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In actuality, Xiaocao wasn't interested in the so-called 'Healing Panacea' that she could easily make. She just wanted to find a justifiable reason to get the elixir into her hands. From Xu Ziyi's micro expression, she could see that five pills was his limit, so she stopped forcing him.

She revealed a sly smile and said, "Alright! For the matter of the Healing Panacea, we will do as you say. But——"

"But what?" Seeing the smile on the young maiden's face, Xu Ziyi helplessly begged for mercy, "My little ancestor, what else do you want? Can you not act so crafty?"

"Actually, this request is a piece of cake for your Medicine King Valley! That is——if the descendants of our Yu Family need medical treatment from Medicine King Valley, may I ask Young Master Xu to please help out!" Yu Xiaocao didn't continue to make things difficult for him and came straight to the point.

"No problem, no problem! With our relationship, this is something that goes without saying ah!" Xu Ziyi thought that it would be a tricky request. Medicine King Valley had always provided medical services to outsiders, so it naturally wasn't a problem to provide free medical treatment and so on.

Of course, Yu Xiaocao's request wouldn't be that simple. When she was around, she naturally wouldn't let the members of the Yu Family have any major illnesses or injuries. After all, she had a cheat——the little divine stone. She was doing this for the benefit of her descendants ah!

"Does your Medicine King Valley have some sort of token that, when presented, will ensure that you guys will go all-out to save the patient?" Yu Xiaocao thought about it and said, "Don't misunderstand, it's not that I don't trust you. But, decades later, our generation would be aged. So we need a token that the younger generations of Medicine King Valley will acknowledge!"

Xu Ziyi smiled bitterly and pondered for a moment before saying, "Originally, there was no such thing! However, since you mentioned it, we must have one now! When I get back, I'll have someone carve a few 'Rescue Tokens' with ten-thousand-year-old ebony wood. Those who possess this token are benefactors of Medicine King Valley. With the 'Rescue Token', one can request Medicine King Valley to save a life with all their might once. Is it alright like this?"

“Mhm! Can you give me three of these tokens?” Yu Xiaocao made an exorbitant request.

“Miss Yu, aren't you just making things difficult for me? Only those who Medicine King Valley are indebted to can get a token...” Xu Ziyi felt as if his face was about to turn into a bitter gourd. This Miss Yu was too hard to deal with. He felt so helpless ah!

Yu Xiaocao counted her fingers and said, “Look, Royal Prince Yang and I saved your life in the deep mountains. As the successor of Medicine King Valley, you're carrying the hope of the rise and fall of Medicine King Valley. Isn't saving you a great favor to the entire Medicine King Valley?”

Xu Ziyi had to agree with this. As the heir of Medicine King Valley, the clan devoted themselves to train him to be a qualified successor of the valley. If he died while collecting medicinal herbs, it would certainly be a great loss to Medicine King Valley.

Seeing him nod, Xiaocao continued, “Secondly, not only did I let you eat one of the Healing Panacea that my family treasured for decades, but I also provided a pill for Medicine King Valley to do research on. With Medicine King Valley's attainment in medicine production, it would only be a matter of time before you analyze the formula and produce the holy medicine of life and death! Since I provided such an important formula to you guys, isn't it considered a favor to Medicine King Valley?”

Alright! Although she didn't provide the formula, the Healing Panacea used for research was indeed given by Miss Yu. Xu Ziyi must acknowledge this favor!

“There's more! It was thanks to the clue I provided that your Medicine King Valley was able to successfully capture the traitor. Isn't this considered a favor?” Yu Xiaocao had a matter-of-fact expression on her face. Her meaning was very clear—it wasn't an exorbitant demand to request three tokens because she deserved them!

Xu Ziyi couldn't win against her, so he could only suffer silently and agree to give her three tokens. In any case, if he could successfully produce the Healing Panacea, it would be worth it no matter how many tokens he had to give her.

After sending away Xu Ziyi, Yu Xiaocao was so happy that she was about to fly. First of all, Xu Ziyi resolved the biggest concern in her heart. Without Heavenly Teacher Lei misleading the public with rumors, she could go about freely in the northeast with her hidden guards! Furthermore, she had gained

three chances to save the lives of her descendants, which was also an unexpected surprise! Ah, if she knew that Young Master Xu was so easy to persuade, she would have asked for a few more tokens.

While taking the traitor back to the valley, Xu Ziyi sneezed and had an ominous premonition in his heart. He should hurry back to the valley because it was too dangerous outside. Who would have thought that a young maiden, who appeared like a little white rabbit, would be a sly fox?

It was now already late spring to early summer. With suitable temperature and pleasant climate, the grassland in the north was a good place for summer vacation. Unfortunately, someone had been anxious for a long time, waiting to go back to marry his wife. For fear of missing the auspicious date, he urged the group to return to the capital as soon as they settled the foreign invasion.

On the way back, Xiaocao rode in her royal princess carriage. One could lie down or sit in the spacious and comfortable carriage, and it could accommodate seven to eight people. He Wanning and Yuan Xueyan had also benefited from this and sat comfortably in the carriage. Compared with their trip to come here, they were so happy now.

When they travelled to the borders, they had to rush over on horseback because a certain little grass had a task on hand. When they settled down each day, their waist and back would ache. They didn't even want to get up in the morning. They had also encountered many setbacks on the way, which let the two pampered noble maidens from the capital experience the feeling of thrill.

The return trip went smoothly. The firearms camp sent a dozen men to escort their caravan out of the borders so that foreign tribes eager to cause trouble would give up on the idea and powerlessly watch as their targets passed the borders.

It was already midsummer when the group arrived in the capital. Yu Xiaocao, Lu Hao, and Ning Donglan entered the palace to report to the emperor. Due to the dangers of this job, Xiaocao was rewarded with a lot of goods to comfort her startled heart. She was also granted a half-month vacation so that she could have a good rest.

When Princess Consort Jing heard about the danger on the road, she called Xiaocao to the prince's estate and held her hands as she carefully examined her from head to toe. After she confirmed that Xiaocao was not hurt, she pulled her into her embrace and said with lingering fear, "How could they assign such a dangerous task to a girl? It's perfectly possible to make the antidote in the capital, and then have someone deliver it to the borders! You must be scared, right? Tomorrow, I'll take you to Chong'an Temple and ask the abbot to calm your uneasy and startled heart!"

Allegedly, the Chongan Temple's soul calming mantra was very effective in soothing one's mind and soul. For children who had suffered a fright, many would invite the abbot to chant the soul calming mantra to dispel the fright in the child's heart. Yu Xiaocao really wanted to say that she wasn't a child, and she didn't suffer a fright. However, she couldn't refuse the good intentions of her future mother-in-law and could only go along with her. She would just take it as easing Princess Consort Jing's heart!

The war in the northwest borders was in full swing. They had Royal Prince Yang, who was the invincible 'God of War, so they had never lost any of the battles. With the protection of all the different kinds of medicinal pills he carried, the enemy had no chance to plot against him. In terms of martial arts skills, there was no one in the entire northwest who was on par with him. He could even fight to a draw with Su Ran, the army supervisor.

Normally, in between battles, Zhu Junyang often asked the army supervisor for advice. Royal Prince Yang and Xiaocao were already engaged and confirmed their relationship. With the mentality of 'love the house and its crow', Su Ran gave him advice unreservedly, which greatly improved Zhu Junyang's martial arts skills.

Repeated reports of good news helped relieve Xiaocao's anxious heart. Next, she had to put all her attention on the Medicinal Cuisine House. During the period when she went to the borders, the Medicinal Cuisine House had been fixed up in accordance to the blueprint that she had left behind. The training of the medicinal chefs was also in full swing.

The division of labor in the back kitchen was very clear. Each medicinal chef was only responsible for one medicinal meal, and they each had their personal kitchen. Thus, each medicinal chef was only trained in one method of cooking medicinal cuisine. The less than half a year of intensive training made them very familiar with the cooking technique, heat control, and so on. The medicinal meals not only required color, fragrance, and taste, but it was also important to achieve the curative effect of the medicinal meals.

This would test the ability of the medicinal chef. Fortunately, Yangliu had high talent in cooking and was strict towards others. Some of the medicinal chefs had worked under her since she was managing the braised food shops. To be able to work for her for so many years, they definitely had some merits.

Allegedly, when they were at the pastry shops, these people could only work as assistants. But 'a real piece of gold would shine sooner or later'. Hence, when the master announced that she wanted to

establish the most popular medicinal cuisine restaurant in the capital, these girls, who had followed Yangliu for many years, suddenly felt that there was a use for their abilities.

When they learned to cook the medicinal meals, they were particularly diligent and attentive. Moreover, they were all decently talented. All of them passed the medicinal chef examination with excellent performance and were honored with positions as medicinal chefs of 'The Yu's Medicinal Cuisine House'.

In addition to these four, the other medicinal chefs were recruited from outside. There were both men and women, and some of whom were cooks with good cooking skills. There were also housewives skilled in cooking who had come for the high wage offered by the medicinal cuisine restaurant. There were also people who were loyal fans of 'The Yu's'. These young maidens and youths had no doubts about the abilities of the founder of 'The Yu's', who was also the first female official of the Great Ming Dynasty, to prosper in all the business that she endeavors in. They strived to become a member of 'The Yu's' with their own efforts...

Before 'The Yu's Medicinal Cuisine House' had opened for business, the notice of recruiting medicinal chefs became a heated topic as soon as it was posted. The people signing up almost filled the room that served as a temporary recruitment agency. For the recruitment of twenty medicinal chefs, over a hundred people had signed up for training.

The training also abided by the principle of fairness and equity. The hundred or so people were divided into twenty groups, which consisted of five to six people in each group. Each team was trained on twenty different medicinal meals, respectively. After over four months of intensive training, Yu Xiaocao, the owner of the 'Medicinal Cuisine House' who had just returned from the borders, personally tasted and selected the top two medicinal chefs of each course. The first place in each group was the main chef, and the second place was responsible for assisting. If there was booming sales and exceeding demands for the medicinal meal, the two medicinal chefs would have to work on the cooking...

Those who weren't selected could continue participating in the training with no fees until they received Xiaocao's approval. These people were all reserved talents of Medicinal Cuisine House, who could be used when the restaurant expanded or opened branches in the future.

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'Buddha Jumps Over the Wall' had been a well-known dish before Medicinal Cuisine House had opened. It had even attracted many influential officials to book in advance. Of course, this was thanks to the unsparing promotions from the emperor emeritus, Great Scholar Yuan, and more.

The medicinal chef in charge of cooking the 'Buddha Jumps Over the Wall' was Yangliu herself, as well as one of her trusted subordinate maidservants. Yangliu was highly talented in cooking. Not long after she learned the technique of cooking 'Buddha Jumps Over the Wall', she had received the approval of her master. Her trusted subordinate maidservant, Jinhuan, was slightly lacking in terms of heat control. However, after Medicinal Cuisine House opened, Jinhuan had progressed considerably and was soon able to work on her own!

'The Yu's Medicinal Cuisine House' opened for business on the sixth day of June. Although it was the height of the summer season, the hot weather didn't extinguish the nobles' anticipation of the opening of Medicine Cuisine House. What's more, all the tables for the first month of operation were long booked. Only ten servings of 'Buddha Jumps Over the Wall' were served each day, so the nobles were in a fierce competition for the sake of eating this dish!

On the first day of business, many high status 'bigwigs' in the capital had deigned to come to 'The Yu's Medicinal Cuisine House' for the plaque unveiling ceremony. Two full tables were occupied by the emperor emeritus, Imperial Prince Duan, Imperial Prince Jing, Imperial Prince Sa, as well as their princess consorts, heirs, and daughters-in-laws. It had almost turned into a gathering of the imperial family. There were also Duke Rongguo, Marquis Dingyuan, Prime Minister, Assistant Minister Yu, and Minister Li of the Ministry of Ceremonies... They had also brought their families over for the celebration.

There were some people who came that seldom had contact with Yu Xiaocao, and she didn't even recognize their faces. They were influential people who had come with presents to congratulate the opening of their restaurant, so she couldn't just drive them away. In addition, there were also guests who normally interacted with Xiaocao and the Fang Family. There were more than thirty private rooms upstairs, and the rooms barely accommodated all the guests. Xiaocao seriously suspected that some people had come today just to try out the medicinal meals.

Alright! She immediately went to the back kitchen in person to cheer on the medicinal chefs, "Today's guests are either rich or influential, and they are all potential customers of our Medicinal Cuisine House. Whether it can become an instant hit will depend on your performances! Don't spoil 'The Yu's' good reputation!"

Seeing that several of the introverted medicinal chefs looked slightly nervous, Xiaocao quickly pacified them, "Relax! No matter how powerful they are outside, they would only have one identity once they enter our restaurant—a customer! I have personally appraised each of your culinary skills, and many have already surpassed your teacher. As long as you continue to do things as normal, they will definitely be amazed!!"

Her words seemed to have successfully soothed the hearts of the medicinal chefs. Some of them were diehard fans of Yu Xiaocao, and they had become even more spirited. They were ready and eager to let their master see their skills and efforts. Their master had said that in the future, the medicinal cuisine restaurant would definitely open branch restaurants. Manager Yangliu had limited energy. The position of the branch manager was like a carrot hanging in front of a donkey. It stimulated the medicinal chefs with ambitious hearts to strive for the position.

Let's put aside the position of the branch manager to talk about the employee treatment at the medicinal cuisine restaurant! In addition to a good base pay, all medicinal chefs also received a commission for each dish. In other words, whoever got the most orders and sold the most dishes would get the higher salary. This was enough motivation for them to constantly improve the medicinal dish that they specialized in and strive to make every meal perfect.

The grand opening of 'The Yu's Medicinal Cuisine House' would be talked about enthusiastically for a long time. Not to mention the creative and novel performances at the opening ceremony, but just the important figures who came to celebrate the occasion had almost covered more than half of the imperial officials who were third-ranked and above.

