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Fortunately, the lass looked thin but she had a good constitution. However, the snow and temperatures of the north couldn't be taken lightly. In comparison, the capital's winters were much warmer!

"I know! You're nagging like a little old lady!" Yu Xiaocao chased him out of the room. Resignedly, she put on layer after layer of clothes to keep out the cold. If she let Zhu Junyang continue talking, she would have to go out wrapped in a blanket!

Zhu Junyang had black lines on his forehead, 'Is there an old lady as handsome as me? This lass is really heartless.'

"Ah! It's so cold!" As soon as she came out, a piercing cold wind with flying snowflakes came at her small face. Yu Xiaocao wrinkled her face; she wasn't used to the extreme cold of the north!

Zhu Junyang took off her snowcap and added a thick mink scarf, leaving only two big eyes exposed. The snow outside was just below the calves. Zhu Junyang had the advantage of height, so walking in the snow wasn't much effort. However, with Yu Xiaocao's present height, which hadn't reached 1.6 meters, it was a tragedy for her small short legs.

She tried to pull one foot out of the snow, took another arduous step, and then pulled out her back foot. From the courtyard to the front door, which was only the short distance of a few meters, she walked for more than ten minutes and her whole body was sweating!

Zhu Junyang turned back and saw that the lass was far behind him. Her figure tottered with every step. He couldn't help from turning back, walking towards her, and squatting in front of her, gently saying, "Climb on!"

Yu Xiaocao stared at the broad and strong figure in front of her and pursed her lips, trying to stop the corners of her mouth from rising. These few years, under her subtle influence, Royal Prince Yang, this cold stone man, had gradually developed towards the direction of a caring guy, the overwhelming power of a doting boyfriend! She liked it! She had made the decision! She must seize this man of the century and not allow any others to have any chance!

"Come on! Don't worry, I won't let you fall!" Seeing that Yu Xiaocao hadn't moved in a long time, Zhu Junyang looked back at the lass, who was stupefied behind him, and soothed her.

All of a sudden, the lass, who had been standing still, rushed at him. The target wasn't his back. Instead, she held onto his handsome face and gave him a hard kiss. A sweet sound entered his heart, "Jun Yangyang, I now see your good side more frequently. If you continue on like this, I will get addicted and not be able to quit!"

Zhu Junyang stood up and caught the lass in front of him. He lowered his head and kissed the lass's big eyes, which were the only things exposed. His soft and moist lips were in a charming gentle smile, "I will always treat you well, only you! You don't have to quit because as long as you turn, you will see me beside you, never far away!"

Yu Xiaocao sniffled and her eyes heated up, "What do I do? I have an urge to cry. Jun Yangyang, what you said is so touching? Where did you learn how to please girls?"

"In this world, you're the only one worthy of my flattery! Don't cry, the tears will turn into ice as soon as they come out!" Zhu Junyang gently wiped away the tears from the corners of her eyes with warm fingers and preciously landed a hot kiss there.

He bent down and held the lass in his arms like a princess. If he let her continue on like this, he didn't know if they would get to the new stables before dark!

It was not a bad thing to have a tall and strong boyfriend! She was wrapped up like a ball. Adding in her bodyweight, she must've weighed at least ninety to a hundred pounds. However, in his arms, it was as if he was holding a baby, free and relaxed. Zhu Junyang walked steadily and rapidly in the snow.

Soon they were at the new stables. Yu Xiaocao was afraid that his imposing manner would cause the wild horses uneasiness, so she let Zhu Junyang put her down not far away. When she got to the stable, she looked back and saw the figure standing upright in the snow, with his eyes focused on her the entire time.

"Don't just stand there, find a place to avoid the snow and wind! Come pick me up in half an hour. Don't worry, with Snow Scar there, the other wild horses won't hurt me!" Yu Xiaocao put her hands up to her mouth and shouted at him.

Zhu Junyang knew that if he didn't leave, the lass wouldn't enter the stables. He waved in her direction and turned away in the storm. He strode in the direction that had a thatched pavilion nearby for the guards on duty.

In the stables, the lead white horse heard the familiar voice and soothed the horses that were startled by the sound. It walked towards Xiaocao with elegant steps. It tilted its head and looked at Xiaocao, trying to find the familiar smell from her thick clothing.

Yu Xiaocao patted its head and walked into the stable. A wall with flues for space heating was set up in the new stable the second day the storm began. Therefore, although the doors of the stable were open, it was still warm and comfortable inside.

"How is it? Snow Scar, are you used to living here? Is there enough fodder to eat every day?" Yu Xiaocao inspected several stalls, said hello to a few familiar wild horses, and then started chatting with the white horse.

Snow Scar was still unfamiliar with its name, but it saw that, when the human girl was talking, she looked in its direction. After a few times, it recognized the designation she had given it, just like that dark little guy was called 'Black Whirlwind'.

The white horse didn't reject its new name and followed the girl, swishing its tail. It looked at her examining its herd members that were too sick to stand up, listening to her nagging like a chatterbox.

"Hiss——" Snow Scar gave a low sound and the little divine stone helped to translate, [It asked if you can cure its herd members!]

"No problem! It's just a common spasmodic hernia. It's caused by the cold or drinking a lot of cold water after running and sweating." From her medicine box, Yu Xiaocao took out the herbs she needed, ground them into powder, and mixed the powder with warm water that had mystic water added in before pouring the resulting mixture down the throat of the sick horse.

The sick horse, that was so thin that it seemed like it was only bone, acted as if it knew that she was curing it. It was very cooperative when she opened its mouth for examination and didn't fuss when she poured the bitter medicine.

"Alright! If there is nothing unexpected, you should be able to jump around tomorrow! Snow Scar, let all the sick horses go into one area. It will take too much time for me to go check them one by one!" She didn't care if the white horse understood or not. After all, there was a translator named the little divine stone, so she didn't need to worry.

Little Divine Stone thought resentfully, 'I'm a divine stone. I don't know how to speak horse, ok?' However, it still could convey the meaning of Xiaocao's words through mind to mind contact.

Xiaocao cleaned an empty stable and brought over the wild horse that had just drunk the medicine. Soon Snow Scar came with a dozen horses to join her. Fortunately, the sick horses all had common diseases that were caused by cold weather, gastrointestinal diseases, or injuries.

She examined more than a dozen horses and gave them medicine according to their symptoms. Some of them were cooperative, while some of them, at most, restlessly turned under the pressure of their leader, and some of the younger horses refused to open their mouths faced with the bitter medicine. Xiaocao spent a lot of strength, even coaxed and cheated, and gave them some sugar cubes. She finally poured the medicine down their throats after working up a full body of sweat.

"Ok! Let them stay here and I will let some people bring specialized feed over. Snow Scar, you're in charge of supervising the other horses so they don't come over to steal food!" Yu Xiaocao took water from the water trough to wash her hands. After thinking about it, she added a drop of mystic-stone water to all the water troughs.

The white horse, who had been following her around, noticed the spirit energy of the porcelain bottle in her hand and immediately became restless. Intuition told it that even a drop of that liquid was better for its body than a sugar cube.

Noticing its covetous gaze, Xiaocao took out a sugar cube, dripped a drop of mystic-stone water onto it, and rewarded it to Snow Scar. She believed that as long as they made unremitting efforts, the horse herd headed by the white horse would gradually be assimilated, adding strong reinforcements to their horse farm.

"No! Only one drop today!" Yu Xiaocao saw that Snow Scar was still coveting the mystic-stone water in hand and refused firmly. "I'll come again tomorrow to assess the recovery of the other horses. If

anything goes wrong, go over to the courtyard over there to find me! If you don't know the way you can have Black Whirlwind take you!"

Although it didn't want to see the big fellow who always stole its nightly snack, Black Whirlwind and Snow Scar still gradually became familiar with each other. The white horse also knew which stable Black Whirlwind was in, so Xiaocao said it like this!

"You and your herd can settle down here without any worries. None of the staff at the stud farm will harm you!" Yu Xiaocao told the white horse not to harm the staff of the horse farm as she was walking out. After all, there were people who came to deliver feed and water every day, as well as those who cleaned the stables.

After coming out, she looked up to see a tall and straight figure standing in the wind and snow, like a god standing between heaven and earth. The white horse also noticed Zhu Junyang's scent. It looked up at him once and then calmly returned to the stable. That human's scent, although powerful, wasn't threatening. What's more, the scent coming from him was the same as that of the human girl, so he shouldn't be a bad person!

Zhu Junyang didn't know that he benefited from the lass and was given a good person card by the white horse. He only had eyes for his lass. She was walking against the snow and wind, which was blowing harder and harder, to come towards him.

Zhu Junyang went up and helped the lass to tighten the clothes wrapped around her body. He picked her up again and quickly went back. Their speed going back was obviously faster than the way coming out! This was because Zhu Junyang found out that Xiaocao's face was as cold as ice when he was helping her wear her snowcap earlier.

The sooner they got back, the less his lass would have to endure in the cold. He didn't know if those maids were ready with the ginger soup to expel the cold, whether the kang bed was heated up hot enough... Zhu Junyang rotated his inner energy and lightened his body without a trace of effort. Xiaocao buried her face in his chest and put her arms around the man's neck. The curve of her smile couldn't be hidden...

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Snow fell continuously for seven days and only finally stopped on the eighth day. Gradually, the dark clouds covering the sky scattered and the sun stealthily peeked through the cover.

The white horse brought along its herd to live at the stables that were built at the outskirts of the stud farm. This place not only had plentiful food and drink available but there were also humans here who helped to diagnose and treat their bodies. Their lives had improved perceptibly here! The dozen or so wild horses who had gotten ill were now leaping and frisking about as if nothing had happened. As soon as the weather took a turn for the better, the horses all ran out to celebrate and left trampled snow behind them.

The prairie had been buried under the snow from the great blizzard. In former years, their herd had to travel to a very far off place to find some withered grass beneath the snow to eat, which barely filled their stomachs. When they were thirsty, they had to gnaw on icy snow. The horses who were weaker often couldn't endure the bitter cold and poor fodder and ended up getting ill and dying. There were also some unlucky foals who were born in the dead of winter. They didn't even get to open their eyes to see the world before they froze to death next to their mothers' sides.

The white stallion strode over to a mare who had a large pregnant belly. That little human girl had already examined her body and stated that it was very likely that the birth would occur in the next few days. Thus, she had especially prepared a clean, cozy and warm birthing stall for this mare.

Eh? The mare seemed to be a bit out of sorts. Goodness, was it time to give birth?! It raised its head to look at the uncomfortable expression on the mare's face and heard its grunts of pain. Snow Scar stopped moving. What should it do? What should it do?!

That was right! That human little girl had said that if anything came up, it could go to the stud farm to find her! However, as soon as it exited the stables, Snow Scar paused out of bewilderment. Where should it go to find her? Where did she live? Oh right! It could go find that little black colt; it was sure that little fellow knew where the girl lived!

The white horse galloped away and glided over the snowy fields. In the distance, it looked like a snowy whirlwind as it billowed layers of snow in its run towards a certain direction.

"Eh? Who let Treading Snow out during the winter storm? If it gets chilled, Miss Yu will surely get angry! Huzi, go catch that horse and bring it back to the stables!" One of the firearm soldiers, Xiaoqi, who was patrolling around the area with his subordinates, saw the white horse galloping swiftly in the snow and mistakenly identified it as Treading Snow, which was the horse that Xiaocao had ridden over here.

Huzi was a tall and sturdy young man. Because he had a full beard on his face, he had received the nickname of 'Huzi'. He followed the orders and got closer to the white horse. However, he discovered

that the white horse didn't have any tack on it, so it would be difficult to corral it in the right direction. Despite that, he wasn't flustered. He prepared to go forward to grab onto that horse's neck and hoist himself onto the animal's back to stop and control it.

At this moment, Snow Scar sensed that there was a human who wanted to 'control' it. Hmph! Didn't that human little girl say that it would have complete freedom to come and go as it pleased at the horse farm? Was that lie being exposed now? When it saw her, it needed to interrogate her closely!

"Treading Snow! Stop, you'll get chilled and sick from being outside in this weather!!" Huzi saw that the horse had neatly avoided him and was now running in a different direction, so he hurriedly called out the animal's name, hoping to calm it down to a stop.

'Treading Snow? What the heck?? Wasn't its name Snow Scar ah?? Did this guy mistake it for another horse ah? Not all white horses were Treading Snow, okay ah?' Snow Scar noticed that Huzi had come over again to stop it, so it suddenly tensed its muscles and leaped forward, soaring over that man's head. Then it gracefully landed on the snowy ground behind the man. The snow that it brought up from its jump spewed completely on Huzi's head.

By the time Huzi was able to react, the white horse had already ran far away. When Xiaoqi detected that the horse seemed out of the ordinary, he remembered his leader's warning and walked over to pat Huzi on the shoulder before saying, "We were the ones who were wrong! That horse should be one of the wild horses that came here to shelter from the wind and snow. The leader told us that we should directly ignore them if we see them! Earlier I was a bit too hasty when I gave the command. Are you okay ah?"

"I'm fine! If it's a wild horse, why is it coming over to the inner area of the stud farm? Is it trying to inspect the farm to see if it's a suitable place to stay long term?" Huzi shook the pile of snow off of his head and grinned, revealing a row of bright white teeth.

"Ha ha ha...perhaps! How could the environment outside of the farm be as comfortable as here? After living here, it wouldn't be surprising if it didn't want to leave. How could our leader's idea not work?" Xiaoqi and the other soldiers guffawed and then continued to patrol around the area as if nothing had happened.

