

Gold Chapter 621

Fields of Gold Chapter 621

After Xiaocao finished speaking, she lowered her head and looked at her 'little steamed buns' that had started budding not long ago. Xiaocao felt both joyous and helpless. She felt happy because she didn't turn out to be flat-chested, but she felt somewhat helpless because they were still quite small. She hoped that they would grow into 'big steamed buns' soon.

As soon as she raised her head, she noticed that Zhu Junyang's gaze had followed her line of sight. Xiaocao hurriedly folded her arms across her chest and looked at him like she was staring at a wolf, "Where are you looking? Pervert! Lecher! Do you know that you're acting indecently?"

Zhu Junyang was actually very innocent. The little lass was wearing three layers of clothes and she was wrapped up like a bear. What was there for him to see? He felt somewhat unhappy after being scolded for no apparent reason

He grabbed Xiaocao's arm and gently pulled her into his embrace. Then, he placed his other hand behind the back of her head and leaned in for a peck on her small yet brilliant red lips. He even gently nibbled on her lips, leaving behind a light teeth mark on her alluring and soft lips. He let go of his dazed little lass while Wutong and Yingchun let out a soft exclamation of surprise. Zhu Junyang chuckled softly, "Do you understand now? This is how a real lecher acts!"

A few cries of exclamation entered his ears. The beautiful, warm smile on Zhu Junyang's face disappeared instantly and his gaze turned into sharp icy arrows as he stared at the servants that worked in the outer courtyard. The words he spat out chilled their hearts to the core, "If any of what you dare to gossip about what you had just seen, then I will make sure you will never have a tongue to chew food again in the future!"

The servants fell silent and shook their heads repeatedly, indicating that they hadn't seen anything. The servants shivered when they recalled the rumors they heard about the demon in the capital. It was like they were suddenly suffocating in a sea of blood when Royal Prince Yang's gaze swept across them just before.

In the past, it was already intimidating enough when they saw Royal Prince Yang's indifferent expression on his face every time he came to visit. However, when his icy cold gaze pierced through them just now, it felt like their liver was almost about to split open!

“Let it go. You're the one who has committed a misdeed, and yet you're scaring off my family's servants. Stop bullying them intolerably!” Yu Xiaocao watched as the outer courtyard servants' faces ashen as they trembled in fear. The servants who were more timid than the others couldn't stand the pressure and soon fell onto the ground, unable to stand up. She was so angry that she reached out her small paw and pinched Zhu Junyang's waist.

Although Zhu Junyang's cold and stern gaze did not affect Wutong and Yingchun, the two maids were still frightened by the murderous aura Zhu Junyang was exuding. When they saw that their young miss's hands were pinching his waist, their pounding heart gradually calmed down.

No matter how powerful Royal Prince Yang was, how could he escape from their young miss's grasp? Their young miss was amazing! She actually dared to pinch the black-faced Royal Prince Yang. They worshiped their young miss's courage!! From this moment forward, Yu Xiaocao received two diehard fans who would blindly worship her!

Zhu Junyang took Xiaocao's restless little paw from his waist and held her hand. He pinched Xiaocao's cute nose and dotingly said, “You should head back. It's cold outside!”

Three days later, Zhu Junyang personally came to visit her again, but this time, he came with a lot of gifts. The gifts included the venison meat that was bestowed upon him by the emperor, fruits from the southern region, gold, pearls, silk, gauze, satin, and so on. There were even one-of-kind treasures from his Treasure Pavilion. These gifts would also be presentable as betrothal gifts.

When Yu Hai and his wife saw all the precious and expensive gifts, they felt a little nervous. In contrast, Xiaocao accepted all his gifts calmly. Since they were going to get married soon, then there was no need to divide their properties too clearly. After all, once they got married in the future, then all his belongings would belong to her. There was nothing wrong with him delivering some of his belongings to her in advance.

In return, Xiaocao made a big meal for everyone, which included 'Buddha Jumps Over the Wall'. She even stewed the venison that Zhu Junyang brought over with red wine, giving it a distinctive flavor.

However, it was impolite to only receive and not give in return. Since he had sent them so many precious gifts, then they must give back! Yu Hai and his wife were worried because even if they pooled together all of the wealth belonging to the Yu Family, they still probably wouldn't have enough money to purchase a gift that would meet Royal Prince Yang's standard. What should they do?

Xiaocao had already prepared a return gift in advance! She used the cocoa beans and coffee beans that were brought back by the fleet last time to make chocolates with various flavors. There were coffee-flavored toffee and some other unusual snacks. For example, she made tiramisu, matcha red beans cake, banana pudding cake (the banana was one of the southern types of fruits that was bestowed by the emperor to Zhu Junyang), shredded dried pork cake, fruit tart, and many others.

Madam Liu looked at the return gifts that Xiaocao prepared and believed that her gifts were too meager compared to the expensive gifts given by Royal Prince Yang. She felt embarrassed giving him such small gifts in comparison.

Xiaocao consoled her mother, "Prince Jing's Estate doesn't lack gold, silver, pearls, silk, gauze, satin, and other expensive items. The rarer an item is, the more valuable it is. For example, my sweets and desserts are one of a kind in the capital. You wouldn't even find these sweets in The Yu's Frozen Dessert and Pastries Store. I'm not trying to boast, but based on my skills, these sweets and snacks will definitely protect you from losing face. It's natural to give back to those who have given to you; it's also natural to reward servants who have done well! Mother don't worry! Princess Consort Jing will definitely be satisfied with our return gifts!"

It was easy to preserve chocolates and candies in the winter, so Xiaocao prepared many different kinds of sweets. Not only did she make a mellow and rich type of dark chocolate, but she had also made milk flavored chocolate, hazelnut flavored chocolate, silky and smooth flavored chocolate, wine-flavored chocolate...most of the candies were coffee-flavored and some of the chocolate was stuffed. She packed the sweets in an elegant and classy case and wrapped the case in high-grade wrapping paper.

The pastries were made similar to the Jing Ba Jian . There were several different varieties of pastries in each box and there were dozens of boxes prepared. She told her elder brother, who was the one sending the gift to Prince Jing's Estate, to inform the steward that the pastry needed to be eaten within five days.

Yu Hang was assigned the task to give a New Year gift in return to Prince Jing's Estate because he was the eldest son of the Yu Family. He was so nervous that he was sweating buckets inwardly. Fortunately, the steward was informed in advance about his arrival by his master, so the steward treated him with enthusiasm and great courtesy. Zhu Junyang valued his future brother-in-law, so he personally headed to the outer courtyard to accompany Yu Hang to drink tea and chat.

The New Year gift prepared by the Yu Family naturally received Princess Consort Jing's approval and love. As the female head of Prince Jing's Estate, there weren't many things that she hadn't yet seen. Her husband doted on her a lot, so he would give all his treasures to her. Furthermore, she had a son who liked to go on adventures. Her son even managed to give her many gifts from the western hemisphere and overseas. As a result, it was hard to capture her interest with rare and expensive treasures because she had already seen most of them.

However, the candies and desserts that Xiaocao sent over were items that she had never heard of, seen, or even tasted before. Princess Consort Jing was entertaining a few noble-titled madams for the New Year when she received the New Year gift from Xiaocao. She immediately opened the gifts once she received them and couldn't help but chuckle when she saw what was inside! It was impossible for her not to love Xiaocao; she even managed to deliver the snacks right on time.

She immediately asked the servants to serve the snacks and candies that were given by Xiaocao. However, she put aside the well-preserved chocolate and coffee-flavored candies. Instead, she opened the boxes containing the pastries first.

When the madams heard that the New Year gift from the Yu Family only contained sweets and snacks, they felt contempt for the Yu Family. It was no wonder that they were a family who came from the countryside. How could they send out such cheap gifts? They believed that Princess Consort Jing was too kind. If they were the ones who received such cheap gifts, then they would've already thrown the gift back at the person who gave them the gift. Were they looking down at people from Prince Jing's Estate? How could they send out such poor gifts as a New Year gift?

However, the madams knew that Royal Prince Yang was extremely protective of the little girl from the Yu Family. So, even though they felt contempt for the people of the Yu Family, they didn't express their true feelings.

"Xiaocao must've made a new type of dessert again! You probably didn't know, but Xiaocao is a very considerate little girl. Whenever there is something delicious to eat, she would never forget to send some to me. Seeing how much care to put into wrapping the gifts this time, I bet the snacks will definitely taste delicious. You guys are in luck today because you're in for a treat!"

Princess Consort Jing personally opened the delicate lid of the case. A strong yet novel fragrance slowly filled the room. Even though she was a princess consort who had tasted all kinds of delicacies, she couldn't help but become intoxicated by the sweet fragrance produced by the snacks inside the case. She could feel her saliva increasing.

The madams looked at each other profoundly after noticing Princess Consort Jing's attitude towards Yu Xiaocao. They didn't dare to feel the least bit of contempt towards the dessert. It seemed like the people from Prince Jing' Estate had already accepted the little girl from the Yu Family as their future daughter-in-law. The Yu Family had climbed onto a higher social status. In the future, not just anyone could step on them or look down on them!

At the same time, the madams couldn't help but reveal a slightly surprised expression when they smelled the delicious fragrance that the content of the case was exuding. What kind of dessert could exude such a rich yet mellow fragrance at the same time? This fragrance was something they had never encountered before. With this fragrance alone, it was already enough to pique their interest and appetite!

They all subconsciously started focusing on the content inside the delicate food case. The round food case was divided into six equal parts, and there were six different kinds of snacks inside the food case. None of the madams present, including Princess Consort Jing, had ever seen any of the snacks inside the food case. These snacks didn't appear in any of the limited-edition snacks presented in The Yu's Pastry Shop.

Princess Consort Jing couldn't wait as she picked up a dainty and delicate spoon and reached out to scoop a spoonful of the tiramisu. Even though she was impatient to taste the snacks, her actions remained graceful and attractive as she put the spoonful of tiramisu into her mouth. The dessert melted the moment it entered her mouth. The tiramisu contained a slightly bitter but strong coffee aroma. It tasted sweet like a cake made from eggs and sugar and was mellow like sweet wine. The fragrant chocolate, the denseness of the cake, the rich aroma of the whipped cream, and the dryness of the cocoa powder—each layer of the tiramisu evoked a different taste. When each layer was all eaten together, the resulting taste reached the peak of what a dessert could taste! Princess Consort Jing was infatuated with this incredible taste.

The other madams were very curious about the fragrant dessert when they noticed that Princess Consort Jing still had her eyes closed as she relished the taste. What did it taste like? They were curious, but they couldn't speak their mind since Princess Consort Jing still hadn't spoken yet. Although they didn't reveal their curiosity on the surface, their hearts were itching to taste the dessert.

Princess Consort Jing finally snapped out of her daze after tasting the rich flavors of the tiramisu. When she noticed that the madams were looking at her hungrily, she hurriedly said, "I have never tasted a dessert with such a complicated yet harmonious taste. Meixiang, go and serve the snacks along with some scented tea to the madams. It will be a delicious treat!"

Soon, each of the madams was served a fragrant and alluring dessert on a delicate porcelain plate the size of a palm. The Ministry of Ceremonies' wife, Lady Wang, followed Princess Consort Jing's example. She picked up a small spoon and gently scooped a small portion of the simple and elegant matcha flavored red beans cake and put it into her mouth.

Fields of Gold Chapter 622

The thin piece of cake actually had four layers. On the top, there was a layer of cream with matcha powder. Then, it was a layer of cake. Under the cake layer, there was a layer of peeled red bean paste. The cake tasted very delicate, and the combination of red beans and matcha was perfect. It had a mild yet slightly rich flavor, but it didn't taste overly sweet or greasy.

As chance would have it, Lady Wang ordinarily didn't like to eat sweets very much. This dessert was just right for her. The piece of cake wasn't big; she finished it in a few bites, wishing there was more!

Lady Liang, who was from the household of the Left Minister of the Imperial Clan, was attracted by the colorful banana pudding cake. She was very fond of eating the cream cake from 'The Yu's Frozen Dessert and Pastries Store', but eating too much of it made her feel sick. The top layer of the banana pudding cake was replaced with a bright yellow pudding paired with pickled green grapes and red cherries, making people love it at first sight.

When eaten, the pudding had a very smooth and soft mouthfeel, and the aroma of banana was soaked into it. It was novel and delicious. In addition, the taste of the cake was richer and smoother than the one bought in the store. After eating this cake, Lady Liang's first thought was, 'It would be great if I can buy this cake in The Yu's! Even if it's limited sales, I will eventually be able to get it.'

The wife of the Imperial Censor, who loved to eat fruits, first picked up a fork and aimed for the fruit tarts. This kind of fruit tart was made up of red grapes, strawberries, oranges, green apples, red apples, watermelon, muskmelon, and cherry tomatoes. The bottom of the fruit tart was soft, and the vanilla flavor cream melted in the mouth. The fruits were fresh and refreshing, and its shape, color, and taste were very good.

In ancient times, the technology of preserving fruits wasn't advanced enough. Only the Yu Family could get this full set of fruits in the winter. To be able to eat fresh fruits in the winter, Xiaocao built a huge cellar in Zhu Junyang's farmstead, which was in the suburb of the capital.

When the fruit was harvested in autumn, ice was placed around the cellar to produce the effect of a freezer. Thus, the fruits wouldn't rot for a long time. Combined with the preservation effects of the mystic-stone water, the stored fruits would be fresh all winter.

With strawberries, cherry tomatoes, watermelons, and cantaloupes grown in greenhouses, there was no other family in the capital that was so rich in fruits, both in variety and quantity. Even those in the palace wouldn't be able to eat such fresh fruits!

The imperial censor's wife laughed while eating and tentatively asked, "These fruits taste very fresh. Could it be that Miss Yu can get the fruit trees to bear fruit in winter?"

Since the 'cold storage' was built on her son's farmstead, Prince Jing's Estate had never been short of fruit. Princess Consort Jing chuckled, "That lass, Xiaocao, isn't an immortal in charge of the seasons. How could it be so mystical? These fruits are put into a little storage by her like a little squirrel. To make the ice cellar, she put in a lot of work. Fruits are the most delicate, so too low of a temperature can cause it to frostbite easily and too high of a temperature can cause it to rot easily. The lass has tried many times before finding the best temperature to store the fruits!"