Almost all the members of the imperial family had come. Even the emperor had personally written an inscription for Medicinal Cuisine House, which was hung in the main hall on the first floor. As soon as one entered the door, one would be able to see the emperor's calligraphy! The eldest imperial prince, who had been bestowed the title of crown prince, also visited the medicinal cuisine restaurant. He tasted the medicinal meals and gave a high evaluation.

As Xiaocao had said, the honored guests who had come today immediately became loyal fans of Medicinal Cuisine House after tasting the delicious, fragrant, and visually appealing medicinal meals. Based on their past experiences with the other businesses under 'The Yu's', these people decided to gain the advantage by striking first. Almost every household made reservations for medicinal meals.

After all, 'The Yu's Medicinal Cuisine House' had limited space and couldn't accommodate too many customers every day. In order to let more people taste the delicious and nourishing medicinal meals, the restaurant enabled takeaway service. If booked in advance, it could be picked up at the restaurant or delivered to one's door. Delivery fee must be added to the order!

Medicinal Cuisine House had adopted the tiered membership system. Diamond card members and gold card members could enjoy the service of imperial physicians' medical consultation and customized diet plans based on their pulse examination results. If there was no improvement in their health within one month, then a full refund would be given! As for the other members, they could also bring their pulse

examination results over and let Medicinal Cuisine House develop a nourishment plan. However, a fee would be charged!

In actuality, on the wall of the main hall on the first floor of Medicinal Cuisine House, there was an introduction of all the medicinal meals, as well as their effects. In addition, each private room had a menu, which introduced the medicinal dishes with pictures and texts. For this menu alone, Xiaocao had put in a lot of effort and invited an renown painter in the capital to help out.

Great Scholar Yuan was the one who introduced this leading figure of the painting world to Xiaocao. As soon as Xiaocao made the request, this famous painter immediately pulled a long face. Had he not considered his old friend's, Yuan Sinian, face, he would have driven her out a long time ago.

His paintings were hard to get even with money, yet she actually wanted him to draw menus. It was simply an insult to him! However, the reason this great master painter could become close friends with Yuan Sinian was that they shared a common hobby—eating delicious food!

In order to be able to paint good works, he had visited well-known mountains and rivers. He had also boasted about eating all the delicacies in the world. When he got together with Great Scholar Yuan, they often bragged about the delicacies that they had eaten, in an attempt to best the other party.

This great master painter seemed rather angry and resolute at the beginning, but Yuan Sinian had a calm smile on his face and only needed to say, "If you help with this request, you can eat 'Buddha Jumps Over the Wall' for free for one year!!"

The great master painter had heard of the dish 'Buddha Jumps Over the Wall' from his old friend many times. His old friend praised the dish to the skies, and the gluttonous bug inside him had long been hooked. On numerous occasions, he had regretted that he didn't have any relationship with the Yu Family. But he couldn't be thick-skinned like his old friend and bum meals off others. He had long been tempted by 'Buddha Jumps Over the Wall', yearning to try it.

He could finally taste 'Buddha Jumps Over the Wall, and it was for free for an entire year!! Upon hearing this, the great master painter had set aside all of his initial persistence as a cultured individual and reservation as an artist.

'The Yu's Medicinal Cuisine House' became a hot topic again, and this time it had nothing to do with the taste of the medicinal meals, the curative effects, and the services! It was because the thin menu in the private rooms of the restaurant were original works of Old Lin!! Many literati were extremely envious when they saw the menu. They seriously wanted to steal the menu and admire it on the walls of their studies every day...

The staff in charge of the private rooms of Medicinal Cuisine House had a heavy responsibility. In addition to serving the customers, they also had to prevent others from taking away their restaurant's menu, or secretly tearing a page out...

In conclusion, 'The Yu's Medicinal Cuisine House' was very popular in the capital! In the capital, anyone who didn't know about The Yu's Medicinal Cuisine House would be ridiculed as a country bumpkin!

The most common topic regarding Medicinal Cuisine House was the curative effects of the medicinal meals! Since they dared to promise a full refund if there were no effects within a month, they definitely had the confidence! For members with gold card membership and above, members who had bad health showed apparent improvement in their health after consuming Medicinal Cuisine House's medicinal meals on a daily basis.

The grand tutor's migraine, the insomnia of the matriarch of the Minister of Appointments' household, and the qi--blood deficiency of the wife of the assistant official of Crown Prince Affairs...had all cured miraculously without any medication! After a month, The Yu's arranged a consultation with an imperial physician. The proven facts became another advertisement for Medicinal Cuisine House.

The second topic was the taste of the medicinal meals. When most people heard 'medicinal meals', they would think about the smell of medicinal herbs. But that was wrong! If one didn't say that the dishes served at 'The Yu's Medicinal Cuisine House' were medicinal meals, one wouldn't be able to detect the taste of medicine. None of the medicinal meals were inferior to the delicacies of Zhenxiu Restaurant. How could it not be popular when it can be eaten and nourish one's health?

Of course, these medicinal meals weren't affordable for everyone! The third topic of Medicinal Cuisine House was the astonishing price of each dish!! Even a dish that seemed to have ordinary ingredients cost two hundred taels. But they claimed to have added precious medicinal herbs that were over a hundred years old, and thus it really wasn't that expensive! Without good medicinal herbs, how could the curative effects be so good?

'Buddha Jumps Over the Wall' was the signature dish of the restaurant. In addition to medicinal herbs, it also contained many precious food ingredients. All kinds of valuable ingredients were collected in one jar, so it was even more expensive. A jar of 'Buddha Jumps Over the Wall' cost five hundred taels, yet there were still people rushing to get it. Only ten servings were offered daily, and they had all been booked for the next three months. Poverty had limited one's imagination, so one could only sigh that there were too many people who didn't lack money in the capital!

If others found out that the so-called precious hundred-years-old medicinal herbs were just a drop of the little divine stone's bathing water, they would definitely scold Xiaocao for stealing money!

Every day, the medicinal chefs of Medicinal Cuisine House received a special ingredient—mystic-stone water. Xiaocao claimed that it was extracted from over a dozen precious medicinal herbs. One drop was added to ordinary medicinal dishes, while two drops were added for dishes like 'Buddha Jumps Over the Wall'. She also told the medicinal chefs about the principle of 'too much was as bad as too little' to prevent people from adding too much mystic-stone water. If the effects were too astonishing, it would be too eye-catching.

In fact, those people were right. This medicinal cuisine restaurant was just like picking up money off the ground for Xiaocao, and she was using a rake to get the money. According to an incomplete calculation, the daily turnover for 'The Yu's Medicinal Cuisine House' was equivalent to the monthly turnover for Zhenxiu Restaurant, which was also very popular.

Shortly after the medicinal cuisine restaurant opened, Third Young Master Zhou brought his wife—a fangirl of Yu Xiaocao—over for a visit. He deliberately complained to Xiaocao that she had robbed him of at least half of his business, and if this continued, Zhenxiu Restaurant would have to close down for good. Before he had finished speaking, Xiaocao tsked at his nonsense.

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“Yeah right! You really think I'm so easy to fool ah! There's no correlation between the customers who come to our Medicinal Cuisine House and your Zhenxiu Restaurant. Most of the people who come to Medicinal Cuisine House are focused on regulating their bodies. Who would be such a squanderer to frequently eat dishes that cost hundreds of taels for the sake of satisfying their appetite? Therefore, there are very few who come to Medicinal Cuisine House for the sole purpose of eating! There's no impact to the business of Zhenxiu Restaurant at all, okay?” Yu Xiaocao stated the facts and rejected Third Young Master Zhou's grievances.

Third Young Master Zhou had wanted to act pitiful and get some new recipes from Xiaocao, but his plan had been terminated by Xiaocao. With his relationship with Xiaocao, he didn't have to beat around the bush. He directly stated his intention, and Xiaocao also generously gave him some recipes. No matter

what, she was also considered a shareholder of Zhenxiu Restaurant. She invested with her recipes and received a rather impressive annual dividend!

The business of Medicinal Cuisine House was becoming increasingly prosperous, and there was exceeding demand for both in-store dining and takeout. Which one of those old generals and old ministers who had fought along the emperor emeritus didn't have old injuries? Not only were the medications prescribed by the doctors in the past were too bitter to swallow, but they also weren't very effective and couldn't cure the root of the problem.

Since the opening of The Yu's Medicinal Cuisine House, those filial sons and grandsons who had initially just wanted to let the elders in the family try out the medicinal meals noticed that the health of their grandfathers and fathers were becoming better day by day. Even their old injuries didn't act up before the winter. They felt happy and were also willing to help advertise the medicinal cuisine restaurant for free.

The good reviews were spread far and wide. This was a period when filial piety was very important. As long as their family conditions permitted it, they didn't mind spending a lot of money on ordering medicinal meals for the elders in the family to regulate their bodies. The women of this era would, more or less, suffer from some childbirth complications such as puerperal fever, blood deficiency, or menstruation problems. Therefore, there was excessive demand for Xiaocao's medicinal meals, which could regulate women's constitutions.

In response to the request made by the vast majority of the customers, the business of Medicinal Cuisine House expanded significantly after the New Year. The takeout service was separated, and the business was even better than the restaurant. The manpower that Xiaocao had initially reserved were now put to use, but they were still shorthanded. Thus, Yangliu began to train another group of medicinal chefs as stand-by.

The salary was related to the sales and quality of the medicinal meals, and Medicinal Cuisine House was blooming with business. Thus, although the medicinal chefs were tired, they beamed with smiles when they received their salaries. Some had even received up to nearly eight hundred taels in a month. One wouldn't be able to find another place that offered a higher wage in the capital. Allegedly, Head Chef Wang, who had devoted himself to Zhenxiu Restaurant for nearly ten years, only received a monthly salary of five hundred taels.

The medicinal chefs of Medicinal Cuisine House had worked for half a year at most, yet they were already receiving such good benefits. Their enthusiasm for work increased even more, and they tried

their best to show a good performance in front of Manager Yangliu, for fear that they would be replaced by the backup medicinal chefs if they didn't work hard enough.

There would naturally be a lot of people envious of such a blooming business, but they could only be envious and make some sour remarks in private. 'The Yu's' had a strong backing that others couldn't afford to easily offend. Disregarding the fact that the boss of 'The Yu's' was a royal princess personally conferred by the emperor, with her identity as the future wife of Royal Prince Yang, no one dared to offend her no matter how powerful and impudent they were in the capital. They were afraid that Royal Prince Yang would settle accounts with them when he returned!

Not to mention the backing of Royal Prince Yang, but from time to time, the emperor emeritus would visit Medicinal Cuisine House to eat 'Buddha Jumps Over the Wall'. Imperial Prince Duan even specially reserved a private room at Medicinal Cuisine House and regarded the restaurant as his own kitchen. The emperor and empress would also occasionally travel incognito to dine at Medicinal Cuisine House...

Yu Xiaocao had finally experienced the feeling of 'counting money until one's hands got cramps'. Xiaocao was truly a rich little lady in the capital. She didn't dare to call herself wealthy, but if there was a ranking for the richest people in the capital, she would definitely be in the top ten. Other tycoons had accumulated their wealth for generations, but she relied on her own efforts to create a legend in the capital's business industry. Yu Xiaocao's reputation had spread far and wide. From an old man in his eighties to a five-year-old child, there wasn't anyone who didn't know her name.

A year had unconsciously passed by in a hurry. The war in the northwest borders was also coming to an end. Royal Prince Yang had led the Great Ming Army to drive out the tribe in the western borders all the way to present-day Kazakhstan, and they no longer had the ability to confront the Great Ming Empire. There wouldn't be a major war in the northwest borders for at least thirty years.

Since the war was coming to an end, it wasn't too far from the date when Royal Prince Yang would return to the court. In the past year or so, the Yu Family had many happy events. First, the youngest son of the Yu Family placed first in the provincial exam. This youth, who was only fifteen years old, had become the first provincial official in Dongshan Village. This wasn't just a happy occasion for the Yu Family, but it was a major event for the entire village.

Next was the marriage of Xiaocao's eldest brother. In the spring of the year that Yu Hang turned nineteen, he married his long-time fiancée, Liu Huifang. The wedding ceremony was held at the Yu Family's ancestral home in Dongshan Village. This was the first wedding of the Yu Family's younger generation, so it was held in a grand manner. All of the officials, gentry, and merchants in the Tanggu

area, as well as customers who had business relations with the Yu Family, had come to congratulate the happy occasion.

The heir of Imperial Prince Jing had even personally come to Tanggu for the occasion, giving face to his future in-laws. There were also a lot of people who had a good relationship with Yu Xiaocao, who had sent people to deliver valuable gifts to congratulate the marriage of the future head of the Yu Family.

The wedding banquet was held at the Zhenxiu Restaurant in Tanggu Town. Zhenxiu Restaurant was now the most popular restaurant in Tanggu, and its scale had expanded significantly. Many guests had come to the celebration, and it was just able to accommodate all of them.

Yu Hang's wedding banquet had caused quite a stir in Tanggu. No one dared to look down on the Yu Family, who had come from a farmer's background. No matter if it was their connections, financial resources, or material resources, the Yu Family was very outstanding in Tanggu. Many old noble households, who originally looked down on the Yu Family and just viewed them as nouveau riche, gradually made friends with the Yu Family and regarded them as people worthy of being friends with.

The relatives of the Yu Family had also come to Dongshan Village early to help prepare the first wedding for the younger generation of the Yu Family. After consuming the nourishing medicinal meals that Xiaocao sent over, Xiaocao's maternal grandparents, who were almost seventy years old, had even healthier bodies than their fellow villagers, who were in their fifties. They didn't have any health problems and were able to directly travel from home to Dongshan Village without any need to rest.

