

Gold Chapter 491

Fields of Gold Chapter 491

Zhu Junyang looked at the two rows of teeth marks and the glistening layer of saliva that was left on the back of his hands and pretended to be slightly disgusted as he frowned, "You deserve to be hit! We're celebrating the New Years, but what are you saying? So inauspicious!!"

Yu Xiaocao snorted a few times and didn't say anything else. Under the flashing lights in the cold and cheerless street, they leisurely strolled forward. A gust of cold wind and snow blew past them and Xiaocao, who had just been inside a warm room, couldn't help but let out an involuntary shiver. She unconsciously shrunk back into Zhu Junyang's chest, seeking warmth.

Zhu Junyang took off his large overcoat and wrapped the little lass, who seemed as sweet as a kitten, tightly until only her tiny adorable face was left out in the open. Xiaocao had a somewhat tipsy expression on her face as she leaned against the broad and sturdy chest behind her. She swayed slightly with the rocking motions of the horse going forward.

"Little lass, just how much did you drink earlier ah?" Earlier, when he saw the lonely and empty expression on Xiaocao's face, as she lay on the windowsill, looking up towards the sky, he felt his heart tighten. Under the blossoming fireworks, which brightened and dimmed accordingly, he unexpectedly had a feeling that she could disappear at any time. This type of feeling felt like a giant vice around his heart, as if it could choke him at any time. Luckily, when he spoke, the ethereal air around the little lass momentarily dissipated.

The little lass had a secret and it was also a gargantuan secret. He had long known about this. After all, the little lass displayed astonishing talents at raising crops and using medicines at a very young age. Furthermore, all of these skills were self-taught, which made no logical sense. Sometimes, an absurd and ridiculous idea surfaced within his heart: was the little lass actually a little immortal who had descended to this mundane world? Was that the reason she had such a big change compared to her earlier self?

Zhu Junyang had previously investigated her background long ago in the past. Before she turned eight, Yu Xiaocao had always been sickly and timid. She had been an ordinary little village girl who almost never left the house. How could she possibly pick up the old remnants of a scroll that described recipes and medicinal prescriptions? The change had started after her head had been cracked open. He couldn't help but wonder if that sick and weak Yu Xiaocao had been swapped with a little immortal girl after she became injured and fell unconscious. He speculated that perhaps a soul swap had caused his little lass to become as eccentric and adorable as she was today (Author's note: I have to say, Royal Prince Yang, you almost stumbled upon the truth).

The more he went down this path, the more certain Zhu Junyang became, and the more terrified he felt. He was afraid that, on some day, his weird and odd little lass would suddenly leave and that timid and gutless soul would return to the body. He didn't know what he would do if that happened. Would he have a breakdown then?

“Promise me that you won't leave, alright?” The arm that Zhu Junyang had around Xiaocao tightened and he lowered his head to press a gentle kiss on the top of her head.

Yu Xiaocao was a bit uncomfortable in his grasp and wriggled for a second before she found a more comfortable position. She raised her head to look Royal Prince Yang in the eye for a second and discovered that his eyes looked quite lonely. She couldn't help but frown, “What are you saying? Why would I leave? Where would I go ah?”

“Promise me to always stay by my side, okay?” Zhu Junyang helped her wipe off a pure white snowflake from her hair. His voice sounded gloomy and lonely.

Yu Xiaocao could tell that he was in a downcast mood, so she deliberately snorted arrogantly and said, “Don't forget, you're still under probation ah! Whether or not you can pass this trial depends on your behavior! You're such a crafty fellow. Don't think you can take advantage of this beautiful and bewitching night to bait a honey trap for me. I have a heart of steel and a steady will. I won't be so easily conquered by your sweet ways.”

The chest behind her moved a bit and a large hand suddenly appeared in front of her nose and gently pinched it. Zhu Junyang grinned, “Alright! Tonight, I will do my best to show you my good side!!”

Yu Xiaocao deliberately acted like she was a frightened little deer and hugged herself, “You...what do you want to do? This young maiden hasn't reached her age of majority, so you absolutely cannot do anything too weird...”

The movement on his chest became more obvious and Zhu Junyang deliberately used a look full of disdain to inspect her 'flat' body from head to toe. He clicked his tongue, “Your chest is as flat as your back. Is there anything worth this prince messing around with?”

“Stinky fellow! You lose points for this, lose points! You're making fun of my figure so I must take ten points from you!” Yu Xiaocao hollered loudly and there was a bit of anger and humiliation on her face, “Just watch, in two more years, this young maiden will become more elegant and beautiful, and I'll have plenty to look at from head to toe...you're such a cad to make fun of a young maiden who hasn't reached maturity!”

“This prince was wrong! When have I ever not admitted that I was wrong ah? I'll make it up to you. I heard that, in the south, they have a type of fruit called papaya and it has the ability to make one's bosom grow. This prince will send some ships down to bring some back for you, how's that?” Zhu Junyang stifled his urge to laugh and cleared his throat subtly.

Yu Xiaocao was interested at the prospect of eating southern fruits so she didn't jibe with him about his joke about her chest. She exclaimed, “I want to eat durian, jackfruit, passionfruit, dragon fruit, lychee, coconut, longan...bring some papaya too. We can use it to make papaya milk and it's very delicious and refreshing!”

“I got it, little foodie!” Ever since they had a method to craft ice, Zhu Junyang was no longer afraid of transporting perishable goods from the south. He silently remembered the names of the fruits that the little lass mentioned. There were some he had never heard of before, yet she, who had never been to the south, rattled them off as if they were as familiar to her as her own backyard. He was once again even more sure that she wasn't an ordinary person.

“Where are you taking me? If we keep going, we'll leave the city!!” Tonight was a national celebration so there wasn't the usual curfew. Other than a few people who stepped outside their gates to gaze at the fireworks, there weren't a lot of people on the streets.

Zhu Junyang was silent for a moment before he said, “This prince especially reserved a few fireworks for you and I want to find a place empty of people to allow you to enjoy them!”

“The more people watch, the better the fireworks look. Right now the weather is getting colder. If we exit the capital now, then the officials and soldiers guarding the capital will think we're a bunch of idiots!” Yu Xiaocao let out a large yawn. She was currently very warm and comfortable, which made her feel slightly sleepy.

Zhu Junyang tapped her nose when he saw the little lass's drowsy expression. He looked around and was quiet before he said, “Then let's set them off at the city walls. That way, we can enjoy them with the soldiers who are guarding the walls on New Year's Eve.”

“Yes, yes! This is a good idea!” In her past life, there were some leaders who would give their greetings to their subordinates during the New Years. Royal Prince Yang was actually a general, so there shouldn't be any problems with him celebrating with the guards and soldiers, right?

Under the flabbergasted looks of the soldiers, the two of them climbed up to the wall. Yu Xiaocao almost tripped over the long and large overcoat that was around her, but luckily Zhu Junyang swiftly grabbed onto her and pulled her back onto the wall before she could fall.

The fireworks at the wall exploded into existence one after another. The words 'Happy New Year', 'Blissful Family', and 'The Country Celebrates' blossomed in the air and the bright lights seem to dazzle a person's eyes. The guards on the wall exclaimed in astonishment and pleasure at this display. Following that, the words 'Happy New Year', 'I love you', and “I will give you happiness” appeared in the air. These phrases were all written in English and had no meaning to most of the people on the wall.

“Haha! This absolutely must have been an idea that the emperor came up for you. Did I guess right?” Under the brilliant rose-shaped firework that blazed in the sky, Xiaocao had a bewitching expression on her face. Her sweet smile seemed incredibly beautiful at that moment.

Zhu Junyang slowly nodded his head and raised his head up to gaze at those magnificent firework roses that bloomed in the sky. He stated in a somewhat strange voice, “You understand these foreign words? I reckon you've come from the same place as the emperor and it must be a mysterious and strange nation.”

“That's right ah! It's an ancient and flourishing country...” Perhaps the night sky was too beautiful or the fireworks too glorious, or the person in front of her was too gentle and handsome, Yu Xiaocao muttered her thoughts out without any regard to where she was. A sparkling tear slowly fell from the corner of her eye.

“Are...you still able to return ah?” Zhu Junyang hurriedly asked a follow up question when he heard her confess. This was the question that he had wanted to know the answer to the most.

“I can't go back; it's impossible to go back...” Yu Xiaocao stated in a distracted tone. In her previous life, she was only an ordinary worker and owner of a braised food store. In this life, she had encountered so many beautiful and strange events. Who would have thought that she, a little farmer's girl, could actually become a female official and feudal princess? Furthermore, she even had such an incredible

man next to her who was willing to be her partner. If she had the choice, then it would take a lot of courage for her to let all of this go and go back!

Zhu Junyang extended a large and lanky hand and gently grasped her soft little hand. He lowered his head to smile sweetly at her, "Don't feel sad, this prince will stay by your side, accompany you, protect you, love you, and won't allow you to be bullied one bit. You will discover that staying behind is the most wise decision you have ever made."

A scarlet-red firework in the shape of a heart exploded in the sky. Snowflakes danced merrily in the wind and circled the two people as if they were spotless white butterflies frisking in the air. Yu Xiaocao's eyes reflected the flickering, brilliant light in the air and a happy smile graced her face. She wished for a second that she could stay in this moment forever!

"Bend down, I want to say something to you!" Yu Xiaocao had a gentle look glowing in her eyes and Zhu Junyang almost drowned in it. He didn't want to wake up from this scene.

Like a big, loyal dog, Zhu Junyang obediently bent down and placed his ear close to Xiaocao, waiting for the little lass to tell him what she wanted to say. Suddenly, a soft and somewhat moist sensation touched his cheek. He could hear a barely audible voice that seemed to have merged with the wind say, "I'm so fortunate to be able to meet you!"

He clasped the cheek that had been kissed and a foolish smile crept onto Zhu Junyang's handsome face. It looked quite funny. Another smile blossomed onto Yu Xiaocao's face and it seemed more splendid and beautiful than the sky lit up by brilliant exploding fireworks.

Zhu Junyang couldn't help but reveal a giant grin. The little lass kissed him! The little lass has finally grown up!! His patience and efforts were not in vain as the little lass finally had a place for him in her heart. 'Did you all hear this? The little lass said, 'I'm so fortunate to be able to meet you!' ah!!' In fact, him being able to meet her was one of the miracles of his life!

He pulled the little lass into his arms and, under the astonished looks of the guards, gleefully raised her up as he turned around, "This prince is too happy! Today is the best day of this prince's life!!"

The soldiers all thought, 'The rumors are true. Royal Prince Yang is pursuing Feudal Princess Jinan. Aren't we only able to see these romantic fireworks today because of the feudal princess? Tsk tsk, what type of

taste does Royal Prince Yang have? He actually likes an ordinary little farming girl. Truly a mismatched couple and they look so odd together!

However, there were other guards who didn't have the same thoughts. Feudal Princess Jinan was the goose that laid the golden eggs. Just the greenhouse-grown vegetables and fruits alone made her a fortune this winter, let alone her other business endeavors. How many noble maidens in the capital could claim they had that under their belts? Furthermore, the emperor clearly valued Feudal Princess Jinan. Whoever married her would acquire a great helper for his future.

If Zhu Junyang knew what these men were thinking, he would have been incensed, 'With this prince's abilities, do I truly need someone to help me? Do you think this prince is a good-for-nothing who relies on his wife to support him??

Fields of Gold Chapter 492

Although winter in the capital was cold, it was still quite lively. Snow started falling during New Year's Eve, and, while there were some breaks in snowfall, it continued to snow now and then until the sixteenth of the first month.

This was the first time the Yu Family celebrated the New Years at the capital. Zhu Junyang no longer acted as aloof and cold as before. Instead, he had morphed into the ideal son-in-law around his future wife's family. He was warm and considerate to them as he took them around the capital to take in the sights.

On the fifth day after the New Years, there was a temple fair at Baiyunguan Temple that was located in the suburbs of the capital. The whole group of them went to attend the fair to sightsee and participate in 'sacrifices to the gods', 'sacrifices to the ancestors', 'hitting the golden coin to ask for wealth', 'touching the stone monkey', and other common temple activities. On the eighth day after the New Years, there were festivals and plays at some of the more wealthy suburbs around the capital. Zhu Junyang asked around and found the suburb with the most festive activities and brought the Yu Family there to watch performers on stilts, parade floats, festive drumming, folk dancing, banner dancing, lion dancing, small carts, bamboo horses...they were all able to participate and enjoy the celebrations. Everyone had loads of fun. The most festive moment, of course, was the lantern festival on the fifteenth day.

That evening, before darkness fell, Zhu Junyang ate a bowl of glutinous sweet dumplings with his parents, eldest brother, and eldest sister-in-law before he hurried out. Imperial Prince Jing swallowed his final bite of glutinous dumpling as he frowned at the sight of his youngest son leaving in a rush. He stated casually, "This youngster's heart seems to be elsewhere lately. He hasn't even calmed down during the New Years. Where is he going now?"

Princess Consort Jing had a smile flickering on her lips as she remarked with slight jealousy, "Isn't it obvious that his heart is elsewhere, ah? He is always thinking about that little sweetheart of his, so he doesn't have any time to spend with his old father and mother. Instead, he's off to spend time with his future in-laws! They didn't even need to ask before he volunteered to escort them off to enjoy the lanterns! Everyone always says that girls will leave the nest but our third son is also leaving the nest too!"

"Yang'er truly has his eye on Yu Xiaocao?" Imperial Prince Jing asked in a manner that didn't show his thoughts on the matter.

"I'd bet gold on it!" Princess Consort Jing took the offered cup of warm water from Meixiang's hands and took a sip as she gently washed her mouth. She looked at her husband and asked back, "What? You don't agree with his choice?"

Prince Jing glanced at his wife and replied cautiously, "My opinion isn't important. What's important is whether you see eye to eye with that young maiden! As a father-in-law, how many times in one day can I encounter a daughter-in-law? Don't you spend the most time with the daughters-in-law instead? The most important thing is that she's able to get along with you and make you happy!"

