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At the entrance of the city, the imperial guards wore armors and stood upright in two rows on both sides of the gate. The imperial symbol was stitched onto the bright yellow imperial canopy, and the canopy was followed by feather fans that were embedded with precious jewels as the procession led them into the city. Music was playing, people were singing, and the sound of a drum could be heard. The emperor donned a bright yellow dragon robe and sat on the luxurious carriage. The officials of the court crowded around the carriage, escorting the emperor as they headed for the imperial city.

The commoners that were standing on the two sides of the procession held their breath as they watched. Marching orderly behind the officials was a row of black-armored guards with their armored horses. Among all the guards, one man was clad in silver armor, carrying an épée on his waist. He sat upright on an ink-colored warhorse. The man exuded a dense and austere aura. Next to him, was a lean and competent man, carrying a unique bow. The black flag fluttered in the wind; the words “Great Ming” were written flawlessly and powerfully on the flag!

Royal Prince Yang took the lead in the procession. He lifted the reins of the horse, urging it to move forward. The armored horses followed after him unanimously in order. The warhorses' hooves hit against the ground in a neat and orderly fashion, which resonated within the people's inner hearts...

It took awhile for the commoners to snap out of their trance after the army passed by. They began to gossip in low whispers.

“The man clad in silver armor, leading the procession, has such an imposing aura that I didn't even dare to look straight at him. I heard that he is the famous 'God of War' of our Great Ming Dynasty. As soon as he led the soldiers to the northwestern border, they managed to defeat the different tribes to the point where they didn't even dare to raise their heads anymore!!”

“I just wanted to see how our great general, who is always victorious, looked like. However, when he glanced back at me with his ice-cold and murderous gaze, I immediately lowered my head and almost fell to the ground in fear. Even now, my legs are still trembling from the shock! He was so scary!!”

“The man next to him is Old General Zhao. Although both his hair and beard has turned white, he is still strong despite his age. He isn't weaker than any of the young men following behind him. If it were not for Old General Zhao, who was stationed in the northwest for a long period of time, how would we have been able to live such a stable and peaceful life?”

“Look at General Zhao! He has a tall and sturdy build. He is the best of the best of all the men on the battlefield. It doesn't matter whether he is leading his soldiers or slaughtering the enemy, he always does a great job. Unfortunately, he fell into the foreign tribes' devious traps; otherwise, he wouldn't have asked Royal Prince Yang for help.”

“Although General Zhao is brave, he is not as skilled as Royal Prince Yang. The father and sons of the Zhao Family have been stationed in the northwest border for many years now, but they have never managed to defeat the different tribes occupying the borders. However, Royal Prince Yang was stationed by the border for merely a little over a year yet he managed to drive the tribes far away like he was herding a group of chickens. The tribes don't even have the courage to bother us again!!”

“Did you see the young girl next to the emperor's carriage? Is that Royal Princess Jinan? I've heard that Royal Princess Jinan managed to cultivate rice fields in the Imperial Plantation that produce up to four to five hundred catties per mu this spring! It has only been five years since she's taken office, and she already has produced cornfields that yield more than a thousand catties of corn per mu and high yielding winter wheat. She also grows fruits and vegetables in greenhouses, which allows the people of the capital to continue to be able to eat fresh vegetables in the winter...all the meritorious deeds she has contributed helped the country immensely! Now, her experiment of creating high yielding rice fields has also succeeded. Who could've imagined that a young girl would be able to make such major achievements?”

“Yes, that's right! I have a distant relative who is married to someone from the northeast. When I went to visit them, I heard that the northeast could only plant one type of crop in a year due to the climate and the yield from the crops was always low. As a result, they have a famine every year. However, ever since they started planting the corn and high yielding winter wheat, the family could finally eat without fear of having another famine!”

“I've heard that the important officials from Jiangnan requested Royal Princess Jinan to help them improve the rice seeds a few days ago. Royal Princess Jinan has a kind heart. She planted dozens of rice fields on the Imperial Plantation at the beginning of spring to improve the yields of the rice seed. It was unexpected that she managed to succeed in such a short time frame. Each field managed to produce over five hundred catties, which is more than double the original output. Reportedly, Royal Princess Jinan isn't satisfied and is determined to improve the rice seeds until it yields a thousand catties per mu!

“Rice seeds that yield a thousand catties per mu? Stop joking around! Aren't you worried that your tongue might be cut off? A mu of rice yielding five hundred catties is already quite high. Rice seeds are not like sweet potatoes and corn, it's impossible for one mu of field to yield a thousand catties of rice!”

“Why would I lie to you? My younger cousin is a tenant farmer at the Imperial Plantation. He told me that he heard Royal Princess Jinan say this to the Imperial Plantation's steward!”

“You didn't make it up? Royal Princess Jinan actually said that? If that's the case, then it's us, the commoners, who will benefit in the end. If she succeeds, then everyone will be able to afford to eat white rice and white noodles. Every family will have a surplus amount of food. We won't have to worry even if there's a disaster!”

“Do you think Royal Princess Jinan is the Child of Fortune sent by the Heavens? No matter what she grows or raises, the crop will always produce high yields; it seems like she's able to communicate with the spirits. She's definitely not an ordinary person since she's able to grow vegetables in seasons where vegetables aren't supposed to grow.”

“It must be because of the emperor's concern for the country and the commoners that moved the Heavens. The Heavens have sent an immortal girl to assist the emperor and establish a foundation for this country that will last throughout the ages. The heavens protect the Great Ming Dynasty and the commoners!

...

The commoners that were watching the procession were originally talking about the army stationed in the west. But now, the topic changed to 'the Child of Fortune', Royal Princess Jinan.

Xiaocao didn't know that in the blink of an eye, she was branded as a little fairy who had descended from the Heavens. At the moment, she was watching the 'soldiers being promoted to nobility' with great interest!

The emperor's carriage had just arrived in front of the imperial gate. The emperor straightened his dragon robe before he descended from the carriage. He was escorted by the civil and military officials as he entered the Jinluan Hall and sat down upright at the Dragon Throne in the middle of the hall.

The civil and military officials stepped into two neat rows on either side of the hall. Xiaocao was standing in one of the rows, fading into the background. She stood upright and remained quiet as her large eyes watched the scene unfold in front of her with great curiosity.

At this moment, her gaze was solely focused on the tall and heroic general clad in silver armor. He stopped at the imperial gate and raised his right hand slightly. The soldiers behind him immediately stopped moving forward. Zhu Junyang got off his horse and slowly walked forward with a straight back. He was shrouded with a murderous aura. His face was so handsome that it made the heavens angry and the mortals resentful. His solemn and serene expression gave off a frightening feeling.

Xiaocao's gaze remained on his enchanting face for a long time. He had been fighting in a war all year round, so his originally fair skin had now turned a healthy wheat color. His charming phoenix eyes were brimming with anger and might. His straight nose bridge was like a delicate work of art sculpted using a carving knife. She originally thought that his thin lips weren't that sexy, but now, it gave off a majestic feeling.

The corners of her mouth curved up slightly and her eyes shone with pride——that man was her man, a man that can support both heaven and earth with just his bare hands! She suddenly recalled a well-known sentence from 'Journey to the West' in her mind: 'My sweetheart is an unrivaled hero. One day, he will ride a seven-colored magical cloud to pick me up'...Fairy Zixia never received the mystical treasure, but she found her 'unrivaled hero'!