A few days ago, they had caught a few outsiders who clearly had bad intentions in the area. Thus, they had increased the security around the horse farm by another level! The powers above had sent down an

order to make the security look lax on the outside while being very stringent on the inside. Maybe by doing that, they could catch a big fish later on!

Snow Scar roved around the stud farm and finally arrived at the private stable of Black Whirlwind. It gently kicked aside the door to the stall and saw the little fellow leisurely eating its breakfast there—a stack of hay that had been infused with spiritual energy.

The little fellow unhurriedly turned around when it heard the noise to glance in the direction of the door. Black Whirlwind's carefree demeanor immediately changed when it saw who the intruder was and it forgot all about its breakfast. It revealed a cautious expression as it stared fixedly at that 'thief'. Did the other horse come over to steal its breakfast ah?

Horses had their own way of communicating with each other. Snow Scar told the young colt its purpose in coming over. Black Whirlwind was a bit unwilling to help the other horse. Why did it have to help such a horrid fellow? It still held a grudge against it! However, this fellow's affairs were related to the future of the stud farm. Its master had told it before that all of the foals here were the future of the farm! If it delayed the birth of another little foal because of its own personal grievances, then the master would be angry, right?

Although it was unwilling, Black Whirlwind still brought the repulsive 'thief' along to the master's courtyard for the sake of the 'overall situation'. When it saw the familiar courtyard gate, the little fellow excitedly and happily rushed forward as it let out a joyful whinny—“Master, your most favorite Black Whirlwind is here! It's been a long time since we saw each other, did you miss me?”

Snow Scar was not in the mood to appreciate the little fellow's foolish demeanor. The pregnant mare in the stable was still waiting for the little human girl to save its life! It eagerly stepped forward and pushed aside Black Whirlwind so hard that the little fellow staggered a bit. It followed a familiar smell straight into Xiaocao's courtyard.

The servants in the courtyard, who were currently sweeping the area clean of snow, saw that their frequent visitor, Black Whirlwind, had brought along a beautiful white horse along today. They all revealed admiring looks in their eyes. Almost everyone who had worked a long time at the stud farm was able to differentiate between different horse bloodlines. This white horse was an absolute divine steed and was in no way inferior to the fine steeds that their masters rode!

Yu Xiaocao had just finished washing herself up and was wearing a pink dress paired with a pink coat. She was sitting by the kang bed table and eating a delicious breakfast. Across from her sat a pair of

handsome fellows who were respectively dressed entirely in black or white. Being able to eat at the same table with two handsome and stunning looking men, who each had their own merits, truly made her appetite better! Yu Xiaocao felt as if the plain white congee in front of her was more fragrant than before.

Suddenly, a ruckus could be heard in the courtyard and she heard the small cry of an animal. Yu Xiaocao looked inquiringly out but her line of sight was blocked by a thick door curtain. Zhu Junyang placed down the bowl in his hands and hollered out to ask, "What's going on?"

The sound of Yingchun's voice from the outside transmitted back, "In reply to Your Highness, a white horse has entered the courtyard. The servants are about to drive it away!"

"A white horse? It wouldn't be Snow Scar, right? Is it about to leave with the herd of horses and came by to say farewell?" Yu Xiaocao pushed another spoonful of congee into her mouth and then used the handkerchief Zhu Junyang handed over to wipe her mouth before she put on her fur boots and jumped off the kang bed.

"Put on your mink fur overcoat. It's cold outside!" Zhu Junyang couldn't help but nag a bit. Only when he saw the little lass obediently allow Wutong to wrap her up tightly in the warm coat did he finally relax.

"Tsk tsk!" Su Ran used a handkerchief to wipe the corner of his mouth, revealing an ambiguous looking smile, "I never would have expected the cold hearted and tyrannical Royal Prince Yang, who's like a fierce lion, had such a considerate and sweet side to him. A fierce lion becoming as docile as a kitten. This truly has opened up my eyes!"

Zhu Junyang smiled faintly and didn't think that he was doing anything improper as he struck back, "Hasn't Chief Steward Su, who has always been a loner and never bothered to make close relationships with other people, also changed quite a bit recently? You make it sound as if only this prince treats that lass well!"

He was already feeling unhappy about the way Chief Steward Su treated that little lass. Ever since Xiaocao had knitted a white wool sweater for the other man, Chief Steward Su seemed to dote on the little lass without any restraint. Zhu Junyang had seen everything from the side and always felt like the other man was treating Xiaocao as if she was his own daughter!

That damned old eunuch was trying to steal the little lass away from him since he couldn't have his own children! Zhu Junyang silently cursed the other man. This absolutely could not continue! Clearly, in the future, his road to woo his little wife now had another 'father-in-law' who was there to bar his way. Zhu Junyang truly wished he could pack that fellow up right now and send him back to the capital!

“That lass Xiaocao is worthy of being doted upon. If I don't favor her, who else should I favor?” Su Ran deliberately revealed the white woolen sweater that Xiaocao had knitted him——he really wanted to infuriate that little brat to death!

Su Ran felt his heart lighten when he remembered the constipated look on Royal Prince Yang's face when Xiaocao had given him the sweater. He deliberately asked the little lass to also make him a pair of gloves and a scarf to complete the set. The more he could irritate the other fellow, the happier he felt!

Didn't Xiaocao say that she regarded him as an older brother ah? It was right and natural for an older brother-in-law to make things difficult for his younger sister's husband, right? Right? After all, wouldn't anyone feel a bit upset seeing such a lovable little girl being taken away by a big bad wolf, right? The Yu Family didn't dare to make things difficult for this son-in-law, so he, Su Ran, would help them in their stead! Did the other guy really think it'd be easy to swindle away someone's daughter, who they had painstakingly raised for over a decade?

The two handsome men in the room stared at each other with pointed eyes. Sparks of fire seemed to be coming off of them. If Xiaocao, this crazy fangirl was around, she might have started imagining a romance between the two of them!

With the little divine stone translating for her, Xiaocao discovered that the white stallion had come by to tell her about a pregnant mare who was about to give birth. Thus, she sent Yingchun to inform Doctor Wang and bring him over. Although she had a cheat item in her hands, it was only useful in decreasing pain for the horse. As for helping the horse give birth, that was out of her abilities.

She brought along her own medicine box and climbed onto the white stallion's back before the two of them sped towards the outskirts of the stud farm, where the stables for the wild horses were located. There truly weren't a lot of horses who gave birth in the middle of deep winter within the herd. Xiaocao was a bit worried about this, so she felt that it was for the best that she also be present for this.

When Little Black Whirlwind saw that its master had completely ignored it and had her entire attention taken up by that 'little thief', it felt quite unhappy. It threw a little temper tantrum in the courtyard and only calmed down after Wutong gave it two pieces of rock candy.

This was not okay! It could not allow that little thief to take its master away. It needed to keep an eye on that uncouth fellow. Despite the cold, Little Black Whirlwind trotted outside in the direction of the outskirts of the horse farm. Before long, it caught up with the old veterinarian who was also headed to the stables there.

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The birth of the new foal had gone quite well considering the circumstances. Perhaps it was because the mother horse had eaten fodder that had spiritual energy in it, so she was in good shape. Not long after Xiaocao arrived there, the mare had given birth on her own to a red colored foal. Once Doctor Wang arrived, he inspected both the mare and her new foal from head to toe. After ascertaining that both animals were doing well, he left.

Black Whirlwind squeezed through the group of people and curiously regarded the pitiful little fellow who couldn't even stand up properly. It turned its head away in disgust and walked away. However, it was also afraid that its master would start loving the other fellow more than it, so it ended up waiting obediently at the side, acting completely different from its usual fiery and childish self. In fact, it didn't even try to steal the drop of mystic-stone water that Xiaocao had fed to the other little foal.

The new little foal had a decent bloodline and had just been fed some mystic-stone water to improve its constitution. After spending a winter at the stud farm, the little foal would likely not be the least bit inferior to Snow Scar once it grew up! Yu Xiaocao noticed that within the wild horse herd there were quite a few other pregnant mares. Thus, she especially sent out a few experienced grooms to take good care of these mares and their future little ones. These foals were all the hope for the future at this farm! She was pretty convinced that the next generation of these horses, who would spend their entire childhood in the cozy environment of the horse farm, would likely be quite reluctant to leave such a wonderful 'home' in the future.

After she finished settling everything down with the wild horse herd, it was already getting close to the twelfth month. Yu Xiaocao took a few of her maidservants on a day with good weather and had them pack all of their belongings in preparation to head back to the capital.

During this time period, the guards at the stud farm had caught a few outside spies who had tried to infiltrate the area to poison their water source. After interrogating them, they confirmed that these spies had come from the Tuha'erhanbu Tribe and had been sent out by Xiao Rong's brainless younger brother on this mission.

Did they really think that the Great Ming Empire, a fierce tiger, was a weak little Hello Kitty ah? In a pique of fury, Zhu Junyang took these spies along with some soldiers from the firearm barracks and headed out to attack the tribe with a night ambush. This group ended up setting the tribe's winter supplies all on fire and they also hung the heads of the slain spies on the flagpoles at the camp. For these ambitious foreign tribes, it was necessary to teach them a hard lesson. Otherwise, they would never learn!

The elite warriors of the Tuha'erhanbu Tribe had finally experienced the savagery of the long-distance gunpowder powered firearms. After experiencing a complete defeat, they finally realized the giant gap between themselves and the troops from the Great Ming Empire. Just because the other side didn't bother with them did not mean it was because they were afraid of them. Instead, it meant that they truly didn't even regard them as a rival and saw them as little jumping fleas instead.

In the middle of winter, it was extremely difficult for a tribe like them, which lived on the outskirts, to gather extra food and supplies. Almost half of their wintering supplies had been burnt to a crisp, which meant that a large portion of the tribe would go hungry during the long winter. In addition, the new chief of the tribe was tyrannical and muddleheaded. Many of the lower-ranking warriors and commoners were quite unhappy about this turn of events and began to long for the times when Great King Xiao Rong, who was a wise leader, was still around.

Xiao Rong, who had recovered fully from his wounds in the outer residence at the outskirts of the stud farm, had already infiltrated the tribe with his two loyal advisors. He was patiently waiting for the perfect time to strike and regain his throne. When Royal Prince Yang's firearm troops began their ambush, he took advantage of the situation and struck when the iron was still hot. He roused the warriors and people who were still loyal to him and swiftly rounded up all of the turncoats and imprisoned them. Thus, he finally regained the power that he had lost within the Tuha'erhanbu Tribe.

At this time, the tribe was facing a crisis with their lack of supplies for the harsh winter. Xiao Rong called all of the high-ranking warriors to take part in an urgent meeting and stated that he was thinking of making Tuha'erhanbu a subject-tribe under the Great Ming Empire such that the common people would be able to survive the upcoming season. Although there were a few high-ranking warriors who vehemently disliked this idea, the vast majority of people were cool-headed enough to analyze the situation logically. After realizing the severity of their situation, the votes came in and Xiao Rong's plan was approved.

Xiao Rong then informed Royal Prince Yang of their sincere desire to become a vassal under the Great Ming Empire, so the prince immediately sent someone off on a fast horse to send this information to the capital. The emperor swiftly sent over some officials to negotiate this settlement and the Tuha'erhanbu Tribe ended up signing an agreement. Every year, the Tuha'erhanbu Tribe would give a tribute to the

Great Ming Empire in raw silks and cash while the Great Ming Empire would provide the tribe with enough food and supplies to get through the harsh winters in the north. Furthermore, they would craft a marketplace where the two nations could trade freely, leading to an improved business relationship between the two...

But none of this could affect Xiaocao's desire to go back home. Did she want to go back to Dongshan Village to celebrate the New Years this year? Or should she bring her family into the capital to celebrate it instead? Since she wasn't sure herself, she wanted to go back earlier so that she could discuss this matter with her parents.

Zhu Junyang, on the other hand, hoped every day for a giant snowstorm. That way, they would be stuck here in the north, unable to travel. If that happened, he would be able to celebrate the New Years with the little lass himself, just the two of them! Naturally, if he could also find a way to get rid of that eyesore, Chief Steward Su, that would be even better!

Unfortunately, the weather did not cooperate with his wish. The eleventh month pretty much only had clear skies and bright sun every single day. He began to find every excuse he could to delay their departure back but his anticipated blizzard never appeared during that time.

Naturally, Su Ran, as a perceptive man, had long seen through his desires. Although he also wanted to spend a happy and bustling New Years with that lass, Xiaocao, he didn't want that brat, Zhu Junyang, to get his heart's desire either. As Zhu Junyang was trying to find another excuse to delay Xiaocao heading back, Su Ran lampooned his idea with a single sentence, "If Royal Prince Yang is much too busy to go back, I can go in your stead and escort Xiaocao back to the capital!"

Zhu Junyang was infuriated by Chief Steward Su's suggestion. This stinking old eunuch was definitely doing this on purpose! He was definitely deliberately going against him and instigating that lass to go back to the capital earlier! What made the prince even more angry was that the little lass expressed her approval of Chief Steward Su's idea and was nodding her head in agreement. Did she truly want to leave him behind and head off with Su Ran alone, who only had a pretty face?

Helpless in the face of the events, at the end of the eleventh month, Zhu Junyang reluctantly journeyed off with Xiaocao back to the capital. Within their luggage, they had added a few carts of valuable fur pelts as well. Naturally, the most expensive items that they were bringing back home, the rare and hard to find medicinal herbs, were all stored within Xiaocao's medicine box!

At the start of the twelfth month, Xiaocao finally arrived back at the capital. In the midst of a windy and snowy day, she obtained the news that Fang Zizhen and his wife were waiting to welcome their adopted daughter home at the Shili Pavilion in a suburb outside of the capital.