After eating the small fruit tarts, the imperial censor's wife gently wiped the corners of her mouth with her handkerchief and said with a smile, "Miss Yu is really capable! Princess Consort, your skin is so good, you must've eaten a lot of fruits this winter, right?"

"Don't mention it! That lass is the most filial. Even if she's not in the capital, she still tells the people at the farmstead to send a basket every three or five days." Princess Consort Jing's tone was full of flaunting. Of course, it wasn't that she ate fruit every day, but the fact that her son had a good eye and found her a filial and considerate daughter-in-law.

Looking at each other, the madams no longer dared to feel contempt for the young girl from the Yu Family and agreed with Princess Consort Jing's words one after another.

The imperial censor's wife had a temperament that was very similar to her husband's. She was frank and didn't care about speaking tactfully. She listened to her words with slight envy and said, "Your Highness is really blessed! However, if Miss Yu's method of preserving fruits can be made public so that more people in the capital can eat fresh fruits like you, it would also be a merit! "

The other madams all looked at her with contempt. Wasn't trying to find out how to preserve fruits from Miss Yu the same as cutting off her wealth? If there were fresh fruits for sale when the snow was flying in the capital, the business would've been as popular as the greenhouse vegetables. Who wouldn't want to make money by themselves? If the method was made public, how would the other party still make money?

Princess Consort Jing ate another piece of fruit tart and was reminded by Meixiang that she had to eat the cake sparingly. Hearing her words, she didn't think much. She just smiled and said, "Xiaocao, that lass, created this for the first time this year. According to what she said, they're still working on developing the technique. It is estimated that the storage method will be published for the public next autumn."

Seeing the slightly abnormal expressions on the other madams' faces, she smiled again and took a sip of the mellow and simple tea. In a low voice, she said, "You must think that the lass is messing about like this to make money just like what happened with the greenhouse fruits and vegetables, right? Then you're wrong! She mainly wants to satisfy her own desire for good food. She even said that sitting at the warm kang bed during the New Year's without cold and crispy fruits was the pity of life! She didn't have any plans to make money off of it!"

When the imperial censor's wife heard this, the smile on her face became more sincere and she eagerly asked, "Then... does that mean we can send someone over to your farmstead next year to learn how to preserve fruits?"

"That's correct! I can make this decision in her stead! This winter, you guys should store more ice cubes so as to not have to send money to our Xiaocao to buy ice cubes from her!" Regarding the preservation method of fruits, Xiaocao had mentioned this matter to Princess Consort Jing. Princess Consort Jing casually helped her out and settled this matter for her.

With plans in mind, the madams made a series of pleasant remarks to Princess Consort Jing and also praised Xiaocao, as if she was a flower. While chatting and enjoying the snow, they tasted the unique and delicious cakes. Unconsciously, they had finished the entire box. When it was time for them to leave, the madams realized that they had accidentally eaten too much. These noble madams, who had always restrained their appetite for good food, all had an expression of bashfulness on their faces.

Princess Consort Jing had an understanding expression on her face. The lass's cooking was something that even she, who often had the chance to eat it, was unable to resist, let alone others.

When the madams were leaving, Princess Consort Jing had ordered some servants to give each of them a box of pastries as a return gift. Gifts didn't need to be expensive—it was enough as long as they could make the recipient satisfied! Seeing the expressions of the madams carrying the wooden box, she felt satisfied. Princess Consort Jing liked the considerate lass, Xiaocao, even more now.

After the guests had left, she opened the box containing chocolates and took out a dark, round, and fragrant 'candy'.

Seeing this, Meixiang hesitated before saying, "Your Highness, you have eaten two pieces of pastries today... Be careful that you don't have an appetite for dinner tonight. "

"As if I want you speaking out of turn!" Princess Consort Jing carefully looked at the dark candy in her hand, glanced at her, and said, "How much room will a small piece of candy take up? Besides, it won't make any difference if I skip dinner! "

Zhu Junyang, who had just sent off his future brother-in-law, came in and heard the last few words from his mother and said, "Lady Mother, if Lord Father found out that the reason you didn't eat dinner was because of these cakes and sweets, I'm afraid you'll never be able to eat the snacks sent by the little lass again!"

"I know! I'm not a criminal in prison. Why are each of you so strict with me?!" Princess Consort Jing said angrily, and then continued, "This 'candy', I'll only eat one, okay?"

"Lady Mother, this is called 'chocolate'. It is made of cocoa beans brought back from the western hemisphere and processed through complicated procedures. If you like it, I'll ask Xiaocao to make it for you more often." Zhu Junyang saw that his mother wasn't happy, so he changed the topic.

"The raw material is rare, and it's troublesome to make it. Xiaocao, that lass, has enough on her hands already. It's enough to eat good food for novelty once in a while! " Princess Consort Jing's heart also ached for the lass who was too busy to be seen. She just came back from the bitter cold of the borders a few days ago.

Yang'er was really too much. He went to raise horses at the borders, yet he also pulled the lass with him. She was a charming little girl, nothing like him. He had thick skin and rough flesh, so he could withstand

the sand and cold wind at the borders! A few days ago, the little lass came back to the estate to pay her respects to her. She looked so pitifully thin, like willow branches.

Now, her son wanted her to make the complicated choco...something for her! He didn't even know to be more considerate. If her daughter-in-law flew away, see who he could cry to!

"Lady Mother, if Xiaocao knew that you cared for her so much, she would be very moved!" Zhu Junyang sat down beside his mother and gently massaged her shoulders for her.

"She's my future daughter-in-law, who else would I dote on? Besides, the little lass is also worthy of being cared for. No matter what she does, she's always thinking about me, her future mother-in-law. The ferret cloak that she sent over a few days ago had such a pure color! Just thinking about the envious look that Princess Consort Duan gave when she saw me wearing it makes me happy!" Princess Consort Jing was very pleased with herself. Princess Consort Duan took advantage of the fact she gave birth to the emperor and suppressed her sisters-in-law. Although Princess Consort Jing was indifferent to these worldly disputes, she still felt a little upset.

'So what if you're the mother of the emperor? Even the tributes to the palace aren't as high class as the fur her future daughter-in-law gave her to show filial respect! Even if you're the emperor's mother, would you be able to eat the pastries and sweets made personally by the lass?'

When she thought of this, there was a look of pride on her face. Princess Consort Jing put the chocolate into her mouth, and her tongue curled around the round shape. The chocolate gradually melted in her mouth and the unique aroma of cocoa overflowed her mouth. That rich, delicate, and silky mouthfeel, which teased her taste buds, was a new banquet of taste.

Fields of Gold Chapter 623

After a while, Princess Consort Jing woke up from this addicting sensory overload. She let out a long sigh and said, "This lass's talent is really surprising. As long as she wants to do something and does it with all her heart, she will be able to do her best. Once this chocolate is released on the market, it will definitely cause a commotion in the capital, no less than her greenhouse vegetables and fruits and her Blossoming Beauty. It's a pity that the raw material is so rare that only the people closest to her can even have a taste of it."

Zhu Junyang looked at the second piece of chocolate in her hand and quickly took it from her. He put the lid back on and put the box into Meixiang's hands, letting her put it away. He told her to only let the princess consort have two pieces every day.

Seeing his mother's discontented expression, he gently explained to her as if he was coaxing a young maiden, "Chocolate can make people feel energized and excited. Your health hasn't been good, so if you eat too much of it, you might not be able to sleep well at night."

"Also, you don't have to worry about the raw materials being too rare. I already sent people to buy an island in the south to plant cacao beans. Not just cacao beans but coffee beans will also be planted. I reckon that these kinds of food will become popular in the capital next year."

Zhu Junyang gradually shifted the topic to avoid giving his mother time to think about how to eat more chocolate. His lady mother had been spoiled by his lord father, so she was like a young girl who was ignorant of worldly affairs. Sometimes she was even more unrestrained than Xiaocao.

Upon hearing this, Princess Consort Jing's creased brows immediately relaxed, and she said with a smile, "There's a manor that was part of my dowry in the outskirts of the capital. It's not far from yours, so you can set up the chocolate workshop there. It would be more convenient for you and Xiaocao to take care of it. Do you have anyone under you who is suitable to manage this? Do you need your lady mother to help you take care of it?"

"Uh...Lady Mother, the chocolate workshop and coffee workshop belong to Xiaocao. Shouldn't she decide the management and location?" Zhu Junyang didn't doubt that his mother wanted to keep this workshop for herself, but his mother's enthusiasm made him feel uneasy.

"My silly son! You don't even know how to make a girl happy. How could Xiaocao, that clever girl like you, a piece of wood?" Princess Consort Jing poked her slender finger at her son's head and snorted, "Xiaocao is alone in the capital, so it's not easy for her. Since you are interested in her, you should help her more. What's more, after the New Year's, your marriage will be set. Her matters will be your matters. Be more attentive and don't be like your father, who's not romantic at all!"

"Ahem!" Imperial Prince Jing, who had just stepped into the room, happened to hear his wife say that sentence with a tone of hidden bitterness and quickly self-reflecting, 'Have I been too busy lately and ignored my wife, making her feel unhappy? Should I take advantage of the New Year's Break and take her to relax at the hot springs nearby?'

"Don't interrupt me. I'm talking to your son about important matters!" Princess Consort Jing didn't seem to think there was anything wrong with what she had just said. She continued saying to her son, "You

can take both the manor and the steward in charge. I'll have Meixiang find the title deed and send it over tomorrow. At that time, you can provide the manor, workers, and raw materials, and Xiaocao can invest with her technique. Then, you two can figure out how to split the income."

Imperial Prince Jing finally understood and quickly nodded his head, saying, "Did that lass, Xiaocao, come up with a new way to make money?"

Princess Consort Jing took a look at the box in Meixiang's hand, took a piece of hazelnut chocolate from it, and put it into her husband's mouth. The strong fragrance of chocolate made her lick her lips unconsciously, "Try this new food. With this delicious flavor, it will definitely sell well."

"Mhm! Not bad!! Women and children must love it. Princess Consort, why aren't you eating it? You don't like it?" Imperial Prince Jing, who had never liked sweets, finished the piece of chocolate. His 'not bad' was rare praise.

Princess Consort Jing immediately frowned, glared at her youngest son, and said with resentment, "It's because of your good son. He's only allowing me to eat two a day. Wait, I've only had one today, so I can eat one more!"

"Lady Mother, you've just eaten a lot of pastries, which also contain cocoa. If you eat more, what will you do if you don't sleep well at night?" Zhu Junyang hurriedly explained when he saw his lord father, who doted on his wife, glare at him without any reasoning.

As soon as Imperial Prince Jing heard this, he immediately sided with his son and said, "Yang'er is right. No matter how good things are, there should still be restraint. It won't run anywhere, so let's eat it slowly!"

"By the way, you just said to invest with the manor. In my opinion, why do you still need to invest? After the first month, the marriage of the two children will be settled and the manor can just be given as a betrothal gift!" When that girl married over, wouldn't the manor and the workshop come back over as dowry? Why bother becoming business partners and making the relationship so distant? Although Imperial Prince Jing didn't say the rest of those words, his wife and son could understand him.

Princess Consort Jing naturally didn't covet her daughter-in-law's dowry. However, those noble-titled madams were not very optimistic about this marriage between her family and the Yu Family. They

thought that their standings weren't a match. If her daughter-in-law's dowry was so amazing that it would shut their mouths, she would naturally be happy to see it.

However, her son, whose heart and mind already belonged to someone else, insensibly said, "But Cao'er already has so many businesses in her hands. If she wants to leave the chocolate production workshop to her family, it wouldn't be appropriate to have the workshop at the manor in the betrothal gift we sent. How about... I'll help her find and purchase some land nearby, and then build the workshop there."

Imperial Prince Jing and his wife glared at their son and inwardly sighed, 'Who are we doing this for? This stinky brat is so ungrateful. We worried about him for nothing!'

As the days went by, New Year's Eve came quietly in the snow. The Yu and Fang families had a loud and noisy New Year's Eve dinner. Fang Haolin and his many siblings spent the New Year together. He was so excited that he couldn't bear to go to sleep for most of the night. Because they had to stay up all night on New Year's Eve, the two families just let him. However, he was still too young and ended up falling asleep before dawn. Xiaocao left him to sleep in her room.

In the first month, when the two families were free, they would occasionally meet up to play cards and mahjong. On the sixth day of the month, Princess Consort Jing invited the opera troupe to the Prince Jing's Estate and invited the Yu and Fang families to go to see the show. Not only these two families but almost all the influential figures in the capital had been invited. This was also a means to introduce their future in-laws, the Yu Family.

At first, Madam Liu was still a little stiff-faced when facing so many of the capital's noblewomen. However, Princess Consort Jing acted very friendly and familiar with her, and she was accompanied by Lady Fang. Gradually, her appearance and behavior began to become more natural.

Madam Liu knew very clearly that at this moment, she was representing her daughter. Her daughter's future in-laws would be high in power and her future mother-in-law was also of noble birth. There would be many wives of high-ranking officials waiting with critical eyes to see her become a joke. Her younger daughter made a living for herself in the capital alone and finally had a breakthrough. As her mother, even though she couldn't help, she wouldn't drag her down!

In her mind, the etiquette that the senior palace servant taught her gradually became clear. She became calmer and more comfortable. She even handled a few difficult questions the noble ladies threw at her. Of course, the most important thing was Princess Consort Jing's attitude towards her. Seeing her

attitude, the noblewomen present dare not slight her. Lady Fang's help from time to time had also prevented her from having many difficulties.

As for Yu Hai, Yu Hang and Yu Fan, who were in the outer courtyard, there was no need to worry about them. Not to mention the protectiveness in Imperial Prince Jing's words, but with the way that Royal Prince Yang took good care of them, no one would dare slight them and offend the death god.

It didn't matter whether the opera was entertaining or not. The most important thing was that the aristocrats of the capital all knew about the marriage between Imperial Prince Jing's Household and the Yu Family. The Yu family, a small family of a peasant origin, would have a foothold in the capital.

On the other hand, the noble misses in the inner courtyard were happily enjoying the sweets and snacks served to them. Since the opening of 'The Yu's Frozen Dessert and Pastries Store', these proud women of the capital have instantly abandoned the so-called established brands and favored these novel foods. In particular, The Yu's limited sales cakes were hard to buy every day. If anyone was lucky enough to grab one, she could show off among her sisters for a long time.

