

Gold Chapter 521

Fields of Gold Chapter 521

Also, who was this Feudal Princess Jinan that they kept talking about? Didn't they say that the Imperial Plantation was completely managed by the lass, Yu Xiaocao? Did she give the back mountains to Feudal Princess Jinan to plant fruit trees?

“That uh...this Older Sister, forgive me for interrupting. I truly admire this Feudal Princess Jinan you're talking about, but would you happen to know who she is? Is she here today?” Wu Junling had been silently listening for a bit and finally found a chance to ask some questions.

The noble maiden she had asked the question to was the daughter of the fourth-ranked assistant official in the office in charge of the crown prince's affairs. That girl gave her a side-long glance full of contempt and let out a cold laugh before she replied, “You don't even recognize Feudal Princess Jinan, eh? You must be new to the capital, right?”

Wu Junling had never endured such poor treatment before. However, at this entire table, she was the one with the lowest rank out of all of the maidens. Thus, she could only grit her teeth while keeping a smile on her face as she said, “Older Sister's observational skills are very good. This younger sister has only been in the capital for a few months and there are many people that I'm unfamiliar with!”

“No wonder!” The daughter of the assistant official had an air of conferring a great favor as she pointed towards the main table and said, “Do you see that table? The person who's wearing the light pink qi-style attire is Feudal Princess Jinan. The emperor personally titled her.”

Following that, she ignored the alarmed Wu Junling and continued to chat about the previous topic with her good friends, “A few days ago, plums entered the market. Have any of you had the chance to try any? In the past, I hated eating plums the most. I always felt like they were incredibly sour fruits but the plums grown on the back mountains of the Imperial Plantation have a sweet and fresh taste. They don't even have a hint of acidity in them. I could probably eat three to four of them in one sitting! Unfortunately, it's very hard to buy them. Eating only a little bit isn't enough to satisfy my cravings!”

Another young maiden interjected, “Isn't that right. If only during that flower war banquet, when Feudal Princess Jinan was being dismissed, I had come out and spoken up for her, wouldn't that mean I would be one of the people by her side right now?”

“Stop dreaming! Haven't you looked at the people interacting with Feudal Princess Jinan now? Which one of them isn't the daughter of a first-ranked official at court? The feudal princess looks down upon lower-ranked people like us!” This young maiden, who was commenting sourly, had noticed that as soon as she finished speaking, the other young maidens around the table, other than the country bumpkin, were regarding her with eyes wide with shock. The two girls who were sitting next to her had even scooted their chairs away from her and had an expression on their faces that showed that they didn't want to interact with her.

After she figured out just what she had said, she hurriedly tried to explain, “I didn't mean it that way, I...I was trying to say that Feudal Princess Jinan is a feudal princess that the emperor had personally titled. She's talented beyond measure and thus attracts people of the same standing. Those who are able to become friends with her are only the noble ladies whose fathers are grand first-ranked officials or the relatives of the imperial family...I wasn't trying to imply earlier that she only toadys to the powerful...” The last sentence was spoken in almost a half sob and this girl's face had turned white from fear.

The other young maidens all acted differently. Some lowered their heads, pretending to drink tea. There were some who picked up a few sweet grapes from the plate to eat. Some looked out the windows as if they were admiring the beautiful scenery in the courtyard...none of them wanted to talk to that girl as if they were afraid a particular someone would misunderstand and think that they agreed with this young lady. Last year, during the flower war banquet, Li Meirou had gotten into conflict with Miss Yu. Now, no one knew what godforsaken corner she had been sent to. Furthermore, they all knew the astonishing ending of the Li Family...all of the young maidens shuddered for a second. The table they were sitting at suddenly fell silent.

Yu Xiaocao and the others at the main table weren't even paying attention to what was happening at that side table. He Wanning was right in the middle of excitedly planning their next trip to the Imperial Plantation to pick grapes. The last time they went, she was able to eat and pick fruits. In fact, her family wasn't able to finish all of the fruits she brought back and they were able to send them out as gifts, which gave them a lot of face. The grapes that Yu Xiaocao had brought along were as sweet as honey. She definitely needed to pick more when she had the chance.

Yu Wanqing sat on the side and listened enviously as her eyes revealed her inner desire to participate. Only after Yu Xiaocao promised that she would also get an invitation did she let out a sigh of relief inside. Older Sister Yu truly treated her quite well. She not only fixed her problem with her face, but she also never forgot to bring her along whenever there was fun to be had or good things to eat.

Finally, as the host, Yu Wanqing discovered, after getting reminded by one of the maids, that the atmosphere at that side table was a bit off. She hurried over and smiled sweetly, “Older Sisters, this is

the first time this younger sister has invited so many people over. If there's anything wrong going on, please bring it up and I will try to fix it.”

“Younger Cousin Qing, I made a big mistake, what should I do? Sob sob sob...” The young maiden, who realized she had made a verbal faux-pas, was a distant relative of Yu Wanqing and felt extremely frightened now. When she saw Yu Wanqing, she grasped onto the other girl as if she was her savior.

Yu Wanqing looked at the other young ladies who had previously been getting on swimmingly with her older cousin. They all revealed expressions showing that they wanted nothing to do with this, so Yu Wanqing felt quite perplexed. She quietly comforted her older cousin, “Older Cousin Xin, even the emperor has once said: 'People are not saints, so we will all make mistakes. If one can change after making a mistake, there is nothing better.' It's not the end of the world if you make an error. As long as you sincerely admit that you're wrong and courageously try to change in the future, I'm sure that everyone will all generously forgive you.”

“Then...can you accompany me as I ask for forgiveness from Feudal Princess Jinan?” Ding Yaxin timidly glanced at that figure sitting at the main table and pitifully looked at Yu Wanqing. 'Older Sister Yu? The so-called trouble that Older Cousin Xin had gotten into was offending Older Sister Yu? That can't be right ah. Ever since they entered the courtyard, I don't think the two of them have even interacted together, right? Did Older Maternal Cousin do something in the past that was bad to Older Sister Yu?’

Right at this time, Wu Junling interjected, “Miss Ding, don't worry. Younger Sister Xiaocao isn't someone who is that narrow-minded. She absolutely wouldn't blame you.”

Although she wasn't clear how that lass, Yu Xiaocao, had suddenly obtained such a high status in the eyes of these young maidens, it looked like she needed to get closer to that lass in order to quickly blend into the capital's noble maiden circles. Wu Junling wasn't sure as to whether there was a problem between the two of them because of her older cousin's affairs last time.

When the other young maidens heard her call Feudal Princess Jinan 'Younger Sister Xiaocao', all of them sneered inwardly as if they were of one heart. A daughter of a tiny and insignificant fifth-level official was so shameless to boast like this. She made it sound like she was very close to Feudal Princess Jinan and that she understood her like the back of her hand!

Ding Yaxin was so desperate that she was willing to turn to anyone for help. She grabbed onto Wu Junling's hand and asked, “Older Sister, are you very familiar with Feudal Princess Jinan ah? Can you help me say a few nice words in front of her then?”

Wu Junling lightly chuckled and patted her hand, "I've only met her once but my maternal aunt and older cousin are very close to her. They should be able to say a few words for you to her."

Ding Yaxin was also a foolish girl. She didn't beg the younger cousin next to her and instead was groveling towards Wu Junling, who she wasn't even familiar with! She was truly too muddle-headed! She revealed an expression full of hope and said, "Older Sister Wu, then can you tell me who your maternal aunt and older cousin are..."

"Princess Consort Jing is my mother's blood-related older sister and Royal Prince Yang is my older cousin ah!" As she spoke, she turned towards the other maidens on the table and winked at them while revealing an ambiguous smile.

"Pffffttt—" The words had just left her lips when a voice could be heard from behind her, "Don't start saying 'older cousin, older cousin' as if you're very close to him. Did you ask Royal Prince Yang his opinion about this ah? Is he actually willing to admit that you are his younger cousin?"

"Feudal Princess Jinan", "Feudal Princess Jinan"...the whole table of nobly-born maidens politely stood up at the same time and paid their respects to her simultaneously. When Wu Junling heard these words, the smile on her face stiffened and congealed. She didn't expect the outwardly weak and delicate Yu Xiaocao wouldn't actually give her any face. Instead, she made it such that she couldn't easily step away from this problem in front of everyone at the party.

Wu Junling also stood up with everyone else and turned around to face Yu Xiaocao. She squeezed out a smile and said, "Younger Sister Xiaocao, Older Cousin Yang and I are truly related by blood through the maternal line. Whether or not he is willing to admit it, we are still relatives."

"Ohhhh? Is that so ah?" Yu Xiaocao was tired of seeing Wu Junling act all tranquil and peaceful as if nothing could touch her. The other girl couldn't snatch away her man so she changed her tactics to use her familial connections to climb up the social ladder in the capital instead. Who did she think she was?

"But, didn't I hear Zhu Junyang personally say two days ago that he wanted Official Wu to keep a close eye on you and your mother? That he didn't want to see you two appear in front of him again? Otherwise...he couldn't guarantee that he wouldn't harm you two!" Yu Xiaocao watched as Wu Junling's expression abruptly changed and she revealed an innocent look on her face. Everything she said was true ah! She wasn't embellishing this story at all! However, the way other people heard it, it made it

sound like the Wu Family's wife and daughter and offended Royal Prince Yang and that Royal Prince Yang wanted nothing to do with them anymore.

"Younger Sister Xiaocao, I..." Wu Junling recalled what her older cousin had looked like when he lost control of himself and felt her heart suddenly tremble and the expression on her face darkened. She didn't expect that this Yu Xiaocao, who outwardly looked sweet and kind, was actually this malicious inside. The younger girl cornered her in this type of situation and made it impossible for her to step back.

'Who do you think you are ah? To allow this old woman to give you face, ah? You're not worth it!' If Yu Xiaocao could hear what she was thinking, she would have absolutely slapped Wu Junling.

[Master, the aura of evil sorcery on her is coming from that talisman that she has strung on a necklace on her chest. The pendant must be the thing holding the spell. As long as you get closer to her, this divine stone will be able to break the magic on her!] Right at this point, the sound of the little divine stone's voice resonated in her mind.

Yu Xiaocao didn't give Wu Junling the chance to quibble before she used her hand to stop the other girl from talking as she said, "Miss Wu, we're not that close, so I really don't want to hear you say 'Younger Sister Xiaocao' in the future! As for the relationship between you and Zhu Junyang, this young maiden won't manage it and I'm too lazy to even bother. As for the two of us, we are different people who walk different roads and cannot make plans together. Let's just agree to remain acquaintances in the future!"

As soon as she heard the little divine stone crow 'I got it!', she didn't give Wu Junling another chance to speak as she turned around swiftly to ask Yu Wanqing, "Younger Sister Wanqing, could you tell me where the washroom is? I want to wash my hands." Her hands were originally clean but after touching a certain someone's mouth, who knew how many germs were on them now? She needed to wash them carefully with soap!

"Feudal Princess Jinan, please wait!" Ding Yaxin had mentally prepared herself for a multitude of scenarios before she finally spoke up. She bowed deeply and sincerely stated, "Earlier, my lips were loose and I said, 'You only associate with the daughters of first-ranked officials'. I admit that I was jealous then and I also admit that I was wrong about you. Thus, I am sincerely apologizing to you."

Rather than having her words being twisted to and fro by other people and finally making it to the Feudal Princess Jinan's ears, it was better for her to admit it outright. One had to admit that being cowardly had its benefits too. At least, she wouldn't cause any trouble that was too big to handle!

Yu Xiaocao glanced at her briefly and revealed a faint smile before she slowly said, "I accept your apology. However, I need to leave you with one piece of advice, 'It's best to think again and again before acting and don't be goaded into making a bad decision'. Not all mistakes can be fixed and you will not always be forgiven for your actions."

After she finished speaking, she didn't even give Wu Junling another glance before she left with the personal maidservant of Yu Wanqing to head to the washroom.

Fields of Gold Chapter 522

Just as Yu Xiaocao turned to leave, the entire table of noble maidens looked at Wu Junling with disdain and ridicule in their eyes. Did she really think that anyone could cozy up to Feudal Princess Jinan? And she even wanted to make a connection with Royal Prince Yang. She was truly overestimating her own abilities! If she truly was a relative of Imperial Prince Jing, then would Official Wu still only be an idle fifth-level official?

Wu Junling was so infuriated that she almost ripped the handkerchief in her hands into shreds. She hatefully thought, 'Isn't she just a rural bumpkin?! No matter how good she's at raising crops and despite the fact that she's been titled a feudal princess, she'll never get away from her muddy peasant roots! Other people may look up to you but this young maiden won't!'

However, did Wu Junling ever think that just a few seconds ago that she was trying to worm her way into Xiaocao's good graces to get some benefits?

Naturally, for the rest of the birthday banquet for the Left Assistant Minister's daughter, Wu Junling was snubbed and ignored by the other guests. As for Yu Xiaocao, she had personally made a three layer birthday cake for this celebration and had astonished everyone present with it. The cream and jam cake had the sweet and pure flavor of cream. As soon as one ate a piece, it melted in the mouth. The cake was soft and bouncy with a very fine texture. Everyone there praised it to the skies.

When the maidens there found out that the Yu's Frozen Dessert and Pastry Store now had many types of fancy birthday cakes available for sale, they all sent their servants to the shop as soon as they left the Yu Residence to reserve a birthday cake in advance. After all, everything that Feudal Princess Jinan came out with was a smashing hit in the capital. Everyone who was somebody rushed to snatch her latest goods. By reserving a cake early, it would prevent them from having an awkward situation later on where they didn't have a birthday cake when everyone else did. Not only would that cause the host to lose face but they would also receive the disdain of their fellow noblewomen in the future.

Other than this fancy and beautiful looking cake, Yu Xiaocao also gave a set of skincare items that was especially suited to Yu Wanqing's skin. The items had moisturizing and protective abilities and were packaged in a delicate and beautiful gift box, making it look very high-end and classy. It was obvious that this set of skincare items was worth quite a lot. Even after getting a discount, it would cost another customer around a few thousand taels to buy! Although the Yu Family didn't lack money, sending gifts required one to think of the recipient's likes and dislikes. Otherwise, even the most expensive gift may not make the person happy.

