rhythmically on the table. He could feel the young girl's anxious mood, so he deliberately said, “This little stone can only use one or two percent of its power, yet it's already so powerful. What will happen when it returns to its heyday? I really anticipate it... What to do? I have the urge to take it away!”

“It has already recognized a master, so there's no use in taking it!” Yu Xiaocao felt slightly alarmed in her heart. She carefully observed the emperor's expression, but she couldn't tell if he was joking or being serious.

“Then...what if its master—dies?” Zhu Junfan deliberately showed a cruel gaze and curled up his lips so that his expression appeared sinister.

Yu Xiaocao's entire body turned cold, and her lips instantly lost all color. Yeah! If she died, then wouldn't the little divine stone be without a master? Could it be...that her fellow transmigrator finally wanted to get rid of her?

“Don't be scared! Since you're already bound with this Divine Stone, how can you die so easily? You will definitely die peacefully in bed!” Little Divine Stone couldn't help but cover its face when it saw the stupid expression on its master's face. Why did it have such a coward as a master? It must never let its friends in the other realm know about this. It was too embarrassing!

Zhu Junfan finally looked at the pantless baby seriously and calmly asked, “If the sovereign wants the official dead, then the official will have no choice but to die! What if I really want her life and take the treasure?”

“Then you can try! Who knows who will end up dead!!” The little divine stone spoke in a tone that was full of the arrogance of looking down on all living beings. Not to mention the palace's imperial guards, but even with tens of thousands of soldiers, they still might not be able to ensure the complete safety of their master.

Yu Xiaocao really wanted to block the little divine stone's mouth. Wasn't it just adding oil to the fire? The other party was the emperor. If he really got angry, then that would lead to a death sentence. Although the little divine stone could ensure her safety, she yearned for a stable and peaceful life, rather than being a refugee for her entire life ah! There were more than a dozen lives altogether in her entire family, including her extended family!!

Without a change of expression, Zhu Junfan deepened his gaze and said with a light chuckle, “She's only an ordinary commoner, so is she really worth you doing this for her? We are the 'son of the heavens' and thus have the qi of a dragon on my body. Isn't it better to cultivate around us than her?”

The barefooted baby walked up to him and looked him up and down, as if it was examining the value of an object. After a long time, the little fellow shook its head and sighed, "It is indeed more beneficial for my cultivation to stay around you!"

It paused to give the alarmed Yu Xiaocao a reassuring look, and then continued, "If this Divine Stone had not recognized a master yet, you're indeed the best candidate. Unfortunately, this Divine Stone has already signed a blood contract with this girl. If I betray my master, I will turn back into my original form. By the time I recover my intelligence, it will probably be several hundreds or even over a thousand years later!"

The meaning of the little divine stone's words was very obvious. 'Kid, don't even think about trying to instigate this Divine Stone to rebel against my master and break our relationship. You won't be able to get anything good out of it unless you can live for over a thousand years. Then you will have to wait for the Divine Stone to recover my intelligence and make a contract with you. Unfortunately, you're only a mere mortal. By that time, you would have long turned into a pile of dry bones. Who knows where you'll end up at that time!'

"It seems like the possession of a treasure really did depend on fate!" After hearing the little divine stone's words, the slight trace of desire within Zhu Junfan's heart was completely cut off and a relaxed feeling replaced it. Seeing that his little transmigrator friend was scared out of her wits, he quickly revealed a pacifying smile and said, "Don't be scared. I was just joking with you!"

However, he knew very clearly within his own heart whether he was purely joking with her. It was such a rare treasure, so who wouldn't want it? Since he wasn't fated to have it, he could only give up.

"Emperor, Royal Prince Yang requested an audience." Chief Steward Su Ran's voice sounded from outside of the imperial study and broke the apparently awkward atmosphere in the room.

Zhu Junfan chortled and teased, "Let that kid come in! We aren't a man-eating tiger, so did he have to be so worried?"

As soon as Zhu Junyang stepped into the imperial study, he could clearly feel an uncomfortable emotion coming towards him. If Xiaocao was the only woman who he couldn't detect the feelings of, then the emperor and his imperial grandfather were the only two who could block his mind reading ability. He concluded that this was because they had the qi of a dragon protecting them!

The two people in the imperial study were both people he couldn't see through, but he was sensitive enough to feel the weird atmosphere in the room. He looked worriedly at the little lass, who he was worried sick about. Seeing that she still had a frightened expression on her face, he felt as if his heart had been pricked by a needle and the pain penetrated into his internal organs.

“Emperor, Yu Xiaocao was born in the countryside, so she doesn't know proper etiquette. If she offended you in any way, this official will apologize to you on her behalf.” Zhu Junyang knew that the little lass was bold and would say whatever she wanted in front of him. However, the person in front of her was the emperor. He wouldn't tolerate all her actions. Did the little lass offend the emperor with her words and got scolded, so she got frightened?

With a meaningful smile on his face, Zhu Junfan chuckled and teased, “Oh! You guys aren't even married yet but you're already so protective? I didn't expect that Royal Prince Yang, who is known as a cold faced killer, to also have such a gentle and considerate side.”

Zhu Junyang slightly blushed. He glanced at the little lass who was hiding behind him. She gently held onto the edge of his clothes and looked as if she trusted and relied on him. An inexplicable feeling surged within his heart. He was afraid that the little lass would be shy, so he quickly said, “Your Majesty, girls are thin-skinned, so please be merciful with your words. This official doesn't want to add more obstacles to my long pursuit of my wife!”

“Tsk tsk, Younger Cousin ah, you can't always spoil women, lest they walk all over you!” Others might not, but he was certain that this fellow transmigrator of his wasn't someone who would obediently listen to others. His younger cousin would definitely be tortured in the future!

As soon as Royal Prince Yang came in, Yu Xiaocao, who was in a panic, instantly calmed down. She was like a little grass in the rain and wind that had finally found a big tree to shelter her from the furious storm. Thus, she couldn't help but move closer to his back, seeking protection. His broad and lofty back seemed to be able to block all kinds of storms. She felt a full sense of security when she hid behind him. No matter how strong women were, they still needed a safe haven to stop at, right?

Fields of Gold Chapter 424 - Inner Demon

A burst of hot summer wind blew towards them when they came out of the imperial study. There was still a moist feeling on her back, which had been drenched in cold sweat. As she stepped on the white marble platform, she looked back at the yellow glazed tiles on the roof of the palace hall and the golden dragon and multicolored paintings on the double-eaved roof.

Looking at the magnificent palace, Yu Xiaocao had personally experienced the horror of imperial authority! Perhaps, there was actually a moment earlier when the emperor really thought about taking

the multicolored stone. However, he just suppressed it with his rationality. As for herself, she had just barely dodged death!

Stepping on the flat surface of the marble flooring, she walked forward silently. She didn't have any energy to talk as if she had just exhausted all her courage in the imperial study earlier.

Zhu Junyang quietly accompanied her. Seeing that the little lass didn't have any intention of speaking, he didn't disrupt her confused feelings in hope that his silent company could help her calm down. He didn't know what just happened in the imperial study, but he was certain that the little lass had been greatly frightened. Didn't the emperor think highly of the little lass? Could it be that he intimidated her in order to make her obedient? Or...did the emperor find out about the lass's secret and wanted to inquire about it?

He turned around and saw the young girl's silky black hair, which was styled into a small flower bud on the top of her head and adorned with green hairpins. The top of the little lass's head hadn't even reached his shoulders, yet she seemed to be carrying a big secret on her thin shoulders. He wanted to tell her that he was the only person that she could trust, so she could rest assured and tell him about her worries. He would help her carry the burden. However, he was afraid of scaring her. He should forget about it for today and try again in the future.

Seeing that the lass had stopped next to the terrace in Qianqing Palace and her gaze was fixed on a metallic gold pavilion on the stone step, Zhu Junyang said, "This metallic gold pavilion is called 'Magnificent Palace of the Country', which symbolizes that the country is in the hands of the emperor."

Yes, the country was in the hands of the emperor. She, on the other hand, was just a little ant that he could easily kill at any time. He had let her go today, but it wasn't because she was someone very important. Instead, it was because she was still useful to him.

How astonishing would it be for a woman to become an official? How many officials would have objected? Yet the emperor still bestowed her the position of a sixth-ranked official. What did this mean? In addition to her cheat for farming, he had also displayed the supremacy of imperial authority. As imperial officials, they had the right to voice their opposition, but they couldn't control the emperor's decision.

Yu Xiaocao touched the multicolored stone on her wrist. Today's conversation in the imperial study seemed like a casual chat but it was actually full of danger. Had it not been for the fact that the little divine stone had already recognized a master who couldn't be easily replaced, perhaps...

“This prince doesn't know what you and the emperor talked about before I arrived that made you so scared. You also know about this prince's ability. When I stepped into the imperial study, I didn't feel any killing intention from the emperor. Thus, he had no intention of harming you in any way! As long as the emperor isn't planning on harming you, with this prince here, no one would dare to touch you!” Seeing that Xiaocao was staring at the 'Magnificent Palace of the Country' in a daze and didn't appear as lively as usual, Zhu Junyang couldn't help but comfort her. He hoped that she could break away from her perplexed feelings.

Yu Xiaocao still appeared somewhat listless, but she gave him a face and replied, “Is it really okay for you to privately speculate the emperor's intentions? This is the Imperial Palace... There are ears and eyes everywhere, so it's better to be cautious with your words and actions!”

The little lass, who usually acted in a reckless and bold manner, had now become timid and overcautious. Seeing this, the darkness within the deepest part of Zhu Junyang's heart started to become restless and a burst of violence escaped from within. At this time, he wanted to overturn everything in front of him, including the large and thick palace walls.