“Godfather, Godmother! It's such a cold day yet you both still came out of the capital to welcome me!” Yu Xiaocao exited the carriage and excitedly threw herself into Lady Fang's arms. After spending almost two months away from the capital, the closer she got to the city, the more Xiaocao reminisced about her time there and missed her relatives. The fact that her godfather and godmother came out to welcome her back had touched her greatly and made her feel very fortunate—she also had people who missed her!

Lady Fang carefully inspected her goddaughter from head to toe. She noticed that Xiaocao's complexion was bright and rosy and it looked like she had gained a bit of weight as her cheeks felt much more soft under the gentle pinch of her hand. She helped the little lass to stand up straight and discovered that her daughter had seemed to have grown a bit taller. Furthermore, the girl's body had added a bit more curve to it and she now resembled a little flower that was gradually blooming, beautiful and stunning.

She felt herself relax and revealed a smile, “Your godfather, ah, started to inquire after your whereabouts right at the start of the twelfth month. A few days ago, he found out from Imperial Prince Jing's Estate that you would probably be back within the next two days, so he couldn't sit still anymore. He ran out here every day. In fact, even snow didn't stop him from heading out. I secretly calculated a bit and thought that you would likely be back by today, so I headed out with him. And see, it looks like my hunch was right. I truly did pick the right day. Doesn't that show that us two have our hearts linked together?”

Yu Xiaocao hugged her godmother's arm and swayed a bit as she chirped in a sweet voice, “Does that mean only Godfather was waiting for me ah? Godmother, does that mean you weren't excited about me coming back?”

“How could she not miss you? Right after you left the capital, she began to incessantly mutter into my ears: 'As a girl, do you think Cao'er will be able to get used to life at the border ah? Is Cao'er at the stud farm at the border yet? Will Cao'er be bullied by the horses? When will Cao'er come back? Cao'er should be back by now right? Why has she been gone for so long? It couldn't be that something has happened right...' She was like a broken record that it made my head spin every day. Even your younger brother learned from her and began to ask when his older sister would come back!” Fang Zizhen roasted his wife as he gently stroked his daughter's black and silky hair with a fake helpless expression on his face.

Zhu Junyang silently stood at the side and waited until the three of them had finished their conversation before he sidled forward to wish his two future in-laws well. However, all he got in return was a disdainful eye roll from General Fang—It was this fellow who took his daughter off to the forsaken border to help him establish a horse breeding farm. Having a young maiden live in the crude and harsh conditions of the border front in order to build a stud farm was only an idea this brat could come up with!!

Fang Zizhen directly ignored Zhu Junyang, who was a royal prince, and instead warmly greeted Chief Steward Su and even thanked him for taking good care of his goddaughter.

Zhu Junyang: Clearly it was this prince who had been taking care of the little lass, alright? How was any of this related to that stinking old eunuch?

“If you want to chatter, do it once we get back to the capital. It's windy and snowing right now, so we shouldn't let our daughter get exposed to the cold!” Lady Fang pulled on her daughter's hand and led her onto Xiaocao's carriage. After entering the carriage, she discovered that the inside was wide and spacious and had been appropriately supplied. There were fur blankets in the carriage and plump cushions on the seats to make sitting more comfortable. Furthermore, the carriage had a warm and welcoming brazier in the corner, which made the entire inside cozy and at a comfortable temperature. Only then did Lady Fang relax after seeing all of this.

Xiaocao nestled next to her godmother and the two of them began to chat about the residence. Lady Fang told her some good news, “When your father and mother found out that you had been sent to the border on a mission and that you wouldn't be back until the twelfth month, they couldn't bear for you to make another journey to Tanggu Town and decided to bring their entire family over to the capital at the end of the month.”

“My parents are coming to the capital to celebrate the New Years ah! Then what about their business in Tanggu Town?” Their farmstead in Tanggu Town had over a thousand mu in land that was cultivating out of season vegetables under greenhouse pavilions. Normally, her father and her eldest brother managed the day to day operations, so was it truly okay for them to leave at this time?

Lady Fang patted her daughter's hand and said, “Are the stewards at the farmstead eating and drinking for nothing ah? If every owner of land and business had to manage everything themselves, then what's the point of having stewards? You, ah, at such a young age, really like to worry over things. It's not the first year that your family has grown vegetables out of season in greenhouses and there are so many experienced hands on the farmstead. Your parents will only be gone for less than a month, so what sort of problems could arise then?”

“You are right! Steward Ding, who is in charge of the greenhouses, is quite capable despite his young age! This is also the right time to test him. If he's unable to handle everything, then it's better we find a new steward to take his place instead. That way, we can avoid my father and eldest brother becoming overtired from working so hard!” Yu Xiaocao forcefully nodded her head in agreement.

Lady Fang tapped her head and lightly said, “You must be tired after traveling so long, right? Come lean against me and sleep for a bit. When we get back home, I'll wake you up! We'll first go back to the General's Residence as your younger brother has been asking after you for days. If you didn't come back soon, I'm sure he would throw a huge temper tantrum!” The 'younger brother' that Lady Fang was referring to was naturally her blood-related son, Fang Haolin, who had just turned three this year.

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Because Xiaocao had spent most of her time in the capital these past few years and was often at the General's Residence to keep her godfather and godmother company, her relationship with Little Linlin was better than most relationships that biological siblings had with each other. If the little fellow didn't see his 'older sister' for two days, he would immediately become unhappy and would even refuse his loving mother as he scampered away on his two little legs to find his older sister at the Yu Residence.

When they got to the General's Residence, Su Ran said his farewells as he had to go see the emperor. After all, the emperor was still waiting for him to report on all of the matters that had occurred at the stud farm! Zhu Junyang, on the other hand, was quite happy to see this brazen faced fellow leave and drank a cup of tea. Unfortunately, Fang Zizhen only received him in the study at the outer residence, so the prince could only blankly watch as the little lass turned around and headed through the Drooping Flower gate with a crowd of maidservants waiting for her in the inner residence.

Xiaocao, who had just entered the inner residence, had her legs immediately hugged by the little fellow, Fang Haolin. She bent over and hoisted the little fellow up and enthusiastically kissed the little boy a few times on his pudgy cheeks.

“Be careful! This fellow is not light! Lin'er, your older sister is very tired after spending the whole day traveling in the carriage. Don't make your older sister overtired!” Lady Fang helped Xiaocao prop the little boy up from the side. Her son had been so slight and weak when he was first born but after being treated by her daughter, he had a ravenous appetite and continued to gain weight. In addition, he was wrapped up from head to toe in winter clothes and currently resembled a plump little meatball.

“Mother, Linlin is not fat. Linlin got taller!” The little fellow hated people calling him fat the most. Thus, he often claimed that he didn't gain weight and instead grew in height, which was why he was heavier!

Xiaocao let out a peal of laughter after being amused by the little fellow. When the little fellow began to pout out of anger, she hurriedly agreed with his previous statement, "That's right! Linlin is now a couple centimeters taller than he was before I left. In a few more years, you'll be taller than Older Sister!"

When Fang Haolin heard this, he revealed a brilliant and angelic looking smile as he vigorously nodded his head, "I absolutely have to be taller than Older Sister! A shorty would not be able to marry a wife!"

"Haha! You're so young but you already want to marry a wife? Do you have a particular young maiden in mind?" Yu Xiaocao grinned as she made fun of him.

Lady Fang suppressed a laugh and smiled, "A few days ago, I brought him to the Imperial Tutor's residence to admire the plum blossoms. Lady Feng's youngest son had just added a daughter to his family. That little girl baby was adorable and pretty with a pair of luminous inky black eyes and long, lush eyelashes. Her entire body was soft and sweet with a hint of a milky smell. This little guy insisted on hugging her, so Lady Feng made a joke that she should become his wife. This little guy shamelessly nodded his head in agreement!"

Lady Fang didn't know whether she should laugh or cry as she recalled what had happened, "When we were about to leave, this guy even threw a tantrum stating that he wanted to bring his 'little wife' back! Lady Feng and I tried to calm him down but, in the end, only Lady Feng's youngest daughter-in-law managed to placate him by stating that he could only marry a wife once he reached his father's height. This is the reason why he now states that shorties are not able to find wives!"

"Our Little Linlin really wants to marry a wife? If you want to grow taller, then you can't be as picky as you were before. You need to eat less meat. Otherwise, you'll only grow horizontally and not vertically. Furthermore, you need to eat more vegetables and exercise more. Every day you should run laps in the practice arena and you shouldn't slack off on practicing martial arts..." Fang Haolin wrinkled his nose after hearing Yu Xiaocao's opinions. Finally, he couldn't take it anymore and blurted out that he didn't want to find a wife anymore!

Fang Haolin loved to eat meat the most. If the meal didn't have any meat, then he refused to eat. Furthermore, he hated eating vegetables the most, especially the leafy green ones. Since he was already three years old, General Fang had already started to instruct him in the basics of strengthening his body and martial arts. However, Fang Zizhen often had to leave the capital to head to Tanggu Town and Lady Fang really doted on her son, so the little boy only lazily practiced these skills every few days or so.

Making him change his eating habits as well as increasing his exercise regime was something the little fellow was deathly against!

When she saw that the little fellow was starting to pout again, Xiaocao hurriedly asked, "Don't you want to become a big hero like your father, who's a great general?"

When she saw that he responded immediately by nodding his head in agreement, she pressed forward with her advantage, "The reason why Father's martial arts are so good is because he worked very hard in training his skills when he was young. Just think about it. If you go on the battlefield without even the strength to hold onto a sword, then you can only get beaten down when the enemy appears because you are weak! Just look, I can easily push you down with just a tiny bit of force. If I, a weak little maiden, can even push you over, then how could you possibly become a big hero? Instead, you're just a weakling!"

"Linlin is not a big weakling, Linlin will become a great hero when I get older and help Older Sister beat away the bad guys!!" Tears had come to Fang Haolin's eyes after being pushed around by his older sister. However, he had an obstinate expression on his face as he stated, "Tomorrow, Linlin will start to practice martial arts and I won't slack off anymore!!"

Lady Fang looked incredibly gratified after hearing this and smiled, "Lin'er still listens the most to you, his older sister. Every day I nag him over and over and use all sorts of methods, but he's never agreed so readily like this! Even when his father shows him a stern face and reprimands him, he still stubbornly holds onto his convictions. The fact that you were able to make him agree so readily to agree to train is something that your father would be incredibly happy to hear!"

"What would make me happy to hear?" At this moment, Fang Zizhen had just entered the inner courtyard. He had noticed his wife and daughter were both in the main hall having a conversation, so he came over and picked up his fat son from his daughter's hands, throwing him up into the air a few times. Fang Haolin giggled happily as flying up in the air was his favorite game that he played with his father.

"Your precious son has made the decision that he's going to train hard! Are you happy or not by this?" Lady Fang leveled a glare at her husband and snatched her son back, placing him on the warm couch.

Fang Zizhen looked appreciatively at his son and spoke to Xiaocao, "Daughter, it must be you who managed to convince him, right? This little fellow will only listen to you when he has a stubborn streak going on! He's so little yet I don't know where he learned this from. He has such a temper!"

“Are there other fathers who speak about their sons in this way? Wasn't Lin'er still young in the past ah? After the New Years, our Lin'er will be older by a year again so he'll be more mature and will improve more!” Lady Fang only bore her precious son after reaching the age of forty. Thus, she normally spoiled him to no end and couldn't bear to say a single harsh word to him.

Fang Zizhen glanced at his wife and earnestly persuaded, “Wife, please remember the saying that 'a dotting mother often ruins a son'. In my opinion, we should hire a strict boxing tutor for our son so that he'll learn the basics well. What do you think? Otherwise, it's likely that with our soft hearts that we won't be able to let him truly learn what he needs to learn.”

Although Lady Fang was still a bit reluctant in her heart, she also knew that her husband was right in this situation. She gently stroked her son's soft hair and managed to eke out a nod in reply, “Okay! Go see if there's anyone among the people below you who has a good handle of the foundations...the best would be to find someone who has a bit more patience and doesn't have a bad temper...after all, Lin'er is still small...”

“Alright then! I will handle everything for this matter! I know what needs to be done!” Although Fang Zizhen verbally agreed with his wife's request, in his heart, he became even more convinced that he needed to find a strict tutor for his son.

Yu Xiaocao pinched the cheeks of Fang Haolin, who had scrambled up onto her lap and was nestled against her chest, and then said, “I have a recipe for medicinal baths on my hands. When the time comes, I'll make sure to alter it appropriately to suit my younger brother's needs. This bath can strengthen his bones and muscles and relieve exhaustion and fatigue. That way, he won't have to endure too much aches and pains after exercising hard!”

“Thank you, Older Sister! Older Sister, you're the best!” Fang Haolin wasn't someone who was stubborn beyond means and didn't know how to think. After all, he was still young and had never experienced the cruelties of life before. Every time his father made him practice martial arts, his whole body would ache from head to toe the next day as if someone had given him a beating. This was the reason he did everything within his power, such as acting cute, to get away from having to do more. Once he heard that his body wouldn't ache after practicing martial arts, the little fellow immediately became much more enthused. As for his older sister, who seemed to know everything, the little fellow now liked and worshiped her even more.

Lady Fang watched fondly as the two siblings revealed their harmonious relationship with each other and revealed a gratified smile. Suddenly, she remembered something and hurriedly had Linglong take out a large red wedding invitation from her grooming case, placing it into Xiaocao's hands, "This is the wedding invitation from the Zhou Family's heir. He first sent it to your residence but when he found out that you had left to handle some affairs, he personally came over to our residence to have us tell you instead."