For Yu Wanqing's birthday feast, they had booked Zhenxiu's Restaurant's head chef in advance to be in charge of the menu and cooking. If it wasn't for the fact they had a good relationship with Xiaocao, Head Chef Wang wouldn't personally come to cook!

He was the most skilled chef at Zhenxiu Restaurant and the one who knew all of the recipes. Thus, he very rarely 'left his mountain'. The banquet that he created obtained the compliments of every guest present, so Official Yu had gained a lot of prestige from this. The guests all ate happily, so as the host, he was naturally very happy. However, the person who was the most pleased by all of this was Yu Wanqing as this was the first time she held such an event at her home and had made so many new friends.

The only person who was feeling unhappy today was Wu Junling. After all, anyone who was being snubbed and pushed out wouldn't feel very good about it. When she got home, her father, who had consumed so much alcohol that he was in a drunken stupor, even repeatedly asked her if she had managed to make a good connection with Miss Yu. It made her very irritated!

However, there were more troubles ahead of her now! That night, Wu Junling had nightmares without end. The dreams all featured vengeful spirits who demanded another chance at life and there was a thick scent of monsters about. After being scared awake, she felt like her entire room was full of ghostly presences. The usually warm weather in early autumn actually felt incredibly chilly to her and caused her to have goosebumps.

Even with a few of her personal maidservants surrounding her and having all of the candles and oil lamps lit up in her room were not enough to give her a sense of security. After being tormented for an entire night, she wasn't able to sleep a wink. The next day, she seemed quite spiritless and lacking in energy.

Her miserable days continued in the same vein. Every night, the neighbors next to Official Wu's residence could hear the mournful cries of fear and the pitiful sounds of weeping next door. When Jiang Meiyi saw that her precious daughter had trouble going to sleep every night, she became extremely worried. Every mother sincerely cared about their own children. Jiang Meiyi felt her heart hurt after

seeing her daughter suffer every night, so she spent every night next to her daughter to help her calm down. However, the effects were miniscule. Her daughter continued to clutch onto her, shivering with cold and claiming that there were ghosts around...

Jiang Meiyi couldn't help but recall what her daughter was like prior to turning three. Back then, she also said that she could see ghosts and was often so scared that she turned feverish. She had gone to countless temples and monasteries to beg for protective amulets and had also invited senior monks over to drive these monsters away for her girl. However, the results were unsatisfactory. It continued until a gloomy-looking middle-aged Taoist priest dropped by and claimed that he could fix her daughter's problems.

By then, she had seen many swindlers and didn't harbor much hope for this man. However, that Taoist priest said that if what he did had no effect, then he wouldn't charge them. Only then did she make a decision to have him try. She didn't expect that once her daughter started wearing the protective amulet that he made she was finally able to sleep without any problems!

Over a decade had passed since then and they never had another episode of her daughter 'seeing ghosts' again. She originally believed that the problem had been resolved once and for all. However, suddenly, her daughter's old problem had come back again! The world was vast and boundless and that Taoist priest didn't leave them a way to contact him. Where would they find him now?

Since she was being frightened to death every night and didn't have much energy during the day, Wu Junling, who used to be beautiful and full of life, very quickly wilted like a dying flower. Her complexion was deathly pale and there were obvious dark circles under the eyes. If she wanted to act in a horror movie, she wouldn't even need to have makeup done to fit in. If this continued on for much longer, it was possible that she might lose her life one day.

That couldn't happen! It absolutely couldn't happen! Jiang Meiyi had heard that the Grandmaster Yuanhui of Huguo Temple was an experienced senior monk. In fact, in the past, the emperor emeritus himself had asked him to divine his fortune for the future! Although Grandmaster Yuanhui no longer interfered in the mundane world and had gone into closed door contemplation to recite sutras in the past few years, saving a life was more meritorious than building a seven-floor pagoda. If it involved her daughter's life, Grandmaster Yuanhui wouldn't just sit idly and watch her die, right?

Jiang Meiyi lowered her head and asked Concubine Qiu for permission to leave the residence. After obtaining it, she brought her daughter along to go to Huguo Temple, which was outside the capital. The temple was located on top of a small scenic mountain surrounded by quiet lands and their teachings emphasized having a sincere and honest heart. Thus, all carriages and sedans had to stop at the foot of

the mountain and believers had to ascend to the mountain by foot using the stone steps in order to enter the temple.

After being tormented for days and days, Wu Junling was at the edge of either a physical or mental breakdown. It was only with the support of her mother and maidservants that she was finally able to ascend the stone stairs to Huguo Temple after taking many breaks along the way.

However, when they inquired after the grandmaster, they discovered that he had gone traveling. After asking in more detail, they discovered that Grandmaster Yuanhui would only be back in about a dozen days. Jiang Meiyi and Wu Junling felt their hearts drop in despair. It had only been half a month and Wu Junling had been worn down until she was starting to resemble a ghost herself. If she continued to have 'ghosts swirling about her' for the next dozen days, she might not be able to hold on and become a ghost herself!

Fortunately, the person left in charge of Huguo Temple, Grandmaster Huiming, who was also the head disciple of Grandmaster Yuanhui, felt sympathy for these two women after hearing their story and had them sent into one of the side courtyards to live in until Grandmaster Yuanhui came back. The two women listened to scriptures every day and were living on consecrated temple lands now. Only then did Wu Junling's 'nightmares of seeing ghosts' stop and she was finally able to sleep comfortably for a few nights in a row.

By the time Wu Junling and her mother had reached Huguo Temple to wait for Grandmaster Yuanhui to come back, the grapes on the back mountains of the Imperial Plantation had ripened. There were green grapes, purple grapes and the milky-white long white grapes. All of them were sweet and fresh and left a delicious flavor in a person's mouth. When they came on the market, they were as blazingly popular as the honey peaches and caused a sensation. Naturally, the lines to buy these grapes grew longer with every passing day.

He Wanning, Royal Princess Minglan, Ning Donghuan and the other people who had gone picking peaches last time all succeeded in receiving invitations from Yu Xiaocao to go to the Imperial Plantation for a fun outing. In addition, they also added on Yu Wanqing, who had just reached the age of thirteen.

Originally, Lady Yu was planning on accompanying her on this trip. Her daughter had almost never left her side since she was small. Because her face had that issue, she took special care of her and raised her in a way that made her very sheltered and almost everything had to be decided by her. Suddenly, her daughter was about to go out with a bunch of young masters and maidens out to play and she even heard that they were planning on hunting. How could Lady Yu feel comfortable about that?

This was the first time Yu Wanqing did her best to resist her mother's intent. She acted spoiled and whined that the other older sisters didn't have their parents accompanying them. If her mother came along, then those older sisters would definitely laugh at her.

However, Lady Yu's thoughts were that her daughter was the youngest out of the group and had never gone out alone. In fact, she had only started learning how to ride a horse. The more she thought about it, the more anxious she became...

Yu Wanqing then brought out Older Sister Xiaocao as an example and stated that when the other girl was around eight to nine years old, she was even doing business at the docks, selling recipes to Zhenxiu Restaurant, planting vegetables and watermelons...when Xiaocao was ten, she was starting to help Royal Prince Yang plant the newly brought over crop from the western hemisphere, corn, and coming up with ways to breed crops to make them more high-yielding.

“When Older Sister Yu was titled as a sixth-rank agricultural official by the emperor, she wasn't even as old as I am today! Even then she rode a horse daily to go back and forth between the capital and plantation. Although I'm not as smart and capable as her, as her friend, I can't be too weak. Don't you think so too, Mother?” This was one of the main reasons why she managed to convince Lady Yu.

Yu Wanqing had been bright and considerate since she was young. It was only because of her face that she had been bound to the inner courtyard for long. Although she was a bit more on the shy side and a bit more cowardly, she was still optimistic and strong in spirit. In fact, she frequently helped to comfort her mother, who loved her dearly.

Lady Yu didn't believe that her daughter was inferior to other people. She was incredibly intelligent and was skilled at all of the four arts. Her poetry was very lively. If it wasn't for the fact that her skin disease had hindered her, she might even be a very famous and talented young maiden in the capital at this point!

Lady Yu felt her heart soften after looking at her daughter's eyes, which were full of expectation. In addition, her husband had also said that it would be hard for a pine tree raised in a pot to reach the skies, and that chicks raised under a mother's wings found it hard to fly. It wasn't as if she didn't understand these concepts. Thus, although she was still worried, she still agreed to her daughter's request.

That day, everyone ate to their fill and were able to play to their hearts' content, especially the little lass Yu Wanqing who had run around ecstatically. She had picked bunches of grapes, trapped wild hares, gone on a picnic, helped brew some wine...she even tried crushing grapes with her feet and enjoyed the experience. She was incredibly happy after this outing!

When she got back, her face had turned red from sun exposure and the smile on her face was exceptionally bright. She chattered happily about everything she had experienced that day and talked endlessly to her father and mother. She even gestured excitedly with her arms and hands and let out small peals of laughter. Compared to that timid and gutless Yu Wanqing who pretended to be strong, it was as if another person had appeared.

Official Yu, Lady Yu, and Yu Wanqing's older brothers were all incredibly gratified to see the change in her. An optimistic, open, and lively Yu Wanqing was a complete stranger to them but they were also glad to see her in this way.

Lady Yu decided that the two best decisions she had ever made in her life were this: One, she had persevered in marrying her husband despite her parents' opposition; Two, on that warm spring day, she had nervously brought her daughter into 'Blossoming Beauty's' doors.

Her first decision had led her to have a husband who loved her dearly and a blissful and happy family. The second decision had given her a healthy, beautiful and confident daughter! She truly felt like she had hit the jackpot in life and was now pleased with everything!

Fields of Gold Chapter 523

“The scenery goes on for a thousand measures, in the north is the Xingan Mountain Range, lively things all congregate together and the mountains are linked into valleys. All in all, it is a fertile land with plenty of animals around.” From the descriptions alone, it could clearly be seen that the Imperial Hunting Grounds had natural conditions that were superior to others.

After being jostled on horseback for half a month, Yu Xiaocao finally got to experience the fascinating and beautiful allure of the wildlands outside the walls. Here, the mountains and plateaus flowed into one another and there were rolling hills everywhere the eye could see. The rivers and lakes dotted the landscape like glittering stars and the dense forests criss crossed through the grasslands. The vast ocean of prairieland was especially a glorious sight. It was said that during the spring and summer, this area was full of life and carpeted with lush green grass. During the autumn, the thick forests would become dyed in spectacular colors and the air would be filled with the sweet aroma of fruit. In winter, the land would be carpeted in silvery snow, making the trees look as if they were made of jade. Was this the main reason why the transmigrated emperor decided to hold the Autumn Hunt here?

That was right. The Imperial Family's Autumn Hunt, which had undergone preparations for the past two years, had finally opened not long after Xiaocao and her group of friends had their grape-picking gathering. She didn't need Zhu Junyang or He Wanning to plead for this favor as she herself had been personally picked by the emperor to come along.

For this Autumn Hunt, invitations had obviously gone out to people like Royal Prince Yang and He Wanning, who were the blood-related relatives of the emperor. Following that, the officials who had done meritorious deeds had also been granted the favor from the emperor to come along. Originally, Yu Xiaocao could barely be considered a part of those official ranks and would have been given a nondescript position in the procession. However, this time, she had to proceed along with a group of white-bearded old imperial physicians who were almost always right next to the emperor, empress, and prince.

She could clearly feel that some imperial physicians—such as Imperial Physician Wang, were regarding her with a scathing gaze. Yu Xiaocao could only express her own innocence. It wasn't as if she was the one who clamoured for this spot and was pretending to be a medical expert. In fact, the emperor himself had said that she was very skilled at treating pediatric ailments and had 'contributed greatly' to this area of medicine. He was afraid that his beloved children, such as the prince, would not acclimate well to the change in surroundings and insisted on bringing her into the physician ranks.

In other people's eyes, being next to the emperor was a very glorious thing that brought honor to one's family. Yu Xiaocao wanted to scoff at those people! She didn't want this kind of honor, alright? Anyone within the vicinity of the emperor was being watched by everyone around them and she had to guard every word and action she did. She felt like she was being imprisoned by chains being here and didn't have the slightest bit of freedom. Even when she rode her horse she had to make sure that her posture was ramrod straight—it was quite tiring!

Luckily, Zhu Junyang, who was officially in charge of the emperor's safety, would, from time to time, use his authority as an excuse to spend time next to her. He would always ask in concern whether she was tired or thirsty.

When he noticed the exhaustion on her face, Zhu Junyang spurred Fierce Wind forward and arrived next to Xiaocao. He quietly said, "We still have about half an hour to go before we'll arrive at the temporary imperial residence. Just hold on for a little bit longer...I have some pears that some subordinates gave me. Although they are not as good as the ones grown on the Imperial Plantation, they can still quench your thirst..."

“Yang'er, are you secretly giving your little wife some good things again? Yet you didn't leave a portion for us? Looks like I took care of you for nothing!!” The sound of the emperor's voice could be heard from the nearby sedan. Yu Xiaocao rolled her eyes at this. The journey here was too long and monotonous so the emperor always found some time to make fun of her and Zhu Junyang. Wasn't he starting again now?

Zhu Junyang replied in a serious manner, “In reply to Your Imperial Majesty, this subject bought the pears from a small merchant on the side of the road. I do not know the origin of these fruits, so how could I dare give them to you?”

The scope of the Autumn Hunt was quite large and there were some brave merchants and peddlers who drove ox and donkey carts along the procession to sell some local goods, articles of daily use, and other goods to the officials in the line. When the soldiers guarding the line didn't stop them and they ended up making good profits, the number of merchants increased day by day. It got to the point when it was starting to resemble a small moving bazaar. From time to time, Zhu Junyang took advantage of his position as a guard and made sure to patrol around and take the time to look at the goods of these merchants. He would always buy some things that he felt that Xiaocao needed or things that weren't commonly seen in the capital for her.

