

## Gold Chapter 631

### Fields of Gold Chapter 631

“Beautiful maiden, if you keep looking at this young master, this young master will feel shy! Since when were our capital's young maidens so warm and brazen ah?” That young master smiled slightly and the dimples by his lips were faintly visible. Although his voice was lowered, this deception was not enough to cloud Yuan Xueyan's sharp eyes as she had always been someone who noticed the smallest of details.

“\*\*\*\* your bullshit!” He Wanning was in an irritable mood, so as soon as she heard 'the youth's' glib provocations, she immediately exploded, “You dare to be so frivolous and impolite at such a young age! You've got some stupid guts to try to tease this old maid's good sister. Today, this maiden will have to punish you in your parents' stead, you little brat!”

“Oh ho ho! This young master is oh so scared ah! If you have the skills, then come over ah? Although you're not as beautiful as your sister, it's still enough to catch my eye! This master will gladly take you as you rush into my arms!” The young master dressed in white opened up the fan in his hands. The words 'the most handsome under the heavens' had been written on the fan. The youngster waved the fan around in a theatrical manner, covering the wide smile on his face.

“Yu! Xiao! Cao! You get your butt down here for this older sister. Come! Here!” Yuan Xueyan blocked He Wanning, who was about to rush over to fight the white-clothed youngster with a whip in her hand. She sneered as she addressed the robed youngster in the pavilion.

“Yu Xiaocao? Are you saying that the little brat over there is our Younger Sister Xiaocao? That can't be true, right? Younger Sister Xiaocao's skin is so pale that it looks transparent. Although he is also pale, the shade of his skin is about two levels tanner! Also, his eyes look different. Our Younger Sister Xiaocao has round and large eyes. Although his eyes are also large, they slant upward...” He Wanning searchingly looked at the young master who was clothed in white, trying to find similarities between him and Xiaocao. She had to admit that it did seem like there were some similarities between the two.

“The jianghu has a type of odd ability called changing appearance art. Although the appearance has changed, the feeling that this person gives off is quite familiar. The only reason you didn't sense it is because you're as dense as a block of wood!” Yuan Xueyan couldn't help but give a verbal stab towards her good friend.

“Oh my oh my! I've been exposed so quickly! Not fun at all!” Yu Xiaocao folded up the fan in her hands and stood up from the stone bench she was sitting on at the pavilion. She quickly went down the steps and gleefully went towards the two older sisters.

"It really is you?!" He Wanning put away the whip in her hand and rushed forward. She circled around Xiaocao a few times and looked her up and down for a long time. She tsked as she said, "Who helped you to alter your appearance? Truly some good work. I couldn't tell at all that you're a young maiden. In fact, you're remarkably like an arrogant and infuriating young master who had been spoiled rotten by his family."

"But of course! This young master has plenty of talented people around me! There's no one I can't find that you can come up with!" Yu Xiaocao arrogantly raised her head until her nose was pointed towards the sky.

Yuan Xueyan hit her in the back of the head with her fan and coldly huffed, "Which family are you from, Young Master? Who gave you the guts to tease us older sisters?"

"Aiyo! Older Sister Yuan, you are too cruel ah! Don't you know that women shouldn't hit a man's head ah? And you guys! Just how are you all bodyguards? The master has been attacked but you don't even try to protect me!!" Yu Xiaocao turned around to holler at her Chunhua and Qiushi, who had also been disguised as the opposite sex, but the mirth in her eyes didn't decrease one bit.

Chunhua and Qiushi giggled and replied, "Young Master, we were wrong!"

"A man's head cannot be touched eh? Well I don't care. I'm going to touch it, you little swindler!" He Wanning rushed forward and took advantage of her height to cause havoc on Xiaocao's head with her hand. Xiaocao's head, which originally didn't have a single hair out of place, was now as messy as a bird's nest.

The three friends laughed as they fooled around and then sat down in the pavilion. He Wanning regarded Xiaocao's confident and leisurely manner as she waved her fan idly around with pure envy. She spoke in a cozying tone, "Younger Sister Xiaocao, do you think I can also disguise myself as a man? I think it's more convenient to walk around in that way!"

"Older Sister He, you still need to disguise yourself?" Yu Xiaocao glanced at He Wanning in surprise. The amusement in her eyes could not be hidden.

He Wanning had a puzzled look on her face as she asked, "What do you mean?"

Yuan Xueyan immediately inserted a verbal knife, “She’s saying that you don’t need to disguise yourself to look manly!”

“You stinky lass, you’re the one who’s manly! Just watch as I sink my claws into you...” He Wanning stretched out her two hands and there was an evil grin on her face as she stepped closer and closer towards Xiaocao.

“Look! Your boyfriend is here!!” There was never too much deception in war. Yu Xiaocao casually pointed in the direction of the capital and He Wanning’s attention was immediately redirected.

“Eh? The young maiden in the middle of the troops looks quite a lot like you! Her eyes are so big and her skin is so luminous. She’s even wearing bright and colorful clothing. If I wasn’t so familiar with you, I really might have mistaken that person as you ah!” He Wanning looked first at Lu Hao, who was seated straight on a large horse. He looked quite strong and imposing. When she moved her line of sight, she noticed a familiar slender and delicate looking figure, which caused her eyes to widen in surprise.

Yu Xiaocao looked in the same direction that her friend was. She chewed merrily on a soft fruit candy as she gestured, “Wow! I finally got to see what Official Yu looks like. It’s exactly as the rumors say. Official Yu is so pale that she’s the same shade of noodles that have just been fished out of the noodle vat.”

“Pu-chiiiiii—” He Wanning burst out into laughter and pointed at her as she guffawed, “The same shade of noodles that have just been fished out of the noodle vat? Is there anyone else who would describe themselves in such a hilarious manner? Wait wait...you...you...just what are you doing? That faker is Official Yu, so who are you?”

“Me? This young master is bringing along two great beauties to go on a leisurely trip, enjoy the sights, and have a taste of the charms of the wild and rough grasslands. After all, I am the youngest son from Imperial Prince Sa’s Estate, Royal Prince Guo!” Once again, Xiaocao snapped open the fan in her hands, revealing the words ‘the most handsome under the heavens’ in an effort to show off her distinguished and elegant side.

“Older Sister He, Older Sister Yuan!” The ‘faker’ as He Wanning termed had noticed the two great beauties within Sanli Pavilion and smiled brightly as she jumped off her date-red horse. She bounced over in a lively manner with two adorable dimples at the side of her lips, which really made her resemble Xiaocao.

“Pshhhhh—” He Wanning noticed that the fake Xiaocao's face was an unnatural shade of white and suddenly thought of the description 'noodles that have just been fished out of the noodle vat'. She truly thought that it was quite amusing and couldn't stop the smile from forming on her lips. If it wasn't for Xiaocao elbowing her from the side, she likely would have burst out into mirthful laughter.

“Older Sister He, why are you laughing ah?” The fake Xiaocao opened her eyes wide and looked in puzzlement at He Wanning. The acting skills of this person was quite good, so she was going to get an extra chicken leg for lunch!

Yuan Xueyan already understood what was going on and smiled faintly at the 'Yu Xiaocao' who dressed in a bright red riding habit, “Younger Sister Xiaocao, she's laughing because she's happy to see you.”

“Older Sister Yuan, where are you all planning on going to? And this young master is...” 'Yu Xiaocao' looked towards the real one and the confused look on her face didn't look fake at all. This person truly was worthy of becoming a 'film empress'!

“I am Royal Prince Guo from Imperial Prince Sa's Estate. I've invited these two older sisters out to go hunting at the border! Who would have thought that we'd encounter Official Yu at Sanli Pavilion. I've long looked forward to meeting you!” Yu Xiaocao earnestly conversed with 'Official Yu'.

“Oh so you're Older Sister He's younger maternal cousin ah! We are also going to the northern border. If you don't disdain it, how about we travel together on this journey?” 'Official Yu' warmly gave them an invitation.

Yu Xiaocao wasn't very fond of using the term 'on this journey'. She squeezed out a fake smile and said, “No need, we're still waiting for a friend...”

She wasn't able to finish her sentence when a gentle voice interrupted, “Forgive me for getting here late. I made Younger Brother and these two maidens wait for me!”

“You are all too much. Going out to play at the northern border but you didn't even invite me, Third Young Master Ning!” The voice of the fool, Ning Donghuan, could also be heard.

The three good friends looked at each other, all thinking, 'Why are the Ning Brothers here?'

"Did you invite these two?" He Wanning quietly asked Yu Xiaocao, who was disguised as a boy.

Yu Xiaocao shrugged her shoulders at her two friends and opened out her hands. Her actions made it clear, 'Only devils would know why these two brothers are here at this place. It wasn't this young master who invited them, alright?'

"Miss He, Miss Yuan," Ning Donglan was dressed entirely in white and his long, jet-black hair flowed down his back with a small portion of it confined in a copper coronet. He looked like the epitome of a gentle and elegant young man. He turned to face Xiaocao and smiled slightly, "Younger Brother, this Older Brother arrived late. I accept my fault!"

"Older Brother! Just when did you become familiar with such a younger fellow?" Ning Donghuan sidled over and carelessly reached out to touch Xiaocao's hair, which had just been combed back into order. She immediately dodged his attempt.

"You're such a rude fellow! Don't you know that you're not supposed to touch a man's head or a woman's waist ah?" Yu Xiaocao lowered her voice as she scolded him, but she was unable to disguise the youthfulness from her voice. However, her current appearance, as she glared furiously at Ning Donghuan, quite resembled a young youth who was only around twelve to thirteen years of age. Thus, having a somewhat childish voice was still within the realm of possibility.

"Bwahaha!" Ning Donghuan laughed much more boldly than He Wanning. He held his belly as he snickered, "You? Your whiskers haven't even grown yet, so how can you be considered 'a man'. Look! This young master's appearance is what is considered a man!" As he spoke, he rolled up a sleeve and flexed his arm muscles.

Yu Xiaocao sneered and laughed, "Haha! A white poached chicken like you dares to call himself a man? A real man is someone like my...older paternal cousin, Royal Prince Yang. Tall, sturdy, fierce, with a body full of sinewy muscle!"

Ning Donghuan didn't want to back down but he didn't dare to refute Royal Prince Yang's fierce reputation. He could only snort and say, "Your older paternal cousin is your older paternal cousin, while you are you! If I'm a white poached chicken, then you're a tiny, weak little chick!"

“Screw off! Don't provoke this young prince or else be careful that this young prince doesn't make my bodyguards beat you until your teeth fall out! Elder Brother Ning, why did you bring your stupid fool of a younger brother along? This fellow only causes trouble and brings no benefits. If he messes up our plan, then what can we do?” She wasn't the one who invited the elder Young Master Ning along, but it clearly looked like he was here for a reason. Thus, it meant that there was only one other explanation—Ning Donglan had been sent by the emperor to protect her.

“Your plan? What sort of plan? A travel plan or is it the hunting plan?” Ning Donghuan sidled over and asked with a voice full of curiosity.

“Last time, my older paternal cousin managed to catch a white tiger at the borders. My lord father eyed that tiger pelt enviously for a long time, so this young prince has decided to also hunt a white tiger and bring its pelt back for his birthday present!” Yu Xiaocao lied without blinking an eye, easily convincing Ning Donghuan without a hitch. The older youth also began to hoot, clamouring that he wanted to help hunt a white tiger down.

“I don't know if Miss Yu will be bringing her two hunting dogs along to the stud farm. If we're able to borrow them, I'm sure it'd be a lot easier to hunt down a white tiger.” Ning Donghuan was still obsessed over Xiaocao's two beloved wolf pets.

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The soft spring wind of March gently brushed across her cheek. Gentle rays of sunlight shone brilliantly on the mountain. On both sides of the road were wheat fields and they were so green it looked like the plants had been dyed. It truly showed that the world was full of verdant life.

“Hey! I gotta say! The wheat seeds that Royal Princess Jinan bred are not that bad. Our entire north has been planted with it. It's said that the previously fertile and plentiful Jiangsu area is now envying the people in the north. Not only are they able to eat enough to fill their stomachs but they can also, from time to time, enjoy the tastes of refined grain!”

Ning Donghuan gazed at the bright green wheat fields with the farmers working hard in them. He couldn't help but let out a few compliments. In actuality, as someone who was born with a silver spoon in his mouth, how could he possibly know how hard the lives of commoners were? In the past, being able to eat food made with white flour was considered something only the wealthy could enjoy ah! Thus, just how wretched were the lives of the commoners in the north then?

“That's right! The common people have plenty, the treasury is full, and Royal Princess Jinan's contributions cannot be forgotten ah!” Ning Donglan agreed as he glanced over in the direction of the youth dressed in white.

“But...why aren't we traveling along with Royal Princess Jinan's large entourage ah? I heard that the conditions in the north aren't always peaceful, so if we traveled together as a group, wouldn't that be more safe?” Ning Donghuan was a bit puzzled. Clearly, they were all headed towards the same destination and He Wanning and Yuan Xueyan were also very good friends with Royal Princess Jinan, so why were they traveling separately?

He Wanning heard his question and immediately answered, “Every time Younger Sister Xiaocao travels, she always brings along delicious snacks, fruit juices, and canned goods. Third Young Master Ning, perhaps you're more interested in the good things that Younger Sister Xiaocao brought along?”

Ning Donghuan immediately rearranged his expression and stated seriously, “Am I, Ning Donghuan, such a person ah? I was just curious. You two are really good friends with Royal Princess Jinan and usually inseparable from each other. How come this time you're not with her?”