His casual remarks had unintended effects. The wife to Prince Jing's heir had a somewhat unnatural expression appear on her face. Ordinarily, she didn't spend much time with her mother-in-law. Other than greeting her husband's mother in the morning, she rarely had the time to chat and interact with her. In fact, she wasn't the type of person who was good at worming her way into other people's good graces. In addition, her mother-in-law also had no interest in managing the household. There were a lot of things to take care of at Imperial Prince Jing's estate, and all of these matters had fallen onto her once she married in.

Luckily, while she was still an unmarried young lady, her mother had often taken her along when she was managing household matters. Furthermore, she had experienced stewards and senior servants helping out too. After working hard for half a year, she was finally able to make things run smoothly at the estate. Usually, she was busy managing all of these things so she naturally had very little time to spend with her mother-in-law. Based on what the imperial prince was saying though, she truly wasn't an ideal daughter-in-law...

Princess Consort Jing had noticed the awkward expression on her eldest daughter-in-law's face and secretly glared at her husband as she said, "From what you're saying, our sons' wives aren't for them but

for me ah? If this came out, who would be willing to marry their daughters to our sons?! Try to be a bit more serious. Our son naturally has to marry a wife that he likes. After all, the two of them will be spending the rest of their lives together!”

“I’m usually quite busy, so I was only afraid that you’d be lonely presiding over such a large courtyard by yourself!” Imperial Prince Jing also thought that his earlier words were not quite right so he hurriedly tried to explain himself.

Princess Consort Jing slanted another annoyed look at him, “What kind of eyesight do you have that you think I’m lonely ah? I spend my time raising flowers, walking around the garden, and playing with the dogs and cats. I’m quite pleased with my life ah! Don’t you know that odd temperament of your youngest son ah? Let’s not talk about the fact that I already like that lass Xiaocao. Even if I didn’t, he would still marry her. Unless you want our youngest son to be alone, like a monk, for the rest of his life, it’s going to happen!”

Imperial Prince Jing naturally knew what his youngest son was like. From his subordinate’s reports, Miss Yu looked weak and delicate on the outside but she was still able to reign in that tiger of a son of his. In fact, she was even able to stop his son from breaking out into one of his monstrous tantrums. This truly showed that each pot had its own lid to match and that the gods had ordained this from the get go.

Furthermore, the little lass was incredibly skilled at crafting and making medicinal cuisines. The medicinal cuisine she made completely healed his wife’s previous weak and broken body. From that alone, the little lass was the whole residence’s lucky star!

“Ah...my Zhu Family is truly an affectionate group. From this aspect, Yang’er took after me...” Imperial Prince Jing saw that his eldest son and daughter-in-law had tactfully left the room and decided that he no longer needed to hold back. He scurried over to curry favor with his wife.

Princess Consort Jing glanced at him and had a faint smile on her face as she rebuked, “My son is much better than you! At least Yang’er has never had any fluttering birds or butterflies around him. As for you, how are you considered affectionate? If it wasn’t for those rotten peach blossoms around you, do you think our family would have turned out like this? Zhu Xiaole, let me tell you, if our Yang’er hadn’t encountered Yu Xiaocao and gotten back to normal, I wouldn’t have forgiven you in this lifetime!”

“See here, you’re bringing back that old stale stuff again? Do you think as his father I also didn’t feel bad about this? That I didn’t regret this?” Imperial Prince Jing noticed that his wife seemed a bit angry again and hurriedly apologized. He pretended to seem a bit lost and lonely as he sighed, “Meijuan, you also

said earlier that parents, siblings and children are just passing moments in one's life. In the end, the person who accompanies me for the rest of life is my old partner! How can you quarrel with me for the sake of our children?"

Princess Consort Jing pushed away his face and playfully spat, "Go away! Who's your 'old partner' ah? Just where do I look old? Lady Fang is only younger than me by a couple of years yet she just had Lin'er ah. How can I be old ah?"

"My bad, it's all my fault!" Prince Jing looked at his wife's tender and glowing skin that seemed to be more beautiful than a young maiden's. In the past, there were some fine lines at the corners of her eyes but they had all disappeared after she had consumed the specially crafted medicinal tea that the Yu Family's little lass had made. Now, she was someone in her forties who looked like she had just entered her thirties. He hastily flattered her, "Meijuan, I just discovered that you seem to be getting younger with every passing day. When you go out with our son, you look like siblings...that's not okay, I need to ask Miss Yu if she has any tea that is suitable for me. Otherwise, in another two years, I'm going to look like your father...just thinking about that makes me shiver with fear!"

"Hmph hmph, weren't you trying to fight for favor with our children? How come now you feel like you're getting old eh? However, men become more attractive with age. The older they get, the more flavor they have! I don't mind you looking like this, so why do you want to become younger looking ah? You want to seduce some young maidens?" Princess Consort Jing was quite happy after being complimented by her husband. However, she deliberately didn't show her pleasure and instead deliberately asked her husband this.

All of the maidservants and senior servants in the residence knew that the imperial prince didn't like having people around him when he was alone with his wife. Thus, there was no one around to witness the two of them playfully bickering and flirting with each other.

Imperial Prince Jing swept a look around the room and discovered that there were no people around! Thus, he became more 'dishonorable'. He pulled his wife onto his lap and started to stroke her slim and soft waist. The look in his eyes became gentle and sweet, "Other than you, I don't want to seduce anyone else! Weren't you envious of Lady Fang having Lin'er earlier? Looks like I need to work a little harder and take the attention from that guy, Fang Mingzhe! How about we give Yang'er and the others a little sister, eh?"

"You old, shameless fellow..." Princess Consort Jing didn't get to finish her scolding before she was suddenly quieted. Her entire body had also been lifted up in the air. By the time she got her senses back,

she discovered that she was being carried princess-style by her husband and they were walking out of the reception hall towards the bedroom.

The maidservants, who were waiting outside, were all surprised by this sight and hurriedly lowered their heads to pretend that they didn't see anything. Princess Consort Jing was simultaneously embarrassed and angry, so she forcefully scratched at her husband a few times as they entered the bedroom. The room quieted down for a moment and then intimate noises soon followed. The maidservants were all immediately embarrassed by this but they also envied the prince and his wife for their close relationship. The two of them had already been married for a couple of decades yet they were still so—
—passionate together...

Zhu Junyang, who had left the residence, didn't know that his parents were currently undergoing an embarrassing mission of 'making another human' back at home. He was currently headed towards the Yu Residence. By the time he got there, the Yu Family had already finished eating their sweet glutinous dumplings and gotten ready. They were just waiting for him now!

At first, Little Shitou was a bit wary of this man who was trying to snatch away his second sister. However, after romping around for a few days with his future brother-in-law, Little Shitou was now a die-hard fan of his 'second brother-in-law'. It wasn't because he was valuing benefits over his sister. It was because he could tell after these few days just how much Royal Prince Yang cared about his sister. Although the prince had a horrible reputation as a beast, in front of Little Shitou's sister, he became as loyal and obedient as a large dog. He not only took care of his second sister's every need like she was a precious princess, but he also treated their entire family with courtesy and respect and made sure they were all doing well.

Little Shitou naturally had a very close relationship with his second sister, so he obviously wanted her to be able to obtain happiness. In his eyes, none of the men in the world were worthy of his second sister. Only Zhu Junyang barely met his high expectations. After staying in the capital, he had been taken along to a few scholarly gatherings with Headmaster Yuan. While he was taking in these new experiences, he also heard a few rumors regarding his second sister.

The children of the wealthy and powerful in the capital all had their eyes on the tops of their heads. The vast majority of noblemen were chauvinistic to the extreme. His second sister had always been hardworking and innovative. Even his master said that if his second sister had been born a boy, it was likely that she would be no worse than the Zhou Family in Tanggu Town.

When his second sister arrived at the capital, she not only showed her strength but also came up with the blazingly popular greenhouse vegetables. Now, all of the wealthy families needed to have her

vegetables on the table. Some people praised her in an effort to get a connection with her but there were plenty of others who derided her for being a woman who usurped authority, disturbed the societal norms, and acted beyond her status. Furthermore, the Yu Family didn't have an illustrious background, so trying to find a man who truly loved, cherished and respected his second sister would be difficult.

Fortunately, Royal Prince Yang had long established his intentions and was doing his best to pursue his second sister. From the looks of it, the prince was a barely acceptable match, so Little Shitou was able to reluctantly acknowledge him as his 'second brother-in-law'. However, if his second sister didn't like the prince, no matter how good he was, Little Shitou would not agree to this match. However, it looked like his second sister currently didn't reject Royal Prince Yang's attempts to get closer to her...regardless, he needed to keep an eye on this!

“Older Sister! Linlin missed you a lot! Linlin loves Older Sister the most! Linlin also wants to go out with you to look at the colored lanterns!!” When he heard a childish and sweet little voice pipe up, Little Shitou rolled his eyes inwardly—Bah, another person was here who was trying to steal his second sister away from him!

Fields of Gold Chapter 493

The wet nurse came in holding Fang Haolin, who was wearing so many clothes that he resembled a little ball. When the little kid saw his older sister, he struggled to be put down. As soon as he reached the ground, he staggered over to Xiaocao like a fat little ball.

Xiaocao stepped forward a couple of steps to support him and lifted him up with a bit of effort. When Zhu Junyang saw her struggling, his eyebrows slightly furrowed and he reached out to grab Little Linlin instead.

Fang Haolin had just been able to snuggle into his older sister's warm and fragrant arms. Before he could enjoy the feeling and grin happily, he was suddenly taken out of his sister's arms and held by another person. He stupidly raised his head and saw Royal Prince Yang's cold and indifferent face. The little boy's face immediately creased.

“You're not allowed to cry!” Zhu Junyang truly was the stuff of nightmares for little children. After hearing the youth's soft reprimand, Little Linlin's eyes filled up with tears but not a single one dripped down. He had a wronged expression on his face that was enough to melt anyone's heart.

Zhu Junyang looked at the little fellow's adorable manner and suddenly the thought came up into his mind whether his future children with Xiaocao would be as cute. Would they also be chubby and soft and so adorable that you didn't dare to make them sad? His voice softened perceptively as he explained,

“Your older sister is too skinny and is unable to support your weight. You're a boy and in the future you need to protect your older sister, so you can't just start crying for any old reason.”

Fang Haolin nodded as if he didn't quite understand the youth's words and then turned his head around to see his father and mother smiling at him. He hurriedly reached out his hands. His eyes had a look of yearning in them as he stared at his parents——this uncle is too scary, save me soon!

Fang Zizhen noticed that his son looked a bit wilted and grinned foolishly at the side. He even said to his wife, “Have Junyang continue to hold him ah! In the future, Lin'er will become a general and he can't be too cowardly. The more time he spends with Junyang, the more he can practice!” Was this something a biological father should be saying?

Fang Zizhen turned towards Xiaocao and had a completely different reaction, “Cao'er, it's cold outside so you need to wear more. Otherwise, you might get chilled! In a bit, when you go look at the colored lanterns, there will be a lot of people so all of you servants need to be careful and make sure to protect your young miss. Prevent her from being squeezed through the crowd. Do you all hear me?”

Fang Haolin's inner thoughts: 'Linlin was picked up at the side of the road, only Older Sister is their biological daughter...Linlin wants to leave home and find my true biological parents!' The little fellow hung his head down dispiritedly and was resigned to his fate being carried by his future brother-in-law. He looked withered and would, from time to time, glance at his older sister in a pathetic manner.

Fortunately, when they left, his older sister spent the entire time next to his future brother-in-law who had an icy cold face. With his older sister by his side, Fang Haolin very quickly stopped being unhappy and regained his cheerfulness.

Dazzling lanterns filled the sky and people wound through them like the tide. The streets were illuminated brightly by the lights and citizens of all ages, men and women, old and young, young matrons leading their children, were in the streets calling merrily to their friends. Zhu Junyang was afraid that Xiaocao would be squeezed unceremoniously by the giant crowd, so he used his strength to boost Fang Haolin onto his shoulders. He left one hand to support the little boy's legs while he used his other arm to monopolize Xiaocao. When people squeezed by, he pulled Xiaocao towards his chest and tightly protected her.

This was the first time Fang Haolin had ever been up so high. He was stunned for a moment before he became excited. He observed everything from high above and saw people below him who were shorter

than him by a head and the bright and colorful beautiful lanterns in the not far distance. Sweet lips of laughter burst from his lips and occasionally he would let out a few screams in delight.

The whole family walked together at first. As more and more people filled the streets, they were slowly separated from each other. Fortunately, none of them were far from the others. With Fang Haolin high above the crowd and also letting out a few squeals of excitement here and there, no one in their group was lost from the others.

The shops on both sides of the streets had been open since the fifth day after the New Years. In order to attract customers, all of the stalls were decorated festively and almost every single one of them had colored lanterns hanging in the front. The types and variety of lanterns in front of the stores seemed to advertise their popularity and wares to the people. Thus, all of the shopkeepers did their best to get their hands on the most beautiful and interesting lanterns. There were lanterns shaped like flowers, birds, fish, and people. They were all painted bright colors, such as red, yellow, green, blue, purple, and bright white. It made a gorgeous and bewitching sight.

Some lanterns were large, others were small, some were shaped like rectangles, while others were round...many different shapes were available. Red ones, yellow ones, green ones, purple ones...the colors were unmatched and brilliant. There were silk lanterns, paper lanterns, glass lanterns, bamboo lanterns...multitudes of materials were used. The most beautiful lanterns were the ones that were crafted from the Imperial Palace. There was one shaped like two dragons holding a bright pearl, one shaped like the fortuitous three goats, one shaped like the four auspicious flowers of the seasons, one shaped as the five blessed and lucky bats, one shaped as the eight immortals crossing the sea...they were made so beautifully that they looked realistic and made people gape in admiration.