Zhu Junfan felt like his younger cousin was becoming less and less cute as time went on. No matter how much he tried to tease the youth, the prince always kept the same stoic expression on his face. Not interesting at all!

“Imperial Father, I'm thirsty and want to eat some fruit! Feudal Princess Jinan, I heard that you brought along quite a few good things along in your luggage carriage. Can you let this prince go take a look?” The young imperial prince was sitting in the same carriage as the emperor. He was a bit bored from sitting inside and wanted to get out to get some fresh air.

The empress looked at her son's eyes that were full of expectation and smiled, “Wen'er has been stuck in this carriage the entire time. Even I, as an adult, feel a bit irritable from sitting for so long, let alone him, right? Your Imperial Majesty, let him go out and relax a bit. With Royal Prince Yang guarding him, we don't need to be worried about his safety.”

Although Zhu Junfan was a bit strict with his heir, he wasn't strict beyond reason. He rubbed his son's little face and nodded, “You need to listen to Royal Prince Yang and Feudal Princess Jinan. You're not allowed to be stubborn and willful...”

“This son will remember Imperial Father's words!” The little fellow was indeed quite eager. As soon as the emperor gave his permission, he yelped in glee and jumped off the carriage.

Zhu Junfan's forehead slightly creased into a frown. Before he could say anything, the empress interjected, “Imperial Majesty, Wen'er is still only a child of around seven to eight. You've often said that we should preserve our son's childhood for as long as possible and not try to break his spirit. Normally, you've often told me that Wen'er seems a bit old for his age. Today, this is the first time in a long while since he's shown such a spirited and childish air around him. I hope you can forgive him for this.”

“We weren't going to admonish him for this. In fact, we were only worried that our son jumped out of the carriage without waiting for it to stop. It's a bit dangerous to do that. Do you think you are his biological mother while I am merely his stepfather ah?” In private, Zhu Junfan often stopped using the imperial forms of address with the empress and spoke to her as if they were a normal married couple. He felt that using those old-fashioned forms of address was too stifling and made it seem like they weren't a family.

The empress glared coquettishly at him and stated, “Just what are you saying! Stop blabbering! Right now we're in public, so be careful that other people don't hear you!”

She had long gotten used to Zhu Junfan cracking undignified jokes from time to time. She wasn't sure how other emperors interacted with their empresses but the emperor always treated her in a way that showed how much he loved and cared about her. Sometimes he would even give her some small tokens. It made it such that she never regretted marrying into the imperial family and entering the deep inner palace...

At this time, the imperial prince that they were talking about was currently riding his little pony with Zhu Junyang and Yu Xiaocao accompanying him. He was regarding all of the peddlers and merchants with great interest. Sometimes he would ask them what one thing was and then pick up something else a moment later to ask about that.

The small merchants and peddlers were very courteous to them. Even if they only asked about their wares and never bought anything, the merchants never revealed a hint of resentment. After all, the people in this entourage, even a small insignificant maidservant, weren't people that these commoners could ever afford to offend.

As for Yu Xiaocao, she was behind the two and had bought quite a bit of good medicinal herbs. The Imperial Hunting Grounds were located on the south side of the Xingan Mountain Range and had a lot of

unique products. The locals often went out to gather medicinal plants and would come back with rare species. How could Xiaocao, who was excited by all of this newness, possibly go home empty handed?

“Korean pine nuts, tasty delicious pine nuts...” Maybe it was because he noticed that the eldest imperial prince and Xiaocao looked like half-grown children, but the uncle selling nuts enthusiastically called out to them.

In her past life, Yu Xiaocao loved snacking on pine nuts the most. However, because Korean pines were slowly decreasing in number during that time, the amount of Korean pine nuts that were produced had also decreased, so she never had the chance to try any then. She arrived in front of the nut peddler and picked up a plump pine nut and asked, “Can I taste this ah?”

“Honored customer, feel free to try as many as you like! The pine nuts I have here are fat and very tasty. I guarantee that you can't stop from eating just one!” The older uncle grinned until his eyes closed into a line.

These fresh pine nuts had a very special nutty fragrance and eating one spread the aroma throughout one's mouth. As expected, these pine nuts were much more delicious than the ones she had bought off of the internet in her past life. Yu Xiaocao bought out the merchant's entire stock of Korean pine nuts and also bought some hickory nuts and hazelnuts.

The hazelnuts and hickory nuts she bought were still in their shells so it was a bit difficult to eat them. However, didn't she have Zhu Junyang by her side who was skilled at everything and was thus her own personal 'nutcracker' ah? Nuts that took her forever to crack open only took a little pressure from his hand to pop open, revealing the delicious nut meat inside. Thus, Zhu Junyang was in charge of cracking the nuts while Xiaocao and the eldest imperial prince ate them. It was a perfect pairing.

Other than nuts, there were also merchants selling fur pelts. However, compared to the fur pelts that Royal Prince Yang brought back last year, these pelts were of much inferior quality. Yu Xiaocao only glanced at the offerings and then quickly lost interest in the fur merchants.

At this time, Yu Xiaocao's personal luggage carriage had arrived before them. Xiaocao invited the eldest imperial prince to sit in her carriage for a bit.

Zhu Hanwen wasn't very interested in sitting down again but when he found out that Xiaocao was planning on squeezing fresh fruit juice for him and was even going to add ice, he was immediately hooked. He had heard from his friends that the Yu's Frozen Dessert and Pastry Shop made the best snacks that were suited for the summer. He knew that his imperial father had gone out a few times incognito to eat at the frozen desert store. He had once begged his imperial father to bring him along so he could try but his father had given the excuse that 'little children are not allowed to eat ice' to refuse his request!

He naturally knew that the frozen dessert and pastry store was owned by Feudal Princess Jinan. The store's iced drinks and desserts all came from her hands. Now, on the road, they were limited by their circumstances so he couldn't eat any frozen desserts. However, he was able to drink some fresh-pressed fruit juice that was iced with no problems!

Zhu Hanwen entered Xiaocao's personal carriage and Zhu Junyang used the excuse of guarding the eldest imperial prince to also shamelessly enter as well. Zhu Hanwen disdained the other prince's actions inwardly, 'No wonder Imperial Father always says that Royal Prince Yang sticks to Feudal Princess Jinan like glue. He acts as if he has to keep the wolves, other men, from her at all times. It's truly as Imperial Father says. I'm only a seven to eight year old child, yet he doesn't feel comfortable letting the two of us sit in one carriage. He's truly too much!'

Zhu Junyang: 'This prince isn't sticking to other people's wives, so what's wrong with me sticking around my future little wife ah? Is there anything wrong with that ah? Little brat, wait until you get older and you start understanding things!'

The outside of Yu Xiaocao's carriage looked quite normal but the inside was very spacious and had also incorporated many design elements that she had proposed. Zhu Junyang had helped her acquire many of the more exotic items contained in her carriage. For example, she was currently holding a hand-held juicer in her hands and this instrument was something that she had described. Zhu Junyang had written out what she wanted and had hired a foreign artisan to create her equipment.

This time, Xiaocao had brought along Wutong and Yingchun as her two personal maidservants. She also took the two maidservants that Zhu Junyang had given to her who knew some martial arts to act as bodyguards for her. She had Wutong bring out a few snow pears and bunches of grapes from the back storage, clean them with water, and then cut the snow pears into small chunks.

Zhu Hanwen curiously watched as Xiaocao stuffed the chunks of snow pears into that odd contraption made of wood. After she cranked something that faintly resembled a hand, pure snow pear juice slowly flowed out of another opening into a transparent glass cup.

“Wow! That's so interesting. May this prince try as well?” Zhu Hanwen, after all, had a child's heart and was eager to try after watching this happen.

Yu Xiaocao used a damp handkerchief to wipe his hands clean and then slowly let him try. The principle behind the juice maker was quite simple. By using an inward spiral, it could crush the flesh of the fruit and press out juice. The raw juice would then flow through a filtering area and pure juice would flow out in the end. Using it was also quite easy, so Zhu Hanwen quickly became familiar with it and started to play with relish.

Fields of Gold Chapter 524

Cup after cup of juice was pressed. In addition to snow pear juice, there was also grape juice. Zhu Hanwen drank a cup of snow pear juice with honey added in and started on his pressed juice business again. The juice was sent to the emperor and empress by his personal eunuch accompanying them. Upon hearing that it was pressed by their son, they were deeply moved by the little guy's filial piety. The juice tasted even better now.

At noon, the summer's heat was giving off its full power. Prince Jing, who was on horseback, saw the cups of many different colored juices that were sent out from the back of the group. He touched the water bag at his waist that had been empty for a long time and lamented that he had a fake son. Even at seven to eight years old, the eldest imperial prince knew to be filial to the emperor and empress. His son, on the other hand, would follow behind the little girl whenever he had free time. Alas... the moral degeneration of the world was getting worse day by day!

Before he could finish lamenting, Dong Dali, Zhu Junyang's bodyguard and servant, came over carefully with a cup of snow pear juice. "Your Highness, are you thirsty? This is our master's filial piety towards you!"

"Was it personally pressed by that boy?" The gloominess in Prince Jing's heart disappeared and his eyes shone with pride. After taking the juice, he didn't forget to flaunt it to the other members of the imperial family around him.

Dong Dali seemed to know what the prince was thinking and said in a loud voice, "Yes, Your Highness, it was personally pressed by our master! Have a drink first. If there isn't enough, there's also grape juice, tangerine juice, and pomegranate juice!"

Prince Jing finished drinking the sweet and thirst-quenching snow pear juice in one breath. He purposely smacked his lips and said, "Go, let that boy squeeze a cup of grape juice for his father again! I didn't expect that lass Xiaocao to bring so many fruits. It's been more than half a month but she still has more in stock!"

Xiaocao's luggage carriages could be considered to be a line of supply carts. In fruits alone, she had brought along five carts, and all were preserved with ice. There were also ingredients to make all kinds of pastries, seasonings for grilling meat, etc. Everything that needed to be there was there. Zhu Junyang once laughed at her, saying that she could open a food shop at the imperial hunting grounds.

At the time, Yu Xiaocao thought, 'Do you really think I'm willing to bring so much food along? Did you ever think that, as a small sixth-rank official in a group of first and second ranking officials, anyone could crush me to death?' If she brought less food along, after being robbed by one person and having another take something else, would she have any left for herself?

In fact, right now was a prime example. The eldest imperial prince pressed cup after cup of juice for fun. In no time, dozens of catties of fruit had gone down and he still hadn't stopped pressing juice. 'Eldest Imperial Prince, are you trying to burst the stomachs of the emperor and empress?'

Luckily, Zhu Junyang persuaded him to stop. After he pressed two more cups of juice for Prince Jing, Yu Xiaocao thought about it for a moment. She didn't have any relatives to show filial piety to. The only one who was qualified to accompany the emperor was her godfather, who had a post at the port in Tanggu Town. She lifted the curtains and looked out towards the white figure beside the bright yellow carriage. An immortal like figure appeared in front of her eyes. Yu Xiaocao pressed a cup of snow pear juice and sent Wutong over with it.

The emperor and empress drank the fruit juice happily at first. Later on, they sipped on the juice with a bitter look on their faces while holding their stomachs. In the end, there were cups full of juice on the carriage. Su Ran could tell the eldest imperial prince was addicted to playing with the juice presser as he sent cup after cup of juice over. The emperor and empress were unwilling to share the fruit juice that their son had personally made with other people, so they could only drink until they were stuffed!

They drank until they were about to burst but at least they were still better off than those who couldn't even drink one cup, right? Su Ran took a glance at the emperor who had a look of satisfaction on his face. Sadness suddenly rose in his heart. If he hadn't entered the palace back then, would he have a family of his own right now? Children might be playing around his knees and filially bringing him a cup of tea...

"Sir Su, our young miss has asked this servant to bring you a cup of juice. Please enjoy it!" Although she had seen Head Steward Su a few times before, Wutong was still impressed by his beautiful appearance and face. How could someone be so handsome and unique...

Su Ran, who had been interrupted out of his thoughts, glanced at the snow-white pear juice. The transparent cup had crystal clear water droplets on the outside. That lass, Xiaocao, was so attentive. She knew that he liked to eat cold foods and added ice to the juice. Su Ran's eyes softened and an intoxicating soft light flooded his gaze. If Xiaocao saw his expression right now, she would be dazzled by it.

He took the snow pear juice and took a sip of it with his slightly red lips. A refreshing sweetness seeped into his heart. The melancholy and unwillingness in his heart seemed to follow the cool taste into his heart, turning into sweet juice.

At his age, if he had married early, he would have a child of about twelve to thirteen years of age. If he had a daughter, would she be smart, capable, attentive, and kind like that lass Xiaocao?

The cup of juice was downed in one gulp. Su Ran's heart felt slightly melancholy—if he wasn't a eunuch, taking the Yu Family's lass as a goddaughter would've been a good choice. Unfortunately, with his position and identity, it would only bring the lass a lot of trouble and make her a laughingstock. It was better this way, not too far and not too close, observing her silently. When it was necessary, he'd help. This was the best choice!

A cup of juice being sent out caught many people's attention. Lu Hao of the Yulin Division took advantage of the break during shift changes and came to Xiaocao's carriage after wiping his face to ask for some fruit juice to drink.

The eldest imperial prince hadn't played enough and excitedly said, "Beloved Official Lu has worked hard. I'd like to reward you with a cup of juice that I pressed..."

Lu Hao didn't expect the prince to also be there. In a panic, he said, "I don't dare let Your Highness work for me. Let Miss Yu's servant girl press a cup for this subject!"

After finishing the cup of juice in a couple of gulps, he quickly left. He was afraid that the eldest imperial prince would reward him with a cup of juice. Even though the emperor and empress couldn't finish the juices personally pressed by the eldest imperial prince, they still weren't given to others. If they found out that he had drunk the juice pressed by their son, he didn't know how they would think!