“In the past when we were together it was because we had agreed upon having fun together. This time Younger Sister Xiaocao is out on an official mission, so how could we muck it up for her?” He Wanning stated in a lofty manner.

Ning Donghuan 'tsked' at her and then turned his attention to the only person he hadn't met before, the youth, “Royal Prince Guo, I heard that in the past your health wasn't the best and that it was Royal Princess Jinan who helped you by giving you some medicines and writing medicinal cuisines for you. Are that lass's medical abilities even better than the imperial physicians'?”

Yu Xiaocao, who was currently disguised as the never before seen Royal Prince Guo, replied in a shameless manner, “This young prince cannot make the judgement as to whether Royal Princess Jinan's medical skills are better than the imperial physicians'. However, my imperial uncle's body and myself have all been treated by her, so she definitely has some skill!”

Ning Donghuan seemed to fall into contemplation and he muttered to himself, “In the future, I cannot offend that lass. Otherwise, if I have an issue with my body in the future, then I'll have no face to beg her for help.”

Yu Xiaocao let out a peal of laughter, "Third Young Master Ning, you are quite a practical person!"

"I just have a clear view of things!" Ning Donghuan didn't think he was doing anything wrong, "However, when will Little Black and Little White have pups ah? If I could get one, then I could die contently!"

Ning Donghuan's dog-fighting arena had attracted all of the rich good-for-nothings in the capital. In other people's eyes, this arena was too bloody and cruel but, in these people's eyes, it was a provoking, interesting, and entertaining area! Consequently, Ning Donghuan made quite a bit of money from this endeavor. His dog-fighting arena was now breeding fighting dogs and it had all sorts of breeds there. Even a few of the western hemisphere's sheepdogs had been brought over. However, this fellow still constantly thought about the Yu Family's two special dogs and it had become an obsession for him.

Ning Donglan didn't want to see his younger brother commit a faux pas and hurriedly interjected, "In actuality, by being not too close and not too far from them is a good thing. Not only do we have some freedom but we also have the protection of the soldiers in the front. What could be better?"

"That makes sense!" Ning Donghuan also didn't want this leisurely trip to be constrained by external factors, "Eh? It looks like they're planning on settling down right now? But it's still light out ah! Are we going to be like them and also spend the night outside in the wilderness?"

Xiaocao looked at the color of the sky and then took out a map. After she identified where they were, she pointed towards a direction and said, "There's a village about fifteen kilometers from here. If we pick up our speed, we can get there before the sun goes down. Isn't hunkering down in a small village better than sleeping in tents outside?"

Although the weather in March was a bit warmer, it was still chilly at night, the early morning and evening. Even if they used their tents, it still wouldn't be a very comfortable night's sleep. Xiaocao was also considered half a hedonist, so why wouldn't she choose the comfortable area when she had the choice?

"Oh ho! From your appearance, Royal Prince Guo, I couldn't tell that you knew so much despite not stepping a foot outside before! Where did you get a map like this from? It even has the small villages marked on it and is quite detailed!" Ning Donghuan had spurred his horse forward and craned over to look at the map that was full of densely crowded drawings. It was a bit overwhelming for him so he looked away within seconds.



How could Yu Xiaocao tell him the truth? After all, she had been to and from the northern border twice and this map had been drawn after she solicited the observations of all of the people who had traveled with her. Although there were a few minor errors here and there, for the most part, this map was quite detailed and accurate.

“Why does it matter where this young prince got it from? All that matters is that it's useful! Come, let's compete! Let's see who can get to the village first! The person who wins can make the person who loses do something. Do you dare to take this challenge?” Yu Xiaocao had gotten the attitude and arrogance of a young royal prince down perfectly. If it weren't for the fact that He Wanning and Yuan Xueyan knew her true identity, they would have truly believed that the person in front of them was a spoiled and headstrong young master.

“Why wouldn't I have the guts? Do you think I'm afraid of you?” Ning Donghuan glanced at the horse, which didn't look like much, that the prince was riding on. Naturally, he also didn't spare her tiny little figure a look either, “We already made an agreement. So if you lose, don't cry and claim that I, Third Young Master Ning, am bullying a child ah!”

“Who can be certain who will win? Your boastful words are being said too early!” Yu Xiaocao lightly squeezed at the horse, prompting that dusty yellow horse, which was clearly impatient earlier, to become more energetic. After receiving its master's commands, it shot off like an arrow from a bow. It stretched out its four hooves and ran like the wind into the distance.

Ning Donghuan was stunned for a moment, “What the! That yellowish horse doesn't look like a heavenly steed, so why does it run so fast? However, the starting speed is of no use, the most important thing is its endurance!” He had complete confidence in his purebred Dayuan horse. Even though he started a bit later, he was sure that he could easily close the gap between them and then overtake the young prince.

Everyone was riding a horse that was of decent quality. At first, there wasn't a true difference that could be seen between them. However, after they ran five kilometers, the bodyguards were slowly being left behind and the gap between the five nobles was also increasing.

Yu Xiaocao continued to hold onto the lead and the gap between her and the second place horse was getting larger and larger. Although the horses from the Yu Residence didn't look like much, they had all been raised since they were young on mystic-stone water and fodder with spiritual energy imbued in it. Thus, their bodies had been altered by the energy into ones that could easily compete with horses that were from much better bloodlines. The best example of this was Little Red.

However, for this journey and her disguise, she couldn't bring Little Red along. Thus, that fellow was currently back in the stables at home, sulking and in a temper. It even bit some of the other horses residing there. Little Red was now the head honcho of the horses at the Yu's Residence. Whenever it was throwing a temper tantrum, the other horses would only obediently stand at the side quietly. None of them dared to even make a peep.

This dusty yellow colored horse could only be considered one of the middle-level horses within the Yu Family's stables. In fact, its name, 'Golden Jadeite' was only casually given by Xiaocao when she headed out on this trip. However, this horse was clearly a male horse, but it had been given a feminine sounding name. Unfortunately, it was unable to object to this name and had even been marked by Little Red, who was jealous that it had received such an 'elegant and classy' sounding name. If it wasn't for the fact that it was going to head out with the master the next day, it likely would have been injured from head to toe as punishment.

As expected, Xiaocao was the first to arrive at the village. At this time, the sun was still hanging out at the western mountains. The bodyguards, who were in charge of finding a place for their masters to live, had also just arrived at the village. Xiaocao watched as one of them took out a black colored official tile. It was rumored that these tiles were held by imperial bodyguards. Only then did she realize that other than Chunhua, Qiushi, and four of her other personal bodyguards, the rest of the guards had been sent specifically by the emperor for her. They were only borrowing the name of Imperial Prince Jing's Estate for convenience.

“Master, Village Official Wu has already vacated a courtyard residence for you and your friends. Although the conditions are a bit crude, it is a clean place to live. Master, please head on over.” This tall and sturdy looking bodyguard was surnamed Yuwen and seemed to have a body full of muscle. Just one glance was enough to tell that he wasn't someone to be pushed around.

Yu Xiaocao waved a hand at him and said, “When we're out in the open, there's no need to be too picky! Having a roof above our heads is still way better than spending the night outside. I'm going to wash up first. Make sure the servants start preparing food and you all need to help this prince keep an eye out to see who exactly lost this bet.”

The results came out very quickly. Ning Donghuan, who bragged earlier that he was riding a Dayuan horse, had actually come in last. He was also incredibly surprised by this outcome and repeatedly stated that he couldn't believe it. The facts spoke louder than the words and Xiaocao didn't try to embarrass him. She only had him go off to feed and water the horses. While everyone else was in the main room, happily eating their evening meal, that unfortunate fellow Ning Donghuan had become banished to be the horses' groom for the night.

By the time he staggered over to the table, hungry and exhausted, he discovered that his fellow travelers, who had no love from him, had pretty much finished eating. Only sad looking leftovers were left on the cold table.

“You are all such big bullies ah!” Ning Donghuan howled in anguish and was almost to the point where he was biting on his handkerchief, sulking in the corner of the room.

He Wanning and Yuan Xueyan stifled their laughter and left the main room to go to the eastern side room to rest. Even Ning Donglan, his blood-related older brother, was too lazy to pay him any attention. When he left, he didn't forget to insert a verbal knife, “Eat faster as we have to head out early tomorrow. If you end up delaying my rest, I'm going to banish you outside! Oh right, don't forget to wash up completely after you finish eating. The disgusting odor on your body is enough to make anyone want to vomit immediately!”

“Are you still my full-blooded older brother ah?” Ning Donghuan lamented just as his belly let out a rousing howl of hunger. It was as if it was protesting its master's decision to delay eating food.

She had to admit that having such a fool along with her on this journey made it seem less lonely and boring. Xiaocao relented her teasing and had one of the servants bring in the leftover food she had saved for him to the table. Although it was a simple spread of four dishes and a soup, the taste of the food was so good that Ning Donghuan began to cry in happiness.

“Royal Prince Guo, you are truly the best out of all of them! Don't worry, in the capital, this older brother has a lot of clout. If anyone dares to bully you, then that means they don't want to have a good relationship with Third Young Master Ning!!” Even the taste of delicious food wasn't enough to stop the blabbermouth Ning Donghuan from talking.

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Ning Donghuan wolfed down his food as he let out compliments from his mouth, “Who would have thought that in such crude surroundings there was actually a hidden tiger here? How could a mere cook maid from a village official's residence end up making food that tastes just as good as the food from Zhenxiu Restaurant? Do you think if I bring this cook maid back to our estate that I'd be able to eat delicious foods all the time?”

How could Yu Xiaocao actually correct him and let him know that this table of food had actually been personally made by her? Wouldn't that be blowing her cover? She didn't want this stupid idiot to rush

over and ask Village Official Wu to transfer his servant over and hurriedly interjected, "In actuality, the food is just so-so. It must be that you are too hungry, which is why you think the food is that good! By stating that the food here is even better than the food from Zhenxiu Restaurant is too much of an exaggeration! As for the cook maid, it's better you not ask for her. Otherwise, the people here will mock us for being so unsophisticated despite living in the capital!"

After he stuffed his belly full, Ning Donghuan paced around the courtyard a few times and couldn't help but ask his older brother, Ning Donglan, in the end, "Second Older Brother, do you think the food we ate today, which looked very ordinary, tasted even better than the food made by the head chef at our family's estate?"

Ning Donglan secretly glanced over at Yu Xiaocao and slowly shook his head, "I didn't think so. This Wu Family's cook maid's skill could only be considered average. Perhaps it really is as Royal Prince Guo said. You were probably ravenous after spending the entire day on the road and then taking care of the horses. Thus, anything you ate would taste incredibly delicious."

"Is there something wrong with my taste buds? That can't be true ah. I've always been a picky eater, so how could I possibly mistaken good food for average?" Ning Donghuan muttered to himself as he tried to figure out just where he had gone wrong.

The next morning, at breakfast, Ning Donghuan frowned the entire time as he ate. The food he had today seemed to have been made by an entirely different person. It truly was as his second older brother said. The food here was incredibly average. Perhaps he had been delusional last night from hunger?

The group of people traveled merrily, enjoying the thrilling sights of untamed nature the entire way as they basked under the warm spring sun. The entourage escorting 'Royal Princess Jinan' was sometimes in front of them and sometimes behind them. All in all, the two groups were only about ten to fifteen kilometers apart the entire time.

"In front of us is a desert mountain and there is no sign of human habitation there. After passing the mountain, I believe there is a small town about five kilometers away. Tonight, we could spend the night there. However, judging by the time right now, we'll need to ride hard in order to get there in time." Once again, Yu Xiaocao's map came in handy. The sun was already in the western part of the sky. They needed to go past a mountain and then had a few more kilometers to go to get to the town. If they wanted to settle down before it got dark, they needed to speed up their current leisurely pace.

It had already been eight days since they left the capital, which meant that other than eating and sleeping, they spent most of these days on horseback traveling. After the novelty of the journey had passed, the rigors and fatigues of their trip had long caught up onto the delicate bodies of these noble misses and masters.

“Eh? We need to speed up again ah?? My legs are about to fall off and my waist is about to snap in half. Didn't we go out to have fun ah? Why do we need to hurry up so much?” He Wanning listlessly lay across her horse and swayed with each step. She looked like a soldier who had been solidly defeated.

“Compared to camping out in the wilderness, I would much rather prefer being able to rest in a safe and comfortable area. If we need to ride hard then let's do it. It's still better than camping out in these woods. The mountain in front of us looks a bit desolate and creepy, so it's likely that there might be wolves or other nasty creatures there!” Yuan Xueyan thought longingly about being able to rest at a guesthouse in the small town in their warm, soft beds. After traveling for a whole day, if they weren't able to get a good night's sleep, then how would they be able to handle the rest of the journey?

The incredibly intelligent and perceptive Yuan Xueyan looked again at the people who were escorting the fake 'Royal Princess Jinan'. She knew that this trip out to the northern borders was not as simple as it looked. The maidservants who were around the fake Royal Princess Jinan all had the bearing and demeanor of Chunhua and Qiushi, so it was likely that their identities were out of the ordinary too. Furthermore, there were soldiers from the Jin Wu Guards within the group. This meant that the trip to the stud farm was likely to be going across roads that were not that peaceful.

In addition, Younger Sister Xiaocao had always intentionally or otherwise kept their group a certain distance away from the other one. It was as if the group in front of them was a small carrot that they had to follow. It looked like something definitely had occurred at the stud farm!

“Alright ah! For the sake of being able to eat well and sleep well, this old maid will do her best!” He Wanning gritted her teeth and spurred her beloved steed further in the direction of the desolate mountain. The group of people stayed together as the sounds of their horses' hooves broke the silence around them.