With Zhu Junyang as her escort, Yu Xiaocao was always able to stand in the spot that was best for admiring the lights. She felt like she was almost lost in the beauty of the lanterns.

What Fang Haolin found most interesting were the lanterns that the other children were holding. Even though their hands had turned red from the cold, their noses had mucus dripping down, and their heads were covered with snow, those children were still incredibly happy to have a lantern on hand.

"Fish, horse, rabbit..." Fang Haolin pointed out the types of lanterns each child was holding. Yu Xiaocao also looked towards where he was pointing and watched as the small children played with their lanterns and sang nursery rhymes cheerfully. In the festive atmosphere, the pure and innocent smiles of the children seemed incredibly precious.

The children who didn't have lanterns in their hands stood in front of the stalls selling lanterns, looking at them pitifully. Towards the end of the New Years celebrations, any family that had a bit of spare cash on hand couldn't resist fulfilling their children's wishes to have a lantern. Even being given the most crude paper lanterns would cause a child to smile broadly.

They stopped in front of a shop selling various lanterns. Yu Xiaocao looked over the variety of wares being sold there. The simplest lanterns had a bamboo skeleton that had white paper pasted over. These came in shapes of the twelve animals from the zodiac, such as rooster, horse, ox, sheep...the entire roster was there. The ones that the children liked the most were the lanterns that had wheels on them, such as the horse, sheep and rabbit lanterns...as such, these were more expensive. Whichever child had a lantern in wheels on it would always have a bunch of his or her friends behind, looking at it enviously. Those children were incredibly proud and happy as they strode forward with their wheeled lantern.

"This prince will buy whichever lantern that you like!" Zhu Junyang had noticed that the little lass was staring at the children who were pulling along their wheeled lanterns. Didn't that mean she wanted one?

Yu Xiaocao rolled her eyes at him and said, "I'm not a little child, so how could I shamelessly hold a lantern around? Don't come up with these silly ideas!"

"Why are these silly ideas? You're only thirteen and haven't reached your age of majority, so it's perfectly fine for you to hold onto a lantern. Do you like the ones with wheels on them? I will buy you one...how about this monkey? Or this dog with its tongue out?" Zhu Junyang enthusiastically helped her to pick lanterns out.

Yu Xiaocao wasn't very interested but that didn't mean that Fang Haolin, who was currently being ignored, wasn't. He pulled on Zhu Junyang's ears forcefully from side to side and hollered, "Tiny! I want the Tiny lamp!"

From the moment Fang Haolin saw the Yu Family's pet roe deer, he cried and wailed that he wanted to bring the creature back home. Yu Xiaocao couldn't bear to let the kid cry during the New Years so she lent Tiny to him for a few days (Author's note: Hopefully the little roe deer wasn't too scarred by this). Yu Xiaocao looked over at where the little fellow's plump hand was pointing and saw a lantern shaped like a deer made out of thin, reinforced paper.

His future younger brother-in-law had spoken. Although Zhu Junyang wasn't very pleased that the kid was pulling on his ears, he still took out some money to buy the deer-shaped lantern. The little boy held

the lantern that was lit up with a candle in his hands and returned to his inquisitive and sweet manner. His dark round eyes stared at the lantern in delight. Because he was young, Fang Zizhen and his wife rarely took him out of the residence. This was the first time he had seen so many people around and so many lights in such a lively setting. The little fellow was incredibly delighted by all of this.

Zhu Junyang persevered until Yu Xiaocao finally picked out a glass lantern that turned to reveal different images of the eight immortals crossing the sea. When the lantern was lit, the contraption turned around and around, showing different types of scenes. There was Han Xiangzi blowing his flute, then there was He Xiangu holding a lotus, and then there was Zhang Guolao riding his donkey...even Fang Haolin, who was on Zhu Junyang's shoulders, was fascinated by the changing images. He held onto the prince's head and leaned over to stare at the lantern.

Yu Xiaocao was afraid he might fall down and reached up to let him hold onto the glass lantern. Unfortunately, the little fellow's hands were too weak to hold onto it so he could only pout unhappily and watch as his older sister held onto the lamp.

However, he was soon distracted by the sugar painting stalls. His older sister had once told him the story of the monkey king, Sun Wukong, wreaking havoc in heaven. Thus, he ended up choosing a sugar painting made in the shape of a monkey. After playing around with it a bit, he finally couldn't resist the sweet smell of the sugar and bit off the monkey's head. He chewed noisily on the treat in utter delight.

"You be careful up there. If you get this prince's hair dirty, your little butt will feel the pain!" Zhu Junyang was somewhat of a clean freak and was slightly disgusted by the little fellow's saliva. He hurriedly brought the boy down from his shoulders and held him in one arm while the other took the offered handkerchief from Xiaocao. He patiently wiped the saliva that had congealed on Little Linlin's chin.

The cold and arrogant Royal Prince Yang actually had such a patient side to him. Although his expression looked impatient, his hands were quite gentle. He was like a strict father who treated his kids seriously but still loved them as much as their mother.

In the future, he was probably going to be a good father right? Yu Xiaocao watched their interactions and the dimples on her cheeks became slightly visible.

"Eat...you eat some candy." After spending an entire evening with him, the little fellow Fang Haolin no longer seemed scared of Zhu Junyang. He presented the sugar painting that didn't have a head anymore towards the other person's mouth.

Zhu Junyang dodged the boy's clumsy attempts and didn't even bother to hide the disdain in his voice, "Who wants to eat a sugar painting that has your saliva all over it? It's alright, you can eat it yourself. This prince doesn't need your good thoughts!"

When Fang Haolin saw that the other person was not grateful for his generous offer of something he really liked, he puffed up his cheeks and took the sugar painting back. With another 'crunch', he bit off half of the monkey's body and noisily chewed on the treat. His saliva continued to drip out of his mouth. Zhu Junyang had a helpless look on his face as he helped to wipe the little boy clean. When had he ever served someone else since he was born? As expected, children were truly annoying!

"Do you want to eat some?" Yu Xiaocao had bought a stick of candied hawthorn fruits and had bitten off half of one fruit. It was so sour that she scrunched up her entire face.

"Eat!" In actuality, Zhu Junyang didn't like to eat sour foods one bit. However when he saw half of the red fruit with bite marks on it, he stretched out his neck and gobbled up the remaining half. He chewed on it with relish.

"You ate something that has Older Sister's saliva on it!!" Fang Haolin had an outraged expression on his face. 'You eat Older Sister's food but you don't eat Linlin's. You're truly humiliating this baby!!'

Although Zhu Junyang still had his usual frosty expression on his face, he replied in a roguish manner, "This prince just likes to eat your sister's saliva, okay? Isn't it right and proper for men to eat a woman's saliva? Leave your saliva for your future wife to eat!"

Fields of Gold Chapter 494

"What kind of nonsense are you saying! You're going to misguide the child!!" Yu Xiaocao flushed bright red and she reached out to twist Zhu Junyang's arm. There were so many people on the streets, so how could it be good if other people heard this? This fellow's skin was truly too thick in that he wasn't afraid of other people laughing at him!

"The news is true! Zhenxiu Restaurant has ice lanterns in the front! Quickly go find a good place!!" Someone sped past Yu Xiaocao and almost touched her arm. She was startled by this sudden appearance but immediately her waist tightened. By the time she realized what had happened, she had already been drawn into that warm chest.

She raised her head and met a pair of dark phoenix eyes that seemed to glitter like the stars. It was as if they were two deep pools that could draw one's soul into them. Yu Xiaocao was about to be bewitched by them when a snowflake leisurely floated down and coincidentally landed on her nose. She unconsciously looked at that pure white snowflake and wasn't aware that, in another person's eyes, she had a silly look on her face while being cross-eyed.

She felt that person's chest rumble and a large hand gently brushed the snowflake off of her nose. Only then did Yu Xiaocao realize just how funny she looked earlier. She firmly glared at Zhu Junyang, who was suppressing his laughter, and forcefully pushed him away. He was blatantly hugging her in such a public place. How scandalous! She didn't want to admit anything so she became angry out of humiliation!

Zhu Junyang raised the hood on her cloak to cover her head and brushed off all of the snow that had fallen onto her shoulders. His smile seemed to be as bright as the lights around them and it had an alluring quality to it. The young ladies and matrons around who saw him all revealed a bashful smile and their eyes lingered on him.

"Attracting all of the bees and butterflies!" Yu Xiaocao snorted grumpily. Zhu Junyang hurriedly stopped smiling and reverted to a grim expression and starkly cold eyes. The young women around them, who had been surreptitiously looking at him, suddenly felt like they had seen a demon. Their faces immediately turned white and they all retreated one after another...

"Are you satisfied by this now?" When Zhu Junyang lowered his head to look at Xiaocao, he couldn't help but unconsciously soften his expression. The loving gentleness in his eyes was enough to make someone intoxicated.

"Older Sister...it's so scary!" Fang Haolin, who was gnawing on the sugar painting, had been scared by Zhu Junyang's earlier expression. He pouted his lips and sobbed as if he had been wronged.

Zhu Junyang glared at him, "You're such a coward yet you claim you'll protect your older sister when you get older. It's more likely your older sister will be the one protecting you!! Do you see that young fellow wearing a light green colored robe? He is also the younger brother of your older sister and has already become a county official at such a young age. He's determined to place first in the imperial palace exams! After he does that, he'll become a powerful official and help back your older sister up. If you don't get more courage, then you'll be pushed down by him!"

Yu Xiaocao found this hilarious yet a bit too much. She picked up Little Linlin, who had been begging for a hug, and said, "Why are you telling him this? Can't you see he hasn't even reached the age of two yet? It'd be surprising if he could understand what you're saying!"

"Older Sister, when Linlin gets older, I'll become a big general and I'll fight bad people to protect you!" When he said the term 'bad people', Fang Haolin surreptitiously glanced at Zhu Junyang and it was clear how the little fellow categorized the prince in his mind.

How could Zhu Junyang allow Xiaocao to carry the little fatty? The little lass had such slim arms and legs, so what if she became tired? He looked at Fang Haolin with contempt and said, "What kind of big general is this cowardly? When the bad people come, you're going to be crying instead. How can you protect your older sister?"

"Linlin is very brave!!" Fang Haolin was very upset by this and was no longer cowed by the prince's glares. He puffed up his cheeks and stared intently at Zhu Junyang as if by doing this he wouldn't be scared anymore.

"How do you prove you're brave? As soon as I look a bit gloomy, you want to cry. Is that a sign that you're brave?" Zhu Junyang had an expression that stated he didn't believe the little boy as he secretly observed the little kid's reactions.

Fang Haolin scrunched up his little face for a long time before he finally stretched out his hand in an effort to prove he wasn't scared as he stated, "Linlin is not crying. Linlin is brave. In the future, Linlin will become a great general and fight bad people!!"

"That's the spirit!" Zhu Junyang took the little boy back into his arms and lowered his head to talk to Xiaocao, who was hiding a smile, "It looks like your parents are walking toward the direction of Zhenxiu Restaurant to go look at the ice lanterns. Should we follow them too? I heard that Zhenxiu Restaurant is selling late night snacks. After walking around, it's easy to get hungry and tired so we can also stop at the building and rest our feet while eating some food."

Before Xiaocao could reply, he lifted up Little Haolin in his left arm and grasped Yu Xiaocao's hand in his right. They followed the stream of people headed towards Zhenxiu Restaurant. Beautiful lights lit up the criss-crossing streets, producing an image of a flourishing land. On the two sides of the street, different varieties of lanterns lit the way and the bright glow of the candles inside of them flickered and swayed...

The unique ice lanterns in front of Zhenxiu Restaurant were actually Yu Xiaocao's idea! In her previous life, the thing she regretted the most was that she had never traveled to Harbin in the winter to admire their ice sculptures and lanterns. Winter in the capital this year was quite cold, which was why she casually spouted this thought. However, she didn't expect Third Young Master Zhou to take it to heart and actually follow through.

By the time they got close to Zhenxiu Restaurant, there was already a giant crowd, that had to be at least three shoulders deep, surrounding the building. It was obvious just how popular these ice lanterns were! In front of Zhenxiu Restaurant were two large ice sculptures that had been shaped into lions and they resembled the guardian stone lions in front of temples. Inside them were giant red candles, which lit them up from within. It made them look festive and pure. Nearby, there were all sorts of finely sculpted ice lanterns, such as pavilions, buildings, bridges, animals, humans, and court ladies...it was truly a beautiful and fascinating sight to behold. It was as if they had entered a fairyland that was made entirely out of ice!

Third Young Master Zhou was currently at one of the nearby buildings, looking down on the crowd below. He suddenly spotted a familiar figure within the people and hurried down the building. He managed to squeeze through the crowd with difficulty and finally arrived in front of Yu Xiaocao and Royal Prince Yang, "Why are you guys stuck in the crowd? Be careful to not get stepped on! Come, go into the building with me. I especially reserved a room upstairs where you can see all of the ice lanterns from above. The view is quite spectacular up there!"

Yu Xiaocao followed him as they headed towards Zhenxiu Restaurant. Zhu Junyang came along with Fang Haolin in his arms as he also protected Xiaocao from being squished by the crowd around him. Luckily, he had long legs and arms so he didn't need to struggle as hard.

"Third Young Master, have you seen my parents and godparents?" Yu Xiaocao quietly asked after she reached the third floor. She was currently sitting in the private room by the window and drinking a warm cup of tea.

Third Young Master Zhou shook his head and replied, "I didn't see them. Are you sure they came over here? I'll have the people downstairs keep an eye out. If they see Uncle Yu and the others, they will immediately invite them over to this private room—there are too many people downstairs looking at the lights. It might be difficult to find anyone for a bit."