What could they do when 'The Yu's Frozen Dessert and Pastries Store' was able to satisfy these pampered ladies' appreciation of beauty in terms of both appearance and taste?

When these noble misses, who thought they had tried all the delicious food in the world, tasted the cakes served at the Prince Jing's Estate, they realized how ignorant they were. They listened as the servants introduced 'tiramisu', 'fruit tarts', 'matcha red bean cake', 'opera cake', and 'chocolate mousse'... Just the names alone seemed high class!

Not only were the names nice sounding, but the appearances of the cakes were also beautiful and attractive, which made them not want to destroy their art-like shapes. However, their attractive fragrance made people want to taste them.

As the daughter-in-law of the host, the wife of the Imperial Prince Jing's heir gave each of the young maidens a small spoon, inviting them to have a taste of the cake.

Yu Xiaocao was pulled aside by several of her good friends, and they sat around a round table, forming a small circle. In this small circle, there was the high status Royal Princess Minglan, the two talented

beauties of the capital, and the sisters with an impressive family background, Li Mengqi and Li Mengru. The person in the center was Yu Xiaocao, who was rumored to be engaged to Royal Prince Yang.

Although the composition of the members of the small circle was a bit complicated, everyone was envious of it, and it was impossible for them to get close to it. It could be said that if this small circle wanted to expand, all the noble maidens in the capital would wrack their brains to integrate into it.

Not to mention that there were noble maidens in this group that many want to flatter but couldn't, but not just anyone could curry favor with Yu Xiaocao, this shining Buddha. It wasn't that she was arrogant and cold, but it was that she was usually too busy and didn't have many opportunities to get together with the noble maidens in the capital. She also often has a frightful 'big and loyal dog' guarding beside her, giving everyone a sense of alienation.

Fields of Gold Chapter 624

“Younger Sister Xiaocao, if my guess is correct, these new desserts should be from your 'Yu's Frozen Dessert and Pastries Store', right?” He Wanning ate the tiramisu in front of her in small, delicate bites as she savored the delicious flavors. Her eyes curved up into small crescents in enjoyment, and the pleased expression on her face resembled a sleepy little kitten who had just eaten its fill and was basking itself in some warm sunshine.

The other young noble maidens at the nearby tables were also tasting these new delicacies. All of them perked up their ears to eavesdrop more closely on the conversation occurring at the main table.

Yu Xiaocao personally preferred Black Forest gateau herself. She swallowed down the bite of cake in her mouth and her little pink tongue quickly licked the corner of her lips to wipe away any remnants of chocolate before she mysteriously said, “Older Sister He, this time you guessed wrong ah!”

“How could I possibly guess wrong? Other than the Yu's Dessert Store, what other place could possibly come out with such unique and eye-opening desserts? After all, aren't places like 'Daoxiang Village' only able to make out-dated and old fashioned pastries?” Prior to the opening of the Yu's Dessert Store, 'Daoxiang Village' was He Wanning's favorite place to get desserts and pastries. However, once Xiaocao's family business opened, she had an abrupt change of heart and became a diehard and loyal fan of the Yu's Pastries Store's products.

On the other hand, Yuan Xueyan picked up a piece of chocolate that didn't look very special and placed it into her mouth. This was the first time she had ever eaten something that slowly released a dense and rich flavor on her tongue. Within the bitterness of the chocolate was a faint taste of sweetness. She

usually never became enamored with delicious foods, but this piece of chocolate had actually managed to send her into a dreamlike reverie.

When she heard her good friend's words, she lightly replied, "I believe Younger Sister Xiaocao is trying to say that these desserts aren't a product of the Yu's family business. However, that doesn't mean that they are unrelated to her. In my opinion, these desserts were personally made by Younger Sister Xiaocao and they can't even be bought at the Yu's Frozen Dessert and Pastries Store right now."

"Older Sister Yuan is still as brilliantly sharp as before. This younger sister is starting to wonder if you have the ability to peer into other people's hearts ah!" Yu Xiaocao complimented her as she picked up a piece of wine infused chocolate and placed it into Yuan Xueyan's hands. She watched avidly as the older girl bit into the chocolate. The abrupt change in Yuan Xueyan's expression belied the fact that she had tasted the very sweet liquor that came out of the chocolate shell. Yu Xiaocao stifled a giggle and the mischievous look in her eyes made her resemble a little squirrel who had just stolen some pine nuts. Xiaocao obviously knew beforehand that Yuan Xueyan wasn't very fond of sweet foods and definitely didn't like the taste of alcohol. She was deliberately teasing the other girl!

Yuan Xueyan endured the bombardment of the two flavors she hated the most in her mouth and picked up her teacup to drink a large sip of tea to dilute the sweetness. She glared at the little lass who was still surreptitiously giggling and huffed as she said, "You naughty girl. You're clearly asking for a beating, right?"

Royal Princess Minglan was quite flabbergasted by this. Just what sort of flavor could make the usually cold and aloof beauty reveal such an exaggerated expression? She picked up a piece of wine infused chocolate and placed it into her mouth.

"Eh? This candy actually has some liquor in it and it's quite sweet. It tastes quite good ah! However, Older Sister Yuan hates the taste of alcohol the most. Younger Sister Xiaocao, did you give it to her on purpose?" Royal Princess Minglan savored the somewhat sickly sweet chocolate and gazed at Yuan Xueyan, who was currently rinsing her mouth with some tea, with a teasing look.

Yu Xiaocao let out a long sigh, "In life, one needs to constantly try new things and challenge one's set thoughts. It's important to experience new things constantly. I was only trying to help Older Sister Yuan experience more things ah!"

Yuan Xueyan picked up another piece of dark chocolate and let it slowly melt in her mouth. She unhurriedly said, "I'm quite upset now! For an apology gift, you need to give me a box of this type of candy. Otherwise, don't even think of obtaining my forgiveness!"

"And me, and me!! I want the ones that have fruit filling and the ones that have cream filling, and I also...what should I do? Younger Sister Xiaocao, can't you give me a box of each?" He Wanning wasn't practiced at shamelessly asking for chocolates like her other friend in a roundabout way, so she could only directly voice her wishes. She pulled at Xiaocao's hand, swaying it back and forth.

The other young maidens at the main table also looked at Xiaocao with fervent gazes. Their eyes glittered with anticipation. Xiaocao couldn't handle the dozen or so 'feverish looks', so she hurriedly assented to their request and stated that she would give everyone two boxes of chocolates as compensation. As for Yuan Xueyan, she got an extra box of toffee to soothe her ruffled feelings.

The noble young maidens sitting at the other tables were so jealous that they almost turned green. Every table at Imperial Prince Jing's Estate today had two boxes of chocolates and two plates of pastries for the guests. However, when split between all of the people at the table, each person could only get a couple pieces of chocolate at the most. However, there were very few people who didn't become enamored with these new candies after tasting them. Unfortunately, earlier Miss Yu had stated quite clearly that these couldn't even be found at the Yu's Frozen Dessert and Pastries Store. After eating some here, they could only return empty handed with these fleeting memories in mind. It made them feel quite unhappy.

However, that was not the same for Miss Yu's good friends who were sitting at the main table. They, on the other hand, received two boxes of chocolates each as a present. All of them were guests at Imperial Prince Jing's Estate and all of them were the daughters of high-ranking officials at court. The only difference was how close of a relationship they had with Miss Yu, but that was enough to result in such a large disparity in treatment. This truly caused a lot of people to feel incredibly jealous!

But this was something they had no power to change. After all, the chocolates hadn't been provided by Imperial Prince Jing's Estate. Instead, Miss Yu was the one who brought them over as a treat for everyone involved. This was also the reason why many noble maidens now wanted to enter her little circle. Everyone in the capital knew that Miss Yu was very generous to those who were close to her. However, that small circle of hers wasn't something that anyone could just enter willy-nilly. The person needed to get the personal approval of Miss Yu and that was a difficult thing to obtain. Miss Yu usually treated everyone around her in a polite and courteous manner. However, there were only a select few that she saw as her own people and treated accordingly.

In fact, if one thought more about this, it wasn't surprising it was like this! After all, who would treat someone, who had obvious ulterior motives, in a sincere manner? If one wanted sincere treatment from someone else, the first thing that person should do was to show their own sincerity. Who didn't know this relationship law?

Later on, it was Miss Yu Wanqing who had asked the question that everyone was harboring in their thoughts, "Older Sister Yu, when will these pastries, chocolates and candies be available at the Yu's Frozen Dessert and Pastries Store? I can finish two boxes of these delicious chocolates by myself in two days, let alone all of my brothers, sisters-in-law, nieces and nephews. There's just not enough to go around!"

Within the heated pavilion silence prevailed. It was so quiet that one could hear a pin drop. Everyone was holding their breath, waiting for Xiaocao's answer to this important question.

Xiaocao had also sensed the difference in the atmosphere. Without thinking too much, she replied in a regretful manner, "Whether it is the chocolates, tiramisu, Black Forest gateau...all of them require a raw ingredient called cocoa beans from the western hemisphere. This time, the trade ships only brought back a limited amount. It's enough for me to make some desserts and pastries for my own use. However, if I decided to bring these desserts out for the public, I'm afraid the supply would only last for a month's worth before it was gone. Thus, I've decided not to sell the pastries and candies here to the public."

"Ahhhhhh——" Yu Wanqing let out a disappointed scream and it was likely everyone else was also screaming within their hearts, "Then, does that mean, in the future, I won't be able to eat such delicious and unique snacks anymore? What should I do?"

He Wanning shoved a coffee candy into her mouth and crunched on it. She had a wicked smile on her face as she said, "What do you mean what should you do? If you want to eat some, then we can go together to Younger Sister Xiaocao's place and 'seize the goods from the tyrant'! If she dares to hoard it for herself, just watch as I tickle her to death!" As she spoke, she waved her two forefingers in front of Xiaocao in a threatening manner.

"Older Sister He, you've actually learned to use the phrase 'seize the goods from the tyrant'! I'm not sure if the Grand Princess Royal will blame me for taking you down the wrong path ah!" Yu Xiaocao almost couldn't resist laughing at the thought that she had ended up teaching some old rural sayings to a noble young maiden in the capital.

“My paternal grandmother wouldn't blame you at all! After all, she often lectures me and tells me that I need to learn more from you instead of spending all of my time like a tomboy causing trouble. When have I ever caused trouble though? I don't even know who's her blood-related granddaughter anymore!”

Xiaocao truly had a knack of getting along with the older generation. The grand princess royal was quite partial to her. Sometimes, even He Wanning, as her blood-related granddaughter, became jealous at the other girl's treatment. However, whenever she thought of her adorable new nephew and niece back at the residence, He Wanning felt at ease again. The fact that Younger Sister Xiaocao was able to cure her older brother's problem and relieve the hereditary crisis at Marquis Anning's Estate was truly a good thing. Thus, having her paternal grandmother dote on the other girl a bit was something she was more than willing to allow.

Li Mengqi knew that her family's background was inferior to the other people present here and sighed, “These desserts and candies truly require expensive and rare ingredients. Even if they were to be sold on the market now, that doesn't mean that most ordinary families would be able to afford them!”

Although Li Mengru was a concubine-born daughter, she was getting quite a large dividend from her shares at 'Blossoming Beauty'. She was probably the little god of wealth in her family right now! When she heard her sister mention this, she smiled and said, “Older Sister, if these pastries were up for sale, this younger sister would buy them for you!”

“Then that would be awesome. This older sister will have to hug onto your large thigh, you little god of wealth!” In the past two years, Li Mengqi had become a lot closer to this younger concubine-born sister of hers. Thus, her tone when speaking to her had also become more intimate too.

Yu Xiaocao grinned as she watched the two sisters converse with each other. Then she disseminated some good news, “Although this year I won't be selling these new desserts, that doesn't in later years they won't be sold ah!”

“What are you saying? That in the future we'll have enough raw ingredients?” Royal Princess Minglan was also very interested in this problem and couldn't help but ask a follow up question.

Yu Xiaocao didn't continue keeping her audience in suspense and proclaimed, “Royal Prince Yang has an island in the south. He opened up the land there and created a cocoa and coffee plantation. Those two plantations will only raise cocoa and coffee bean trees. After two to three years pass, these trees should be able to produce enough cocoa and coffee beans to supply the dessert shop. At that time, we won't

have to worry about not having enough raw ingredients. Then, you all won't have to worry about not being able to eat chocolate mousse and Black Forest gâteau, right?"

He Wanning had a foolishly happy smile on her face as she waxed, "I still need to wait two to three years ah! I don't care. In these next couple of years, you need to prepare yourself. From time to time, I'm going to rush over so you'll have to prepare some pastries and candies. If not...hmph hmph!"

Yuan Xueyan immediately burst her bubble, "Younger Sister Xiaocao is already sixteen this year. By the standards of the Great Ming court, the best time for women to marry is when they turn eighteen. In two to three years, she'll become a married woman. As for you, you're going to become Lu Hao's wife very soon. Are you still shameless enough then to rush over to Younger Sister Xiaocao's in-law's residence to beg for food?"

That fellow Lu Hao had always come over during the events and outings that Xiaocao organized in the past. As time passed, before other people realized it, he and He Wanning, the little chili pepper, had become a loving but quarrelsome couple. Their families had already come to a marriage agreement. At the end of autumn this year, everyone would be able to drink wine at their wedding.

"Why not? That guy Lu Hao is also great buddies with Royal Prince Yang, whereas Younger Sister Xiaocao and I are a pair of close sisters. It's not as if our good relationship will change after we get married. Can Royal Prince Yang just send me away if I come over to visit her?" He Wanning suddenly thought of that cold and icy face. Her heart shivered for a second and she no longer felt as confident as before.

"Older Sister Yu, you really decided to marry Royal Prince Yang ah? That face of his is so scary looking though. Are you sure you don't want to think more about this?" Yu Wanqing had also seen Zhu Junyang before. She acted like a mouse around a cat whenever she was near him. Although Royal Prince Yang currently treated Older Sister Yu quite well, could she endure even one blow from him with her tiny figure if she accidentally angered him in the future?

Fields of Gold Chapter 625

Yu Xiaocao had a face full of puzzlement. She looked at her good friends, who all had solemn expressions on their faces, and rubbed at her nose. She cautiously asked, "Is Royal Prince Yang's face really that scary? Does anyone here think that he has a handsomely sculpted face, so good-looking that it could entrance someone? He clearly is very good-looking, so why do you all think he looks frightening?"