The mountain wasn't very high. The official road wound around the edges of the mountain. Although the road was on the more craggy side, it didn't impede the horses at all as they went forward. As the horses cantered forward, Ning Donghuan looked all around him as he quietly muttered to himself, “I wonder if this mountain has any wild pheasants or hares around. If we're able to catch some to add to our dinner, that'll make this trip a little less hard.”

Yu Xiaocao couldn't resist the urge to rebuke him, "Have we shorted you on food or drink these past few days? Every time we stop to rest, you're the one who eats the most out of all of us and yet you're the one with the most complaints too! This isn't good, that isn't good, but no matter how bad it is I've never seen you stop eating!"

"Argh...it's because I have no choice! Every day we spend so many hours on the road, so if I didn't eat enough, how would I be able to endure this? How could I allow myself to become super skinny? The flavor is truly not that great but you won't even allow me to complain a bit?" Ning Donghuan flapped his lips and turned his head to address Xiaocao, "Royal Prince Guo, do you still have any flaky pastries left? Give me a piece so I can fill my tummy!"

Although Golden Jadeite was not as intelligent as Little Red, it was still much smarter than most of the other horses along. She didn't even need to direct it and it was able to run steadily on these mountainous roads. Yu Xiaocao retrieved a piece of sesame flaky pastry from her pouch and had the horse get closer to Ning Donghuan. When the two of them were side by side, she stuffed the pastry into Ning Donghuan's outstretched hand.

"Eat slower to avoid choking! This is the last piece, so you won't be able to eat more even if you want any!" Yu Xiaocao gave this foodie the evil eye. This fellow only came along to cause trouble. If he wasn't able to eat the flaky pastry, he would definitely complain and slow down the entire group.

"Hey! Royal Prince Guo, you're quite good! You brought along so many pastries from the Yu's Shop on this journey. I've learned a lot this time. The next time I go out, I need to bring some more tasty snacks and pastries that are easy to transport with me. The flaky pastries may be gone but don't you have dried meat ah? Don't hide it from me, this young master's eyes are very sharp ah!" Ning Donghuan munched on the pastry and didn't forget to eye the dried meat that was with Xiaocao.

"We need to stop for a bit. There's something going on in the distance!" Ning Donglan, who was at the front of the group, suddenly made the signal to tell them to stop. He lightly pulled on the reins in his hands and had his horse slow down to a stop.

Because they were traveling on hilly roads, no one was riding very quickly, so they all swiftly came to a stop after seeing Ning Donglan's signal. Ning Donghuan swallowed down his last bite of pastry and drank a gulp of water as he asked in puzzlement, "Second Older Brother, why did you stop so suddenly?"

“Shut up!” Ning Donglan glared at him and turned his head to listen. A gust of mountainous wind blew by and he could hear the faint sounds of people shouting and weapons clanking. Xiaocao's senses had been sharpened by mystic-stone water so she was able to pick up on more than other people could. She frowned and then turned to command Chunhua, who was behind her, “Go in the front and take a look. If there's something wrong, come back to report!”

“Yes!” Chunhua went forward after getting her order. Ning Donghuan stared at her back as he frowned deeply. Why did this short bodyguard give off such a familiar feeling to him?

“Royal Princess Jinan's carriage has been in front of us this entire time today. Did something happen to her?” Ning Donglan glanced at Xiaocao. Luckily, the real Royal Princess Jinan had gone out incognito. Otherwise, the person in trouble would be her right now. Although this young maiden was quite intelligent and capable, she was still an ordinary little girl without much way to defend herself. It'd be quite likely for her to get injured in a chaotic situation.

When Ning Donghuan heard this, he immediately blurted out, “Since Royal Princess Jinan is in trouble, then what are we waiting for? Let's go up and help right now!”

Ning Donglan scowled and glared fiercely at his stupid dunce of a brother. The target of these foreign tribes was right in their midst. If they rushed forward now, wouldn't they be walking right into a trap? He quietly said, “Royal Princess Jinan has the emperor's hidden guards protecting her as well as the elite troops under General Lu's command. If they are unable to fend off these attacks, then what can our small group do by rushing forward rashly? It'd be in vain. That being said, we also have two weak and delicate young maidens in our group and a youthful royal prince. We absolutely should not make a rash decision!”

“But we also can't just sit back and watch Miss Yu get attacked ah! Miss He and Miss Yuan, aren't you Miss Yu's best friends? We shouldn't be fair weather friends...yeouch!” Ning Donghuan didn't even get to finish his thought when a heavy slap interrupted him.

Ning Donglan pulled back the hand he used to hit his brother and coldly said, “Just who are you calling fair weather friends? Are you saying that if we send our lives into an unwinnable situation, that's called being a good friend? Or are you saying that to be a good friend, we should just show up and allow the enemy to use us to threaten Royal Princess Jinan? You stupid idiot!”

Just as they were about to get into a heated discussion, Chunhua, who had been sent up to make inquiries, had returned, “Master, Royal Princess Jinan's group was attacked by some people from a

foreign tribe. Although the attackers were quite bold and fearless, the group wasn't very big and has already been beaten back by the Jin Wu Guards. Royal Princess Jinan hasn't been injured and was only a little bit frightened by the situation.”

Yu Xiaocao lowered her head down to think for a bit before she opened her mouth, “If their target truly is Royal Princess Jinan, why would they send such few people along to attack her and get pushed back? Isn't that beating the grass to scare the snake ah?”

“I think that these foreigners were only trying to sound things out. They were trying to see whether the group ahead actually had the target they had in mind. It looks like the rest of the journey will not be very smooth anymore!” Ning Donglan now truly admired the person who came up with this decoy plan. With the group in front of them to draw the attention of the enemy, it was a lot easier for him to keep the real Royal Princess Jinan safe on this journey.

He Wanning was now alert and excited. She sat up straight and excitedly said, “Let's rush forward and catch up with them. Perhaps we'll encounter some of the enemy running away. This old maiden's whip isn't just for show and I'm certain I can make them cry for their parents!”

“Just stop ah! With your cruddy abilities, you wouldn't be able to harm a single person on a real battlefield. Those foreign tribes are as sturdy as a bear, very skilled, and extremely cruel and vicious. Calm down and don't add to the mess!” Nign Donghuan had also been given a tutor who taught him how to ride and do martial arts. However, he didn't like to work hard and wasn't as proficient in these areas as his second older brother. Despite that, even he looked down upon He Wanning's so-called 'whip skills', let alone more skilled people.

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Ning Donghuan was whipped a few times by He Wanning before he finally begged for forgiveness, “Miss He, I was wrong. I'm the one who only has flashy moves with no substance, alright ah? Your good friend Miss Yu has been frightened today. Do you plan on going over to comfort her ah?” The fact that she was in the mood to whip him showed that she was only surface friends with Miss Yu.

He Wanning glared at him and then glanced briefly at Yu Xiaocao before she said, “You finally said something that makes sense. Although my younger sister Xiaocao puts up a brave front normally, she's a scaredy-cat at heart ah! I definitely need to go and comfort her little trembling heart since she experienced such a frightening and exciting event today.”

The expression on Yu Xiaocao's face didn't change one iota as she nodded in agreement, “A meeting by chance has fate involved. Since this has happened, I should definitely go up and greet her courteously!”



The group of them spurred their horses forward and, after about fifteen minutes of fast travel, they arrived at the scene. It was obvious that the enemy was only sounding things out with this attack before retreating quickly. Thus, neither side had suffered a lot of losses. The enemy left behind a few dead corpses while their side only had some injured soldiers. These soldiers had been treated with Royal Princess Jinan's special wound balm, so they were in no danger.

The first person He Wanning thought of was her fiancé, Lu Hao. She sidled over and saw that there were bloodstains all over him. She asked in a worried tone, "You got injured? Is it serious ah? I have some extra strong wound balm that Younger Sister Xiaocao personally made here. Go take it..."

Lu Hao happily gazed at his fiancée's pretty little face. He noticed that she couldn't seem to hide her anxiety and felt his heart twinge. He softly comforted, "What's wrong? You don't have any faith in your man's abilities? How could those tiny thieves possibly be worthy opponents for me? The blood on me is all from other people! Not even a single hair was harmed on me, so don't worry!"

"Who's my man?!" He Wanning felt herself relax a few degrees and immediately blushed. Her watery large eyes flashed a glare at him.

"Although I'm not your man now, it'll be a done deal very soon! After this mission is over, it'll be very close to our marriage date." Lu Hao also didn't know why he didn't end up liking those gentle and sweet young noble misses. Instead, he had to be fond of a little spicy pepper. However, this little spicy pepper was incredibly good looking, for even her glares seemed to have the ability to draw a person in.

He Wanning felt her face become even more hot. She seemed to be feeling something as she ran a few steps towards the carriage. She stammered haltingly, "I...I'm going to go see Younger Sister Xiaocao. I'm sure she must have been scared to death!"

Yuan Xueyan also entered the luxurious and comfortable carriage. Yu Xiaocao wanted to have a better idea of the situation and climbed into the vehicle too. The dunce, Ning Donghuan, wasn't able to take a single step into the carriage before the hidden guards blocked his way.

"Oi, how come he can enter but I, Third Young Master Ning, can't?" Ning Donghuan gestured at Xiaocao, who was disguised as Royal Prince Guo, as he asked in a disgruntled manner. Come to think of it, Miss Yu only had a very shallow relationship with Royal Prince Guo, whereas, he, on the other hand, could be

considered an old acquaintance of hers. Thus, wouldn't he be considered closer to her than Royal Prince Guo? Ning Donghuan smugly decided that his train of thought was spot on with the situation.

Ning Donglan pulled his third younger brother back and admonished him, "Royal Princess Jinan will be marrying Royal Prince Guo's older paternal cousin. As the younger cousin, it's within reason for him to go and comfort his future in-law. Why are you trying to butt into all of this?" When he said the words 'future in-law', Ning Donglan felt a pang go through his heart. Wouldn't it be so much better if he had been the one to encounter Xiaocao first? Their meeting by chance had occurred too late and he was too distracted by other matters to strike...

"Your Highness!" One of the hidden guards who had been disguised reported to Xiaocao in a lowered voice, "This time the enemy sent around fifty or so experts to attack. Although they were disguised as people from our empire, they were unable to conceal the tell-tale odor of sheep from their bodies. As you and the emperor have both suspected, their target truly is you, Your Highness!"

Yu Xiaocao nodded her head slightly, "This is only the beginning. This attempt was only to see what we have on our side. Since they have confirmed that their target is here within the entourage, the true battle will start very soon. If I'm not mistaken, I'm sure that their next attack will occur at Wild Wolves Slope! That area has a grove of trees that is quite thick, so I'm sure they'll set an ambush over there!" Wild Wolves Slope was the area where Xiaocao and Zhu Junyang had previously saved Xiao Rong.

"Your Royal Highness, please be at ease. This subordinate will send people right now to survey the area!" Another hidden guard, who had been disguised as a maid, bowed towards Xiaocao before she exited the carriage to run off in the distance.

He Wanning had a face full of puzzlement when she heard the conversation between them. She remarked in surprise, "What's going on? It looks like you all knew beforehand that there would be bandits attacking, right? Why does it feel like that this outing isn't for the sake of giving us a fun trip and, instead, we're here to create a smokescreen for you?"

Yuan Xueyan tapped the other maiden's head and lightly sighed, "Do you finally realize it now? I'm pretty sure that, within our group, other than that numbskull Ning Donghuan, you're the other stupid one. It took you this long to figure out something so obvious!"

"Alright, enough you guys! Clearly we're not as good friends as you claim we are since you all hid such an important matter from me! That's not okay! My poor little heart has been injured now, so I need to

be comforted. Otherwise, I'll break off all relations with you cold-hearted fellows!" He Wanning wasn't stupid beyond measure and at least said her threats to Yu Xiaocao in a lowered tone.

"Two boxes of chocolate flavored cakes!" Yu Xiaocao casually waved the fan in her hand as she made the number two sign in the other.

He Wanning continued to act as if she was furious as she countered, "So apparently our sisterly relationship is only worth two boxes of cakes in your eyes, Younger Sister Xiaocao! This is such a shock to my system, I am so dismayed now!"

"I'll add on a box of hazelnut chocolates too!" Yu Xiaocao went up on her offer.

"Accepted!!" He Wanning's favorite treats were hazelnut chocolates. Thus, she quit while she was ahead and candidly accepted the offer as soon as it came out of Xiaocao's mouth. "However, for the two boxes of cakes, one needs to be tiramisu while the other needs to contain Black Forest Gateau!"

"Such an embarrassment! You're so easily bribed by just one extra box of chocolates. You're not the least bit reserved at all!" Yuan Xueyan glared at He Wanning in an exasperated manner, "Didn't you say that Black Forest Gateau is a tad too bitter for you and is not as tasty as tiramisu? Why didn't you ask for two boxes of tiramisu then instead of one of both?"

Right at this moment, Lu Hao's strong and sturdy figure flashed by the window of the carriage He Wanning stared at him as she chuckled sheepishly, "Well that's because...that fellow Lu Hao likes the taste of Black Forest Gateau the most ah..."

"Older Sister He, you normally seem quite dense. Who would have thought that even you would have such a side for details too ah? Looks like my future brother-in-law will be lucky in food ah!" Yu Xiaocao couldn't help but tease the older maiden.