Su Ran, who was personally escorting Royal Prince Yang and Yu Xiaocao out of the palace, alertly sensed the change in Zhu Junyang. He had long known that the royal prince would sometimes lose control of himself due to a childhood trauma. There was once an episode that was so serious that even the emperor had been alarmed, and thus sent him to assist Head Steward Liu to suppress the royal prince, who had gone completely out of control.

At that time, he, Head Steward Liu and several martial arts experts, who served the royal prince, had exerted a lot of efforts to prevent Royal Prince Yang from hurting others. In the past two to three years, the royal prince seemed to have overcome his childhood trauma and had never gone out of control again. Why was the royal prince suddenly on the verge of going on a rampage? What caused his inner demon to come out and lead him to lose control?

Su Ran realized that this was a bad situation. They had just walked not too far from the imperial study. If Royal Prince Yang lost control in the palace and hurt the emperor, not only would it affect the royal prince, but the entire Imperial Prince Jing's Household would also be doomed...

In a flash, Su Ran had quickly turned around and shortened the distance between himself and Royal Prince Yang. He was now two steps away from him, and he was secretly on guard.

Su Ran's vigilance might have triggered Zhu Junyang. His charming phoenix eyes gradually turned crimson red and the veins around his eyes became apparent. His slender hands were like the strong talons of an eagle...

[Oh no! Master, your man is about to go crazy. Quickly stop him!] As soon as Zhu Junyang stepped into the imperial study, the little divine stone had already turned into a golden light and went back into the multicolored stone. When it sensed that something was wrong with Zhu Junyang, it immediately jumped out to stop him. 'Damn it! There're so little resources for cultivation here, so why would there be demon possession? With my current power, I won't be able to beat this demon. What should I do? What should I do!'

'Whose man? Little Glutinous Dumpling is seriously speaking more and more recklessly!' However, Yu Xiaocao didn't have time to rebuke it. She immediately grabbed onto Zhu Junyang, who was on the verge of losing control. Her soft and slightly cold hands seemed like sweet spring water that went straight to the heart of a thirsty man and soothed the uncontrollable rage within his heart.

The little divine stone also hurriedly gathered all its spiritual power and let it flow into the deepest part of Zhu Junyang's consciousness through his veins. The demon inside was about to break through its shackles. A demon could control one's heart because it could hold onto the weakness of human nature. It could also hide in the deepest wound in one's heart and expand infinitely until one loses control of their consciousness. In this way, it could take control of the person's body and do irreparable things. The process would repeat over and over again until the person collapsed completely and finally became the puppet of the demon.

This meant that if a person had a strong enough mind, the demon would never be able to do anything and would be suppressed within the deepest part of one's mind. The moment Yu Xiaocao grabbed onto Zhu Junyang, the pure sense of worry, anxiousness, and concern directly entered his heart. The raging fire within his heart slowly cooled down and extinguished, as if it had encountered a spring rain.

The spiritual power that the little divine stone had released, with the help of its master's hands, had also entered the deepest part of Royal Prince Yang's consciousness and disrupted the demon that was about to emerge. The inner demon's control on Zhu Junyang had been weakened, and with the anxious calls of Yu Xiaocao, Zhu Junyang gradually recovered his senses. The darkness of the demon was suppressed bit by bit until it reluctantly retracted back into a corner.

Su Ran was inwardly stunned as he watched the redness in Royal Prince Yang's eyes gradually fade and he regained his senses. He looked profoundly at Yu Xiaocao, who was holding onto Royal Prince Yang's hands with an anxious and worried expression. It seemed like this lass was quite important within Royal Prince Yang's heart ah. She could actually pull him back before he lost control of himself. Could this be the so-called 'there was always one thing to overcome another'?

Since the emperor ascended the throne, he had been shackled down by the old ministers and had always wanted to nurture his own capable ministers. Royal Prince Yang was the emperor's younger cousin, and he had both capabilities and ways to get things done. But as the emperor described him, he was like a bomb that could explode at any moment, hurting others and himself. Thus, he would be hard to control.

In recent years, he might have strengthened his self-control as he aged. There had not been another incident when he lost control and hurt others again. Thus, the emperor gradually began to let him handle some matters. Royal Prince Yang also didn't let people down and successfully completed his tasks. Based on what he had heard from the emperor, it seemed like he was planning on putting the royal prince in an important position in the future.

Earlier, he almost thought Royal Prince Yang would be possessed by the demon again and lose control of himself. With Royal Prince Yang's current martial arts skills, it would be quite difficult to suppress him. It was fortunate that the lass of the Yu Family was here! She appeared like such a thin and weak person, but she could actually help the royal prince instantly recover his senses. Perhaps, Royal Prince Yang attached great importance to her deep within his heart. He was afraid of losing her, and thus he desperately tried to suppress his inner demon and control himself before he exploded...

It seemed that as long as Miss Yu was here, all of the emperor's worries would be unnecessary. In the future, the emperor would have another capable assistant. He had gotten one step closer to his dream...

When he sent them out of the palace, Royal Prince Yang had already recovered to his usual state. It appeared as if the ferocious demon earlier was only Su Ran's imagination. When the young girl got on the carriage, the tall physique of Royal Prince Yang, who sat on his horse, appeared even more stalwart. The strong and gentle figures seemed very harmonious. Even the gorgeous sunset dimmed in comparison with them.

When he returned to the palace hall, the eunuch told him that the emperor was still in the imperial study. After receiving permission, Su Ran entered the imperial study again. He noticed that the emperor, who was usually a diligent worker, had left the imperial memorials aside and sat beside the bookcase in a daze... In a daze? Earlier, the emperor had kicked everyone out of the room, so even he couldn't stay

to serve by him. Could it be that the emperor and Miss Yu had discussed a difficult matter, and thus he was acting abnormally now?

Fortunately, the emperor soon cleared up his mind. He let out a long sigh as if he had made some sort of decision. He took a look at Su Ran, who stood in front of him, and slowly said, "Junyang...and Miss Yu, have they already left the palace?"

"In reply to Your Majesty, this servant personally escorted them out. It seems like Royal Prince Yang intends to send Miss Yu back to the General's Estate." The latter part of Su Ran's response seemed to have a deeper meaning.

"Oh? Junyang is already nineteen, right? Most similar aged men in the capital have children who can already help with errands. He, on the other hand, always regarded the noble young misses in the capital as ferocious tigers. He would avoid them as much as possible. If he can't, then he would pull a long face and scare them off. We thought that the kid would be single for the rest of his life, but we didn't expect that he would suddenly understand love and fall for Miss Yu. But that lass is only twelve this year, right? That kid will still have to wait for a while!"

Zhu Junfan experienced a struggle within his heart, but he finally made a decision. Since he couldn't have possession of the treasure, he must ensure that the treasure would stay close to him for his usage!

Fields of Gold Chapter 425 - Visitor

His imperial uncle, Imperial Prince Jing, was quite capable and had no greedy ambitions. His eldest son had a steady character, while his second son was radical. His third son had the most unpredictable temperament, but he was the most capable among the three brothers. Had it not been for Junyang's instability, he would have long put that kid in an important position and let him handle important matters. There was no way that he would let him constantly run off to Dongshan Village.

While he was deep in his thoughts, Su Ran, who seemed to have seen through his thoughts, thoroughly recounted what had happened earlier in front of Qianqing Palace.

Zhu Junfan raised his brows. To be able to pull his younger cousin back from the verge of tyranny, that lass was really quite capable. There was a lid for every pot. The heavens must have specially prepared that young girl from the Yu Family for that kid Junyang. Otherwise, she wouldn't have transmigrated back thousands of years to meet him.

As his older cousin, Zhu Junfan was finally at ease to know that a girl who could control that kid had appeared. On second thought, it was fortunate that he didn't make the wrong decision of 'killing in

order to obtain the treasure'. Otherwise, that kid Junyang would probably go on a rampage and destroy Qianqing Palace.

Zhu Junyang, who was riding on a horse and following the General Estate's carriage, leaned over and looked into the carriage through the window. He finally couldn't help but ask, "Xiaocao, why were you so nervous in the imperial study? Did the emperor force you to do something?"

Regarding her secret, it was already quite dangerous to have the emperor know about it, so there was no way that she would dare to disclose it to another person. Since ancient times, a person's heart was the hardest to predict. Royal Prince Yang took great care of her and her family, but who could guarantee that he wouldn't be interested in such a tempting treasure?

"No...nothing! It's just that the emperor thinks too highly of me. He wants me to cultivate wheat and rice grains that produce a thousand catties per mu. I might have been a little dazed due to the pressure. Young Royal Prince, I didn't act improperly in front of the emperor earlier, did I?" In order to avoid the earlier topic, Yu Xiaocao pretended to be at a loss. Zhu Junyang couldn't use his mind reading ability on her anyway, so it was harmless to tell a little lie.

Zhu Junyang looked seriously at the little lass. Since she didn't want to tell the truth, he wouldn't force her. He was willing to be a protector, who silently guarded her for a lifetime. It was just that he didn't know what the emperor's intentions were.

For the two people on either side of the carriage, one was in an unsettled state, while a myriad of thoughts went through the other's mind. For a moment, they fell into a silence and only the crisp sounds of the horses' hooves and the wheels rolling over the road could be heard...

Zhu Junyang escorted her to the main entrance of the General's Estate and looked at the doorkeeper, who hastily opened the side door to welcome the young miss's return. An idea came up in his mind, so he said in a soft voice, "You're now someone who has to deal with official matters. In the future, the supervisor of the Imperial Plantation and lower ranked officials of the Ministry of Revenue will come ask for advice from time to time. Even Minister Liu might also come to disturb you. Therefore, it will be inconvenient for you to stay at the General's Estate. This prince has a small and exquisite house nearby. If you need to, feel free to use it..."