He Wanning popped another piece of chocolate into her mouth and closed her eyes in enjoyment. She candidly stated, "Royal Prince Yang's default expression is as cold as the ice from a ten thousand year

old glacier. It's so icy that it freezes people instantly and the glare from his eyes seem to pierce a person's heart, so no one dares to look at him directly. His whole body seems to give off a razor sharp aura and people can't help but tremble in front of him! Even if he is handsome, no one would dare to appreciate it ah! However, in front of you, he's as obedient and clever as Little Black. You're not afraid of him, and you're able to stand up to him. Thus, it's only natural that you're able to appreciate his...good parts, right?"

The other young maidens in the room didn't know the 'Little Black' that He Wanning was referring to, but all of Xiaocao's good friends knew. When they saw He Wanning daringly compare Royal Prince Yang to that pet wolf, who could act adorably spoiled in front of Xiaocao, they had to muffle their giggles. Yu Wanqing had been in the middle of taking a sip of coffee and had accidentally choked on the liquid after hearing He Wanning's comparison. The young maiden coughed and sputtered for a few minutes.

Royal Princess Minglan grinned broadly and used her pointer finger to tap He Wanning's head as she said, "You ah! You only have the guts to make Royal Prince Yang a joke in front of us. If these words of yours end up being transmitted into his ears, you're not going to have a good ending!"

"Uh...all of us are good friends here, ah. Thus, the words we say here should not be transmitted outside of this pavilion. None of us are flighty gossip mongers who can't keep ahold of our tongues!" He Wanning glared warningly at all of the young maidens in the room. She then also showed an entreating expression to all of her close friends.

Li Mengru covered her mouth with her handkerchief and glanced at Xiaocao, who was laughing with the crowd. She smiled in amusement and said, "Older Sister He, I think it slipped your mind that Royal Prince Yang is Younger Sister Xiaocao's sweetheart. The two of them spend a lot of time together. What if one day she forgets and accidentally tells him what you said today? What will you do then?"

He Wanning sent a fierce glare in the direction of Yu Xiaocao, who was grinning like a maniac. Xiaocao hurriedly mimed locking her mouth and said, "Don't worry! Am I the type of person who is that unreliable ah? When has anything our little group has talked about ever been disseminated into the public? That being said, I also think you're right. He really does resemble Little Black sometimes!"

"See, Younger Sister Xiaocao also agrees with me! As soon as Royal Prince Yang is in front of our younger sister, he immediately becomes obedient. Otherwise, our younger sister wouldn't become interested in such a big ice cube. What do you all think?" He Wanning casually continued to devour pastries. Most of the desserts on the table had been consumed by her.

Xiaocao reminded her, "Try not to eat too much here. In a bit, lunch will be served and if you eat too much here you won't have an appetite for the food then."

He Wanning waved a hand in dismissal, "What kind of food is there for lunch? It's all the same anyway. How could it be any more novel than this? These desserts and chocolates aren't something that I can eat whenever I want. Thus, I naturally have to eat more now."

Royal Princess Minglan rolled her eyes at the other young lady and said, "You're such a disgrace!" Although she said it like that, she also didn't stop eating the desserts on the table.

Yu Xiaocao raised her voice to announce, "Lunch today will have a few dishes that I have personally just come up with. This will be the first time they will be making an appearance in the Great Ming Empire! The most important one is a dish called 'Buddha Jumps over the Wall', and it's a dish that even the emperor emeritus and emperor cannot forget. Are you guys sure you don't want to try them?"

"Wow! The food that Older Sister Yu makes is truly delicious. I'm so excited to try these new dishes! The name 'Buddha Jumps over the Wall' is quite unique. Doesn't that mean that the dish is so tasty that even Buddha himself can't resist the temptation?" After personally tasting Xiaocao's food, Yu Wanqing had become a die-hard fan of her cuisine so she gratifyingly showed her support in a pleasing manner.

He Wanning rubbed her tummy, which was about seventy percent full, and then glared at Xiaocao, "Why didn't you mention this earlier? You made it such that I ate a full belly full of sweets before tempting me with the food at lunch...however, I absolutely won't hold back at lunch today. Every time Younger Sister Xiaocao cooks, the food is divine. I'll stuff myself to death if I have to!"

Yuan Xueyan calmly shoved a verbal knife, "Then who was the one complaining earlier that her clothes were getting tight and that she needed to eat less to lose some weight?"

Yu Xiaocao looked at He Wanning, who had a beautiful figure, from head to toe and remarked in a shocked manner, "Older Sister He wants to lose weight ah? Then this is bad. These desserts and chocolates provide a lot of energy and are more likely to cause people to gain weight than eating fatty braised pork ah! How about...when you leave, you don't take those two boxes of desserts with you?"

"How can that be ok? What about...what about in the future I'll go practice martial arts a bit with my eldest brother or I could spend some more time on horseback? These desserts are so delicious, so those

two boxes aren't even enough for me to eat!" He Wanning had a nervous expression on her face as she was afraid that Xiaocao would not give her the boxes of chocolates and desserts.

Yuan Xueyan rolled her eyes, "Then if you die of overeating, it's all on you!"

"If I can't eat delicious food, then what's the point in living?" When He Wanning had to choose between 'losing weight' and 'eating delicious food', she naturally ended up selecting the latter.

Yu Wanqing comforted the older maiden by saying, "Older Sister He, you're not fat, so why torture yourself to lose weight ah? My mother said that I need to eat more like you, that way I can have a strong and healthy body and avoid having my skin produce more issues."

He Wanning pulled Wanqing into her arms and almost planted a kiss on the younger girl's face, "You're clearly my little sweetie. This older sister didn't dote on you for nothing. You're right. I'm not even fat so why do I need to lose weight? Why torture myself for nothing?"

Royal Princess Minglan had originally stopped reaching for desserts after hearing Xiaocao's comments on the food. However, she glanced at He Wanning's 'curvaceous' figure and then lowered her head to look at her own slim and slender waist. Then, she began reaching for the tiramisu again. If He Wanning's figure wasn't considered fat, then what did she have to be afraid of?

Once the other maidens found out that new dishes were going to be presented for lunch, all of them either slowed their speed or stopped eating the desserts on the table. One after another, they began to quietly discuss amongst their good friends about the relationship between Miss Yu and Zhenxiu Restaurant. They were all looking forward to the noon meal.

Meixiang came over as ordered to invite all of the young maidens over to the theatre pavilion and noticed that the atmosphere looked peaceful and harmonious. Originally, when she found out that Miss Yu was the one hosting these maidens, Meixiang was a bit worried that these noble young ladies would try to make things difficult for Miss Yu. She didn't expect that Miss Yu had the skills to make everyone behave in such a courteous manner.

However, how could she know that Yu Xiaocao didn't use much effort to make the event go well? As soon as the desserts and chocolates came out, all of the young maidens here immediately shelved any

thoughts of causing trouble. They were eating her food. If anyone came out to say some sour remarks now, that would truly mean they had no sense.

While they were watching the plays, the young ladies were all preoccupied thinking about the upcoming noon meal and fantasizing about 'Buddha Jumps over the Wall' as Xiaocao had described it in such a tantalizing manner. Thus, most of them seemed quite distracted. Only a few of them managed to pay attention to even the most favored play of the ladies. Their elders all noticed the change in their juniors but couldn't figure out what was going on.

It was only after when the servants came over to announce that the noon meal was ready for the princess consort and her guests that the young maidens all seemed to snap out of their daydreams. Only then did the matrons and ladies present realize that their daughters (granddaughters) were preoccupied with thinking about the meal. Then, they remembered that the Yu Family's young maiden had received the juniors earlier, which meant that the upcoming meal was related to her as well. Thus, they also began to excitedly anticipate lunch.

As expected, the unique dishes at the lunch didn't disappoint a single one of the guests.

'Lightly fried mandarin fish fillets' was a dish that required fine knife skills. The bones of the mandarin fish were carefully removed and then, with one knife stroke, the skin was removed entirely in one piece before cooking. The cooked flesh was then delicately sliced into fillets that were as thin as a cicada's wing and arranged beautifully on the platter.

'Dried scallop rings' was a dish that used strips of daikon to form the 'ring' portion of the dish. Inside the ring, dried scallops were placed in the middle. The golden-yellow color of the scallops contrasted sharply with the whiteness of the daikon, making an elegant and pleasing sight. When the dish was eaten, the texture was soft and tender with a light, pleasing fragrance.

'Squirrel fish' was a dish whose name referred to the fact that it looked like a squirrel. The fish had tender meat, golden-yellow luster, and tasted sweet and sour in the mouth. Furthermore, it had the faint aroma of pine nuts.

'Crystal meat slices' was a dish that mixed fragrant chopped meat with solidified tasty broth. The red of the meat contrasted beautifully with the transparent, sparkling solidified broth. The texture was tender and soft, rich without being greasy, and the dish had a delicate savory flavor.

'Stewed bamboo shoots from Wenzheng Mountain' was a dish that cooked the bamboo shoots until they were tender with a delicate mouth feel and they were infused with a rich flavor. The dish also contained sausages and shiitake mushrooms, which elevated the savory taste. A single bite would flood a person's mouth with a delicious aroma...

Every single dish was refreshing and unique. Even those old gluttons, who thought that they had eaten all of the delicious foods in the world, had never encountered food that had such a pleasing look, tantalizing aroma, and mind-blowing flavor as these dishes. A few of the older guests, who were obsessed with food, inquired about the new chef that the prince's estate had invited, so that they could find a chef like that too.

When they found out that these new dishes had all been created by Imperial Prince Jing Household's future daughter-in-law in her spare time, they all became upset and regretful. Why hadn't they struck first when they had the chance and snatched such an ideal wife for their sons or grandsons?

Oh my, for the sake of eating delicious foods, these people were willing to sell their sons and grandsons. These old men put up an elegant and dignified front while they were at court, but, in private, they were just some old urchins who loved to eat delicious foods.

When the star of the meal, Buddha Jumps over the Wall, appeared on the tables, these old officials, who had eaten until they were stuffed, seemed to get a second wind. It was as if those people who had seconds ago been burping and hiccuping from fullness weren't them! They ate as if they couldn't stop themselves!

As the host, Imperial Prince Jing was quite alarmed when he saw this sight and hurriedly commanded the servants to brew more digestive soup to avoid having the issue of these old men, who were the pillars of the court and country, becoming heavily ill from indigestion.

As for the women in the inner courtyard, they weren't doing much better than the men. In the morning, they had already eaten quite a few pastries and desserts. The older ladies and matrons were aware of their statuses and were able to control their appetites in an effort to keep their reputation. However, the younger maidens had ended up eating many chocolates and desserts.

Unfortunately, the tables in front of them were testing them again. There were a plethora of delicious and unique dishes, so none of them could resist letting this opportunity pass, especially the tables that were next to Xiaocao. When the maidens seated there heard her describe and introduce all of these dishes and then tried them themselves, how could they possibly stop themselves from eating more?

Prior to the arrival of Buddha Jumps over the Wall at the table, He Wanning cradled her bulging little stomach and repeatedly muttered loudly, "I can't do this anymore. If I eat any more something bad is going to happen. No matter how delicious the next plates are, this maiden will have to decline!"

Seated at the main table was Marchioness Anning. She sent a pointed glare at her daughter. Her daughter was almost an adult lady, at the cusp of getting married, yet she still spoke without thinking and in a rash manner. In contrast, Yu Xiaocao was younger than He Wanning by two years but was clearly much more mature and steady. Furthermore, that lass knew how to experiment with foods and had quite the culinary talent. Argh! Comparisons could truly infuriate a person, especially when you came out as inferior. Why didn't the heavens have eyes and let her birth a daughter like Royal Princess Jinan instead?

Fields of Gold Chapter 626

However, once 'Buddha Jumps over the Wall' was served to the table, He Wanning immediately forgot the words she had just said when the dense, mesmerizing aroma of the dish hit her nostrils. She couldn't restrain herself and completely ignored her protesting, full stomach and rushed to grab a bowl to start stuffing herself with the fragrant stew.

As she ate, this lass continued to compliment the dish without end. She stated that she had never eaten something as delicious as this. The other young maidens around them all nodded their heads in agreement with their cheeks stuffed full of food. He Wanning even complained endlessly, grumbling that Xiaocao had such culinary talent but had only shown it off today. Clearly, she had slighted the other girl as He Wanning had to wait this long in order to eat such delicious food. In the end, the remaining food left in the ceramic bowl had been unceremoniously partitioned out to her.

Xiaocao was truly afraid that her good friends would end up with stomach aches after eating this much. Thus, when the digestive soup was passed around, she hurriedly added a few drops of mystic-stone water to the pot. She personally served a bowl to all of her friends and made sure that all of them drank it. By the time they said their farewells, her friends had recovered to their normal state and were no longer holding their stomachs and crying out in pain.

This banquet had truly given a lot of face to both Imperial Prince Jing and Princess Consort Jing. Everyone told them that this was the best feast they had ever been at. There were even some people who surreptitiously asked Yu Hai and his wife whether the 'Yu's Line of Business' planned on opening up a restaurant in the future.

Yu Hai had been prepared by his youngest daughter and vaguely let out the news that the Yu Family was planning on opening up a medicinal cuisine restaurant. In fact, 'Buddha Jumps Over the Wall' was going to be the main attraction there. Some of the guests were quite surprised by this and asked, "This dish is incredibly delicious but it's actually a type of medicinal cuisine?"

Yu Hai described the effects of Buddha Jumps Over the Wall. It could make a person blossom with their innate beauty, stymie the inevitable aging journey, increase immunity, and had an overall energizing benefit. He described all of these effects to the people around him. Everyone's interest in medicinal cuisine had immediately increased by a notch. It was a dish that not only could benefit one's body but it also satisfied a person's craving for delicious food. Clearly, this was something to look forward to.

Although the medicinal cuisine restaurant had not been established yet, its reputation had already been quietly disseminated throughout the capital. The dish 'Buddha Jumps Over the Wall' had also been discussed enthusiastically by all of the officials who had attended Imperial Prince Jing's banquet in a bragging manner. Those who hadn't been fortunate enough to receive an invitation were now incredibly curious and looked forward to the day when the medicinal cuisine building would open. Even if they had to tighten their money belts, they still had to try the dish that has been praised to the skies by other people, 'Buddha Jumps Over the Wall'.