The 'unrivaled hero' in Xiaocao's heart, had already quickly arrived in the throne room. He walked up the marble staircase one step at a time and unhurriedly stepped into the throne room. He slightly lowered his gaze and knelted down. There were several generals who had contributed to the war kneeling one after another not far behind him.

“Fortunately, this official has not failed your orders!” Zhu Junyang's words were resounding, powerful, and concise. He immediately raised the tiger tally over his head. Su Chi bent his waist and took the tiger tally from him with both hands, then, he presented the tiger tally to the emperor. In the beginning, many of the officials were worried and feared that giving the tiger tally that commanded the army would incite disloyalty in Zhu Junyang.

However, the emperor reprimanded them for worrying too much at the time! The emperor was good at judging other people's characters. Although Royal Prince Yang achieved outstanding military service by subduing the enemy army at the northwest border, his heart did not yearn for power that the tiger tally provided. Instead, he took the initiative to return the tiger tally back to the emperor. It seemed like the old generals were worried about nothing!

“My beloved officials, please rise. My beloved officials, please rise.” The emperor did not take the tiger tally from Su Chi, so Su Chi placed the tiger tally on a case. Zhu Junfan raised his hand slightly, hinting at the head eunuch, Su Chi, to announce his decree.

It was silent in the Jinluan Hall, and only Su Chi's voice could be heard as he read the emperor's edict in a shrill voice. The imperial edict started off politely by praising Royal Prince Yang for the illustrious feats he had done. It was only at the end of the imperial edict that something substantial was said— bestowing the title 'Imperial Prince Xu' to Royal Prince Yang. The meaning behind the title was quite clear; it referred to a rising sun and a bright future. The meaning behind the title was similar to the 'Yang' title he received.

Not only was he rewarded a lot of gold and silver, jewels, silk, gauze, satin, and so on, but his feudal fiefdom was also expanded to encompass the entire Jinwei Prefectural City. In other words, all of the taxes collected in Jinwei Prefectural City, except for the ports, was going to belong to Imperial Prince Xu, Zhu Junyang! Jinwei Prefectural City was very close to the capital, and it was the top three wealthiest prefectural cities of the Great Ming Empire. For the emperor to bestow Imperial Prince Xu this feudal fiefdom showed that the emperor regarded him highly and favored him greatly!

Zhu Junyang received the yellow imperial edict made of thin silk with both of his hands. He thanked the emperor for the rewards and rose. He turned around and faced the high-ranking military officers standing outside the throne room. He said in a respectful yet solemn voice, “This achievement and glory was achieved through the blood-soaked efforts by the soldiers of the western army. It was achieved thanks to the brothers who lost their lives on the battlefield! For the brothers who died on the battlefield, in addition to the emperor's reward, I will also look after their family's old and weak women until their children reaches adulthood and finds a job!”

The hundreds of soldiers in the army were all soldiers that Zhu Junyang trusted, and every single one of them was a brave warrior. The soldiers' blood began to boil when they looked at the bright yellow imperial edict in their leader's hand and after they heard their leader's generous speech. They began to shout in unison, “Long live the emperor” and “We pledge our lives to protect the Great Ming Dynasty”...their voices resonated through the sky and shook the heavens and earth!

The emperor revealed a satisfied smile as he looked at the majestic soldiers standing before him with their battle regalia fluttering in the wind. These people represented the spirits of the Great Ming Dynasty's army. With such an invincible army, he didn't need to worry about the stability and strength of the Great Ming Dynasty.

“Your Majesty, I think Imperial Prince Xu harbors bad intentions by doing this...” One of the old officials couldn't stand it anymore and stepped forward. It was the emperor's job to reward the soldiers in the army. Wasn't Royal Prince Yang...no, Imperial Prince Xu overstepping his boundary?

The old official's words actually drew the emperor's resentment. Zhu Junfan glanced at him indifferently and said, “Are you doubting Imperial Prince Xu's loyalty? If I didn't know how hardworking and loyal you are normally, then I would've already punished you for trying to sow discord!”

“In the imperial court, anyone can suddenly have a change of heart and betray me, all except for Junyang! You can't just become suspicious of him for abusing his powers in the future just because he has the skills to lead an army. A man being used cannot be suspected, but if he becomes suspected, he cannot be used. If my beloved official doesn't understand my meaning, then you should return home and think carefully about it behind closed doors!”

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The emperor looked at the civil and military officials and sighed deeply, “Only an incapable ruler would become overly suspicious of a god-like general and push him away, forcing a once loyal subject to rebel! Do we look like a muddle-headed and an immoral ruler to you?”

The old official was terrified by the emperor's speech. He hurriedly knelt on the ground and begged for forgiveness.

Yu Xiaocao almost started clapping and cheering for the emperor, 'The emperor is mighty. The emperor is wise. The emperor is a fair and just ruler.’”

People believed that becoming the emperor was amazing and wonderful, so everyone would scramble for the throne. The truth was that it was a demanding position that required a lot of work. If they wanted the throne, then they could just fight for it, but her Jun Yangyang wouldn't fight for such a strenuous and unrewarding job! Some people put great importance on power and influence, while others viewed power as a pair of discarded shoes. Different people had different views! The unrivaled hero of her heart was not the kind of person who would covet the army for himself and plot a rebellion! She could guarantee that as long as the emperor retained his trust in him, then he would definitely return his trust 100% with loyalty!

After that, the generals of the war were bestowed their rewards. Of the father and son duo from the Zhao Family, one was bestowed the title of a first-rank General Jianwei, while the other one was bestowed the title of second-rank General Longhu. With the addition of the Duke of Zhenyuan, all three generations of the Zhao Family continued to prosper.

The emperor even graciously allowed the father and son from the Zhao Family to rest in the capital for an extended period of time. They couldn't leave the Zhao Estate unattended without a man in charge, so General Longhu stayed in the capital with an official position. General Jianwei, old General Zhao, returned to the northwest after resting for half a year to protect the Great Ming Dynasty's borders. In addition to that, his loyal and hardworking apprentice, Fang Zizhen, General Fang, went with him.

Fang Zizhen had been idle in the capital for many years and now, he finally had the opportunity to achieve his ambition. Even if there wasn't any war on the northwest border, it was better than idling at home and taking care of some trivial matters. Moreover, this was an opportunity for him to gallop through the battlefield with his master. He was undoubtedly overjoyed by this opportunity!

The only regret he had was that he was going to be separated from his wife and son in the future. He wondered if his son, Fang Haolin, would still recognize that he was his father the next time he returned to the capital. His wife doted on their child too much. It seemed like he needed to ask his daughter to visit her family frequently to make sure that his wife didn't raise his son into someone useless.

After Zhu Junyang was conferred the title of Imperial Prince Xu, rumors of the two princes from the Jing Estate spread far and wide. Imperial Prince Jing returned to the estate and happily held his princess consort in his arms and proudly said, "This prince's title was only bestowed on me because this prince was the previous emperor's son. When our child was young, I didn't think that he would achieve much. But now that he's older, not only does he have a prosperous future, but he also depended on his own abilities and contributed military merits to the country and earned the title of nobility! No wonder he's my son!"