Yu Xiaocao stuck her head out the window to look and enjoyed the gorgeous and delicate icy lanterns. She had to admit that she couldn't look down on the ancient people's creativity and work. The ice lanterns downstairs were all delicate and gorgeous and were obviously much more beautiful and

interesting than the other lanterns in front of other stores. Zhu Junyang placed Fang Haolin at the windowsill and held onto the boy as he stuck half his body outside. The prince avidly observed Xiaocao's side profile. The little lass had gotten older by one year after the New Years and seemed to have become more beautiful. The childish part of her was gradually disappearing and revealing the charm and grace of a young maiden.

“What are you looking at me for? Go look at the lights!!” He was staring too obviously at her and it made Yu Xiaocao feel a bit antsy. She felt her cheeks redden from embarrassment and even her ears were heating up. Ultimately, she couldn't stand it anymore and turned around to glower at him angrily.

“The lights aren't as pretty as you!!” Zhu Junyang was now completely shameless and really had no compunctions left. He even said something so shameless in front of Third Young Master Zhou. Was he not even a bit embarrassed?!

(Fang Haolin: I'm still here! Me!! You don't just ignore Linlin just because Linlin is small!

Zhu Junyang: Anyone younger than three isn't considered a person...

Fang Haolin glares angrily...)

Third Young Master Zhou opened his eyes wide and stared in astonishment at Zhu Junyang. Was still the same widely known cold-faced royal prince? Why did he suddenly get off his high horse and become a youth who was head over heels in love? This guy could say such sappy and lovely things without even batting an eye or turning red. It was really too much! Such sticky sweet sentiments truly pricked a single man's heart! He couldn't take it anymore!

Zhou Zixu did his best to suppress the rising tide of jealousy within him but a thought suddenly popped up in his mind. If he hadn't put all of his efforts in establishing Zhenxiu Restaurant and the family business in order to prove himself to his grandfather and the Zhou Family and instead listened to his heart to pursue Yu Xiaocao, would he be the one next to her right now? Would he be the one whispering sweet nothings to her?

Although he now had the trust of his clan and was the acknowledged heir of the family business, he discovered that he had lost his chance with that person as she had already been taken away by someone

else. It felt like his heart had been dug away and he was only left with an empty hole that felt cold to his bones.

“Third Young Master, are you cold? Should we close the windows for a bit?” Yu Xiaocao had noticed from the corner of her eye that Third Young Master Zhou had let out a shiver, so she hurriedly asked.

Third Young Master Zhou endured the sharp look from Zhu Junyang and did his best to remain calm as he smiled and shook his head, “There are two braziers here, how could I feel chilly? Oh right, I remember I had the kitchen leave a fruit platter for me. I'll go down and bring it back so we can eat...”

Zhu Junyang watched as Third Young Master Zhou fled out of the room and raised an eyebrow. A complicated look crossed his eyes as he fell into thought. He was willing to bet his royal prince title that this youngster surnamed Zhou was also interested in his little lass! Fortunately, he had struck relatively early. Otherwise, he wasn't sure if his little lass would be snatched away by some other bad wolf!

“Awoooooo——” Far away, at the Yu Residence, Little Black, who had been abandoned by the family, was sulking in the courtyard with the snow falling around it. From time to time, it would raise its head and howl in the air——'Master, Little Black also wants to go out and admire the lights. Why didn't you bring Little Black along?!

Little White was currently lying down at a pavilion in the corner of the courtyard garden and rolled its eyes at his brother. Its blue-gray eyes, which were full of contempt for the other wolf, had two words written in them——Giant idiot!!

The Yu Family and the Fang couple were very quickly brought up to the warm and lively private room. It was getting late and the people in the streets were slowly going away. However, the ice lanterns at Zhenxiu Restaurant glittered with a beautiful light, so the crowds admiring them did not thin out one bit.

Zhou Zixu had the chefs prepare a light and refreshing table of midnight snacks. After walking around for a few hours, everyone was feeling a bit thirsty and peckish. They drank some refreshing West Lake water shield soup, ate some lightly cooked dishes, and idly chatted as they enjoyed the beautiful scenes below them.

Outside, the snow continued to lazily float to the ground. Inside, the friendly and affectionate feelings among the people swirled into a beautiful image and engraved itself into everyone that was present there...

Fields of Gold Chapter 495

Although celebrating the New Years in the capital was a novel and joyous event, Yu Hai still worried about the greenhouse pavilions on their farmstead back in Tanggu Town. Madam Liu also felt anxious about their home, so as soon as the first month passed, they started to pack up in preparation to go back to Tanggu.

On the eighteenth of the first month, Little Shitou had packed his bags and was taken away by Headmaster Yuan to travel to Jiangnan. The most famous academy in the south, Yuelu Academy, had invited Great Scholar Yuan to go and lecture there. He naturally had to bring along his last disciple with him to travel and gain some experience. Yu Xiaocao thought that their trip would be long and exhausting, so she made quite a few shelf-stable pastries and biscuits for them to bring along. Headmaster Yuan even brought along a few roasted ducks and chickens for their journey. He stated that he wanted to eat some while they were on the road.

Originally, Yu Xiaocao wanted to keep Yu Hang and Xiaolian around in the capital for a bit longer. However, Yu Hang was able to take on more than half of the work at the farmstead in Tanggu now. Yu Hai had noticed that his son had gradually matured and that he had a steady and responsible temperament. Thus, he had the desire to start cultivating him to inherit the farmland. In the future, both of Yu Hai's daughters were going to get married and his youngest son was talented at studying so his future was already set. The family had a farmstead nearing a thousand mu. Although the vast majority of land was given to them by Royal Prince Yang, they would likely obtain more and more land in the future. As the eldest son, Yu Hang needed to be able to manage all of this. Currently, the greenhouse vegetable business was going to be popular until the start of spring. Yu Hang was afraid his father would have more work than one person could deal with so he tactfully declined his younger sister's invitation.

Xiaolian also wasn't an idle person. Yingtao was currently in the capital, managing the building and establishment of a new pharmaceutical workshop. Thus, the workshop back in Dongshan Village was now under her hands. The little lass was in charge of all of the manufacturing recipes, ingredients, and supervising the workers. Most of the workers in the workshop were hired from her home village or the surrounding villages, so they all had faith in the Yu Family. Thus, none of them looked down upon her, a preteen girl, as their manager, so everything she said was done. The workers' vacation for the New Years was set to end on the last third of the first month. Although there was a steward keeping an eye on things, Xiaolian still wanted to go back.

Like this, Yu Xiaocao was once again left in the capital all alone. In fact, she also wanted to take this chance to go back to Dongshan Village and spend some time with her family. However, her new

cosmetic and spa business for women was currently making all of its preparations to have a grand opening. Although the vast majority of work had been delegated to a female shopkeeper that Royal Prince Yang recommended and her maidservant Hechun, as the owner of the business, she couldn't just stand aside and do nothing, right?

That being said, the heir of Marquis Anping and his wife still required her to help nourish their bodies. In actuality, these two people had healthy bodies just like all of the imperial physicians and other doctors had said. They didn't have any big problems to deal with. The heir's sperm count was low because he had been eating and drinking the wrong things. As long as he stopped eating those offending foods and continued to eat her medicinal cuisine with the mystic-stone water added into it, she was sure that good news would soon be on its way.

Yu Xiaocao, who had been left in the capital, spent a few days in her own residence, a few days in her godmother's residence, and would sometimes rest at the Imperial Plantation when she had work to do there. When Royal Prince Yang was in the capital, he always spent time with her, so it wasn't too lonely. However, once the first month passed, Zhu Junyang, who was regarded highly by the emperor, sometimes had tasks that took him out of the capital. Sometimes, he would be out for ten days to half a month and it made Yu Xiaocao feel at a loss whenever he was gone.

There were times when Yu Xiaocao thought that she was being a bit ridiculous. When she first transmigrated over into this society where men were seen dominant over women, she had originally planned on being single for the rest of her life. In the past, when she was working hard with her family to alter their circumstances, she was in charge of everything and had to rely on herself. As a girl who hadn't even reached the age of ten, she had to support the whole family, so naturally she didn't have much leisure time to think of much else. Now, with someone pampering and taking care of her at every turn, she was at a loss when he was gone. The problem was that she had too much time now! It looked like she needed to make herself busy again. Otherwise, she would turn into those other women and become someone who relied on a man for everything in life!

Fortunately, as the weather warmed, the season of flowers blooming had arrived. The mountains and hills behind the Imperial Plantation and Royal Prince Yang's farmstead were now covered in brilliant flourishing flowers and it made the scenery look multi-colored. From a distance, the scene resembled clouds that were colored like the rainbow.

Zhu Junyang's farmstead was especially gorgeous. The back mountains were planted full of a variety of plants and flowers. There were more common flora such as peonies, jasmine, Indian azaleas, magnolias, Chinese roses, etc. There were also less commonly seen varieties such as Chinese enkianthus, Buddha's hand, bitter orange flowers, globe amaranth, etc. Naturally, there were also varieties that were brought over from the western hemisphere, such as roses, forget-me-nots, lilies, tulips, etc...

Every type of flower was planted in neat rows and each section was under the care of an experienced flower gardener. When the entire hill bloomed in sequence, the gorgeous scenery was a sight to behold. It resembled an ocean of flowers and looked as if they were in an immortal land.

She wasn't sure how word came out but a stream of elegant literary scholars and talented women started coming to the 'flower mountain' to enjoy the sights. Royal Prince Yang's stewards at the farmstead also built a few pavilions on the hills. There were rustic and interesting thatched pavilions, delicate and elegant eight-sided pavilions, simple and small round pavilions, and lively and grand layered-roof pavilions.

If they had more time, Steward Sun would have liked to build a 'flowing cup pavilion'. The most famous flowing cup pavilion had to be the 'Melodious Flowing Water Goblet'. Watching a wine cup float down the water was one of the most favorite pastimes of literary scholars. This type of pavilion was the best for scholars to enjoy the beautiful scenery of the flowers and all of the scholars loved to congregate in these areas. In fact, some of the more famous and talented scholars even took the initiative to volunteer in creating a few couplets for these buildings!

As the warm spring caused the flowers to bloom, Yu Xiaocao's flower tea business had also started its production. The nearby village girls and matrons were all attracted by the offered wage of twenty copper coins a day. These hired workers picked the flowers in the fields and also helped process the flowers under a strict set of protocols to create a variety of flower teas. Every type of flower tea that was made all had to undergo the secretive last step that was controlled entirely by Yu Xiaocao. In other people's eyes, this was a mysterious process. In actuality, Yu Xiaocao just had the little divine stone morph into its golden kitten form and have it run around the flower teas. It imbued the flower teas with a tiny bit of its spiritual energy by doing so. Thus, the signature flower teas of 'Blossoming Beauty' couldn't be made by anyone else.

As for the fruit trees at the Imperial Plantation, the peach blossoms bloomed and then the pear flowers followed. Peach blossoms had the ability to enrich the blood and improve a person's complexion, whereas pear flowers could help fade hyperpigmentation from a person's skin. In addition, these were the two types of fruit trees that they had planted the most of at the Imperial Plantations. Consequently, when these two flowers bloomed, Yu Xiaocao took her personal maidservants along with some daughters of the tenant farmers to pick the male flowers from the trees.

With raw ingredients on hand, the manufacturing of flower blossom tea was on its way. Furthermore, Hechun had also begun producing cosmetics and health supplements and a supply had slowly built up. Thus, the 'Blossoming Beauty' cosmetics and spa facility had its grand opening at the start of April!

The estate that the emperor had given them had long finished the renovations needed. On the outside, there was a building that had been changed to fit the store front. Three rooms were earmarked for the selling of flower blossom teas, another three rooms were reserved to sell cosmetics, and the last three rooms were to be used to sell health supplements. Inside the estate, the beautiful and elegant residence was kept the same as before.

Yu Xiaocao was too lazy to come up with original names for each courtyard at the estate, so she willfully pilfered names from the buildings in Prospect Garden from the 'Dream of the Red Chamber'. There was 'Enjoyment Red Hall', 'Bamboo Lodge', 'Alpinia Garden', 'Violet Caltrop Island'...when the names came out, the famous talented girl of the capital, Yuan Xueyan, unanimously approved of them. She stated that Xiaocao must be refined inwardly in order to choose such suitable names for the courtyards.

The inscribed board at the front gates of the cosmetic and spa facility was crafted by the most famous artisan from the Ministry of Works who faithfully copied the empress's handwriting and her personal plum blossom seal. On the day that it opened, Zhu Junyang somehow managed to get a dragon and lion dance team from who knew where to noisily celebrate on the streets. The empress had sent her personal palace maids out to the store and, surprisingly enough, even the wife of the heir to Marquis Anning was also present. Other than these people, there were also the 'Two Beauties' of the capital at the scene. In short, the noblest and highest ranking women in the capital were present for the grand opening of this new business.

Since the effects of the peach blossom tea were now legendary in the capital, all of the noble young misses and ladies in the capital paid close attention to 'Blossoming Beauty', the new cosmetics and spa facility, before it even opened. They were waiting for it to open so they could rush to buy flower tea! As for the business's skin care facilities and the health supplements, these women were also very interested. Lady Fang had only relied on drinking flower tea to restore the health of her skin and body. If they added on the other treatments, it would definitely be even more efficacious!

As for the efficacy of the flower blossom teas and the cosmeceuticals, the noblewomen and maidens completely believed in their effects. After all, the empress herself was involved in this endeavor. If the effects weren't good, wouldn't that be slapping the mother of the country in the face? It was unlikely the Yu Family's lass would dare to do something underhanded!

On the day of opening, there were sedans and carriages parked outside 'Blossoming Beauty' cosmetics and spa resort long before it was time. There were women from the imperial clan, noble ladies from high-ranked officials' families, sweet and cute daughters of officials, and also the wives and favored

concubines from rich merchant families...all of them had one common trait: none of them lacked money!

These upper class women and young maidens were all invited to elegant rooms based on their family backgrounds and likes. The items displayed in these rooms were not only void of any nouveau-riche sentiments but they also seemed to be full of things that each person liked as if they had been personally tailored to them.