He Wanning had never been the type to be embarrassed over small things. She planted her hands on her hips and proclaimed in a confident manner, "He's my fiancé, not some random person on the street. What's wrong with caring about him ah? When Royal Prince Yang had to leave the capital to go to war, didn't you stay up all night until your eyes turned red like a rabbit's to personally make some special medicine and dried rations for him ah?"

When she spoke this time, He Wanning didn't try to lower her voice. Thus, Lu Hao, who had good hearing, heard everything she said. Bubbles of happiness rose up in his heart. Hmph! That fellow surnamed Zhu always bragged about how virtuous and sweet his little lass was. Now he also had someone who cared about him and would think of him always!

The hidden guard who had been disguised as Xiaocao secretly observed the true Royal Princess Jinan. She never would have thought that such an innocent and delicate looking girl could tame the great devil that was Royal Prince Yang. It was just as that saying said, 'brine can be used to cure tofu, thus an unlikely object can be the nemesis of the other!'

Xiaocao finally came out of the carriage with her two good friends after she finished talking to the hidden guards. They chatted a bit with Lu Hao before their group left, traveling at top speed to head towards their destination for the night. By the time they reached the small town, the moon had already risen past the tree tops.

This small town was much smaller compared to Tanggu Town. There was only one restaurant within the town and also one guesthouse. The group first entered the inn and reserved all of the remaining rooms there. It was just enough for all of them to fit in if they were willing to squeeze a bit. Dinner was had at the only restaurant in town and the food was delivered to the inn. The ingredients were considered quite fresh but the taste of the food was incredibly average.

Qiushi had gone out into the town, pretending to buy supplies as she scoped out the area. She came back to report, "There are quite a few suspicious looking characters in town. I'm pretty sure that these are all spies from the enemy tribes."

Yu Xiaocao's five senses were quite sensitive so she nodded her head in agreement, "No wonder as soon as we entered this small town I always felt like there were people surreptitiously observing us. I originally thought it was the citizens of this town who were curious about our group. Now I know that these people were watching us for another reason. Truly makes one feel honored by their preparations ah!"

Chunhua came in with the hot water and quietly said, "Master, the other rooms in this inn have been reserved by people who are suspicious too! If I'm not wrong, I'm sure they are the enemy too!"

"I'm pretty sure they're all here to prevent their target from inadvertently slipping away ah!" Yu Xiaocao rubbed her chin and thought for a bit before she continued, "Tonight, we need to stay on guard ah. We need to avoid the situation where they try to kill us just to be safe!"

She then had people go remind He Wanning, Yuan Xueyan, and the two Ning brothers. When it was time to sleep, Chunhua and Qiushi had originally planned on taking watches separately throughout the night, but Xiaocao had convinced them not to. After spending an entire day on the road with more dangerous roads ahead of them, it was important to get enough rest in order to be alert enough to deal with the surprises of tomorrow.

As for night watch, wasn't there the little divine stone ah? That fellow didn't need to cultivate recently and spent all day every day within the multi-colored stone. It was already bored to death by now.

A tiny golden kitten appeared in the corner of the guestroom. Chunhua and Qiushi immediately recognized that this pretty little cat was their master's beloved pet. They hadn't seen heads or tails of it during this entire journey, so just where did this fellow pop out from this time?

Although Chunhua and Qiushi still had some doubts within their hearts, they didn't persist in trying to take over the night watch. This was because they knew that their master's pets all were very intelligent. When true danger arrived, these pets would definitely warn them. The two of them squeezed onto the other bed in the room and very quickly fell asleep. In their slumber, they missed the kitten slowly transforming its color from its bright golden coat into a dark black color.

The little divine stone vanished into the darkness and sidled over to the other guest rooms in the inn. Right now, there was a group of people from the enemy tribes who were grouped together, coming up with their plan. Although they spoke a foreign language, that wasn't enough to stump the little divine stone. It had the ability to directly hear the thoughts from other people's heads.

One of the men, whose face was covered with a beard and looked quite vicious, spoke in the Mongol's language, "From my standpoint, there's no point in dilly dallying ah. Let's catch this group of people! What's the point in hesitating anymore? It doesn't serve any purpose!"

"Don't forget our mission here. The Heavenly Teacher had said that we need to capture them alive!!" The man who rebuked the first one was a brawny fellow with a knife scar on his face.

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The man with the big beard snorted out a gust of air from his nostrils and grumbled, "Heavenly Teacher, Heavenly Teacher! The great king has been bewitched by that fellow and believes that dribble about 'immortality medicine'! How could a stupid teenage girl possibly know any arts to make immortality

medicine? In my eyes, that Heavenly Teacher, who we have no background information on, is the one who is suspicious!”

“Second Brother, hold your tongue!” The person who spoke this time was a middle-aged man who had a graceful and elegant demeanor to him. His face was pale without any facial hair and he was dressed in scholarly clothes. However, his eyes shone with a crafty light, which completely destroyed his outward elegant appearance.

“Eldest Brother, I've already asked around. The guests here contain one royal prince and the other two youths and girls are all the children of high-ranking officials. From their appearances, it doesn't look like our target is among them. It's better not to act rashly in case we end up beating the grass and scaring off the snake!” The man with the knife scar on his face looked at the middle-aged scholar as he quietly stated.

When the big bearded fellow heard this, his eyes immediately lit up, “The children of high-ranking officials? I'm sure they have a ton of cash on them. If we catch any one of them, we can eat and drink merrily for the rest of our lives!”

The man with the scarred face glared at him and huffed, “Did you get addicted to masquerading as a bandit ah? Do you think the guards they brought with them are pushovers? What's her name, the royal princess, is lodging not far from town. If a ruckus happens here, do you think they wouldn't be able to find out? Perhaps there are even their spies here already. It's better not to introduce a new twist in our plans without thinking it through!”

The man with the beard sneered and replied, “Old Three, I think you've spent too much time here in the Central Plains. Not only do you speak all fancy now but you've also become more of a coward too! In my opinion, we should have our fellow brothers ambush them when these guys leave town. After they're dead, we can plunder the loot. By the time that whatever royal princess comes along, we would have fled long ago!”

Although the middle-aged scholar seemed a bit tempted by this proposition, in the end, he decided to say this instead, “Official business first! The rest we can all figure out later!”

The little divine stone waited in the dark, listening for a long time. When it knew that these people had no intentions of harming its master tonight, it eavesdropped for a bit longer to learn their plans. After getting the information it was looking for, it turned around and silently left.

These foreigners would have never expected that their carefully thought out plans had inadvertently been leaked out without them even knowing what had happened. When the little divine stone got back to Xiaocao's room, it told its master everything that these fellows had outlined. As she had expected, the enemy had set up an ambush at Wild Wolves Slope with about a thousand men there. They were all waiting for 'Royal Princess Jinan's' carriage and escort to walk into the trap!

Yu Xiaocao knew that there were countless eyes in town staring at them, so it wouldn't be convenient for them to send someone out with this information. Instead, she wrote down all of the details on a piece of paper and asked the little divine stone to carry it in its mouth to the decoys outside of town.

The little divine stone was displeased with her plan.

“Then do you plan on morphing into a homing pigeon? I can tie the paper onto your tail instead.” Yu Xiaocao retorted.

The little divine stone thought about its beautiful and elegant tail with a stupid piece of paper bound to it. It was still better for it to carry it in its mouth. At least it'd look less dumb that way. It grumbled a bit as it unhappily headed out with the note in its mouth, jumping through the window. It disappeared silently in the darkness of the night.

Since the foreign enemy wasn't planning on attacking them tonight, Xiaocao went to sleep with a light heart. She slept deeply without any dreams. The next morning, after washing up, she saw He Wanning come out of her room listlessly with a pair of prominent panda eyes.

“What happened? Did you go out last night to steal some needle and thread from other people?” Yu Xiaocao couldn't resist the urge to make fun of the other girl.

“Don't mention it! Didn't you say last night that there were countless foreigners in town with ulterior motives ah? After hearing that, she was anxious the entire night and tossed and turned, disrupting the entire room! Didn't you always claim that you were bold and brave ah? How come you're so cowardly now?” Yuan Xueyan spared no effort in ridiculing her good friend.

He Wanning righteously stated, “I have some skill in martial arts, so if bandits appear I can at least defend myself for a few moves and stall for enough time for the bodyguards to come over. I was worried

for you, okay. You're a weak and delicate young maiden. I was the one who brought you out so the responsibility rests on me to bring you back safe and sound. Last night, the reason why I didn't sleep was because I was trying to keep a night watch, okay? Argh...I'm so sleepy. I'm pretty sure I can fall asleep while riding my horse today!"

Yu Xiaocao remarked out of guilt, "I was the one who wasn't thoughtful enough. I should have sent either Chunhua or Qiushi over to protect you guys!"

"No need! Among the maids I brought, two of them also have some martial arts skills. Although they're not as strong as Chunhua or Qiushi, even ten of me wouldn't be able to beat any one of them. The enemy's target is you, so it's better that Chunhua and Qiushi stay by your side to keep you safe." He Wanning yawned again and rubbed her eyes with a hand as she spoke casually.

As they talked, the Ning Brothers also exited their rooms. The two men seemed to be in good spirits and Ning Donghuan was as cheerfully happy as ever. When he saw them, he said, "Let's go and try out some special breakfast foods in this area. I've already investigated everything. Not far from here is a small shop that sells barbecued donkey meat and almond milk. It should be decent."

Another group of people exited the inn as they conversed. Yu Xiaocao could sensitively tell that there was an unfriendly gaze staring at them blatantly. She glanced over secretly and saw a large fellow with a giant beard looking at them as if they were a herd of fat sheep. The man had a vicious looking smile on his face.

Yu Xiaocao remembered what the little divine stone had told her last night and unconsciously frowned slightly. Did the bearded man still want to attack them for their goods? Xiaocao silently became wary at that thought.

While they were eating breakfast, Yu Xiaocao told her thoughts to Ning Donglan in order to make sure that he was prepared for the possibility of an attack. She also deliberately revealed some wealth in front of the bearded man when they were packing up their luggage to head out—a large embroidered pouch that was bulging with cash had been dropped right in front of him. A few golden coins fell out. She could distinctly tell that the bearded man's breathing had quickened when he saw this happen and that his eyes had flashed with the light of greed. Aha! the bait had been cast and she didn't have to worry that the quarry wouldn't bite!



As expected, not long after they left town, their group heard the sound of hooves behind them chasing them when they reached a more desolate area. They slowed down their pace and a group of fifteen to sixteen gruffy looking men on horseback surrounded them.

“Fellow citizens, I'm not sure why you are blocking our way. Is there something that we need to be instructed on?” Ning Donglan went forward one step and greeted them in an official manner as he addressed the large bearded man who was clearly the leader of the scruffy group.

“Heh heh!” A vicious light flashed through the large bearded man's eyes as he coldly laughed, “Instruct you? This old man doesn't have the time! I'm here to send you to the next life early, so there's nothing you can do except lament your poor fate!”

“You think you can do that with just a dozen small fish with you ah? It hasn't been set in stone who will be sent to their next life yet!” Yu Xiaocao lightly brushed off some invisible specks of dust from her white clothing as she regarded the attackers with a look full of disdain.

“You little brat! You're just arrogant 'cause you have a few guards with you right? This old man has even fought against proper army soldiers from the Great Ming Dynasty. Do you think your little toys here can do anything? Brothers, let's go! First come, first served. This little brat is marked by me, so don't even think of trying to snatch him away!” The large bearded man waved the cutlass in his hands and slashed it furiously in Xiaocao's direction.

Chunhua pulled her master back about ten meters in a hasty retreat. Out of the four hidden guards that the emperor had sent over, two of them rushed forward to engage the bearded man, flanking him on his right and left. The other people present weren't to be outdone and quickly found their targets among the group as they ran over eagerly.

He Wanning and Yuan Xueyan were protected fiercely by their maidservants as they headed over in the direction of Xiaocao. Chunhua and Qiushi, as well as the other two hidden guards, grouped around the three maidens, keeping them safe in the middle.

The large bearded man thought that the noble young maidens and masters from the capital only brought a few guards along that weren't very strong. Otherwise, he wouldn't have brought along only a dozen or so friends along to chase them down. However, as soon as he began to fight, he discovered that something was off. Why did the two men fighting against him seem to be even stronger than the soldiers he had fought yesterday?

The large bearded man wasn't a complete idiot as he knew he had hit a hard wall. He brandished the cutlass in his hands as he fought against the two soldiers. He hollered, "Muerhan! Geji! Come over and help me out!"

The two people he had named ran towards him and began to attack the two hidden guards fiercely. The large bearded man disengaged swiftly and rushed towards the direction of Xiaocao as he screamed, "There's definitely something off with that white-clothed brat's identity! Brothers, come up with me. No matter if we live or die, we need to capture him!"

In actuality, out of the guards that were protecting her, only the few hidden guards among them were truly great experts. The rest of the people were just ordinary guards sent by their families. When fighting against these fierce foreigners, at most, these guards could only fight them to a stalemate.

Immediately, a few warriors from the enemy's side rushed over after hearing the bearded man's commands. The other two hidden guards were quite skilled but they still needed time in order to fight off the enemy. Chunhua, Qiushi, and the other maidservants had all been engaged by the enemy. Thus, only Xiaocao and the two beauties of the capital were left standing alone by themselves.

The large bearded man had avoided the hidden guards and stalked the three people with an evil smile on his face. He Wanning waved the whip in her hands and stepped forward, keeping herself in front of the other two girls. She solemnly stated, "Xueyan, take Younger Sister Xiaocao away on horseback now! I'll stall for now!"