"What are you talking about? Stop acting so shameless!! Prince, you don't need to be so humble. You are also a pillar of the country and one of the emperor's most trusted aides! You deserve your title." Princess Consort Jing was also elated by the news, but nevertheless, she still took her husband's feelings into consideration and comforted him by saying a few pleasant words.

"Hahahaha!" Prince Jing laughed happily for a long time. "Not only did the emperor redivide Yang'er's fief, but he also rewarded him with a large estate. The estate in question is said to belong to one of the corrupt officials in the previous dynasty. I have seen the estate and the estate is grander and more majestic than our Jing Estate. The estate was originally reserved by the emperor for his elder brother as a retirement house, but the emperor's elder brother said that he was used to living in his current house. He didn't want to move, so the estate was left empty. Although the house was built during the previous dynasty, it was still being repaired over the years. There are even people who have been assigned to take care of the house. They can move in anytime they want..."

A lonely expression appeared on Princess Consort Jing's face. She sighed softly and said, "Is it necessary for Yang'er to move out of the Jing Estate? If he moves out, then there will be fewer opportunities for him to visit us. I was even thinking about helping him raise his kids after he has a child. When I visited Dongshan Village, I saw that it was always the grandmother of the family who helped raise the children..."

"We have so many maidservants and senior servants working in our family, why would you need to raise the children yourself? When the time comes, we can just send the couple a few hardworking and capable senior servants. It's time for him to separate from the flock. Yang'er has been bestowed with the title of an imperial prince, so it's no longer suitable for him to live with us. Let's take his elder brother for example, will Yang'er need to greet his elder brother first, now that he received a title?"

"Don't be disheartened. Their new estate isn't far from our estate. It will only take a quarter of an hour by carriage for them to come here. Xiaocao is a filial child, so she will definitely encourage our son to come and visit us often. Besides, if you miss the kids, you can move to their estate for a couple of days. You can also move into their estate for a few days when I'm busy or if I don't have time to accompany you because of work. I feel at ease if Xiaocao is there to accompany you."

Imperial Prince Jing tugged Princess Consort Jing's hand and comforted her carefully. Under the candlelight, it seemed as if her beautiful pair of phoenix eyes were twinkling with reflections of waves of sunlight; it was extremely charming. In the beginning, it was her beautiful and moving pair of eyes that had captured his heart and his heart still belonged to her after nearly thirty years.

Ever since Xiaocao produced the anti-wrinkle skin rejuvenation cosmetic cream and sent some over, the princess consort looked much younger after using it for less than half a year. Her skin became dewy and delicate and the fine wrinkles around the corners of her eyes had magically disappeared. She was around forty-five to forty-six years old, but she looked like a woman in her early thirties. If the princess consort stood next to her daughter-in-law, they would look like a pair of similarly aged friends.

Imperial Prince Jing stroked his old face. He was already three years older than the princess consort and he was usually very busy with his work. Even if he persisted in eating the medicinal cuisine that was prescribed by Xiaocao, he would only have a strong and youthful body. But his face... if he stood next to the princess consort, would people mistake him for her father?

"Princess Consort, have you asked if the anti-wrinkle skin rejuvenation cosmetic cream can be used by men?" Imperial Prince Jing thought about how his complexion was ashy and his face was covered in

wrinkles while his wife still appeared beautiful and youthful like a mature honey peach, would she dislike him because he looked old? With that thought in mind, he instantly blurted out the question.

Princess Consort Jing was originally immersed in the melancholy of having to separate from her son and was immediately stunned when she heard Imperial Prince Jing's question. When she finally came back to her senses, she almost couldn't help but burst out into laughter after understanding the reason behind his question. However, she knew that her husband was someone who had great pride, so she tried her best to control her facial expressions. She pretended to be calm and collected and said, "I don't know if men can use it. Xiaocao told me that this set of skincare products that she gave me was specifically made according to my skin type. Since it was specifically made for me, it's not sold to the public. Should I... ask her when I meet her again?"

Princess Consort Jing raised her head and looked at her husband. Although there were a few wrinkles around the corner of his eyes, the wrinkles made him look more manly. Her husband was handsome; the more she looked at him, the more handsome he looked!

"You...can't tell her that I'm the one who asked that question. Just say that your friend's husband asked. Cough cough...I have some matters that I need to attend to, so I'll head back to my study. You...if you can't stay awake, you can head to sleep first, okay?" Imperial Prince Jing walked away quickly. In the princess consort's opinion, it seemed like there was a wolf chasing after him as he quickly walked away.

"Pfft!" Princess Consort Jing could no longer hold back her mirth and burst out laughing. Imperial Prince Jing was extremely adorable. It had been many years since she had seen him blush like that. He told her to head to bed early, but it wasn't even dinner time yet, why would she head to bed to sleep?

Standing to the side and serving the princess consort was Meixiang, whose hairstyle was combed into a married woman's updo. She resisted her desire to laugh and brewed a cup of scented tea for her master. Even though Meixiang married a young steward that worked in the outer courtyard of the Jing Estate, she remained by Princess Consort Jing's side to serve her.

Princess Consort Jing's maidservants Lanxiang and Juxiang also married the stewards working for the Jing Estate. However, they left the estate with their husbands after the marriage. Zhuxiang and Meixiang remained in Prince Jing's Estate; one of them was in charge of the princess consort's courtyard while the other one was in charge of teaching the young maid servants working in the courtyard.

The four main maidservants serving by the Princess Consort's side were replaced with fifteen-year-old Chuxiang, Xiixiang, Qiuxiang, and Dongxiang. Yu Xiaocao almost burst out laughing when she heard the

names of these four maids. She couldn't help but stare at the beautiful young girl named Qiuxiang for a long time. Qiuxiang was anxious and uneasy when she saw that Xiaocao was staring at her. She racked her mind, wondering if she had made any mistakes in front of Royal Prince Yang's future wife. Was she not hospitable enough? Did she somehow annoy her by accident? How could she have known that the future Princess Consort Yang was thinking about the movie, 'Flirting Scholar', and the scene in the movie where Qiuxiang's head was kicked beyond recognition?

Yu Xiaocao had a stronger connection with Meixiang, so she was specially prepared by Princess Consort Jing for her future daughter-in-law. Once Xiaocao married into the family and had her own courtyard, Princess Consort Jing's plan was to reward Meixiang to Xiaocao as the head maid of her courtyard. Now that her youngest son was bestowed a large estate for his military merits, it was even more crucial for them to have head maidservants and head senior servants!

“Meixiang, in the past six months, you have to observe the servants in the estate and note down which servants can be used, their temperament, and their capabilities. Xiaocao is busy with the court matters and she also has to take care of her own business. I'm considering sending her a few capable managers that can take care of and arrange all the minor matters. This way, she won't have to worry about the matters regarding the estate as much as she needed to, and she won't exhaust herself.” Princess Consort Jing browsed through the book that listed all the staff that worked in the estate and would ask her a few questions from time to time.

Meixiang stopped talking and chuckled softly, “Miss Yu is really fortunate to have a mother-in-law like you, who would worry about her wellbeing! But this servant heard that not all wives want their mother-in-law to push servants into their courtyard...”