For example, the wife of the imperial tutor was a famous talented maiden in her youth. Her daughter was also proficient in poetry and verses. The room they were escorted to was full of scholarly items, such as famous paintings and calligraphy. It was extremely elegant and refined.

As for the wife of the Grand Secretary of the Pavillion of the Imperial Library, she loved flora and adored famous and valuable flowers. The room that she was in had valuable orchids, top-notch quality peonies, precious Chinese peonies...there were even some varieties she had never seen before. As soon as she entered the room, she almost forgot what she was there for. Instead, she hungrily appreciated these beautiful flowers.

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These examples could be found everywhere. Each room that a person went into was extremely well tailored to their personal likes. Naturally, this was the skill of the female shopkeeper in charge of the business. She had gathered information on the likes and dislikes of almost all of the potential customers in the capital. Thus, she used that information to create more than thirty types of rooms to fit those styles. These rooms were perfectly crafted to receive the guests at 'Blossoming Beauty'. When Yu Xiaocao found out, she was impressed with this woman and trusted her even more implicitly. She also raised the salary of this shopkeeper by a lot more.

Every guest in the rooms was given a small booklet describing the skincare items, health supplements, and flower blossom teas at the spa. Furthermore, each room had its own maid who was perfectly trained. They were there to answer any questions or explain anything the customers weren't sure about.

If the guests were interested in the spa resort's other services, they would be given another pamphlet that introduced the benefits of getting skin care treatments, lymphatic massages, gua sha treatments , and healing foot baths. All of these maids could also describe these treatments in full detail. They had sweet and gentle voices and were able to really speak to the customers about the business's offerings and treatments.

Many customers became very interested in obtaining a membership card to the cosmetics and spa resort. After spending a certain amount of money at the spa, they could apply for different levels of membership cards. Membership cards not only could give them a discount on their future visits but they also served as a status symbol among the women.

Fields of Gold Chapter 496

Many of the capital's wealthy and noble matrons and maidens were polite and courteous on the surface to each other but they privately put in a lot of effort to think up every possible method they could to defeat each other! This was also the reason why everyone pursued Jiang Siniang's custom made clothing.

For example, if a friend of yours could only register for a silver membership card but you were able to get a gold membership card, wouldn't you have a lot of face when spending money at the resort? As for diamond membership cards, that was just a dream. It was rumored that those cards were a legend.

What? The empress herself had two diamond cards on hand? She was planning on awarding them to the wives of prominent officials who had contributed much to the court? All of the wives of the fifth-ranked officials and above began acting virtuous when they got home. That way, their husbands wouldn't need to fret about anything at home and would be able to do their best at work!

What? Lady Fang had a diamond membership card that was personally given to her by her goddaughter? Suddenly, the gates of Count Zhongqin's estate, which used to be desolate and empty, were now filled with sedans and carriages. It wasn't because someone was as shameless to ask for the diamond membership card from Lady Fang. Instead, everyone wanted to see what a diamond membership card actually looked like. It was rumored that it was made out of a very rare material. This material could be used to make weaponry and could destroy other weapons made of other, less rare material. The imperial court was very interested in this material and they are currently in the process of secretly manufacturing more...

What? Miss Yuan and Miss He, who were good friends with the owner of 'Blossoming Beauty', also had diamond membership cards? The other young maidens in the capital, who previously had their noses up in the air, were filled completely with regret now. They wished now that they were the ones who had jumped out to help Yu Xiaocao when Li Meirou was making things difficult for her during the flower war banquet. That way, they could become her close friends and would also obtain a spot in the quota for the legendary diamond cards that everyone wanted to get ahold of.

Regardless, the 'Blossoming Beauty' cosmetics and spa resort was now blazingly popular throughout the whole capital. On the opening day, they had made over five hundred thousand taels in income. Furthermore, there was a promotion going on during the opening day. Every product was ten percent off and they also offered free facials and physiotherapy.

The thirty private rooms at 'Blossoming Beauty' were filled to capacity that day. The most popular products, the flower blossom teas, were extremely expensive, especially the legendary peach blossom tea. The price was actually a hundred taels per catty. The other dozen or so flower teas were also not cheap. For example, the pear blossom and Chinese angelica tea, which was good for fading hyperpigmentation, the three flower blossom tea, which was good for slimming the body, and the rose and lily flower tea, which was good for renewing skin elasticity and glow, were all priced at eighty taels per catty.

At the cosmetics counter, the most popular product were the different types of handmade soap. After an entire winter, Hechun and the other maidservants under her command had already manufactured more than twenty types of handmade soaps. They could whiten, moisturize, and renew a person's skin...there were all types of beneficial effects available.

The raging popularity of the handmade soaps was due to the living advertisement, He Wanning. Last autumn, her skin was extremely dry, had enlarged pores, and seemed quite dark and dull. During the flower war banquet, Yu Xiaocao gifted her some handmade soaps and also gave her some usable prototypes later. After using them for a whole winter, her skin was now tender and glowy and felt as soft as a baby's skin. Her skin was also brighter and less dull and it made her seem more lively and youthful.

The sales of the watery lotion and moisturizing cream were closely behind the soaps, and following that was the rouge powder. The lip color that Li Mengru instructed her maidservants to make was also quite popular. Yu Xiaocao suggested that she should use the wealth of spring flowers available to make more lip colors. Thus, the lip colors currently had the following options: rouge red, peachy red, rose red, coral red, light almond blossom pink, pomegranate red, violet red, ruby red, etc...all in all, there were around a dozen or so colors available. No matter the age of the customer, whether they were elderly or a young maiden, there was a suitable color available.

Every customer who came in was able to buy the exact products that fit their needs. Naturally, when they got back home, their purses were also much lighter compared to before. However, after using these products, they discovered that these cosmetics and supplements were well worth the cost.

Those who bought skincare items found that their skin had an improved texture, brightened, and had fewer wrinkles. The young maidens looked more delicately pretty while the married women looked more youthful. Those who bought flower teas discovered that their complexions were more rosy and not as dull. Furthermore, their bowel movements became regular and their figures became more graceful while all of their small ailments seemed to disappear. Those who bought health supplements found out that they were no longer short of breath, their bodies felt lighter and healthier...in conclusion, in one word—worth! Two words—worth it!! Three words—extremely worth it!!

'Blossoming Beauty' had exploded onto the scene at the capital and all of their customers consisted of the noble matrons and maidens in the area. Almost everyone in the upper classes was buzzing excitedly about the efficacy of the products from 'Blossoming Beauty'. In one month, over twenty people had registered for gold membership cards and almost a hundred people had registered for silver membership cards. As for bronze membership cards, it was obvious that the number was not small!

'Blossoming Beauty' cosmetic and spa resort also provided facilities for women to bathe in medicinal baths as well as other services to improve one's health and beauty. Perhaps the women in ancient times were a bit more reticent, but in the first month, there weren't many people who tried the body massage services and other treatments. However, there were a decent amount of customers who tried the skin facial treatments. The medicinal baths were offered privately on a one-on-one basis in the spa rooms, and the customer's own maidservant could serve them there, so there were also a decent number of women who tried that.

Although the body massages and other body treatments were not very popular currently, Xiaocao was convinced that the guests who had tried them would come back again to be a repeat customer after seeing the effects. Furthermore, the number of guests would increase over time as she believed that as the first customers let out word of mouth about their treatments, other women would also become curious and try. That was their marketing strategy!

On one particular day, Xiaocao was currently in her own private room enjoying a leisurely swim in the hot springs. Wutong, who was serving her outside, came in to let her know that Hechun was asking to see her, so Xiaocao rinsed off her body and bundled up in a bathrobe before she saw her maid.

“What's going on?” Yu Xiaocao calmly asked after she saw the embarrassed expression on Hechun's face.

Hechun gave her a greeting and said, “There's a customer that's arrived at the spa today and this servant thinks her situation is a bit thorny. Master, can you go take a look?”

“Eh? What sort of guest is it that makes it a thorny case that even our expert treatment hero, Hechun, can't handle ah?” Yu Xiaocao quipped teasingly at her maidservant as she went behind the standing screen to have Wutong help her change into proper clothing.

“Young Miss, do you still remember the daughter of the Left Assistant Minister of the Ministry of Appointments, Miss Yu?” Hechun began reporting to her young miss from the other side of the screen.

“The Left Assistant Minister of the Ministry of Appointments? He's also surnamed Yu? However, I don't remember interacting with his daughter before. I do have a very deep impression of the daughter of the Right Assistant Minister, Miss Li!” Yu Xiaocao wasn't very familiar with most of the young ladies in the capital. Other than the few she got along with, the rest she could barely recognize.

Hechun knew her young miss wouldn't remember and reminded her, “It was during the flower war banquet last year. At first, everyone had mistakenly thought that you were Miss Yu from the Left Assistant Minister's residence. Do you still remember this?”

“Uh...now that you mention it, I now vaguely remember. Her 'Yu' (于) is written with two horizontal lines and a vertical stroke with a hook at the end, so it's different from our Yu (余). Isn't that Miss Yu around thirteen to fourteen years of age right now? It's just the age when young girls like to be beautiful. Just recommend a few skincare products that can moisturize the skin, what's so hard about that?” Yu Xiaocao put on a set of brightly colored qi-style clothing and walked out from behind the screen. The attire emphasized her fine and slender waist and it made her look as elegant and tender as a lily.

Hechun was stunned by the sight of her young miss. Qi-style clothing was currently mainstream in the capital, but she thought that her young miss was the one who wore it best. Her young miss was becoming more and more beautiful. No wonder Royal Prince Yang was always keeping a close eye on her whenever he had free time!

“Come back to reality! I was asking you a question, why are you spacing out now?” Yu Xiaocao waved a white little hand in front of Hechun's face.

Hechun recalled the ravaged condition of Miss Yu's face and couldn't help but tremble, “Master, please go and take a look. Miss Yu has too many pimples and lesions on her face and they are the pustule type that are very densely packed together. This servant is afraid to do any treatments on her.”

The spa resort had a pimple extraction treatment service. They first used a fine sterile needle to prick the pimples to help with extraction. However, this young lady had large and small pustules covering her entire face, so none of the trained employees there were willing to try!

After hearing Hechun's descriptions of the young maiden's face, Xiaocao wondered whether the young girl had facial blisters. They couldn't use any old treatment on facial blisters. If the treatments ended up leaving a scar on her face, then that would destroy the reputation of Blossoming Beauty!

In the most private courtyard of the spa, a young girl, who was heavily veiled and looked no older than ten years of age, was currently sobbing piteously against her mother, "Mother, let's go ah? Didn't you see the expression on the manager of 'Drifting Beauty'? The estheticians all said that she is the best consultant they have here. However, even she seemed to be at a loss for words after seeing my face. Why should we continue to stay here? To allow other people to laugh at us?"

The wife of the Left Assistant Minister was only in her early thirties but she looked even more aged and sallow than Lady Fang. The hair on her temples was already frosted with gray and it was obvious that she normally was quite stressed. It was no wonder. Not long after her youngest daughter was born, a rash started to appear on her child's face. After seeing doctors for more than a decade, there was still no improvement. Instead, her daughter's facial rash seemed to be getting worse as she got older. Her sweet and clever little girl gradually became more silent and antisocial. As her mother, how could she be happy through all of this?

"Qing'er, Mother already carefully asked around. 'Drifting Beauty' is the place that is best at treating pimples. You've also seen the older sister from the Wu Family, right? In the past, she also had a face full of pimples like you but after undergoing treatments at 'Drifting Beauty' for less than a month, they've mostly disappeared. Furthermore, the treatments didn't leave a single discoloration or scar on her face. Her skin also looks much more sleek and healthy than before. Didn't that consultant say something earlier? The best at doing skin treatments isn't her but it's actually her master, Feudal Princess Jinan!" The wife of the Left Assistant Minister quickly tried to console her daughter.

Yu Wanqing was silent for a moment before she slowly shook her head, "She was given her title of feudal princess by the emperor himself, so how could she be willing to lower herself to help me heal my skin? Mother, let's not continue to bring humiliation onto ourselves and go! If rumors come out about my face, how am I supposed to live anymore?"

The wife of the Left Assistant Minister didn't want to renounce their last hope and persevered, "Don't worry, Qing'er! The spa honors and keeps every guest's privacy and they won't broadcast the circumstances of any customer to the public. Even if your skin condition can't be treated, it won't be any worse than it is now! You're still young and you can't spend the rest of your life with your face in this condition. Sigh...it's all Mother's fault. I couldn't give you a beautiful and adorable little face. Instead, I let you endure so much pain and heartbreak since you were young..."

"Mother, it's not your fault! If you continue to blame yourself, then I will feel even worse!" Yu Wanqing was sensible and restrained her sorrow to start consoling her mother.

The wife of the Left Assistant Minister patted her daughter's small hand and held back the sorrow in her heart. Her daughter was sweet and sensible, but why did the heavens treat her so unfairly? What did she do wrong? If she could choose, she would rather her own face be ravaged instead of her kind and obedient youngest daughter.

Fields of Gold Chapter 497

"Qing'er, listen to me. Wait a little longer. Maybe Feudal Princess Jinan can really cure the pimples on your face? Promise me, don't give up any chance of treatment, alright?" The wife of the left assistant minister didn't want to see her twelve year old daughter dispirited and tried to get her to see sense.

Upon seeing that her mother was enduring her own sadness and trying to comfort her with her heart and soul, Yu Wanqing nodded slowly with tears in her eyes. No matter what the result was, she had to try, even if she were to lose hope in the end. She didn't want to waste her mother's painstaking efforts. It wasn't easy for her mother these past few years...

"Mother, don't be upset. I won't go back! Just as you've said, no matter what the result is, we should face it firmly. Your daughter won't run away. Even if Feudal Princess Jinan can't cure my face, then it's my fate."