Xiaocao pasted on a smile and dealt with another batch of young noble maidens whom she was unfamiliar with. After sending them off, Xiaocao rubbed at her face. Just when did her relationships with other people become so good? Why did all of these noble maidens in the capital, who usually didn't even deign to nod their heads at her, sidle over to speak with her? Furthermore, they always directed the conversation towards the speculative 'Medicinal Cuisine House'.

The high-ranking officials and their wives were all quite in touch with the capital's gossip. In only a few days, the rumors that the Yu Family's Business was planning on opening a medicinal cuisine restaurant had pretty much been transmitted to every corner of the capital. Even the dish, 'Buddha Jumps Over the Wall', had become blazingly popular. Those who had tried it bragged that this was a dish that 'was something that could only be found in the Heavens, and was a rarity in the mundane world'.

Well! At least that saved her the trouble of racking her brain to come up with a method to advertise this new business. The location of the Medicinal Cuisine House has already been decided; it was going to be located at one of Princess Consort Jing's dowry shops. The building was situated on the west side of the capital, which was a wealthy district and was also quite close to the imperial princes' estates and the imperial palace. The shop itself had seven interconnected rooms on each floor and had three floors in total. Thus, it had the ideal layout for a restaurant-based business.

In order to avoid Xiaocao becoming uneasy at getting this building, Princess Consort Jing had prepared early and had already transferred the deed to this building to her youngest son's name. Furthermore, she stated that this was to be a betrothal gift to the Yu Family. When the Imperial Prince Jing's heir's wife had married over, she had been given a few more shops and stores than this. However, the stores that she was given were in slightly worse locations than this one. Both of them were daughters-in-law, so they had to avoid these betrothal gifts causing friction between the two later. Thus, Princess Consort Jing did her best to make things as equal as possible. She still had some dowry shops left in her hand and those would be used in the future when her second son got married as betrothal gifts.

As Xiaocao got closer and closer to opening up Medicinal Cuisine House, Zhu Junyang also helped her quite a bit from the background by providing the materials and manpower needed to renovate the building. Furthermore, the day where the two of them were to be engaged also got closer. Zhu Junyang excitedly counted down the days to that date.

In ancient times, the people followed the customs of 'three matchmakers and six rites' and the 'three letters and six rites'. Imperial Prince Jing had originally invited one of his uncles, who was a person of high repute and virtue, to become the matchmaker on the men's side. However, once the emperor found out through Chief Steward Su that Royal Prince Yang and Xiaocao were going to get engaged, he insisted on stepping in as the male matchmaker with the excuse that the two of them were both important officials under him.

As for the matchmaker on the female's side, that had already been arranged a long time ago. The person selected was Little Shitou's, Yu Fan's, beloved teacher, the most brilliant and famous scholar of the Great Ming Dynasty, Yuan Sinian. It must be stated that Headmaster Yuan was a giant in the eyes of scholars and had legendary status. The fact that they were able to have him become her matchmaker was a very illustrious and grand honor!

For the 'three matchmakers', the male and female side had all been selected, and both of them were important people. Thus, the middle matchmaker couldn't be someone of no repute. The two families were pondering this problem as they needed to find an appropriate person to bridge between the two matchmakers. At this time, the emperor emeritus, who had just come back from his travels in the southern part of the country, found out that the lass Xiaocao was going to become engaged with his darling grandson. He didn't even take the time to rest a bit before he came up and insisted on becoming the middle matchmaker between the two.

Did he actually know how to become a middle matchmaker to bridge between the two families? If you asked him that question, he would immediately glare at you with his large eyes and state in matter of fact manner, "Absolutely not!" That wasn't surprising. After all, when the emperor emeritus was the emperor, he didn't need to bridge things between two families at all. Instead, he just bestowed

marriages as he liked. After he retired from his position, he spent all of his time traveling around the country, tasting the delicacies of the empire. When would he have the time to act as a matchmaker then? Furthermore, who would have the guts and face to ask the emperor emeritus to act as matchmaker for them?

Then what should he do if he didn't know how? Just wing it! In any case, that stinky grandson of his and the little lass already had an affinity for each other. Thus, the matchmakers in the marriage were only for show. That being said, it didn't matter if he didn't know the correct rituals, that was what his subordinates were for! For this matter, Chief Steward Su Ran had especially instructed his subordinates to gather all of the information and materials needed for the emperor emeritus. Once that was done, they created a special 'cheat sheet' for the emperor emeritus to refer to on the prospective day.

All in all, when the news came out about the 'three matchmakers' that Imperial Prince Jing's Household and the Yu Family had chosen, it completely stunned all of the nobles and officials in the capital. Once again, Xiaocao had become the jealous target of all of the other maidens there. She was the first person who was able to invite such illustrious personages, the emperor, emperor emeritus, and Great Scholar Yuan, as her matchmakers. In the future, it would be hard for anyone else to top that!

Naturally, her close friends were a bit envious but all of them were happy for their younger sister. This level of ostentation truly showed how much the male side valued the female side. So what did it matter that her background was lowly? Did it matter that her identity didn't match his? Clearly, she was favored by the heavens as she was able to find such an ideal match within the imperial family. Furthermore, she was also someone highly regarded by the emperor. The most important thing was that Royal Prince Yang truly liked that little sprout from the Yu Family, and had chosen illustrious matchmakers to show his pleasure.

When the calculated date of auspiciousness finally arrived, Zhu Junyang set out in high spirits. He was dressed in a dark maroon brocade robe and his hair had been combed into a shiny style. On his left was his middle matchmaker, his imperial grandfather, and on his right was his lord father, Imperial Prince Jing. With them were all of the betrothal gifts that had lucky and fortuitous meanings. They waited outside the Yu Residence for the start of the formal proceedings.

This was the first rite of the 'three letters and six rites'—the formal proposal. The male side was inquiring as to whether the female side agreed to this marriage. Thus, they first had the matchmakers enter the female side's residence to send them betrothal gifts. After they obtained the agreement from the female side, then they would have the matchmaker conduct the formal 'betrothal and exchanging of gifts' between the two families.

The presents that Imperial Prince Jing's Estate had brought over were all displayed in the main reception hall. The gifts included all sorts of expensive and valuable silk bolts, gold and silver, jewelry, and a few dozen boxes of expensive pastries. The most conspicuous and eye-catching gift was a pair of live geese. They had just passed the first month of the year, so all of the geese should have flown off to the south already to spend the winter months in a warm climate. Thus, it was incredibly hard to find any live large geese in the capital area, which was far up north.

It must be mentioned that Zhu Junyang had long started to prepare for his engagement day. Thus, last year at the start of fall, he had gone out and caught a few pairs of live geese. These geese were all sent to the farmstead in the suburbs to be raised. Fortunately, all of the wells at the farmstead had been transformed by Xiaocao to contain mystic-stone water. Otherwise, these geese might have frozen to death while staying there.

The type and amount of betrothal gifts sent over by the male's side was considered quite lavish by the capital's standards. All of the fine fabrics were tribute goods sent into the imperial palace. They had even given the female side a dozen or so bolts of the most rare and expensive 'floating clouds' cloth. The jewelry, as expected, were all top-notch pieces whether it was the craftsmanship or the materials used. Among them included gems that Zhu Junyang had brought over from the western hemisphere. There were rubies, sapphires, cat's eye gems, and colored diamonds. The jewels filled up more than a dozen boxes and the glitter from them was enough to blind a person.

No one in the Yu Family paid much attention to the betrothal gifts. After all, there were three great personages currently at the Yu Residence and it made Yu Hai, Yu Hang, and all of the other members there a bit uneasy and unsure of what they should do. Whether it was the emperor, emperor emeritus, or an imperial prince, all of them were people that they needed to kowtow three times to. However, these people were all here with gentle smiles on their face while greeting them in a casual manner. It made them feel quite tense as they had no idea what to expect.

When Zhu Junfan saw this, he hurriedly stated, "Today we can do away with the customs between a ruler and his subjects. It is a day for celebrating a relationship. You all are the family members of the female side. If there are any requests to be had, please tell us immediately. After all, you spent over a dozen years raising your daughter and letting all that work benefit another is a shame..."

Imperial Prince Jing glanced over briefly at him—Your Imperial Majesty, just who's side are you on anyway?

Although the emperor said it that way, these three great personages were still right there. How could the Yu Family possibly open their mouths at this point? Fortunately, Headmaster Yuan and Fang Zizhen

were both there as their backing, so that allowed the awkward atmosphere in the room to dissipate a little.

As the matchmaker that was here to bridge the two families, the emperor emeritus picked up a pastry from the table in a nonchalant manner and stuffed it into his face. He noisily ate it in one bite and nodded his head repeatedly, "That's the taste of good stuff ah! Although this lord isn't super fond of these sweet treats that women like, it's been decades since I've had any and I've missed them a bit. Hey you...Little Shitou, is there any coffee here ah? Get me a cup, no milk and only a touch of sugar!"

'My dear father ah, just what are you doing here today ah? Do you really think you're here to drink some afternoon tea ah? Asking for coffee and desserts?' Imperial Prince Jing suddenly felt quite exhausted inwardly. Neither the elder nor the junior were here to help him. Instead, they only seemed to be making him look bad!

Coffee? Little Shitou made a noise in assent and headed towards the inner courtyard with his head full of confusion. He needed to find his second sister to save this situation. Because drinking coffee could affect the growth rate of young children, Xiaocao also didn't really like to drink any. Thus, no one in the family knew that this stuff existed. Zhu Junyang, on the other hand, had realized the benefits of consuming this beverage, so when he was busy he'd have Xiaocao send him a cup now and then.

When Xiaocao heard this request, she didn't say anything as she took out the coffee that had been finely ground into a powder. She mixed an appropriate amount of powder with some cold water and then heated it up in a porcelain pot on top of a small fire. Brewing coffee required fine control over the amount of heat, but that wasn't something that was considered to be difficult to Yu Xiaocao. Two minutes later, once the oils came out and the liquid began to foam, she took it out of the charcoal heat and placed it on a smaller flame to simmer for a few minutes. Finally, she took it off of the heat for half a minute and then filtered out the coffee. After adding a bit of powdered sugar to the coffee, she ordered one of the servants to bring it out.

Fields of Gold Chapter 627

Naturally, this coffee wasn't prepared for the emperor emeritus alone. Thus, Xiaocao considerately also placed some milk and sugar on the serving tray. Whoever felt that the coffee was too bitter could easily add either to their own taste.

The emperor emeritus drank some pure coffee and ate a few pieces of sweet but not too sweet western-style pastries. He nodded his head in satisfaction. The fatigue that had settled into his bones for months had dissipated away as soon as he ate the delicious food. Other than the emperor, who had added a bit more milk and sugar to his cup and drank it down with pleasure, the rest of the people present weren't used to this bitter drink.

However, Headmaster Yuan was able to taste the uniqueness of the coffee. There was still more than half a year before the autumnal exams started, so all of the students were studying late every day. Naturally, their energy levels couldn't keep up with this schedule. If they had access to this energizing drink, it may be of great help to them in the future. He silently remembered the properties of this drink and reminded himself to ask the little lass for 'the secrets' of this drink.

“Ahem ahem! We've done most of the ceremonies today, and it's starting to get late...” The emperor emeritus finished the cup of coffee in front of him in one gulp and wished to drink more.

The Yu Family and Headmaster Yuan, who was the matchmaker on the female side, all thought that he was going to say his farewells next, so they hurriedly interjected, “Lunch preparations has just been finished, so you should eat before you go ah!”

The emperor emeritus nodded his head in a matter of fact manner and said, “That was precisely my thought. It's getting late and about time to eat the noon meal. I heard that when my second son had guests over, the little lass had come up with a few more new dishes. I'm not sure whether this old lord would be able to try any today at noon.”

Imperial Prince Jing had a constipated look on his face. Why did he agree to allow his old father to become the middle matchmaker? Was there anyone else who would shamelessly cadge a meal from the female side when they were here to match the birthdates between the prospective groom and bride?

“Will 'Buddha Jumps Over the Wall' be at the meal today? Every time the imperial chefs make it, I always feel like it's missing something. The taste is never as good as when that lass Xiaocao makes it.” The emperor also had a face full of approval, showing that he had no intention of moving even one iota out of the chair.

Imperial Prince Jing let out a long sigh inside. It looked like he was truly going to be shamed to the heavens today. After all, it was impossible to not get bitten when there was a lot of lice around! He also had no intention of saying his farewells now either.

“Yes, yes, yes! When Cao'er found out that Your Imperial Majesty was going to personally come today, she made sure that all of the ingredients for the dish were ready in advance. She had woken up bright and early to begin preparing. Not only will there be 'Buddha Jumps Over the Wall', but she also prepared your favorite braised pig head meat, sliced pig ears in chili oil, braised pig snout...all of these have been

personally made by that lass Cao'er!" Yu Hai realized that both the emperor and the emperor emeritus were quite easygoing, so he slowly relaxed as time went on. Thus, when he spoke, he wasn't as afraid as before.

The emperor emeritus chuckled and said, "Looks like I didn't dote on that lass for nothing. She still remembers what this old lord likes to eat the most. However, these past two years my teeth have become more loose in my mouth. Thus, it looks like the sliced pig ears will have to benefit the rest of you stinky brats instead."

As one of the 'stinky brats', Imperial Prince Jing rubbed at his nose. He was almost fifty years old but was still labeled a stinky brat. It felt like he had gone back to his youth again during a time when his old father would beat him out with a broom.

Headmaster Yuan guffawed loudly, "You're already seventy years old and your teeth have only started to loosen now? You should be pleased ah! However, Xiaocao mentioned that she wants to open a medicinal cuisine hall. You should ask if she has any recipes that can help with your teeth. If you don't have any teeth, then eating is not as enjoyable since there will be many things you can't eat anymore."

"Old Yuan, you are right. Eating with no teeth is just not the same! That lass Xiaocao has all sorts of crazy ideas in her head, so I'm sure she has a solution. It's a pity that the medical technology here is too backwards. If they were able to plant teeth, then this old lord wouldn't have to worry." The emperor emeritus quite missed the dentists in his previous life now.

"Plant teeth? I've only heard of planting flowers, grass or crops before. I've never heard of being able to plant teeth. You're thinking a bit too outside the box, eh?" Yuan Sinian was around the same age as the emperor emeritus. When he was younger, he had served under the emperor emeritus and consequently had a good idea of the other man's temperament. Thus, when he spoke, he didn't have to be too cautious around him.