Princess Consort Jing stopped browsing through the staff book. She lowered her head and pondered over what Meixiang said for a moment, before she slowly said, “Xiaocao is not someone who can't tell what's good from what's bad! Besides, I'm only sending her servants because I'm afraid that she doesn't have many servants working under her since she's still young. When she moves into the new estate, she will have to take care of a large courtyard and it will be a lot of work. Xiaocao wouldn't overthink my intentions of sending her servants as something intrusive, right? Even so, I think your worries are not too excessive. The next time Xiaocao comes to visit me, I'll ask her what she thinks about my plan...”

“Princess Consort, if you directly ask her for her opinion, I'm afraid that Miss Yu would be too embarrassed to reject your offer even if she doesn't want it. Why...don't you let the third young master ask her for her opinion?” Meixiang was afraid that she would be sent to serve Xiaocao but would be pushed to the side and not granted an important position. If that happened, then she would be caught in an awkward position.

Princess Consort Jing nodded and said, "You are right, I'm glad to have someone who is thoughtful and cautious like you. It seems like I didn't choose the wrong person. I'll feel so much more relieved with you by Xiaocao's side!"

[1] Flirting Scholar - A comedy/martial arts movie that parodies famous works of literature which feature the same characters and settings. It's about a famous scholar who has 8 wives who are gambling addicts. His wives don't care for his artistic talents. He wants to find a woman who can truly appreciate him for his talent and thinks that Qiuxiang, a maidservant, is his true love.

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However, Meixiang was feeling a little apprehensive. Could she receive the approval from her future master even though she was originally Princess Consort Jing's servant? Besides, it wasn't like there weren't any capable servants serving Miss Yu. Wutong had become more and more steady and capable recently and, in addition to that, she was solely devoted to Miss Yu. She was one of Miss Yu's most trusted aides. Wutong was in her early twenties now and she still hadn't gotten married yet.

Based on her observation, Wutong would definitely become the head maidservant to the future princess consort... at that time, it was uncertain whether it would be her or Wutong who would end up receiving the role!

"The third young master is back! The third young master is back!" There was a burst of footstep sounds outside. A young girl's excited voice could be heard by Princess Consort Jing.

Meixiang curbed the emotions from her face. She raised the curtain, headed outside, and scolded the maidservant, "Why are you making such a big ruckus? Don't you know the rules? If you accidentally frightened Princess Consort Jing, then you will be skinned alive!"

"Forget it! Today is Yang'er's big day, so don't fuss over minor matters. You can teach the maidservants in the future on how to properly behave." Princess Consort Jing was in a good mood today, so she waved her hand at Meixiang to stop.

While they were talking, a tall figure clad in silver armor walked in, bent his waist, and greeted the princess consort. Princess Consort Jing looked at her third son and noticed that his skin was darker, and he became thinner. Even so, he appeared much sturdier and more reliable.

Recalling how her most beloved son must've suffered a lot of hardships at the border after being stationed there for more than a year, the rims of her eyes started to sting. She was choking with emotions as she said, "It's good that you're back! It's good that you're back! Look at your tanned skin! You should hurry and ask your wife to produce some skin whitening products for you and nurse your skin back to how it originally looked!"

"Lady Mother, why would a man be afraid of being a little tanned? Don't you think that your son looks very masculine now with the tan?" Zhu Junyang posed like how a bodybuilder would with his arm, showing off his muscles.

Princess Consort Jing smiled slightly and slapped his arm. She said, "I would never dislike you for being ugly! No matter how tanned or ugly you are, you're still my son. However, my future daughter-in-law has skin as fair as snow and if you stand next to her, there will be a drastic comparison between your complexions!! Aren't you afraid that she will dislike you for being tanned and ugly? Aren't you afraid that she will change her mind and break off the engagement?"

Princess Consort Jing was merely amused and was deliberately teasing her son. However, Zhu Junyang took his mother's word to heart. He naturally knew his little lass's character; she was very superficial. She could never resist a handsome man.

He remembered when his little lass was still young, she was extremely shocked by his handsome appearance. Before the engagement, she would drool over his handsome face from time to time! He reckoned that the little lass only agreed to marry him largely due to his handsome appearance and because he was destined to have a prosperous future.

Zhu Junyang subconsciously touched his cheek. Hmm... it seemed like his skin had become rougher. He looked at his skin that wasn't covered by the armor; he noticed that his skin tone was also several shades darker. Although he rarely looked in a mirror for more than a year, he didn't even need to use one to check to know that his face had definitely become less attractive!

The little lass told him that she was going to make "Buddha Jumps Over the Wall" for him tomorrow. Not only did she invite him, but she also invited the father and son duo from the Zhao Family as well as Su Ran! It was fine if she only invited the father and son from the Zhao Family. They were stationed in the northwest all year round, so their skin was in no better condition than his. However, he didn't know how, but Su Ran's complexion and skin tone remained the same; he didn't become tanned at all. He still had that annoyingly handsome face.

The little lass kept telling him that Su Ran looked like 'an immortal that had been banished from heaven', and that he had a refined and clean temperament. She even said that although Su Ran appeared to be cruel and heartless on the surface, he was actually a warm and kindhearted guy deep inside. Humph, the little lass was cheated by that guy's outer appearance. That guy killed people like cutting grass. His methods of dealing with people were cruel and merciless. He just never showed his true colors in front of Xiaocao!

No! Compared to that guy, his skin was tanned and rough, and he was definitely going to lose to him in terms of appearance! Although he believed that his current appearance made him look more manly, his current looks didn't match his little lass's taste. Her taste was different from ordinary people's. Well, he believed that his lady mother was correct. He needed to ask his little lass to make some skin whitening cream and moisturizing cream for him to use. Otherwise, he would really be in danger of being abandoned!

Seeing how her stupid son actually took her words seriously, Princess Consort Jing couldn't help but smile and said, "You should ask her to give you some whitening, anti-wrinkling, and moisturizing cream!"

Zhu Junyang was startled and immediately touched the corners of his eyes. He asked in an impatient manner, "Lady Mother, does my face have wrinkles? It must be because I've been pondering over how to end the war earlier, so I lost a lot of sleep during the past year! I'm doomed. The little lass looks tender and lovely, like a budding flower. If I stand next to her, won't I look like her father?"

Princess Consort Jing had never seen her son care about his appearance so much. Before he met Xiaocao, he would become unhappy if someone complimented him for being handsome. Now, he was actually concerned about whether his skin was fair or not and whether or not he had wrinkles.

She was amused by this, but she didn't forget to comfort her son, "No, you don't look like her father. At most... you look like her uncle. Pfft—let me laugh a little bit! To tell you the truth, you are older than her by seven to eight years. In many families, uncles and nieces are around the same age, so there's nothing for you to worry about!"

How could he stop worrying? His little lass would definitely dislike his old and ugly appearance. Hmm... he needed the skin care products soon, so he should hasten his little lass to make it for him. He should take the break he was given to nurse his skin back to its original condition.

"Oh right, can you ask Xiaocao to also make some skin care products for your father? It's time for him to start taking care of his aging face! You have to believe me when I tell you that the gap between those

who take care of their skin and those who don't, will only become more drastic with time. Look at me, I don't look like a person who is about to reach fifty, right?" Princess Consort Jing happily showed off her delicate and dewy skin to her son. The other married women asked her what skin care products she used, but these skin care products were something specially made for her by her future daughter-in-law to show her filial piety. It wasn't something that can be bought publicly!