The Zhou Family's heir? Who was that? Yu Xiaocao looked puzzled for a bit and only after she opened the invitation did she realize that Zhenxiu Restaurant's Third Young Master Zhou had now become the acknowledged heir of the Zhou Family. Oh ho! This fellow had wordlessly even found his future wife and was going to get married on the sixteenth of this month!!

After thinking about it, she realized that this fellow Zhou Zixu was older than her by six years and would be twenty-two after the New Years. It truly was the right time for him to marry a wife and beget children now! Time really passed too quickly. At that time, when her family was still incredibly poor and in hard times, she had coincidentally come across Third Young Master Zhou, who was fourteen at the time. He had been a youthful and handsome young teenager then!

In the blink of an eye, seven to eight years had already passed. She herself had grown from a small little cabbage in a rural village to become a royal princess who helped the emperor with his affairs. Furthermore, the many businesses under her hands were all roaring and doing quite well. As for Third Young Master Zhou, he had already become a successful businessman. Not only did he expand Zhenxiu Restaurant throughout the country, but his condiments, vermicelli and century eggs factory had also expanded such that its goods were now shipped everywhere. He had expanded the Zhou Family's business by a large degree and helped them firmly keep their imperial merchant status. This status naturally made it easier for him to conduct more business...

Yu Xiaocao held onto the invitation and signed reminiscently. She and Third Young Master Zhou had started off in a mutually beneficial relationship. Third Young Master Zhou needed her abilities to help forge a way within his complicated family and create a stable position for himself. As for herself, she needed a fast way to make money to change her family's poor and embarrassing state. At that time, the two of them were like two weak little creatures who relied on each other for warmth and strength as they slowly grew up in this world.

Before she knew it, that tough and stubborn youth had already reached the age where he was going to marry a wife. How come she suddenly had a feeling that she was suddenly going to lose a son after he became an adult?

Fang Zizhen had noticed that his daughter had been sighing repeatedly over this and couldn't help but start thinking down the rabbit hole. He carefully probed, "Daughter, despite the Zhou Family's wealth, this heir of the Zhou Family is still a merchant when all is said and done. When considering a marriage, one must remember that it is best of people of similar statuses to be matched with each other. The person he's going to marry is the daughter of the Huang Family, who are also imperial merchants. Thus, it looks like they are well matched in this aspect."

"Oh, he's going to marry the daughter from the Huang Family, one of the four great merchant families of the empire? Is this a marriage of convenience for the two families ah?" Yu Xiaocao frowned even more deeply as she was afraid that this fellow was trying to sacrifice his own future happiness for the sake of his family.

"Uh...a marriage that benefits the family isn't necessarily one that leads to unhappiness for the individual. That fellow surnamed Zhou doesn't really have a lot of relationship with us and is mostly just considered a business partner for you. He's already an adult man so I'm sure he can make his own decisions. Let's not worry too much about him!" Previously, Fang Zizhen had once considered this fellow as a match for his goddaughter as he had seen how well he had treated Xiaocao.

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However, when he realized that Zhou Zixu only had his mind and soul on improving his family's business, Fang Zizhen decided to pass on this fellow as a prospective marriage candidate. He definitely didn't want his future son-in-law to only be preoccupied with the family business, leaving his daughter alone to live a lonely life in the inner courtyard. Furthermore, perhaps the fellow only saw his daughter's abilities and talents as a way to further the family business. Neither of these scenarios was something he wanted for his daughter!

At the time, his daughter might have been too young and not mature enough to consider the relationship she could have with the opposite sex. He rejoiced in the fact that she hadn't been entranced by that fellow's good looks and gentle treatment of her. Naturally, this also couldn't be separated from the fact that the tyrannical Royal Prince Yang had clung onto her, which put out the Zhou Family's youngster's slight flame of desire.

Fang Zizhen felt his head ache again once he thought about Royal Prince Yang. In his opinion, Royal Prince Yang wasn't the best choice of husband for his daughter despite the fact that he was the youth with the most promising future at court. First of all, that fellow had an explosive temperament. The prince was like an unsteady cannon that could explode at any time.

After all, didn't the prince almost completely destroy Official Wu's residence earlier? If it wasn't for the fact that the prince's two loyal bodyguards had given their all to stop him, then it was likely that the

whole Wu Family would have perished at his hands! His daughter had a weak figure with slender arms and legs, so she absolutely wouldn't be able to survive one blow from him.

Even if his daughter could stop him from bursting into violence, wasn't the fellow just too good looking as well? Was it really alright for an adult man to be more beautiful and better looking than most women? If this guy didn't have his violent and temperamental reputation, Fang Zizhen was willing to bet that almost all of the young maidens in the capital would be willing to go up to the guy and stick themselves to him! If his daughter ended up choosing Royal Prince Yang as her husband, wouldn't she have to guard him from wolves every day and have to try to stop other women from throwing themselves at him?

Argh! The emperor was truly too much. Why did he have to send a little girl out to handle official work and also allow that large wolf, Royal Prince Yang, go along with her? The capital already had many rumors swirling about how Royal Prince Yang had his eye on Royal Princess Jinan. If this news also came out, who knew what the rumormongers would spin this story into?!

Hmph! Regardless, he couldn't allow any of this to benefit that brat, Royal Prince Yang! If that guy refused to treat his daughter well and keep her as his one and only, Fang Zizhen was willing to raise his daughter for the rest of her life rather than allow her to be tormented at the royal prince's residence!

That being said, it was not as if Royal Prince Yang was the only suitor available for his daughter. The second young master of Duke Ronggu's Estate was cultured and refined, and it was obvious the man had a gentle temperament. From what he had observed, it seemed as if Second Young Master Ning had some good feelings towards his daughter.

Furthermore, there was his martial teacher's grandson, Zhao Han. He had a handsome appearance and was also childhood friends with Xiaocao. Currently, that youth was doing quite well in Tanggu. By relying on his own abilities, Zhao Han was already the head of a battalion there. As for the large and small military campaigns at sea, he always managed to complete the missions in a satisfactory manner.

Fang Zizhen was in charge of the garrison at the harbor, so he was very close to where Zhao Han was stationed. In addition, because he had a close relationship with his martial teacher, he had always kept an eye out on this young marital nephew of his. He was quite satisfied with the youth's performance. Furthermore, the Zhao Family had a family rule where they didn't take concubines, which made Fang Zizhen even more satisfied with the youngster.

All in all, his daughter didn't have to worry about not being able to marry someone. Thus, she didn't need to place all of her hopes on the crooked tree that was Royal Prince Yang!!

Yu Xiaocao obviously didn't know that her godfather had gone through all of the marriageable young men in the capital in the blink of an eye, weighing them to see if they were suitable and finding Royal Prince Yang quite lacking. She was currently preoccupied with her own thoughts as she was trying to figure out just what sort of wedding gift she should give Third Young Master Zhou, who was her good business partner.

Figuring out the intricacies in a relationship was not one of her strengths. In her opinion, things were much simpler in modern times. When friends got married, all you had to do was give them some wedding money. If you were closer to the person, you gave more money. If you were not as close, you gave less. This saved the hassle of trying to figure out what was a suitable gift to give to the other person!

“Daughter...just what are you thinking about now?” Fang Zizhen noticed that Xiaocao was frowning and had a 'depressed' expression on her face, so he felt his heart drop. Was it possible that his daughter had finally realized she liked that youngster surnamed Zhou after she saw the wedding invitation...

General Fang, you're going down the wrong rabbit hole!

Yu Xiaocao's frown became even more severe and her entire face scrunched up as she sighed, “I'm trying to figure out just what sort of wedding gift is appropriate to give to Third Young Master Zhou ah!”

When Fang Zizhen heard this, he felt his heart completely relax. He grinned and spread his hands open, “Your godmother is the one who's in charge of these matters. Why don't you ask her ah?”

Lady Fang smiled ruefully and leveled a look at her husband before she said to Xiaocao, “Gift giving requires paying attention to reciprocity. Last time, during your coming of age ceremony, Third Young Master Zhou not only took on all of the banquet's expenditures but he also gifted you an expensive hair ornament. This time, you can select a gift that is of equal value to give back to him. It is best that you tailor the gift to his personal likes. For example, if he likes antiques, then you can give him some valuable curiosities. Or if he likes more tangible goods, then you can give him gold and jade...if you truly don't have any good ideas, after you rest for a whole day, I can take you out to some jewelry shops to take a look.”

“Alright, then I'll have to rely on you, Godmother!” Yu Xiaocao nodded her head and finally felt as if this headache was over. If all else failed, she could always commission an artisan to craft a golden money tree to give to Third Young Master Zhou. As a businessman, he likely cared about good omens.

In order to get back to the capital faster, Xiaocao and the others had taken advantage of the good weather and made good speed to get back here, camping along the way. After she conversed a bit with her godmother and godfather, she finally felt her exhaustion catch up to her. Lady Fang hurriedly sent her back to her own courtyard and the servants there had already prepared hot water and were just waiting for her. Yu Xiaocao enjoyed a comfortable hot bath and ate a simple lunch before she immediately fell asleep. She slept until the latter half of the evening and it was only the growling of her hungry stomach that woke her up.

Lady Fang had already ordered the servants to bring back dinner for her and it was quickly heated up in her small kitchen. After she hastily stuffed her stomach full, Yu Xiaocao quickly went back to sleep. The next day, when Royal Prince Yang came over to visit, she was still happily snoring away on her warm and comfortable kang bed.

Fang Zizhen had finished up his affairs at the harbor and was currently on his year end break. Thus, he received Royal Prince Yang at the outer study and was currently talking circles around the other man. The conversation somehow never seemed to touch upon his daughter. Zhu Junyang was helpless under the other man's tactics and could only use official matters as an excuse to bring the topic to where he wanted, “Yesterday when I saw the emperor, he was quite interested in Cao'er's special recipe to bait horses over. He wanted me to get the recipe from her so he could take a look at it. So...”

“Your Highness, please conduct yourself with propriety! In the future, the name 'Cao'er' should not be easily said around other people. In the past, when my daughter was still young, it wasn't necessary to observe these customs around her. However, she has already reached a marriageable age, so, in the future, you need to be much more cautious when speaking about her!” Although Fang Zizhen didn't make his dislike of the prince extremely obvious, he wasn't going to make it easy for this fellow who clearly didn't have pure thoughts towards his daughter.

Zhu Junyang would have never had expected that before he could endure difficulties from his future father-in-law, he would first have to endure the pickiness of his future godfather-in-law. However, he refused to retreat from this matter and smiled in a good natured way, “General Fang, that lass Cao'er has already agreed to become engaged to me after the New Year passes. Thus, there's no need for us to be too concerned about propriety now.”

“Who agreed to allow you two to become engaged? This is called making a private deal behind the parents' backs! My daughter is still young and quite immature, but you, Royal Prince Yang, should understand how things are done around here, right? If you want to want to become betrothed to Cao'er, don't you need to make sure your elders also approve of this? You're being much too negligent, right? Is it because you think my Cao'er has no backing nor power behind her? I've never seen such a bully like you before!! That's not okay, I need to go to Imperial Prince Jing's Estate and have a good talk with your lord father!”

When Fang Zizhen heard this, he immediately exploded! This stinky brat was flaunting his stunning good looks in order to seduce his daughter and even obtain her consent for marriage. This was showing the Yu and Fang Families that he wasn't afraid of them at all!

“General Fang, please calm down! Please don't tack on the crime of going behind our parents onto us! The relationship between me and Cao'er didn't just happen out of nowhere. In the past, when the lass was still young, I had privately contacted Uncle Yu to see what he thought about betrothing her to me in hopes that I could obtain his approval. However, Uncle Yu had said at the time that the little lass was in charge of her own life and that any marriage for her needed her consent before it could go forward. I spent a lot of time and effort over the past few years in order to have the lass finally agree to marry me. If you don't trust me, then you should at least trust your daughter's judgement. When has she ever gone wrong?” Zhu Junyang knew that the relationship between Yu Xiaocao and Fang Zizhen was of the same caliber as the one she had with her biological father. Thus, he patiently explained all of the details to the older man.

“I naturally trust my own daughter! However...parents and matchmakers should be the one to decide a child's marriage. It is out of the ordinary for the two of you, at such a young age, to make such a momentous decision! This decision cannot hold as neither myself nor Brother Yu have given our permission yet. If you want to trick our daughter away from us, we definitely won't make it easy for you!!” Fang Zizhen slapped the table forcefully causing all of the trinkets and other items to bounce at least a foot in the air.

Zhu Junyang hurriedly tried to placate his future godfather-in-law, “Uncle Fang, please relax. I will absolutely go through all of the needed etiquettes and customs for this matter. I absolutely won't have anyone say a bad word about the little lass. After a month has passed after the New Years, I will have my lord father come to your residence to propose marriage with the three letters and six rites. We absolutely will not shirk one bit on anything on our part. Furthermore, I will absolutely follow the emperor's recommendation and will wait until the little lass turns eighteen before I marry her. So what do you...”

As soon as he heard that the prince was willing to wait until his daughter turned eighteen to marry her, the indignation within Fang Zizhen's heart settled down perceptively. Although the court had recommended that women wait until they were eighteen and men wait until they turned twenty to marry, there was still the pressure of the old customs from long ago. Change didn't happen in a short period of time. Within the commoners, most girls still got engaged and married as soon as they passed their coming of age ceremony.