With Lu Hao as an example, several of the noble young ladies who were on friendly terms with Yu Xiaocao, along with Ning Donghuan and his brother who were thick-skinned enough to come up, all came to ask for juice. They also asked that ice should be added. They really thought of her place as a mobile juice stand and the kind that was free too! Just when Yingchun came up with a bitter look on her face and stated that they were running out of fruits from the cart behind them, they finally arrived at the temporary imperial residence for the imperial hunting grounds.

The temporary imperial residence was built in a hurry with limited funds. Compared to the tourist attractions of her past life, it was simpler. Fortunately, the scenery nearby made up for the furnishing of the temporary imperial residence. The forest here was lush. There was plenty of water and plants, and, from time to time, hawks and falcons would fly across the sky giving a different sense of feeling compared to the inner lands.

The hunt was scheduled to begin on the next day. After a short rest, Yu Xiaocao came to the meadow outside the temporary imperial palace and looked out towards the thousand acres of grasslands. Not far away, under the double peaks surrounded by clouds and shadows, the Yixun river rushed down. The vast grassland was dotted with wildflowers. This pure and natural scenery opened up people's hearts.

"How is it, not bad right?" The emperor's voice rang out from behind her and he stopped her from giving a salute. Zhu Junfan sighed, "In my past life, I heard that the Mulan imperial hunting grounds was 'the source of water, the hometown of the clouds, the world of flowers and the ocean of forest.' Unfortunately, I never had the chance to go see it. This life, I can finally fulfill my wish."

Yu Xiaocao glanced at Su Ran who was behind the emperor and blinked a few times thinking, 'The emperor trusts Sir Su so much that he even talks about past lives and this life in front of him without any hindrance. Mmm...there's something between them! One has the manner of delicate beauty, while the other is rich and handsome. One is handsome beyond compare, while the other has the looks of immortal beauty. A perfect match of a domineering power and gentle beauty—Ouch! Who hit me?'

"What are you thinking about? That pair of shifty eyes of yours hasn't stopped roving around. There can't be anything good going on in that mind, right?" Zhu Junfan pulled back the fan that he had used to hit her and turned his gaze back out towards the grassland.

Yu Xiaocao's mouth moved but she didn't tell the truth in the end. Her neck was too fragile to survive an encounter with the guillotine the emperor used to chop off people's heads. It also wouldn't survive being snapped in two by Sir Su. She changed the subject, "Grey skies, vast wilderness, cattle and sheep can be seen in the grass blown by the wind! Why can't you see herds of cattle and sheep? I'd want to try the flavor of a whole roasted sheep!"

Zhu Junfan chuckled, "This is the imperial hunting grounds, which was commandeered by us. Naturally, you won't see the common people releasing cattle or sheep! It's rumored that there are bighorn sheep and wild deer in the forest on this grassland. When it comes time, there won't be any less for you to eat!"

"Your Imperial Majesty, aren't you the most frugal and diligent? How can you think of wasting money to create an imperial hunting ground for autumn hunting?" Yu Xiaocao was looking for something to talk about and casually picked a question to ask.

Zhu Junfan raised his eyebrows at her and the corners of his mouth lifted in a faint smile, "Weren't those transmigration novels popular in our past lives? Weren't there a lot of female readers? I don't believe that you have seen any of them! Tell me, are you on the side of the fourth prince or the eighth prince?"

"Of course it's the fourth prince. Although the gentle, jadelike, honest gentleman eighth prince is very attractive, the fourth prince is more to my taste. He is cold on the outside and warm on the inside. In public, he's just an ice prince; however, in private, he turns into a loyal dog! That's the type I like!" Yu Xiaocao's eyes brightened. She didn't expect the emperor to have the same pursuits as her in his past life!

Zhu Junfan's eyes flashed with a bantering light and he made a loud 'Oh' in assent. Then, he quipped, "No wonder then! No wonder you chose Zhu Junyang that sullen man!"

"What choice or no choice? Did I have a chance to choose?" The current her was labeled by Royal Prince Yang. It was too unfair. If that guy changed his mind, she would die alone. Alas... this patriarchal society was truly too unfair!

Zhu Junfan gossipy heart flourished, and, with the face of a gossiping woman, he asked, "Tell the truth, if you had to choose between Ning Donglan, who is elegant and comparable to a gentleman, and Zhu Junyang, who is majestic, cold and stern, how would you make your decision?"

"Ning Donglan? What does this have to do with him? I'm not familiar with him, ok? Although his appearance is very pleasing to me, I'm not a person who likes to just look at a person's appearance! Besides, my Zhu Junyang's appearance isn't any worse than his, alright?" Yu Xiaocao was audacious enough to obviously roll her eyes at the emperor.

Su Ran looked appreciatively on the sidelines and thought, 'This lass's courage can't be compared to that of ordinary people.' Maybe it was because the two people came from the same place. When they spoke, there wasn't any care about the difference between monarch and subject or the distinction between superiors and inferiors.

Zhu Junfan grinned evilly and continued, "'My' Zhu Junyang? Looks like you've already made the choice in your mind. I pity Ning Donglan, the embers of love are going to be put out heartlessly before they can even be ignited..."

Fields of Gold Chapter 525

"Don't speak nonsense! Which eye of yours saw Ning Donglan's favorable impression toward me? He's gentle toward everyone, alright? You're the emperor, don't be like a gossiping woman, it's really painful to look at!" Yu Xiaocao didn't want to continue on this subject. If Zhu Junyang heard this and became overwhelmingly jealous, it wouldn't be fun!

Since rebirth, it was the first time he heard such impolite words directed towards him. Zhu Junfan poked her and huffed, "You dare say I'm a gossiping woman and that it hurts to look at? Lass, do you know how to write the word 'death'?"

"I don't know. I'm illiterate in this life as I didn't go to school!" Yu Xiaocao saw that the other party didn't have any signs of anger, so she stuck out her tongue and made a face at him.

"Do you want me to teach you?" Zhu Junfan revealed a sinister expression.

Yu Xiaocao blinked her large eyes innocently and smiled flatteringly at him, "Your Imperial Majesty, you deal with a myriad of important matters every day, so I won't bother you. Besides, this word is too unlucky. It's better to learn more auspicious words like 'Imperial Gift', 'Reward', and 'Promotion' ah!"

"Dream on!" Zhu Junfan gave her a sidelong glare and continued on the previous topic, "You've seen so many transmigration romance stories, so aren't you curious about the Mulan Autumn Hunting Grounds of this world?"

"So you made this hunting ground to satisfy your curiosity?" Yu Xiaocao refused to admit that she was also interested in the Autumn Hunts from the Qing Dynasty.

Zhu Junfan showed a pleased expression and said, "In the past, I was concerned about the hardship of the people and the empty treasury. Aren't the lives of the people better and the country is becoming more prosperous with peaceful people because I discovered your talents? What's wrong with having an Autumn Hunt that the subject and the emperor can enjoy together to celebrate? Oh, by the way, having such an event can also frighten and pacify the foreign tribes outside the borders. So what's wrong with having this happen?"

All of sudden, Xiaocao pointed toward the people on horseback coming towards them from afar and asked uncertainly, "Your Imperial Majesty, there's people racing horses on your imperial hunting ground and no one is taking charge of it? Isn't the management too bad?"

Zhu Junfan's eyes were quite keen. He saw the white-haired elderly man in the center clearly and with a wry smile said, "No matter how brave the management is, they wouldn't dare try to manage him. Even if it was me, I wouldn't dare to stop him from using the imperial hunting grounds as a horse racetrack!"

Yu Xiaocao also saw who was taking the lead and asked in surprise, "Eh? The emperor emeritus? When did he come? How come we didn't see him on the road?"

"He thought the carriages were going too slow, so he took a few bodyguards and came ahead on horseback..." As he said this, the emperor emeritus and his group approached them swiftly. Xhu Junfan hurriedly expressed his concerns, "Grandfather, you should slow down. Age isn't merciful, so you should take it easy!"

"Haha... I've practiced for several decades with the army here in the northeast. I'm quite fond of this piece of grassland, so I still think of it! Unfortunately, in later times, the air in this place is no longer as fresh and the sky is also not as clear!" The over sixty year old emperor emeritus agilely jumped off of his horse's back and onto the ground. The skill he showed was very robust as if he had gone back to his twenties and thirties when he was still fighting on horseback.

This was also thanks to Xiaocao's medicinal food, which helped nurture his body. Three or four years ago, he would need help getting on and off the horse! At that time, he often exclaimed, "A hero's old age is the setting sun!" Unexpectedly, the medicinal food he impatiently ate was actually quite effective.

In the past, it was the old head steward begging him and watching him eat it. Now, he would ask for a bowl on his own. On one hand, it was because he learned about the effects of medicinal food, but on the other hand, it was because the taste of the food wasn't too shabby.

Su Ran's eyes flashed. From the emperor emeritus's tone, he could tell that the emperor emeritus came from the same place as the emperor and Yu Xiaocao. Earlier when the emperor used the phrase 'past life', Xiaocao, that lass, secretly looked at him. Could it be...that they all reincarnated with the memories of their previous lives? The emperor emeritus should have been a senior general who had been in the army for decades. The emperor's past life...he should have been a shipbuilder? This explained why, when he was young, he was able to supervise the design and building of a fleet of ocean-worthy ships. In Miss Yu's past life, she was good at farming, cooking, and preserving good health? By pure accident, Chief Steward Su had actually felt his way to the doorway of truth!

The old head steward wasn't surprised by the 'crazy words' of the emperor emeritus anymore and his bodyguards also knew what could and what couldn't be said. The old head steward glanced at Su Ran, and the two of them exchanged a look that had a tacit understanding.

"Greetings towards Your Imperial Majesty" Yu Xiaocao took advantage of the gap between the two people talking to give a salute to the old yet strong emperor emeritus.

The emperor emeritus saw her and his eyes narrowed into a smile, "Lass Xiaocao is here too! Looks like the meal for tonight will be quite good!"

Yu Xiaocao's eyelids twitched a bit and she had the feeling that she was being used as a cook. 'The emperor is out on a tour accompanied by his imperial chefs. Could you guys quit thinking of me?'

As if he could see into the little lass's mind, the emperor emeritus's expression wasn't happy as he said, "Now that I'm back to my old place, I want to eat some authentic northeastern food but no one is serving any. It's really annoying! I've eaten all at all the restaurants and eateries nearby, and I still can't find that feeling from the past! Xiaocao, when I was Dongshan Village and ate the pork stewed with vermicelli you made, that was the taste that I was looking for!"

Since it already came to this, could Yu Xiaocao still refuse? Let alone the fact that it was the emperor emeritus making this request, even if it was an ordinary old man missing the taste of home, she still couldn't refuse! Yu Xiao maintained the smile on her face and said, "Your Imperial Majesty, this subject doesn't know many dishes from the northeast. I hope you won't be disappointed."

"Not disappointed, not disappointed!" The emperor emeritus guffawed and said, "As long as it's made by you, the taste definitely can't be bad. Let the people in charge of the temporary imperial residence buy the ingredients you need. Oh right! I have some wild pheasants here that I hunted. Ask whether the temporary imperial residence bought any mushrooms yet. Do you know how to make 'stewed mushrooms with chicken' ah?"

Stewed mushrooms with chicken wasn't a difficult dish, so who didn't know how to make it? She was just afraid that the taste of the one she made would be different from the one that was in his memory. Yu Xiaocao showed an expression of reluctance. The most difficult food to make was recreating a taste from memory because it was the hardest to replicate.

How could the emperor emeritus not see her reluctance? He laughed more heartily, "Don't worry! I'm not a picky person. Make it however you want! It's fine if it's not good!"

Yu Xiaocao resignedly went back to the temporary imperial residence. In the small kitchen, in the emperor emeritus's courtyard, she started to get busy. That evening there was stewed mushrooms with chicken, sweet and sour crispy pork, three treasures from the earth, crispy fried pork, northeastern hotpotch, plus pork stewed with vermicelli at the table. All of these dishes were authentic northeastern dishes. Taking into account the spicy tastes of the emperor, she also made several Sichuan dishes as well. This made all four generations of the imperial family, from the grandparent to the great-grandchildren, enjoy their meal with relish!

That's right, in addition to the emperor emeritus and emperor, Prince Jing and the eldest imperial prince were also at the table. Prince Jing said this was the first time he ate northeastern food. He was the son of the emperor emeritus, so their tastes were similar. The sweet and sour crispy pork and crispy fried pork were quite to his liking. The father and son pair basically ended up eating these two dishes in their entirety.

The arrival of the eldest imperial prince allowed Xiaocao to add two dishes that children liked—sweet and sour pork chops and roasted chicken wings. Zhu Hanwen ate the pork chops and chicken wings one by one. His small mouth grew a 'mustache' as he ate. Paired with fresh juice, he ate until his stomach

was round. A little eunuch was told to take him on a long walk to aid with digestion before allowing him to return to his palace to rest.

Zhu Junyang took pity on her for cooking so many dishes and accompanied her to explore the grassland under the moonlight. Galloping on the grasslands was what Xiaocao had in mind that afternoon. Sadly, it was ruined by the emperor and emperor emeritus. Tonight was the fifteenth and the moon was bright. The grassland seemed to be covered with a snow-white frost, which added a sense of mystery to the vast meadow.

The two horses, Little Red and Fierce Wind, were itching to have a go! Little Red, in particular, could rarely run to her heart's content. Usually, she was either in the city itself or in the suburbs of the capital and had to be content with holding back her speed. Upon seeing the boundless green grassland, she had long been unable to hold back. As soon as her master gave the order, she immediately spread her hooves and rushed out like lightning. Luckily Xiaocao and her horse seemed to be linked through their hearts. If it were anyone else, they would've been thrown off.

Fierce Wind didn't decline this challenge. He didn't wait for his master's orders and instead shot off after Little Red like it was a conditioned reflex. One black figure and one red figure turned into shadows under the moonlight, galloping together. It appeared incredibly harmonious, natural, and beautiful.

The two people seemed to have let go of the reins, allowing the two horses to gallop freely. They were on the imperial hunting grounds anyway, so they would never get lost no matter how far they ran. Besides, the two horses were intelligent and could remember the path. Fierce Wind was exceptionally intelligent. He once brought his master, who was unconscious and wounded, back to camp from the battlefield and had been turned into a legend!