The three brothers of the Liu Family traveled between the prefectural city and the neighboring counties to deliver goods to various fruit and vegetable shops. There were the early-maturing vegetables in early spring, melons in late spring and early summer, various fruits in the fall, and out-of-season fruits and vegetables in the winter... They rarely had free time throughout the year.

At the beginning, the oldest son of the Liu Family was responsible for transporting the goods, the second son, who took care of the farmlands at home, occasionally helped out, and the third son worked on port construction at the harbor. As the work got busier, Second Maternal Uncle realized that transporting goods made much more money than farming at home. After helping out a few times, he opened up a new route and also started doing this business with a few horse carriages.

Later, when the port construction was completed, Third Maternal Uncle could only take on some casual jobs and became the person who earned the least in the family. Hence, Eldest Maternal Uncle invited

him to help transport goods between the prefectural city and neighboring counties. In actuality, the business that they were doing was similar to the fruits and vegetable wholesale in later generations.

The Yu Family's out-of-season vegetables were of high quality and had excellent taste, so they were naturally very popular! It wasn't something that could be brought by just anyone! The three brothers of the Liu Family had the advantage of being able to obtain an unlimited supply of goods, so for the sake of convenience, the fruit and vegetable shops within the vicinity all got them to deliver the goods. Although it cost 20% more than getting the goods from the Yu Family directly, there were still some profits.

In order to attend her oldest nephew's wedding, Xiaocao's oldest paternal aunt handed the braised food shop and pickled vegetables shop to the steward working under her and arrived early in Dongshan Village to help out. Although the braised food shops still used the name 'The Yu's', it had long become the property of Xiaocao's oldest paternal aunt. The business of the braised food shop and pickled vegetables shop was so good that they opened several more branches in the prefectural city, and the business was thriving.

On the day of the wedding, an unexpected guest had appeared, which was Yu Hang's younger paternal uncle, Yu Bo. After moving to the prefectural city, Yu Bo had changed his impetuous temperament. He had studied hard for three years and finally passed the county-level examinations. Madam Zhang relied on selling the braised food that she got from The Yu's to support the whole family. They even had extra money to buy ten or so mu of farmland in the outskirts of the prefectural city, which they rented out to farmers who had no land.

Yu Bo clearly realized that with his skills, passing the county-level examinations was the most he could accomplish. He didn't even need to think about passing the provincial examination. Thus, he opened a small private school in the south side of the city to teach young children and earn a small income.

It had been a long time since Yu Bo and Madam Zhang had appeared in front of the Yu Family. At this time, he had come to Yu Hang's wedding with a gift. While it surprised the Yu Family, they also warmly welcomed him. Yu Bo was quite selfish in the past, but he had never done anything to harm Yu Hai's family. His biggest mistake was to have Madam Zhang as his mother.

Not long after Yu Hang's wedding, Zhuang Xiaomo prepared a grand gift and solemnly asked the Yu Family for Yu Xiaolian's hand in marriage. Yu Xiaolian and Zhuang Xiaomo's wedding was scheduled to be held in early winter. At this time, Zhuang Xiaomo no longer sold greenhouse fruits and vegetables. Instead, he had taken over the business of supplying seafood to the major restaurants in the capital.

At the beginning, it was because of the hot sale of 'The Yu's Medicinal Cuisine House's' signature dish, 'Buddha Jumps Over the Wall', which required a large supply of seafood. Since they had to find a supplier, they might as well hand it to Zhuang Xiaomo, who was the future son-in-law of the Yu Family.

Zhuang Xiaomo, who had been doing business in Tanggu for several years, knew quite a lot of people and had accumulated a decent amount of personal connections. In addition, when he used to gather seafood in the sea, he had made many friends in the seafood market and had many resources. Therefore, the seafood he purchased was the freshest and best quality in the market.

Third Young Master Zhou, who had inadvertently learned about this, also let him be in charge of supplying seafood to Zhenxiu Restaurant. Gradually, the reputation of Zhuang Xiaomo's seafood supplying business had spread out. Many restaurants in the capital contacted him and were willing to work with him. A year and a half later, Zhuang Xiaomo, who was in his early twenties, had become the biggest seafood supplier in the capital.

Fields of Gold Chapter 644

Due to his relationship with the Yu Family, no one in Tanggu and the capital dared to mess with him. His business operated smoothly, and with the ice making technique that the Yu Family had mastered, there was no need to worry about the freshness of the seafood. The famous restaurants in the capital had established a stable client-supplier relationship with him. In addition to fresh seafood, Zhuang Xiaomo had also opened a dry seafood store in the capital, and the business was very good.

After more than a year, Zhuang Xiaomo had made quite a lot of money. With the money he earned, he bought a small courtyard in the capital. After they got married in the future, if Xiaolian wanted to live in the capital, then they could live in the capital for a period of time. If she missed home, they could live in Tanggu for some time. Uncle Yu and Xiaolian didn't look down on him even when he had nothing. Over the years, Uncle Yu and Auntie Yu had treated him like their son and helped him a lot. Even this seafood business was arranged by Younger Sister Xiaocao. It could be said that the current Zhuang Xiaomo wouldn't exist without the Yu Family!

Zhuang Xiaomo remembered this gratitude deep in his heart. After they got married, he treated her twice as well, and they never got into conflicts. When they had disagreements, Zhuang Xiaomo always took Xiaolian's opinion as the most important. Even when he monopolized the marine goods industry in the capital and its surrounding area and became an influential magnate in the capital, he still treated her in the same way.

At that time, the two most envied girls in the capital were the Yu Sisters. One married a powerful prince who no one dared to offend, while the other wedded a famous and rich merchant. The two men were loyal to the Yu Sisters and spoiled them to the skies. Both emotionally and physically, they were able to stay devoted to one person for a lifetime. This should be recounted later...

The Yu Family celebrated many happy occasions, and their business of improved varieties was becoming more and more prosperous. The seeds of high-yield wheat had been popularized in the north and gradually expanded to the central regions. There were more and more seed merchants relying on the Yu Family's breeding farm. At the Yu Family's farm, no matter if it was seeds for corn, potato, or winter wheat, there was no need to worry about the sales because there was excessive demand for them.

During the summer and fall harvest seasons, seed merchants lined up overnight in front of the farm, for fear that they wouldn't be able to get the improved varieties. It should be noted that the people in the northern region only accepted the seeds from the Yu Family's farm and the Imperial Plantation.

As soon as the improved varieties were in stock, all of them would be sold out immediately. Even if the imperial court suppressed the price of the improved varieties, seed merchants still made a considerable profit. One must grasp the opportunity to make money in their hands. So what if it took some hard work?

The Yu Family's lives were becoming increasingly prosperous, and Xiaocao's business grew bigger and bigger. However, even the growing numbers on the account book couldn't suppress Xiaocao's longing for a certain person.

It had been nearly two years since Zhu Junyang left the capital with his troops. They maintained contact during this period of time, but he wasn't physically by her side after all. Since he appeared in Xiaocao's life, he had never been away for such a long time. She was used to his company, his care, and his doting love. No matter how busy Xiaocao was, she still couldn't ignore the empty feeling within her heart. It felt as if it could never be filled up, making her anxious.

In the past year or so, Xiaocao deliberately kept herself busy. She could have been a master who only ordered others to work at the Imperial Breeding Base, but from time to time, she would run over there to provide some suggestions. It caused the officials and stewards in charge of the breeding farm to think that their work ability had declined due to the overly comfortable work environment recently. In order to keep up with Miss Yu's pace, all of the officials and tenant farms of the breeding farm worked even harder and diligently. By the time of the fall harvest, the yield went up slightly, which was a pleasant surprise.

The annual output of the high-yield winter wheat increased each year, so with fertile soil and meticulous care, an output of six to seven hundred catties per mu definitely wouldn't be a problem. Compared to the previous two hundred catties per mu, the yield had increased two to three folds. The successful breeding of the high-yield winter wheat had benefited the people in the central regions and the northern regions. They were able to live in a time when they didn't have to worry about food and clothing.

As a result, the officials in the southern regions couldn't sit still anymore. They submitted a joint memorial to request the emperor send Official Yu to the south to investigate and help them improve the rice yield.

If Zhu Junyang was around, Xiaocao would have travelled to the south at public expense without any hesitation. If a certain person was free, he would accompany her on the trip and made proper arrangements for all the matters of the trip so that she didn't have to worry about anything. She only had to enjoy the trip and sightseeing.

But, since Zhu Junyang left, she hadn't been in the mood to attend the gatherings hosted by her good friends, let alone a long and arduous journey to the south. However, since the emperor had summoned her into the palace to discuss the matter of the high-yield rice, she couldn't disregard the face of the biggest boss.

As a result, she opened up around ten mu of experimental rice paddies near the water source in the breeding farm to grow rice. For the selection of the rice kernels, she deliberately asked the tenant farmers to pick kernels that were full and large one by one. They had to be careful and meticulous. When preparing the paddy, they made sure to use enough farmyard manure. After sowing, they specially added a layer of plastic film to help with incubation.

This layer of plastic film had high efficiency in preserving moisture, soil, and fertility. It could increase the temperature and accelerate the growth of the rice seedlings. Of course, when cultivating the rice seedlings, she definitely wouldn't forget to add diluted mystic-stone water to ensure that the seedlings were robust, resistant to diseases and pests, and high yielding.

As for the water in the paddy field, she also altered it a bit. Many officials of the imperial court were keeping a close eye on the experimental fields, and the emperor also attached great importance to this matter. However, Xiaocao knew that 'one must learn to walk before one could run'. Thus, when she used her cheat, she made sure to control how much was used.

Even so, the yield of rice in the experimental fields reached 500 catties per mu during the summer harvest this year. Even when the most fertile fields in the south were carefully managed by experienced farmers, the highest output would be 300 catties per mu. Generally speaking, a field with an output of more than 250 catties per mu was already considered a top-grade field.

When this number was announced, Yu Xiaocao and the Imperial Breeding Base became famous again. The officials in the south burst into tears of excitement. It should be noted that in the past two years, the officials in the north had frequently reported good news supported by a series of data, leaving the south in the dust. Many people, who used to not care about the northern regions, viewed it as an area with adequate food and clothing. Some people had left their hometown and moved to the north... How could the officials of the south feel good when they saw this?

But, what could they do when an expert farmer had appeared in the north? Not only did she cultivate high-yield corn, but she also enhanced wheat seeds, ensuring that the people in the north could fill their stomachs. The officials of the south had submitted the memorial to the emperor with a mindset of doing a trial. After all, there were many dry fields in the north, so that amazing Official Yu might not be good at cultivating in paddy fields.

It was fortunate that they had made this attempt. Otherwise, as a fertile region, Jiangnan would be surpassed by the northern regions and never be able to prove themselves again! The more the officials of the south envied the northern officials in the past, the more they felt grateful to Royal Princess Jinan now. In their hearts, they almost regarded her as the Child of Fortune who served beside the Bodhisattva! She had doubled the output on the first year of attempting to plant in paddy fields! Based on their experience with winter wheat, the yield would increase again next year. Jiangnan was saved, and the people of Jiangnan were blessed!!

Yu Xiaocao's reputation reached a new high in the imperial court. Many old ministers who used to look down on her, who was a little lass, were slapped in the face. They inwardly pondered whether the lass was favored by the heavens. Not only was she talented in farming, but she was also skilled in business!

Now, the most popular person in the imperial court was this lass! She was highly favored, and the emperor had rewarded the lass with many goods because of the rich harvest of the experimental fields. The goods rewarded by the emperor had occupied nearly half of the Yu Family's storehouse! Furthermore, the businesses under her name were all closely related to their lives. People would be desperately trying to curry favor with someone like her. How could anyone be so blinded as to try to offend her?

In the past year or so, Yu Xiaocao's career and business had been going smoothly, but there were fewer and fewer smiles on her face. This was because the longing in her heart was surging at all times. During the day, she worked so hard that she didn't have time to rest.

But, no matter how tired her body was, her heart and mind would be occupied by that hateful fellow when she was free. That feeling of longing had turned into an urge to cry. Xiaocao, who had lived for two lifetimes, never knew that there would be this persistent gloomy mood in the bottom of one's heart when one missed someone.

Just when Xiaocao had the bold idea to fight for the position of an official in charge of army provision and travel all the way to the northwest to see her lover, there was finally news about General Zhenxi's victory and return to court.

When the news reached Xiaocao's ears, she immediately felt as if the shackles on her body had been released. At the thought that she could be able to see the devilishly handsome and devoted man, Xiaocao's mood suddenly became as clear as the autumn sky, and all the haze in her heart had disappeared. The troubled, painful, and stuffy feelings were all left behind. Her long lost smile had returned on her face.

Before the victorious troops had entered the city, the person who Xiaocao was longing for had appeared in the courtyard of the Yu Estate. Seeing the familiar figure, Xiaocao disregarded all the reservations and shyness of a young maiden and rushed towards Zhu Junyang like a butterfly fluttering towards a flower.

Perhaps her footsteps were too quick, or she was too eager, but in the process of rushing over, Xiaocao had accidentally stepped on the hem of her dress and sadly fell towards the ground.

Just when her little face was able to have close contact with the ground, a pair of strong arms lifted her up like he was holding a little chick. Xiaocao, who was glad that her nose had escaped a misfortune, was pressed into a chest comparable to an iron wall. The hard chest muscles almost knocked tears out of her eyes. Her nose felt painful and sore. If her nose was fake, it would definitely be ruined now! Xiaocao was so eccentric that she had the time to think about this.

“Be careful! You're already a year older, yet you're still so reckless?” The voice that sometimes emerged in her dreams was still as elegant and touching as a cello. It easily moved one's heartstrings.

“Waahhh~~~” Xiaocao suddenly couldn't control her emotions anymore and burst into tears as she hugged the slim waist of the person in front of her and buried her head in his chest. Her tears soon dampened that person's clothes.