Royal Prince Yang was actually older than Cao'er by seven to eight years and many of the other young lords his age in the capital had long been married with a herd of children around them. Despite that, the prince was willing to wait patiently for another two years. Fang Zizhen naturally felt the young man's sincerity from that.

The uncomfortable feeling he had in his heart after finding out that his daughter had been snatched away had been slightly ameliorated. Fang Zizhen still asked the youth suspiciously, "Tell me the truth. This time, when you guys went to the borders, did you take advantage of Cao'er in any way? After all, why else would she so easily agree to marry you? My Cao'er is such a sweet and obedient child so how could she make such a momentous decision without obtaining the consent of her elders?"

Zhu Junyang naturally wouldn't tell the older man that the two of them had already hugged and kissed each other. Otherwise, his future godfather-in-law would definitely explode in anger and start throwing the stool he was sitting on at him. He seriously replied, "Uncle Fang, just what sort of man do you think I am? This time, Cao'er had brought along four maidservants along with her to complete this mission. The maid, Wutong, was especially diligent. Every day she kept a close eye on us. Even if I had the desire to take advantage of your daughter, I never had the opportunity with the maids along. What do you think?"

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"You dare to have improper thoughts towards my daughter? You shameless little brat..." Fang Zizhen immediately stood up and looked around before he picked up a paperweight. He was planning on throwing it at Zhu Junyang.

Zhu Junyang hurriedly exclaimed, "Uncle Fang, please wait! This paperweight was given to you by Xiaocao, who especially picked it out for you. Regardless of how valuable it is, do you really think you can bear to break something that she's given to you ah?"

When he saw Fang Zizhen hesitate in his throwing motion, the prince continued on, "Uncle Fang, you've misunderstood me! Just think about it, I've watched that lass Cao'er grow up under my eyes, so how could I possibly treat her poorly ah? That being said, other than that maid Wutong, Chief Steward Su was also there keeping an eye on us. You don't know this yet, but Chief Steward Su treats Cao'er as if

she was his own daughter in every possible way and he's extremely docile and gentle with her. From my perspective, it looks like he's trying to steal your daughter away from you!"

This guy was truly too much. In order to obtain his future in-law's trust, he was willing to crown himself as a 'beast'. As long as he was able to hug his little lass home, he was more than happy to have 'beast' as his name. (Author: Royal Prince Yang, where's your integrity? Royal Prince Yang sends out a glare: What is integrity? Can that be eaten ah?)

Fang Zizhen's attention had been successfully transferred over to Chief Steward Su now. What? Chief Steward Su wanted to steal his daughter away? How could that be okay? Fang Zizhen really couldn't do much against his daughter's biological father. However, why did an eunuch also need to come into the mix? Did the guy want to steal someone else's daughter because he was unable to father his own?

Furthermore, that fellow wore all white every day of the year and had severe mysophobia. In addition, the other man's tactics at handling people was enough to scare children and his moods changed all the time. In all aspects, this guy was definitely not a good father, so he needed to make sure the eunuch didn't end up influencing his daughter in the wrong way! Not okay! In the future, he needed to prevent that fellow from getting too close to his daughter. However, Chief Steward Su was the head of the hidden guards and had a wide reach. Was he really going to be able to stop the other man?

"Uncle Fang, I truly have something that I need to see Xiaocao about. Can you be a bit flexible and let me see her? If you don't feel comfortable, then you can be present in the same room as us. That way you can see if I am improper in any way!" Zhu Junyang was willing to concede some things in order to win the overall battle as he truly wished to see the little lass. Argh! Why was it so hard for him to even see his future wife in person?

Fang Zizhen stared at Zhu Junyang for a long time before he finally curled his lip and waved a hand. He stated in a voice that showed he was conveying a great favor, "Forget it, I may not trust you but how could I not trust my own daughter? Go ah? I'm only giving you two hours and it's not negotiable. Don't even think of trying to cadge a meal from us!"

Zhu Junyang's lips involuntarily twitched. He had originally wanted to spend time with the little lass at the noon meal. It looked like...he needed to work on Lady Fang on this point now!

"Master, are we going to Miss Yu's courtyard now? I'm not sure if that lass, Wutong, is here or at the Yu Residence right now." The second sentence that Hou Xiaoliang uttered was mostly for himself.

“Oh what? You're interested in that maidservant?” Zhu Junyang glanced at his own assistant. Ever since Dong Dali had been transferred over to the Xishan Barracks to take over leadership there, Hou Xiaoliang had been at his side. Perhaps the youth was of a tender age, but the fellow was not as steady as Dong Dali and had a livelier personality. However, he still managed to finish his tasks and assignments in a satisfactory manner.

Hou Xiaoliang chuckled and candidly admitted his thoughts, “That's right ah! Wutong has a pleasant appearance, is loyal and reliable, and is quite capable and clever. I haven't even worn the sweater and gloves she knitted for me because I don't want them to get dirty or ruined! She's also gentle without being a pushover so I think she's quite good!”

“You need to make sure you think things through. In the future, Wutong will likely stay by Cao'er's side and be the chief manager of her courtyard. As for you? You can just look at Older Brother Dong to see what your future is like. In the future, it's quite likely that you'll become a fifth or sixth ranked general. At that time, other people may mock you for marrying a maidservant and you may not be able to hold your head up high among your colleagues. Don't blame this prince then when it happens!” Zhu Junyang reminded the other fellow a bit.

However, Hou Xiaoliang wasn't the least bit grateful, “Master, this subordinate has no aspirations. Being able to stay by your side, running your errands, is already more than enough for me. I've really never thought of entering the military and becoming an official. This subordinate has already decided that it's best for me to stay by your side for the rest of my life as your assistant. After all, wouldn't I have more freedom doing this then going into the military?”

“Just look at you with your lack of ambitions! For the sake of your wife, are you willing to give up officialdom?! In the future, I'm sure you'll become a hen-pecked man and be completely controlled by your wife!” Zhu Junyang jokingly scolded his assistant.

Hou Xiaoliang gathered his courage and grinned mischievously, “A certain type of master will have the same type of servant. This subordinate is only taking a page out of the master's book, that's all. I still need to continue to study from you so I can bring the beauty home earlier!”

“Stinky brat, who gave you the guts to make fun of this prince? You're looking for a beating, right?” Zhu Junyang turned around and swiftly sent a not-gentle kick at the youth's butt. Even though Hou Xiaoliang had taken precautions, he still wasn't able to avoid his master's fast reprisal.

“Greetings to Royal Prince Yang!” The sound of Wutong's voice could be heard from behind the plum blossom glade. Hou Xiaoliang's eyes, which weren't very large but were full of life, immediately lit up. He raised his head and saw a graceful, simply-dressed figure through the picturesque scene of the plum blossoms. The fiery red flowers contrasted beautifully with her pale, white face. Hou Xiaoliang immediately fell under her spell.

Zhu Junyang quietly rebuked, “Such an embarrassment!”

Then he looked at Wutong, who was wearing a cloak made of weasel fur, and asked, “Is your young miss up yet? How did she rest last night?”

Wutong appropriately replied in a decorous manner, “In reply to Your Highness, my young miss has been awake for quite a bit. She is currently with Lady Fang discussing her plans for tomorrow. The young miss slept very well last night and seems to be in good spirits today.”

“Younger Sister Wutong, are you...” Hou Xiaoliang came over in a flattering manner and was trying to find some way to have a conversation with her.

Wutong glanced at him briefly and quietly replied, “The red plum blossoms in the courtyard are quite beautiful right now, so this servant was planning on cutting a few branches to place them in a vase to decorate the inner room.”

“Younger Sister Wutong, which branches do you like? If you need any help in cutting them, please feel free to ask me.” Hou Xiaoliang sidled over and stood next to her. He looked in the direction that she was facing and gazed at the plum blossoms.

Wutong increased the distance between them by a couple of steps and shook her head at him in a distant manner, “No need to trouble yourself, Bodyguard Hou. The plum blossom trees are not very tall, so this servant can easily reach the branches. Your master has already left, so why aren't you following him?”

“The master has matters to discuss with your young miss and doesn't need me by his side. Younger Sister Wutong, don't be too courteous. If there's anything you need help with, give me a holler!” Hou Xiaoliang warmly sidled over, which frightened Wutong into stepping back.

She couldn't persuade him otherwise, so Wutong hurriedly offered the ceramic container in her hands towards him and said, "How about you help me gather the snow that is underneath the plum blossom petals? Remember, you can only gather the bit of snow that has touched any fallen petals..."

Hou Xiaoliang saw that he finally obtained his chance to spend more time with Wutong, so he eagerly took the container and idly chatted, "Younger Sister Wutong, is the snow that we're gathering going to be used to brew flower blossom tea? Could I possibly have the honor of trying the tea that you've personally brewed?"

"You...just do your job, okay? If you do well, then next summer, I absolutely won't forget to give you a share of the tea that is brewed from flower-scented snow. The plum trees are blooming quite nicely over there, so I'm going to take a look..." Wutong was a bit flustered by Hou Xiaoliang's actions and was trying to think of ways to dodge this fellow who was acting oddly.

How could Hou Xiaoliang let go of this good opportunity? He hurriedly followed after her with the container in hand, "Let's go together! I'm pretty good at climbing trees and I might be able to help...Hey! Younger Sister Wutong, walk a bit slower as it's slippery around here..."

As those two talked, Zhu Junyang walked familiarly along the paths that lead to Xiaocao's courtyard. The young maidservants stationed there all knew who he was. The maid in charge of keeping an eye on the gate hastily jogged forward to announce his presence to her mistress but was only about a second or two faster than the long legged Royal Prince Yang from reaching the main room.

Lady Fang had come over early in the morning with her clingy son in tow. Right now, she was fondly watching as her son and daughter horsed around on the warm kang bed. Her daughter, who was usually quite mature, was teasing her son quite mercilessly. Her son, on the other hand, foolishly took it in stride and allowed his older sister to play around with him. His hair had been tied up with a red string and there was bright red blush on his cheeks, making his face resemble a monkey's bottom. It truly was a sight for people to behold. Despite that, the little fellow giggled happily and had a brilliant smile on his face.

When she heard the young maidservant report that Royal Prince Yang had come by, Lady Fang smiled knowingly at her daughter and lightly chuckled, "It's only been one night since he last saw you yet he still comes over like a little begging puppy! Do you think Royal Prince Yang plans on hanging himself from your waistband now?"

“Godmother! Are there mothers like you in this world who make fun of their daughters in this way?” Yu Xiaocao's face immediately turned bright red and her large eyes had a bit of bashfulness in them.

The two of them weren't able to say much more before they heard Yingchun on the outside greeting Royal Prince Yang. Lady Fang glanced at her daughter mirthfully again. Speaking of Royal Prince Yang, Lady Fang was quite pleased by his behavior in the past few years.

If one was evaluating Xiaocao by the standards of nobly born maidens in the capital, she didn't hit the mark of being graceful or gentle enough in either speech or decorum. Although her personality was able to attract the attention of some youths, she still wasn't an ideal daughter-in-law in the eyes of many matrons.

Sometimes she wanted to make the hard decision and invite an etiquette master over to instruct her daughter. However, she was also afraid that, by doing so, she would end up erasing her daughter's unique personality and transform her into another living doll like the other noble young maidens, who lived as if they had masks over their faces. On the flip side, if Xiaocao didn't learn these mannerisms, she was afraid that her daughter would have difficulty finding a good marriage in the future.

Fortunately, Royal Prince Yang was present and he had always done his best to protect and shield her daughter. Furthermore, he accepted all of her quirks, even her wily little temper, shocking verbal discourses, and her lively and mischievous expressions...the most valuable thing was that even Royal Prince Yang's lady mother seemed to regard Xiaocao quite highly and was satisfied with her.

In her youth, Princess Consort Jing hadn't been a maiden bound by the soulless shackles of decorum. Furthermore, Imperial Prince Jing spoiled her like a little princess. Because of this, she was much more tolerant of young maidens going outside of the norm in terms of speech or temperament. Xiaocao also helped her to heal her body and often helped her raise her rare and valuable flowers. This allowed Princess Consort Jing to have a lot of status in her circle of flower loving matrons.

During the little lass's coming of age ceremony, Prince Jing's Estate had added quite a bit of honor and grandeur to her. Not only did the whole family come out to celebrate, but they also gave a bunch of expensive and valuable gifts to her, acting as her future in-laws. For many in the capital, the fact that the two families were going to be united in marriage was an iron-set thing.

Zhu Junyang's obvious regard and affection for the little lass made Lady Fang feel much more relieved about their relationship. The prince was about to turn twenty-three yet he had kept himself chaste and celibate this entire time. There had never been a whiff of scandal between him and another young

maiden. He never took a second glance at another maiden except for Xiaocao. Even the young ladies who stared at him with adoration and tried to get closer to him were all rebuffed by him with his signature icy-cold glare. Thus, he froze all attempts by other women.

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However, no matter how cold and unfeeling Royal Prince Yang was, he didn't have the heart to scold his little lass with harsh words. He wouldn't even put on an attitude in front of her. Lady Fang believed that some of Xiaocao's actions and speech sometimes 'took advantage' of Royal Prince Yang, but Royal Prince Yang would merely look at her dotingly. He would dismiss her unruly actions with a laugh and spoil her even more.

Lady Fang was a blessed little woman. Although her husband was nothing more than an uncultured martial artist in other people's eyes, he treated her very well. They have been married for over 20 years, but the two of them had never gotten into an argument before. Even though her temper became a little more irritable over the years because she had yet to conceive a child, he had always endured her temper.

She thought that she was her fault for being infertile, so she restrained her jealousy and took in a few concubines for him. However, he drove all the concubines out and said, "I don't want any other woman except you!"