Zhu Junyang recalled the age gap between his father and mother, and he noticed that his lady mother seemed to grow younger each year. It was a bit of an exaggeration to say that she was growing younger each year, but she indeed looked much younger than before. It seemed like the thousand-year-old ginseng that his little lass found in the northeast was quite useful!

His lord father and lady mother were only two years apart in age. However, based on appearance, it seemed like his lord father was over ten years older than his lady mother. He was seven to eight years older than the little lass. If he didn't pay attention to the future maintenance of his skin, then he will have an ashy and wrinkly face. If he went out with his little lass, other people might have mistaken him to be her grandfather. No! Although it was a little effeminate for a man to use skin care products, he was only going to be using it at home. Who would know besides him?

"Your son will be heading to the Yu Estate now. I think the little lass might have some finished skin care products that I can use!" Zhu Junyang could no longer sit still and immediately got up to leave.

Princess Consort Jing didn't forget to remind him, "Remember to ask for some skin care products for your father... also, aren't you tired? Why are you still wearing the heavy armor? Why don't you change first before leaving? It's not going to take much time..."

Before she even managed to finish speaking, Zhu Junyang's figure disappeared in the courtyard. Princess Consort Jing couldn't help but smile, "That stinky little boy! Whenever it's something concerning Xiaocao, he would panic and try to calculate his gains and losses. He is simply a mirror image of his father when his father was younger!" After she finished speaking, the corners of her mouth were curved upward into a joyous smile. Her gaze became unfocused like she had returned to the time when she was still a young girl...

Zhu Junyang listened to Princess Consort Jing's words and returned to his courtyard. He took off his heavy armor and changed into a fresh black embroidered robe. He combed his hair until there wasn't a strand that was out of place. He pondered for a few seconds before he went to wash his face and asked the servants to shave his beard. He peeked at his reflection in the mirror and saw a man with charming features but a tanned skin tone. He was still very handsome! However, his current appearance didn't necessarily conform to the little lass's taste!

When Zhu Junyang arrived at the Yu Estate, Xiaocao had just taken off her court robes. At this moment, she was reclining happily on a rocking chair that was located under the grapevines in the courtyard while tasting the sweet grapes!

The orchard planted on the mountain located at the back of the Imperial Plantation had expanded to more than three hundred mu of land in the past two years. With all of the various kinds of fruit trees added up, there were about five to six thousand fruit trees. This year, there was a bumper harvest on most of the fruit trees.

The rumors of the fruits from the Yu Family's orchard had spread far and wide. She didn't need to worry about not being able to sell all the fruits! Almost the entire northern capital would come to the Yu Family's orchard to purchase fresh fruits from them, even if they lived thousands of miles away. However, some of the people lived far away from the capital, so it was inevitable for some of the fruits to turn bad from the long trip.

As a result, Yu Xiaocao established a transportation team that specialized in transporting fruits door to door. However, the price of the fruits would increase around ten to twenty percent based on the distance. But this meant that none of the fruits would turn bad. This way, people didn't have to spend as much time and effort to buy fruits. It was much more cost-effective than personally going there to buy it themselves. Over time, except for those that lived in the nearby prefectural city, most people would rather pay a higher price to have the Yu's deliver the goods to them.

The Yu transportation team now had more than eighty carriages and more than two hundred employees. These employees were recruited by Zhu Junyang's former attendant, Dong Dali, who was now Commander Dong. He received a lot of injuries from the battlefields. Although he was wounded and sick, it never affected or delayed his work. His valiant temperament as a soldier was still there and he was not afraid of fighting against the enemies even if he was outnumbered three to one.

Many of the people that were part of the transportation team were formerly soldiers that worked under Royal Prince Yang, so they naturally respected his future wife. In addition to that, the people working in the transportation team received great benefits. The medicines that they needed were pricey and rare, but Xiaocao gave them bottles after bottles of the medicines they needed.

Before they joined the transportation team, their leader's future wife even invited doctors from Tongren Medicine Hall over to treat their illnesses and injuries. Their old diseases and injuries that had hindered them for a while now were treated and they quickly recovered.

For example, the captain of the transportation team had his arm broken on the battlefield before. The treatment he received before wasn't done correctly, so his left arm was not properly reconnected together. As a result, he couldn't fully extend his left arm, nor could he apply too much force on it. When he returned to his hometown, he couldn't farm, and no one wanted to hire him for a job because of his arm. He was twenty-seven to twenty-eight years old and yet he still didn't have a wife.

When Commander Dong found him, he was poor, dejected, and barely hanging onto his life. After he was diagnosed, Miss Yu sought his permission before she helped him reconnect the bones that weren't properly connected before. Although the medical procedure was quite painful, his bones grew quickly, and he made a full recovery after using a high-quality bone replenishment ointment. After two months of rest, he was no different from an ordinary person. Now, he had no problem carrying a basket containing one hundred catties of fruit with one hand!

Fields of Gold Chapter 654

An example like the captain of the transport team could be found everywhere on the transport team. Because most of the transport team were ex-soldiers, the robbers suffered several losses. They remembered the words 'The Yu's' deeply and didn't dare to provoke the transport teams anymore.

The Yu Family had a method of preservation so there was very little loss during transportation. When they left, they transported fruits and vegetables from the orchards in the capital. Coming back to the capital, they transported local specialties and some good, cheap products to sell in their own shops. Back and forth, taking into account the various expenses of the transport teams' personnel, they made a couple thousand taels of silver every month.

Although the profit of the transport teams compared to Xiaocao's other businesses could only be considered a drop in a bucket, Yu Xiaocao was satisfied that she could help the wounded and retired soldiers who had difficulties and also make an income.

The leader of the transportation teams was also a talented person with a unique vision. Every time the goods were transported back, they were in great demand and there was never any worry of not being able to sell them. The transport teams carried all kinds of fruits in the fall and greenhouse vegetables in the winter. Out of season vegetables were more profitable than fruits.

After spring, the Yu Family's vegetable sales were good. Then there were cherries, strawberries, peaches, watermelons, and so on. In short, the transport teams never had an idle time.

Now, it was the season for grapes, pomegranates, apples, oranges, and crisp pears.. The taste of the Yu Family's fruits was incomparable. Of course, the price of their fruits was also two or three times higher than ordinary fruit, so they were especially sold to the rich!

Xiaocao comfortably picked up a purple sparkling grape from the fruit plate Wutong had brought over and put it in her mouth, enjoying the sweet taste and feeling it slowly spread in her mouth. The evening breeze was slow and the setting sun was picturesque. What a pleasure!

When Zhu Junyang came in, he saw this scene of a 'lazy leisurely lass lounging under a cherry-apple tree.' He couldn't move his gaze, the lass was even more dazzling than the cherry-apple tree!

"Miss, Imperial Prince Xu has arrived..." Wutong saw who was coming and quickly whispered in her master's ear to remind her.

"Imperial Prince Xu? Who's that?" Yu Xiaocao didn't register what she said and casually asked.

"Is the 'Clerk of the Capital for Grain' really a noble person who's forgetful? It hasn't been an hour since I left you and you've already forgotten me?" Zhu Junyang's voice jokingly rang out in her ear.