"Haha! Little beauty, ah, do you really think you can stop me with just that measly little whip in your hands? It'd probably be better if you stripped naked now and show yourself to me! You two beauties, I may look rough but I still have tender feelings for the opposite sex. How about you two come and engage me? I'll make sure to keep you two alive!" The large bearded man had a disgusting smile on his face. His mouth was wide open in a grin, revealing a row of yellow, revolting, uneven teeth.

How could He Wanning possibly not explode after encountering such a disgusting insult? She snapped the whip in her hand as she snarled angrily, "This lady will fight against you!!" Just as she was about to rush forward, she was pulled back by Xiaocao, who was behind her.

The large bearded man had never considered He Wanning, who had slender legs and arms, to be of any threat. He stalked forward as he continued to spew insults from his mouth. He wasn't in any hurry to

attack them. In his eyes, the fat little sheep and two beauties in front of him were all going to fall into his hands sooner or later.

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The large bearded man was very well aware that when people faced their death, they were more likely to become more fearful with every little movement. Thus, he deliberately made each step forward at a slow pace. As he raised the large cutlass in his hands up in an exaggerated manner, the expression on his face immediately congealed right before he was about to slash in Xiaocao's direction.

He Wanning looked over in the direction that he was looking when she noticed the scared expression on his face. She unexpectedly saw a dark colored barrel pointing in the direction of the large bearded man's chest.

“A gun?” He Wanning shouted in surprise, “Why didn't you take it out earlier if you had something like this on hand? You really scared me to death, making me think that I'd have to sacrifice myself to save you two from this bandit!”

“It wouldn't be fun if I took it out early, right?” Yu Xiaocao steadily pointed the gun in her hands at the large bearded man, who had cold sweat dripping down his back, as she regarded him in a steely manner. A cold smile flashed on her face, “Oh ho! You recognize what this is, ah? Looks like you've already experienced the might of the Great Ming Empire's new weapons! What's wrong? Since you know that our firearms are powerful, you still decided to rashly attack a royal prince. Were you tired of living and wanted to court death?”

“Ah...it's a misunderstanding. It's all a misunderstanding!!” The big bearded man couldn't be more terrified now. He squeezed out an uneasy smile, “I've been strapped for cash recently. Young Master, you accidentally revealed your wealth at the inn, which caused me to become quite greedy, leading to uncouth thoughts. I never wanted to do anything that would cause permanent harm, so please, Young Master, be generous and merciful. Give me and my brothers a way out alive.”

“Don't listen to him ah! Fire the gun and let this criminal die!” He Wanning had been stoked into a fury by this man's insults and words. Now that they had the upper hand, she needed to make sure that his man ate his words!

“Don't, don't! My little ancestor, I was the one who didn't have eyes and offended you. If you feel unhappy, you can use your whip on me a few times to relieve your temper...” This large bearded man apparently knew when to bend and grovel. He immediately revealed a flattering smile and even began to slap his own face a few times.

Yu Xiaocao impatiently pointed the gun at him and shouted, "Aren't you going to drop your weapon and quickly tell your subordinates to stop? Or do you really want to have a taste of what our Great Ming Empire's guns are like?"

Clatter! The large bearded man immediately threw his cutlass onto the ground and screamed at his subordinates, who were slowly losing the fight, "Back off, you bastards. Stop fighting for f\*\*\*'s sake!"

"Second Older Brother!" A large man, who seemed as sturdy as a bear, opened his large eyes wide and aggressively charged towards Xiaocao. Despite his hulking size, he wasn't the least bit clumsy as he sped over with a longsword in his hands that he swung in her direction.

Bam! That sturdy fellow staggered a couple steps forward and finally stumbled to the ground. He fell about three steps away from Xiaocao and lay on the ground near the bearded man's feet, no longer moving.

The large bearded man slowly looked at the man at his feet and discovered that the other man's chest had a large hole in his chest. Copious amounts of blood oozed from the wound. Then, he turned his head to look at that young master dressed in white and discovered that the youth had switched out the gun in his hands for another. The gun that had been used to kill his subordinate was now in the hands of a short bodyguard, who was currently reloading the still steaming muzzle.

Just when did the new Great Ming Empire's firearms become so cheap? A tiny, insignificant royal prince actually had two of them on hand! Didn't they say that the empire's firearm factories had trouble manufacturing these guns in large quantities, which was why civilians were prohibited from carrying them? Was that just fake news that their spies had obtained?

This was also the first time Yu Xiaocao had killed someone. Her back dripped with cold sweat as her heart trembled inside. However, none of her tumultuous emotions could be seen on her cold, serious looking face. Her eyes glittered with an icy light as they stared fixedly at the large bearded man. The loaded gun in her hands was pointed steadily in the direction of the large bearded man's chest.

Their current guns had an annoying flaw as they were only able to hold one 'bullet' at a time. Thus, after they were fired, they needed to be reloaded before being used again. Because of that limitation, the soldiers within the firearms barracks were trained to have half of their men shoot the first batch and

then step back to allow the other half to shoot while the first patch reloaded...that was the cycle they used now.

Yu Xiaocao rejoiced in the fact that she had two guns on hand. The first one had been given to her by the emperor as he had been worried about her safety on her journey. The other one, well, that had obviously been given to her by her beloved fiancé so that she would have a way to protect herself. This time she had brought both guns along and they truly proved their worth right now.

Yu Xiaocao felt her heart swell with courage when she thought of Zhu Junyang, who was currently on a bloody battlefield, defending the country. She took the reloaded gun from Chunhua in her left hand and pointed at the dumbstruck bandit in front her. She coldly laughed and said, "Do you want to experience the might of my Great Ming's legendary weapon? This royal prince will gladly allow it!"

"I don't dare, I don't dare!" The large bearded man immediately quelled any sneaky thoughts and deflated completely, "Spare me, Your Highness. Please spare our worthless lives ah!"

"Spare you guys? I guess I could consider showing mercy!" Yu Xiaocao paused for a second and then waved a hand at the bodyguards under her. She commanded them, "Round up these bandits and strip them dry. Then leave them hanging at one of the small forests next to the road! As for when they might obtain rescue from their fellow compatriots, that would have to rely on their own luck and fortune!"

The corner of the hidden guard's lips twitched as he obeyed her orders. He Wanning was still upset though, "Are we going to let them off that easy ah? It's not like you didn't hear the horrid things that brigand said earlier!"

"Do you hear that? Older Sister He over here is quite dissatisfied by your earlier words and insults and has no desire to let you off that easily! Now that I think about it, she's right. If it weren't for the fact that this prince had guns on hand, who knows what would have happened by now? We can forget about everyone else, but as for you ah..."

"If you don't keep your word, you'll reap the consequences!" The large bearded man regarded the gun pointed at him with a look of pure fear as he howled.

"I only said that I would spare your life but I never said that I would allow you to leave completely unscathed!" The smile on Yu Xiaocao's face was enough to freeze a person's heart. "Destroy their right arms such that they will never be able to pick up weapons again!"

"As for you ah! You're the leader of this vile group so you need to pay a higher price! Otherwise, that wouldn't be fair!" Yu Xiaocao turned towards He Wanning and said, "His mouth is foul, so you can go wash it for him!"

He Wanning picked up a rock from the side of the road that was about as large as a man's fist and pelted it viciously at the large bearded man. The bandit screamed in pain and almost half of his teeth fell out of his mouth. His lips were swollen like sausages as blood dripped onto the ground.

"Vented enough ah?" Yu Xiaocao slanted a look at the other maiden as she asked.

"Mmm, just a bit ah!" He Wanning's eyes flickered as she said, "Lend me that gun of yours. I want to destroy an arm and leg of his. That'll be enough to sate my temper. Otherwise, if I hold it all in it'd cause problems for me in the future!"

Yu Xiaocao's eyes twitched. This lass spoke so much only for the sake of playing with the guns, right? She put the gun that the emperor had given her into He Wanning's hands. She warned the other girl repeatedly, "Play as you wish but don't hurt yourself. Make sure you keep his worthless self alive. This prince doesn't want to have a stain on my reputation because of him."

The unspoken implications were clear. As long as the man was kept alive, everything else was negotiable. After she finished, Xiaocao gracefully marched away, leaving He Wanning with the large bearded man. The other girl waved the gun in her hands excitedly towards the man, making him turn pale out of fear. He was frightened that she might accidentally discharge the gun at him and end his life!

He Wanning ultimately aimed at the large bearded man's right leg. Pow! The man howled as if he was a pig at the slaughter.

"Oh ho ho! Looks like my aim was poor and I wasted a bullet!" He Wanning sighed regretfully. While Chunhua reloaded the gun for her, she snapped her whip at the large bearded man's face as she asked, "What are you screaming for? I didn't hit you. Just look at you, your courage is smaller than an ant, yet you dare to come out and cause trouble!"

“Screw you——” The large bearded man wasn't able to finish his string of profanities when the reloaded gun was pointed in the direction of his chest. He hastily swallowed down what he was about to say.

“If you make this young maiden even more unhappy, I might aim poorly and hit the wrong place! At that time, it'll be my mistake and not Royal Prince Guo not keeping his word, right?” He Wanning felt her temper sate as she watched the large bearded man in front of her sob and beg piteously.

“Stop playing around! If this continues on for too long, we won't be able to make it to our next rest stop in time!” Yuan Xueyan shouted towards He Wanning as she followed Xiaocao from behind.

He Wanning shot the large bearded man in the knee and then also shot the man's right arm as well. The man howled grievously in pain while he was being tied up a large tree. After that was done, she hurriedly caught up with her two good friends.

“What's wrong?” When she got to Xiaocao's side, she found out that the younger girl's complexion looked wan while her hands and feet trembled.

Yuan Xueyan supported Xiaocao as she gently patted her back. She answered He Wanning's question, “I'm not sure. Earlier she seemed just fine but she began to vomit when we got here. She also can't seem to stand up straight.”

“...” He Wanning took out her waterskin and had Xiaocao drink a few sips as she worriedly inquired, “Was she scared silly from earlier? She seemed quite calm and confident just a few moments ago. That demeanor, that expression, I almost became her die-hard fan after seeing that! Who would have thought that she would also be frightened by what had happened?”

Ning Donglan had finished cleaning up the remains of the battle and walked over. When he saw this scene, he stated, “The first time I killed someone my hands also trembled and my heart felt uneasy. Did anyone bring any calming pills? Give her one. This is something that has shadowed her heart and only she can walk out of it.”

Qiushi hurriedly took out a pill that gave off a refreshing fragrance from the small medicine box she carried on her. After helping her master take it, she muttered guiltily, “It was all this subordinate's fault for allowing the young miss to get frightened so much!”

"I'm fine! I'll be perfectly alright in a few moments! No need to worry about me!" Yu Xiaocao sat down on a rock at the side of the road and inhaled a few deep breaths through her nose. She could still smell the scent of fresh blood in her nose. Blarghhhh—she vomited again.

Yuan Xueyan personally fed some water into her mouth and helped her rinse. Then she gently hugged Xiaocao as she comforted, "That person deserved to die! If you didn't fire your gun, then we would be the ones who are dead now! Killing a bandit to save the people most close to you was the right decision! There's no need to put pressure on yourself over this!"

"That's right ah! Earlier you were so cool! You were able to accurately hit him from such a far distance, which means you must have practiced before! I was unable to hit something even from such a close distance. So embarrassing ah!" He Wanning sat next to Xiaocao as she chirped and jabbered at the younger girl in an almost worshipful manner.

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At this time, Yu Xiaocao had already rested for a good while. She smiled wanly at her two good friends and said, "Junyang...Older Cousin Junyang had once instructed me for a period of time on how to use guns. With that added onto my natural talent, I can't say I will hit every single thing I aim at but I'm sure I can hit it ninety percent of the time!"

Yu Xiaocao wasn't bragging. She truly was more talented in this area compared to other people as she had been infused with spiritual energy from the little divine stone. Thus, it only took half of the time and effort for her to learn how to use a gun well compared to other people. Zhu Junyang had even repeatedly complimented her for being so talented.

Ning Donghuan slung an arm around her neck and flatteringly said, "Royal Prince Guo, can you lend me a gun to play with for one day ah? I just want to play with it for one day, alright?"

"Not okay! This young maiden hasn't had enough either! Thus, it absolutely cannot go to you first!" He Wanning glared at him fiercely and then smiled fawningly at Xiaocao, "Young Royal Prince, don't you have two guns ah? Just let me play with one of them for a few days, alright ah~"

"Blarghhhh——" Ning Donghuan mimed vomiting, "Surnamed He, ah, you're a woman with a fiancé. Is it really alright for you to fawn over a young master who is in his early teens without that fellow Lu Hao knowing about it?"



“Why do you care ah? You're just a dumb schmuck——mind your own business ,okay!” He Wanning snarled viciously at him, “This young maiden is considered maternal cousins with Royal Prince Guo ah! What's wrong with asking one's younger cousin to lend me something? Is that something I need to hide from others? If that fellow Lu Hao dares to voice a complaint, just watch me put him in his place!”

Ning Donghuan repeatedly shook his head and felt some pity towards his good friend, “Such a good youth yet he has such a shrew at home...”

“If you dare to speak more nonsense, then I'll let you have a taste of just how strong this gun is!” He Wanning pointed the gun in her hands in the direction of Ning Donghuan with a threatening look on her face.

“Both of you stop! This gun isn't a toy, so you need to be careful to not harm someone! For the sake of fairness, neither of you are allowed to borrow it. Give it back!” Yu Xiaocao felt much better after taking the calming pill. She took the gun from He Wanning and locked the safety catch on it before putting it away on herself.