She searched far and wide for doctors and inquired about various medicines that would cure her of her infertility. She just wanted to conceive a child that looked like him. But he comforted her and said, "Don't worry. Even if we're destined to have no children, we will still grow old together."

When he learned that he might be the reason why the two of them couldn't conceive a child, he did not hide the fact from the world to protect his ego. Instead, he publicized that he was the reason that they were unable to conceive to help relieve the external pressure on her...

He didn't know how to whisper sweet nothings to her, but he would always hold her hand to accompany her silently and comfort her when she was down. Others believed that she made the wrong choice by marrying him, but she knew from personal experience that it was not true! She was truly happy compared to other women! As for other women, their mothers-in-law would deliberately make things difficult for them, they would be ignored by their husbands, and they had to fight against numerous other concubines every day! What more could she ask for when she had a husband who loved her?

Lady Fang believed that Royal Prince Yang and Imperial Prince Jing were the same kind of people as her husband. They were considerate men that would spoil their wives no matter what. If one met a man like them, why wouldn't one seize every opportunity to snatch him for oneself?

Her daughter would be sixteen years old once the new year starts, so it was time for her to start considering her daughter's marriage. As luck would have it, there was a man that treated her wholeheartedly, so there was nothing she had to nitpick about.

Lady Fang looked at Royal Prince Yang like how a mother-in-law would look at her son-in-law. The more she looked at him, the more satisfied she became.

Fang Haolin was playing with his favorite sister on the kang bed. When he heard the news that Royal Prince Yang was coming, he immediately had a 'change of affections' and abandoned his favorite sister. He headed straight for Zhu Junyang who had just walked in and addressed him sweetly, "Brother-in-law! Does Linlin look handsome?"

"You little traitor!" Yu Xiaocao blushed bright red when she heard her younger brother address Zhu Junyang as 'brother-in-law'. It was not a surprise that Zhu Junyang was loved by her younger brother. Every time he came to visit, he would bring a few toys from the west for the little guy. For example, he had gotten him a horse that could run after pulling its string, a mechanical music box, and an elaborate Russian nested doll. Thanks to these toys, Zhu Junyang successfully gained the little guy's trust and lured him into addressing him as 'brother-in-law'. Xiaocao was angered to death by it!

"Err...you look very handsome~" When Zhu Junyang saw how his little lass had messed with his future brother-in-law's appearance, he hesitated before he gave him a compliment against his will. Fang Haolin's clown-like appearance was extremely eye-catching. However, when he was faced with the little lad's enthusiasm and sparkling bright eyes asking to be praised, it was impossible for him to say, 'it's ugly'.

"Brother-in-law, do I look as handsome as you?" The little lad looked at him expectantly. He was used to hearing her older sister mention that Zhu Junyang was a beautiful man, so he believed that Zhu Junyang was the beauty standard he needed to live up to. He believed that if he looked like his brother-in-law when he grew up, then he wouldn't have to worry about not being able to find a wife who was willing to marry him!

Zhu Junyang had a helpless expression on his face when he looked at the little lass who was lying on the kang bed and kicking her legs in laughter. He forced himself to squeeze out an ugly smile and nodded his

head with difficulty and said, "You look more handsome than me!" He had no choice since the little lad was his future brother-in-law. In order to be able to quickly marry his little lass, he needed to coax the people around her to like him.

Fang Haolin's face was as red as a monkey's butt as he sat back on the kang bed happily. He took the jumping frog toy that his brother-in-law had given him and studied it with his full attention. Once he pulled the string on the frog, it would jump very high upwards. It was very interesting!

"Auntie, what are you discussing with Xiaocao?" Zhu Junyang paid his respect to Lady Fang and sat down. He noticed that there was a satisfied expression on her face.

Lady Fang smiled gently while she helped Xiaocao wring the ball of yarn as she knit gloves at flying speed. She said in a soft voice, "I'm discussing with Xiaocao about what we should buy Third Young Master Zhou as a congratulatory gift tomorrow!"

"Third Young Master Zhou? Isn't he the head of the Zhou Family? Is he getting married?" Zhu Junyang was very petty. He hadn't forgotten that he had once harbored some feelings for his little lass. Fortunately, he was able to nip the problem at its bud, otherwise...humph!

"That's right, he's engaged to the daughter of a merchant family, the Huang Family! I heard that the young lady had been learning business acumen from her father and older brothers in the past few years. As a result, she has developed a keen insight. The Huang Family left her in charge of a few shops and the shops prospered under her hands. She is a very capable young woman!" Lady Fang told the two everything she knew.

Yu Xiaocao nodded her head when she heard Lady Fang's words and said, "That's good! In the future, Third Young Master Zhou will have an additional helping hand! If he married a soft, weak, and fragile young woman, then she'll be more than what he can deal with!"

"It seems like you know that man with the surname Zhou, pretty well. You even know his likes and dislikes." Zhu Junyang had to admit that he was being petty again. His words were laced with jealousy.

Yu Xiaocao looked up and glanced at him. She sounded very confident as she said, "I'm just saying this from my point of view. If I were him, then I would definitely find someone who could help me instead of

a pretty white flower who only knows how to cry all day. Of course, there are some men that like those types of women. It's uncertain whether he is one of them or not.”

“I don't know what type of woman he likes, nor do I want to know. But I have to agree with your taste. I like someone who is efficient and capable!” Zhu Junyang quickly expressed his agreement when he saw that his little lass seemed to be a little unhappy.

“I can't control what type of woman you like. I don't want to be able to control it either!” Yu Xiaocao lowered her head and continued to knit the gloves. The gloves were blue with white rhombus patterns; she was making it for Fang Haolin.

Despite Lady Fang's presence in the room, Zhu Junyang hurriedly coaxed her like he was coaxing a child, “Why are you leaving me all alone? I want you to control me! I'll love it if you can control me for the rest of my life...”

“Cough! Cough!” Lady Fang coughed twice loudly when she was ignored. It seemed like Zhu Junyang was much better at whispering sweet nothings than her husband. His sappy speech made goosebumps rise all over her arm.

“Auntie, when the two of you head out tomorrow, will you need a guard?” Zhu Junyang had a serious expression on his face when he offered his services. Lady Fang didn't know whether she should laugh or cry—how could he be so thick-skinned?

“Our family do not lack guards!” Yu Xiaocao lazily rejected his offer.

“I'm very familiar with the capital. I can help you with a lot of things!” Zhu Junyang continued to persist.

“My godmother was born and raised here. She's twenty years more familiar with the capital than you!” It was a habit for Yu Xiaocao to go against him.

“Cao'er!” Lady Fang rebuked and glared at her daughter. It seemed like her daughter treated Zhu Junyang too casually. However, when she turned to check on Zhu Junyang, she noticed that she seemed to be enjoying their banter. She couldn't help but defend him and said, “Royal Prince Yang offered his

services out of good intentions. You can't repay his goodwill with rudeness! If Royal Prince Yang doesn't have any matters to attend to tomorrow, then we will trouble you for your service."

"Auntie, you're acting too polite with me. Addressing me as Royal Prince Yang is too formal, you can address me as Yang'er or Junyang." Zhu Junyang seized this opportunity to become closer to his future mother-in-law. His actions had successfully earned him an eye roll from the little lass.

"Then I'll accept your service! Junyang, do you know which jade shop in the capital sells the highest quality jade?" The more Lady Fang examined him, the more she felt that Zhu Junyang was a perfect match for her daughter. He was handsome, rich, and talented. He also had a good temperament, as well as a promising future. It was hard to find another man like him.

"I believe the shop called Wisdom Jade Pavilion has just received a shipment of jade from Xinjiang. However, it will take them two days to open and fully examine the shipment to determine whether there is anything of value." Zhu Junyang's expression remained the same as he explained.

"Wisdom Jade Pavilion? Doesn't that shop belong to your family?" There were many prosperous shops that belonged to Royal Prince Yang and Wisdom Jade Pavilion was one of those shops. The quality of the jade there was superb and the carvings on the jades were extremely intricate. Each jade produced and sold by the shop could be considered to be a valuable piece of art. It was rumored that they spent a huge sum of money to hire a master jade carver. Every work produced by the master jade carver was worth a considerable value!

"Auntie, you only asked me for a place that produced quality jade, but you didn't ask me if the shop belonged to me. You should check out the jade there; I'll give you discounts if you find something you like!" Zhu Junyang did not tell her that the jades would be free because he knew that if he offered it for free, then Lady Fang would never take a step in Wisdom Jade Pavilion in the future. She would do that to avoid suspicion, especially since he was going to become Xiaocao's future husband.

Zhu Junyang paused for a moment before he continued, "If you can't find anything you like in Wisdom Jade Pavilion, then you should check out Treasure Pavilion. Treasure Pavilion received a new batch of western goods in the previous year. Among those goods, there is a grandfather clock that is of good quality. It would chime every hour and when it chimes, a bird would pop out and start chirping..."

"Brother-in-law! Brother-in-law! Linlin wants to go with you guys tomorrow to see the chiming grandfather clock!" Fang Haolin was still playing with the frog, but he didn't forget to make sure that they didn't forget his existence by chiming in their conversation.

“Okay! Okay! Brother-in-law will deliver one to your house!” Zhu Junyang stroked the little lad's braids as he said softly.

“How much do you hate Third Young Master Zhou ah?” Yu Xiaocao asked indifferently as she stifled her laughter.

Zhu Junyang raised his eyebrows and asked in a puzzled manner, “Why would you say that?”

“It should be a happy day for the couple since they're getting married, yet you're giving them a clock instead!” Yu Xiaocao could no longer hold back her laughter as she burst out laughing.

'Giving them a clock? Giving them a clock...paying his respects to the dead?!' Zhu Junyang pondered over it and immediately understood what the little lass meant. Hmm...the meaning behind the gift was not auspicious!!

“Linlin, if you like the chiming grandfather clock, then you should ask your sister to buy it for you! She doesn't lack money!!” Zhu Junyang quickly said. He didn't care whether or not they would give the grandfather clock to Third Young Master Zhou as a wedding gift. He didn't want to offend his mother-in-law and brother-in-law.

“Yeah! My sister is very good at making money! My sister can make more money in a month than our family in a year!!” Fang Haolin nodded his head earnestly as he recalled the words that his parents had lamented in the past.

“You little brat!!” Yu Xiaocao raised her hand and gently tapped the little lad's forehead.

Fang Haolin's covered his forehead with his chubby little hand and moved to Zhu Junyang's side. He wanted some sympathy as he pitifully said, “Brother-in-law, my sister beat me up! You need to get revenge for me...”

“It seems like you're getting more and more daring!!” Yu Xiaocao glared at her heartless brother. She decided to cancel his afternoon snack!!

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Zhu Junyang hugged the little lad's chubby body as he patiently instructed him, "You need to remember this lesson clearly; you can only dote on your wife! She can hit you, but you can't lay a finger on her. If your wife beats you, it means that you didn't perform your husbandly duty well enough. You have to correct your mistakes until she's happy, do you understand?"

Fang Haolin looked confused as he looked up at him. How could a three-year-old child understand his words? Zhu Junyang said this mostly for his future mother-in-law and wife to hear.

Lady Fang's teeth ached when she heard his sappy speech. She pulled her son over, put some warm clothes on him, and handed him over to the wet nurse standing to the side. She smiled and said, "Since the two of you have some official business to discuss, I will take Lin'er to the main courtyard first. Junyang, you should stay for lunch. You can ask Xiaocao to make something you like!"

"Linlin wants to eat cream puffs!" Fang Haolin was unwilling to leave her sister, he immediately reached out his claws.

Yu Xiaocao stuck out her tongue at him and snorted, "You a little traitor! There's no cream puffs, cakes, or biscuits for you today!"

"Older Sister—Older Sister is the best! Sister is the prettiest! You're the most amazing sister in the world!" Fang Haolin threw himself into her embrace. Xiaocao was startled by his sudden action; she quickly put away the needles she was holding in her hand and patted the little lad's chubby bottom. That was too dangerous. If the knitting needle had accidentally stabbed the little lad's face or eyes, then the consequences would've been unthinkable.

Lady Fang broke into a cold sweat. She glared at the stunned wet nurse standing to the side and rebuked her son harshly, "In the future, when someone has something in their hands, then you are not allowed to throw yourself into their arms. What if that needle has accidentally poked you?"

"I'm not afraid because Older Sister has a lot of medicine!" Fang Haolin grew up drinking Xiaocao's medicine concoction. He stared at Xiaocao with his big round eyes and seemed to be a little confused.

Yu Xiaocao had a solemn expression on her face, "It's no excuse to be careless just because I have medicine. Did it hurt when your hand was cut by a knife last time? Your wounds would still hurt if you

get punctured by a needle, even if you have medicine. In a more serious case, if you were blinded by a poisonous needle, then you will never be able to see me or your parents anymore!! Do you know what's wrong now?"

When he heard that he might never be able to see his sister and parents again, Fang Haolin immediately realized the seriousness of the matter. He cried out, "I don't want to never be able to see my sister again. Linlin still wants to be able to see my parents. Wah wah waahh...Linlin knows that Linlin is in the wrong. I will never do that again!"

Yu Xiaocao watched as the little lad cried so much that his face flushed red. She felt distressed for him, so she embraced him in her arms and comforted him softly, "Linlin, be obedient, and stop crying! As long as you know that you were wrong and learn from your mistake, then you'll still be a good boy!!!" Then, she took this opportunity to tell the little lad a few cautionary children's fairy tales. The little lad listened to the fairy tales with great interest and soon forgot about crying.