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Zhu Junyang was flustered and hurriedly pacified the petite maiden who was going through an emotional breakdown in his arms. He softly said, “Don't cry. Don't cry. It's this prince's fault. I shouldn't have scolded you as soon as I saw you. If you're unhappy, hit me a few times. Don't cry until your beautiful eyes are swelled. This prince's heart will ache ah!”

“Waahhh~~~I miss you. I really, really miss you! I think of you when I eat. I dream of you when I sleep. When I see you now, I wonder if I'm dreaming and you will disappear again when I wake up. Waahhh...you're so hateful. As soon as we got engaged, you left me in the capital and disappeared. Were you enthralled by the young maidens of the northwestern tribes, and thus reluctant to come back?”

At the beginning, Zhu Junyang was moved when he heard her words. His little lass finally understood, and his feelings were finally reciprocated. But he didn't know whether he should laugh or cry when he heard the latter part of her words. She was indeed his little lass; the sentimental feelings only lasted for three seconds.

“Good, be good! Today isn't a dream. This prince is right in front of you. In the future, this prince will take you wherever I go and never leave you by yourself. Don't cry. Don't cry anymore...how can those young maidens of foreign tribes be as lovable as my little lass? This prince likes you so much, so other women are the same as the men in the army in my eyes!” Zhu Junyang held Xiaocao's face and wiped the tears on her face with his somewhat rough fingers.

Yu Xiaocao raised her head and looked at the delicate and enchanting face in front of her. There was a sense of pity in his charming phoenix eyes. His plump red lips parted slightly, producing a pleasant voice. This must be a dream. How could someone who had been in the army and out in the battlefield in the northwest for over a year become even more good-looking?

Like an open faucet, the tears in her clear, big eyes kept flowing down along her eyelashes. She sniffled her nose, lifted her own little hand, and opened her mouth to bite down on it.

Zhu Junyang acted swiftly and blocked her action with his own hand. He had a smile on his handsome face as if it wasn't his hand that was being bitten. He even joked to lighten up the mood, “What? There's no one to bring you 'braised pig trotters' when this prince isn't in the capital? You want to eat it so much

that you're actually gnawing on your own hands. It's no wonder that you got thinner again. Do you not eat properly when this prince isn't around? You should be punished!”

“Waahhh~~~” Xiaocao, who had just stopped crying, started crying again. This time, her cries sounded even more sad, wailing endlessly.

“What's wrong? I won't punish you! I won't punish you! How can this prince bear to hit you? Only you can hit me. If this prince makes you unhappy, I'll be willing to let you beat and punish me!” As he spoke, he held Xiaocao's small, tender hands and hit himself a few times.

“Waahhh...it doesn't hurt when I bite my own hand. I'm indeed dreaming again...” Xiaocao couldn't stop crying. As soon as Wutong saw her young miss rush towards Royal Prince Yang, she had cleared out everyone in the courtyard and quietly retreated far away. At this time, Xiaocao and Zhu Junyang were the only ones in the huge courtyard.

Upon hearing her words, Zhu Junyang didn't know whether he should laugh or cry. He showed her the small teeth marks on the back of his hand, saying, “Silly girl, you were biting this prince, so how can you feel the pain? There's no way that this prince will let you get hurt; even if you're the one biting yourself!”

Yu Xiaocao stared at the teeth marks for a long time, and then stopped crying with slight embarrassment, “This time, it's really not a dream?”

“It's not a dream! This prince is back and I'm really standing in front of you. If you don't believe me, then...why don't you pinch my face?” Since Zhu Junyang was three years old, he had firmly rejected others pinching his face. He was also desperately opposed to Xiaocao pinching his face in the past. At this time, he actually offered to let Xiaocao pinch his face, which immediately caused her to feel that this situation was unreal again.

Looking at the lass's wrinkled up face and tears welled up in her big eyes, Zhu Junyang didn't know what to do. With a sudden thought, he bent down and stopped the young maiden's loud cries with his warm, full lips.

Yu Xiaocao opened her eyes wide open, and clearly saw the scorching affection within his enchanting, bright phoenix eyes. His lips, which were soft and carried a pleasant scent, were tightly pressed against

her lips. The sudden kiss was filled with a deep sense of longing and full of emotions. It was like a violent storm that took her by surprise.

His strong and powerful arms held her slender waist tightly as he pulled her into his embrace, leaving no gaps. Their lips made contact and their tongues instinctively entangled together. He caressed her back with his hands, and then lifted her silky hair. He gently rubbed the soft skin on the back of her neck, pulling her closer to him.

His kiss was gentle yet domineering. The fresh breath from his lips made her feel dizzy and intoxicated as if she was drinking wine. Putting aside all her reservation and worries, she wrapped her slender arms around his beautiful neck and closed her eyes in a comfortable and sweet manner. At this moment, the emptiness within her heart had been filled up, all her confusion was dispelled, and all her thoughts had turned into a breeze that gently wrapped around him.

After an unknown period of time, Xiaocao's engrossment was interrupted by the sound of heavy breathing. The touch on her lips disappeared and she was gently pushed away, creating a distance. She pouted her lips and kissed him again. It seemed like only this close contact could calm her heart.

Zhu Junyang didn't push away the soft young maiden in his arms. He took a deep breath and calmed his heated and restless heart. He really wanted to marry and bring the lass home right now. If this happened a few more times, he definitely wouldn't be able to stand it.

The young maiden's attachment to him made him feel as if a feather had brushed over his heart. He had originally thought that all his efforts and feelings were one-sided. The lass seemed like a child who still didn't have a clear understanding of love, and she was always laughing merrily without a care in the world.

Unexpectedly, he had gained a pleasant surprise from this separation. His feelings were finally reciprocated. The appearance of the little lass clinging to him reminded him of a kitten that he used to raise. When it was seeking attention, it would grab onto his trousers tightly and look as if it wanted to be caressed and hugged.

His heart was filled with a sense of happiness. Zhu Junyang hugged the young maiden's slender waist and gently lifted the lass up. Xiaocao cried out in surprise, and then realized that her feet were lifted off the ground. Only when her view was suddenly shifted to be looking downwards did she notice that she was being lifted up in the air like a child. She had a sturdy and strong fiancé, who always surprised her.

Her surprised cry attracted the look of Wutong, who was inwardly muttering 'look not at what is contrary to propriety'. She looked over and just happened to see a beautiful scene. Amongst the fluttering golden ginkgo leaves, a tall, strong, and handsome youth lifted a beautiful, petite, and lovely young maiden in the air. With the sun shining on their bodies, they appeared to be shrouded by a circle of light. That wonderful scene was unforgettable!

Looking at the bright smile on the young miss's face, all the gloomy mood had been swept away. Wutong suddenly felt that Royal Prince Yang was perhaps the fated person that the heavens specially arranged for Young Miss. Only when the two of them were together would they be complete!

"Why did you get thinner again? Did you not eat properly?" After putting Xiaocao down, Zhu Junyang felt her thin arms, which seemed like they would break with a little force. Thus, he asked with slight dissatisfaction.

After Yu Xiaocao was put down, she stayed in her boyfriend's embrace as if she had no bones. She replied in a coquettish manner, "Because I miss you ah! I didn't have any appetite, and even 'Buddha Jumps Over the Wall' didn't seem appetizing anymore. No matter how good the food is, I can hardly eat without you helping me get the food!" As she spoke, she stood on her tiptoe and kissed his chin.

"Cough!" Zhu Junyang was momentarily overwhelmed by his fiancée's sudden outspoken words of affection. He lowered his head to kiss her small, red lips, and said, "It turns out that this prince has the role of serving food. How come I never knew?"

Yu Xiaocao suddenly showed a cheeky smile, which gave Zhu Junyang an ominous premonition. Generally, this kind of smile was a precursor of the lass's mischief. Sure enough, she shook her head and said, "As the ancients said, 'a feast for the eyes!'"

As she said this, Xiaocao reached out her right hand and pinched his sharp chin with her index finger and thumb. She revealed a lecherous expression and said, "Looking at this exquisite, gorgeous, and devilishly-handsome face, even if there aren't any side dishes, I can still eat two more bowls of rice!"

In this world, this bold and mischievous lass was the only one who dared to tease him about his appearance. The last person who said he was beautiful seemed to have been bedridden for half a year. After that, that person always took a detour upon seeing him.

What could he do to the little lass that he chose himself? What's more, he had this inexplicable sense of joy in his heart over the fact that she was attracted to his appearance.

“It's my honor to be able to serve food to the future princess consort of Royal Prince Yang. Alright, you must eat at least three bowls of rice tonight. You're not allowed to go back on your words!” Zhu Junyang decided to come to the Yu Estate for the next few days to supervise the lass's meals. His next goal was to ensure that the lass regained the weight that she lost. If she got any thinner, she would turn into a stick of firewood. If outsiders saw her like that, they would think that he, Royal Prince Yang, was a miser who was unwilling to feed his wife!

Three bowls of rice? Yu Xiaocao glared at him with big, round eyes and complained, “Are you trying to make me eat until I burst? Be honest! Did you get hurt? Did the medicine I give you work?”

“The medicine that you gave me played a big role! But, don't worry, it wasn't used on me.” Zhu Junyang briefly recounted the chaos at the borders to her. It turned out that the rebellion in the northwest wasn't a simple invasion at the borders by foreigners. There were actually descendants of the former dynasty involved in the conflict.

He hadn't expected that martial art experts of the former dynasty were hiding within the thousands of troops. Among them, there was the big boss who used to train with Su Ran and had always been hard to distinguish. However, unlike Su Ran who had forsaken darkness for light, this fellow had fanatical supporter of the former dynasty. He was very loyal to the former dynasty, and thus held deep hatred for Su Ran's betrayal. Therefore, he took advantage of the chaos to attack Su Ran, who was the army supervisor.

It was originally hard to determine who had the better martial art skills between the two. But, with the addition of petty and unscrupulous tactics, Su Ran almost lost his life in that man's hands. Fortunately, Zhu Junyang was beside him at that time. Seeing that Army Supervisor Su was injured and about to die, he didn't hesitate to use Xiaocao's special internal injury medicine, giving them all to him.

Fields of Gold Chapter 646

Xiaocao's specially prepared medicines were only a tiny level away from the legendary elixirs in the stories. With them on hand, even if Su Ran wanted to die he wouldn't be able to.

“So shameless! To mount a sneak attack! If it was a fair fight, Sir Su likely wouldn't have lost to him!!” When Yu Xiaocao found out that Su Ran was fine, she let out a sigh of relief. She then waved her small fists in the air and cried out for the injustice that he had endured.

“Okay, okay! Your Sir Su is very strong, alright ah?” Zhu Junyang almost slapped his own face. He knew that the little lass was a crazy fangirl of that fellow, so why did he have to bring that stupid eunuch up in such a good atmosphere?

Yu Xiaocao frowned perceptibly and snarled angrily at him, “What sort of attitude is that? Huh? Do you want to elaborate?”

Zhu Junyang inwardly rolled his eyes as he thought, 'Your Sir Su, who is soooo skilled, actually had to be saved by your man. Within the whole army, other than the heavily injured Su Ran, only I, your man, can be considered a worthy opponent to that person. Although that person ultimately fell due to the might of the gun, the person who reacted the fastest when Chief Steward Su Ran got attacked was still your man. If it wasn't for me blocking the way, your Sir Su would have long died without even the chance of getting medical treatment!'

Now he needed to bring the little lass's attention back to himself, “Chief Steward Su is truly quite skilled but he had been heavily injured. It was I, your man, who had bravely stepped forward to fight his enemy despite the danger. It was also I, your man, who ended up subduing the other party. In the end, it was also I, your man, who saved Chief Steward Su's life. Based on the facts, who do you think is the strongest now?”

Oh ho! Who was being jealous again? Such a narrow-minded man! However, this was exactly the type she liked! Yu Xiaocao jumped up and gave a quick kiss to the handsome man in front of her who was currently incredibly jealous. She grinned and said, “You're the strongest! In my heart, you're the biggest hero in this world and no one can surpass you!! Sir Su's enemy was so strong, so I need to check to see if you're injured or not.”

“Nope! When this prince left, I had promised you that not even a single hair on my head would be harmed ah!” Zhu Junyang acquiesced to the little lass's request and turned his body around, allowing her to easily inspect him. As Xiaocao began to pull apart his clothing to get a closer look, he grabbed onto her busy little hands and said, “This prince isn't stupid. If I couldn't beat him, don't I also have a gun on hand? One shot and that fellow fell straight to the ground!”

Apparently he had used this type of strategy. Yu Xiaocao felt completely relaxed as she said, "My Junyangyang is the smartest of them all! You're absolutely right. What's the point of trying to beat them head on if you don't have to? That's something only an idiot would do! Guns are so easy to use ah, so it'd be idiotic of you to not use it if you have one ah!" As she spoke, her eyes glittered with worship as she stared at him. It made Zhu Junyang feel quite proud and elated.

"Junyangyang, did you eat lunch yet? What do you want to eat for dinner? It's been a long time since you last ate something that I made, so I need to make sure to compensate you!" Yu Xiaocao rubbed her hands together in anticipation. She was planning on making sure she had a firm grasp on Great General Zhenxi's stomach.

"I didn't eat yet! In order to come back earlier to see you, I even ate breakfast on horseback. I just gnawed casually on a few bites of dried rations." As he spoke, Zhu Junyang held his stomach in an exaggerated manner as he pasted a pitiful look on his face.

Yu Xiaocao immediately felt her heart soften, "Aiyo! How can that be okay? I can't let my great hulking hero starve to death! Wutong, Wutong! Quickly take out the pastries that I personally made at noon and bring them to the reception pavilion! You should first eat a few pastries for now. Later on, I'll make a sumptuous meal for you!"