Yu Xiaocao lazily opened her eyes and continued leisurely rocking in the rocking chair, not getting up. Her chin pointed towards the bench next to her and casually said, "You're here! Sit and try some of the 'rose fragrancd' grapes that I planted. They are sweet and fragrant, and the flavors are pretty good!"

Zhu Junyang took one and put it by her mouth. After seeing that she ate it, he took another one and put it in his mouth and said, "Mhm, it's really good. It's sweeter than ordinary grapes; lass, you really know how to enjoy life!"

"Life is just a few decades of suffering from fatigue, so one should enjoy it as much as one can when one has the chance!" Yu Xiaocao worked hard for her younger brother and sister in her previous life. In this life, the first few years were also very hard and tiring. Days like these where there were things came to her easily with the snap of her fingers, she naturally would cherish and enjoy it.

"After you marry me, you can live a leisurely life and do whatever you want without any difficulties. Of course, others wouldn't even think about forcing my wife to do anything!" Zhu Junyang helped her push aside a stray, naughty piece of hair by her cheek and put it behind her ear.

Yu Xiaocao lightly laughed and said, "What's more, I'm a fourth-ranked official, 'Clerk of the Capital for Grain'. Was the emperor giving me the title for fun? We still have to go along with it from time to time to keep people's mouths shut! Since you came over right now, is there something important?"

"Nothing! Just asking if you need me to come over early tomorrow to help?" How could Zhu Junyang say that he purposely came over for skincare products?

Yu Xiaocao pursed her lips and asked, "Can you help me tend the fire or wash the dishes for me? Forget coming over to help me, I bet you're coming over to make trouble, right? "

"Are you looking down on me? Tending the fire, washing the vegetables, these are simple things, how could it be hard for me?" Zhu Junyang said, looking proud and confident.

"Gentlemen keep far away from the kitchen. How could I dare to ask Your Highness, Imperial Prince Xu, the Great General Zhenxi, to do odd jobs in the kitchen?" Yu Xiaocao opened her mouth and let the man put the peeled grape in her mouth, and enjoyed it happily. Her man looked rough but he was actually very attentive and indulged her. It looked like she had taught him well over these past few years!

The two of them chatted for a bit longer before Zhu Junyang finally said what he came for. Yu Xiaocao held back her smile and looked at his face carefully for a moment. Then she nodded slightly and said, "Your skin is pretty good. Although it is a little tanner, it's not a natural-born tan. It will change back soon! However.... didn't you always think that men were more masculine if they were tanner? Why do you suddenly want to maintain your skin? "

"Aren't I doing it for you? Tell me, do you like tanner ones or fairer ones?" In her bright eyes, Zhu Junyang's expression was slightly unsettled.

"As long as it's you, fair or tan, I will always like it!" Yu Xiaocao hadn't seen her handsome men for more than a year. Now the longer she looked the more valuable he became.

These words made Zhu Junyang feel sweet. He took the lass's hand and wanted to become a single body with her. Unfortunately, there was a large oil lamp (third wheel) hanging around him, so he could only anticipate for nothing.

However, according to Zhu Junyang's understanding of the lass, she still liked that kind of gentle, elegant, warm, white, and pure type of man. He had a height of nearly 1.9 meters and a strong physique. Elegance, gentleness and he would never be on the same side. Only his face could attract the lass's sight. Not to make trouble, but he was afraid that shortly, the lass wouldn't want to see him! Alas, the Imperial Prince Xu, the ever-victorious general on the battlefield, was reduced to the point of pleasing people with his face.

In the end, Zhu Junyang got the whitening skincare product from Xiaocao. A few days ago, Xiaocao was very bored and made a lot of high-grade skincare products. Whitening, anti-wrinkle, moisturizing, firming...there were a lot of bottles and jars. Zhu Junyang chose two sets of anti-wrinkle and firming products, saying that his lady mother had asked him to take them back.

Yu Xiaocao was a little puzzled. She seemed to have just given her future mother-in-law a set of anti-wrinkle and firming skincare products. It had only been half a month. It was impossible to use it up already. Unless...Princess Consort Jing wanted these two sets to gift people?

Zhu Junyang's eyes dodged Xiaocao's surprised eyes. He wrapped the three sets of skincare products in a bag and put them into Hou Xiaoliang's hand, and told him to handle them with care.

Hou Xiangliang's mind was currently all on Wutong. He thought about it, the two of them weren't young anymore. Should they arrange something for their marriage? But then he reconsidered, Wutong had said she had to wait till her young miss was married before she could consider the matter of marriage. Also after marrying, she wanted to continue staying by her young miss's side. If he couldn't fulfill these two conditions, then he would have to choose someone else.

Hou Xiaoliang didn't know what he loved about Wutong. Was she gentle? When this lass was protecting her young miss, she was as fierce as a cat with claws and open teeth. She could withstand pressure in front of her young miss. Call her virtuous? What kind of master will determine the type of servant. She was like her young miss; someone who didn't stay within their bounds, and she also ran about outside all day. Her ability to handle affairs was not any less than that of a man.

However, her loyalty and willingness to work hard were really impressive. Perhaps, it was because of this that he had a deep affection for her. Alas, as mentioned before, the kind of master will have what

type of servant. His master wasn't married yet, but he was already like a slave to his wife. He would have to yield to her about when they might get married. He didn't lose any face by doing this!

Besides, he had no intention of leaving his master or planned for another way out. In the future, he was going to be the most effective person around the master, and she was going to be the most important person around the mistress. They were going to help their masters manage their residence and share their worries. Wouldn't that be good?

The next day, Yu Xiaocao entertained several 'meritorious officials' in her home, which could be regarded as helping them. The first to arrive, of course, was Zhu Junyang, who self proclaimed to be half a host at the Yu's. The Yu Family father and son pair were in Tanggu most of the time and needed to have a crash course in receiving noble guests. When entertaining the guests, they naturally wanted him, 'the future half son of the Yu Family', to help!

'Buddha Jumps Over the Wall' had been simmering on the stove for a long time. Other dishes, ingredients, and so on had already been prepared and waiting. Once the guests arrived, they could be cooked immediately.

Although Su Ran had not yet recovered from his injuries, he only arrived a little later than Zhu Junyang, and he had also come to Yu's Estate early in the morning. Looking at Su Ran's pale face and lips, which had no trace of blood, Yu Xiaocao's tears almost came down. Even if she was half skilled in medicine, she could see that Sir Su's vitality was greatly damaged. If he was not well taken care of, then he may be bedridden for the rest of his life.

"I'm fine. I'll be able to recover after a few days with some care." As soon as Su Ran arrived back to the palace, the emperor had called over an imperial physician to diagnose and treat him. This time, a vital point had been gravely injured. If it weren't for Royal Prince Yang's... Imperial Prince Xu's medicine, his bones would be rotten into the mud at this time.

He knew very clearly that the medicine Imperial Prince Xu carried with him was specially made for him by the lass, Xiaocao. He reckoned that a lot of precious medicinal materials such as the thousand-year-old ginseng and the hundred-year-old purple lingzhi collected in the northern region were used in them. Otherwise, how could he be pulled back from the hand of the underworld? This time, he owed the lass his life! He didn't know if this broken body of his would ever have a chance to repay her.