Seeing that the little lad was lively and full of energy again, Lady Fang hurriedly asked the wet nurse to take him away. Didn't you see how restless and helpless Royal Prince Jun looked by the sideline? They should stop acting like bad guys and leave the two for a chance to be alone.

"Tell me, what important matter did you come across that made you come running here instead of staying at home and resting?" Yu Xiaocao picked up the knitting needle again and skillfully started to knit again.

Zhu Junyang took off his shoes, climbed on the kang bed, and sat cross-legged next to Xiaocao. His little lass was lazily leaning on the pillow while she sewed. He wanted to pull her into his embrace, but the maidservants were staring at them with bright eyes. He was in his future in-laws' house, and he didn't dare to act too rash since he wanted to leave a favorable impression of himself to his future in-laws.

The gloves that Xiaocao was sewing were slowly taking shape. He smiled at her and said, "Is there anything more important than accompanying my future wife? I was afraid that you missed me, so I came here to ease your lovesickness."

"You're being insincere!" She never expected that the cold-hearted, apathetic, and cruel Royal Prince Yang would act like a rogue.

Zhu Junyang leaned toward her ear, blew softly toward her ear, and whispered, "Not only do I have a glib-tongue, but I also have a 'skillful mouth'. Would you like to...experience it?"

"Scram!" Yu Xiaocao pushed away his handsome face that was inching towards her. His charming face was squished into a deformed shape under the palm of her hand, turning his handsome face into—an ugly face!

"Okay! Let's talk about important matters! Thanks to Chief Steward Su praising and flattering us around the emperor's side, he was very pleased with our assignment. I've heard that the emperor shifted our vacation to an earlier date as a reward. I suppose we will be able to go on vacation once the matter with the horse farm is settled!" Zhu Junyang pulled off the tender and fair little hand that was covering his face. He fiddled her small hand in his palm. Wutong, who had just entered the room to arrange the plum flower in the vase, remained calm when she caught sight of the couples' intimate actions.

"Oh right, the emperor asked us to write a proposal for the horse farm exhibition. Once we're done writing the proposal, we will be handing it over to the imperial horse supervisor to be implemented..." Zhu Junyang was already in charge of managing the Xishan Barracks, so he didn't have the spare time to personally manage the matter related to the horse farm located beyond the borders. It was beneficial for him to split this task with her because he already had too much power in the court and some people were already eyeing him warily. However, he was a little worried about his little lass because by passing this task to her, she would be making the biggest contribution to this assignment.

When Yu Xiaocao heard this, she stopped knitting the gloves. She looked up at Zhu Junyang and saw that the expression on his face was the same as usual. She pursed her lips and asked cautiously, "Is the emperor trying to divide the power in your possession? Is it because you have performed overwhelmingly well in the past two years and caused the emperor's suspicion to rise?"

Zhu Junyang didn't expect that his little lass would directly ask him about this matter and she even took a step farther by realizing the scheme behind it. He smiled at her and tried to appease her, "It's not as serious as you have described! The main reason is that I control the barracks in charge of the capital's safety. If I also take charge of the horse farm, then it will definitely earn some criticism from the ministers of the court. Besides, I also have to manage the Xishan Barracks. I already don't have enough time to accompany you because of my duty, so if I shoulder more responsibility, then I would barely have any time to accompany you. I'm afraid that you, like a fish swimming back in the water, would forget about me if I stay away for too long!"

"Are you sure that the emperor really doesn't suspect you?" Seeing how Zhu Junyang had nodded his head solemnly, Xiaocao lowered her head and started knitting again. As long as the ultimate boss in this

world didn't harbor any suspicions, then she was fine with distributing their powers. Besides, telling other people that they raised horses as a job didn't sound like a good job.

“However, the emperor still wants you to help prepare the potions that will help with the horses' growth and reproduction.” Zhu Junyang hesitated for a moment, but he couldn't hold back by asking, “Little lass, does the emperor know your secret?”

“The emperor is so clever and wise (sly like a fox). How can I ever keep a secret from him?” Yu Xiaocao replied dispiritedly. Moreover, he knew more of my secret than you! He even knew about the secret of my transmigration. Alas...he got a hold of my weakness. She deserved to be a servant to him for a lifetime!

The expression on Zhu Junyang's face turned serious. It was natural that a person's talent would arouse the envy of others. What should he do if the emperor suddenly became interested in the little lass's secret and wanted to kill her to rob her treasure? No, he mustn't let that happen. He needed to work harder so that if the emperor ever wanted to touch his little lass, he would have to consider his position before doing that. Once he possessed that much power, then he would be able to protect his little lass properly.

“Don't worry about me! The emperor knows that Little Glutinous Dumpling's life and mine are connected. If I die, then Little Glutinous Dumpling will also disappear from this world. He can't hurt me and he must always guarantee my safety. After all, if the emperor wants to become a good ruler, then he will have to rely on my farming skills!” Yu Xiaocao was afraid that Zhu Junyang might do something inappropriate, so she quickly explained the relationship between her and the little divine stone.

Zhu Junyang was relieved after hearing Xiaocao's explanation. It turned out it was not because the emperor didn't want to steal the treasure from her, but it was because he couldn't! The little lass was correct. In this case, as long as the treasure was in her hands, then the emperor would need to rely on Xiaocao's ability to provide peace, prosperity, and ample food and clothing for the nation. Xiaocao's safety was related to this country's welfare and people's livelihood! As long as the emperor didn't have any desire to hurt the little lass, there would only be a few people in this world who could hurt her!

Zhu Junyang was fully confident that he would be able to provide a safe and quiet haven for his little lass with his own ability. He would take care of everything and guard her for the rest of his life!

Zhu Junyang loitered around the Fang Family until they were all fed up with him. He finally left reluctantly at nightfall. But before he left, he made an appointment with the little lass to pick her up the next day to shop together...with Lady Fang.

It stopped snowing the next day and the sky was filled with brilliant rays of sunlight. The snow on the streets had been swept away by the residents of the area. The snow was neatly piled up on both sides of the road. There were even a few eye-catching snowmen of various shapes piled in front of some shops.

It was now the twelfth month of the lunar year, and the capital was shrouded in the cold wind. As a result, there were barely any pedestrians on the streets. Xiaocao carried Fang Haolin's chubby little body onto the custom carriage and sat down. The carriage was gifted to her by Zhu Junyang. There was a separate compartment below the carriage that had anthracite burning inside. The four walls of the carriage were built with similar fireproof linked to the compartment below the carriage. Once they entered the carriage, it was like they had entered a warmly heated room. It was a luxurious and extravagant carriage. However, Zhu Junyang had worked hard to make sure that his little lass would stay comfortable when going outside!

The carriage was very spacious. Even though Xiaocao, Lady Fang, and Fang Haolin, as well as two servants were in the carriage, there was still more than enough space left. Wutong and Linglong were able to bask in their master's glory and sit in a warm carriage on such a cold day like this. They were able to see the pedestrians shivering outside in the cold when they lifted up the curtain of the carriage.

It must be said that the maids from wealthy and influential families lived more comfortably than ordinary people. This was especially true for them since they had such a kind and easy-to-serve master; it was a blessing from their previous life to be able to serve someone like their master.

Besides the bodyguards from the Fang Family outside the carriage, Royal Prince Yang was also present. He was wearing a thick black coat made from a fox. The grave and stern expression on his handsome face contrasted beautifully against his dark clothing, making him appear more charming than usual. Hou Xiaoliang was Zhu Junyang's personal guard, so he naturally stayed by his side at all times. He shrank his neck and from time to time, he would look back at the carriage, hoping to catch a glimpse of the woman he yearned for day and night.

“Why is Imperial Bodyguard Hou acting so silly? What is he trying to do?” Lady Fang glanced outside the carriage and didn't notice the unnatural expression on Wutong's face.

Yu Xiaocao raised her eyebrows and glanced at Wutong. Wutong had become more steady and capable over the years. She was also two years older than the body Xiaocao possessed, so it was time to start thinking about arranging a marriage for her soon. She originally planned on keeping Pipa and Wutong by her side, grooming them to become her left and right arms. However, it seemed like her plan would have to change!

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"What else could he be doing? He's taken a fancy to some beauty!" Yu Xiaocao lazily replied. Her right hand assistant that she had trained was stolen. It was the same as having all the vegetables she worked hard to grow stolen just when she could harvest them. That feeling of loss...

"Miss!" Wutong twisted her body with shyness, and her face flushed red. Hou Xiaoliang recently came to her side whether something was happening or not. Yesterday in the plum-tree grove, he acted very courteously. She was aware of his fondness for her.

However, due to Hou Xiaoliang's lively temperament and playful grin, it made him seem unreliable. Furthermore, the people around Royal Prince Yang would have a good future as long as they had the ability.

She was just a little maid and her appearance was only slightly above average. Maybe right now he was just looking for something new, but who knew if he would end up regretting today's decision in the future. Wutong was a person who thought twice before she acted, and the more a person thinks, the more they'll have to worry about. At least for the moment, she hadn't accepted the guy.

From Wutong's perspective, there was nothing better than to be allocated as a competent subordinate under her master and remain at the young miss's side to serve her and the future little master. That was the greatest blessing to her. As for being an official wife of an official, she dared not have such greedy thoughts. After all, not all men were as unchanging as Prince Yang.

"Miss, please allow me to stay and serve by your side. Please don't give me to someone else, okay?" Wutong held back the ache in her heart, pleading with a pitiful tone as if worried that she would be abandoned in the next second.

Yu Xiaocao looked at her in surprise and said, "Have you thought it over? Hou Xiaoliang's character isn't bad. Don't think that his temperament is just energetic. Every time he has a task, he does a very good job. In the future, even if he doesn't join the army, he will still have a bright future in the yamen! I was just thinking about letting him hang around for a couple of years. When you're old enough, I will return your citizenship and let you go be an official's wife!"

Lady Fang glanced at Hou Xiaoliang's figure, which was moving towards the side of the carriage from time to time, through the gap between the curtains from the carriage. She smiled and said, "Your young miss is correct. When the opportunity comes, you have to catch it yourself. Imperial Bodyguard Hou seems to be a good person. As the sayings go, the type of master will determine the type of servant. He doesn't look like a man with a lot of ulterior motives!"

Wutong lowered her head and unsurely whispered, "But...my status as a servant is too far from his. He can clearly choose someone from a suitable family or someone who can help in his future developments. I'm afraid he'll regret the decision he made today."

Yu Xiaocao gently patted her shoulder and said with a smile, "You usually hide everything in your heart, so it's easy to complicate things. Take me and Royal Prince Yang for example! In the beginning, I was just an ordinary little peasant girl, and he was a high-ranking royal prince, holding an important position. According to what you said, he could have just found a young lady from a high ranking official's family, or a girl from a neutral family of an official, who would've been helpful to his future, couldn't he? "

"I will fight for my future myself. What ability do I have if I rely on my in-law's? Am I a coward that relies on others to help so I can climb up?" Zhu Junyang's hearing was quite good and he heard the lass, who was in the carriage, talking about Wutong and Hou Xiaoliang's matter. Hearing that he was being brought up, he quickly refuted. He didn't forget to glare at his bodyguard, 'You can't even get a woman, useless!'

"It's none of your business! Don't butt in!" Yu Xiaocao opened the curtains and made a face at him, but choked on the cold wind outside and coughed.

"Quickly put down the curtains and put on the fox fur cloak. Be careful about catching a cold!" Zhu Junyang saw this and wished he could get into the carriage to wrap the little lass into a cocoon. This lass couldn't stop making him worry, opening the carriage curtains while wearing a thin jacket. How cold it was outside, did she want to freeze?

Xiaocao coughed a few times and drank the hot tea that Wutong handed over. She made a sound at the person outside and half-heartedly said, "I know, I know! Caretaker!" In actuality, her heart said, 'It's so warm in the carriage, why would I wear a cloak, and be overheated?'

"See? A man with the ability will have his own pride! We won't be satisfied by those good-looking young men who depend on their in-law's families!" Yu Xiaocao didn't forget to continue to straighten out her servant girl's anxiety.

Wutong thought about and shook her head gently, "Miss has great potential. The emperor values your ability to cultivate high yield seeds and your ability to make a profit. You're like a golden doll, but this servant is an ordinary girl. I don't have any skills in literature or martial arts, what good am I?"

A chilly voice came from outside, "Maid, your words are unreasonable. It's as if I liked your young lady only because of her ability to earn money and farm?"

"That wasn't what this servant meant!" Wutong hurriedly explained. "What this servant meant is that the Miss is outstanding and thus is naturally loved by others. I'm too ordinary and common..."

"Silly girl! Why belittle yourself? Every girl is a beautiful angel. When she is willing to break her wings for a man, for love, and stay in the mortal world, and that man doesn't treasure it, then we should take care of our wings and resolutely fly away from him and soar into our own world. Don't avoid giving your heart because you're afraid of meeting a scumbag! No matter what the results may be, I will always be your strong support." Yu Xiaocao gently embraced Wutong and let her lean on her shoulder.

At this moment, Wutong's uneasy heart settled down in the thin and weak arms of her master. What the young miss said was right. She should go for a bold attempt and she might be able to harvest her own happiness. Even if the result left her in pain, at least there was a warm hug that was always open to her, unconditionally accepting her.

"Thank you, Miss.." Wutong's nose tingled and her eyes were warm. She was afraid of getting her master's clothes wet, so she hurriedly brought out a small handkerchief and dabbed her eyes.