Although she had deliberately stationed herself further away from the two of them, Wutong had been observing the events in the courtyard quite carefully. She had seen everything: her young miss sobbing pitifully when she saw Royal Prince Yang, her young miss acting spoiled and cute, her young miss being intimate with the prince...ahem ahem. In the past, she had done her best to prevent Royal Prince Yang from taking any liberties, but now there was no need for her to be so cautious. In a year, her young miss would become Princess Consort Yang. If she continued to block these two lovers, she'd end up drawing the ire of both. Even her young miss wouldn't forgive her for those actions!

When she heard her young miss's orders, Wutong made a noise in assent and quickly headed into the small kitchen. Earlier, during lunch, her previously down and depressed young miss finally had become more lively and had made some chocolate sandwich cookies in the kitchen. After she finished making them, she only ate a few cookies. Was it because her young miss had a premonition that Royal Prince Yang was going to appear so she had especially prepared these pastries for him?

At the moment, Xiaocao had already entered the small kitchen and was bustling about. Zhu Junyang didn't want to waste a single moment he had to interact with Xiaocao, so he picked up the plate of sandwich cookies and strolled into the small kitchen. He gazed at Xiaocao's busy figure and felt a burst

of warmth rise up in his heart. He really wanted to marry his little lass as soon as possible. That way, she would only make food for him. Everything would be for himself only!

“What sort of delicious foods are you planning to make for me?” Zhu Junyang bit into a flaky and delicate sandwich cookie. He delicately chewed on the pastry as he asked.

“Today I was sent over some fresh prawns, so I'm going to make you a dish from the Manchu-Han Imperial Feast , 'Peacock Prawns'. Yu Xiaocao shelled the large prawns with a practiced ease and cleaned out the middle intestines before seasoning them. Then, she whipped some egg whites until they were foamy and placed the peeled prawns within them. Afterwards, she fried the coated prawns until they were a golden yellow, “Try some, ah...”

“These are...done?” Didn't she say that this dish was called 'peacock prawns'? Where was the peacock? Zhu Junyang ended up asking the question that rose within his mind.

“Peacock?” Yu Xiaocao rubbed her nose in an unconfident manner. Her eyes roved around as she said, “That is just made by using some squash and carving it into a pretty shape for the plate. It's just for show. We're very close to each other, so there's no need to do it today!”

One of the sous chefs who was quietly helping out on the side took out a piece of wintermelon and carved it into a life-like looking peacock head and neck before handing it to her master. Yu Xiaocao smiled gratefully and made a funny face at Zhu Junyang, “Alright ah, now we have the peacock! My dear prince, do you have any other requests now?”

The golden yellow large prawns were now paired with the light green color of the 'peacock' neck. A delicate aroma wafted from the dish and the beautiful aesthetics of the dish delighted one's eyes. With such delicious and tasty looking shrimp in front of a person, who would want to eat some boring cookies instead ah? Zhu Junyang stuffed the plate of cookies into the drooling Hou Xiaoliang's hands, “These are gifted to you now!”

“Thank you, Master!” Hou Xiaoliang was exhausted and starving after spending a grueling journey on horseback following his master. Although Wutong had considerably given him a piece of jujube cake earlier, he had seen the tantalizing plate of cookies within his master's hands. Furthermore, it was said that these were made by his future mistress. Thus, the jujube cake became tasteless in his mouth.

Everyone in the capital had acknowledged his future mistress's culinary talents. However, he had never been lucky enough to eat any food personally made by her. He would have never had expected that his master would be so kind to bestow upon him a plate of chocolate sandwich cookies to him. Boo hoo...he was so touched. What should he do from now on? In the future, he needed to work even harder for his master in hopes that he would get rewarded with more delicious food to eat!

Naturally, Zhu Junyang had no idea of the thoughts that were running through his assistant's head. He was currently stretching out a hand to pick up a golden-yellow fried prawn. He stuffed it in his mouth and tasted it delicately. Mhm~~crispy on the outside while tender on the inside. Flaky and immensely tasty. This truly was the hallmark of his lass's cooking!

“Oh right! What is the 'Manchu-Han Imperial Feast'?” Zhu Junyang ate three large prawns in quick succession before he had the time to voice the question that had risen in his heart.

“Ah? Uh! Hm~~” Yu Xiaocao's hands paused for a second as she pondered how to answer this question, “The Manchu-Han Imperial Feast, ah, is a type of legendary court feast that has been lost in the sands of time. This feast not only has the elegant qualities of imperial dishes but also has the refreshing qualities of local delicacies. It combines the tastes and qualities of both Manchu and Han culinary traditions. It's considered one of the best feasts within our culture and has reached the pinnacle of culinary success. The entire feast has a total of a hundred and eight dishes. It contains sweet and savory dishes, vegetarian and meat foods, extensive and rare ingredients that are found in the deep mountains and frigid seas.”

Wow! A hundred and eight different dishes? Zhu Junyang's eyes immediately lit up when he heard this detail. Didn't that mean that once he married his little lass he would have such a delicious feast in the future?

“Wife, were the recipes for this legendary 'Manchu-Han Imperial Feast' recorded in that ancient scroll remnant that you had found?” Zhu Junyang considerably found a perfect excuse for Xiaocao. Yu Xiaocao paused for a second and then lightly nodded her head, “Mhm! However, the scroll remnant is just a remnant, after all. I only know a few dishes that were used in that legendary feast!”

“It's already amazing that you know how to make a few of these dishes! This prince's little wife is truly the best among the best!” (Author's note: Royal Prince Yang, where is your cold and aloof image now? Royal Prince Yang: Cold and aloof image? Isn't this prince a loyal and loving dog in front of his wife ah?)

“Who's your little wife? Looks like not even food can keep your mouth shut!” Yu Xiaocao rolled her eyes at him in a coquettish manner as she continued to prepare food.

Zhu Junyang sidled over and stuffed a fried prawn into her mouth. When he saw her chewing happily, he felt like this plate of 'peacock prawns' had become even more tasty.

“Wife, you are clearly this prince's little wife, right? In about a year, you'll be eighteen. Hasn't our wedding date been set long ago ah?” Their wedding date had already been booked over a year ago. They had decided to get married at the start of spring next year, during the third month. At that time, the weather wouldn't be too hot or cold, so it was perfect!

Zhu Junyang watched as Xiaocao concentrated on making delicious food for him. As expected, seeing Xiaocao fully focused made it hard for a person to stop staring at her. He gazed at her in an infatuated manner. Even the plate of large prawns in his hands wasn't enough to draw his attention, “Wife, what are you making now?”

“I noticed that the kitchen has both meat and fish and remembered there's a dish from the 'Manchu-Han Imperial Feast' called 'Affection of the Dragon and Phoenix', so I plan on making that!” Yu Xiaocao didn't raise her head as she deboned and skinned the fish in her hands. She then expertly skinned and deboned some chicken breast before she thinly sliced both meats into slender slivers. Following that, the two meats were placed into two bowls and seasoned with some cooking wine and a bit of salt. After mixing it up, she then placed the two meats into some egg white and corn flour.

“Wife, this name is quite nice! However, when you take this dish outside this residence, it's better to find a different name. Otherwise, certain people would use this name as an excuse to attack our reputations!” Zhu Junyang had just come back triumphantly and didn't want some jealous officials to find anything to bring him down in front of the court.

“Okay! Then I'll change the name, I'll call it——Loving Iron Man!” Yu Xiaocao also felt the 'Dragon and Phoenix' in the name of the dish was a bit too eye catching. Although the emperor wasn't someone who was that petty, she was afraid that there would be nitpicky jealous officials who would take it as a point of contention against her and complain endlessly.

“Wife, this name is very good! It sounds like this dish was named especially for this prince!” Wasn't he the perfect example of a 'loving iron man' ah? He was such a manly man but in front of his little lass, he acted like a gentle and loving person instead.

“However, this dish looks to be quite cumbersome to make! In the future, you should have the chefs and cook maids make such complicated dishes!” Zhu Junyang didn't want his little lass to work so hard. Cooking was quite difficult sometimes and his wife was supposed to live a leisurely life. She wasn't there to be his personal chef. In the future, she shouldn't have to do so much work if she didn't want to!

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Yu Xiaocao glanced at him and revealed a honey-sweet smile on her face. The words that came out of her mouth subsequently also delighted him to his core, “It's not a bother at all! I'm happy to make food for you. Even the smallest detail needs to come out of my hands!”

As she spoke, she went back to her task at hand, leaving Zhu Junyang, who was touched beyond measure, to stand silently at the side. She heated up the wok and oil before searing the slender strips of fish and chicken in separate batches. Then, she took them out of the pot and left some oil in there before adding the fish back into the pot with some cooking wine and fine salt. She let it simmer until it produced a fragrant broth and then added some cornstarch to thicken it. Finally, she poured the cooked fish into one half of a prepared plate.

Following that, she did the same procedure for the seared chicken meat, making sure to also thicken the broth with starch at the end. She then poured the cooked chicken into the other half of the plate, creating a sort of yin-yang presentation between the fish and chicken. Finally, she stir fried some bean sprouts with some special seasoning and placed it in the middle of the chicken and fish meat in the dish. The final dish was complete!

Zhu Junyang looked at the beautiful dish that was in front of him. The simple and elegant aesthetics of the plate immediately conquered him and he shifted his attention away from the plate of shrimp in his hands. He shoved the remaining plate of large fried shrimp into Hou Xiaoliang's hands and used a pair of chopsticks to pick up a piece of fish meat. Immediately, the tender and savory taste of the food invaded his mouth, tantalizing his taste buds. It was truly too delicious. It was fragrant and tasty and the two types of different meat complimented each other perfectly as if they were meant to be together. The food was so delicious that it was hard for a person to stop eating.

The dishes afterwards all satisfied the raging glutton within Zhu Junyang's stomach. He ate and ate until his belly was about to burst. Only then did he finally reluctantly put down his pair of chopsticks in defeat. His lass's food was seriously too good. If he could eat this kind of food very day, then he would have a very fortunate life. Unfortunately, cooking was too exhausting. Not only did she have to prepare all of the ingredients but many of the cooking processes were also time consuming. Furthermore, the kitchen was full of high heat and oily smoke. In the summer, the heat was almost unbearable, like you were being steamed alive. How could he bear to let his little lass endure such conditions all the time?

Forget it, in the future, he needed to reign in his inner glutton in order to avoid making his little lass suffer too much.

Hou Xiaoliang had truly benefited from following his master around today! His future mistress's culinary talents were heavenly! Even the imperial chefs in the palace likely wouldn't be able to make food as delicious as the food she made today. He was so envious of his master. In the future, his master would be able to eat scrumptious food like this every day ah! That wouldn't do. He needed to cling himself shamelessly to his master in order to find other opportunities like today. Perhaps on days when his master was in a good mood, he'd be rewarded a few dishes here and there. That would truly be the fortune of a lifetime for him!

That was right! Wutong wasn't getting any younger. Shouldn't he beg his future mistress for a favor and have her engage Wutong to him? His future mistress's culinary talents were so good, so shouldn't the maids by her side also be very good at cooking too ah? Then...in the future, wouldn't he be living in the lap of foodie luxury?

Hou Xiaoliang happily fell into his own thoughts. However, how could he know that the maids under Xiaocao, other than Yangliu who had the talent and desire to learn more, were all dunces in the kitchen? In fact, Xiaocao often felt that they were pulling her back when they tried to help her prepare ingredients in the kitchen, which said volumes about their actual cooking abilities. Wutong, for example, might not even know how to properly cook rice! Thus, Hou Xiaoliang's silly fantasies were quite off the mark!

Xiaocao felt a bit sorry when she saw Zhu Junyang shoveling down food as if he had never had a good meal in his life. She added a few bites of food to his plate from time to time and repeatedly warned him, "Eat slower, ah! I know you haven't had a good meal in a while, but eating too fast will make your stomach hurt."

"Not a problem. Don't I have the medicine you gave me in the pouch ah?" Zhu Junyang ate and guzzled down food and drink before he was finally so stuffed that he couldn't eat anymore. He regarded the remaining food on the table with a gaze full of regret. If he hadn't eaten those cookies earlier, he would be able to eat more food now.

Yu Xiaocao slanted him a disapproving look and said, "The medicine I gave you is to treat you when unfortunate things happen, not give you an excuse to use your body poorly. If you continue to do this in the future, then believe it when I say I won't cook food for you anymore!"

Zhu Junyang pulled at Xiaocao's fair little hands and rubbed them between his large palms as he gently said, "If you don't want to make food, then don't! This prince doesn't want his princess consort slaving away every day at the stove. In the future, ah, all you have to do is enjoy yourself at home. Plant some flowers, do some hobbies...don't you like little animals ah? I heard that in foreign lands, there's a type of small dog that looks a bit like a lion. It's gentle, cute, and obedient. We can get two for you, if you like. If you get bored, then you can play and tease your animals! For everything else, this prince is here and you don't need to worry..."

Hou Xiaoliang was dumbstruck by the words coming out of his master's mouth, 'Master, ah, you are truly too skilled at sweet-talking your wife. This is truly an example of the disciple overtaking the master. Master, you're better than your father at this!'

On the other hand, Yu Xiaocao wasn't the least bit grateful for any of this. Her eyes opened wide and she stated in a somewhat threatening manner, "You want me to just idle around for the rest of my life until I become a simpleton ah?? You also know that I'm not the type to just sit around, doing nothing. If you keep me at home all the time, that's the same as taking my life away from me! That won't do. You need to promise me that I can do whatever I want after I get married to you and you won't interfere either. Otherwise...otherwise, I'll rescind this marriage, hmph!"