After the two riders had enjoyed their ride, they slowed down and trotted along the road. Zhu Junyang took a look at Little Red, who was no worse than the Ferghana Horse under him and had a flash of inspiration. He suddenly asked, "Xiaocao, are you sure your horse is just a common breed?"

Yu Xiaocao scratched her head, not knowing how to answer. This was because Little Red's change had a lot to do with her feeding it mystic stone water, but an inferior foal suddenly growing up to become a quality horse, wasn't there something wrong with that?

"What's there that you can't tell me? The secret you have...do you think I'm so stupid that I can't tell?" Xiaocao's mistrust towards him made Zhu Junyang feel pain in his heart. He thought that with their

relationship, the defenses in her heart would have been long gone and they could open their hearts to each other.

Yu Xiaocao heard this and her eyes widened. Under the moonlight, a glimmer of surprise climbed up on her face that was as fine as jade. She pondered a moment and conservatively said, "In fact, I don't know if Little Red intelligence came from what her breeding or if it was more related to how I raised her. I don't know much about horses. However, when my godfather gave me her, he once said he would let me ride it first. When I got older, he planned on getting me a better horse. "

"General Fang has a way of looking at horses. From what he was saying, it sounds like that Little Red should originally have been an inferior horse..." Before Zhu Junyang could finish his thought, Little Red, who had been labeled a bad quality horse, became unhappy and let out an angry hiss. In retaliation, she turned her head to bite Fierce Wind, 'I can't afford to offend your master, so I'll use you to vent my anger instead!'

Yu Xiaocao quickly pacified Little Red and put a piece of sugar made with mystic-stone water into her mouth. Little Red chewed on the rock sugar contently. To the coveting Fierce Wind, she shot a proud look—"I won't let you eat any! Just watch as I annoy you to death!'

Fields of Gold Chapter 526

"Let me guess. You probably have some sort of treasure that can increase the yield of crops, improve the properties of medicines, make food taste better...and help inferior horses become superior ones, right?" Zhu Junyang cautiously stated his thoughts as if he was afraid this 'little snail' would become startled and retreat away.

Yu Xiaocao's eyes flickered with an evasive light and she no longer met Zhu Junyang's eyes as she nibbled on her bottom lip. She smiled unnaturally and said, "Your imagination is truly too out there ah? Is there truly such a treasure that is that powerful?"

[I can't sense any greed or desire to snatch things from you at all. This divine stone believes that he can be trusted. How about you be honest with him for once?] The little divine stone quietly gave her a reminder in order to avoid these two having a gap between them because of this in the future. Oftentimes, a split between two people started from doubting and concealing secrets from each other.

From the way she was acting, Zhu Junyang had already gotten the answer he had wanted. He was absolutely spot on with his guess. Whenever the little lass was feeling unconfident, she always had some tell-tale signs. For example, her eyes would always shift back and forth and avoid meeting his eyes directly, or she would start picking incessantly at her own nails, or she would lower her head and play

with her hair. Currently, she was pretending to be fascinated by some clouds in the sky and was looking at them quite intently.

He rubbed her small head and smiled, "Alright ah, this prince won't force you to tell me! I believe that one day my sincerity will finally move you. I have plenty of patience to wait until you trust me heart and soul and are willing to open yourself to me."

The guilt within Yu Xiaocao's heart started to bubble and expand as if it was proofing dough being fermented with yeast. She lowered her head and used the toe of her foot to kick at a patch of grass as she quietly said, "I...it's not that I don't trust you, but it's hard to truly understand a person's heart. No one would willingly try to gamble and take a risk on the darkness of people's hearts. I don't want to lose the happiness I have right now and don't want to lose the you who protects and cherishes me with all your heart...please forgive me for being cowardly and cautious..."

Although Zhu Junyang felt a bit downcast at this, the little lass's desolate mood made him feel sorry again. Perhaps he shouldn't have chosen this time to force her but he really wanted to create a new cavalry unit that was armed with the new firearms. This cavalry required many good horses of high caliber. After inspecting the horses that were being raised by some noble families, he discovered that none of their horses met his requirements...

"Xiaocao, on this hunt, I was trying to find an expert at raising horses and was planning on spending a lot of money to help this prince train and raise horses—you're willing to help me, am I right?" Zhu Junyang tactfully expressed what he wanted. The little lass had a nimble mind and could definitely understand what he was hinting at within his words.

Raise and breed horses? Yu Xiaocao raised her head to look at him with a somewhat flabbergasted expression on her face. From the profound smile on his face, she was able to understand what he wanted. The twenty year old Zhu Junyang had already revealed his outstanding talent at leading and training troops. This was the reason why the emperor was willing to allow him to manage the usage of these new firearms.

For elite troops, relying on soldiers alone was not enough, especially when they had to fight against those tribes that fought on horseback. The cavalry currently lacked good steeds for their soldiers and it was a glaring weakness of theirs. For the Great Ming Empire, the vast majority of good horses had come from outsiders during trade.

Naturally, those nomad tribes who lived on the central plains constantly eyed the empire. During winter, they would often come to raid. Thus, how could they possibly trade their best horses away to their future enemy? Even if the Great Ming Empire was occasionally able to get one to two good horses, after generations of breeding, the quality of the animals had naturally become more average...

Zhu Junyang was determined to create a set of elite troops that could sweep away anything. Thus, he was naturally very anxious to find a way to supply his men with good horses, right? Yu Xiaocao could vaguely sense through those dark eyes of his a bit of desire and hope.

She clenched her two hands into fists and made a decision. It was always him silently helping and protecting her all of these years. Feelings naturally didn't only exist from one side. It was time for her to sacrifice something for him now!

A brilliant smile blossomed on her face and Yu Xiaocao's bright eyes met that handsome and manly face, "As long as you need me and as long as I can do it, I absolutely will help you with all I can!!"

The two of them stared at each other for a long time and they both revealed happy smiles. Zhu Junyang leaned over on his horse and gently raised that delicate and small body into his arms. He embraced her soft and lovely body into his chest and muttered in a deep voice, "Cao'er, meeting you was the luckiest moment of my life!"

"Young Miss!" The two of them suddenly heard Yingchun shrilly shouting next to her. Apparently, without noticing, their two horses had wandered back to the vicinity of the temporary imperial residence and they had been seen by the two maidservants.

Xiaocao felt a bit uncomfortable under the accusing looks of her maids. Zhu Junyang chuckled lightly and she could feel the chest behind her rumble. She couldn't help but reach out a hand to grab some flesh from his waist and cruelly pinch down. It seemed like he didn't have an extra ounce of flesh on his waist, so even her hand felt tired trying to pinch down on his rock-hard muscle. The fellow seemed to not feel anything either.

"If this prince doesn't let you down soon, do you think your loyal and protective little maidservant will come up here and try to rip me apart?" Zhu Junyang's voice was full of mirth, "Arggh...such a pity, I wanted to hold onto you for longer ah! Xiaocao is so soft and fragrant. It feels so nice to hug you..."

Yu Xiaocao forcefully jabbed back her elbow and hit that fellow's steel-like abdomen. She growled angrily, "Do you think I'm a toy ah? That you can hug me whenever you want? Let me go, this maiden wants to get down!"

Zhu Junyang easily jumped off his horse. He held onto the little lass's thin waist and slightly raised her a bit before finally putting her down, "You're too skinny. I could probably snap your waist in two with one hand. In the future, you're not allowed to be picky with food. You need to eat more, especially more meat..."

"Are you done ah? You're like a nagging housewife! I don't have time to pay attention to you!" Yu Xiaocao raised her nose up high in a spoiled manner and shook off his hands as she headed towards the temporary imperial residence in large strides. She left with a parting sentence, "When your horse-breeding center has opened, remember to tell me. I will go over and help you a bit. I have a lucky star guiding me and I'm extremely lucky. What's wrong with lending you a bit of luck ah?"

Zhu Junyang watched as the little lass's figure slowly disappeared in the distance and a slight sense of happiness washed over him. Although the little lass didn't tell her secret to him, from what she was telling him, she could absolutely be of great help in breeding better horses. The clever little girl must have understood his ambitions and would do her best to help him reach his goals!

Right now, the first thing he needed to do was find a 'expert horse breeder' to help cover for the little lass. Hm...last time, in battle, he had saved someone who had a mix of Han and Tartar blood. It was said that this guy had helped the Tartars raise their horses. Mhm! He would be perfect for the role!

The night passed uneventfully. The next day was the first day of the big hunt. The hunting grounds had been split up into thirty-six different areas. First, the head steward of the whole area took the cavalry out to surround the outskirts of the grounds in a tight net. Then, they slowly closed the circle and drove the game closer together.

There were also some soldiers who had disguised themselves with deer masks and hid within the forests as they blew on whistles that mimicked the sounds of wild deer. As the herds of deer slowly got closer together, it would also attract some animals who were their predators over.

As the circle got smaller and smaller, the areas that the wild animals could move in also got smaller. Once the wild beasts were concentrated to a certain point, the hunt could begin.

“Imperial Majesty, the time has come. Please, take the lead!” The head steward had come over to report on the matters.

The sons of the imperial family had all been trained in equestrian archery since they were young. Thus, shooting down a wild animal congregated in the thicket wasn't a difficult task for Zhu Junfan. He took out a hunting bow that was elaborately decorated and drew an arrow out of his quiver. He faced a herd of deer that wasn't far from him and aimed at a tall and sturdy buck.

The arrow flew and hit the buck squarely in the neck. After struggling for a bit, the deer fell heavily to the ground and the rest of the startled herd scattered in fright. Following that, it should have been the imperial sons and grandsons taking the lead. Unfortunately, the oldest imperial prince hadn't reached the age of eight yet and the bow in his hands was only a tiny toy to the other people around them. Although Zhu Hanwen wanted to shoot down some game just like his imperial father, the bow in his hands was only strong enough to possibly shoot down some small wild pheasants.

Zhu Junfan waved a hand, signaling to the princes, dukes, and high-ranked officials that the hunt was officially underway. Furthermore, he took out a few impressive treasures that would be awarded to the first, second, and third places to those who killed the most game. The prizes weren't the most important thing. The most important thing was that the winners would be able to show their faces to the emperor! All of the young children from military families who believed that they had good skills rubbed their hands together in anticipation and began to prepare for the hunt.

Yu Xiaocao was currently riding a horse not far behind the emperor. She looked at the young men who were all sitting tall on their horses and suddenly had a desire to eagerly try as well. However, when she remembered how skinny and thin her arms and legs were and that she probably couldn't even pull even the lightest bow, she decided that only the little prince's bow would be suitable for her. Instantly, her interest in hunting on her own waned.

“What's the matter? Not going to try to experience it yourself?” Zhu Junyang, who was in charge of the safety here, urged his horse over and quietly asked.

Yu Xiaocao rolled her eyes at him and dully said, “What is there to experience for me? When I was in Dongshan Village, it's not as if I didn't experience hunting before. Why do I need to fight for game with these people?”

He Wanning spurred her horse over. She was dressed in bright red riding attire and she held a bow in her hands as she said, “Younger Sister Xiaocao, let's go! This older sister will take you to go hunting!”

"I've never learned any archery. There's no use bringing me along. You go by yourself and be careful!" Yu Xiaocao waved a hand at her.

He Wanning giggled happily at her and had an exultant smile on her face, "You guys are no fun, did you all come to the Autumn Hunt to take a tour ah? Just watch this older sister come back with a tiger for you!!"

Yu Xiaocao grinned back, "Alright, then tonight I'm waiting to eat some tiger meat and drink tiger soup!"

Zhu Junyang gave He Wanning a look full of disdain as he remarked in a voice dripping with poison, "Kill a tiger? You'd better hope the tiger doesn't chase you and bite you down! Don't cry when you come back empty-handed because you boasted so much earlier!"

"You're the one who's going to snivel like a child ah!! Can't you say something nice for once?" He Wanning let out a huff and then spoke to Xiaocao, "You should shoo away men like him sooner rather than later. His words are enough to kill a person!"

After she finished talking, she turned around such that Zhu Junyang could only see the back of her head and spurred her horse towards the hunting area. Behind her were four highly-skilled bodyguards that had been sent over by Marquis Anning's estate.

Zhu Junfan had heard the ruckus and had come over. He asked Zhu Junyang, "Yang'er, you're not going to go out and try?"

"If this official participated, would there be anyone else who could compete with me for first place?" Zhu Junyang patted his nine stone bow. Whether it was his martial arts skills or his body constitution, he was much stronger than he was four to five years ago. Now, he was able to bend his nine stone bow with ease and wouldn't end up damaging his arm tendons from pulling it.

Fields of Gold Chapter 527

Zhu Junfan knew that the bow in his cousin's hands didn't look very impressive but it definitely wasn't something an ordinary person could bend. He curled his lip and thought, 'Zhu Junyang, you brat, why does it seem like you're begging for a spanking now?'

“This official's most important task is keeping you, Imperial Majesty, safe!” Zhu Junyang had an earnest expression on his face and it made him seem a bit fascinating and charming.

Zhu Junfan waved a hand in dismissal and said, “We will be close by, shooting a few arrows here and there. There are so many imperial bodyguards along, what sort of danger could befall us? This is a rare opportunity for you to go play, so don't just hang around here!”

However, Zhu Junyang was not moved by the emperor's statement and displayed an expression of utter loyalty and willingness to complete his duty. On the other hand, the eldest imperial prince felt a bit restless and asked, “Imperial Father, can I go hunt?”

'You want to go hunting with that little bow that seems like a toy?' Zhu Junfan raised an eyebrow and looked at his son. It wasn't that he was looking down on his son. However, a child of around seven to eight really couldn't do much, despite the fact that he had learned some boxing from the imperial bodyguards. The young prince had only started his lessons on archery, so what could he possibly shoot down now?

However, Zhu Junfan considered himself to be a compassionate father, so he looked in the direction of Yu Xiaocao and said to his son, “You want to go hunting? Go ahead!”