"Silly girl! It's only those of you who are closest to me that feel I'm so good. In fact, I know that in the eyes of those old fogeys, my words and deeds are different, and can even be called 'a woman usurping man's power'. When I chose to control my own life, I was fully prepared. If I didn't meet a person who understood, tolerated me, and supported me, I'd rather be single my entire life. I will try my best to earn a lot of money. In the future, whoever among my brother's and my younger brother's children is willing to support me then I will give all the wealth I have accumulated in a lifetime to him or her in a hundred years! "

When Yu Xiaocao first transmigrated over, she really had this idea. After all, men in ancient times were male chauvinists and regarded women as vassals. How could she accept this as a modern person who had lived for thirty years in the 21st century?

"Talking about Wutong, you're the silly girl!" Lady Fang poked her forehead and scolded her while laughing. In heart, she was thankful, 'Fortunately Royal Prince Yang appeared in my goddaughter's life'. Otherwise, she would really worry that her goddaughter would be alone for life as she had said.

"Older Sister! Linlin is willing to support you when you are old. Don't worry!" Fang Haolin, who was napping in his mother's arms, came out to alert them he was still there.

"Little Lin'er, go to the sidelines. Do you think I, your brother-in-law, is dead, ah? Supporting the lass when she's old; it's not your turn yet!" Zhu Junyang's voice came in from outside the window. The cold that seeped in through the gaps of the carriage seemed to have deepened suddenly, which made people feel chillier.

Fang Haolin was unconvinced and said, "You're older than my older sister. When that time comes, you're gonna be so old that you can't walk, so how can you support my sister?"

Zhu Junyang almost choked half to death by his reply and had to remind himself not to get on the same level as a kid under four years old. To a certain someone on the carriage, he said, "You, don't think about it! Keep your wealth for my children. Not only yours but my shops too will be taken care of by you when you marry over. At that time, when you get busy, you won't have time to think about such things!"

Lady Fang couldn't continue listening. Wasn't this man too good at beating the snake with a stick? Where the wedding will be held hadn't even been decided yet, and he wanted to leave the property for the children already. Then, she looked at her goddaughter, who didn't have a hint of shyness on her; the lass was still foolishly laughing. As her godmother, she needed to teach more, so Royal Prince Yang wouldn't lead her astray.

"Madam, we've arrived at the Wisdom Jade Pavilion!" The carriage came to a stop. The two servant girls inside quickly put on their thick clothes and hopped out of the carriage first to help their masters get off the carriage.

Zhu Junyang got off his horse and went straight to the carriage, squeezing Wutong aside. When Yu Xiaocao came out, she saw a handsome face that was as stunning as the spring blossoms waiting for her outside of the carriage. She hid a smile and turned around and picked up Little Linlin and put him into his hands. She then went to take Wutong's hands and leisurely got off the carriage.

Zhu Junyang reluctantly took the chubby child given to him by force and wrapped him up in his little cloak. He adjusted his position so he could sit on his left arm and his right hand went to support the lass when she got off the carriage.

"Brother-in-law, why can your son support Older Sister when she's old but I can't?" Fang Haolin was still thinking about the problem in the carriage.

Zhu Junyang pinched his chubby cheeks and said with a smile, "You only need to take care of your parents when they are old. Your older sister will naturally be taken care of by her children! It's a natural thing for children to take care of their parents when they are old. Only those elderly people who have no children are taken care of by their younger brother. You don't want your sister to be like that, right?"

"It's pitiful to not have any children! Will my sister be provided for by her children? Mother, when Linlin grows up, I will support you!" The little guy nodded his head and grinned sweetly at the lady who got out of the carriage. That little figure was as good as can be.

Yu Xiaocao looked over and stood on her tippy toes with a greedy look. She held the little guy's face and mercilessly kissed it, "Our Little Linlin is so precious!"

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With a touch of emotion in her eyes and a happy smile on her face, Lady Fang said, "Your godfather and I are not the kind of people who can say sweet words. I don't know who this little guy is like to have such a sweet mouth."

"Like Older Sister!" From a young age, Fang Haolin listened to his own father, who spoiled his goddaughter immeasurably. His father, when in front of his mother, always talked about how good his sister was, how capable she was, and how filial she was. In his young mind, the seeds of 'Older Sister is the most capable', 'Older Sister is the best' and 'wants to be like Older Sister' were subconsciously planted. So, when his mother sighed and asked who he was like, he blurted out his thoughts.

When the adults laughed in good faith, the little guy looked foolishly at his mother, brother-in-law, and older sister, blinked his large eyes a few times, and asked strangely, "What are you laughing at? Where are Older Sister's children? What if they don't behave and don't take care of Older Sister? "

"If they dare to do so, I will beat these unfilial sons to death! " Zhu Junyang glowered angrily as if the 'children' that weren't there were right in front of him.

"Brother-in-law, I'll help beat them for you!" Fang Haolin smiled flatteringly at Zhu Junyang, with the appearance of a dog that couldn't be directly looked at.

"Are you guys done?" Yu Xiaocao gave a hard glare at the guy who caused this topic to be brought up and helped her godmother into the Wisdom Jade Pavilion, leaving only the view of the back for small and big men behind her.

Fang Haolin stared with big eyes, looking innocently at Zhu Junyang and whispered, "My older sister seems to be angry. What should I do? Then... I won't hit her sons? "

"Yes! Your sister loves her son! " Zhu Junyang solemnly talked nonsense.

"But... Where is Older Sister's son? When did Older Sister have children? When you went to the border? How come you didn't bring her children back? Did you leave them at the studfarm with the foals?" Fang Haolin, this kid, had opened up the 100,000 why mode.

Zhu Junyang carried him into the shop and nodded at the shopkeeper who greeted him graciously. He followed behind the pair of godmother and goddaughter and entered the private room in the shop. He didn't forget to continue to brainwash Little Linlin, "Your older sister's child hasn't been born yet. You have to wait until your older sister marries me before there can be a baby. If you want to see them early, let your older sister marry me as soon as possible! "

"But... My father said that all the people who try to steal my older sister from me are bad guys! " Fang Haolin wrinkled his little face and miserably said.

Zhu Junyang pinched the little guy's chubby face and continued the ruse, "How can brother-in-law be a bad guy? I love you so much that I always bring you something fun every time. If you think about it,

when your sister marries your brother-in-law, we will be a family. The fun stuff in brother-in-law's Treasure Pavillion, you can take whatever you want, whenever you want. Just like taking your own stuff at home! Not only do you not lose your older sister's love, but you also have a brother-in-law who loves you. How profitable is that? "

"Zhu! Jun! Yang! That's enough! Don't teach children bad things! If you continue speaking about those things that haven't happened, then don't come to propose marriage at the New Year's! " Yu Xiaocao saw that this guy was getting more and more outrageous, and he was leading Little Linlin askew, so he had to be stopped!

The shopkeeper, who personally made a pot of good tea, heard this and had an expression of disbelief on his face, 'This miss is so bold. There's actually someone who dares to yell at my master! What is even more unbelievable is that my master has no intention of getting angry, and still has a smiling face while coaxing the miss to be happy.'

It was said that the master had taken a fancy to a girl from a peasant family. It was reasonable to say that this girl from a low background should be grateful, courteous, and hold the master's heart. Yet the girl in front of him, had an impatient look on her face, repeatedly pushed away the master, and had rolled her eyes at him from time to time.

Could it be...This girl was not the peasant girl, and the master had a crush on someone else? He looked at the demeanor of the noble matron beside the girl, and the movement of the two servant girls. They didn't seem to have come out of a small family! It must be that his master was looking for something new and the novelty has passed. Thus, naturally, he still felt that the temperament of noble girls in the capital was more suitable for him.

However, it seemed that his cold-hearted master really spared no effort to coax the little girl. Unexpectedly, he pulled down his self-esteem to be nice to her when she was having none of it. This girl was quite suitable for the master. It was really hard to find noble girls in the capital that weren't afraid of the master! She was the only one who dared to stand up to his master.

After the shopkeeper came in, Zhu Junyang immediately put up airs and played the role of Royal Prince Yang, "How much jade material arrived a few days ago, and how many are opened? Are there any of them that can be regarded as fine quality? Bring it out for Lady Fang and Miss Yu to have a look! "

"Little Linlin will have a look too!" Fang Haolin murmured in a low voice, showing his presence.

"Alright! Show Little Linlin, too! Choose whichever one you like, and your brother-in-law will give it to you!" Zhu Junyang found Fang Haolin more and more interesting. When will he be able to have such a lovely baby? Alas! It was a pity that the mother of his future son was still angry with him. If he didn't coax her well, it was still unknown whether or not he would be able to marry the little girl in two years.

Lady Fang adjusted her expression and asked the wetnurse to take her son. In a low voice, she scolded, "Lin'er, what did Mother tell you? When the adults talk, the children shouldn't interrupt! If there's something that can't be said, wait until the adults finish talking to say it!"

"Oh! Linlin is wrong!" Fang Haolin, this small kid, obediently sat well in the chair with his small hands on his knee, with a look of 'Linlin is a good baby'. Yu Xiaocao wanted to knead the little one into her arms and kiss his little face—how could Little Linlin be this cute?

"Answering Master, one-fifth of that batch of material has been opened. There are two pieces that are pretty good. One was ordered by Imperial Prince Duan, and it was said to be carved into a white jade Guanyin for his princess consort. The other one was a smaller piece of suet jade, which was ordered by Lady Yu, and it was in the style of a hairpin. It was said to be given to Miss Yu for her hairpin ceremony.

The jade from Wisdom Jade Pavilion was always very popular. Every time new material came in and the jade was unearthed from the raw ore, it was very quickly reserved by a customer. Thus, when Zhu Junyang asked him whether there were any good raw jade around, the shopkeeper felt quite embarrassed— who would have known that the master would suddenly want to use jade to gain favor from his future mother-in-law ah?

"In that case... the rest of the material should be opened as soon as possible. If you have a good quality product, reserve it for me!" Zhu Junyang frowned. It seemed like he was going to have to disappoint his wife and future mother-in-law. It was because he didn't plan properly. In the future, when there was good material, he must reserve it for the people close to him.

"It's said that all the white and creamy jades are cut from stones, aren't they? How can jade be in the middle of a stone? How strange!" At this time, jadeite jewelry was not as common as nephrite jade, and most of the jade materials were raw materials transported back from Xinjiang.

Zhu Junyang saw that the lass was curious about the jade stones and was no longer angry at him. He eagerly said, "Lass, do you want to see what raw jade material looks like? Shopkeeper Zhang, do you have jade stone materials in the shop now?"

Shopkeeper Zhang quickly replied, "The materials are all in the warehouse behind us. If Miss Yu wants to see it, I'll let someone carry some of them over right away!" Considering that some of the materials weighed more than one hundred catties, Shopkeeper Zhang wiped the invisible sweat off of his forehead. In order to help the master please the little girl, he needed to work the staff in the shop hard.

"Don't bother, I'll go take a look at the warehouse!" Yu Xiaocao stood up and looked in Zhu Junyang's direction, implying that he should speak soon. They shouldn't make everyone busy because of her whims.

Zhu Junyang nodded to Shopkeeper Zhang, indicating that he should listen to Miss Yu. Finally, the little girl wasn't mad at him anymore. He had to perform well and let the little lass, who was puffed up, to be less angry. Just now, he was impulsive. After all, the girl's godmother was still there. Didn't he say he wanted to increase his mother-in-law's good feelings towards him? Would Lady Fang feel that he was frivolous and disrespectful to the lass?

Lady Fang was in the warm private room, drinking mellow tea and eating delicious snacks. Oh? The taste was very familiar! It seemed that the business of the Wisdom Jade Pavilion was really good. All the snacks for guests were ordered from Yu's Pastry Shop. It should be known that the snack shops under her goddaughter's name were full of customers every day. Like the ones ordered out by Wisdom Jade Pavilion cost quite a large sum of money. They couldn't be bought in the store. They could only be reserved, and it was a limited reservation. If people came late, they could only go home disappointed!

The little kid, Fang Haolin, who had delicious food, immediately put his sister and his so-called brother-in-law aside. In his eyes, there were only delicious cakes and puffs. Delicious food! However, it was not as good as his older sister's personally made food. Older Sister said she would make delicious snacks for him when she was free. He was looking forward to it!

Zhu Junyang accompanied Xiaocao to the storeroom, and the loyal Wutong closely followed. The young miss was older and she had more worries. She couldn't let her young lady lose her reputation and honor at the hands of Royal Prince Yang!

Seeing Wutong follow them out the door, Hou Xiaoliang, who was enjoying the snacks, immediately stood up. He was the bodyguard of the master, and he had to accompany him at any time. However, what were you trying to do by getting so close to someone else's maid?

The light in the storeroom was rather dim. Shopkeeper Zhang asked the guard in charge of the warehouse to light all the oil lamps inside, and before letting the master enter.

Xiaocao set a foot over the threshold of the warehouse and saw the collection of large and small stones inside. Some were as big as eggs, while others were so big two people wouldn't have been able to lift them. Some of them are round in shape, showing white jade flesh, while others had edges and corners, with only rough stone skin...

[There's spiritual energy in the jade stone!] The little divine stone jumped out of Yu Xiaocao's wide sleeves in the form of a cat. His fur was shining in the candlelight, scaring Manager Zhang.

The little divine stone walked through the raw materials with haughty and arrogant steps. Xiaocao followed behind the golden cat—concerning matters with spiritual energy, the little divine stone was always sensitive. At the time, it was able to sense the small amounts of spiritual energy within spring water that came from the deep mountains and use it to further its cultivation. Thus, perceiving the energy within jade material that took ten thousand years to form after being baptized in pure snow water was a snap for it.