He Wanning had a deflated expression on her face and she turned her head around to glower angrily at Ning Donghuan. Ning Donghuan shrank his head down as he muttered quietly, “It's not as if I was the one who told you that you're not allowed to play with the gun. Why are you glaring at me ah?”

“If you didn't butt in, perhaps Royal Prince Guo would have lent me the gun to play with for a couple of days. It's all your fault! You're the one who ruined everything for me!!” He Wanning didn't want to admit her own fault when there was a perfectly good scapegoat here. Why not vent her temper on an easy target?

Ning Donglan quietly advised Xiaocao's two maidservants, Chunhua and Qiushi, to keep a close eye on their master that evening. That night, when they had hunkered down in a farmer's house, Yu Xiaocao ran a high fever. Fortunately, they had brought along some fever reducing solution. In addition, the little divine stone stayed by her side the entire night, helping her to process through these complex emotions. After tossing and turning for an entire night, she was finally able to settle herself by the next day.

The other people saw her pale and listless looking face and felt pity rise in their hearts towards her. Thus, they decided to rest for another day in the farming village before heading out the subsequent day. By doing that, they were now behind 'Royal Princess Jinan's' carriage train again.

By the time they arrived at the site of the next ambush, Wild Wolves Slope, the battle had already finished. Although the enemy had the advantage of numbers, their warriors were not as skilled. The soldiers within the Jin Wu troops were all seasoned veterans who had undergone hundreds of battles. Furthermore, there were a few hidden guards within them who were highly skilled, so even the hidden guard disguised as Xiaocao didn't need to come out. Within the bleak environment, the soldiers had also hidden themselves, which hindered the enemy. In addition, Xiaocao had given them some paralyzing poison, so it made victory quite easy for them.

Long before Xiaocao and her group arrived at Wild Wolves Slope, they could smell the distinct scent of blood in the air. Ning Donglan was afraid that Xiaocao would become ill from fright again, so he had her and her two friends wait at the side as he went forward to check on the situation.

Ning Donghuan quipped foolishly, "Little Royal Prince, obediently stay here in order to avoid getting scared out of your pants again! Argh~you're such a sissy that you're giving a bad name to all men!"

He Wanning frowned immediately and strode forward in large steps and began to quarrel riotously with Ning Donghuan. Suddenly, she revealed a crafty smile on her face and stretched out her tiny claws. She forcefully scratched down on Ning Donghuan's wounded hand. Everyone could only hear him howling in pain and it was loud enough that even Lu Hao, who was cleaning up the battle, was startled.

"Weren't you just bragging about how manly you were? You can't even endure a little bit of pain, so how manly can you possibly be?" He Wanning smiled proudly. Ning Donghuan was in so much pain that he wanted to hit her but he had been raised since birth that he wasn't allowed to hit women. The expression on his face twisted, which made He Wanning grin even wider.

"Third Younger Brother!" Ning Donglan had already seen things for what they were. His younger brother would never be able to gain an advantage over these three maidens, so he hurriedly called him over. Otherwise, that fool would end up just getting even more hurt over the tricks of these three girls.

Although the battle at Wild Wolves Slope had been won by them, they had still been outnumbered so it was unavoidable that they had some casualties. Out of the five hundred Jin Wu Troops, there were around twenty who had been seriously injured and seven who had perished. The seriously injured ones were able to stay alive thanks to the special medicine Yu Xiaocao had made. Even those who had only one breath left in their bodies were brought back from the brink of death. Otherwise, they would have lost more people.

When he found out that Xiaocao's group had also encountered danger, Lu Hao came over to inquire about everything after he finished cleaning up his area and making sure the fake Xiaocao was okay. Naturally, he spent most of his time making sure his bold and impetuous fiancée, He Wanning, was alright since she only had the most rudimentary skills at defending herself. He was afraid that she might have lost her temper in the midst of battle and rushed forward, injuring herself. He Wanning did her best to convince him that everything was fine. It was only after he saw that the person he needed to protect and his fiancée was safe and sound did he finally leave anxiously.

For the rest of the journey, the main group had been ambushed a few more times. However, these attacks were all much smaller than the attack at Wild Wolves Slope. The crafty enemy even began to use poison. Luckily, Xiaocao had refined a large batch of detoxifying pills. Thus, although there were people who had gotten injured, no one had ended up dying during these attacks.

With Lu Hao and the others as the bait, Xiaocao and her group were able to swimmingly get closer to the stud farm. Unfortunately, when they were about twenty kilometers away from their destination, they had gotten intercepted by a group.

The leader of the enemy group was a handsome fellow with a pretty face and elegant demeanor. However, an evil aura could be sensed from him and it was easy to tell at a glance that he wasn't a good person. Furthermore, he was able to immediately spot the disguise on Xiaocao's face. He grinned confidently as he said, "Royal Princess Jinan, it's quite difficult to get an audience with you ah!"

"If I'm not remembering incorrectly, I'm pretty sure we've never met before. Why do you want an audience with me?" Yu Xiaocao knew that the hidden guards she had brought with her had already gone ahead to the stud farm. As long as they stalled for an hour, the stewards and guards at the farm would notice that they hadn't arrived and would absolutely send people to look for them. Furthermore, the stud farm even had a squadron of special soldiers from the firearms barracks guarding them.

The man smiled faintly and replied, "Although you have no knowledge of me, this lowly one has admired you for a long time. I don't have any ill intentions in inviting you over. This one is interested in concocting medicines and is considered talented in this area. When I found out that Your Highness was also proficient, I wanted to invite you over to my residence so we could compare notes!"

"Then I will have to disappoint you. This young maiden only has a shallow knowledge of the medicinal arts and only knows how to make the most ordinary of medicines. If you want to find someone to compare notes with, our Central Plains has quite a few talented people, such as Young Master Xu from Medicinal King Valley. His abilities are much better than mine!"

The little divine stone had the ability to read people's minds, so he had told Yu Xiaocao that the person in front of her was the traitor from Medicine King Valley, Lei Tengfeng. This guy had once competed against Xu Ziyi for the status of the future master of the sect. However, because the current leader didn't like his personality, he ended up losing to Xu Ziyi. That was the reason why she deliberately mentioned Xu Ziyi earlier.

As expected, the expression on Lei Tengfeng's face changed as he couldn't keep the smile on his face anymore. He asked, "Your Highness truly is learned and has a good memory. You even know about the hidden and secretive Medicine King Valley. Perhaps you've had some contact with the young master there?"

"We can't be considered to be very close. However, the last time when I was here, I ended up saving Young Master Xu's life while I was deep within the mountains. That's all." Yu Xiaocao smiled slightly as she spoke in a calm and collected manner. It was as if she didn't think much of what had happened in the past.

The expression on Lei Tengfeng's face changed again. It was important to realize that Medicine King Valley was a sect that repaid its debts and grievances in a strict manner. The young maiden in front of him had actually saved the young master from the sect, which meant that Medicine King Valley owed her an incredible favor. If he ended up kidnapping her, that meant the people from the sect would never let him go!

However, after thinking a bit, he realized that he had been living incognito ever since he fled from Medicine King Valley. Even if he didn't kidnap her, the sect would never let him go either. As long as he was able to obtain what he wanted from this maiden surnamed Yu, then the people from the sect wouldn't be able to do anything to him either!

Lei Tengfeng frowned deeply as he said, "Your Royal Highness, now that you mention it, this one is also related to Medicine King Valley. In fact, Young Master Xu is considered my younger martial brother ah! Since you've saved him, that means you're my benefactor too. This one has a residence in a nearby town. If you don't disdain it, then please come back with me to allow me to toast some good wine to thank you..."

"I will have to refuse!" Yu Xiaocao immediately pushed away his offer, "You say that this wine is good, but can the wine here in the middle of nowhere compare to the wine that my Yu Family makes? If you want to invite me for food, do you really think the food at your place can compare to the food at

Zhenxiu Restaurant? Since you've already investigated me before, then you must know that many of the recipes at Zhenxiu Restaurant are related to me as I was the one who gave them their recipes. Thus, don't mention bringing me over as a guest to your residence anymore. I still need to finish my journey, so please stop blocking me!"

"Your Royal Highness, I'm afraid that I cannot let you go!" Lei Tengfeng clearly didn't expect Yu Xiaocao would reject his offer so directly. He was unable to keep the fake smile on his face as he continued, "Your Highness, this one will have to advise you to obediently go with me. Don't refuse my good intentions now, otherwise you'll regret it later!"

"Since this princess has no interest in drinking a toast with you, I naturally have no desire in drinking a forfeit either!" Yu Xiaocao crossed her arms around her chest and stubbornly stood her ground. This demeanor paired with the male clothing on her made her seem quite heroic, causing He Wanning's eyes to shine in admiration.

Lei Tengfeng sneered coldly, "Your Royal Highness, do you truly believe that you will be able to prevail against all of my brave soldiers with just those two puny guns on you?" After he spoke, he blew a loud whistle. Not far from where they were, a dozen horses appeared from a small glade of trees, galloping over at high speed. There was a strong warrior seated on each horse.

"Psh—" Yu Xiaocao's confident expression didn't change one iota as she chuckled icily. She asked casually, "Did you forget just whose domain you are standing on now?"

"Are you talking about the Tuha'erhanbu Tribe? They just finished quelling internal unrest, so how would they have the time to meddle in other matters? Let me advise you to stop trying to stall for time as it's all in vain. Obediently come with me to avoid suffering more in the future!" An evil expression surfaced on Lei Tengfeng's face.

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"Great Leader Xiao Rong, if you guys don't come out now, then the people who saved you will be taken away by some bad people. I don't think refusing to repay a boon is Great Leader Xiao Rong's personal style!" Yu Xiaocao raised her voice.

"Ha ha ha—" A bout of clear and resounding laughter could be heard. The expression on Lei Tengfeng's face immediately changed. He had never expected that the ancient saying, 'the mantis stalks the cicada, unaware of the oriole behind', would actually apply to him today!

Suddenly, a group of several hundred warriors seemed to appear from out of nowhere. In the blink of an eye, this group had easily surrounded Lei Tengfeng's group of men and Xiaocao's group. After looking more closely, one would discover that these men had all been disguised with mats woven from fresh grass. When a person laid down on the ground with the mat on top, they blended seamlessly into the grass prairie. It was truly a good disguise.

"Miss Yu, how did you know that my men and I were in the vicinity?" A fine looking steed trotted forward from the dust, stopping not far from her. The person sitting on top of that horse was the current leader of the Tuha'erhanbu tribe, Xiao Rong.

"Chief Xiao, I trust you have been well since we last met?" Yu Xiaocao had a bit of admiration in her heart for Xiao Rong. He was decisive and confident in his actions while being brave and intelligent. In the period of short months, he had managed to not only quell his tribe's inner turmoil but also swallow up a few small tribes in their vicinity. If he had been born in the Great Ming Empire, he would absolutely become a wise and great general there. Having such a man as an enemy would not be an easy thing to deal with!

Lei Tengfeng interrupted the greetings between the two people as he coldly huffed, "Chief Xiao, I, Lei Tengfeng, have long admired you for being a true man. Who would have thought that a mighty chief would become the mere dog of the Great Ming Empire! Such an utter waste of your talents ah!"

"Esteemed Heavenly Teacher, Xiao Rong has also heard that you are a person of the Central Plains. A citizen of the Great Ming Empire is asking for my help because of a grievance between you two. Esteemed Heavenly Teacher, are you in any position to criticize me at this point?" Xiao Rong easily dismissed the other man's attempts at sowing dissension between them.

"Absolutely true! Does someone who has betrayed their own country have any qualifications to criticize other people? That being said, the Great Ming Empire and the Tuha'erhanbu tribe are in a mutually beneficial diplomatic relationship with each other. How is this one country commanding another then?" When Yu Xiaocao learned that Lei Tengfeng was a traitor from the Medicine King Valley Sect, she felt even more disdain towards the other man.

"Since the Tuha'erhanbu tribe is not being commanded by the Great Ming Empire, then it's best, Xiao Rong, if you don't butt into today's matters. That way you can avoid rousing the ire of all of the other outer tribes!" Lei Tengfeng noticed that the other man had almost the same number of men as he did. When added onto the bodyguards that Yu Xiaocao brought along, that would make victory uncertain for him if Xiao Rong decided to interfere.

Xiao Rong smiled slightly and leisurely replied, "At that time, when I was at my lowest and severely injured, Miss Yu had helped me out. If it weren't for her help, then this world would no longer have me anymore. The warriors from the Tuha'erhanbu Tribe always return a boon for a boon and an eye for an eye. We are honorable warriors. Today, I will consider this as returning the favor that Miss Yu had shown when she had nursed me back to health!"

Yu Xiaocao slightly bowed towards him and said, "Chief Xiao is too kind. As a student of the medicinal arts, I'm not like some practitioners who only know how to rely on my skills to harm others. I was only doing my duty when I had helped you out!"

A particular practitioner's expression changed before he managed to wrest his face back under control. Lei Tengfeng spoke to Xiao Rong, "If Chief Xiao doesn't interfere today, then I, surnamed Lei, will be willing to supply a year's worth of medicines to the Tuha'erhanbu Tribe for free!"

Yu Xiaocao sneered and said, "Do you think you're the only one who knows how to make medicine? As a medicinal practitioner, for your own benefit, you even dared to set poison down at the stud farm. Who would dare to use medicine made by such an immoral person? What if you decided to add something a little extra to your pills..."

Lei Tengfeng had seen that his words had somewhat tempted Xiao Rong. Thus, when he heard Yu Xiaocao's rebuttal, his face immediately darkened and he raged furiously, "Shut up! I, surnamed Lei, am willing to use my reputation as a guarantee..."