"Break the wedding off? This prince has already hugged and kissed you. If you don't marry me, who will marry you instead?" Zhu Junyang immediately exploded after he heard her threat. His entire face turned pitch black like the bottom of a pot and he stared furiously at the little lass, who had successfully angered him. His entire body seemed to ooze out an imposing aura. If it were anyone else in front of him, they would have long fallen to the ground in abject terror.

Xiaocao, on the other hand, forcefully pulled her hands out of his and placed them on her hips. She snarled in a shrewish manner, "Do you want to make me into a hapless canary and shut me in a cage for the rest of my life? I would rather be single for the rest of my life than marry a stupid oafish pig like you!" Her attitude in front of Zhu Junyang seemed like a little kitten whose tail had just gotten stepped on. She roared and raged in an uninhibited manner.

Hou Xiaoliang surreptitiously scooted over towards the door. Flames were raging inside and he didn't want himself, just a little fish, to get in the line of the fire. His future mistress was truly too fierce. When facing off with his master's icy cold face, she wasn't the least bit intimidated. However...how come it seemed like the two people in front of him resembled a tiny kitten confronting a giant wolf? It actually looked a little bit funny for some reason.

“You...this prince traveled without stopping day and night in order to see you sooner. I didn't do this to fight with you. Calm down a bit!” Although Zhu Junyang was quite angry inside, he couldn't bear to say a harsh word to the little lass in front of him. What was he to do with her?

“Do you think I wanted to fight with you too? You're the one being too tyrannical, trying to force me into a life I don't want to live! You also know that I'm the type of person who has my own ideas and I love having freedom and independence. I don't like it when people try to control me. You should have known all of this before you proposed marriage to me. I thought that you liked me for who I am, my entire self, and that you didn't want to change me! If things go the way you described, then why don't you just marry any noble young miss in the capital? That's the type of life that they long for!”

Yu Xiaocao thought of how much she had missed this stupid fellow in front of her for the past year. In fact, she even spent a lot of time and effort making a table full of delicious foods for him, yet all she got in return was his grim and icy looking face. Instantly, the feeling of being wronged rose in her heart.

Zhu Junyang felt his heart fall when he saw the tears form in the little lass's eyes. He hastily said, “You misunderstood this prince. This prince doesn't want to control you. I just feel bad seeing you work so hard for the court's matters while also managing all of your businesses. I'm afraid that you'll become too tired, so I wanted to give you a comfortable and relaxing environment. If you don't like it, then this prince won't force you to become an idle young matron in the inner courtyard. In the future, you can do whatever you like, as long as you keep yourself safe and don't tire yourself out. Is that okay ah?”

“You were the one who didn't say it clearly, which made me misunderstand you. It's all your fault!! Furthermore, you glared at me in such a hateful manner while yelling at me. You need to apologize for that!!” Apparently it was because the man in front of her cared too much about her and wanted her to be well rested. Why couldn't he say it clearly earlier? Yu Xiaocao blinked away the tears in her eyes as she pouted her little mouth. It was clear that she was stubbornly holding onto her position.

Zhu Junyang hurriedly took out a handkerchief and helped the little lass wipe away the tears on his face. He sighed again and said, “Alright, alright, alright! It was all my fault! In the future, this prince won't glare at you ever again, okay ah? However, in the future, please don't say anything about breaking off the wedding. It felt like someone was stabbing a knife into my heart when I heard those words. Right now I'm still hurting!”

There wasn't one person who was stronger in relationship issues between men and women. The outwardly heroic Royal Prince Yang easily acquiesced and bent his head down in front of his little lass, as if it were no big deal. As long as his little lass wasn't sad anymore and would smile again, it was worth it.

"I'll help you rub it a bit so it won't hurt anymore!" The person in front of her had apologized sincerely. In addition, she also had some fault in the manner, so Yu Xiaocao felt a bit embarrassed now. She stretched out a little hand and began to massage Zhu Junyang's chest. It didn't look like she was trying to relieve a hurt. Instead, it looked more like she was taking advantage of him.

A few times, that little hand rubbed him in such a way that made him feel sensitive. Zhu Junyang simultaneously enjoyed her ministrations while being tortured by them. Finally, he restrained her naughty little hand. If he continued to allow her to stoke his fire, he wasn't sure he'd be able to endure any longer without ravaging the little lass. He needed to wait a little longer; there was less than half a year left for him! The little lass didn't have any adult women around to remind her at the moment so he needed to make sure he respected her. He needed to wait for the most important step of their relationship and do it on their wedding night. It would be an unforgettable experience.

"Is it bad that you didn't come back with the army?" Yu Xiaocao quietly leaned against Zhu Junyang's chest as she listened to the sound of his beating heart. She felt incredibly calm and secure at this moment.

"It's not a big deal. Only Inspector Su knows about me coming back early. Before I entered the capital, I made sure to disguise myself, so no one saw me. Tonight, this prince will secretly go back to where the army is. There's no need to worry. This prince isn't someone who does things rashly!" Zhu Junyang had made sure to make all of the proper arrangements in order to see his lass earlier. It had taken quite a bit of effort for him.

Yu Xiaocao nodded her head and then worriedly asked, "If Sir Su knows, doesn't that mean that the emperor will know too? Will the emperor use this as an excuse to make trouble for you?"

"Don't think too much ah! At the worst, the prince could get rid of all of the duties that I was given. I'll just go back to what I was before, an idle and leisurely royal prince. However, at that time, this prince will have a much lower income stream, so Wife, you'll have to make sure I don't go hungry!" Zhu Junyang had absolutely no interest in keeping and obtaining political power. The only reason why he worked so hard right now was to improve his status and become a better shield for his little lass. That way, he could prevent all harm from reaching her.

Furthermore, from his understanding of the emperor's personality, the situation would never get to the point that the lass worried about it. The lass was only being wary of shadows because she was concerned about him.

Yu Xiaocao forcefully nodded her head and said, "Alright! I'll raise you ah!! All you have to do is keep yourself forever young and beautiful, and I'll be in charge of the money in the household. Hee hee...it suddenly feels like I'm raising a little kept man at home!"

"What sort of nonsense are you spouting now? This prince was only horsing around. I don't think my circumstances are that bad, alright? Do you really think this prince is someone who would happily live off my wife?" Zhu Junyang had a helpless expression on his face as he gently pinched the lass's cheek to 'punish' her.

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Once again, Hou Xiaoliang sidled a few steps closer to the outside. 'My future mistress ah, you truly have guts to call the master a 'kept man'. Out of the whole Great Ming Empire, you're probably the only one who's able to say something so impolite to him without retribution.' He needed to get out of earshot. Otherwise, his master might fly into a fury over the fact that his subordinate had heard something so humiliating. He also didn't dare to reprimand his future mistress either.

"Hee hee! I'm only teasing you ah! Do you think there's anyone in the capital who will dare to compete against us when we combine both of our enterprises? In the future, wouldn't that mean I could count money every day until my hands cramp?" Yu Xiaocao suddenly had a feeling that she was going to become the richest noble lady in the capital and felt incredibly proud at the prospect.

"Is counting money exhausting ah? This prince will send a few people over and have them count for you. You can just stand at the side and watch them." Zhu Junyang aggressively said as he gently stroked the little lass's fine and glossy black hair with a hand. He relished in the silky feeling slipping through his fingers.

"Hee hee!" Yu Xiaocao, the little money grubber, sniggered. Her whole demeanor resembled a tiny squirrel who had just eaten some stolen pine nuts. She was simultaneously adorable and childish. Zhu Junyang loved and hated that image at the same time. Just where did she get that oddball temperament from? Uncle and Auntie Yu were both placid and down to earth people. Her older brother and sister were the same. Her younger brother was also steady at a very young age. It was only this lass who had a weird personality.

Zhu Junyang loafed around the Yu Residence until the moon peeked over the willow trees. Only then did he reluctantly say his farewells. After leaving the Yu Residence, he and Hou Xiaoliang headed out of the capital, back towards the army. Although he never took outside criticism to heart, he was someone who was about to become married. Thus, he couldn't let his wife be worried about him in the future. It was

important to keep up his image. Thus, he had no intention of getting accused of the crime of privately returning back to the capital without the army!

Three days later, Great General Zhenxi returned back to the capital. News from the northwest had just gotten back and the entire capital was thunderstruck and then elated by what had happened. Royal Prince Yang, who had become Great General Zhenxi, was now also given the nickname of 'War God'. In the short time period of a year, he had managed to beat back the invaders and traitors of the northwest until they couldn't even raise their heads anymore. Thus, the people of the northwest now had a few decades of peace in the future. No matter what the time period, the commoners all hoped and prayed for peace in where they lived.

In order to see the 'War God's' imposing demeanor in person, many of the capital's people had arrived in the suburbs of the capital early to wait. The Yulin Division had imposed martial law within a one kilometer radius of the suburbs for safety. This was done because the emperor himself, along with court's civil and military officials, were coming out to receive the army back home.

On the day of the procession, Xiaocao had been summoned to enter the palace. Within the imperial study, Zhu Junfan was currently looking over the crown prince's school work. The crown prince was already twelve this year and had grown into an impressive youth. All of his work had been praised to the skies by his various imperial tutors and, more and more, he was gaining the appropriate demeanor and solemnity as the imperial heir.

Although the imperial palace had added a few more young princes and princesses, the second oldest prince, who was a three to four year old, had an eight year gap between him and the crown prince. By the time the second oldest prince got older, the crown prince would have almost reached his age of majority. Thus, no one could possibly be a threat to his position then! Furthermore, as long as the crown prince didn't make a huge blunder such as being unfilial to his parents or become a traitor to the empire, it was very likely his position would be rock steady. Consequently, it was highly unlikely that a bloody fight for the throne would happen in this generation.

“Official Yu!” Zhu Hanwen placed down the brush in his hands and smiled when he saw Xiaocao being summoned inside.

“This official greets the emperor and the crown prince!” Yu Xiaocao was holding a box of food in her hands. She hesitated for a moment before she went down on her knees to perform an official bow. However, the emperor interrupted her before she could finish.

“Alright, no need to do these false courtesies. You are exempt from the official greetings and may take a seat!” Zhu Junfan never expected his fellow transmigrator to do these overly convoluted and complicated customs in front of him. He pointed at the food box in her hands and heatedly said, “Oh! It's rare that you think of us. You actually brought a present along! If we hadn't summoned you, you would probably never show your face around here, right? It's fine that we don't see heads or tails of you at court, but do you truly believe the imperial token that allows you to access the palace to be a mere frippery?”

'Your Imperial Majesty, just why are you speaking in such an aggrieved tone?' Yu Xiaocao glanced over in confusion towards the crown prince, who was sitting at the side. The two of them exchanged clearly puzzled looks.

“Imperial Majesty, this official's rank is not high enough to allow me to attend the daily court sessions.” Yu Xiaocao quietly reminded him.

Zhu Junfan snorted a bit and retorted, “Oh what? Do you dislike your position for being too low now? I would have never expected you to be someone who was obsessed with getting promoted ah.”

Yu Xiaocao was seriously starting to wonder whether another soul had transmigrated over and taken over the emperor's body. Why was he acting in such a weird way? Why did she get the feeling that the emperor was currently whining and acting spoiled in front of her now? Oh my gosh, she was starting to get goosebumps from his behavior!

Zhu Hanwen looked at his imperial father and blinked a few times. If it weren't for the fact that Official Yu had already been engaged to his imperial uncle, he would have seriously started to suspect that his imperial father was interested in Official Yu! After all, just what did that aggrieved expression and casual tone of voice mean?

He turned his attention back to Yu Xiaocao. The young crown prince regarded her seriously for a few moments and came to a few conclusions. In the past two years, Official Yu had truly grown into her looks. Just her flawless skin alone, which seemed as delicate as the outer shell of an egg and as luminous as a flawless crystal, was enough to blow all of the noble born maidens in the capital out of the park. Furthermore, she had a pair of large and lively eyes that seemed to have the ability to pierce a person's soul.

Zhu Hanwen suddenly felt a bolt of lightning go through his heart. He returned his gaze back towards his imperial father. 'Imperial Father, did Official Yu truly catch your fancy now ah? That absolutely cannot

happen ah! Imperial Uncle Yang has just done a great deed for our empire and obtained a great military victory. You absolutely cannot steal his wife from him! If you do, it's likely that Imperial Uncle Yang would fly into a rage over this and there's very few people in the capital who can possibly stop him when he is incensed...'

'Imperial Father, ah, Imperial Father, you've been a wise ruler all this time, so you cannot, in a moment of muddle headedness, become an infamous ruler who tried to steal one of his official's wives ah!' One had to admit that the crown prince had a pretty active imagination sometimes.

Zhu Hanwen suddenly discovered that his imperial father had looked over in his direction. He met his father's eyes and immediately hid his thoughts as he said, "Imperial Father, Official Yu has done many meritorious deeds over the past few years. She has undertaken hard tasks despite receiving criticism from other officials, yet she still only has a lowly sixth ranked position as an agricultural official. This son believes...isn't it about time to promote her a bit?"

Zhu Junfan regarded his son with an impressed eye. He had spent all of these years painstakingly educating this son to be his successor for the sake of handing over the throne once his son turned twenty. At that time, he planned on becoming a leisurely emperor emeritus, traveling with the empress throughout the country as well as into foreign lands. Wouldn't that be such a relaxing life?

"Imperial Son, rewards and punishments must be allotted accordingly in order to become a wise ruler. In your eyes, what is the best way to promote Official Yu?" Zhu Junfan had also thought about promoting this trusted official of his. However, he didn't have a precedent to do so and he had just awarded her with the glorious title of a royal princess, so he had delayed her promotion in officialdom.

Zhu Hanwen pondered for a moment before he seriously replied, "This son has studied with the imperial tutor and remembers that in the Qin Dynasty, there was a position called the 'Clerk of the Capital for Grain'. This son believes that, with Official Yu's current duties, it falls well within the position of 'Clerk of the Capital for Grain'..."