Yu Xiaocao considered it carefully, and then declined the offer, “My father will go back to Tanggu Town in a couple of days. There are a lot of matters that he needs to take care of at our farmstead. Since the emperor is paying close attention to our farmstead, we must manage it properly. My father was granted the position of a seventh-ranked official, so he should naturally take responsibility for his duties. In this way, I'll be the only one staying in the capital. My godparents would definitely be worried and not let me move out. At best...I can ask my godmother to let me reside in a separate courtyard with a side door.”

Zhu Junyang didn't force her anymore. The little lass was only twelve, which was an age when the children of other families would be acting like a spoiled child in front of their parents. If she really lived in a house alone, he wouldn't feel at ease, let alone others.

As the two of them talked at the door, a head peeked out from the side entrance. With a closer look, it turned out to be one of Yu Xiaocao's maidservants, Xichun. Yu Xiaocao wasn't very good at coming up with names, so her godmother helped her name the head maidservants in the courtyard.

Yingtao was in charge of the pharmaceutical workshop in Dongshan Village, while Yangliu was responsible for the braised food shop in the capital. The other two girls, Wutong and Pipa, had more ideas in their heads and were less loyal than the others. Thus, they were only responsible for serving her daily life. However, she was now granted a position of a government official and was responsible for managing the Imperial Plantation. So, she needed to urgently train some capable assistants.

For the names of the second-ranked maidservants, she had plagiarized the names of several of the young misses of the Jia Family in *Dreams of the Red Chamber* like Tanchun, Xichun, Yingchun, and Hechun. The name 'Yuanchun' was too eye-catching so she didn't use it. Her godmother praised that the names were artistic and well-named. Anyway, *Dreams of the Red Chamber* didn't exist in this era and that Cao Xueqin [1] wasn't even born yet. Why should she feel shameful about it? Thus, she shamelessly accepted the compliment.

Among the four 'chun', there were two who were capable. For example, Xixhun who was currently in front of her. With a clever and flexible mind, she never did things sloppily. She was also capable of working independently. Most importantly, this girl was absolutely loyal to her, and she also somewhat idolized her. Since she was bestowed a position of an official, this girl always looked at her with little stars in her eyes. The girl obeyed everything that she said like it was an imperial edict. Moreover, she always completed her assigned tasks in a strict manner.

At this time, the young maidservant dashed over at full speed with excitement in her eyes. Before she had even caught her breath, she eagerly said, “Young Miss, Minister Liu of the Ministry of Revenue has been waiting at the estate's study for a long time.”

Yu Xiaocao knew in her heart that he must have come for her 'potion' which was good for the growth of crops. She glanced at the lass Xichun and noticed that she was currently staring admiringly at the official's gown that she was wearing.

Zhu Junyang reached out to help fix the crooked jade hairpin on Xiaocao's head, and softly said, "Minister Liu is seriously such a workaholic. It's already this late yet he's still staying at another person's house with no intention of leaving. You should go and send him away. This prince will take you to the Imperial Plantation tomorrow morning. Go to rest earlier. Have your maidservant burn some calming incense for you and brew a cup of soothing tea."

Yu Xiaocao's heart warmed up because of Royal Prince Yang's concern. She nodded her head obediently like a gentle kitten, waved goodbye to him, and then followed Xichun to the study in the outer courtyard.

Minister Liu had already drunk the nth cup of tea in the study, and his intention was very obvious. The faster he could get the pesticide and spray it on the corn seedlings, the sooner he could feel at ease. Today was the first day that the eighteen grain shops in the capital started selling corn seeds, and it was extremely popular. He heard that the villages around the capital had been notified in advance, so under the leadership of the village heads, the villagers were rushing to the capital. He reckoned that the stores around the grain shops would have decent business in the next few days.

He had hurried over to the General's Estate in order to share the news with Miss Yu. He hadn't expected that she got summoned by the emperor right after lunch. It seemed like the emperor shared the same view as him. The current priority was to increase the output of crops so that the common people wouldn't have to starve.

Minister Liu sighed when he thought about the problem of people's livelihood. In the past two years, the north had been suffering from drought and locust plague. Fortunately, the emperor made a timely decision to send Royal Prince Yang to transfer grain from the south to the north via waterway so as to avoid widespread starvation. The emperor had racked his brain in order to ensure that the people wouldn't starve! If these high yield crops could be popularized and every family had surplus food, they wouldn't be thrown into chaos in times of disaster.

The sun was slowly moving closer to the west. Miss Yu had been in the palace for the entire afternoon, so it was apparent how much importance the emperor placed on her. Those officials, who discriminated against Miss Yu because she was a girl and tried to stop the emperor, should have realized their mistakes now, right? Miss Yu didn't get the position of an official to be an ornament, but instead she

was an official who worked diligently. She was much more capable than those fellows who held a position but didn't do any work.

From now on, he could finally take his hands off the matters of the Imperial Plantation with ease. In the past two years, he was seriously exhausted from running back and forth between the Ministry of Revenue and the Imperial Plantation. He believed that the Imperial Plantation's experimental fields would thrive under the management of Miss Yu!

Just as Minister Liu held up his eighth cup of tea and felt too full to stomach it, he heard some movement outside of the study. A moment later, Yu Xiaocao, who dressed in a red official's gown, came in from outside and she was followed by a young maidservant who couldn't hide her excitement.

"Official Liu, you must have waited for a long time!" Minister Liu was a second-ranked official, so he had a much higher status than her who was just a low sixth-ranked official. As a lower ranked official, she should show proper respect to the higher ranked official.

Minister Liu didn't wait for her to finish her bow and stretched out his hands to stop her, saying, "Yu... Official Yu, please don't be so courteous. Quickly have a seat!"

After staying in the imperial study for the entire afternoon and suffering a fright, Yu Xiaocao really did need to sit down for a rest. She politely asked Minister Liu to sit down and had someone get a new pot of tea before she sat down.

"Miss... Official Yu, may I know how much of the pesticide you have on hand..." Minister Liu almost called her 'Miss Yu', but when he saw the small official's gown on her body, he quickly changed his words.

Xiaocao smiled and said, "Official Liu, you're a higher ranking official and an elder to me, so you should just call me 'Xiaocao'. It sounds more cordial. When you say 'Official Yu', I almost thought that you were calling my father!"

Originally, with Minister Liu's rigid temperament, he wouldn't easily change his way of speech. However, the young girl in front of him was about the same age as his granddaughter. She also spoke and behaved in a very amiable and lively manner. Thus, people couldn't help but to feel a sense of affinity towards her. He smiled and said, "Then I'll call you 'Miss Xiaocao'."

As long as he didn't insist on calling her Official Yu, it didn't matter what he called her. Yu Xiaocao picked up her cup of tea to moisten her throat, and then said, "Xiaocao really admires Official Liu's dedication to the people. But, I didn't bring a lot of the potion with me this time. I just have some samples for the emperor and officials to look at."

Seeing Minister Liu's eager and anxious expression, she quickly continued, "But, after seeing the emperor last time, I started to work on gathering the ingredients for the medicine. I almost have all of them now. It's getting late now, so it's a little late to leave the city. I'll work overtime tonight to make more potions so that tomorrow's work won't be delayed."

Since Yu Xiaocao said that, Minister Liu could only suppress the anxiety in his heart. He nodded and said, "Then I will have to trouble Miss Xiaocao tonight! This old man will come over early tomorrow morning!"

Fields of Gold Chapter 426 - Worry

"Official Liu is being too polite!" One really needed skills when interacting with officials. How was she going to survive in the future ah! After sending away Minister Liu, Yu Xiaocao stretched her back and put her legs up on another chair. Xichun alertly crouched down beside her and helped her massage her tired calves.

This was the scene that Fang Zizhen saw when he came in. He chuckled and said, "Oh! Who is this lord? You don't have a very high rank, yet you're quite haughty. If your godmother sees you, she will definitely nag you for several days!"

When Yu Xiaocao was appointed as an official, Fang Zizhen was very happy for her for a while, but Lady Fang was very worried. As a girl, she wasn't staying in the inner court and learning how to manage a household, but instead she had to deal with a bunch of men. What would outsiders think about her? Perhaps, many of the people who were on bad terms with the General's Household had already prepared snacks and were waiting to watch a good show.

Lady Fang had originally planned on having her goddaughter move into the estate when she was around twelve or thirteen. She wanted to fix her temperament, teach her things that a young lady should know, bring her to some flower appreciation gatherings and tea parties, and find a good marriage partner for her.

Now, that Royal Prince Yang, who was rumored to be the cold-faced death god, followed her everywhere without any sense of propriety. This caused her close friends to ask her whether she decided to let her goddaughter be the royal prince's concubine for the sake of her husband's future.

Was she that kind of person? She knew very clearly herself how much she cared about Xiaocao. She treated her even better than if she was her biological daughter and wanted to give her all the best things. Especially in terms of marriage, she didn't want her to be mistreated. Why would the rumors turn her into a shameless person who wanted to send her goddaughter to be a concubine for the sake of her husband's future? Lady Fang felt very wronged ah!

The emperor also joined in and made things worse. If he wanted Xiaocao to help with matters of farming, he could just privately send an imperial edict or give an oral order. Why did he have to go through all that trouble to summon her to the Imperial Palace and make her a little sixth-ranked official? Wasn't...wasn't this just making things hard for people?

Since ancient times, how many women were able to become government officials? Even Shangguan Waner, who served Empress Regnant Wu Zetian, didn't have a good ending. Which of those officials in the imperial court weren't proud and arrogant? Which one of them would be willing to let a woman be an official in court? The emperor had sent out an imperial edict, but besides the emperor and Minister Liu, who genuinely cared about the good of the people, how many of them really had a good opinion of her family's Xiaocao?

How was this being favored by the emperor? This had really destroyed all hopes for her goddaughter marrying a son of an official! Which of those young masters of aristocrat families and scholars who failed the imperial examination would be willing to marry Yu Xiaocao, who constantly worked outside the house and had a government post that people ridiculed? When the imperial edict was announced, Lady Fang was so angry that her chest started to hurt. 'Your Majesty, you're seriously so annoying for doing this!'