A smile full of happiness unfolded on Zhu Hanwen's adorable little face. Just as he was about to cheer in glee, he heard his father's follow up statement, “However...you need to stay by Official Yu's side the entire time!”

Zhu Hanwen was only happy for about three seconds before his face fell. He remarked unhappily, “Imperial Father, Official Yu is a girl, so how could she know how to hunt ah? If you let me accompany her, it's no better than staying by your side ah!”

“Since my son is so filial, then stay by my side!” Zhu Junfan took great pleasure in teasing his son and smiled as if nothing had just happened.

“Imperial Father...” Zhu Hanwen twisted his body around like a python and attempted to act spoiled to have his father change his mind out of softheartedness.

“Stay here or go hunting with Beloved Official Yu! Those are the only two options you have!” Although Zhu Junfan was usually quite kind and sweet to his children, once he came to a decision, it was almost impossible to change his mind.

The eldest imperial prince naturally knew of this side of his father. He didn't beg for long before he made his decision, “Then...this son will go hunting for small animals with Official Yu then...”

On the side of all of this, Yu Xiaocao blinked her large eyes as she thought, 'Can't you two solicit my opinion about all of this before making a decision? When did I ever say that I wanted to go hunting? My own hunting skills are quite bad but I also have to bring along a little tail now? Anyone else would be better. The eldest imperial prince has a lofty status. If he got even mildly injured, who will take the blame?'

“That uh...Imperial Majesty, Imperial Highness, this official doesn't know how to hunt...” Yu Xiaocao interjected weakly.

The eldest imperial prince immediately replied, “Imperial Father, look...Official Yu doesn't know how to hunt. Can this son change her for someone else ah? Duke Rongguo's third son brought two fierce hunting dogs along and they must be very bold. How about we have him accompany me instead?”

Yu Xiaocao secretly sneered, 'Your Imperial Highness, just how much do you dislike me ah? Why don't you make it even more clear now? Be careful what you wish for. Next time, you might have to guzzle down some really bitter medicine!'

This time, the person who spoke was the empress, “Imperial Son, Miss Yu is only being modest when she says that she doesn't know how to hunt. I heard that when Miss Yu was eight, she often went into the mountains to hunt so she could add some meat to her family's meals and has never gone home empty-handed. Her father had even killed a black bear! A talented father will have a talented daughter, so Miss Yu absolutely cannot be too bad!”

The corner of Yu Xiaocao's mouth twitched when she heard the empress's words, 'You two are really too much! Isn't the only reason you're pushing the prince to go along with me is because you both know that I value my own life and naturally won't go to any dangerous places? You both truly spare no pains or efforts to keep him safe ah!’

In the past, she had only set a few traps and snares, using the mystic stone water as bait. How could that count as hunting? If they wanted her to use bow and arrows to hunt game, she was pretty sure that even if she shot ten arrows, not a single one would hit unless her luck was sky high. They even brought up her father. If her father truly had the ability to kill a bear on his own, then how could he have almost died after getting his leg savaged by one?

When Zhu Hanwen heard this, he immediately gazed at Yu Xiaocao with an admiring look in his eyes. He was no longer as reluctant as before. Little children were truly easy to trick!

Zhu Junfan then added on another incentive, one that was enough to completely convince the eldest imperial prince that going with Yu Xiaocao was a good idea, “Beloved Official Yu, don't you also have two very large and special hunting dogs ah? Even that fellow Ning Donghuan salivates over your massive dogs, so they must be exceptional! Imperial Son, if you go with her, even if you don't use your bow at all, you'll be able to get quite a bit of game!”

Even Ning Donghuan envied her for these dogs? Zhu Hanwen's gaze towards Xiaocao became much more fervent, “Official Yu, where are your hunting dogs? How come I didn't see them on the journey here?”

Little Black and Little White had also been given permission to go to the Autumn Hunt. However, in order to not startle any of the horses on the journey there, the two of them could only follow the procession from far behind. When they got to the grasslands, they were like fish in the water and ran so far that no one could see them. Occasionally, they would remember their master and bring some game back and leave it in front of the temporary imperial residence. The patrolling bodyguards benefited from their gifts.

Zhu Junfan also voiced his agreement, “That's right ah! Beloved Official Yu seems to like to hide her hunting dogs from the rest of us. If you don't take them out now to play, when will you? Anything a hunting dog catches is also counted under the master's game count. Don't you want to place highly?”

Get first to third place? Was it really alright for someone who couldn't even bend a bow to get in the first three rankings? Yu Xiaocao rolled her eyes inwardly but turned to face the prairie and raised her voice to yell, “Little Black, Little White, come here——”

Zhu Hanwen was currently sitting on his pony and stood up in his stirrups to look afar. His childish face, which still had some baby fat on it, was lit up in anticipation. However, after waiting for a bit, he noticed that there weren't any signs of movement in the grass and the little fellow became a bit dispirited. He

mumbled quietly, "Official Yu, was the sound of your voice too soft such that Little Black and Little White couldn't hear you? How about you raise your voice a bit louder and yell for them..."

Before he could finish his thought, the little pony beneath him became uneasy and started stomping its hooves restlessly, turning around and around. If it wasn't for the young eunuch holding tightly onto the reins, the pony might have already started running off uncontrollably. Just like this, there were a couple of times that the prince had almost fallen off the pony. When Zhu Junyang saw this, he hurriedly bent over and pulled the eldest imperial prince onto his horse to sit steadily.

The other horses in the vicinity also became restless. Fortunately, the horses that the imperial family rode were all carefully picked out and meticulously trained. Thus, people were able to calm them down and restrain them easily.

At this time, in the distant thickets, a black and white small dot appeared and speedily headed towards their directions. The small dots became larger and larger. In the blink of an eye, the eldest imperial prince could make out the full figures of those small dots. The black and white colored figures looked like very big and fierce dogs.

Within the span of a couple of breaths, the two massive hunting dogs stopped not far from the group of people. They did so because their master had told them that not every human would be able to tolerate them and treat them with friendliness, so they needed to keep their distance from people they didn't know.

Little Red, who had already become a bit impatient, trotted forward when it saw the two wolves without even waiting for its master for an order. It reared up slightly to warmly greet the two wolves. Little White was its usual cold and arrogant self. Little Black, on the other hand, warmly licked Little Red's hooves to send a greeting back.

Two pairs of shining blue eyes regarded their master with excitement and intimacy. Xiaocao dismounted from her horse and hugged a furry wolf neck with each arm. Her small hands caressed their heads, mussing up their fur. The two of them clearly enjoyed their master's pets and closed their eyes in joy and their mouths opened in what looked like a smile.

"Wow! Official Yu, your dogs are so big and so majestic looking ah!" Zhu Hanwen had somehow appeared next to her and had stopped when he was about three steps away. The prince knew that most strong and fierce hunting dogs had some wildness inside. Other than their own masters, they very rarely allowed strangers to get close to them.

“Imperial Majesty! Those two are clearly...will the eldest imperial prince be in any danger?” The head steward in charge of the hunting lands had come across many animals in his time. Naturally, he was able to tell the difference between wolves and dogs. Thus, he was asking this out of concern.

As the father, Zhu Junwan wasn't the least bit worried by any of this, “No worries, Official Yu is there!”

As expected, as soon as Little White noticed the boy coming close, it became wary and wrinkled its snout to start to snarl at Zhu Hanwen. Xiaocao lightly stroked its ears and smiled, “Little White, no need to be so nervous! He's a friend, not an enemy! Relax a bit! Look closely you two, protecting him today is also your responsibility today ah!”

Zhu Hanwen noticed that Little White's previous snarling countenance had immediately disappeared and exclaimed in surprise, “Official Yu, Little White seems to be able to understand what you're saying!”

Xiaocao turned her head around and beckoned towards him with a hand. The little boy scampered over and bravely attempted to stroke Little White's soft and silky white fur. However, the arrogant wolf dodged his attempts. Xiaocao spoke to Zhu Hanwen, who had a face full of loss, “Imperial Highness, Little White is a bit bad tempered. Go pet Little Black, he's much more gentle and amiable!”

Little Black, who had just been sold out by its master, heard its master calling its name and excitedly turned in a circle. Then it shoved its large head over to push away Little White and opened its mouth in an attempt to act cute.

Zhu Hanwen giggled in amusement when he saw the large dog, who was taller than himself, acting adorable for the sake of begging for pets and favors. This black dog's eyes seemed to be more gentle and sweet. No wonder Official Yu said that its temperament was a lot better!

“You can reach out a hand to pet it!” Yu Xiaocao noticed that the eldest imperial prince had scooted over and had a face full of desire to pet, yet he still seemed hesitant. His large eyes were shining with longing and he somehow resembled a tiny puppy begging for a bone to chew on. He was so cute that he made a person want to pinch his chubby little cheeks. In actuality, her hand had already reached over and started to do what she thought of!

Zhu Hanwen was startled for a moment and he stared blankly at that claw that had gone back to its owner. Other than his imperial father and mother, the rest of the people around him either treated him with utmost respect or had an air of flattery around them. No one had ever been so daring to pinch his little face. He didn't fly into fury because of this. Instead, he felt it was a bit novel and intimate. Official Yu must really like him in order to pinch his face, right?

Yu Xiaocao sheepishly looked over in the direction of the emperor and empress, praying that the two of them didn't see her incredibly rude action earlier. When she met the emperor's eyes, the man regarded her with a faint smile on his face and he turned around as if nothing had happened. Everything was just an illusion, all fake and a figment of your imagination...

"Eldest Imperial Prince, Little Black is very gentle. Once you become familiar with each other, you can even ride on its back. However, it's not as steady or comfortable as riding a horse, so you need to be careful!" Yu Xiaocao's deliberate attempt at changing the subject was successful in distracting the little fellow.

Fields of Gold Chapter 528

Zhu Hanwen stretched out a hand towards Little Black. The head steward of the hunting grounds couldn't stay calm anymore. If the eldest imperial prince got bitten by a wolf while in the hunting grounds, he wouldn't be able to take this responsibility ah!

"Imperial Majesty, even wolves that have been raised since they were young still have a bit of wildness in them. This official worries..." The head steward remarked somewhat anxiously.

When the empress heard this, she revealed a surprised expression and frowned, "Wolves? Wasn't it said that Miss Yu had raised wolf-dogs ah? How did they become wolves? Emperor, quickly call our imperial son back, it's too dangerous!"

"You're all thinking too much. Just watch, isn't our imperial son getting along quite splendidly with Little Black ah?" Zhu Junfan knew Xiaocao's abilities. As long as these two wolves didn't sense any danger, they wouldn't go against their master's wishes and attack humans on their own.

The empress looked over and saw that giant black wolf with its head cocked looking cutely at her son. Its eyes shined with a gentle and joyful light. Suddenly, her heart squeezed and she tightened her grip on the reins—that giant wolf was lowering its head and its immense mouth was getting closer to her son's tiny hands—if it bit down now, half of her son might be savaged. How could the empress not be worried?

In a place where they couldn't see, there was a person who couldn't restrain his excitement. He silently repeatedly to himself, 'Bite down, bite down on him! Bite ah! Aren't you a wolf ah? Isn't it normal for wolves to eat humans?' If the eldest imperial prince had a mishap here, then he wouldn't have to implement any of his plans.

Unfortunately, the heavens didn't hear his plea. Little Black gently sniffed at Zhu Hanwen's small hand and felt like he was quite similar to his master's younger brother when he was young. The prince gave off a very familiar feeling. It immediately classified the eldest imperial prince as 'someone on our side' and intimately used its rough tongue to lick the prince's palm.

Zhu Hanwen only felt that his hand was ticklish and couldn't help but giggle a few times. The apprehension within his heart completely disappeared. He followed his desires and ran over to hug Little Black's neck. Little Black's long fur didn't have the tell-tale musky scent of most animals and, instead, gave off a smell that made him feel comfortable.

The eldest imperial prince stroked Little Black's fine and soft fur as if there was nothing else he would rather do. He fished out a piece of dried drained yogurt, kurt, from his pouch and offered it to the wolf. Little Black lowered its head to sniff at it and obligingly ate it. Although it wasn't as tasty as the snacks its master gave it, it gave off a dense smell of milk and wasn't considered unpalatable—these were the picky thoughts that Little Black had going through its mind.

“Does Little White want to eat some?” The eldest imperial prince took out another piece of kurt and looked somewhat fawningly over at the arrogant Little White. However, the wolf rebuffed him with a look of disdain in its bright blue eyes. Zhu Hanwen felt his fragile heart shatter into pieces and went back to interacting with the foolish Little Black. Before long, his hurt feelings were easily soothed by the other wolf.

The eldest imperial prince decided to stop trying to get closer to Little White and focused all of his attention at Little Black. They quickly became close pals and the prince intimately patted the wolf's neck, “Little Black, do your best! Bring back more game and make those people who look down upon me eat dirt!!”

“Awoooooo——” Little Black responded to him conscientiously. 'Catching game is not a problem for this wolf! Friend, just wait and see!'

Little White slanted a look full of disdain at the two of them. They were a pair of idiots!

“Let's go! The hunt has begun! Let's go into the forest!!” The eldest imperial prince proclaimed in his high-pitched voice. He rode his little pony forward and brandished the bow in his hands as he earnestly began his first hunt.

Yu Xiaocao accepted her fate and followed him from behind. Along with them were also two bodyguards who were highly skilled at martial arts as well as the two maidservants that Zhu Junyang sent to her who also had fighting skills—Chunhua and Qiushi.

In order to guarantee the safety of the eldest imperial prince, Yu Xiaocao deliberately chose the section of forest that was the safest out of the thirty-six allotted areas. From what the head steward of the hunting grounds said, this area only had small animals around and he had patted his chest and proclaimed that he guaranteed that there were no fierce beasts around.

Although the eldest imperial prince had only the very basics of equestrian archery, his aim was actually quite good. Before long, he had shot down a brightly colored wild pheasant in the wing with the 'toy bow' in his hands. The bird dropped to the ground and struggled heavily.