Yu Wanqing had become tired and downtrodden by the condition of the skin on her face after all these years. With such a face, all the other children treated her as a monster when she was a child, avoiding and running away from her. There were even ones who were so scared they cried. Not only did she not have any playmates but she also had to bear the criticisms of the parents of the children who were scared into crying.

She feared her parents wouldn't like her and wouldn't want her, so she forced herself to be sensible and obedient, to be a well-behaved daughter. Her parents were also so worried for her sake that their hairs turned grey early. Thankfully, she had a pair of loving parents who never gave up on seeking out medical

treatments for her for more than ten years. Her mother feared that she was lonely and accompanied her often, even going to the point of ignoring Yu Wanqing's older brother and father...

She decided, if the treatment didn't work this time, she would advise her parents to give up completely. She would just live alone this life with this appearance!

"Qing'er, Feudal Princess Jinan has medicinal skills. I heard that she even has folk remedies on hand that can treat dubious or hard-to-treat maladies. Perhaps she truly can heal your face." The wife of the left assistant minister carefully continued down this subject. Her daughter had endured this pressure for a very long time. She'd had her hopes lifted and then extinguished time after time. As an adult, even she almost couldn't take it anymore, let alone her young daughter.

"Lady Yu, Miss Yu, our master is here!" Hechun opened the coral beaded curtains and walked in. Behind her, a little maiden, who was about the same size as Yu Wanqing, came in wearing pink Qi-style clothing.

Lady Yu's eyes looked over. The little girl's skin was white and delicate, and it looked as lustrous, smooth and soft as a pearl. She had a pair of big eyes that were sparkling with confidence, which could convince anyone. The dimple by her mouth that was partly visible was sweet and lovable. Was this Feudal Princess Jinan? The Feudal Princess Jinan who could grow high yield crops, invented greenhouse planting, and set up Blossoming Beauty? Lady Yu couldn't believe her eyes; she looked just like a delicate, weak, and protected noble young lady!

"Feudal Princess Jinan, please forgive us for disturbing you!" Whether or not the other party could cure her daughter's face, there should still be etiquette. Lady Yu slightly bowed and said with a smile. Yu Wanqing gave a slight curtsy before falling back behind her mother.

Yu Xiaocao had looked over the daughter and mother pair as soon as she entered the door. Lady Yu looked haggard but her eyes were kind. She seemed like an amiable person. Miss Yu's head and face were covered with a heavy veil. No matter the style or color of the clothes she wore, they could only be described as ordinary. It seemed like they had low-key and modest temperaments. As the wife and daughter of a third-ranking official, there didn't seem to be any arrogance and haughtiness. Rather they had a slight calmness about them, which gave Yu Xiaocao a good impression.

"Lady Yu is too polite. What Feudal Princess, please call me Xiaoyu!" Yu Xiaocao's straightforward personality won a favorable impression from both the mother and daughter pair.

"Qing'er, Miss Yu is older than you. Why don't you call her Older Sister Yu?" Lady Yu took her daughter's hand and said with a smile.

"Older Sister Yu..." Yu Wanqing had a bit of an inferiority complex and a liking for quiet due to the condition of her face. Listening to her mother, she softly called out 'older sister'.

Yu Xiaocao knew that for the patient to cooperate wholeheartedly, she must win over their trust and gain a favorable impression. Hearing this, the dimples near her mouth deepened, "Since I'm older, I'll call you Younger Sister Yu. Younger Sister Yu, ever since I came to the capital, all the people I know are older than me. I finally have a delicate and weak sister to take care of."

Seeing Yu Xiaocao's attitude, Lady Yu's heart finally relaxed. It was rumored that Feudal Princess Jinan had a sharp tongue, so she was originally worried that the other party wouldn't be easy to get along with. She didn't expect the girl to be a kind person with a considerate heart that seemed to have a great understanding of people. It seemed as if those rumors couldn't be trusted after all!

"To tell you the truth, Miss Xiaoyu, my daughter and I came to ask for help. I've heard that your 'Blossoming Beauty' can help with regulating and healing the skin. Do you have any good methods of treating skin disease and improving its condition?" Lady Yu loved her daughter so much that she didn't beat around the bush but went straight into the main topic.

Yu Xiaocao's smile didn't diminish and she nodded slightly, "Our beauty and health spa, which integrates improving beauty and preserving health, is committed to improving the quality of problematic skin so that every maiden and woman can bloom like flowers for their own splendor. As for the skin disease mentioned by Lady Yu, I have to see it before I can know if it can be cured."

Lady Yu saw that the young maiden spoke freely, confidentiality and politely, so she was convinced a bit. She looked back at her daughter. If her daughter's face wasn't like that, would she be as self-controlled, confident, and beautiful as Miss Yu?

In order to avoid giving her daughter any embarrassment, Lady Yu suggested that they avoid unnecessary people. Yu Xiaocao let her personal servant girl wait outside but left behind Hechun, "Lady Yu, Hechun was taught personally by me. She has an extraordinary talent for skincare. As you know, I still have an imperial office and may not have the chance to look after Younger Sister Yu every time so..."

Lady Yu expressed that she understood. After all, the young maiden had the post of an Agricultural Official in the Ministry of Revenue and she still had to take care of the matters on the Imperial Plantation. When her husband was serving his official post, he also placed great importance on agricultural cultivation. She knew that spring was an important season for the crops. If she became busy, how could she have time to care about other matters?

“However, don't worry Lady Yu. Hechun will be Younger Sister Yu's exclusive skincare specialist in the future. When I'm here, I will try to personally help with her treatment. However, when I'm not present, she will take full responsibility. Hechun's level of expertise isn't any lower than mine, so the two of you don't have to worry!” Yu Xiaocao explained the situation clearly, so as to avoid the mother and daughter having any misgivings about the method of treatment.

Yu Wanqing saw that the girl in front of her was about the same age as her. Not only did she have an important position on the imperial court but she also opened a store as big as 'Blossoming Beauty'. While she admired her in her heart, she also couldn't help respecting her, "Older Sister Yu, we believe you!"

Yu Xiaocao gave her a sweet smile. This smile seemed to have a soothing effect on people. Yu Wanqing stopped worrying and gently lifted the face covering, revealing a dainty, but red and swollen face. In some places, it even had large pustules that oozed pus.

Yu Xiaocao put away the smile on her face and looked at the symptoms carefully and solemnly. There was no contempt or disgust in her eyes, which made Yu Wanqing's body and frame of mind relax a lot more. Older Sister Yu was so strong. Even she herself dared not look at this face in the mirror, but the other maiden was looking at it so attentively. Was she not afraid of having nightmares?

When others saw her face, they either took a breath of cold air, screamed in fright, or ran away like they saw a ghost. Only Older Sister Yu stayed normal, not even frowning a bit, and didn't have any expression of disgust or dislike. No matter if her face could be healed or not, as long as Older Sister Yu was willing, she was willing to become her friend—Yu Wanqing didn't have many friends growing up. She idly wondered if Older Sister Yu was willing to accept her as a friend.

“How is it? Can Qing'er's face be cured?” Just when Yu Wanqing was thinking about her personal gains and losses, her mother asked anxiously.

Yu Xiaocao had a conversation with the little divine stone and confirmed her guess. Under the expectant and uneasy eyes of the mother and daughter pair, she nodded slowly.

Lady Yu and Yu Wanqing's hearts fell back down, like a boulder falling to the ground, and they felt as if they were still in a dream. They couldn't tell if that gentle nod a while ago was a hallucination or reality. Lady Yu held her daughter in her arms with eyes full of tears and said, "My daughter, my daughter that life has been cruel to, there is finally an end to your suffering!"

Yu Wanqing's face was nestled in her mother's chest. Although it was uncomfortable, she couldn't care. Her mind was repeating, 'There's a cure. There's a cure. There is a cure for my face!' The tears of joy stung the areas of ulceration on her face but her heart was full of joy. The heavens finally pitied her and sent her savior, Older Sister Yu, to her side. She wouldn't have to hide by wearing the face veil anymore or bear the strange, disgusted, and frightened gazes of other people. She could finally be like a normal person and live a normal life!

"Younger Sister Yu's papular eczema is caused by a skin allergy. It's accompanied by blisters around the mouth and nose. As long as the source of the allergy is found, and the symptoms are treated, her skin will heal without any scars."

Under the little divine stone's reminder, Yu Xiaocao already knew what the little girl's skin was allergic to. This little girl was too miserable. She was allergic to willow catkins in the spring, lotus flowers in the summer, daisies in the fall, and plum trees in the winter...No wonder her skin never got better all year round. Most importantly, someone in her family liked the ornamental plant, kaffir lily, that bloomed all year round. That was the main cause of her skin eczema becoming ulcerated and swollen.

"Source of allergy? How do we find it? Miss Xiaoyu, please tell us." Lady Yu was happy but at the same time more urgent upon knowing her daughter's face could be cured. She hoped to cure her daughter's skin as soon as possible.

"Younger Sister Yu should be allergic to some type of flower pollen. Think of the flowers at your home. Which ones are most numerous and the ones that you have the most contact with?" Yu Xiaocao pointed them in the right direction.

The mother and daughter pair looked in each other's eyes and saw surprise and regret. When Lady Yu was young, she liked kaffir lilies. She had met her husband because of this flower. Official Yu, who was a poor scholar back then, also liked the kaffir lilies. The two of them took fancy to a pot of kaffir lily in the same flower shop on the same day at the same time. Thus, a story of a beautiful official's daughter and a talented poor scholar began.

Lady Yu always believed that the kaffir lily was the matchmaker of her and her husband. Consequently, all kinds of kaffir lilies were planted in the courtyards and the rooms. When Official Yu was free, the two of them would write poems and make paintings while looking at the kaffir lily, creating the scene of a beauty studying with a scholar.

Who would have thought that the kaffir lily, which they regarded as the token of their affection, was the main cause of their young daughter's suffering for more than ten years? In a small corner of Lady Yu's heart, there was a small voice that said, "Maybe, they got it wrong?"

Yu Wanqing, after a period of silence, suddenly said, "I remember the last time when I went with Mother to Jingan Temple, we abstained from eating meat and listened to scriptures there. We were right when a Buddhist festival occurred, so we stayed a few more days. Jingan Temple is known for its rare trees and they don't plant a lot of flowers there, so during the time I was there, the redness and swelling on my face got better and the papules went down a lot. My mother and I thought it was because of my sincerity that moved the Buddha so my face got better. It turns out the only reason why my symptoms were alleviated was because I was staying away from the plants that caused problems for my skin!"

Lady Yu had also thought of this. It seemed that the kaffir lily at home couldn't stay any longer. Nothing was more important than her daughter's face!

"Once we go back, I'll tell your father to give away all of the kaffir lilies! Right now the most important thing is curing the skin on your face. Miss Yu, will the skin on my daughter's face heal by getting rid of the source of her allergy?" Lady Yu felt a bit resigned. After all, those were the beautiful memories of her and her husband. However, for her daughter, there was nothing that she wasn't willing to give up.

Yu Xiaocao pondered briefly and formulated a plan for Yu Wanqing's recuperation and treatment, "I'll choose a suitable courtyard for Younger Sister Yu to stay at for some time, so that it will be more convenient for her to receive concentrated care. Sensitivity to allergens and papules aren't easy to treat. The most fundamental thing is that we have to start from within and improve Younger Sister Yu's physique, using facial skincare as a supplement. Therefore, when necessary, medicinal soups and food will be vital. If Lady Yu is worried, you can spend a few days with Younger Sister Yu in the club as well."

Yu Wanqing shook her head and said, "What is there to worry about? I'm not a kid anymore. I'm just a few months younger than Older Sister Yu. Older Sister Yu can undertake tasks alone, yet I'm like a nestling being protected by my parents. If I didn't dare to stay in a safe courtyard, won't I be a useless person? Besides, aren't there servant girls to wait on me? Mother, go home and clean my courtyard first. That way when my skin is better, it won't have a relapse."

Lady Yu revealed a happy expression on her face. Her daughter was growing up and she was brave enough to take the first step. How precious it was for her!

"Alright! I'll do as my daughter says!!" Lady Yu also had an impatient disposition. What day was better than today? They should start the treatment for her daughter today, "Miss Yu, do you have anything else to tell me? I'll go home right now and help my daughter pack some clothes to bring over."

Yu Xiaocao thought for a moment and said, "I suggest you don't keep any willow trees, lotus flowers, chrysanthemums, or plum blossoms on your estate. Plant more ornamental foliage plants. It's better not to have any pond water in Younger Sister Yu's courtyard. An environment that's too humid can cause Younger Sister Yu to have a buildup of moisture in her body, causing eczema."

"Alright, alright! Your Younger Sister Yu likes lotus flowers. In her courtyard, there's a delicate pond that's full of lotus flowers facing her window. In the summer, the scent of lotus flowers covers the entire courtyard... I always wondered why Qing'er's face gets worse in the summer. Turns out it's related to those lotus flowers!" Lady Yu turned to her daughter and said, "I'll find some people to fill up the small pond when I get home. Don't think it's a pity that it'll be gone."

"Mother, as long as it's good for my skin, I won't have any objections to any of your arrangements!" Yu Wanqing was still immersed in the joy that her skin could recover. Even if her courtyard was left with a plot of dirt, she would gladly be content.

Yu Xiaocao watched as the mother and daughter pair rejoiced in hope for a bit before she said, "I'll give Younger Sister Yu some simple skincare first. Younger Sister, follow me to the inner chamber to lie down."

A veil hung from the entrance of the inner chamber, allowing a vague view of what was inside. There were two narrow beauty treatment beds in the room, which could hold one person lying on their back. There was also a simple treasure shelf in the room that had many bottles in a variety of different shapes.

The simple furnishings and privacy designs allowed Yu Wanqing's slightly uneasy mood to relax. At Yu Xiaocao's suggestion, she laid on one of the beauty beds. Her hands were tightly clasped as she basked in the novelty of the experience.