Yu Xiaocao, who was being teased by her godfather, knew about her godmother's concern. She giggled and put down her legs. After greeting her godfather, she said, "I won't occupy Godfather's study any longer. I'll go back to my courtyard to change my clothes so that Godmother won't see me wearing this official's gown and say that I look out of place and feel angry again."

When Fang Zizhen recalled what his wife told him last night, he sighed and said, "Your godmother is seriously thinking about your future. Think about it. Many of those young masters of the noble families in the capital don't even have a position as a sixth-ranked official. Which young man with some reputation would want his wife to be more capable than themselves? Your godmother is worried about your future marriage ah!"

Yu Xiaocao, on the other hand, laughed nonchalantly and said, "I know that Godmother wants the best for me. My father said that he wanted to keep me until I'm eighteen, so isn't there still six to seven

years? A person who sincerely loves and values me won't be blinded and shackled by those common views. I, your daughter, don't want someone who thinks too much, is restricted by his concerns, and despises women in his heart! To be able to meet a man who genuinely loves me will be a blessing, but if I don't, then that's life! Let's leave it up to fate! In the future, if I don't find someone I like, I'm fine with living by myself. With Godfather, Godmother, and Little Linlin around, would you guys just watch me starve and get bullied?"

"Pah pah! What are you saying? Why would my, Fang Zizhen's, daughter be worried about not being able to get married? Our Xiaocao is so talented. At a young age, you're an even better cook than the imperial chefs, and you also know how to earn money. Those who look down on us are blind, so they don't deserve our Xiaocao!! You're not allowed to talk about being single for the rest of your life anymore. If your godmother heard it, she would probably lie in bed for nearly half a month?" Fang Zizhen glared at the little lass and chided.

Yu Xiaocao wasn't afraid of her godfather, but she was a little scared of facing her godmother. It wasn't that her godmother treated her badly, but it was because she treated her too well. Her godmother was always trying to do what's best for her and strived to turn her into a virtuous noble young lady. Her heart ached when she thought about having to walk, speak, and act in a restrained manner like a monkey controlled by the band-tightening spell.

Yu Xiaocao made a funny face at her godfather, and then walked back to her courtyard with Xichun. As soon as she entered, a round ball-like figure tottered over and hugged her leg. He looked up and called, "Older Sister" in a babyish voice.

"Oh! Little Linlin, why are you at Older Sister's courtyard? Are you waiting for me to come back?" She bent down to pick up the little fellow, which really required some strength. The little guy was quite heavy ah!

Fang Haolin's wet nurse smiled happily and said, "Eldest Miss, right after you went out, the young master has been looking for you. Like this, he has been waiting for the entire afternoon. During the wait, he asked about you many times. If you had come back any later, our young master will probably throw a tantrum!"

Lady Fang had long instructed all the maidservants and senior servants in the estate to treat Yu Xiaocao like the legitimate blood-related young miss of the household. They must never slight and disrespect her. Otherwise, they would be kicked out of the estate after a beating! In addition, the madam's four personal maidservants were all very respectful to the young miss, so the others didn't dare act in a reckless manner.

The wet nurse was also a clever person. From time to time, she would bring the young master over to the young miss's courtyard for a visit. There was an older sister who he couldn't help but want to get closer to and a lot of snacks that he had never eaten before, so the little kid Fang Haolin would visit his older sister's courtyard three times a day. He would always stay until it was time for lunch or dinner before leaving.

Yu Xiaocao carried her younger brother back to her room. The news of the young miss's return had spread to the courtyard as soon as she entered the estate. At this time, hot water had already been prepared in the washroom and Pipa was waiting on the side with a set of clothes the young miss usually wore.

"Pipa, give the young master a peach to eat. It's almost time for dinner, so just feed him half of it." Yu Xiaocao handed the heavy ball of flesh to the wet nurse. It was only a short walk from the entrance of the courtyard to the room, but her arms were already sore. Later, when the little guy could walk steadily, she must suggest to her godmother to not let others carry him. He should run around himself as exercise, lest he turn into a big fatty and couldn't find a wife.

She couldn't help but laugh out loud at that thought. She was seriously worrying over nothing. With her godfather's background as a military official, would he just let his only son grow up in the inner courtyard? Perhaps, her godfather was now making plans to have his son practice basic martial arts when he was three or four years old.

After she took a simple bath and changed into a comfortable set of clothing, Yu Xiaocao took her younger brother, who had finished eating more than half a peach, back to the main courtyard. Lady Fang had been waiting in the room for a long time.

Lady Fang let the wet nurse carry the little fellow, who wanted to stay by his older sister, away, and then asked with concern, "Why did you go for so long? Did the emperor make things hard for you?"

Yu Xiaocao saw that her godmother's face looked somewhat sallow and the dark circles under her eyes were very apparent. It was obvious that she hadn't been sleeping well these past few days. She quickly went forward, held her hands, and said with a smile, "Godmother, His Majesty has always been kind, so why would he make things hard for a little girl like me? The emperor is worried about farming and asked me a lot of questions about farming. Don't worry, the task that the emperor assigned me is something that I'm good at. I definitely won't disappoint you and His Majesty!"

Lady Fang patted her daughter's soft, delicate hands. This was a pair of tender and fair hands that even the noble young misses couldn't compare with! This pair of hands should be doing needlework and casually flipping through the books at home. At times, she could tend the flowers and plants, or make some pastries and drink some tea.

But she was now working with a group of officials from the Ministry of Revenue to help tend the crops. It wasn't that she looked down on women who helped their family do farm work. She didn't say anything in the past when her daughter helped her family grow vegetables, grow watermelons, and make braised food. Ay... She had unintentionally thought about troublesome matters again. In a short period of time, Lady Fang had sighed numerous times.

Yu Xiaocao quickly pacified her, "Godmother, I was granted the position of an official because the emperor acknowledges my ability. I'm responsible for managing the Imperial Plantation, which bears the emperor's expectations for me and his love for the people. When I get back to Dongshan Village and my friends find out that I have become an official, they will be so envious!"

Seeing that Lady Fang still appeared very worried, she continued, "Godmother, whether it's a punishment or reward, it's still a grace from the emperor. Besides, I like this job. As long as the crops are planted well, wouldn't your daughter be in charge of the entire Imperial Plantation and the mountains around it? We can plant all kinds of fruit trees on the mountains and leave a portion of land to grow vegetables and melons. In this way, we can harvest vegetables in the spring and reap melons in the summer. Not only will it be convenient for us to eat, but we will also get more income!"

"Nonsense! Since His Majesty has entrusted you with such an important task, you must do your work in a serious and honest manner. Don't do unnecessary things. If someone complains about it and the emperor wants to punish you, then you'll be in serious trouble!" Hearing her words, Lady Fang had no choice but to accept the facts. Since things couldn't be changed, she had to give her the greatest support so that she wouldn't have any worries.

Ay! She wasn't a good godmother. Her daughter was appointed as an official and summoned to see the emperor alone, so she must be very nervous and scared in this situation. Instead of supporting and helping her, she had fallen ill and needed her daughter to comfort her. Ay... She was really becoming more and more immature as she got older! In the past, when she didn't have a son, didn't she also bravely survive the groundless rumors in the capital? Why did she become so timid after becoming a mother?

Her daughter was right. Whether it was a blessing or a curse, it still couldn't be avoided. So there was no use in being afraid. The key was to know how to turn the bane into a boon! With her husband's position

as a third-ranked general and noble title of Count Zhongqin (Author's note: The title was granted to him after the Wokou incident.), would they not be able to find a good husband for their daughter?

Fields of Gold Chapter 427 - Bad Friend

General Fang and his wife were worried about their goddaughter's marriage, but they would've never expected that a big-tailed wolf had been watching their precious goddaughter. See, the next morning, the other party had gone to their house, saying that he had been ordered by the emperor to escort the agricultural officer, Miss Yu, to the Imperial Plantation.

General Fang, who had personally welcomed him into the reception room, clicked his tongue and complained in his heart, 'My Royal Prince Yang, can you make a reasonable excuse? A little official of the sixth rank can be easily found in the capital, how could they trouble you to come? You are a perfect example of a drunk who isn't interested in the wine—having ulterior motives!'

The two people each had a cup of tea and Yu Xiaocao, who was wearing a red riding outfit, came out of the backyard. Xichun, Linglong, and Wutong, who followed behind her, were also dressed in clothes that allowed more movement. Linglong was originally Lady Fang's most capable personal maidservant. She was worried about her goddaughter's first day at work, so she had Linglong act as an assistant.

In the future, some of the trivial matters of the Imperial Plantation must be handled by someone that could be trusted. Xichun was a young girl but she was capable and none of her work was sloppy. Xiaocao planned for her to be her assistant after training her. As for Wutong, she would serve and follow Xiaocao.

Wutong and Pipa saw that Yingtao and Yangliu, who were loyal toward their master, had respectable jobs. Even the head senior servants in the estate had to be polite upon seeing the two. Those two were originally like them, just serving maids in the young miss's courtyard. Now they were more powerful than those stewardesses in front of the madam. They were also able to have some standing in front of their masters.

They, on the other hand, not only did not change in the slightest, but they also had lost favor with their master. Their identity and status didn't just differ a little. Wutong and Pipa felt extremely regretful. At first, when their mistress asked who would be willing to go to the countryside to serve the young miss, why hadn't they jumped out to express their loyalty?

Otherwise, one of them would be in charge of the most famous braised food shops in the capital. In the worst case, they could've become a female steward of a pharmaceutical workshop. If they had known, the pharmaceutical workshop Yingtao managed didn't produce ordinary drugs but was the Tongren Medicine Hall pills and syrup that were hard to find in the capital, and all the prescriptions were in the

hands of their Sister Yingtao, they would've been so regretful that they would've found a block of tofu to knock themselves to death.