The personal eunuch of the eldest imperial prince trotted over and picked up the injured wild pheasant. Praise was free to give, so he said, “Imperial Highness, you're so skilled ah! In the future, once your strength increases, you will probably be even stronger than Royal Prince Yang when you reach his age...”

“Little Zhuozi, don't speak nonsense! My imperial father has said that Royal Prince Yang is a rare talent and it would be hard to find a second person who is as talented at martial arts as he is. If he had been born in a martial arts community, he absolutely would become the head of one strong group...” Zhu Hanwen quite admired this older uncle of his. He was like a little loyal fan and couldn't allow other people to say one bad word about him.

Little Zhuozi was around eleven to twelve years old. Because he was detail-oriented and handled tasks given to him well, Su Ran had assigned him to take care of the eldest imperial prince. Although this guy was a bit of a lackey, he did have the ability to understand what his master wanted. He hurriedly stated, “Royal Prince Yang is gifted at martial arts and equestrian archery right now. However, when he was at your age, Imperial Highness, he wasn't necessarily as good as you are now.”

The eldest imperial prince felt quite pleased at this praise and glanced over at Yu Xiaocao who was behind him. He rebuked Little Zhuozi, "You're quite brave to put down Royal Prince Yang in front of Official Yu. Be careful not to make an enemy!"

Yu Xiaocao wanted to express her innocence. If the two of them wanted to joke and bicker, why did they have to pull her into the mix? Did she cause trouble for them in any way?

"Shhhhh——" Zhu Hanwen had spotted something and made a shushing gesture at Little Zhuozi, who was still joking around. Yu Xiaocao focused over where the prince was looking and saw a herd of sika deer in a thicket a distance away from them. The deer were currently leisurely eating grass and didn't realize that danger was approaching them.

The eldest imperial prince lowered his head to look at the small bow in his hands and had to reluctantly admit that, with his current arm strength and bow, unless he shot the deer directly in the eyes, it would be hard to bring one down. His eyes flickered and quietly spoke at Little Black, who was rummaging in the grass, "Little Black, it's time for you to show your abilities! Go, catch some sika deer and bring it back. Tonight we will have roast venison to eat!"

Little Black heard its name being called and turned its head back to look at its new friend in a confused manner, as if it didn't understand what was being said. Zhu Hanwen was a bit upset that the wolf wasn't listening to him and his mouth pouted down.

Little Zhuozi immediately comforted his master, "Imperial Highness, some pets will only listen to the commands of their masters. How about you ask Official Yu?"

Yu Xiaocao also wanted to eat roasted venison. When she saw the pleading look in the eldest imperial prince's eyes, she hurriedly ordered the two wolves, "Little Black, Little White! Go, catch some game for us!"

The two giant wolves immediately changed their lazy demeanors. Their ears perked up and their eyes stared brightly at the herd in front of them as they looked for a good opportunity. They stealthily crept closer to the herd of sika deer. The deer seemed to sense danger approaching them and stopped their eating movements, raising their heads up to look around them in alarm.

Little Black and Little White continued to slowly stalk forward. The deer could sensitively tell that things weren't going well and observed their surroundings minutely. The head of the herd, a buck, screamed out a few noises in alarm and the entire herd leapt away in all directions. When the two wolves saw this, they no longer tried to be sneaky and instead rushed out at top speed towards the fleeing herd.

The herd of deer scattered. Although sika deer were very good at running away quickly in forest terrain, for Little Black and Little White, who had been drinking mystic-stone water since they were young, speed was not an issue to them. The eldest imperial prince only seemed to see two flashes of black and white bolting around and couldn't see the details of their movements before they finished. Little Black and Little White both very quickly had a dead large buck in their mouths and they marched back to where the humans were standing. Under the astonished looks of everyone around them, Little Black's eyes shone with pride and arrogance.

The eldest imperial prince's two imperial bodyguards both sighed over the speed of the two wolves. They remarked admiration and felt that Little Black and Little White were almost uncannily human smart. Just from the look in Little Black's eyes and his demeanor, one could easily mistake him for a child who was bragging about his skills.

Furthermore, they could see that the dead deer in their mouths had only their throats ripped open and not a single injury elsewhere. In fact, the deer that Little White caught was still twitching slightly.

"They're too awesome ah! Official Yu, should we switch an area to hunt in? With Little Black and Little White around, we don't need to worry about not reaching the first three places!" Zhu Hanwen stroked Little Black's fur in admiration and took out another piece of kurt to give to the wolf. Little Black gulped it down without a hint of pickiness.

Yu Xiaocao wasn't very interested in getting a high rank. She felt that her first obligation was to make sure the eldest imperial prince was well protected through all of this and not have a single hair be injured. She immediately tried to dissuade him, "Imperial Highness, this official believes that the people who deserve to be ranked are those who hunt relying on their own abilities. If we rely on Little Black and Little White abilities to get ranked, it's a bit unfair. What do you think?"

Zhu Hanwen, after all, was the heir that the emperor was cultivating so he was naturally smart and knew how to look at different sides of an issue. He replied quickly, "What Official Yu says makes sense. Once I get a bit older, I'll rely on my own abilities to compete with the others. Then now...shall we continue?"

“Of course, what's the point of coming to this hunting facility if we don't experience hunting a bit?” Yu Xiaocao had a bow in her hands that Zhu Junyang had especially commissioned for her. It wasn't much larger than the one the eldest imperial prince was using but was much more carefully made. However, with Yu Xiaocao's poor archery skills, she wouldn't be able to show off the bow's true abilities.

Zhu Hanwen's interest in hunting had gone up again, “That's right! The ancient people had once said, 'The pleasure in fishing isn't in how many fish you catch but in enjoying the process'. It doesn't matter how much game we catch, the important thing is that we go through the process. This place isn't dangerous. You guys can also go around and experience the joy of hunting too. How about that?”

Although the two imperial bodyguards were envious of their fellow colleagues, who were participating in the hunt, they knew that their first responsibility was protecting the safety of the eldest imperial prince. Thus, they hadn't moved from where they were standing. It was only after the eldest imperial prince became a bit impatient and unhappy did they reluctantly leave.

Fortunately, the animals in this hunting area were all small creatures that didn't attack humans. Otherwise, even if you beat them death, they wouldn't have been willing to leave the eldest imperial prince from their sights. The two bodyguards discussed amongst themselves for a bit and decided to hunt in the nearby area at a set distance from the prince. If there was danger, they would be able to come back quickly to help.

Yu Xiaocao also allowed Chunhua and Qiushi to roam around nearby to also have them experience the joy of hunting. Little Black and Little White didn't restrain themselves anymore and darted into the forest thicket, disappearing very quickly.

Fields of Gold Chapter 529

“Official Yu...how about you...” The eldest imperial prince was merely a child around seven to eight. It was only him and Xiaocao now. He looked at the gloomy forest around them and had a bit of uneasiness in his eyes as he asked hesitantly.

Although the thickets here were quite dense, it wasn't really considered much compared to the West Mountain's forests that were near her home. Xiaocao had even dared to run into the forests there when she was young to set traps. However, after sensing the prince's uneasiness, she decided to play the role of the weak one here for the sake of his little ego. She stated, “This official is a bit cowardly and I rarely use the bow. I'd be quite scared by myself. Imperial Highness, just let this official accompany you!”

Zhu Hanwen immediately puffed up like a little man and thrust out his small chest, “Alright ah! Then just obediently follow me from behind and don't run off!”

The vegetation became thicker and thicker as they went deeper into the forest. The sky was completely covered by the criss-crossing branches of the trees and the full foliage created a tightly packed canopy. Consequently, the amount of natural light in the area had dimmed considerably. From time to time, some wild hares and pheasants would dart across their feet from nearby shrubbery as they ran away in panic. The two of them would also occasionally cry out in fear.

An unknown creature flitted lightly across Xiaocao's head, bringing about a small breeze. She screeched and hunkered down. Zhu Hanwen had also been scared into a tremble by her scream and turned around to look in her direction. Apparently it had only been a mischievous little squirrel that was holding a nut in its paws. It sat high above on a nearby tree, regarding them with blatant curiosity.

“Didn't Imperial Father say that when you were in the countryside you often went out to hunt? Isn't your father a hunter who can even bring down a bear?” Zhu Hanwen felt quite speechless at the moment. He didn't understand why his imperial father insisted on him accompanying a little coward.

Yu Xiaocao also felt quite helpless and stated somewhat huffily, “Do you know of any rural countryside girls who use bows and arrows? The so-called hunting I did was setting some snares and digging pit traps ah! As for hunting bears, my father had killed one together with someone else. Ah! That's right, he was with the current Young General Zhao at the time...”

The Zhao generals were at the border last winter and had pushed back another Tartar attack, seizing a total victory. From that battle, Young General Zhao had also received the title of 'Battle God'. Naturally, the eldest imperial prince knew all about this. He curled his lip and said, “If the Battle God Young General Zhao went out hunting, he'd be able to kill a tiger easily, let alone a bear. Imperial Father is truly too much, why did he have to trick me?”

“Perhaps it was because he knew that this official is cowardly and doesn't dare to go to any dangerous areas. If you stayed with me, you wouldn't encounter any bad situations. The emperor also did it because he has a fatherly heart ah!” Yu Xiaocao explained her thoughts.

Zhu Hanwen drooped his shoulders down in dismay and remarked unhappily, “With you dragging me down, it looks like I won't be able to make Imperial Father see me in a different light today!”

“Don't we also have Little Black and Little White ah? We can have them work a little harder and then won't we end up with plenty of game ah?” Yu Xiaocao tried to comfort the prince.

“The two of them always kill their prey by biting at the throat, so everyone can easily tell that it wasn't me who killed them. I even told my imperial father and mother that we would be able to taste the game that I personally shot tonight!” The eldest imperial prince sighed. Although there was a decent amount of game around, they were all too perceptive. Before he could even pull his bow open, they disappeared without a trace. After thinking a bit, he realized that the first pheasant he encountered was truly a stroke of luck for him and that he had only killed it because of that.

Yu Xiaocao looked at that tiny childish face that was full of worry and fell silent for a second before she proposed, “Then how about...this official can set some snares to catch prey. After we catch some game, you can then shoot them with an arrow. How's that?”

Zhu Hanwen blinked his large eyes twice and looked at her for a bit before he finally nodded, “Although I dislike lying, in order to not disappoint my imperial father and mother, we can only do it this way. However, are you sure you're able to catch animals with your snares? Did you bring any rope along?”

Yu Xiaocao looked around and picked a pretty pliable and strong piece of rattan from a large tree. She used the small dagger kept in her boot to trim off the branches and leaves and set a snare in an area where small animals often appeared. After she finished crafting her snare, she stealthily added a few drops of diluted mystic-stone water to act as bait.

[Why does this divine stone have such a stupid master. Even after drinking my bathing water, you haven't become one iota smarter!] The little divine stone used a deadpan voice to speak to her mind as it sighed.

'Can you not use the word 'bathwater' to describe it? Just thinking about it makes me feel nauseous!' Yu Xiaocao was teaching the eldest imperial prince how to set snares as she quarrelled with the stone.

The little divine stone huffed and said, [Don't call it bathwater? Fine ah! Then let's change it to saliva, how does that work?] Sometimes when it was releasing spiritual energy into well water, it would deliberately take its golden kitten shape and pretend to spit into the water. However, if one thought about it more carefully, how could a small stone possibly have saliva?

'If you have anything to say, just say it! Stop using those disgusting terms to make other people feel sick!' Yu Xiaocao continued to give pointers to the eldest imperial prince as she asked the divine stone what it wanted. This fellow had somehow been provoked by something and was often cultivating

studiously inside the stone in order to return back to the astral planes sooner. She very rarely saw it these days.

[With your current level of inner focus, if you want to shoot down an animal, it wouldn't be a hard task. Why do you have to do something so idiotic like set traps ah? Truly doing more than is required!] The little divine stone didn't forget to insult her this time either.

What was this 'inner focus'? Yu Xiaocao expressed her confusion, 'How do I use this so-called inner focus? No one has taught me anything. Do you think I'm a genius and just know how to do everything?'

[Concentrate all of your attention on the prey and tell me what you see.] The little divine stone reminded her.

At this time, the sweet sound of a bird singing began again above her. She raised her head and followed the little divine stone's instructions and stared unblinkingly at the bird. She was astonished to discover that that bird, which wasn't much larger than the size of her fist, seemed to be growing bigger and closer in her eyes until it reached the size of a millstone. Furthermore, it felt like she could see every single tiny movement the animal made. The bird, when it preened itself, seemed to be moving in slow-motion. Was this the benefit of using inner focus?

[How's that? Do you think you can shoot down the target now?] The little divine stone asked in a leisurely tone.

With such a large target that was almost within reach, only an idiot wouldn't be able to shoot it! Yu Xiaocao didn't say anything as she took down the bow from her back and pulled it back forcefully. She remembered the instructions Zhu Junyang had given her and aimed the arrow before letting it fly. It hit the silly bird square in the neck.

"Wow! Official Yu, even the sages pretend to be ordinary people ah! You can even shoot down such a small and faraway target yet still claim you don't have archery skills?" Zhu Hanwen had held his breath from the moment Yu Xiaocao pulled back her bow and arrow. He thought her hands had gotten itchy and that she only wanted to try. He truly didn't expect her to hit the target.

The sound of the eldest imperial prince's voice brought her from that mysterious world back to reality. She picked up the first prey she had ever shot down in her life and looked at the admiring eyes of Zhu Hanwen. A feeling of pride rose in her heart.

“Quickly tell me, how did you possibly learn how to shoot something so far away?” Zhu Hanwen's eyes were full of pleading and made it impossible for someone to refuse his request.

Yu Xiaocao thought for a moment and replied, “Have you been taught the essay, 'Ji Chang Learns Archery' ah?”

When she saw him shake his head, she continued, “It's one of the essays contained in 'The Writings of Master Lie' in the chapter 'The Questions of Tang'. It talks about learning archery. The first thing students need to do is to practice their eyesight and work towards a state of not blinking. Even when one's eyes sting and burns, one cannot blink...look, your eyes haven't gotten to the point of perfection yet!”