"I have no suitable conversation topics to have with you ancient people. The two of us have a very big generation gap between us. In a bit, I'll have a nice chat with that lass Xiaocao!" The emperor emeritus had long guessed that Xiaocao was also a transmigrator. However, he wasn't quite sure just what she used to do in her past life.

She knew many medicinal cuisine recipes, so perhaps she had been born in a traditional medical doctor family or was a nutritionist instead? She was also quite skilled at making foods, so maybe she was a chef in her past life? But the lass was also very proficient at planting crops...it really made it difficult for one

to guess just what she did in her past life. However, he didn't think too much of this. As long as he was able to eat the foods he loved in his past life, he was more than satisfied.

The guests and the hosts all had a merry time during the noon meal. The emperor emeritus drank quite a few cups of the Yu's Distillery's new high alcohol-content drinks. Furthermore, he had pulled his grandson, the emperor, into his drinking shenanigans and completely forgot just what he was here for today. Imperial Prince Jing sat at the side and watched the two of them with worry—was it too late to swap out matchmakers by this point?

Not long after the presentation of the betrothal gifts, the matchmakers needed to come back to the female's residence and ask about the prospective bride's name and her eight characters. Then, it would be used with the prospective groom's to divine whether they were compatible. This was the second of the 'six rites'—birthdate horoscopes. Birthdate horoscopes also required the man's side to bring gifts and it usually was a pair of wild geese. Imperial Prince Jing was anxious about this step, so he also tagged along. On the way there, he prayed that his old father and the emperor wouldn't act as ridiculous as before and cause him to lose more face.

Fortunately, Headmaster Yuan was much more qualified for his role of a matchmaker and still remembered his duties. He took care of the exchange of birthdate data between the two families. Some people would take the prospective bride's data back home and place it on the censer in the family's ancestral hall. If three days passed by peacefully, that meant the two were fated to have a harmonious relationship. If something bad happened in three days, then it was likely they would return the woman's birthdate and decline the marriage.

However, Zhu Junyang had long become familiar with the little lass's birthdate data, even more so than his own. Imperial Prince Jing's Estate had also sent their birthdates to Huguo Temple and had the head priest there divine a reading. The results showed that, in every way, the little lass would bring fortune to the prince's estate and be a lucky charm for them. Thus, the comparison of their birthdates today and the presentation of the bridewealth were mostly just for show.

Under the reminder of Su Ran, the emperor took out the betrothal card and handed it to the matchmaker for the female side. The so-called betrothal card was made using red colored paper and had both the prospective groom's and bride's names and birthdates written on top. By receiving the betrothal card, the Yu Family was stating that they were agreeing to this marriage.

The two juniors had a good relationship, so the two families regarded this marriage with a pleased eye. Naturally, Yu Hai was still a bit anxious about this. After all, Imperial Prince Jing's Household was truly

too grand and noble. If, in the future, his daughter was wronged by them, and he wanted to get justice for her, that would be very hard for him to do.

With the Yu Family's current reputation and status in Tanggu, no matter who his daughter married in that area, as the maternal family, they would be able to arrogantly become her supporters from behind. However, in the capital, it was different. One could randomly throw a stick into the streets and end up hitting someone from the imperial family. Thus, the Yu Family's status was nothing to be remarked upon.

In other people's eyes, the fact that a daughter from the Yu Family was able to marry into Imperial Prince Jing's Household was a grand and glorious thing. Clearly, it was their immense fortune. Yu Hai, on the other hand, could only silently pray that Royal Prince Yang would stay true to his words and give his youngest daughter the happy life that she deserved.

Since Xiaocao was still young, Zhu Junyang insisted on waiting until the little lass turned eighteen before marrying her. Thus, they only finished up to the giving of betrothal gifts and bride price in the 'six rites'. As for the three remaining rites, that would have to be done two years later.

Just the first three rites required almost two months to finish in order to show just how much Imperial Prince Jing's Estate regarded the female side. Now, the entire capital knew that Royal Prince Yang had been earmarked by Xiaocao.

At this time, news of war came back from the northwest border of the empire. When the Great Ming Dynasty was first established, the emperor emeritus dealt with war at all of the borders. Thus, at that time, he had kept an iron grasp on the northern and northwestern borders. After the Jianwen Emperor ascended the throne, he slowly relaxed their grip on the borders as the country needed to recover from years of warfare and slowly build up the commoner base. The Turpans at the northwestern borders and the Qinghai Mongols all secretly began to amass possible and often skirmished with the Great Ming soldiers at the borders.

After the old and young Zhao generals were stationed at the northwest, they managed to obtain a few victories in a row. The two foreign states had eaten a few losses, so they became quiet for a few more years. Now, they could no longer wait anymore and wanted to bite off a large piece of territory from the Great Ming Dynasty. Under ordinary circumstances, with the two Zhao generals there, who were very experienced at warfare, these two invaders would only be dancing clowns in front of them.

However, the foreign invaders had somehow managed to send in a spy into the armies stationed at the northwestern border. Furthermore, this spy had managed to hide himself from everyone and had become the right hand man of one of the assistant generals. When the spy received some hinting from his old masters, he somehow managed to poison all of the high-ranking generals and officers within the Great Ming's northwestern army. Although this poison wasn't enough to immediately kill these people, it was enough to cause some damage to the Zhao Family's two generals.

Seizing this situation, the Turpans and Mongols struck using a pincer attack. The northwestern army, now without any competent leaders, immediately suffered a huge loss. In a short period of time, about a month, the Turpans managed to conquer Kurpal City and the northwestern army had no choice but to retreat. Following that, the Turpans struck further into the empire and the Great Ming Empire lost a few other cities. By the time the emperor received this news eight hundred kilometers away, the situation had already turned urgent and the Great Ming's army had already retreated to Jiayuguan City.

This was the first time since the Great Ming Dynasty was established that they had suffered such a loss at the borders. The emperor was furious and immediately sent out Royal Prince Yang after appointing him Great General Zhengxi. He brought with him the soldiers from Xishan Barracks and a hundred thousand people from the Yulin Army to reinforce the northwestern army.

As the proverb said, 'Before an army moves, one must first consider the supply train'. If this had happened five years earlier, the emperor naturally wouldn't have dared to send all of these men out to war. However, now that Yu Xiaocao was here and the empire's storehouses were now filled with grain from the past few bumper years, the commoners had plenty and the national treasury was full. Even if the war lasted for three to five years, the emperor wouldn't have to worry about running out of supplies and money.

The task of preparing and transporting the supplies had fallen upon Minister Liu and Yu Xiaocao from the Ministry of Revenue. Since the northern parts of the country had been given high-yielding seeds first, they now had a large supply of grain stored there. Thus, getting enough food to supply an army a hundred thousand strong was merely a small appetizer. As for the official in charge of transporting the grain, that had fallen onto Count Zhongqin, Fang Zizhen.

The reasoning for this appointment was simple. The Fang Family was now related in marriage to Great General Zhengxi and they also had a master-disciple relationship with General Zhao in the northwest army. Thus, Fang Zizhen wouldn't try doing any tricks in delaying help to those two people.

When Xiaocao found out that Grandfather Zhao and Uncle Zhao had both been poisoned, she immediately went to work. She stayed up the entire night to craft a few bottles filled with detoxifying

pills that had been enhanced with mystic-stone water. Furthermore, she was worried that her fiancé might get injured in the upcoming war. Thus, she personally made some pills and balms to treat internal and external injuries.

The little divine stone had helped her by teaching her a few elementary methods of concocting medicines that it had learned in its other dimension. Although Xiaocao could only use ordinary ingredients, ordinary medicine furnaces and fires to make these pills, the medicines she made were all at least ten times more effective than the other pills made in this world. With the addition of mystic-stone water in these medicines, their efficacy was naturally quite good.

For example, it didn't matter how severe an external injury was as long as it wasn't a fatal strike. As long as that person used a pill to treat external injuries, the bleeding would immediately stop and the person could bounce around like normal in two days. As for the pills used to treat internal injuries, it wouldn't be too far-fetched to claim that it could bring the dead back to life. As long as one breath remained in that person, taking a pill could help them preserve their life.

Fields of Gold Chapter 628

When Yu Xiaocao appeared in the middle of the crowd sending off the army, with dark circles under her eyes and her eyes red-rimmed from staying up the entire night, Zhu Junyang, who was seated on top of Fierce Wind, immediately spotted her.

Today, the emperor had personally come out to send off these troops. Just as he finished his speech, he saw the newly anointed Great General Zhengxi jumping off his horse and striding towards a certain area. The emperor looked in the direction the youth was headed towards and immediately spotted a familiar face.

“That stinky brat!” The emperor growled in amusement.

Su Ran lightly chuckled and stated, “Since ancient times, even heroes have a weakness for beautiful women. This is something that is quite natural for humans.”

Su Ran also looked in that direction and spotted Xiaocao, who had a worried and anxious expression on her face. The little lass had just been engaged to Royal Prince Yang, yet the prince had to enter the battlefield right now. It wasn't surprising that she was worried. The foreign invaders at the northwestern borders were all fierce and vicious warriors who weren't afraid of death. Although Royal Prince Yang was incredibly brave and strong, the battlefield was full of hidden dangers. Who could guarantee that nothing bad would happen to him? If the prince had met an untimely end, the little lass would naturally

be quite heartbroken and would likely decide to stay alone for the rest of her life...Su Ran's heart suddenly felt uncomfortable at this thought and an idea sprouted in his head.

“Imperial Majesty, this subject asks to be sent to observe the army this time!” Su Ran suddenly bowed with his hands together as he volunteered himself.

Zhu Junfan was caught by surprise by this request. He didn't understand what his chief steward was asking for and instead thought that Su Ran was afraid that his younger cousin might have disloyal thoughts after gaining so much power. He hurriedly said, “Chief Steward Su, we have full confidence and trust in Royal Prince Yang. There's no need for you to keep an eye on him and the army, right?”

Su Ran replied solemnly, “This subject also believes that Royal Prince Yang is loyal to the bones. However, recently, the hidden soldiers have gotten information that there are some people who are quite unhappy with how the army was arranged this time. Imperial Majesty, you currently don't have any other projects for me, so there's really no point in me staying in the capital. It's probably better for me to also go along this time!”

“Those so-called generals who helped to establish the empire all have too much idle time on their hands. All they do is gossip and grumble all day, like a bunch of gossipy old women. Alright, then go along with the army ah! Our younger cousin is truly like an unstable bomb that could explode at any time. Although he's had Xiaocao keeping him in check these last two years and hasn't lost control, there's no guarantee that he might not lose himself in the bloody environment of the battlefield. With you there, there will at least be someone who can control him! In actuality, I was thinking about letting that lass Xiaocao go along as that would be more secure...” The emperor suddenly came up with an absurd idea of wanting to send Yu Xiaocao, who was Great General Zhengxi's special medicine, along with the army.

Su Ran hurriedly interjected, “Don't, please don't! Although that lass is braver than most, she's still a maiden. The battlefield is full of vicious sights and scary beasts. I'd be surprised if she wasn't scared silly after seeing something like that. If you gave out the order, I'm pretty sure Royal Prince Yang would have a falling out with you right then and there. What do you think?”

The emperor rubbed at the tip of his nose and recalled just how much his younger cousin liked the little lass. It was very likely that the prince would cause a ruckus if he did exactly that. Zhu Junfan coughed and said, “We were just mentioning a thought. What are you so nervous for? Could it be that you...”

“Imperial Majesty, this subject views Xiaocao as my younger sister!” Su Ran hastily interrupted the emperor to stop him from finishing that thought.

“That's exactly what we were referring to, alright? Why are you acting so off as if you're feeling unconfident about something?” Zhu Junfan eyed his chief steward from head to toe. That fellow had a handsome figure, red lips with spotlessly white teeth, and an elegant scholarly demeanor. If one forgot the fact that he wasn't a whole man anymore, he would absolutely be considered an incredibly handsome specimen. However, after all, he was still someone who had that alteration done. Could it be...that eunuchs could also end up liking women?

“When has this official ever been unconfident? Imperial Majesty, you're the one looking too much into this!” Su Ran once again returned to his usual calm and unruffled image and looked towards that little lass, whose eyes were full of worry, “If she didn't care about my awkward status, this eunuch would truly like to make her my younger sister officially...”

“Mhm! We also believe that could be feasible!” The emperor sent another piercing gaze at him as he nodded, “When my eldest son passes his adulthood ceremony, we will abdicate from the throne and become a leisurely emperor emeritus, bringing the empress along to tour the lands. As for you? You should hurry up and finish training up your disciples and their disciples. When the time comes, if you want to come along with us you can. If you don't, then you can have your younger sister Yu Xiaocao provide for you in your retirement.”

Su Ran was already used to the emperor occasionally spouting off weird ideas. Although his heart clearly yearned for the ordinary lifestyle of ordinary people, this was just wishful thinking on his end. He didn't want that lass Xiaocao to be affected by malicious gossip related to him. Thus, this was only a passing thought for him.

“Imperial Majesty, when the eldest imperial prince turns twenty, this subject will not be quite forty. That's probably too early to retire, right?” He watched as the little maiden cried openly in the arms of Royal Prince Yang. This little lass always revealed her true, sincere self around people and never seemed to care about other people's opinions about her. Perhaps, the emperor's ideas weren't so far fetched after all.

The emperor and Chief Steward Su both focused on one figure——Zhu Junyang, who was currently tightly hugging Xiaocao's trembling shoulders against his chest. He could only use his words to try to comfort her, “Don't worry, this prince is extremely skilled. Can't you believe in me? Don't worry ah, the medicines you have given me won't even have to be used. This prince will come back completely whole and safe. Not even a single hair on my body will be gone!”

“Liar!” Yu Xiaocao's voice sounded a bit stuffed, “A person sheds around a dozen or so hairs a day. Thus, your claim that not even a single hair will be gone is just something you're using to trick me.”

“That's not true, this prince may trick other people but I would never try to trick you! This prince will use all of my skills to make sure I come back safe and sound, without a single injury. Furthermore, I also have the highly skilled Head Steward Liu and Dong Dali with me this time. This prince will also have a gun at my side. Even the most stubborn enemy can't possibly get the upper hand against this prince now.”