When they came out of the General's Estate, a clever red horse and a green shed carriage were waiting outside. The red horse was the foal that the general had given his goddaughter years ago, and now it has grown into a plump and sturdy adult horse.

The little red horse was a very common breed, but upon being raised by Xiaocao, its hay was mixed with diluted mystic stone water and its drinking water was also diluted mystic stone water. No matter how inferior the horse was, it would've been conditioned into a quality horse. Even General Fang's carefully selected beloved steed was not as good as Little Red. Only the fine steed under Royal Prince Yang could compete with it.

The little red horse grew up with her master and the benefits of the mystic stone water for many years. This one might look like a little mare but she has a proud temperament. Especially in front of Royal Prince Yang's Ferghana horse, she showed an air of defiance.

When Yu Xiaocao and Royal Prince Yang were riding side by side, the little red horse would constantly make petty actions. She would either intentionally use her body to push Royal Prince Yang's horse, which was called Fierce Wind, or frighten him by stretching out her mouth as if she was going to bite Fierce Wind when her master wasn't paying attention.

Horses would resemble their masters. Royal Prince Yang's Ferghana horse wasn't a docile one either. With the exception of Royal Prince Yang, no one else could ever have the slightest chance of riding him! If you thought you would be able to jump on his back and subdue him with your riding skills, then you were very wrong. This horse was very strong, and many skilled riders had been flung off by him. Not only were they flung to the ground, but they were also almost seriously injured from being stepped on by his hooves.

Now, this fierce thoroughbred horse was as tame as a sheep. No matter how Little Red provoked him, even if he was kicked in the legs, he didn't get angry at all. His big wet eyes looked at Little Red with tolerance, as if he was a good-natured gentleman indulging his lady's temper.

Royal Prince Jun jokingly scolded Fierce Wind for being so useless and blinded by beauty that it allowed Little Red to play the domineering role. He even said that the beast was spoiled, and it would only be obedient after being disciplined... Before he finished speaking, he saw Xiaocao's raised eyebrows and

her angry round eyes glaring at him. He hurriedly changed his words and said, "I'm talking about horses. Don't worry. How could I bear to hit you? Aren't you normally the one beating me?"

He had changed his words quite quickly. Who was the useless didn't one, my Lord? Steward Liu and Commander Zheng turned their faces in the opposite direction, for fear that their master would see their distorted expressions.

Yu Xiaocao snorted coldly and said, "Fierce Wind's actions are called gentlemanly manners. There's a huge power gap between men and women. What kind of man would fight a woman?"

"You're right! Women are supposed to be cared for and pampered. Look at my family's style. There has never been a precedent for hitting women. My father is reluctant to even say anything harsh to my mother. I'm their son, so this fine tradition has been deeply rooted in my bones since I watched it growing up. So my future princess consort will be blessed!" This shameless guy was speaking like 'Grandma Wang selling melons and praising her own products'!

"Oh! Who is this? How can you have such thick skin!! Looking to see if a young girl can be deceived and taken home with colorful words?! Is this something that you, Royal Prince Yang, would do?! Alas...It's said that Royal Prince Yang has a cold personality and is a man of few words. Surely I didn't meet a fake Royal Prince Yang today?"

A fair-skinned and chubby man, who was around the age of twenty, walked towards them. There was a hint of smile in his squinty eyes that gave him the appearance of a smiling tiger. He was wearing a brocade robe and the jade pendant on his waist seemed to be of great value. He fanned himself with the fan in his hands.

Yu Xiaocao had heard that Royal Prince Yang had very few friends in the capital but a lot of enemies. However, with his skills and temperament, not many would dare to outright provoke him. This guy had a tone of finding fault the minute he opened his mouth. He didn't seem like a good person, but since he dared to come over to provoke Royal Prince Yang, he surely had a high status. She wondered if Royal Prince Yang would get in trouble for slapping him to death.

The 'smiling tiger' detected Xiaocao's unfriendly gaze. He opened his squinty eyes with a surprised face and said, "Oh! I was thinking it was Royal Prince Yang who was flirting with women on the street! Turns out that one is willing to fight and the other is willing to suffer! Looks like I was too impulsive!"

Yu Xiaocao frowned, and her face suddenly became cold. This person had a face that needed a beating. How could he be so annoying? Her hand was itching to beat him up, what to do?

Seeing that the little lass looked like a cat that had been offended and eager to show off her claws, Royal Prince Yang hurriedly urged his horse over to the 'smiling tiger' and punched him in the shoulder and said, "This mouth of yours! You must have been beaten up a lot over the years! When did you come back?"

"Hehe! All the beating that I've gotten in this life would never add up to the time I got beaten up by Royal Prince Yang. Back then, I couldn't get out of bed for three months!" The chubby young man with fair skin retracted his crooked smile, looking less annoying.

Zhu Junyang laughed and said, "This fellow, you are one to bear grudges. That happened when we were ten, yet you're still talking about it! Didn't I already send you a gift to apologize?"

"You call that an apology gift? You dislocated my arm, broke three ribs and my tibia, and took half my life. Your father had to use force and cajolery to finally get you to reluctantly apologize, leaving the matter settled just like that. At that time, I was upset and didn't forgive you. My bones hadn't even recovered before they were broken again by you, this brat, with petty tricks! You even threaten me, saying that if I didn't forgive you then you would beat me up every time you saw me. My mother felt heartache and cried for me to admit defeat. If I wasn't worried that my mother would worry, only a ghost would forgive you!" If the chubby youth wasn't riding a horse, he would have been jumping up and down.

Zhu Junyang's poker face hadn't changed at all, but his words could choke someone to death, "Who let you learn so poorly? If you have the ability, just win it back openly! You used so many little tricks over the years, but not once have you succeeded. Aren't you too shabby?"

The little fatty was so angry his nostrils flared like a mule's and said, "You think everyone is like you, practicing martial arts like they're desperate. Even your talent for it is surprisingly high! Let's not talk about me, just in the entire capital, can you find someone that can beat you? You're just a monster!"

"Alright! We wouldn't have met each other if we hadn't fought. The things of the past, why are we still fussing over it so much? Are you planning on leaving after coming back this time?" Listening to Zhu Junyang's tone, he has a pretty good relationship with this guy. At least, it was not the attitude of killing with a cold glare.

The little fatty was unhappy and snorted a few times before he said, "It's also me who was the bigger person and was magnanimous. I pitied you for not even having a single person in the capital to speak to and just reluctantly became friends with you! Not leaving, not leaving! A few days ago, I just accepted the position of an imperial guard in the Yulin Division. I will take up the official post next month!"

"Congratulations! This prince should get half the credit for you being able to get this job. If I hadn't spurred you on, would you even be able to get a job within the Twelve Divisions of Imperial Guards with your measly martial arts skill? In the future, I will urge you more 'with all my heart' lest you let the emperor down!" The expression on Zhu Junyang's face didn't change but his eyes were full of bad intentions.

"Oh, I should really thank you then! Your kindness will be remembered in my heart. This delicate body of mine can't handle being tossed about by you. If you... have that spare time, you better practice speaking honeyed words, or thickening your skin, in case the lady dislikes you!"

The little fatty politely declined his 'good intentions'. Although he never stopped practicing martial arts all these years, there was still quite a large gap compared to that monster Royal Prince Yang. Even Chief Steward Su Ran might not be able to beat Royal Prince Yang in a fight, let alone a small fry like him. If he fell into this guy's hands, he'd be half dead.

"Scared now? You weren't like this in the past. You would continue fighting despite setbacks and was full of valor and vigor! Now you've eaten so much that you have lost your nerve!" Royal Prince Yang's sharp tongue was very powerful.

Fields of Gold Chapter 428 - The Horse is Like the Owner

"If you know you can't do it, then it isn't brave, it's stupid! This is called changing my actions to suit the changing times!" The fat young man could be said to be one of Zhu Junyang's few bad friends. This fellow's thoughts were simple and he worshipped the strong.

He had very complex emotions towards Zhu Junyang, who had beaten him until his own mother almost didn't recognize him. Feelings of anger and dissatisfaction had swirled within him, and he was always trying to find a way to take his dignity back. However, he never took advantage of Zhu Junyang, a wolf cub two years younger than him, when the latter interacted with him. Zhu Junyang also never detected any malicious intent from him. So although they fought whenever they met, their relationship became deeper with each fight and they had somehow become best friends.

This person wasn't of low birth. His grandfather, Lu Dawei, was one of the founding fathers of the country and was a strong general. After the emperor emeritus abdicated, the old general also retired.

The emperor urged him to stay many times, and even repeatedly went to his estate to invite him, but he refused to come back from retirement.

None of his sons succeeded him. His eldest son received an empty title that had a salary but no political power. His second son took the path of the imperial examinations. At present, he was only a small official of the fifth rank. Thus, he may not be able to take upon bigger tasks in the future. His youngest son abandoned his official position and started a business, which was currently booming. At that time, the high ranking Old Master Lu often lamented that his martial arts and military arts were unable to be imparted onto the next generation.

Unexpectedly, Lu Hao, the only legitimate son of his eldest son, suddenly had a change in personality when he was ten and pestered him to teach him martial arts. Although ten was a bit too late to start learning, the little guy was talented. After learning for a year, he managed to catch up with those who had been practicing for three to five years.

However, this kid didn't do him proud. His grandson learned his martial arts well, but he lacked practical experience. Old Master Lu didn't know who he had offended to get beaten to the point that he was black and blue with his eyes all swollen. Old Master Lu was angry but, at the same time, he refused to accept what had happened. He secretly searched for the perpetrator.

In the end, he discovered that the culprit was a kid who was two or three years younger than his grandson. The way that kid fought was ruthless, as if he didn't care about living or dying. That type of callousness made Old Master Lu feel a bit scared but he also appreciated the kid's guts. At that time, with Lu Hao's martial art skills, his grandson may have been that kid's opponent if he gave it his all. Yet, his grandson lacked the drive to give it his all. When he threw a punch, it was naturally weaker by about three fractions. Thus, every time he was beaten badly.