Yu Xiaocao knew that his physical condition was not as trivial as he said. However, she still nodded and said, "I'll prescribe some medicinal food for healing and nourishing your body. Eating that along with

some Thriving Vitality pills for half a year will ensure that you'll recover to full and complete health just like before."

Su Ran knew that the lass was really worried about his health. Going with what she said, even if he recovered up to seventy to eighty percent compared to before, he would be satisfied. No matter whether the medicated diet and pills were good for his body or not, he needed to be the most cooperative patient: "Then my health will be all up to you, Godly Doctor Yu!"

Fields of Gold Chapter 655

"I don't dare claim to be a godly doctor, but the medicinal cuisine and medicine made by the Yu's are definitely excellent! You will not regret believing and trusting me!!" As long as Sir Su trusted her and cooperated with her, Yu Xiaocao was confident that she would be able to help him take good care of himself, "However... If Sir Su continues to stay in the palace, I'm afraid it might not be convenient... "

"The emperor has allowed me to leave the palace to recuperate. I set up a small courtyard near here a long time ago. It only takes around a quarter of an hour to walk to it from here... " As the eunuch in charge of the palace, the emperor's right-hand man, he naturally had the wealth to buy a residence outside.

Yu Xiaocao said with a smile, "That's great. You can tell me the location. After that, I'll send the cooked medicinal cuisine to you every day! To improve your health, you will have to take a variety of specially prescribed medications every day. Just taking the Thriving Vitality pills alone will make your recovery more slow."

"As long as I can recover around seventy to eighty percent compared to what I was before, I will even be willing to drink bitter Chinese goldthread soup every day." He only knew how to cherish his health once it was gone. The current Su Ran, after having a ray of hope at recovery, had emotions of anticipation and hope.

Xiaocao giggled and joked, "I didn't expect Sir Su to still have the habit of drinking Chinese goldthread soup. When I make your medicine, should I put in some Chinese goldthread to fulfill your hobby?"

"Bad girl! Who would like to eat something so bitter? Just go with what you prescribed, don't put anything else in. I'm old and can't afford to be messed with." Su Ran glared at the mischievous lass and the corner of his mouth could help but turn up into a little smile.

Yu Xiaocao made a cute face at him and said with a smile, "Don't worry! I wouldn't dare to trouble you, Sir Su! I have always respected you."

'If no one loaned you the courage, wouldn't you still be able to make fun of me? You say you don't have the courage? Who would believe you? You're someone who dares to bargain and mess around with the emperor!' Su Ran roasted her in his mind.

"Don't you think you should drink the medicinal soup while it's hot? If you send it over, I'm afraid it's likely that some medicine might be spilled. I'd better come here every day. " Su Ran was aware that his originally cold iron heart was gradually beginning to soften and warm up. It was getting closer to those of ordinary people.

That cold and small residence, even if the layout was more gorgeous, had no sense of home. The Yu's Residence was simple with warmth, low-key mixed with excitement, was this what a home was like? He was getting more and more attached to the lass that brought him warmth...

"That's good! However, you should stay in bed and recuperate right now, can you stand going back and forth like this?" Yu Xiaocao also took his left hand to check his secondary pulse. His pulse was very chaotic and weak. Even an amateur like her could diagnose that his current condition was not optimistic.

Seeing the care in Xiaocao's eyes, Su Ran felt a heat stream attack his heart. He nodded slowly and said, "It's not like I'm walking over. Lying on the bed every day as if I'm waiting for death will make a person think about everything and be depressed, which isn't conducive to recovery. It's good to get out and walk about. The emperor has said, 'Life lies in moving around'. This quote is quite reasonable."

'Of course it made sense. He plagiarized the achievements of his predecessors!' Yu Xiaocao silently complained about it. However, since he insisted, she had to order her servants to prepare a room for Sir Su's recovery in the outer courtyard of the estate. In this way, he could come in the morning and go back in the evening, so as not to rush back and forth, which would not be beneficial to the recovery of his injury.

Zhu Junyang was upset, very upset by all of this! This old eunuch was so cunning, acting pitiful in front of the lass and winning the sympathy of Xiaocao. How big was his reputation? Letting the future Princess Consort Xu personally concoct and make medicinal cuisine for him?

He himself wasn't willing to order the little girl about, but the eunuch, on the other hand, was coming over three times a day to get a meal. This ticked him off. He didn't even have this type treatment, yet this old stinky eunuch had taken over the attention of his lass. If he had known this would happen, he wouldn't have taken out the medicine to save this annoying guy!

Zhu Junyang snorted coldly and said, "Lass, it seems that there is something wrong with your decision. If you think about it, you're the master of Yu's Estate, and you are still a girl. Chief Steward Su Ran, after all, is a man. Having him coming in and out of Yu's Residence so often is harmful to your reputation..."

Su Ran raised his eyebrows, glanced at him provocatively, and said, "Your Highness, your worries are not unreasonable. However, in front of the emperor, I still have a bit of influence. If the emperor knew that the lass, Xiaocao, can cure my body, he should agree with the lass to take care of me. At that time, Royal Princess Jinan will be ordered to treat me. A doctor gives her patients care, so others will not dare to talk about it again."

'You're so shameless, asking my lass to help take care of your body, have you asked her future husband, me?' Zhu Junyang felt that he was about to blow up. He would like to drag this hateful guy out and beat him violently, regardless of life or death!

Xiaocao naturally knew that his vinegar jar had been turned over again and hurriedly said, "This is not a trivial matter. It's not a time to have a childish temper. If Sir Su's body is not nourished in time, it may hinder his life span. Sir Su is loyal to the emperor, devoted to the court, and has helped me a lot. Since I have this ability, I can't just ignore it!"

"Lass, your medicinal skills must have improved again. What you've said is still too courteous. The imperial physician said that my body, even if provided with good medicines and supplements, can't survive past five years and I also have to stay in bed. I've thought about it, if I have to stay in bed like a piece of trash, then it would be better to die at once, nice and clean!" Su Ran deliberately said this purposefully and successfully won Xiaocao's sympathy.

Xiaocao looked at him tearfully and shook her head. "Sir, don't have this idea anymore. You can rest assured that since I said that I can take care of your health, I will certainly cure you! The premise is that you have to be a cooperative patient!"

"Alright! I promise I will be the most cooperative injured patient in the world!" Su Ran patted his chest for assurance, hesitated for a moment, and he asked, "If I cooperate fully with the treatment, how many years can I live? Ten more years...is that possible?"

Not that he was afraid of death, ever since he chose this road, he always regarded each day as the last day of life. He asked but it was only for the warmth of love in life, he was just reluctant to let the lass be sad for him.

"Sir Su, you look down on me too much!" Yu Xiaocao smiled through her tears, took out a common Thriving Vitality pill to let him take it, then continued, "Rest assured, as long as Yu Xiaocao is here, the King of Hell will have no chance to take you. According to my method, after a year and a half of recuperation, the injury will be cured. If there are no other accidents and diseases, it'll be possible to live a hundred years!"

The lass's confident look was so lively and lovely, Su Ran could not help but show a genuine smile. Long life, a hundred years old, was of little significance to him before. At this moment, he was eager to fulfill this wish. This way, he can witness her get married, have children and her children grow up day by day, and then accompany her in a distant place to grow old together...