"Imperial Son, what you're trying to say is...that within the Ministry of Revenue, we should add in the position of Clerk of the Capital for Grain? What rank should it be?" Zhu Junfan searched his mind but couldn't remember what the heck the 'Clerk of the Capital for Grain' was. Just what the hell was this title? How come he had no inkling of what it was? However, for the sake of preserving an imposing and all-knowing demeanor in front of his son, he pretended to project a mysterious expression in front of him.

“Imperial Father, Official Yu currently has the position of 'Agricultural Official'. Wasn't that a position that you had created on the spot too ah? For the past few years, Official Yu not only managed to properly cultivate the western hemisphere's corn, but also produced a high-yielding strain of winter wheat. Furthermore, she's perfected the art of growing fruits and vegetables out of season in greenhouse pavilions, adding variety to our tables during the previous dead season. This year, she also began experimenting with rice paddies and the preliminary results are incredibly promising and exciting. By adding together all of her merits and successes, I believe she should at least be promoted three levels right? This son believes that this position should be at least rank four or above. Otherwise, we'd be slighting Official Yu too much.” Zhu Hanwen had become close to Yu Xiaocao during his tender childhood years. Naturally, he now stood at her side and advocated for her benefit.

However, Yu Xiaocao had no desire to be promoted into officialdom. No matter whether it was in her past life or this one, she wasn't interested in obtaining more power. Other than her desire to make more and more money, the rest was ephemeral to her and of no value. She was quite satisfied with the way her life was now and really didn't want a promotion. This was because she knew that the higher the rank, the more power she had, the more responsibilities she would get. In fact, the number one reason she didn't want to get promoted was because rank five officials and above all had to attend morning court. Being forced out of the house before the sun had risen was truly a fearsome thing!

“That uh...” Yu Xiaocao knew that if she didn't open her mouth now, her new position would be set in stone, so she hurriedly interrupted the father and son duo, who were currently discussing this with enthusiasm, “Your Imperial Majesty, Imperial Highness, this official is already very satisfied with my current position. I don't think I need to get promoted now, right?”

“How could that be okay?!” The father and son duo simultaneously exclaimed. Zhu Junfan glared hatefully in a threatening way at his fellow transmigrator and said, “We are a wise ruler. Successes need to be rewarded, so we naturally need to find something proper for you. Just sit there obediently and don't butt in!”

Yu Xiaocao hastily interjected, “In actuality, rewards doesn't have to be a promotion necessarily ah! Other things that are more practical, like gold and jewels, are also quite good, right?”

Zhu Junfan revealed a toothy grin and suddenly asked, “Aren't the businesses under your hand doing quite well now? Did you encounter any problems with your medicinal cuisine business or Blossoming Beauty enterprise recently?”

“No, why? They're all doing quite well!” Yu Xiaocao was a bit confused now. She stared warily at the emperor as she wasn't sure just what the emperor was hinting at now.

“Since your businesses are doing quite well, that means you don't lack money, right? What's the point in throwing a bit of money down a money-filled well ah? The little bit that we could possibly give you is merely the cherry on top for you. Do you still lack money? Are there truly officials like you who don't long for the glory of promotion?”

Zhu Junfan hatefully glared at her as he grouchy thought, 'The amount of money you have in your hands is much more than what we have in our personal treasury. Yet you still want to spend money from our hands. You are truly quite cold-blooded ah!'

Yu Xiaocao still needed to struggle to the end, “But...I'm just a silly girl, why do I need to have such a high rank at court ah? I only know how to farm and make some tasty food. I'm not cultured enough nor do I have enough elegance, there's no point in playing music to me, the cow!”

“Being able to farm is already enough!! The 'Clerk of the Capital for Grain' is a special position that manages agriculture matters, after all! Alright, why do you have to be so stubborn, Lass? We are giving you a promotion, so do we need to ask for your permission ah? Enough nonsense, we are getting annoyed!”

Zhu Junfan felt quite sullen now. Other people racked their brains to come up with an excuse for promotion, yet this lass was the complete opposite. She not only wasn't grateful for the opportunity but she was also doing her best to push away a possible promotion. Did she think that having a high rank at court was an inconvenient thing? That wouldn't do! This emperor's tender heart was quite hurt by her excuses and he needed some delicious delicacies to soothe the painful wound.

“Just what are you holding in your hands? Aren't you tired from holding it up for so long ah?” Zhu Junfan had long been eying the box of food in her hands. Zhu Hanwen had also been regarding it in a pathetic manner. The delicious aroma from within had already tempted the gluttonous bug in his stomach out. However, in front of his imperial father, he had to preserve his image.

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Yu Xiaocao watched as the two faces, which quite resembled each other, revealed simultaneously an expression of longing and thirst. She felt quite tickled by it. If they were in any other place, who would have believed that these two, who were regarding her quite pathetically, were actually the two most important personages of the Great Ming Empire?

“This subject was idle at home, so I came out with a few new mousse-type cakes. I thought that they tasted quite good, so I brought some over to show my respect to Your Imperial Majesty! Children all love to eat mousse cakes, so I hope that Your Highness, the crown prince, would like to try some too.” Yu Xiaocao stood up and placed the box of cakes onto the study table. She lightly lifted the lid to the box, revealing the tiny adorable pieces of cake within to the father and son pair in front of her.

Zhu Hanwen originally wanted to protest, “This prince isn't a child anymore...” However, once he saw the beautiful and delicate cakes in front of him, he immediately forgot the rest of his words. He only had eyes for the pastries.

As soon as the Yu's Dessert Shop's western-style pastries came out, it caused a huge sensation within the capital and instantly became famous. The cakes were soft and bouncy, sweet without being overwhelming, so they obtained everyone's approval. However, these pastries could not even compare to the legendary chocolate mousse cake, Black Forest gateau, and tiramisu that had been made by Royal Princess Jinan.

Unfortunately, the western-style pastries made by Royal Princess Jinan weren't something that could be eaten whenever one had the desire to. Those legendary pastries weren't for sale anywhere. Only the people closest to her were lucky enough to eat them on occasion. Last time, the matrons and noble maidens who had been invited to participate at Imperial Prince Jing's Estate for a banquet were all given the opportunity to try her hand-made desserts. When they left, the rumors spread throughout the capital about how amazing her cakes were. Thus, the chocolate flavored desserts had reached another level of fame within these noble circles.

The imperial palace naturally was given desserts made by Yu Xiaocao. Once, when Zhu Hanwen was at his imperial mother's palace, he had the chance to try some. He immediately fell in love with these chocolate flavored desserts. However, his imperial father told him that as the heir the empire he needed to learn how to endure hardships before pleasure, have a backbone as strong as steel, control his appetites, and strive for enlightenment...so how could he indulge in gluttonous pleasures? Then, all of the pastries that were later sent into the palace had mostly gone into his imperial father's stomach. Zhu Hanwen secretly wondered if his father's teachings were merely an excuse for him to stop fighting for sweets with him!

There wasn't a second person within the Great Ming Empire who could make pastries that could compare with Official Yu's. Unfortunately, she was way too busy. She had to manage the tasks that the court tasked her as well as keep her own businesses afloat. Thus, she very rarely had the time to bake pastries. Zhu Hanwen could never forget the memory of those unique flavored desserts. When he saw the box full of a variety of mousse cakes, it immediately brought to his mind the taste that his memory savored.

“Imperial Majesty, please wait a bit. This subject will first taste these pastries for poison...” Under the usual state of things, in order to keep the palace safe, it was forbidden for outsiders to bring food into the palace. All of the food served to the emperor first had to undergo tasting by his eunuchs for poison. This was the usual custom, so Eunuch Su Chi's reminder wasn't out of the ordinary.

However, the emperor kicked his butt forcefully and growled in a laughing matter, “Screw off! You're such a sly servant, coming over when you smell delicious food. We haven't even had the chance to try Lass Yu's food before you butt in to have a taste. Go stand where it is cool. There are only a few cakes in the box, so there's definitely not enough for you to get a share. So dream on!”

“Imperial Majesty, food brought in from the outside of the palace normally can't be...” Su Chi now had a visible footprint on his clothing but he didn't dare to dust it off. He had an aggrieved expression on his face as he recited the customs.

“Customs were all made by people! If we can't trust Lass Yu then who is to be trusted? That's enough, stop looking for an excuse to fight for pastries with us. Aren't you going to back down now?” Why did this fellow not have any eyes for the situation? If it were Su Ran here instead, he absolutely would not have made such a fuss.

Yu Xiaocao stopped herself from laughing and took off of the lids from all of the boxes she brought with her as she quietly said, “Imperial Majesty, this official has brought over four types of mousse cakes. Each cake came with nine pieces. How about you let Chief Steward Su Chi let you taste test them first?”

“No need, no need! Each cake only has nine pieces, which is barely enough to satisfy us. How could we possibly allow someone else to try a piece of paradise?” Zhu Junfan protectively brought the food boxes towards him and impatiently took out a piece of mousse cake that had been crafted in the shape of a lychee.

“Imperial Father...” Zhu Hanwen noticed that his father seemed to have forgotten that he was here, so he pitifully cried out. He felt like this was deliberate. His imperial father didn't seem to want to share these cakes with him.

“Hmph! Look at you, do you even have the demeanor of an heir to the empire at this point? If you can't even restrain your desires for food, how can you possibly keep the empire in your hands in the future?”

As Zhu Junfan spoke, he shoved the cake that was in his hands into his mouth. He revealed an ecstatic expression on his face.

Zhu Hanwen silently cursed, 'Imperial Father, you also have a hankering for good food but isn't the empire flourishing and doing well under your hands? There isn't a conflict between the two, alright ah? Do you truly intend on enjoying these pastries alone, letting me, your son, to just watch you pathetically?'

Zhu Junfan felt a sliver of guilt enter his heart when he saw the despondent and pathetic look on his son's face. He dryly coughed and said, "Alright ah! Since you've been working hard on both your studies and martial arts, I will reward you with one piece!"

"Thank you, Imperial Father!" Zhu Hanwen's face immediately lit up in joy as he carefully picked a piece of cake and delivered it into his mouth. He savored it in small bites as he exclaimed, "Wow! It's so incredibly delicious ah! It has the flavor of fruit and the spongy texture of cake. Official Yu, what is the name of this cake?"

"In reply to Your Highness, this is called 'fruit mousse cake'. Within the smooth texture of mousse is the flavor of fresh fruit, which restores the original essence of lychee within it. The taste is very rich." Yu Xiaocao noticed that the father and son pair had the exact same joyful expression on their faces. She suddenly realized that it seemed like the 'foodie gene' could also be inherited. The emperor emeritus was an old glutton, the emperor loved to eat good foods, and, now, even the crown prince was a tiny little foodie!

"Is this a chocolate flavored cake ah? I love chocolate the most!" Zhu Hanwen saw another type of cake in the box and immediately forgot the words that his imperial father had said about him only being allowed one slice. He reached his hand into the box and pulled a piece out as he delightedly tasted the pastry.

The emperor glared angrily at the look on the crown prince's face. It was truly too interesting! Yu Xiaocao controlled the twitching lips on her face as she was afraid she might burst into laughter at any time. She managed to say with a straight face, "Imperial Highness, that piece has hazelnut mousse. Mousse that is chocolate hazelnut flavored is filled between the slices of chocolate cake. The hazelnut adds a unique fragrance to the mousse. Chocolate and hazelnut are a pair made in heaven, so when paired with the cute shape of the pastry, it is truly considered a piece of culinary art!"

Zhu Junfan also placed a piece of mousse cake into his mouth. He delicately tasted it for a long time before he finally said, "Mhm...in one bite, the dense mousse explodes into my mouth. Paired with the refreshing flavor of fruit and the spongy cake, it truly makes me feel quite satisfied!"

The European pear mousse cake was also another example of a beautifully made cake. Not only was the outside delicate and lively, but it also preserved the unique characteristics of a European pear. The cake was filled with a caramel pear mousse filling, and, naturally, the taste was divine.

"The last type is cherry mousse. The outside is beautiful and translucent. In order to decrease the amount of mousse filling needed in the cake, this official added a bit more cherry flesh inside to improve the flavor—please go ahead and try some!" Yu Xiaocao had finished introducing all four types of mousse cakes but noticed that the father and son pair were solely preoccupied with eating. They didn't even say a word, so that's how she knew that they truly loved these cakes.

Zhu Junfan saw that his son had eaten a piece of each type of cake and was raring to grab more. Thus, he placed the lid back on the boxes and said, "Don't eat anymore. Otherwise, in a moment when it's time for the meal, you won't be able to eat much. The rest of the cakes should be given to your imperial mother!"

Each piece of mouse cake was only about the size of a ping pong ball. After eating four pieces, Zhu Hanwen naturally desired to eat more. However, he was a filial child. As soon as he heard that the rest were to be given to his mother, he didn't protest anymore. His imperial mother loved him very much and always gave him the best she had to offer. How could he possibly fight for food with her?

"Official Yu, are the raw ingredients for these cakes easy to come by ah? Will these be added onto the pastries that will be sold at the Yu's Pastry Shop?" Zhu Hanwen was very interested in this point. If the market had these cakes available, then, in the future, when he wanted to eat these cakes, all he had to do was send one of his personal eunuchs out to buy them.

He remembered that the previous chocolate flavored desserts required raw ingredients that were too hard to find, which was the reason why they weren't sold on the market. If the ingredient problem could be solved, then all of these desserts could be added to her store, which would be too awesome. Official Yu was someone who really loved to make money, so she wouldn't let go of such a good money-making opportunity, right?"

Yu Xiaocao solemnly replied, "These mousse cakes truly test a pastry chef's abilities. I'm pretty sure that if someone didn't study under me for at least a year, it'd be hard for them to create a satisfactory

product. However, Imperial Highness, you don't need to worry. If the emperor decides not to promote this official, then this official will have plenty of time to make these new cakes to send into the palace..."