At that time, Old Master Lu's love of talent came up and he wanted to accept the kid as his last disciple. In this way, his mantle would be passed down and, in the future, his fat grandson would have a helper. However, as soon as he started asking around, he ended up inquiring all the way to the emperor and emperor emeritus. This wolf cub was the grandson of the emperor emeritus, which was quite unexpected! With a regretful heart, he had to give up on his previous idea. With his worldly wisdom, no matter how talented Zhu Junyang was at the time, he couldn't accept the Imperial Grandson as a disciple!

However, from time to time, his little grandson would go fight the other and he pretended not to notice. Since then, his grandson's martial arts skills had greatly increased. Although he came back black and blue every time from the fights, the kid always practiced more vigorously in the future.

When Lu Hao was around seventeen or eighteen, the Old Master threw him into the old army to gain experience. At that time, Zhu Junyang had just been granted the title of royal prince and got the task of heading to the West. Thus, this pair of 'bad friends' only met up on the streets many years later.

"Some other day, I'll invite you to Zhenxiu Restaurant to drink wine. I'm still on the job. I'll take my leave from this point." Zhu Junyang looked at the sky. If he didn't say anything soon, he was afraid he would have to spend the night over at the Imperial Plantation.

Although the layout of the Imperial Plantation wasn't bad, he had to consider that Xiaocao was a female. It wasn't good if word got out that a girl had stayed the night outside. There were already many people saying bad things about her since his lass became an official. They couldn't let something else happen that would allow the others to gossip about her during their meals and teatime!

Lu Hao took a look at Yu Xiaocao and his face showed a 'this brother knows' expression. He smiled knowingly and said, "Ok, this brother won't delay your 'business' anymore. In the future, I will be in the capital. Let's get together another day."

The two said their farewells and Lu Hao nodded politely to Yu Xiaocao. He patted his horse's stomach and they passed by each other. Yu Xiaocao was very pleased with the way the two got along. No wonder there was a saying, 'Qin Hui [1] still has three good friends.' It was said that Royal Prince Yang had a solitary personality and was hard to get along with. In his darkest times, wasn't he considered quite lucky to have a friend beside him?

After they passed the city gate, there weren't many people on the official roads. The people travelling were all people from the suburbs on the outskirts of the capital, carrying burdens to sell. When there were fewer people, the little red horse suddenly gave Fierce Wind a look full of provocation. The little red horse spread her four legs and ran like a gust of wind.

Yu Xiaocao had a connection to her steed. When Little Red was 'making eyes' at Fierce Wind, she knew what this horse wanted to do. She gently clamped down on the horse's belly and leaned forward slightly so that they were one. Before Royal Prince Yang could react, the one entity had already ran into the distance. The dust that rose from their run made him and Head Steward Liu cough.

Zhu Junyang felt slightly exasperated and amused. He patted Fierce Wind's neck and said with a smile, "Fierce Wind, you are a good for nothing. The other has already thrown a challenge at your face. Hurry and pull out your fighting spirit for this challenge. If you lose to a woman, then you will lose your reputation as a Ferghana horse! There are times to spoil a woman but there are also times to show her your strength and dignity!"

When he finished speaking, with a shake of the reins in his hand, Fierce Wind chased the red figure that was growing smaller and smaller in the distance. As a Ferghana horse, the title of 'a thousand-mile horse' wasn't just for show. With the addition of Zhu Junyang's consummate riding skills, the advantage Little Red obtained with her head start slowly disappeared, and the distance between them got gradually smaller.

When they were almost at the Imperial Plantation, Zhu Junyang had caught up with Yu Xiaocao. He drove Fierce Wind to keep the same speed as her, traveling side by side. The little red horse defiantly sped up, but, no matter how fast she went, the other could always keep up with her. After the little red horse ran for a while she felt bored and slowed down on her own.

"This little red horse of yours is pretty good!" Zhu Junyang couldn't help but praise.

Yu Xiaocao gently stroked Little Red's smooth mane and modestly said, "Little Red is good, but she can't compare with your Fierce Wind. The title of a Ferghana horse isn't false."

Zhu Junyang looked into her eyes with a doting look and softly said, "Dayuan had offered several Ferghana horses as tribute and one of them just recently foaled. I went to see it and it's a fine specimen, one that is hard to come by. If you raise it well, it won't be any worse than Fierce Wind. If you want to change horses, I can go ask the emperor..."

Head Steward Li, who had been left behind in the dust, finally caught up in a disheveled manner. After overhearing their conversation, Head Steward Liu had a constipated look on his face and complex feelings ran through him as he thought, 'My master, that horse has been born for less than a month. Who doesn't know that the emperor has earmarked it for the empress's little prince? They're just waiting for the young prince to get well and for the horse to get a little older before arranging riding and shooting courses. Consort Li also covets that horse and begged for it for the little princess several times but the emperor didn't change his mind. Is it really good for you to outright snatch at the little prince's things like this?'

Although he thought like this in his heart, Head Steward Liu didn't show anything on his face. He knew just how much his master valued Miss Yu. If a wisp of desire escaped her mouth, the master would get it for her despite all the difficulties. He prayed in his heart, 'Miss Yu, please resist!'

Maybe the Gods and Buddhas pitied his loyalty toward his master as Miss Yu refused as he had wished. "I think my Little Red is very good. Just like how important Fierce Wind is to you, Little Red isn't just a tool for me but also a close partner. As you know, all the animals in our family have intelligence. If I abandon Little Red, she will be sad."

As if she understood her master's words, Little Red's defiant eyes became soft and gentle. Even her steps were light and made rhythmic sounds on the ground. However, Yu Xiaocao knew that this little horse held grudges. She might not do anything to Royal Prince Yang, who proposed replacing her, but she was definitely going to take actions against Fierce Wind in private.

Just like the young man who loved her and would always tolerate her little temper and willfulness, Yu Xiaocao was willing to bet that Fierce Wind must also have some feelings for Little Red, which was why he was always so docile towards her despite her violence.

She raised her eyes to look up at Royal Prince Yang, who occasionally looked over from time to time. Sure enough, a person with a certain personality would raise his or her horse into the same personality. In the future, this guy would definitely be someone who cherished his wife, right? If he could keep his promises, he would be a good marriage partner. Maybe...she needed to consider his proposal more seriously!

After thinking more about this, she decided that she didn't actually reject the prospect of marriage as much anymore. Even in her previous life, one's choice in spouse may not be the correct one. After all, there were scumbags in every era. Why shouldn't they give each other a chance at happiness?

Zhu Junyang noticed that the gaze of the person beside him had changed. Although he didn't know the reason for the change, his keen intuition told him that the change wasn't a bad thing. For no reason at all, his mood soared with the breeze, and even the rising summer heat had become lovely and amicable.

The two of them silently rode side by side until they arrived at the Imperial Plantation. The carriage carrying Xichun and the others hadn't arrived yet. Yet at this time, many carriages had stopped in front of the Imperial Plantation. It seemed that there were people more excited than them.

Sure enough, once they entered the Imperial Plantation, they discovered that Minister Liu had brought some officials from the Ministry of Revenue and the managers of the Imperial Plantation to wait for them there.

Out of these people, some had met Xiaocao and knew her skills. Although they didn't admire her as much as Minister Liu did, they still gave the appropriate greetings. Some had eyes that were full of contempt. What could a girl around the age of ten even do? She had only been awarded the title of a sixth rank official on the whims of the emperor.

If they didn't cooperate, what could she come up with? If she didn't have any achievements, then that meant she had no ability. When that time came around, wouldn't the matter of her office being taken be certain?

The thoughts of these officials were already known by Zhu Junyang. He resisted the anger in his heart and remembered the names of the managers and officials who wanted to embarrass his lass. He was now prepared to find a chance to get at them.

Fields of Gold Chapter 429 - In Domestic Harmony

'Didn't you want my girl to lose her job? Why don't I make you lose your job as an official of the court and never have the chance to turn your fortunes around?!' Those people who did not intend to harm the girl, for the time being, weren't in the position to say anything either. No, it was useless to scold these insincere people.

Zhu Junyang stepped forward and stood next to Yu Xiaocao. He stood side by side next to her, expressing with his action that he was here to support

“By the emperor's orders, whether it is the agricultural officials in the Ministry of Revenue or the stewards at the Imperial Plantation, everyone has to listen to Agricultural Officer Yu's orders. If you disobey her orders, then there will be severe punishment!” Zhu Junyang's sharp gaze swept across the officials harboring bad intentions. He paused for a moment before he continued speaking, “The Imperial Plantation has been given to the Ministry of Revenue and I to take charge of. I suggest that all the matters in the Imperial Plantation should be decided by the newly appointed agricultural official. Minister Liu, what do you think of my decision?”

“I have no objection. In terms of farming, this old man is still an amateur. Miss Yu has far surpassed this old man when it comes to farming. This old man will be at ease if she is in charge of the Imperial Plantation!” Next, Minister Liu introduced the officials and the stewards in charge of the plantation to Yu Xiaocao. He clearly stated all the details of what everyone was in charge of.

Yu Xiaocao listened attentively. The officials from the Ministry of Revenue were all dispensable. For example, the official responsible for keeping records and the official in charge of the warehouse did not know much about farming. Therefore, she couldn't depend on them. The stewards in the Imperial Plantation did their job well and their arrangements were reasonable. She wasn't planning on taking any action for the time being. She only listened to their report quietly.

After everyone finished their reports, someone reported that the carriage carrying servant girls had arrived outside. Yu Xiaocao looked at the time and got up, saying, "The pesticides are here. Steward Wang, please help me ask the tenant farmers in the Imperial Plantation to gather here. After this official finish mixing the pesticides, we will begin the irrigation immediately. After all, the farms don't wait for the farmers to plant themselves!"