Zhu Junyang saw that when the little lass raised up her face, her eyes were wet with tears and had turned bright red, like a small bunny's. A pang went through his heart. He silently vowed, 'Going forward, I need to make sure to protect her well and prevent her from shedding even one tear.'

“Are the firearms barracks going this time too? How come I didn't see Zhang Yao, Liu Xin or the others?” Zhang Yao and Liu Xin were captains of their squadrons within the firearms barracks. Last year, these two had accompanied them along with their soldiers to the northern border. They had been in charge of the safety of their small courtyard residence. Thus, Xiaocao still remembered them.

Zhu Junyang hurriedly whispered into her ear, “The firearms barracks have already set out to head out to reinforce the army. Perhaps, by the time this prince arrives at the northwest, the war will already be over! Don't cry. How can this prince leave without any worries when I see you cry?”

“Alright! I'll stop crying!” Yu Xiaocao used the back of her hand to wipe away the remaining tears in her eyes. She sniffled a few times and then said, “Then you absolutely have to be very, very careful on the battlefield. You need to keep the medicine I gave you on hand at all times, and don't be stingy with using it...”

“Don't worry ah! These medicines were all made by you staying up all night. This prince will definitely keep them safe on me. When you get back, you need to catch up on your sleep right away. Look at those dark circles of yours, you're almost a panda at this point!” Zhu Junyang attempted to be witty in order to drive away the melancholy in his little lass.

Yu Xiaocao nodded her head obediently. She still raised her head to look into his phoenix eyes as she was not completely convinced. She sternly stated, “You need to take good care of yourself. If anything bad happens to you, don't even think that I'll obediently stay by your side! I will use the fastest speed possible to find someone else to marry. Thus, your many years of waiting will all go to waste!”

Zhu Junyang's handsome face immediately darkened and his heroic brows furrowed into a deep frown. He lowered his head speedily to steal a little kiss from his adorable yet hateful little lass. He coldly huffed, "This prince will never give you that opportunity! Just obediently wait for this prince to come back and marry you. Eat a little more in the meantime. This prince doesn't like gnawing on pork chops!!"

"Shoo shoo! Just who are you calling a pork chop? You disgusting pervert! Tell me the truth! Do you prefer women who are plump and curvy? If you dare to like some other woman, I will make sure to poison your two beautiful eyes until they're blind!!" Yu Xiaocao lowered her head to glance at the small dumplings on her chest as she snarled angrily.

"Women are truly too frightening when they get angry ah! Is it too late for this prince to regret my decision?" Zhu Junyang revealed an expression full of remorse.

Yu Xiaocao forcefully pinched his sturdy and muscular waist, "Regret your decision if you dare!! You told me before that in the future you'll listen to everything I say. Then...I solemnly command you today: Come back safe and sound for me!! Do you hear me?"

"Yes! I receive your command, Lady Wife!" Zhu Junyang seriously agreed to her request.

"Don't worry ah! With me, this expert, keeping an eye on things in addition to Royal Prince Yang's impressive skills, the only people who are able to harm him are still in their mothers' wombs!" Su Ran had openly eavesdropped on the two of them as he had been standing next to them for quite a while. He almost burst out into laughter after being amused by their previous conversation.

When Yu Xiaocao heard this, her eyes lit up and the worry on her face immediately disappeared. She excitedly gushed, "Sir Su, you will also be going to reinforce the army ah! With you by Ruizhi's side, keeping an eye on things, I can completely relax. This time, I will have to humbly ask Sir Su to keep a closer eye on things..." After she finished, she solemnly gave Su Ran a ninety degree bow.

Su Ran lightly lifted her back up with a hand and smiled genially, "No need to be so courteous. This is merely what I should be doing. Don't worry, if he tries to be impetuous, I will make sure to beat him for you."

Yu Xiaocao giggled simple-mindedly and said, “Mhm, then I will have to count on you, sir. Zhu Junyang, you need to make sure you listen to Sir Su's proposals and you absolutely need to make your own safety a priority. As for the war, if it takes longer to win, then it takes longer. I will make sure to plant more high-yielding crops and support Great General Zhenxi with all of my might. I will become your most ardent supporter!!”

Zhu Junyang's frown deepened even more. That fellow Su Ran was truly an eyesore that kept coming back. Also, that lass Xiaocao seemed to believe that eunuch wholeheartedly. He had made promises left and right and didn't relieve her worries, yet a single sentence from that loathsome fellow had made her happy. Hmph! Was this prince really not reliable ah?

“Hey! Why are you keeping an eye on the army as the army supervisor? How come this prince had never seen such a position in the army before?” Zhu Junyang gritted his teeth and asked. He crossed his arms across his chest as he glowered at Su Ran.

Su Ran glanced at him with an ambiguous look in his eyes. He waved the scroll containing the official order in front of the prince's face as he slowly remarked, “The emperor cares about you as you are his younger cousin. He was afraid that it'd be too much work for you, so he had me go along to help you a bit. See, this was written by the emperor himself. Do you really think that it's a fake order?”

Zhu Junyang snatched the order over and noticed that the ink on the paper had just dried and still had the slight fragrance of wet ink. He knew then that the emperor had just written it. He shot a glance over in the direction of the emperor's carriage and met the mischievous eyes of his older cousin—the emperor was planning on watching a play ah! Otherwise, why would he deliberately choose Su Ran, the eye sore, to become the army supervisor when anyone else would do? It was truly infuriating!

Fields of Gold Chapter 629

The third month of the year was the start of spring, and it was a time when all things were coming back. At a farmstead in the suburbs of the capital, the winter wheat was turning a verdant green and made all of the fields look lush and bright. The view of the fields reminded people of a beautiful ink-painting, awash with green. Xiaocao, who was dressed in a bright yellow dress, resembled the adorable and sweet looking winter jasmine flower. She gracefully stood in-between the fields as she watched the tenant farmers tending to the plants. She quietly worried about the army that was traveling to the northwest.

“Master! The emperor sent down an oral order, stating that you need to immediately go back to the capital.” Chunhua ran like the wind towards her, not even taking time to catch her breath as she bowed down to greet the slim figure.

Yu Xiaocao frowned slightly and muttered somewhat to herself in a puzzled manner, “An oral command? Why did the emperor suddenly summon me back to the capital?”

Yu Xiaolian, who was currently bent over in the fields pulling up weeds, hurriedly walked over when she heard the news. She quietly said, “It must be something urgent. Otherwise, the emperor would just wait until you went back to summon you into the palace. I'll stay here and keep an eye on things. You should quickly head over.”

The start of spring marked the busy time period for farmers. Yu Hai and his wife weren't the type of people to just sit back and relax. Thus, they brought their eldest son with them as they left the capital to go back to Tanggu well before the planting period started. Because they were afraid that their youngest daughter would be depressed after Royal Prince Yang was sent to the battlefield, they left behind Xiaolian to keep her company. That way, she would have someone to talk to on a daily basis and distract her from fretting too much. If it weren't for the fact that Xiaocao was doing work for the emperor, Yu Hai and his wife might have brought Xiaocao back to Tanggu with them.

Princess Consort Jing also frequently invited Xiaocao over. The future in-laws had a very good relationship with each other, so good that the wife of the heir often joked that her mother-in-law had forgotten the old for the new. Xiaocao knew that the princess consort was worried, so in order to relieve the older woman, she always pretended to be as carefree and adorable as usual. Furthermore, she also always came with delicious medicinal cuisines for her future mother-in-law. Consuming all of these foods made Princess Consort Jing glow with health from head to toe. In fact, she looked about seven to eight years younger than her actual age. It made all of the noble matrons in the capital envy her incessantly and created even more interest in the future Yu's Medicinal Cuisine House.

The wife of the heir had also benefited from her mother-in-law's relationship with Xiaocao. After eating a bellyful of delicious and nourishing foods, her body was also at the peak of health. Her belly, which hadn't had any stirrings for many years, was now even carrying a child. All of the lords and ladies of Imperial Prince Jing's Estate had an imperial physician come over every month to check their pulses. Last time, her pulse was normal, likely because it was too early to tell. This month, however, they had discovered that she had been pregnant for more than a month now.

Princess Consort Jing repeatedly complimented Xiaocao, stating that she was their family's lucky star. It truly was as the head priest of Huguo Temple had stated: Good fortune follows her, bringing luck to her family and her husband's family. She hadn't even married over but she had caused a whole host of good things to happen. Not only was the princess consort's body nursed completely back to health, but her youngest son's 'problem' was also fixed without requiring any medicine. Even her eldest daughter-in-law had benefited from Xiaocao. It had been eight years since the wife of the heir's last child but she was

now pregnant again. She complimented Xiaocao so much that Xiaocao was a bit embarrassed and had to avoid going to the estate for a few days.

In order to avoid dwelling on her worries, Xiaocao threw herself into work. Originally, she could have sat back and let things happen at the Imperial Plantations. However, now she ran to the Imperial Plantations on an almost daily basis to manage the work there, causing all of the stewards to have no work to do. Ever since Zhu Junyang left the capital, she spent at least six days out of ten at the Imperial Plantations. Naturally, she didn't spend all of her time there. Instead, she also spent some time at the neighboring farmstead, which was owned by Royal Prince Yang, and workshops on the mountain.

Behind the farmstead, at the foot of the mountain, the outline of the workshops could already be seen. At a glance, it was obvious that these workshops would be even more grand than the farmstead. Now, other than opening a workshop to process flower teas, they were also going to open a fruit wine workshop and canning workshop. All of them were going to be under the management of Xichun.

That lass Xichun was becoming more and more like a confident head manager. All of the workshops under her ran a tidy and efficient ship. The amount of business she had had already surpassed the amount of business that the Yu's Frozen Dessert and Pastry Shop had, which was under Yangliu. Although these couldn't compare to Hechun's 'Blossoming Beauty' and Yingtao's medicine factory, the profits were still quite good.

The maids all had good relationships with each other but they also silently competed amongst themselves. At the end of the year, when they had to report on their businesses to their mistress, Xiaocao always felt like the four were quietly trying to stay ahead of the others. Each maid under her was extremely hardworking, which actually gave her, as the mistress, quite a bit of pressure!

As for now, 'Blossoming Beauty' was the business under Xiaocao's hands that made the most money as its membership system drove the noble matrons, who loved to compete and brag amongst themselves, to act like bees who had seen honey. These ladies rushed to throw money into Xiaocao's pockets. Thus, the beauty salon and its accessories always had the largest profits, which made 'Blossoming Beauty' the venture that made the most money for her.

The second most profitable business had to be the pharmaceutical factory. Other than the prepared pills that treated colds, fevers, and coughs, Xiaocao was also in the process of experimenting to make a few other pills. For example, she planned on making medicines to treat insomnia, low energy, diabetes, and palpitations...under Yingtao's management, the capital's medicine factory had expanded by a large factor and all of the Tongren Medicine Halls in the northern parts of the country were now stocked with

the Yu's medicinal pills. Furthermore, the Yu's wound balm was also very popular. In the eyes of other people, the pharmaceutical factory was the goose that laid the golden eggs!

Xichun was in charge of the winery and distillery. Whether it was the pure and cold high-alcoholic drinks or the sweet and effective fruit wines that nourished a person's body, almost all of the restaurants and eateries in the capital had their products on the menu. The dried fruit and fruit canning factory had also signed an exclusive contract with the Zhou Family to provide their goods. Thus, the factory only needed to concern itself with manufacturing and the Zhou Family was in charge of sales and marketing.

Huang Shuya had wrangled her way into being in charge of selling and marketing the dried and canned fruits. She seized the opportunity to see her idol, Yu Xiaocao, and also asked for some tips along the way. For example, she learned how to use holiday sales, limiting products on the market, starvation marketing tactics, etc. With her idol pointing out a few ideas, it caused her to have a lightbulb go off in her head. Thus, she began her journey on the road of becoming a strong, independent woman. Naturally, in her heart, Yu Xiaocao had also become a figure like a god now.

The frozen desserts and pastry store that Yangliu was in charge of was also doing quite well and caused many people to eye it with jealousy. However, compared to the other businesses under her fellow friends' hands, it was the least profitable. But, she was obsessed with cooking and baking, so she wasn't down about this at all.

Xiaocao was planning on putting the medicinal cuisine restaurant under her management. Thus, Yangliu was currently in closed-door cultivation, learning how to cook 'Buddha Jumps Over the Wall' perfectly. Her mistress didn't care about how expensive the ingredients were to allow her to practice. Yangliu had a gift for cooking, so in about a month, her 'Buddha Jumps Over the Wall' had already reached about seventy to eighty percent of the perfection of her mistress's. If she was able to get the timing and heat down right, then she could truly graduate from this training.

Uh...apparently we had gone off topic. Back to Xiaocao, who was often 'neglecting sleep and forgetting about eating' at the Imperial Plantations. The emperor had something he needed to see her for, so he had no choice but to send an eunuch out to the suburbs to transmit his oral command.

The emperor had been in a bad mood recently. His right hand, Su Ran, had left. Although Su Ran's disciples and grand disciples were all quite good, they still didn't have the natural connection that he had with Su Ran. It wasn't something that could be cultivated in just a day or two. Thus, Zhu Junfan often felt that getting things done was not smooth as before, so he had a belly full of rage now. He was planning on letting it all out once Chief Steward Su came back.

Xiaocao galloped at top speed the entire way there and didn't even bother to wash up or change her clothes before she entered the imperial city. The jade tile, which had been carved with a dragon on top, allowed her to go through all of the checkpoints without any problems. She directly entered the imperial study. The emperor was currently seated at his desks, frowning as he stared at the official documents in front of him.

“Imperial Majesty, Miss Yu is outside waiting!” The direct successor that Su Ran had trained, Su Chi, quietly reminded the emperor as he glanced at his master cautiously.

“Quickly allow her to come in!” Zhu Junfan straightened his body and leaned back in his chair. His face was full of fatigue. These were truly troubled times. War had started at the northwest border and the northeast border was starting to become restless too. Then there was the stud farm there...

“Greetings to the emperor...” Xiaocao hadn't even finished her official greeting before Zhu Junfan stopped her in her tracks.

“Alright, no need to act so falsely meek! Take this document and look at it for yourself!” Zhu Junfan took a sip of his already cold coffee and his frown became deeper. Should he change out the chefs in his private kitchen? They couldn't even brew a cup of coffee properly. Why couldn't the coffee they made taste as good and fragrant as the one he had at the Yu Residence?