"Psh! Does someone who has betrayed his own masters, who have taught him everything, have a reputation left?" Yu Xiaocao pressed on her advantage and wasn't giving the other person an opportunity to maneuver! He Wanning would have never expected that Younger Sister Xiaocao, who had been born in a peasant farmer's family, could have such an imposing manner and not back off when against a formidable enemy. The admiration and worship in her heart towards the other girl increased until it almost overflowed. She regarded the younger girl with stars in her eyes.

"Chief Xiao," Yu Xiaocao wasn't going to give Lei Tengfeng a chance to speak. She looked at Xiao Rong head on and addressed him solemnly, "Once the problem at the stud farm has been resolved, this princess will immediately send a request up to the emperor once I get back to capital to ask him to allow the addition of the Yu's Medicine Stall to the mutual marketplace between our two countries. This stall will sell some commonly used medications and will sell to the Tuha'erhanbu Tribe alone. However, it will only contain the common types of medications. That's the most I can guarantee at this point!"

Xiao Rong was immensely delighted by her promise and nodded his head repeatedly, "Many thanks, Miss Yu! I am extremely grateful for this!" One had to realize that the weather in the lands north of the border was cruel and bitter. It wasn't an easy land to live in. Every year, many of the tribe's old and weak would end up perishing from some common illnesses as they weren't able to get enough medications for treatment. Xiao Rong had long known of the efficacy and might of the Yu's Pharmaceuticals.

Unfortunately, there wasn't a branch of 'Tongren Medicine Hall' outside of the borders. Thus, one could only buy the Yu's Pharmaceutical's products within the border. Furthermore, these products were extremely popular and as soon as they were restocked on the shelves they were sold out. Xiao Rong had sent a few of his subordinates to the nearby Zhou Prefecture. They had waited for over half a month before they were finally lucky enough to buy two bottles of the Yu's cough and cold medicines. These medicines were now regarded by the tribe as heavenly cures.

Last winter, these medications were a saving grace for Xiao Rong. His stupid younger brother's die-hard supporter, one of the highest ranking generals of the tribe, only had one son. That son had gotten heavily ill from the cold and was at death's door. It was only after taking some of the Yu's medications that he survived. Because of that, that general had switched allegiances to Xiao Rong out of immense gratitude, making his victory over the internal turmoil of the tribe that much easier!

If they could truly open a medicine stall at the mutual marketplace, a stall that actually sold medicines from the Yu Family, then the commoners of the tribe would regard him even more highly. Thus, his position within the tribe would become even more stable and assured! Furthermore, he had already been planning on returning the favor to her, so even without this benefit he wouldn't just stand aside and watch her land into hot water. Xiao Rong immediately ignored the words Heavenly Teacher Lei had said and didn't fall into temptation.

"Warriors, for the sake of the miracle medicines, for the sake of preventing sickness from taking our wives and children away from us, protect the royal princess!" Xiao Rong forcefully waved his arm as he trumpeted loudly. All of the men beneath him enthusiastically shouted, "Yes!"

The hundred of valiant warriors from the Tuha'erhanbu gathered around Yu Xiaocao's group, protecting them tightly within the middle. They brandished their weapons towards the troops from the foreign tribes that were under Heavenly Teacher Lei. An immense battle was about to begin!



Lei Tengfeng was so angry that he almost broke a tooth from clenching his jaw so hard. He silently cursed the eighteen generations of Chief Xiao Rong's family. If that man hadn't suddenly appeared, Royal Princess Jinan would already be safely ensconced away in his hands.

With her on hand, then the secret behind the special horse fodder at the stud farm would be easily found out. Once he investigated the secret within the fodder, then extracted what he needed to make sure that it wouldn't harm humans, he was absolutely certain he'd find an ingredient to prolonging life. Perhaps, once he understood this ingredient's properties, he would truly be able to make the legendary immortality elixir!

After making secret investigations, he was certain that this special fodder was closely linked to the young maiden who was by that cold royal prince's side. As expected, as soon as he set a devious poison at the stud farm, the imperial court immediately sent Royal Princess Jinan out to fix it.

However, he had miscalculated. The current emperor of the Great Ming Dynasty was a shrewd and clever one. He had sent out a fake royal princess out to draw away the vast majority of men under his command. Furthermore, the real princess had been disguised and had almost arrived at the stud farm. If it weren't for the fact he had treated that bearded idiot's gunshot wounds, he would have never realized the switcheroo.

However, from the way things looked now, if they decided to battle them head on, it was unlikely that he'd have an easy victory. Even if he managed to kidnap Royal Princess Jinan, he would have to pay a high price to do so. On the other hand, he really didn't want to let this opportunity slip away! It was time to fight!

With one word from Lei Tengfeng, the battle began! Chunhua, Qiushi and the other four hidden guards had surrounded Xiaocao and her two good friends, keeping them safe within a tight circle. Xiao Rong also went into a protective stance by her side. Thus, the fighting spread like a wildfire while Xiaocao was in the safest area.

"Oh no! This sneaky fellow is actually using poison now!" Ning Donghuan had been ordered by his second older brother to not enter the battlefield but he was quite antsy at this moment. However, as soon as he saw the people on their side inexplicably fall over one by another, he remembered that Xiaocao had once mentioned that this despicable fellow knew how to make poison. He immediately became incensed and exclaimed his findings.

Xiao Rong watched as his men and horses slowly fell down to the ground. The stronger ones didn't end up on the ground but they were still barely holding on. A shiver went through his body and he involuntarily clenched harder to the horse whip in his hands.

“Using poison? Who hasn't used that before? Little Glutinous Dumpling, it's up to you now! Let them experience what it means to 'use one's weapons against them!'” Yu Xiaocao obviously didn't have any poison on hand. However, she had the little divine stone use its own spiritual power to cause a similar effect. The little divine stone's cultivation level had improved again, so doing something like this was only a small appetizer for it.

Before Xiao Rong could figure out what this 'Little Glutinous Dumpling' was, a flash of golden light vaulted off his shoulder and went straight into the battlefield. As the tiny golden figure passed the enemy troops, it left them staggering and falling down to the ground.

When Yu Xiaocao found out that her opponent was highly skilled at making poisons, she had prepared special detoxifying pills to bring along. She nodded her head towards Chunhua and the maid took out a few bottles of pills. She hurriedly disseminated them to He Wanning's bodyguards as well as the other men fighting in the field. In an instant, she had become a 'white clothed angel'.

After taking a single detoxifying pill, the warriors from the Tuha'erhanbu Tribe, who had previously been rolling on the ground in pain, immediately calmed down. A breath later and these previously poisoned men were able to stand up again. Within a quarter of an hour, it was as if they had never been poisoned. They picked up their weapons again and began fiercely fighting against their foes.

Lei Tengfeng watched this all with jealous eyes. He was very well aware of the effects of the poison he had made. Those who were unfortunate enough to encounter the poisonous gas would start rotting from within. Even his own antidote wasn't as effective as the detoxifying pill that the other person had. What did this mean? This meant that Royal Princess Jinan absolutely had a special recipe on her and it might even be a legendary method from the ancient times to concoct medicine! His desire to capture her and steal this method away had risen by another hundredfold.

“Heavenly Teacher! It is not safe here, so this subordinate will escort you to retreat now!” One of the brave warriors watched as the soldiers from his side fall over one by one from an unexplainable method. Slowly, the tide turned against them. If this continued, then it was likely it would end in their total defeat. The most important thing now was to escort the Heavenly Teacher away safely!

"No! No!! That stinky brat absolutely has a heavenly concocting method on her hands. If I'm able to capture her, then I'll become an immortal and the world will become mine!!" Lei Tengfeng had fallen into a frenzy as he was obsessed with obtaining this method. He howled like a madman.

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"You're crazy! I think you're probably possessed by evil spirits and had a cultivation deviation! How could there be a way to refine an immortality elixir in this world? Even if there was, do you think the common herbs of the mortal realm could be used to refine an elixir of immortality? Anyone with a brain wouldn't sacrifice the lives of their subordinates to pursue such an illusionary goal!" Yu Xiaocao sneered and raised her voice.

In actuality, when she said these words, she felt a little guilty because she had a refining method the little divine stone had given her. However, refining an elixir of immortality was absolutely impossible, but it was possible to prolong life, strengthen the body, or increase the ability of something!

Lei Tengfeng's two subordinates looked at each other, quickly brought the Great Heavenly Teacher onto a horse, and raced towards the horizon. Yu Xiaocao thought that this guy was a numbskull. For the sake of the so-called immortality elixir, he ignored the lives of others and created so much trouble. If she didn't teach him a lesson, the resentment in her heart wouldn't disappear.

She took out a gun and fired a shot at the butt of the horse that was under Lei Tengfeng. Originally she wanted to hit Lei Tengfeng, but he was protected by his subordinates, so she could only fire at the poor horse.

The horse stumbled and fell to the ground after its hind leg was injured. Due to gravity, Lei Tengfeng and his subordinate, who were on the horse's back flew off over the horse's head and fell on the ground. They rolled several times before stopping. The other two men were busy dismounting and helping the two people onto their horses before riding away. They were afraid that the Great Ming Empire's gun would fire again!

"Hahaha! How funny! Little Sister Xiaocao, you're so strong! Anyone could tell that guy was a flop just at a glance. Unfortunately, he escaped this time. Who knows what kind of lousy idea he'll come up with next!" He Wanning laughed and clapped.

"Miss Yu, you are not being a good friend! Hiding the truth the whole way here! However, your disguise technique is very successful. I really thought you were Royal Prince Guo; it looks so real!" Ning Donghuan crowded over and grumbled.

However, he was soon attracted by the art of disguise and pestered Xiaocao to learn it. Xiaocao couldn't beat him at stubbornness, and threw him to the imperial hidden guard, who was proficient in the art of disguise to let him mess around however he liked!

He Wanning, on the other hand, didn't miss the opportunity to embarrass him, "Only you, the one without a brain, wouldn't know Xiaocao's identity. If you don't believe me, ask your second brother!"

Ning Donghuan turned his sights to his second brother. Seeing him nod slightly, he wailed and said, "It's ok if others don't tell me. Yet even you...you are my brother!! Second Brother, when did you find out about Miss Yu's identity? "

"I knew from the very beginning. The emperor was worried about the three young maidens. He secretly summoned me to the palace and gave me the order to protect them." Otherwise, how could Ning Donglan know when Xiaocao would be leaving the capital?

"Ah? It turns out that you taking me hunting outside the pass was just to cover up your own business! To think I was moved for such a long time!" Ning Donghuan mumbled and felt uncomfortable because he was the only one in the dark.

By this time, the battlefield was almost cleaned up. Heavenly Teacher Lei brought more than five hundred people here. When he left, a lot of them were knocked down by the little divine stone, and only about a hundred people escaped with him. Lei Tengfeng, this time, could be said to have stolen the chicken but lost the rice and suffered a big loss.

On Xiao Rong's side, except for those who were killed by the enemy at the beginning by poison, the other men who had been poisoned were now completely cured and they were tying up the fallen opponents one by one. They had discovered that these enemy soldiers, who had fallen to the ground, were unconscious for some reason. They even stabbed them twice, but no one woke up.

The warriors of the Tuha'erhanbu Tribe thought that Yu Xiaocao's medicine was responsible for their unconscious state. Also, her antidote pill could easily detoxify the other party's poison, which showed that her pharmaceutical skills are much higher than that of the so-called Heavenly Teacher. As a result, they looked forward to the opening of a medicinal stall at the mutual market.

"Chief, a large group of people are coming!" Dela Citeng, who was leading his men to clean up the battlefield, inadvertently looked up and saw a group of men on horses racing towards them in the distance. He didn't know whether they were friend or foe and immediately went to Xiao Rong's side, on guard.

Yu Xiaocao stood on her tiptoe and looked at the gap between Xiao Rong and Dela Citeng. Her eyesight was good and she immediately recognized the equipment of the firearms camp and said to He Wanning in a relaxed way, "Don't worry, it's our reinforcements."

He Wanning breathed a sigh of relief. This trip was quite frightening. If she were to do it again, she didn't know whether or not she would collapse. She rolled eyes and said, "Coming now, what use is there? If it was not for the Tuha'erhanbu Tribe, we wouldn't even know how the situation would've been at this time. "

Yuan Xueyan patted her and gently said, "Don't be angry! The people at the horse farm didn't know we were in danger!"

"Your Royal Highness, please punish me for being late!" The firearm camp was taught by Royal Prince Yang and they always respected his wants and orders. The news of Royal Prince Yang and Royal Princess Jinan's engagement had been spread outside the pass. Therefore, the commander of the firearm battalion, who had come to rescue them, respected Xiaocao as much as he did Royal Prince Yang.

"Commander Li's words are too serious. After all, it was thanks to Chief Xiao's help this time. If Chief Xiao isn't against it, I'll prepare water and wine in the side courtyard to thank you all! " Yu Xiaocao looked at Xiao Rong and smiled calmly.

Xiao Rong looked highly upon this teenage girl in front of him. He had been to the Central Plains before and those Han women, especially those who grew up in noble and wealthy families, were all delicate, like weak and useless flowers. When they encountered difficult situations, they could only cry and sob.

However, the young lady in front of him gave him a new understanding of Han females. Facing more opponents that had ten times the amount of people, she was fearless in the face of danger, retorting arrogantly, and dealt with her opponent. The bloodshed on the battlefield didn't even make her blink. The retreat of their side was also timed so they could turn the tides and hit the opponents by surprises, letting them turn defeat into victory. When he was saved in the past, he was also greeted with kindness and prestige, which made him think highly of her.