Yu Xiaocao took a few bottles down from the treasure shelf. Hechun helped her fetch some fresh water at just the right temperature and Yu Xiaocao immersed a delicate cotton cloth into the water and gently wrung the water out. She avoided the areas of ulceration on the girl's face as she began to clean Yu Wanqing's skin.

"Younger Sister Yu's skin is sensitive and allergenic, so she can't use the alkaline handmade soap to clean it. This cleanser with cucumber extracts is mild and has hydrating functions. It's more suitable for her symptoms. However, for the sake of caution, do an allergy test on the skin behind her ear first!"

Yu Xiaocao had worked in a beauty spa for more than a year in her past life, so she wasn't unfamiliar with facial care. While she cleansed the younger girl's face, she gave Hechun an explanation for her steps which also served the dual purpose of letting the Yu mother and daughter pair know her intentions and the effects of each step.

A soft and smooth hand caressed her face, which was a new sensation for Yu Wanqing. That pair of hands seemed so gentle as if they were caring for a treasure. Although Yu Wanqing was a little shy, she didn't hate the touch.

Ten minutes into the allergy test, it was confirmed the cucumber cleanser could be used. Yu Xiaocao used her middle finger and ring finger to gently massage the cleanser into the other girl's face. This step didn't take long and, soon, the faintly fragrant foam was washed away. She didn't know if it was a psychological effect, but Yu Wanqing felt that her face was fresher in an instant.

Next, Yu Xiaocao opened a jade bottle containing mystic stone water. After diluting it appropriately with the right proportion of saline, she taught Hechun where to spread the beauty solution on the other girl's face. She also explained to her that this beauty solution could also be used to improve skin that was oversensitive.

Next came a mask that was made of fine cotton and had holes cut out for the eyes, nose and mouth. Yu Wanqing opened her eyes and looked curiously at it. When this mask like cotton gauze was placed on her face after being soaked in the normal saline beauty solution, she felt that her face was cool as if there was something going directly into her skin and repairing her swollen and broken skin. The previous stinging of the ulcers suddenly disappeared. It felt so comfortable...

Unknowingly, Yu Wanqing fell asleep and slept soundly. Lady Yu fought back tears of joy. In her memories, her daughter seemed to have never slept so peacefully, always being awakened by nightmares.

Yu Wanqing slept with a smile. In her dream, she was lonely and sad, and then she met a little immortal girl. The immortal girl said that she could help her relieve her pain and help her recover her original appearance. With that, the immortal gently waved a hand and a gentle light surrounded her. The pimples, redness, and ulcerations on her face were gently removed like a mask, revealing delicate, white, and smooth skin without any flaws. Yu Wanqing was ecstatic beyond measure. When she looked back, the immortal girl was flying away on a propitious cloud, but she clearly saw the immortal's smiling face—it was Older Sister Yu's smiling face.

When she woke up, the first thing she saw was the face of the immortal girl in her dream. The smile was so real, sincere, and went straight into the hearts of the people. She involuntarily told them the dream she just had. Lady Yu gently stroked her soft hair and happily said, "This is a good omen indicating your face will soon be like it was in your dream, smooth without any flaws."

When she finished speaking she turned her hopeful gaze toward Yu Xiaocao, who was finishing her daughter's facial treatment, hoping to gain her acknowledgment and confirmation.

"I don't know if there will be any flaws. Everyone's skin is different and I'm not the immortal girl in your dream with magical powers so great I can change a person's appearance. However, I can guarantee that the pimples, the redness, and swelling, as well as the ulcers on your face, will all disappear!" Yu Xiaocao assured the mother and daughter pair, while she washed her hands, and put on hand cream.

It was just the first treatment, but Yu Wanqing felt that her face wasn't as itchy as before and her symptoms were lighter. She couldn't help but raise her hand to touch her face but Yu Xiaocao stopped her, "Don't move! There are many things that a person's hands come into contact with. Too many dirty things are on them that can be seen. Your skin is sensitive, so you should try to avoid touching your face with your hands. You also shouldn't pick at your pimples with your fingernails as it'll only make your skin worse."

"Did you hear that? In the future don't touch the pimples with your hands, or squeeze out the pus inside. You must remember!" Lady Yu grabbed her daughter's hands nervously and reminded her again.

"Your mother is right. Using your hands to squeeze out the things in the pimples can cause inflammation or even leave scars. When your face is healing there will be scabs. Younger Sister Yu, you must endure it. I will prepare an ointment for you. When you feel itchy, you can apply it with a cotton swab. It can help stop the itching and diminish inflammation, helping the skin recover." The ointment that Yu Xiaocao was

talking about had a relatively high concentration of mystic stone water in it, and thus there was no need to mention the effects.

"Thank you, Older Sister Yu. You really are my savior. I don't ask for anything else, just for the red swelling, the ulceration, and pimples to go away, so I won't be laughed at or hated by others!" Yu Wanqing sniffed. When she was in despair, it was Older Sister Yu who gave her the seed of hope.

To tell the truth, every time she looked in the mirror, she would look for her facial features through the armor-like papules and try to imagine her appearance. Her mother said that her facial features were elegant, and that if it wasn't because of her severe skin conditions, she would have been a beautiful girl.

Fields of Gold Chapter 499

She didn't want to be pretty; she just wanted to be like an ordinary person. She didn't want to wear a face veil whenever she went out. She didn't want to worry about scaring little children with her face because the wind blew away said face veil!

Yu Wanqing was quite satisfied with this courtyard. It was secluded and serene, which made it a perfect place for her to recuperate. There weren't many flowers and plants in the courtyard, and the courtyard was also decorated in a simple manner. Older Sister Yu said that this place was suitable for her to live, so she decided to live in this courtyard.

Yu Xiaocao prescribed her some medicinal cuisine that would help her recuperate her body. There was a small kitchen in the courtyard that her maids could use to brew medicine and make tisanes. Lady Yu loved her daughter, so she sent the cook that was most experienced with making medicinal cuisine over to her daughter. In addition to brewing medicine for her daughter, the cook could also make some foods to help recuperate her daughter's body.

Because Yu Wanqing's face injury was quite serious, Xiaocao increased the concentration of the mystic-stone water in her prescriptions. It was said that an extremely high concentration of the mystic-stone water could 'bring the dead alive and knit together the bones that had been broken'. It was unnecessary to go into details of how powerful it was. Yu Wanqing's face recovered very quickly, and the appearance of her face changed from day to day.

On the first day, her face was no longer itchy or painful. On the second day, the festering pus on her wounds began to close up, and a thin layer of scabs had faintly formed over the wounds. On the third day, eczema started to disappear and the red rash gradually faded. Her face was originally red and swollen, but now, the original color of her skin could be seen on some parts of her face. On the fourth

day, the scabs on the festering wounds began to fall off, exposing the tender and delicate red skin underneath...

When Lady Yu finished handling the affairs of the estate in the mornings, she came to accompany her daughter in the afternoons. When she saw the miraculous changes on Yu Wanqing's face, Lady Yu couldn't help but burst into tears. She held Yu Xiaocao's hand and thanked her incessantly. She told Xiaocao that it was all thanks to her that her daughter was now going to have a second chance in life and that she was the great benefactor of the Yu Family.

The left assistant minister of the Ministry of Appointments had taken office for less than a year. In the past, he used to be an outsider compared to the other high-ranking officials. Everyone in the capital knew that the left assistant minister had a daughter that was reaching maidenhood, but very few people had seen her. Otherwise, Xiaocao wouldn't have been mistaken for her when she participated in the flower war banquet. The Yu Family always told other people that their daughter was unwell and was unable to have visitors.

However, the people who had a good relationship with Left Assistant Minister Yu knew about the skin condition of Yu Wanqing's face. In addition to feeling sympathy for him, the other families wanted to enhance their relationship with the left assistant minister, so they would persuade their daughters to become closer with the left assistant minister's daughter.

But after the sweet and delicate young ladies saw Yu Wanqing's face, they started treating her like a malicious spirit. They refused to accompany her, let alone become her friend. Fortunately, these young ladies were not people who liked to kick others when others were down nor were they the type to gossip. As a result, Yu Wanqing's story did not spread throughout the capital. Everyone thought that the left assistant minister's daughter was weak and sickly. Of course, there were also some people that said behind their backs that Young Lady Yu was arrogant and looked down on other people, so she was unwilling to become friends with them.

Yu Wanqing went to 'Blossoming Beauty' to nurse the skin on her face and Lady Yu didn't conceal the truth. When several madams politely asked about her daughter, Lady Yu told them about her daughter's current situation. The madams were very curious about 'Blossoming Beauty' and wondered if it was as magical as Lady Yu had described it. Could it really restore a young lady's appearance to normal even when many famous doctors were helpless and unable to cure Lady Yu's daughter? As a result, many noble households in the capital began to silently pay attention to the beauty club's movements.

Yu Wanqing lived in the 'Blossoming Beauty' beauty and health spa for a month. During that time, the eczema and the blisters on her face had practically all disappeared, leaving only the areas that originally

had more severe wounds with a redder skin tone. The excess moisture inside her body was nearly gone due to medicinal meals, fire cupping , and gua sha treatments. Her immunity had increased, so her skin's resistance to allergens also increased. If she avoided overexposure to her allergens, then her skin condition wouldn't flare up again.

Originally, Yu Wanqing's symptoms had improved significantly after twenty days of treatment. She could've gone home and nursed herself back to complete health. Yu Xiaocao provided her with anti-allergic flower tea to drink daily and skin care products that she needed to use daily. However, Yu Wanqing feared that she would not be able to properly take care of herself after returning home and, as a result of that, all their previous efforts would go to waste. So, she insisted that she wanted to live in the courtyard until her skin was completely cured.

It was just like she was being hospitalized because she did nothing every day. The cost of living in that courtyard was twenty taels a day. In addition to the skin care, body detoxification, and the medicinal meals, her daily cost of living exceeded five hundred taels of silver per day. When Yu Xiaocao said that her face could be cured, Lady Yu clenched her teeth and recharged fifty thousand taels at the spa and obtained a gold membership card.

Although Minister Yu was born from a humble family, Lady Yu's maternal family was rich. When Lady Yu married him, Minister Yu had already passed the imperial palace examinations and had taken second place. Lady Yu's maternal family was very pleased with the results, so the dowry they provided was very rich and generous. It was said that the procession of the dowry alone filled up five kilometers of the road. The dowry also consisted of thousands of acres of fertile fields in Jiangnan, dozens of prosperous shops in the capital, and two hundred thousand taels in banknotes.

At Lady Yu's maternal home, her family only had two children: Lady Yu and Lady Yu's older brother. Her brother was over ten years older than her, so she grew up spoiled by the family. Because she was her brother's only sister, her brother also doted on her and spoiled her. Lady Yu was also good at making money and managing the estate's finances, and under her care, the Yu Family prospered over the years. Now, the Yu Family was not lacking in money at all. This was also the reason why Lady Yu was able to fork out fifty thousand taels of silver in one sitting.

Every product and service in "Blossoming Beauty" had a price tag. People like them had to first recharge money first on their cards before they were able to buy products or receive services in 'Blossoming Beauty'. Every customer had a record of their account status in the shop's record-keeping book. The record-keeping book had all the information, such as what the customer bought and how much they spent that day. It was all clearly recorded in an organized table.

When Lady Yu came to pick up her daughter to go home, there was only a little over twenty thousand taels left in her gold membership card. Over the month, the money was not only spent on Yu Wanqing's skin condition, but Lady Yu also spent a large sum in the shop. For example, she bought medicinal tea for hair care, wrinkle-reducing products, and facial and shoulder physiotherapy that was by the spa portion of the shop.

Therefore, at the celebration party hosted for her daughter, the noble matrons at the party enviously said that her skin looked much healthier and she appeared younger! When these madams learned that Lady Yu had been receiving care from 'Blossoming Beauty', they all inquired about the price and effects of their products and services.

When they learned that the mother and daughter had nearly spent thirty thousand taels of silver in one month at the shop, many of them were disheartened. Not everyone was as rich as Lady Yu. Facial treatments and body physiotherapy treatments at the spa were incredibly expensive, but they could afford to buy a few skincare products to try out at home. Those who were more wealthy would also buy some herbal and flower teas to maintain their beauty from the inside out. Maintaining their beauty from the inside out was much more effective than just applying skin care products on the face. Even so, it would cost them at least two to three thousand taels a month!

Some of the madams who wanted to be cheap had invited professional doctors over who were experts on Chinese medicine to find out the ingredients in the flower and herbal tea. They managed to formulate part of the tea, but no matter how much they tried, the tea they made could not achieve the same effect that the tea from 'Blossoming Beauty' could attain. After using the products from 'Blossoming Beauty', the results could be seen within a month and the effects were remarkable. The self-made products had little effect, and some people even had side effects after taking it. When the news came out, the madams and young ladies did not dare to try alternative products.

Afterwards, 'Blossoming Beauty' received many new clients who had pimples and acne on their face. After all, it was normal for young ladies to have a few pimples and acne on their face during puberty. However, the noble young ladies of the capital all went to the spa to treat it as they feared that their faces would develop rashes just like Miss Yu.

Ever since Yu Wanqing's face was cured, the kaffir lilies and other plants that caused her allergies had been completely cleared out of the residence. She started paying attention to her diet and skin care, and, as a result, she never developed an allergic reaction again. The left assistant minister's daughter finally presented herself before everyone else in the capital.

Yu Wanqing had a petite and well-proportioned figure, an oval face, big eyes, a tall nose bridge, a small mouth, and skin as fair and delicate as a piece of white jade. She was a remarkably beautiful young lady. If people examined her appearance closely, then they would notice that her appearance was about 30% similar to Yu Xiaocao's face. They were both beautiful ladies with small faces and large eyes.

Yu Wanqing became more and more confident and was no longer afraid of others knowing about the previous state of her face. During parties and celebrations hosted for young ladies, she would generously satisfy the other young ladies' curiosity and tell them about the miserable state her face was previously in. After learning about the before and after of her face, the noble young maidens in the capital were even more convinced by the effectiveness of 'Blossoming Beauty's' services and products.