Steward Wang was personally sent here by the emperor. He was also one the most dependable stewards under Su Ran. Because of Su Ran's positive attitude towards the Yu Family and Yu Xiaocao, Steward Wang was naturally more respectful towards her and listened to her commands.

Soon, all the workers in the Imperial Plantation slowly gathered around in the field carrying buckets and poles. These tenant farmers are divided into ten different groups. Each group had a group leader in charge of mixing the proportions of the pesticide correctly. Once the well water was mixed with the pesticide, the water will be irrigated into the fields.

Xiaocao had the little divine stone transform into a ray of golden light as it circled around the entire Imperial Plantation. Although the little divine stone didn't have strong powers right now, it was still able to improve the soil in the Imperial Plantation after circling around it. The spiritual energy in the field was now enough to support the growth of the crops in the field. The autumn harvest would definitely be bountiful this year!

There were many people in the Imperial Plantation. Whether it was men, women, or children, they were all assigned a task. Even the stewards were ordered to work around the fields. In half a day's time, they finished irrigating 3,000 mu of cornfields.

Minister Liu was unwilling to leave the field no matter what, so the officials from the Ministry of Revenue accompanied him around the sidelines of the fields.

Looking at the small leaves of the corn sprouts glistening underneath the setting sun, it was a touching and verdant sight. Minister Liu stroked the beard under his jaw with a gratified smile on his face, "Miss Yu, I don't know if this old man is seeing things, but the corn sprouts looked much more alive after we irrigated the pesticide on it. It also seemed like they had grown a little..."

Zhu Junyang looked at him and his mind began to ponder. It seemed like he was trying to find an excuse to help Yu Xiaocao lie, "Official Liu, I think that's only a figment of your imagination. No matter how effective the pesticide is, it's impossible for it to have an instant effect on the crops. It's complete nonsense for plants to suddenly grow. All living things grow at their own pace. Agricultural Official Yu is not an immortal, how can she have that kind of magical power?"

Minister Liu also felt that he was overly sensitive and laughed, "What Royal Prince Yang said is correct. This old man was probably too anxious to see results; hence, I began to see illusions."

The agricultural officials around him all murmured in their minds: 'Although we're unclear whether the corn seedlings have grown or not, we are certain that the corn sprouts appeared more spirited than this morning. The whole field is brimming with vitality and each blade from the fields is full of spirit. Is this all just part of our illusions?'

Under the sky that was full of red clouds, a red and a black horse walked side by side on the spacious, smooth land. A tree with a crooked tree trunk would occasionally stretch its verdant leaves on its branches under the summertime light. Two figures were dyed red from the sunset; one figure was petite and delicate, while the other figure was tall and lofty. Two saddled horses and an ordinary green carriage followed behind the two figures.

"What are you thinking about again?" Yu Xiaocao had her head lowered and Zhu Junyang could easily tell from her expression that she was pondering some important issues.

Yu Xiaocao looked up at Zhu Junyang and asked, "Do you think the emperor will agree if I plant some fruits trees on the mountain behind the Imperial Plantation, or build a greenhouse to grow vegetables next to the Imperial Plantation to sell to the high officials and nobles of the capital?"

He knew that this girl would never sit idly by. Just as he expected, she had only arrived at the capital for a few days, and she already wanted to utilize the Imperial Plantation. The Imperial Plantation was originally a place used by the emperor to cultivate and improve crops. As long as she successfully fulfilled the task entrusted to her by the emperor, the emperor would not mind if she used the mountains near the Imperial Plantation for some personal benefits.

“There shouldn't be any problem if you don't take up the fields that are part of the Imperial Plantation. Why don't I write a memorial to the emperor and ask about it?” In addition to helplessness, Zhu Junyang also felt a sense of admiration for the endless money-making ideas that came out from Xiaocao's mind.

Writing imperial memorials was not her strength. Besides, the emperor will probably struggle to read her messy handwriting, which she had only practiced for a few days. Thus, she was naturally happy that someone else was willing to do it for her.

“However, if you want to build a greenhouse, you will need a lot of glass. Large pieces of glass are quite expensive. The several houses in the capital that have greenhouses only used it to plant precious flowers and plants. If you use the greenhouse to plant vegetables, it will take a while for you to earn a profit...”

Zhu Junyang remembered that the manufacturing department had recently received a batch of glasses of excellent quality, but he was uncertain whether the emperor had planned to use the glass or not. How likely would it be for him to succeed if he asked the emperor to give it to them?

Yu Xiaocao calculated the cost in her mind. It simply wasn't profitable if she only grew vegetables in a large greenhouse. As Royal Prince Yang had said, the cost of the glass was too high, and the initial investment was too costly. It was not a cost-effective idea...

“Then...would it be possible for Young Royal Prince to be able to obtain some fruit tree saplings? Saplings from last year's fruit trees work too!” Yu Xiaocao thought that if she wasn't able to build a large greenhouse to grow vegetables this year, she should try planting some fruit trees first. When the fruit trees ripen next year, she could make them into canned fruits and earn some money from selling them.

It was not easy to live in a large capital. Although the capital was a nice place to live in, it was expensive to live in the capital. She had to spend money left and right. Although she earned an official's salary, the salary was not enough. One year's salary wasn't even enough to buy a hairpin or a bracelet in the capital. Therefore, she needed to expand her financial resources instead of only trying to save money!

Zhu Junyang had a confident expression on his face, “What type of fruit trees do you want? There are no fruit trees that I cannot get! Just tell me and I'll get it for you.”

“Apples, oranges, peach trees, pear trees, apricot trees, and grapevines...can I get a few of those first? When is the soonest you can get them here?” Of course, Yu Xiaocao wouldn't buy or sell the fruit trees from the south. They were too garish. The ones she listed were all common fruit trees in the north.

“Do you want them right now? Isn't the best time to plant fruit trees in the spring? Will the fruit trees survive if you plant them right now?” Zhu Junyang was worried.

Yu Xiaocao stuck out her small nose and snorted. She said in an arrogant tone, “With my ability, is there anything that I can't grow? Just wait to eat some fruits next year!”

Zhu Junyang saw that the little girl's expression was quite similar to the expression of the golden kitten she raised. Her head was almost raised all the way back. He couldn't help but say, “Stop boasting so much! Be careful or else all your boasting will turn out to be empty!”

“Stop looking down on people! Do you want to eat fruits or not?” The little girl began to threaten him courageously.

Zhu Junyang trusted the little girl's ability. He was only teasing her because he wanted to see her angry appearance. The peach tree in the back of the Yu Family's house in Dongshan Village was originally a wild peach tree on the mountain. The fruits on the tree were small and tasted slightly sour. It was not tasty at all. However, after the peach tree went through the meticulous care of the little girl, the peach tree produced large peaches that tasted as sweet as honey. The peaches were so soft that even elderly people without teeth could eat a few.

There was also a grapevine in the courtyard. They were able to eat sweet grapes starting in April. The grapes from other people's homes started to go bad two days after it was picked. In contrast, the grapes from the Yu Family still maintained its sweet taste a week after it was sent to the capital. The grapes were as large as a bull's eyes, and it was well-received by the noble ladies in the capital. His lady mother became quite troubled after many noble ladies asked her where she got the grapes.

He could imagine that if the little girl planted an orchard of fruit trees in the Imperial Plantation, it would be absolutely astonishing. It was very likely that the fruit business in the entire capital would be monopolized by her! It seemed like it was necessary for him to buy a few fruit shops under his own name. When the time comes, he could sell the fruits that the lass grew. Wouldn't they look like an old married couple?

With this plan in mind, after he sent Xiaocao back to the General Estate, Zhu Junyang wrote up a memorial that night and sent it to the emperor. Then he ordered his men to collect fruit trees near the

capital. He collected only five or six trees of each type. He wanted to let the lass experiment with it first. It would be great if the fruit trees managed to live, but it also wasn't a big deal if the fruit trees died.

After the morning court ended the next day, Xiaocao was called into the palace again. Perhaps the last time she entered the palace had cast a shadow over her heart, her heart began pounding as soon as she entered the palace this time. She didn't know whether the emperor would go back on his words and covet her multicolored stone.

This time, Sir Su did not lead her to the imperial study but led her in the direction of the imperial garden.

“Sir Su, how is the emperor's mood today?” She felt that it wasn't smart if she tried to inquire directly about the emperor's intentions. So, Yu Xiaocao thought that she could judge whether entering the palace this time was good or bad for her by knowing the emperor's current mood.

Fields of Gold Chapter 430 - Meeting the Young Imperial Prince Again

If anyone else had asked such a question, Su Ran would have ignored them directly. However, since it was Xiaocao, Su Ran reminded her kindly, “Miss Yu, don't worry. The emperor probably didn't summon you for something bad.”

Don't worry? How could she feel at ease? Ever since the emperor had guessed that she had a golden finger, she had been feeling like there was a knife constantly hanging around her neck. The knife could fall down at any moment. Who knew whether the emperor would have a cramp one day and decide to kill her? Alas...it seemed like she needed to keep a lower profile!

That being said, when did she ever keep a low profile? When she had no money, she made braised food and sold a lot of recipes on roasted chicken and duck to other people. She was even able to produce out-of-season produce and watermelons. Not to mention, she opened a braised food shop...this stack after stack of accomplishments, anyone with a discerning eye would easily be able to figure out her status with just a glance.

“Your Imperial Highness, please slow down. Be careful so you don't fall.” It was unknown which palace servant had said that, but the voice came from behind the cluster of flowers not far away. Shortly after, Xiaocao heard footsteps heading in her direction.

Su Ran straightened up and bowed at the little figure that appeared in front of the two. He said, “This servant pays his respects to His Imperial Highness.”