She deliberately suddenly waved a fist in front of the eldest imperial prince's eyes and stopped right before his face. Zhu Hanwen, who had suddenly been attacked, would naturally blink in reflex and pull back.

“The second step of training the eyes is to be able to see a small object as a very large object. Ji Chang had practiced this tirelessly over the years and was finally able to see a tiny louse as something that was larger than a carriage wheel.” Yu Xiaocao explained the essay she had read in her past life to the eldest imperial prince.

A pensive look appeared on Zhu Hanwen's face as he muttered, “To be able to see a tiny louse as something that was larger than a wheel? How long did he have to practice ah?”

“If you work at it hard enough, you can grind an iron bar into a needle. As long as you continue to persevere and strive forward, there's nothing you can't do!” The words Yu Xiaocao said today had buried a small seed within the future emperor's heart. In the future, no matter what sort of difficulties the court encountered, he was never afraid or retreated. He ended up winning the faith, admiration and respect of his officials in the end. However, this was all later!

Yu Xiaocao tried to use her bow a few more times. Sure enough, every arrow she sent out hit its target. The avid admiration in Zhu Hanwen's eyes had almost become large enough to fill a lake. Unfortunately, good things couldn't last forever. Using this ability with her archery used up a lot of energy. She only realized that there was no such thing as a free lunch in the world when the sides of her head started pounding and she felt like her head had become incredibly heavy.

She retrieved her water pouch and took a few sips of mystic-stone water. Her head felt slightly better afterwards. She raised her head to look at the color of the sky and said, "Imperial Highness, it's getting late. We should go back and see if we caught anything in our snares and then head back earlier to avoid worrying the emperor and empress."

"The sun is still up high. Let's head deeper into the forest a bit. Perhaps we can come across some good prey! Little Zhuozi, how about you first take some of this game back. That way, we won't have the problem of having too much game to bring back later." Zhu Hanwen commanded the little eunuch, who had been excitedly picking up the game they had caught.

Little Zhuozi had noticed that on the entire way here, the sika deer were the largest animals they had encountered so far. Thus, there wasn't any danger to be had in this area. Thus, he carried the dead deer on his shoulders and picked up a few strings of wild hares and pheasants to bring back where they had left the horses with a light heart. However, he didn't know that while he was gone, his master would encounter a huge conspiracy and end up in a life or death situation.

"Look! What's that? It looks like a giant rat but its snout and nose look a bit like a pig's..." Zhu Hanwen quietly pointed in a direction and hinted at Xiaocao to look.

Yu Xiaocao looked in the direction that he was pointing at and saw an animal gnawing on grass. It had four thick and stout limbs and a bulky head. It had small eyes and small ears and its entire body was black and white—wasn't this a pig badger ah?

"That's a badger and is also sometimes called a pig badger! It has tender meat that is very delicious. Its fat can also be used in medicine and is very good at treating burn injuries." Yu Xiaocao gave him a brief lesson on the animal.

"Hm...I want to try to bring down this pig badger." Zhu Hanwen raised his small bow and slowly got closer to the badger. The badger hadn't seemed to sense danger approaching and continued to dig up wild peanuts from the ground. It happily bit through the shell of a peanut and began to eat it gleefully.

Fields of Gold Chapter 530

Zhu Hanwen scrunched up his little face and stared at his prey. He slowly pulled back the bow in his hands and placed an arrow on the string; he was about to shoot...

Suddenly, the badger raised its head up alertly and its tiny eyes quickly looked around it. Its fur stood up and it scampered into the nearby bushes at a surprising speed, disappearing into the forest.

“Darn it!” Zhu Hanwen lowered his bow and went a couple step forwards in the direction that the badger had disappeared. He stamped his feet in annoyance, “An animal's perception of danger is too strong ah! This prince was so far away but I still ended up scaring it...”

Yu Xiaocao smiled and was about to say a few words in comfort when the smile congealed on her face. A sense of crisis blossomed in her heart, stifling her completely. There was something wrong! The area around them was too quiet, as if they were in a pool of stagnant water. She wasn't sure when the birds stopped chirping but even the crickets singing in the bushes had gone silent. She could smell a faint fishy scent in the air. Danger was approaching them!!

“Imperial Highness, there's something wrong with this area, let's...” She was just about to call the imperial prince back to leave when she suddenly saw the fierce eyes of a starving tiger appear right behind Zhu Hanwen.

“What's the matter? That silly look on your face is not enough to scare me!” The eldest imperial prince hadn't seemed to have sensed that danger was here. He grinned happily at Xiaocao and made a funny face at her.

“Eldest Imperial Prince, please do not move and do not look back!” Yu Xiaocao was very clear that making any sudden or frantic movements would only provoke the animal at this point and cause it to attack. At this moment, that tiger seemed to be fixedly watching the imperial prince, as if it was trying to calculate the best timing to spring its attack on its prey.

Yu Xiaocao couldn't be bothered to wonder why a fierce tiger had suddenly appeared in the safest area in the hunting grounds. Right now, she was entirely preoccupied with trying to figure out how to save the eldest imperial prince's life. She had been ordered to protect him. If the eldest imperial prince encountered any misfortune, then her head was forfeit too!

She silently ground her teeth and gave a pointed look at the imperial prince, who was starting to look nervous. Then she waved a hand at the giant tiger behind him and screeched, “Evil beast! If you have the skills, come for me! This young maiden is not afraid of you ah!”

It was obvious that the tiger had been starving for a long time. Its belly was deflated and shriveled looking and the fur on its body had long lost its usual glorious luster. Its pair of fierce looking eyes were full of bloodlust. Prey that was moving around was naturally more interesting than something that wasn't. The blood-shot eyes of the hungry tiger moved from the prince to Xiaocao. However, it seemed not to be very interested in the thin and small Xiaocao and started to turn its attention back to the plump and sturdy prince again.

Yu Xiaocao bent down to pick up a rock and flung it at the large tiger. She had used her inner focus for this throw and accurately hit the starving animal on its head. Yu Xiaocao then deliberately jumped a few times in a provoking manner and screamed at it, “Stinky tiger, come here ah! Come bite me ah!!”

That tiger was truly infuriated now. It leapt up like lightning and sped over towards her. Under the clear signal from Xiaocao, the eldest imperial prince let his bow fall to the ground and fell down with his hands on his head. He could feel the tiger barely brush over him and the scent of the beast's odor hit him straight in the nose. He stared at the rampaging beast and was so scared that his teeth immediately started to chatter.

A tiger! A giant tiger! Although this tiger was quite thin, it was still at least two meters long in length. Just its tail alone had to be one meter long and its head was as large as a millstone! Zhu Hanwen felt his body tremble involuntarily. A few times, he attempted to pick up his bow from the ground to save Official Yu but his hands didn't seem to want to listen to him and hung stiffly by his side.

Zhu Hanwen started to cry in frustration. What should he do? Official Yu had lured the tiger away to save him. If it wasn't for Official Yu deliberately provoking the animal, he would have long become a finished snack in the tiger's jaws. He couldn't just do nothing and run away, leaving Official Yu to die. That was the conduct of a coward. He didn't want to be tormented by his cowardly actions for the rest of his life.

“Someone come ah!” Someone come ah! Save us——save us ah——” Zhu Hanwen realized that using his toy-like bow alone was not enough to fight against a fierce tiger. He could only hope that his two bodyguards weren't too far away and could come back in time.

As for Yu Xiaocao, when she saw the tiger had taken the bait to follow her, she was hurriedly running in a direction away from the eldest imperial prince. She was hoping that the prince would be smart and find a safe place to hide while she led the animal away. There wasn't enough time for him to find reinforcements! She could only pray that she would survive this!

[Lie down!!] The little divine stone's voice echoed in her mind and she immediately fell onto the ground. The tiger just barely missed scratching her head as it leapt towards her previous position. Before her mind could realize what was happening, her body had already reacted and she was climbing up from the ground to charge in another direction. She had never known that her body had this strength inside it and that she could run so fast when she needed to.

However, no matter how fast she ran, she was no match for a tiger with four sturdy legs. The angry howls of the tiger were close behind her and she could smell the rotten fishy scent of its breath. She knew that the tiger's jaws were only seconds away from her. So screwed! The bushes in front of her were blocking her way and the danger behind her was quickly approaching. She was stuck between a rock and a hard place now and she could feel the God of Death just waiting for her.

Was this the end of her? Was the purpose of her transmigrating over to this world to use her life to save the life of a little brat? It must really hurt to be bitten to death by a tiger right? She could only hope the tiger would kill her in one blow so she wouldn't have to experience the suffering of being torn apart alive.

Would Zhu Junyang fall into a frenzy when he saw her ravaged corpse? Then who would stop him then? Sir Su seemed like a very skilled expert but she wasn't sure if he'd be able to subdue Zhu Junyang.

It looked like her plans on creating a super farm were going to end abruptly. She had wanted to become the second Yuan Longping and improve the rice paddy seeds. Sigh...she wasn't sure whether she would be able to transmigrate back to the modern world after she died here. Didn't the novels all write it like that ah? All sorts of thoughts came up in her mind during this one moment.

[What are you standing there stupidly for? Why don't you quickly call those two weak wolves over?! If outsiders see this divine stone's spiritual powers, it'd be hard to explain! Those two had been raised on this divine stone's bathing water since young, so isn't it just a small job for them to clean up this insignificant tiger?] The pain she had expected didn't manifest, and, instead, the sound of the little divine stone's voice appeared in her mind again.

A bit confused, she raised her head and almost peed her pants when she saw the open and raging jaws of the tiger in front of her. After looking carefully around her, she discovered that she had been surrounded by a golden light that had protective qualities. It kept the tiger on the outside, away from her.

The pitiful tiger had no clue what was going on. Its prey was clearly right in front of it, but no matter how it tried to bite or claw at it, it wasn't able to touch one hair. There was an alluring smell coming off of the prey which caused its stomach to pulse with renewed hunger pains. These damned humans had used some sort of drug to ensnare it and had closed it in a cage for a long time before finally letting it out. It was quite angry about this and wanted to eat all the humans it could get its claws on to vent its hatred.

Animals had a one track mind. Although it clearly had no way to get at Yu Xiaocao, that didn't stop it from continuing to try. It continued to bite and claw at the protective golden screen in an attempt to get at its hated prey.

After Yu Xiaocao sent out a call to bring Little Black and Little White over, she tried to use the mystic-stone water to lure the beast into tameness. However, she failed in the end. She was quite puzzled by this. Big Gray was also a fierce beast and he couldn't resist the lure of the mystic-stone water. How come this tiger, on the other hand, wasn't interested in it at all?

Her intuition told her that this tiger regarded her as an abject enemy, as if she had slaughtered its father, so it stubbornly clung to the idea of ripping her to death. Furthermore, there shouldn't be any fierce beasts appearing in the dozen or so hunting areas in this area. Why did she and the eldest imperial prince have such rotten luck to encounter a tiger here?

The situation wasn't as simple as it seemed! Yu Xiaocao, who had read many novels about palace schemes in her past life, smelled the sour notes of a conspiracy. She was only a tiny sixth-ranked official. Other than having talent in agriculture, there wasn't much else she could bring to the table. Thus, it was unlikely that anyone would deliberately target her here.

Perhaps...this unknown person was targeting the eldest imperial prince? Yu Xiaocao felt like she had suddenly been drawn into a palace drama. However, the emperor didn't have many children currently and the only imperial prince from his bloodline was the eldest imperial prince. Killing the eldest prince to gain the position of the heir seemed a bit far-fetched right now.

Could it be the plot from the remnants of the previous dynasty? It wasn't easy to hurt the emperor so instead they decided to try for his heir instead? That was definitely more likely. Furthermore, didn't Royal Prince Yang lead troops to the border areas to put down a rebellion? Was it someone who escaped then trying to cause trouble now? Yu Xiaocao's thoughts flitted to and fro and she began to think that she was getting closer and closer to the 'truth'.

If a random person stumbled upon this scene now, they absolutely would not be able to believe their eyes. There was a young lady, who resembled a fairy, sitting cross-legged on a carpet of golden leaves. Her entire body seemed to emit a pure golden light and a majestic tiger was 'frolicking' around her in a dance...

Yu Xiaocao: 'Frolicking? Does this look like frolicking to you?! Are you blind ah? Can't you see that the tiger wants to open its jaws wide and swallow me instantly?!'

At this time, the tiger suddenly stopped its attacks at Yu Xiaocao. It wasn't that it was giving up. Instead, it had sensed some other fierce beasts coming over. That tiger let out a loud roar of warning and Xiaocao felt her ears echo afterwards. The deafening sound made her feel quite dizzy.

The tiger had originally thought its warning snarl would cause the other animals to retreat. It didn't expect the other beasts to, in fact, increase their speed and approach faster. It couldn't be bothered to continue to attempt to harm Yu Xiaocao and turned around in preparation for another battle.

When Yu Xiaocao saw Little Black and Little White's figures, her heart finally settled down and relaxed. She complained, "Why did it take you guys this long to arrive? If I relied on you two, I'd already be a dead, white skeleton on the ground!"

Little Black and Little White didn't even bother to give any attention to the extremely thin tiger. They guiltily headed over to their master. The tiger believed that the two reckless wolves were trying to snatch away its food and immediately exploded in fury. The tiger believed that it was powerful but why were the two wolves acting as if it was Hello Kitty ah?! How could the King of the Forest possibly put up with the provocations of two tiny shrimp?

Unfortunately, it had underestimated the prowess of Little Black and Little White and ended up having a tragic ending. The two wolves played with it like two cats teasing a mouse. The tiger was fighting a dead-end battle. In fact, if it weren't for their master telling them to 'try to keep the tiger pelt free of scratches', that tiger would have ended up ripped to ribbons before its final death.

When the tiger sensed that things weren't going its way, it attempted to flee but it was too late. The two wolves outflanked it and kept the tiger easily within their control. Its final ending was to die in exhaustion after getting its throat ripped open. Even in death it couldn't understand why the two wolves, which were animals as well, would listen to the orders of a weak and little human and protect her so closely.