The few noble young ladies that had seen her face before it was cured respected Yu Wanqing a lot more when they saw that she didn't hesitate to talk about her past to others. Their attitude towards her became more friendly. The young ladies' families were already close. Now that their daughters had become close friends, the families' relationship became even closer.

Many people asked the young ladies who had seen Yu Wanqing's face before to confirm her story. Looking at Yu Wanqing's fair and soft skin and her rosy complexion, it was hard for them to believe that just over a month ago, her face would easily scare people to tears. After obtaining consent from Yu Wanqing, the noble young maidens who had seen her appearance before would describe Yu Wanqing's previous appearance in detail to other curious young ladies. They did not exaggerate or lie while telling the story.

As a result, more and more people who knew Yu Wanqing's backstory and the number of ladies who believed in the 'Blossoming Beauty' shop's effectiveness also increased. The young ladies in the capital with several minor skin problems such as enlarged pores, rough skin, sallow complexion, acne, and pimples...all of their problems were solved after using the skin care products or the facial treatments from 'Blossoming Beauty'. The reputation of 'Blossoming Beauty' grew rapidly.

The products in 'Blossoming Beauty' were selling out faster and faster, and business was booming. If the product was selling well, then she would have to expand the production of the product. This meant that the courtyard she bought in the capital for manufacturing skin care products was not large enough. Yu Xiaocao bought the entire back mountain and the large stretch of uncultivated land behind the Royal Prince Yang's farmstead from him. She built a skin care product workshop and a flower and herbal tea workshop. The numerous courtyards were all connected together in a grand scope.

Originally, Zhu Junyang wanted to give the farmstead and everything along with it to Yu Xiaocao, but she rejected his offer. The relationship between the two was becoming more and more stable. Zhu Junyang

would send some material goods, jewelry, and other toys as gifts to her from time to time. However, before their relationship was officially determined, Yu Xiaocao would drown in gossip from the busybodies in the capital if she accepted his farmstead.

Fields of Gold Chapter 500

In fact, even though Zhu Junyang's farmstead was not officially under Xiaocao's name, it more or less belonged to Xiaocao now. He sold the mountain area behind the farmstead to Xiaocao at a low price. He also gave her the right to arrange the land in the farmstead as she pleased. She was also able to order the stewards and servants working in the farmstead as she wanted. Xiaocao was respected and treated like the master of the farmstead by the servants. Of course, she was treated with respect because of her capability and charming personality.

Although they planted many flowers in the mountain area behind the farmstead, they were still short on supply. Yu Xiaocao publicly purchased a variety of flowers and petals from various places. She even had suppliers from Jiangnan. Furthermore, Zhu Junyang had assigned one of his fleets to personally purchase flowers for Yu Xiaocao.

They already agreed that the thousands of mu of fertile land in the farmstead would be planted with vegetables and fruits in the winter. At the beginning of spring, the land in the farmstead will then all be used to plant flowers. In addition to that, he also had a couple of hundred mu located on the backend of the mountain area. That amount of land should be barely enough, right? If it wasn't enough, Zhu Junyang was thinking about purchasing the neighboring farmsteads at a high price...

Yu Xiaocao had been busy with the beauty and health club during spring. Of course, she had not forgotten about her official responsibilities. She had also been taking care of the matters in the Imperial Plantation. At the beginning of spring, she planted fresh vegetables after the greenhouse pavilions were taken down.

The vegetable farmers in the suburbs of the capital also planted some vegetables at the beginning of spring. However, their vegetables couldn't compare to the vegetables planted in the Imperial Plantation. Perhaps the Imperial Plantation was infected with the dragon spirit from the royal family, but the vegetables produced this year appeared fresher and lusher than the vegetables from the other vegetable farmers. The vegetables from the Imperial Plantation tasted even better than the previous years.

As a result, the vegetables sold by the shops under Zhu Junyang's name were much more expensive than the vegetables sold by ordinary vegetable farmers. Even so, the cunning government officials, noble families, and wealthy merchants all fought to buy some vegetables and fruits from his shop.

The commoners in the capital were naturally reluctant to buy the same type of vegetables at a price that was several times higher just because it tasted better. Therefore, there was still a market for vegetables sold by suburban vegetable farmers. The vegetables produced by the Imperial Plantation were coined as the 'noble vegetables' because it supplied mostly the wealthy upper-class people. It didn't compete in the market against the vegetables planted by ordinary vegetable farmers.

The weather gradually became warmer. People took off their warm clothes for lighter and more comfortable summer garments. The one thousand mu of winter wheat planted in the Imperial Plantation had grown into plump and massive ears of wheat. It looked like the Imperial Plantation was covered with a golden colored blanket. When they saw the vast golden wheat field, the old and experienced tenant farmers in the Imperial Plantation smiled until their wrinkles deepened at the corners of their eyes.

They had planted crops for the majority of their life, but this was the first time they had seen such large and plump wheat ears. This year was definitely going to have a bumper harvest and they would be able to live a better life this year due to the bountiful harvest! Although the wheat in the Imperial Plantation was owned by the imperial family, the tenant farmer's income was still linked to the harvest of the fields each year. The output of the harvest usually got converted into other forms of food or silver as income for the tenant farmers.

Before Miss Yu came to the Imperial Plantation, the tenant farmers working in the Imperial Plantation were envied by others. The emperor was well known for his benevolence and love for his people, so he naturally wouldn't treat the tenant farmers in the Imperial Plantation badly. Last fall, under Miss Yu's leadership, the corn output in the Imperial Plantation broke a new record. Each of the tenant farmers' incomes had doubled compared to the previous years. Looking at the fields of winter wheat for this spring, they knew that their income would definitely be better than the income they received from last fall. In other words, this year's income was better than all the previous payments they had received in the previous two to three years!

As a result, the tenant farmers were full of energy when they were harvesting the winter wheat. Men, women, and children all looked like they were engaging in battle as they cut, tied, and picked the wheat...the children followed behind the adults while carrying a small basket to pick the wheat ears that fell to the ground. They knew that the plantation had to receive the wheat in the warehouse first before it would be considered as their own. Since this year's winter wheat had grown so well, they couldn't afford to have an accident when harvesting the crops. They wouldn't be able to afford the consequences!

When the thousand mu of winter wheat had been cut, dried, and stored in the warehouse, the tenant farmers who had been busy harvesting all day and night could finally let out a sigh of relief. Steward Wang and Minister Liu of the Ministry of Revenue couldn't wait to calculate the output of the winter wheat with the officials in charge of the farming tasks.

Minister Liu trembled with excitement. Seven hundred catties!! The average yield per mu actually reached seven hundred catties, which meant that they yielded a higher catty per mu than the crops produced at Tanggu Town. In this era where the average wheat yield per mu was only around two to three hundred catties, no one could even imagine that they could one day produce seven hundred catties per mu! This was simply a myth that they didn't even dare to imagine!!

The statistics of the total yield from the Imperial Plantation was presented to the emperor. The yield per mu of the fields in Tanggu Town was also counted and it turned out that the yield per mu wasn't much different from the Imperial Plantation this year. However, Xiaocao asked a few people to select a few exceptionally large wheat ears in the previous year for her, and then she planted those in a few acres of land. The winter wheat planted in the few acres of land produced wheat ears that were a third larger in size than normal wheat ears. The wheat ear managed to create a miracle by outputting nine hundred catties per mu!

Above the imperial court, the emperor held a giant wheat ear and excitedly said to the civil and military officials, "Do you see this? This is the wheat ear that yielded nine hundred catties per mu. If we use this as a seed, then the yield next year definitely won't worsen! Imagine if all the wheat in the north can reach this output, then would our Great Ming Dynasty have people who go hungry every day? Would we still have people who are poverty-stricken? Will we still have people who won't be able to make a living?? The people in the Great Ming Dynasty will be able to live in peace and contentment. The Great Ming Dynasty will no longer be unstable because of poverty. Feudal Princess Jinan is indeed one of my most capable officials. Now, my officials and ministers, do you still believe that I'm trying to cause chaos to the imperial court by appointing a young girl as an official? My officials and ministers, do you still believe that a woman cannot be a capable and efficient official?"

The imperial court fell silent. The ministers, who strongly opposed appointing Yu Xiaocao as an official, had their heads hanging down. Their faces burned as if they were slapped multiple times! The emperor always appointed people according to their abilities and merits. He had stubbornly appointed a young girl from a peasant family as an official even though half of the imperial court opposed this idea. He didn't want to overlook a farming genius just because of her background or gender.

After the emperor ascended the throne, in order to save some expenses for the imperial treasury, he insisted on using the former imperial palace. Some of the more remote and desolate palaces were starting to fall apart, yet he refused to repair the buildings. In order to prevent the wasting of manpower

and resources, he even canceled the drafting of young ladies to the imperial harem that usually occurred once every three years. The emperor's harem, including the empress, consisted of no more than ten women! The emperor and the empress also had their expenses cut down by keeping their longevity celebrations simple. The celebration cost no more than one thousand taels of silver, which meant that it cost even less than the birthday celebration of a wealthy merchant.

The imperial family was naturally frugal because the funds in the imperial treasury were not abundant. In the past ten years since the emperor's ascension to the throne, he had worked diligently for the people, encouraged people to open up land for farming, lowered taxes again and again, and he even gave the people who suffered from war and disasters an opportunity to live a good life. Even so, many people in various places still could not fill their stomachs because the grain output was too low! After an ordinary family worked for an entire year, the remaining money they had after they paid the rent for the farm was barely enough to make ends meet.

If the yield per mu was increased by three to four times, then the tenant farmers would still have surplus money after paying for rent and food. If the people were well off, then the nation would be stable. Wasn't this what all rulers wished for? There were hundreds of officials in court, but the generals were the ones who built this country, and the ministers were the ones who ruled this country. Yet it was a young girl whom everyone looked down upon who ended up stabilizing this country!

Now, it was impossible for the ministers to reject the result. Official Yu used her extraordinary ability to win the recognition of the hundreds of civil and military officials in court! Her accomplishments were gradually revealed to the people!

Some of the high yielding winter wheat seeds were stored to be planted in the Imperial Plantation next year, and the remaining ones were sold to the poor people in the north at ordinary prices. In order to prevent certain landowners and officials from monopolizing the seeds, the court had dispatched an imperial envoy to preside over the sale of the seeds.

The Imperial Plantation and Yu Family's farmstead in Tanggu Town only totaled around four to five thousand mu of land. The average yield per mu was around seven hundred catties, so they produced over three million catties of wheat seeds. It took fifteen catties of seeds to plant one mu of land. This meant that the seeds that they currently had could only supply the planting for around two hundred thousand mu of land. This was far from enough since the Great Ming Dynasty had over six hundred million mu of arable farmland!

The emperor asked the imperial hidden guards to secretly count the land in the outskirts of the capital and the nearby Zhou prefecture that belonged to the officials and wealthy merchants. The area of arable

land unexpectedly exceeded one hundred thousand mu. If all these farmsteads could be used to breed the seeds, then they would be able to supply enough seeds for the nine million mu of land! If this happened, then they would be one step closer to their goal of growing high yielding wheat all over the north!

The emperor asked Chief Steward Su Ran to gather these people together and announce that the court had expropriated their land. Of course, their farmsteads would not be used in vain. The seeds will be distributed by the court, and the harvested grains can only be sold to the court. The court was willing to pay ten copper coins per catty to buy the wheat harvested from the land.

The highest price for wheat in the market was only five copper coins per catty. The owners of these farmsteads would earn a huge profit, so why wouldn't they agree? The imperial court signed a ten-year agreement with the owners of the farmsteads. They agreed that the court was going to decide what they will plant and how they will plant it for the next ten years. When they harvested the crops, the court will send a commissioner to buy all the crops.

The crops planted by each farmstead were different. Some planted winter wheat while other farmsteads planted spring seedings, so the process was quite chaotic. Therefore, the agreement went into effect after this current autumn harvest ended. The beginning of the agreement started once winter wheat was planted in the ground.

After the winter wheat was harvested, both the Imperial Plantation and the farmstead at Tanggu Town wildly proclaimed that they were now planting corn and potatoes. The climate in the northeastern and northwestern regions was harsher, and the land was more barren, so crops like corn and potatoes were more suitable for planting than wheat. Last year, many villagers from the suburbs of the capital came to the capital and frantically bought some corn seeds before returning. They immediately started planting the seeds at the start of spring. According to their feedback, the corn was growing very well; however, the specific output of the crop would not be unknown until harvest season in the fall.

The two farmsteads already had some experience with planting corn. Before she started planting the seeds, Yu Xiaocao walked around the well water at the edge of the Imperial Plantation. She increased the concentration of the mystic-stone water that had already gradually weakened. She also put on an act and walked around the fields a few times with her hands clasped behind her back. Her task was now completed!

At this time, the peaches and plums at the back of the farmstead already began to mature. Because she had urgently required fruit trees at the time and couldn't pick and choose, they now had a wide variety of peaches growing on the hill.. A few of the trees there were grafted with Dongshan Village's honey

peach branches, and the resulting peaches were large and sweet. As for the other varieties available, they had the sweet and crunchy big white peaches, sweet and sour juicy blood peaches that looked as red as blood, and the sour and sweet crispy yellow peaches. Regardless of the variety of peach, all of the peaches produced at the fruit orchard were large and numerous. There were so many peaches on the trees that the branches were slightly bent from the weight.

As soon as the peaches were ripe, they were all shipped to Royal Prince Yang's premium fruit and vegetable shops. The peaches were packaged in exquisite gift boxes, and the prices set for each box were quite expensive. Fortunately, those who were willing to buy from the premium fruits and vegetable shops were not people who lacked money. The peaches that came from the mountain area located behind the Imperial Plantation, regardless of the variety, were all larger than the fist of an average adult male. There was no need to even explain the taste of the peaches compared to the regular ones.