Yu Xiaocao obediently received the official document and flipped through it casually. Apparently, now that the stud farm at the borders had obtained some good breeding stock from the wild horses, it provoked the actions of some foreign tribes and they started to scheme against them. However, with the detoxifying pills that Xiaocao left behind as well as the well water that she had altered to contain some weak spiritual energy, the usual plots that could be used against them weren't effective against the horses at the ranch at all.

However, at the time, Zhu Junyang was afraid of having her act too conspicuously, so the pills that Xiaocao left behind and the well water could only do so much. Counteracting the normal sort of poisons could be done, but there were all sorts of weird venoms and toxins to be had in the world. Thus, it wasn't hard to concoct poisons that were out of the ordinary that normal detoxifying pills couldn't cure.

This time, the stud farm had hit a hard rock. Other than the head stallion of the wild herd, Snow Scar, and the extremely intelligent Black Whirlwind, who had dodged this crisis with their heightened sense of danger, the rest of the horses at the farm had fallen into a trap.

It looked like the rest of the horses had become infected with a type of horse plague. They had fevers, pulmonary edema, and internal bleeding. If it wasn't for the fact that they had special fodder, the well water with spiritual energy, and the detoxifying pills, then it was likely that the only horses remaining now would be Snow Scar and Black Whirlwind.

Even though this problem was discovered early and they had treated these horses with a lot of well water and pills, there were still a few older and weaker horses who had died from this. The most tricky problem was that the disease afflicting these horses was now resisting the effects of the detoxifying pills and gradually destroying the horses' bodies. If this continued on, it was likely that...

A spark of anger and anxiety twined within Yu Xiaocao's heart. The stud farm was her fiancé's, Zhu Junyang's, special project that he had poured his heart and soul into. She had stayed at the borders for almost half a year and it could be said that she had watched the farm slowly grow into what it was today. As for the horses at the ranch, she had a deep relationship with a lot of them. She absolutely couldn't allow their special project to fall apart just like that. She also couldn't allow her fiancé, who was on the battlefield risking his life for his country, to come back later and find out that his project had been utterly destroyed!

"Imperial Majesty, please send down your orders ah!" Yu Xiaocao was now very clear as to why the emperor had summoned her today. She held the documents in her hand as she steadily stared at Zhu Junfan.

Originally, Zhu Junfan had prepared all sorts of arguments to convince her. Now he knew that he had thought too much. However, he glanced at Su Chi, who was standing at the side, and said, "We know that Beloved Official Yu has the ability to concoct medicines that are heavenly in effect and that you are quite skilled at diagnosing and treating. Thus, we were planning on sending you along with a few famous veterinarians there..."

He paused for a second before continuing, "We suspect that those foreign tribes have an expert at concocting poisons on their side. However, why would he send a poison that mimics a horse plague instead of directly killing the animals in one shot? This is quite suspicious and requires more thinking!"

Yu Xiaocao was quite clever and slightly furrowed her brows as she thought out loud, "Imperial Majesty, what you're trying to say is that the poison that they snuck into the farm is just a bait. Just who are they trying to bait out with this?"

Fields of Gold Chapter 630

Zhu Junfan nodded and said, "The person who had set the poison has already been caught. The perpetrator was one of the first set of people who had been recruited to take care of the horses. It's said that he's normally very obedient and looked like an honest and loyal man. Usually, he didn't do anything out of the ordinary either. Who would have thought that he had hidden for so long and only came out now?"

Zhu Junfan had already made sure to deeply investigate all of the people who worked at the stud farm and they had actually managed to pull out a few people who had suspicious backgrounds. However, these people didn't have the chance to do anything before they had all gotten caught.

"Steward Yan from the stud farm stated that he had once lost one of the detoxifying pills. After interrogating the culprit, he admitted that he had secretly sent out the farm's fodder and pills to his master. If the enemy has an expert medicinal chemist who is good at making poisons, it's possible that he has figured out the secrets to these pills and fodder. Thus, that is why they made this deeply hidden spy reveal himself and cause this calamity."

Zhu Junfan wasn't completely sure whether or not his deduction this time was correct. After all, Yu Xiaocao was his younger cousin's sweetheart. If anything ever happened to her, it was more than likely that his cousin would slaughter his way up to the throne to beat his ass...however, the stud farm at the border was not only Zhu Junyang's special project, but it was also something that he himself had looked forward to. Didn't every leader of a country long for a rich empire with a strong army?

"Imperial Majesty, from what you're saying, it looks like the reason why they caused this problem was to bring me out to take the bait? However, the detoxifying pills and horse fodder had all gone through Ruizhi's hands to Steward Yan's. How could a small horse groom find out just who made these things?" While she was at the horse farm, Zhu Junyang was afraid of making her too conspicuous and acted as a smokescreen for her the entire time. Did she still end up raising the suspicions of these foreign enemies?

Zhu Junfan placed his long, slender fingers onto the desk and solemnly said, "That spy stated that Junyang, you, and Chief Steward Su had been marked as the most likely targets. Your appearances, personalities and clothing preferences have all been transmitted out to them. This time, whoever goes out, will be marked as the person who made the medicines. The other side had already sent down orders: Do your best to catch the person alive. If it's too hard to keep them alive, then kill them!"

Yu Xiaocao thought for a bit and said, “So from what you're saying, this particular mission is quite dangerous! This official strongly requests that if I'm to take this mission, the money given should be increased by a few fold...”

“In actuality, you could also make the detoxification pills at your residence and then we will send guards to transport it over!” Zhu Junfan paused for a moment before he continued, “You are a trusted aide and official. The people of this empire need you ah!”

“Imperial Majesty, please don't say it like that! This official's goosebumps have risen! This official is only a small, insignificant farming girl, so please don't put the pressure of all of the people on my head. I'm a weak and tender maiden and cannot handle such lofty responsibilities!”

Yu Xiaocao was now used to acting silly around this old transmigrator friend of hers. Su Ran had already gotten used to her antics but the little eunuch, Su Chi, was so shocked that his eyeballs almost fell out of his head—there was actually someone who dared to speak this way to the emperor. Did she feel like she had lived for too long?

Zhu Junfan glared at Su Chi and then continued to converse with Xiaocao, “I heard that you're planning on starting to hybridize rice plants at the Imperial Plantations, right? We don't have high expectations. As long as these new rice paddies are able to come up to a thousand catties per mu, then we will be satisfied!”

Su Chi's eyes widened even further, 'A thousand catties per mu, wasn't this expectation a bit too high? Did you want to force Official Yu into a death sentence ah?' As the young eunuch thought about this, he looked sympathetically towards that slender and delicate looking girl.

However, he would have never expected that the young maiden, who he was sympathizing with, would actually boldly state, “Super high-yielding hybrid rice strains can already produce three thousand catties per mu. Thus, there's no reason why I can't end up producing a hybrid rice that can get up to a thousand catties per mu!”

'Three thousand catties per mu? Miss Yu, are you sure you're not dreaming? Right now, rice paddies that produce three hundred catties per mu only happen during a prosperous year, alright? The emperor is letting his imagination run wild, so you should be bringing him down back to reality. Instead, you're

dreaming the same dream as he is. When the time comes and you're unable to make good on your promise, wouldn't that be a crime of 'deceiving the monarch' ah?'

Before his master had left, he had repeatedly reminded him that he needed to pay more attention to the Yu Residence and Miss Yu. If they encountered any difficulties, he should help them if he could. However, what was he supposed to do now? Was he supposed to stop Miss Yu in front of the emperor and have her take back her words? 'Master, ah, master. This task you set upon me is too hard. This disciple can't do it ah!'

“When you say it like that, we truly don't want you to take any risks anymore...” Jiangnan had a lot of land suitable for rice cultivation. If the rice paddy yields could go up, then all of the people in the Great Ming Empire would be fortunate! Zhu Junfan now regretted his previous decision.

Yu Xiaocao's eyes shifted a bit as she replied, “Not a problem. This official can pretend to go. I don't know whether, within the hidden guards, if there are any suitable soldiers who have a similar appearance and build as me.”

Zhu Junfan threw a look towards Su Chi. Before Chief Steward Su left, he had stated that all of the matters regarding the hidden guards would be temporarily given to his future successor. This fellow should know the hidden guards like the back of his own hand.

Su Chi immediately stepped forward to state, “There are a few soldiers who have a similar build to Official Yu. However...Official Yu's skin is as pale and luminous as snow. There are probably very few people in this world who can compare to her skin quality...”

What a flattering statement! Yu Xiaocao thought carefully for a bit. She didn't think she had any previous interactions with this new assistant chief steward before, so why did it seem like he was trying to curry favor with her? Eh, it didn't matter. Having someone treat her well was much more pleasing than having someone regard her with an arrogant expression.

She smiled, “Little Chief Steward Su's compliments are too much! As long as you find someone with large eyes, it doesn't matter if her skin is on the tanner side. I have some special face powder on hand. After using it, one's skin will look white and bright and it also looks extremely natural.”

“Official Yu, I don't dare to take the title of 'chief steward'. If you don't dislike it, then you can call me Ah Chi instead, alright?” Su Chi was even more deferential towards her. His master had told him that he considered Miss Yu like a younger sister. This meant that seeing Marital Aunt Yu was like seeing his master in person.

'Ah Chi? But I'm younger than you!!' Yu Xiaocao met the eyes of her old transmigrator friend's eyes and saw the mockery within his eyes. Zhu Junfan resisted the urge to laugh. Instead he coughed and said, “Lass, address him the way that we do. Call him Little Chizi instead ah!”

Su Chi peeked at Xiaocao as he thought, 'Although Miss Yu is younger than me, she's considered a senior since she's in the same 'generation' as my master. So it should be fine for her to call me 'Little Chizi'. Thus, he hastily agreed with the emperor's words and nodded in assent.

Xiaocao silently roasted, 'Little Chizi, what a fitting name for a eunuch ah!'

“Official Yu, please be at ease. This servant will definitely find someone who looks very similar to you. I will also send a few people who look similar to your maidservants from the hidden guards...Official Yu, the hidden guards have people who are skilled at disguises, which you may need when dressing up. Perhaps...” Su Chi took the initiative to mention that the hidden guards had people skilled in disguise.

“Looks like Little Chi...Chief Steward Chi has everything in hand. Then I will just have to thank you!” Yu Xiaocao vaguely felt that the reason why Su Chi was treating her so differently had to do something with Sir Su. However, his proposals truly did help make her relax a bit. Originally, she was planning on getting in contact with Medicine King Valley's Xu Ziyi and have him get her some human skin masks for her. Now it looked like she didn't need to!

The imperial edict was sent down very quickly. Thus, the vast majority of high-ranking officials and nobles in the capital knew that Yu Xiaocao had been appointed an imperial envoy and was being sent to the stud farm at the border. Very few people knew that she was actually being sent to resolve a bad crisis there.

“Younger Sister Xiaocao, you're going off to the border to enjoy the sights of the grassland prairie again?” He Wanning was over for a very particular reason. After all, one didn't visit a temple without a cause. She was here to find Xiaocao, “Can't you bring me along? I've never seen the sights at the northern border. I won't make things hard for you. I can even pretend to be one of your maidservants...”

“You're such a noble maidservant. This younger sister absolutely cannot handle you!” Yu Xiaocao quipped, “I don't think you actually want to see the sights at the border, that's just a convenient excuse for you. You clearly have an ulterior motive. Obviously, you want to have a sweet couples trip with your fiancé, right?”

This time, Lu Hao had been given the heavy responsibility of escorting 'Imperial Envoy Yu' to the northern border. He was bringing along five hundred expert soldiers from the Jin Wu guards along with the hidden guards who were disguised as Xiaocao and her maidservants. These troops were all there to create an effective smokescreen.

He Wanning immediately turned bright red and bashfully said, “Stinky lass, just what nonsense are you saying? He's going to be on an official mission, so how would he have the time to...have a sweet couples trip with me? I really just want to enjoy myself among the horses at the stud farm and see the Snow Scar and little Black Whirlwind that you've been telling me about~”

“Have you gotten permission from your family yet? If Marchioness Anning and the grand princess royal agree, then I'll bring you along!” Yu Xiaocao also felt like that since she had to go off in disguise, she couldn't just be alone the entire time. She also needed to have more decoys along.

She didn't know how He Wanning explained this trip to her family but she had actually managed to obtain permission from her parents and grandmother. Furthermore, she had managed to drag Yuan Xueyan along too! Did they truly think that they were out on a leisurely spring outing? However, the other girl not only brought maidservants with her but her family had also sent along a few bodyguards who were skilled at martial arts.

Yu Xiaocao knew that this journey was incredibly important and full of danger, so she didn't bring along Yingchun or Wutong along as they had no self-defense skills. She only took along Chunhua and Qiushi as her personal maidservants. Furthermore, Imperial Prince Jing's Estate also sent along a few bodyguards who were from the hidden guards.

On the day that they were to set off, He Wanning brought her maids and guards and arrived at Sanli Pavilion, where they had agreed upon early as their meeting spot. However, she discovered that the pavilion only had a young master who looked to be about thirteen to fourteen years old. By convention, men and women should not touch once they passed the age of seven, so she didn't take the time to look more closely and instead waited outside, not far from the building. She waited and waited. Yuan Xueyan had also appeared within the agreed upon time. However, the usually timely Yu Xiaocao, her sweetheart, and the Jin Wu guards, who were supposed to be escorting them, were not to be seen at all.

“This is so weird! Did I remember the wrong date? Today is the sixth day of the third month right? It's already past nine in the morning, but where is everyone else ah? Could it be that Younger Sister Xiaocao didn't want to bring us along and gave us the wrong time to fool us?” The more He Wanning spoke, the more she thought that her conjecture might be right. She angrily stomped to and fro on the road as she paced around.

Yuan Xueyan frowned slightly and the usual cold look on her face became more serious. She glanced over in the direction of the pavilion and noticed that there was a young master inside, sitting with his back as straight as a tree trunk's. It looked like he was waiting for people...

Wait! The young master had six bodyguards behind him and two of them seemed on the shorter side. They looked a bit familiar...on a closer look, the young master, who was dressed entirely in white and had a clean looking complexion—although his skin was tanner, eyes a bit longer, and eyebrows a bit more heroic...but no matter whether it was his figure or physical appearance, they all gave her a sense of familiarity.