She was standing there upright, with her delicate waist, like a young bamboo in the spring, standing tall and straight even though it was weak. Her small figure appeared very conspicuous, making people unable to move their sights off of her. Were only such people qualified to stand beside a hero like Royal Prince Yang? Xiao Rong had an unknown feeling well up in his heart.

With a smile on his face, he saluted the respectable young lady and said, "We can skip going to the side courtyard! However, I heard that the Yu Family's liquor is very tasty! Unfortunately, I haven't been able to taste it. If Miss Yu is willing to part with it..."

"Chief Xiao is too polite. Compared to Chief Xiao's help today, what are a few jars of wine worth? Qiushi, take ten jars of 'Northern Spring Sword' from our luggage cart and give it to Chief Xiao!" Every time Yu Xiaocao came out, she was well prepared, especially regarding food and drinks. This time, she originally brought the liquor to reward the soldiers at the firearms camp stationed at the horse farm. Who would have thought that this liquor would end up benefiting the Tuha'erhanbu Tribe?

Yu Xiaocao wasn't a stingy person, giving out ten jars in one go, which made Dela Citeng, who was beside Xiao Rong, open his big mouth and smile like a blooming flower. He rubbed his big hands together and said with a smile, "Miss Yu really is friendly and honest. Elder Brother, can you spare one of these ten jars of wine?"

This Dela Citeng ordinarily had no other hobbies besides drinking a few drinks when he was free. Unfortunately, the quality of the wine outside the border was too poor. He heard that the liquor produced by the Yu's Family Business in the Central Plains was very strong. If it wasn't for the eventful autumn in the tribe, he would have sneaked into the Central Plains to taste how good the so-called liquor was that it was rumored to be supernatural.

"Everyone will have some! When we go back, we kill a few cattle and sheep and reward all the warriors today!!" Xiao Rong's ability to gain loyalty was really unique!

Dela Citeng felt a sharp pain in his heart when he heard this! After all, there were at least four or five hundred people present. There were only ten jars of alcohol and each person getting one bowl of wine each would be considered lucky; how could they even have a good time?

Hearing this, Xiaocao said, "All the warriors who worked and bled for me today! I'll take out ten more jars of liquor to reward you! Qiushi, bring out ten more jars of alcohol. The previous ten jars of liquor will be considered as gifts for Chief Xiao. You better keep them for yourself!"

As soon as the Xiaocao had finished speaking, a burst of cheers broke out among the warriors of the Tuha'erhanbu Tribe. The cheer floated far and wide with the wind on the grassland. Dela Citeng felt a lot more comfortable in his heart. His elder brother had ten jars of wine in his hands. No matter what, he should be able to get a jar, right?

The warriors of the Tuha'erhanbu Tribe were happy, but the soldiers of the firearm camp weren't happy. Twenty jars of fine liquor and they all disappeared like this! If it hadn't been for today's event, all these fine alcohol would have been theirs. Alas! They didn't know how many jars of alcohol the boss's future wife had brought, and whether or not she could give them some.

Xiao Rong returned with the warriors of the Tuha'erhanbu Tribe carrying the wine jars. He Wanning stared at Xiaocao worshipfully on the side and exclaimed, "Sister Xiaocao, after these past three days, I'm impressed! I did not expect you to face such a fierce battlefield and be so fearless and generous; you can face the leader of a tribe without being too humble or arrogant. You're really showing that women aren't inferior to men!"

Yu Xiaocao gave a bitter laugh and lifted her shaking hand to show her, "Who said I wasn't afraid? I was just pretending to be calm. I didn't want to let my timidity show in front of my opponent. Quick, catch me, my legs have gone weak!"

He Wanning and Yuan Xueyan looked at each other, rolled their eyes and each took an arm of Xiaocao, who they were just praising! However, faced with such cruel scenes, it was also a skill to pretend to be calm to the extent of what was false seemed to be real!

Xiaocao and the others arrived at the horse ranch under the protection of the firearms camp without any trouble. However, Lu Hao's team wasn't so lucky. On the way, their opponents used assassination, poison, and endless other methods to intercept them. If it wasn't for the antidotes given by Xiaocao, they were afraid that a large part of them would have died on the way.

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Fortunately, the team was full of excellent soldiers who had experienced many battles. Also, the imperial hidden guards with high martial arts skills, and even the skinny and small fake princess could equal up to five or six foreign warriors, which surprised the enemy to no end.

They arrived at the horse farm three days later and almost everyone was injured. Even if there was a special medicine on hand, they still lost thirty-four Jin Wu Guards. This made Xiaocao's heart feel like there was a heavy stone in there, making her breathless.

"No! I can't take this!" Yu Xiaocao stomped her feet angrily after solving the poison problem at the horse farm. She wouldn't let the one with the surname Lei have an easy time!

He Wanning helped her come up with bad ideas, "Yes! Yes! Our Royal Princess Jinan isn't someone who can easily be bullied. You have to give him some lessons! How about, you make some poison and let the brothers at the firearms camp sneak attack the enemy camp at night so they can poison all their men and horses!"

"No! The traitors of the Medicine King Valley should be dealt with by the Medicine King Valley! I think Xu Ziyi must be very grateful for the news I sent him! " Yu Xiaocao's skill of killing people with a borrowed knife was perfected.

When Xu Ziyi left back then, he left behind the method of sending messages to him. Yu Xiaocao let an imperial hidden guard under her go. Due to the potential threat of the lunatic Heavenly Teacher Lei, Xiaocao and her two good friends could only obediently stay on the horse farm.

Yuan Xueyan had a quiet temperament. No matter where she was, as long as she had a book in her hand, she could spend a whole day quietly. In the spring, the grasslands were as green as if they had been rendered with heavy colors. There were some wildflowers scattered on the green grass. Against the blue sky were white clouds and distant mountains. It was a rugged and bold landscape painting.

From time to time, Yuan Xueyan, with her two maids, would ride the horses on the horse farm, traveling along the grassland freely. When she saw a scenery that she liked, she would stop to quietly draw a picture of the spring scenery of the grassland. As long as they were on the horse farm, even if they didn't remember the way back, the horse would return to the stables in the evening.

Besides, the stud farm's firearm camp guards were well-known. No one dared to come to the horse farm to find trouble openly, even though it was a tough area. Thus Xiaocao didn't have to worry about her safety.



As for He Wanning, she was a horse lover. After arriving at the stud farm, this lady was like a fish in water, mixing with horses all day long. Especially the little Black Whirlwind, He Wanning almost raised the colt as her son.

Unfortunately, the Black Whirlwind was very proud. When faced with He Wanning, it always looked cold and indifferent. At the sight of the Xiaocao, it would change its face. It licked her face in front of He Wanning and asked for her to pet it. Compared to it when it was in front of He Wanning, it was a completely different horse.

He Wanning's eyes were green with envy and jealousy when she saw this cute and adorable side of Black Whirlwind. However, she knew that she couldn't be envious, because her little sister, Xiaocao, had an inborn affinity for animals. Otherwise, she wouldn't have been able to tame two wolves better than dogs.

When Snow Scar led the wild horses back to the horse farm to supplement their 'nutrients', He Wanning's attention turned to this white horse, as she was full of anger and resentment. However, Snow Scar only let the Xiaocao ride it, which made her suffer another blow. However, He Wanning didn't retreat but started being stubborn with Snow Scar, vowing to tame the fine stallion.

Thus, this girl took her dry rations and bedding and went deep into the grassland to chase the wild horses. She often didn't return to the horse farm for ten days to half a month. The wild horse herd was getting familiar with her. However, Snow Scar was still on its guard.

If she changed her taming target, she might have succeeded in her carelessness. It was a pity that she chose the tough nut, Snow Scar...the winds on the grassland made her pale skin dull and rough, but He Wanning didn't care at all. In the end, however, she didn't fulfill her wish. Later on, she was caught by her fiancé and taken back on horseback.

As for Xiaocao, she focused on discussing with Veterinarian Wang the prescriptions for treating equine diseases. They worked together and made many targeted patent medicines. Xiaocao's factories must produce a fine product. The quality of these horse medicines were naturally superior, and their effects were also immediate.

In the days when Xiaocao stayed at the horse farm, the horses in the horse farm were well-conditioned. One by one, they became bigger and stronger, which was very pleasant. Newborn foals were also the biggest beneficiaries. Originally the very ordinary-looking foal, once raised by the grass, actually had the potential to become one of the finest horses.

Spring was the season for all things to multiply. The mares in the stud farm and the wild horses, one by one, became pregnant with young horses. According to Xiaocao's statistics, it was estimated that by the end of the year, more than six foals would be added to the horse farm. These were all the hopes of the horse farm!

The mares of the wild horse herd and their young foals all stayed in the horse farm as they enjoyed the special perks—drinking mystic stone water, having access to fresh horse feed, and being served by specialized personnel. After the winter's imperceptible influence, the wild horse herd had made the horse farm their second home.

The days passed by one by one. In the blink of an eye, Xiaocao and her group had been at the horse farm for more than a month. He Wanning was playing on the horse farm and wasn't in a hurry to go back. However, Lu Hao was in a hurry! He had planned after this assignment to ask the emperor to take a vacation and marry his little wife. But now? He would like to go back, but the reality couldn't tolerate his wish!

After all, the demon-like Heavenly Teacher Lei had suffered such a big fall in Xiaocao's hands, and he would never give up with his fanatic personality. It was only the firearms camp by the horse farm that frightened the enemy so they did not dare to invade them. If at this time, no matter who left the horse farm, they would surely suffer his crazy revenge. Lu Hao only had around four to five hundred men with him. Compared with the forces of several tribal alliances, they were not enough! Although he was anxious to get married, he had to face up to reality and not take risks.

Fortunately, before long, Xiaocao received the news from Medicine King Valley. Young Valley Master Xu, who was leading the experts in the valley, had already set out for the border. The matters of the Jianghu belonged to the Jianghu. As long as Xiaocao achieved her goals, it didn't matter if she did it herself.

Another half a month passed, and just when Snow Scar had 'condescended' to let He Wanning help it take a bath, Xu Ziyi came to the horse farm and brought the good news that he had captured the traitors.

"Young Valley Master Xu, the traitor of your Medicine King Valley, has inflicted physical and mental damage on me and brought irreversible losses to our side. How are you planning on compensating us? " Yu Xiaocao knew that she was venting her temper on the other party.

However, Lei Tengfeng had caused so many troubles to the horse farm for the sake of nothing, causing her to come to the border in person, which delayed her many businesses and caused indelible trauma to her little mind. Also, Lu Hao's subordinates who had died in the battle would never return. Their parents, siblings, wives, and children would be so sad...

"Well...when the holy elixir for internal injury is developed, how about I share it with Miss Yu?" Xu Ziyi had figured out the little girl's personality. He knew that he couldn't tweak her whiskers at this time and had to be careful.

Yu Xiaocao snorted coldly and said, "This holy medicine for treating internal injuries was originally left by our ancestors. Isn't it right to give us a copy of the prescription when it comes out when we gave you the formula to research? "

"Then... how does Miss Yu want to be compensated?" Xu Ziyi looked like he was amenable to discussion

After thinking for a while, Yu Xiaocao said, "How about this? It's said that the 'Nine Paths to Recovery Pill' in Medicine King Valley is the elixir dreamt of by martial arts practitioners. How about...thirty to fifty? And the pill I provided. After it is successfully developed, the valley should provide me at least twenty pills a year...What's more, your Medicine King Valley owes me a favor. When I need your help in the future, you can't shirk it! "

Hearing this, Xu Ziyi felt pain in his heart and said, "The 'Nine Paths to Recovery Pill' that you mentioned, due to the rare medicinal materials, Medicine King Valley can only refine two bottles of about a hundred pills every year. You're asking for one-third to even half of it. Isn't this making things difficult? What's more, there is one substance in the holy medicine handed down by your ancestors which can't be replaced. Thinking of it, even if it can be replaced, the medicinal materials are very precious. Twenty a year... Aren't you opening your mouth too wide?"

"Well...how much does Young Valley Master Xu think is appropriate? " Yu Xiaocao had already left room for the other party to bargain and asked unpleasantly.

"Miss Yu, look... the 'Nine Paths to Recovery Pill' I have only ten with me, I'll give all of them to you! And the healing holy medicine, we provide you with two pills a year. How about it?" With a smile, Xu Ziyi stretched out two fingers.

Yu Xiaocao frowned and replied in a very dissatisfied manner, "I want twenty pills. You, on the other hand, directly used two of them to try and fool me. Are you trying to send beggars away? Forget it, give me back my medicine, I'll work out the prescription myself! Although I'm not good at refining medicine, I'm talented! Maybe in thirty or fifty years, I'll make it! "

"Miss Yu, Miss Yu! Don't be impatient! Let's talk about it!" When Xu Ziyi went back to the Medicine King's Valley, the holy medicine was taken away as a treasure by his drug crazy father. Even his grandfather, the old Valley Master of the Medicine King Valley, had shut himself in and became fascinated with his father's research on the holy medicine.

Right now, all the affairs of Medicine King Valley were in his hands, but he was too busy! If he went back and said that the owner of the medicine was going to take back the holy medicine. His grandfather and father would eat him!

Xu Ziyi clenched his teeth and made a decision, "How about this? If the elixir really is made, I will give you five pills a year! For 20 years, how about it?" His father said that to replace medicinal materials, the materials had to be about five hundred or even more than a thousand years old, and all of them were extremely rare. Five a year to the Yu Family was his biggest concession!