Yu Xiaocao followed after him and bent her knees to salute the young prince. Perhaps the little figure had been running too fast because the young prince continued to rush towards Xiaocao. He was about to fall on her leg. Xiaocao hurriedly stood up and leaned over to support him with her arms. She said softly, "Be careful, don't fall!"

The young prince stabilized his footing and looked up at Xiaocao's eyes. After he frowned for a moment, he suddenly shouted in realization, "I remember you! The last time I was sick, you made sweet medicinal candy for me. You also know how to make seafood congee..."

"Your Imperial Highness is quite clever. It has been a while since it happened, yet you still remembered. Your memory is better than ordinary people's!" Yu Xiaocao praised the young prince. Her younger brother and Little Linlin from her godmother's household were both little boys. Thus, she had her own ways of getting along with children.

As expected, the young prince revealed a bashful but proud expression on his face. But he suddenly pursed his lips and said, "Why did you leave? The seafood congee made by the imperial chefs isn't as good as the one you made. Are you going to leave the palace after this? Why don't I ask my imperial father to let you work in the imperial kitchen? Is that okay with you?"

Yu Xiaocao looked at the official's robe she was wearing and crouched down. She glanced at the young prince and had a soft smile on her face as she said, "If Your Imperial Highness wants to eat seafood congee, I can make it for you after I visit the emperor. However, I can't work in the imperial kitchen because I have some official matters that I need to attend to."

"Why? You are a woman, so what kind of important task would my imperial father give you? Isn't working in the imperial kitchen and serving me food a better job for you?" Since the young prince was born into the imperial family, he was naturally influenced by the imperial household's honor and arrogance.

One shouldn't look down on children just because they were young. They still comprehended many things. As long as one patiently explained everything, they will gradually begin to understand. Yu Xiaocao didn't dare to have the slightest impatience in her tone as she softly said, "Your Imperial Highness, this humble official might be good at cooking, but that is not my best skill set."

“Oh? Then what are you the best at? Is it medicine? That's not right, the official's robe that you're wearing is not one that an imperial physician would wear.” The young prince's face revealed his confusion as well as contained some expectation. She was so talented at cooking, yet she said she had something that she was even more skilled in. She must be amazing!

Yu Xiaocao continued talking with a smile, “This humble servant is not the best at cooking or medicine, but farming!”

“Farming? Is that when you sprinkle the seeds into the soil, wait for them to grow into small sprouts, and then finally harvest them when they grow into wheat?” The young prince blinked his big eyes. His expression was both innocent and adorable.

“Your Imperial Highness is very smart. You even know about farming!”

Yu Xiaocao's words made the young prince feel that he was very intelligent. But he still explained honestly, “My imperial father opened a small field in the northwest area of the imperial garden. He once took me there to farm with him. I also helped him put the seeds in the small holes in the soil! When harvesting time came around, my imperial father gave me a small sickle to reap the grain. Then, we used the wheat I cut down to grind it into flour. The flour was then used to make steamed buns. The steamed buns were tastier than the ones I've bought from outside!”

“Your Imperial Highness even helped with farming. You really are really capable!” Yu Xiaocao praised him and continued, “Do you know why the emperor grew wheat in the imperial garden?”

“I know! My imperial father said that there are many people in the world who don't have enough to eat. Each year, there are children around my age who starve to death because they have no food. Some children are even sold off by their parents in exchange for food...” The young prince was indeed smart, so it was only natural that his knowledge was linked to the emperor's teaching.

Yu Xiaocao nodded her head and said, “That's correct! The emperor tries his best and thinks of many ways to prevent all the children in the world from starving and for all the parents in the world to be able to stay with their children. This humble official is good at farming. The emperor ignored the objections of the other officials and appointed me as an official. Now, I'm in charge of the entire Imperial Plantation. He did this in hopes that I will be able to cultivate high-yield seeds as soon as possible and distribute them to the people. Your Imperial Highness, please ponder over this question. Originally, one mu of land could produce 300 catties of grains. But after the farmers paid the rent for the fields, the remaining grain could only keep the family from starvation. If the output per mu of land is increased to 600 catties or even 1,000 catties, what do you think will happen?”

“The commoners will not only be able to have enough food to eat to their fill, but they will also have surplus leftover!” The young prince was only six or seven years old, but he followed the emperor around and learned many things from the court. He also knew a lot about farming. The emperor often sighed before the empress on this matter. The young prince remembered that and asked, “Can you grow 1,000 catties of grain per mu now?”

Yu Xiaocao shook her head gently, and disappointment filled the young prince's eyes. However, Yu Xiaocao said firmly, “This humble servant is working hard in that direction! Your Imperial Highness, have you heard of the Yu Family from Tanggu Town?”

“Yes! My imperial father told me that the Yu Family has grown wheat that yields 600 catties per mu. If we can spread this across the country, then within three years, the people of the Great Ming Dynasty will have enough food and clothing. In addition, the world will stabilize! The Yu Family has really done an outstanding service to the Great Ming Dynasty!” The proud expression on the young prince's face was quite adorable and funny. Xiaocao almost reached out her hand to squeeze his face.

“Many thanks for the praise, Your Imperial Highness! This humble servant will definitely do my utmost and strive to plant wheat that will yield 1,000 catties per mu! This humble servant will pursue this goal even until my death!” Yu Xiaocao solemnly expressed her gratitude.

The young prince looked at her in surprise and said, “So, you are a part of the Yu Family! Now that you have taken charge of the Imperial Plantation, can you guarantee that you can produce high-yield wheat that can also grow in the capital?”

“This humble servant can guarantee that I will only produce wheat with higher and higher yield rates!” Yu Xiaocao was confident in this aspect.

Su Ran waited quietly on the side. When he saw that the conversation had come to an end, he said, “Your Imperial Highness, the emperor is still waiting in Jinlan Pavilion for Official Yu. The emperor has some questions for her...”

The young prince waved his hands at Yu Xiaocao and said, “You can go visit my imperial father first to discuss your business. When you have free time, I will ask my mother to bring you to the palace to have a good chat with you!”

'Are you only going to summon me to have a good chat with you? Young prince, your words do not reflect your true heart. Do you feel embarrassed to tell me directly that you want to eat the food I make?' Yu Xiaocao didn't say anything and only bid the young prince farewell. She followed Chief Steward Su Ran and soon arrived at Jinlan Pavilion.

"Little girl, you sure are brave to make me wait for so long!" Zhu Junfan looked at Yu Xiaocao with a faint smile on his face. Steam began to rise from the pot of water that was being heated on top of the clay stove. He lifted his slender hand and lightly picked up the dragon engraved Yixing clay teapot before he lightly poured the tea from the teapot into a cup...

Chief Steward Su Ran took the Yixing clay pot from the emperor. His posture when he was brewing tea was pleasing to the eye and his voice was like a clear spring as he said, "We had bumped into the young prince when we walked through the imperial garden. As a result, we were delayed for a moment."

"After he recovered from his illness, his body has strengthened a lot. This is all thanks to Official Yu!" Zhu Junfan picked up the Yixing clay cup with a dragon carved on it, gently blew on the tea, took a small sip, and shook his head lightly. Even the best quality Da Hong Pao didn't taste as good as the wild tea the little girl made. Could it be due to the multi-colored stone on her wrist? His gaze couldn't help but wander towards the multi-colored stone on Yu Xiaocao's wrist.

Suddenly aware of his stare at her wrist, Xiaocao only made matters worse by hiding her hand behind her back. She put on a fake smile and flatteringly said, "His Imperial Highness is blessed by the gods. Even if this humble servant didn't help, his illness would've still been cured. I only helped the young prince by allowing him to drink fewer bowls of bitter medicine. This humble official does not dare to take credit for the young prince's quick recovery."

"Saving Wen'er from drinking all that bitter medicine is already a contribution. During the time when he was still ill, Wen'er had nagged for you more than once. He insisted on arguing with his imperial mother that all the physicians in the imperial palace cannot compare with your medical skills." Zhu Junfan put down the teacup in his hand. The look in his eyes was unclear.

Xiaocao laughed dryly, "His Imperial Highness is overpraising this humble official. This official doesn't dare to compare her skills to the imperial physicians. This would mean that I will offend all the imperial physicians in the imperial medicine bureau. In the future, if this humble servant has a headache or fever, none of the imperial physicians will be willing to help me!"

Su Ran glanced at her and thought, 'Miss Yu, you cannot be too honest. You shouldn't have said that even if you were thinking that! Are you saying that the young prince had caused trouble for you? Moreover, you don't have the right to ask an imperial physician to personally go to your estate to treat you since you're only a sixth-ranked official. Unless...the emperor grants it.'

Zhu Junfan motioned for Su Ran to leave and then he beckoned Xiaocao over. He pointed at the Yixing clay teapot and said, "With your medical skills, why would you need to summon a doctor to cure your fever or minor illnesses? You're being too modest."

He continued to talk, preventing Xiaocao from opening her mouth and acting modest, "Ever since I drank the tea that you brewed at Dongshan Village, the tea in the palace seemed to have lost its flavor. Come, help me brew a cup of tea so I can taste your craft again."

Yu Xiaocao resigned to her fate and picked up the Yixing clay teapot. She opened the lid and tested the temperature of the tea inside the water with her hand. Then, she said, "For this type of tea, you can't use water that is too hot. You should use water that is around 80 degrees. The first time you boil the water is to wash the impurities off of the tea. The tea will taste the best on the third and fourth brew."

She knew only a bit about how to conduct a tea ceremony. She could only wash the tea awkwardly and pour another cup of tea for the emperor. Then, she instructed him to taste the tea.

Zhu Junfan took a sip of the tea, frowned, and said, "Are you trying to fool me? I want to drink the tea that I drank in Dongshan Village!" Did she really think he asked her to come here to perform a tea ceremony? He could grab any eunuch in the imperial palace, and they could perform a tea ceremony much more professionally than her. She really was uneducated!