"Official Yu, you're quite an odd person. Other people, for the sake of a promotion, wrack their brains to find out a method to climb up higher. You, on the other hand, act as if my imperial father was harming you for trying to reward you for your merits. What should we do with you? Looks like you don't care about fame or fortune." Zhu Hanwen was a bit curious. Why didn't she treasure this opportunity to increase her official rank?

"Sigh...the higher one climbs, the more responsibility one has. I'm just a small little girl and I'm about to become a married woman soon. In the future, I'll be tending the household and children for my husband, so how would I have so much extra time to do other things? The most important factor is this: this subject remembers that ranked five officials and above all need to attend morning court..." In a moment of carelessness, Yu Xiaocao said her true thoughts.

Zhu Junfan burst out into laughter and pointed at Xiaocao. He stated in a voice filled with bemusement, "Apparently the reason why you really didn't want to get promoted is right here ah! Is it really that bad having to go to morning court once every five days ah?"

"This subject truly sleeps heavily and likes to sleep in. I'm afraid I might sleep past the time and get punished for missing morning court..." Yu Xiaocao meekly replied in a quiet voice. What a joke! Morning court started at five in the morning, so that meant she had to leave the residence at around four. Didn't that mean she had to get out of bed before four then? That was asking for her life ah! When her younger brother and sister were studying for their college examinations, they didn't even have to get up that early.

Zhu Junfan snorted and said, "If I waived away the requirement for you to go to morning court and promoted you, would you be okay with that?"

"Uh...after I get promoted, would I still only be in charge of the imperial plantation and other farming matters ah? If I need to manage anything else, I'm not sure I could do it!" Yu Xiaocao had a good grasp on her own abilities. She knew she was only able to handle so much, so she truly didn't want to have more extraneous duties added on!

"Your duties will not change! The only change that could happen would be that you will have more people under you. We will send some officials over to help you. All you have to do is make sure your

high-yielding crop breeding continues on course!” Zhu Junfan suddenly felt fatigued. This was the first time he had to chase someone to promote them yet they truly didn't want this honor.

“Then...that will work ah!” Yu Xiaocao reluctantly said as if someone had a knife to her throat, “Then make sure you send two hardworking and humble ones over. Ones that are easy to get along with. I don't want to deal with any annoying ones ah!”

Zhu Junfan: ...

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Zhu Hanwen frowned at this. Wasn't his imperial father being a little too lenient? It was too obvious that he had some vague intentions towards Official Yu. That wouldn't do! He needed to surreptitiously remind his mother a bit on another day. His imperial father had always respected his imperial mother's opinions, so he should be willing to listen to her advice. He needed to make sure that this got nipped in the bud before it got too late!

Following that, at the next court session, Yu Xiaocao had been promoted to the fourth rank 'Clerk of the Capital for Grain' for her efforts in eradicating the poisoning case at the stud farm as well as the promising results in the rice paddies. She was now completely in charge of crop breeding and her task was to improve the rice paddy yield as well as the winter wheat seeds.

The emperor recalled that Xiaocao was Great General Zhenxi's fiancée, so he especially summoned her along to leave the capital to welcome him back home. His intention was simple. He wanted to give her the opportunity to see her fiancé as soon as possible. However, he would have never expected that his younger cousin had snuck into the capital earlier and had bummed around the Yu Residence, acting lovey dovey with his future wife, before he finally left.

Regardless, Yu Xiaocao felt a sense of pride and glee rise up within her heart when she saw that familiar dark figure within the army as she rode next to the emperor's carriage with the envious gazes of other officials surrounding her. When a woman's man was successful, her face also became brighter.

The high-ranked officials who had come out today to receive the army all felt mixed feelings arise in their hearts when they saw the handsome and heroic Royal Prince Yang come back. In the past, Royal Prince Yang was impetuous and cruel with a cloud of bad rumors surrounding him. His reputation wasn't much better than the hedonistic good-for-nothing sons from rich families. Who would have thought that after he turned fifteen and was given the mission to travel to the west, he would come back like a changed man. His personality had become stable and steady and he became more and more outstanding as time passed.

He not only brought the high-yielding corn seeds back, but he also luckily discovered the current 'Clerk of the Capital for Grain', Official Yu, who had a talent for farming. With higher-yield crops now on hand, the commoners, who had previously been living in harsh, post-war times, now had a surplus to eat. As the fortunes of the people rose, so did the fortunes of the empire. Now that the commoners were living better lives, the empire was now richer and more powerful than ever.

Furthermore, Royal Prince Yang wasn't just good at regular issues, he was also a genius at military matters. After the Xishan Barracks were given to him to manage, in less than two years, any soldier from that assignment could easily fight against three to five ordinary soldiers with ease. The firearms division was especially astounding. Each soldier there had top-notch martial arts skills like the rest of the soldiers within the Xishan Barracks, and they were also sharpshooters with their firearms. They were truly the best of the best!

Not only was he talented at training troops, but he was also skilled at military strategy and tactics. When the northeast rebellion had occurred, it felt like only a practice session for him to put it down. This time, with the war in the northwest, he was finally able to display his outstanding abilities. Even the previous dynasty's Old General Zhao and Young General Zhao had to admire this young and skilled royal prince's talents.

Furthermore, the two generals from the Zhao Family were only alive today because of him. Naturally, this was also related to the fact that Royal Prince Yang had external help—Royal Princess Jinan's medicinal abilities. Only he had a fiancée who was skilled at medicine and detoxifying poisons.

It was also rumored that the unfathomable Military Inspector Su had been saved by him! Chief Steward Su was the emperor's closest and most intimate confidant and subordinate. Unfortunately, he was very hard to get close to and was extremely cunning and sly. Whoever could catch his eyes and have him say a few flattering words in front of the emperor naturally had a career that would soar without boundaries. However, Royal Prince Yang didn't require his good words as his own abilities were more than enough to ensure a smooth and steady climb up to the top!

Royal Prince Yang was a youth with an extremely promising career ahead of him. Unfortunately, he was an engaged man. The high-ranking officials who had previously rejected Princess Consort Jing's attempts to matchmake her son in years past were now incredibly regretful. If it weren't for the fact that they had disdained Royal Prince Yang when he had a bad reputation, they could be his future father-in-law now and have another strong ally at court. Thus, their official careers would also be more smooth. What a pity...

However, there were still some people scheming quietly in the background, thinking about their concubine-born daughters at home. Some of them even thought about offering their legitimate daughters to the prince to become his concubine. What man, especially the hardworking and talented ones, didn't have a crowd of wives and concubines at home? Royal Prince Yang was very likely going to be promoted into an imperial prince in the future, and it was very normal for a grand and noble imperial prince to have a courtyard full of women at home, right? For example, Royal Prince Yang's imperial uncle, Imperial Prince Sa, not only had two ranked concubines at home but he also had so many lower ranking concubines that he couldn't keep them straight.

Naturally, there were also some people who wondered whether Royal Princess Jinan could even marry the prince at this point. No matter whether it was personal or familial status, the two of them were not of the same background. Royal Princess Jinan was truly talented. After all, a little girl climbing up to a fourth-ranked official's position wasn't something to be scoffed at.

However, the vast majority of men preferred women who were gentle and unassuming. If one had to be honest, Royal Princess Jinan's personality couldn't be considered sweet and considerate...perhaps the position of Royal Prince Yang's official wife was something that could be negotiated!

Royal Prince Yang had no idea that his future marriage and inner courtyard was currently being schemed over by many people. Currently, he had just spotted his little lass, who was next to the golden yellow imperial carriage. She was dressed in a tiny official's robe and her hair had been styled into a nimble and handsome ponytail. The day before yesterday he had been preoccupied with spending time with her, so he didn't pay attention to the fact that she had some pretty significant physical changes in the past year.

Although she still had a very slim and slender figure, she had grown perceptibly in height. By now, the top of her head should be around his chin height. Her facial features had also blossomed. She had a pair of round and innocent looking eyes that now seemed more elongated. They glittered with liveliness and an air of coquettishness. Her roomy official's robe also couldn't completely hide her alluring body figure, mhm...his little lass had truly matured and was becoming more and more beautiful with every passing day.

At this time, Xiaocao's entire attention seemed to have been magnetized. She couldn't seem to move her eyes away from the heroic figure in front of her. Zhu Junyang was attired in a general's armor and looked incredibly handsome! There was something incredibly manly and stunning about him! His broad and sturdy figure paired with that alluringly handsome face didn't seem out of sorts at all and harmonized into one perfect whole. The mere sight of him made her little heart pound faster. Yu Xiaocao placed her hands over her heart as she was afraid that her heart might jump out of her chest from being too excited...

The emperor was speechless at this. It looked like it was truly the wrong choice to bring that lass Xiaocao along with him. These two people only had eyes for each other. He was pretty sure that neither of them had heard a single word of his grandiose and imposing speech. Such a waste of his eloquent and touching words!

Under the gazes of everyone around them, this youthful engaged couple stared longingly at each other. The soldiers under Zhu Junyang all grinned knowingly as they elbowed each other. If it weren't for the fact that the emperor was present, it was likely that they would have long started heckling the prince.

Yu Xiaocao finally realized that everyone was staring at the back of her head. However, she wasn't the least bit embarrassed. Instead, she calmly moved away her gaze and smiled tranquilly. This made all of Zhu Junyang's subordinates view her, as their leader's future wife, in a different light. She truly was a woman worthy of being admired by their leader as she had the right temperament to be with him.

It was no wonder that she, as a woman, was able to become an official and a successful businesswoman. At such a young age she had been made into an official...eh? The leader's wife was currently wearing the robes of a fourth-ranked official. Heavens! Two years ago, the leader's wife was only a tiny little sixth-ranked official. Now she had already been promoted into a fourth-ranked official.

Fortunately, their leader was also someone with incredible abilities. This time he came back victorious from the battlefield, so getting rewarded was a sure thing now. Otherwise, wouldn't he be surpassed by his own wife by now? Royal Princess Jinan wasn't someone that anyone could marry. After all, most ordinary men would be completely pressured by her!

Yu Xiaocao looked at the army and stopped her eyes on two familiar figures. The Zhao Family's two generals had also spotted the slender and graceful young maiden who was next to the imperial carriage. Gradually, their memories of that super thin little figure in that tiny fishing village had merged with the youthful maiden in front of them.

They would have never expected that the Yu Family's sickly and tiny Xiaocao was now the most successful out of all of them! Although they had been stationed at the border, the Zhao Family's two generals had also heard the stories of Royal Princess Jinan, who was talented at farming and had expertly bred high-yielding crops, changing the lives of the people for the better.

Furthermore, Lady Zhao, who had been left at the capital, often wrote letters to them that spoke of this little lass. She stated that the lass had a kind and compassionate heart. Xiaocao was afraid that she might be lonely by herself in the capital, so she often came over every few days to spend time with her. In addition, Lady Zhao wrote that the lass's pastries were incredibly delicious. Every time she came up with new pastries, she never forgot to send some to her. Finally, the little lass had also helped to nurse Lady Zhao back to health. She had a lingering illness after giving birth but now her problem hadn't reoccurred for several years.

Lady Zhao often lamented within her letters that she would have liked Xiaocao to become her daughter-in-law if it weren't for the fact that Royal Prince Yang moved too fast. Unfortunately, it was too late. Their family hadn't struck when they had the advantage and allowed Royal Prince Yang to monopolize this child. Now, the prince was only waiting for her to reach adulthood before marriage.

Eight years had passed since the two Zhao generals had last seen this little lass, who used to sweetly call them 'Grandfather Zhao' and 'Uncle Zhao'. They would have never expected that she, by relying on her own abilities, would be able to become a fourth-ranked official. Normally, fourth-ranked officials weren't high enough on the rankings to accompany an imperial procession to welcome back a victorious army. However, the little lass was standing next to the emperor's personal carriage, which meant that the emperor himself had allowed her the great favor of coming along. Who else within the empire could obtain this type of honor and glory?

However, that lass's personality hadn't seemed to change one iota. She was still as simple and pure as before. Just look, when she saw the two of them, the little lass revealed a broad and wide smile and even raised her right hand to wave at them furiously. All of the other officials here looked at her with expressionless faces. Even the emperor cocked his head over at her and glared at her with a smile on his face. The young maiden sheepishly lowered her hand and rubbed her nose. Her actions now were the exact same as when she was young.

The two of them began reminiscing of years past. Back then, there was a skinny and slight little girl who childishly followed their son (grandson) from behind, begging him to teach her how to set traps. Now, she had already grown into the Yu Family's glorious and honorable young maiden!

Royal Prince Yang had been put in command of the army to fight the war in the northwest. He fought against the odds and put out a daring plan, which succeeded in pacifying their borders. He managed to beat back those ambitious wolves, the foreign tribes hankering at their border, sending them into a riotous retreat into the bitter and harsh conditions of the north. In less than two years' time, he had obtained a total victory and was likely going to become a rock steady figure in the empire! He was truly too good to be a match in marriage. They weren't sure whether the engagement between the two would be a fortune or calamity for her in the future!

The news that the emperor had personally come out of the capital to welcome Great General Zhenxi back to court had long been disseminated throughout the city and its surrounding suburbs. The commoners had also all come over, finding a suitable place to stand as they crane their necks to get a glimpse of the Great Ming Empire's army who had protected their country from foreign invaders. The bulk of the army had been stationed about two kilometers outside of the city while Royal Prince Yang brought all of the high-ranking officers along to enter the city.

Both sides of the street in the capital, as well as the shops lining the area, were all squeezed full of people. The men entering the city had just experienced the bloody and exhilarating battlefield, so they came in with austere and serious looking faces. The emperor's carriage and escort were also glorious and stately, cowing the people in the crowds into a silence. The entire street was as quiet as if there wasn't a single person there.