"Lass, don't forget that we will be married in less than half a year. During this period, there are many things to prepare, which are very complicated, and you won't be able to handle it. Look...how about I come and give you a hand?" A normal man would not be willing to have the opposite-sex appear next to his future wife, and at such close contact at that. No, he had to watch from the side.

"How come I remember that married men and women cannot meet before marriage?" Su Ran covered his chest and coughed gently two times. Well, just after the Thriving Vitality pill was eaten, he felt more comfortable. At least when he coughed, it no longer felt like ten thousand arrows were piercing his heart.

Zhu Junyang stared at him fiercely with anger and pulled a long face, "The custom of marriage is that two days before marriage, the couple should not meet. Is there not half a year left? Why can't we meet? Moreover, many things are inconvenient for Xiaocao to do. Caring for a male patient, but men and women should have boundaries. However, this prince can do it on her behalf."

"Come on! Didn't you say after the marriage, we can move into the residence that the emperor bestowed upon you and the two of us can close the doors and live our daily lives? How many years has it been since that residence had someone live there? Shouldn't there be some repairs or maintenance done? The main courtyard we will live in, shouldn't it be arranged according to our preferences so we can live comfortably? As you said, with half a year to go, it's only enough time to rush the renovations

on residence. When do you have the time to care for Sir Su?" In Yu Xiaocao's mind, there was a feeling of helplessness; there was nothing she could do about this narrow-minded and petty man.

Listening to the series of 'our daily lives' and 'the courtyard where we live' and 'ours', Zhu Junyang was almost so happy that he almost became dizzy with glee. What the lass said was very correct, no matter how bad the damn old eunuch was, Xiaocao belonged to him after all. Hmph! When they got married, Imperial Prince Xu's Estate would definitely keep that fellow out!! Unfortunately, after marriage, he was not the head of the family!

"That's all right, I keep so many people under me. They weren't there to just eat food. As long as I visit once a day, what do I have to do personally?" Zhu Junyang had not yet returned from the imagination of their future couple's world, and he had a silly smile on his lips.

"I don't need you here either! My father sent a letter saying that he and my mother, as well as my brother and sister-in-law, will arrive in the capital after the New Years. They will help at that time. If there's anything that they don't understand, isn't there still my godmother and godfather?" Yu Xiaocao felt that if Zhu Junyang came, besides adding confusion, he really wouldn't play a big role.

"Your godfather? Is he not going to the border garrison?" Zhu Junyang disappointedly muttered.

"Godfather has asked the emperor for a favor. When he finishes attending our wedding, he will go to the frontline. Godfather has said that I'm his precious goddaughter and he couldn't miss my marriage. He was afraid that the emperor wouldn't agree and even squeezed out a few crocodile tears in front of him!"

Fields of Gold Chapter 656

Every time this memory was brought up, Xiaocao always felt it was very funny and touching at the same time. Her godfather was truly a manly man, yet he had run to the emperor, crying and weeping in order to have the chance to see her get married in front of his eyes.

In all of these years, her godfather had truly treated her like his true biological daughter. Whenever he had something good to eat, fun to play, material for clothing, or bright jewels and gold, he always thought of her and left her a portion. He didn't even change after Linlin was born. Sometimes, he would treat her better than his own son. Her godmother had also never treated her like an outsider. She had taught her how to manage relationships, oversee the household, and customs and etiquettes of the nobility.

And then there was the little fellow, Fang Haolin. He had always regarded her as his true older, biological sister and would even fight for favor with Little Shitou. However, Little Shitou was now older and disdained trying to compete with a tiny brat. Fang Haolin had always been very close to this older sister. Whenever she was around, he would even throw his mother to the side. With an extra set of parents to love and pamper her, Xiaocao truly felt like she had fallen into a pot of gold.

If she had the choice right now to go back to her previous life in the twenty-first century or stay here, she would easily make the choice to stay. That was because this era had people who loved her and people who she loved!

“Young Miss, Old General Zhao, General Zhao and his wife are here!” One of the second ranked maidservants came over with hurried footsteps as she greeted the guests clearly.

“Grandfather Zhao and Uncle Zhao are here? And Auntie Zhao as well? I need to personally see them!” Yu Xiaocao had Su Ran rest in the rocking chair that she often lounged in as she bustled over to the inner gate. Zhu Junyang noticed that the little lass regarded the Zhao Family highly, so he also came along. There wasn't a man in the residence now, so he needed to help her receive the male guests.

However, when he saw the group of people from afar, he knew he had thought too much. The little lass's godfather was currently respectfully next to Old General Zhao, listening to his teachings and wisdom!

“Grandfather Zhao, Uncle Zhao, it's been a long time since I last saw you. I've missed you both terribly!” In front of her elders, Xiaocao had always had a sweet and endearing manner, making her a likable girl. Although it had been almost ten years since they last saw each other, when she saw these familiar faces, it was as if she had been transported back to when she lived in Dongshan Village. In those years, during her family's hardest times, Grandfather Zhao and his family had welcomed them with open arms and helped them quite a bit. The fact that they had sent aid during their time of greatest need truly showed the depths of their kindness.

“Lass Xiaocao, in the blink of an eye, you've grown up into a young maiden. At that time, when Grandfather Zhao left Dongshan Village, you were such a wee thing and so skinny that you looked like you could fall over at any second. You didn't dare to eat any of the prey that you managed to trap with great effort and hid it at our residence before sneakily going into town to sell them. At such a young age, you learned how to manage money. No wonder you're such a successful businesswoman now!” Old General Zhao gestured with his hand at his waist as his eyes sparkled with mirth.

“Grandfather Zhao~~” Yu Xiaocao stepped forward and pulled at his rough and calloused hand as she swayed back and forth. She looked quite bashful as she said, “At that time, my family hadn't split from the main family, right? If I brought the game back home, not a single bite would go into my mouth and not a single coin would fall into my purse either. Thus, selling it off and keeping the money in my purse was the only right thing to do!”

General Zhao also grinned, “I also remember that when you, little lass, became gluttonous, you would have your Auntie Zhao help you cook the wild pheasant you had trapped. You'd sneakily eat the cooked meat like a tiny mouse. However, you never forgot to leave some for your parents and your siblings. What did I say then? Yu Hai and his wife would rely on their daughter to have a good life. Didn't those words become true now?”

“Uncle Zhao, I'm not a tiny mouse ah! Have you ever seen such a beautiful and adorable mouse like me?” Yu Xiaocao proudly turned around in a circle, showing off her newly made bright yellow clothing. She looked quite elegant and stately.

“Now you're beautiful, but at that time ah— a mouse had more meat on its body than you!” General Zhao guffawed loudly.

Fang Zizhen revealed a sad expression on his face after hearing this, “Argh! This child had a hard life. It was I who had showed up too late, allowing this child to suffer so much! That old crone surnamed Zhang treated my Cao'er so poorly then. I shouldn't have let her off so easily!”

Auntie Zhao had a gentle and sweet smile on her face, “What's the point in bringing up those old bad memories now? Without the icy cold of winter, could we possibly enjoy the beautiful scent of plum blossoms? Hasn't Xiaocao emerged from the bitter parts of life and is now enjoying the sweet? Not only are all of her businesses extremely successful, but she also has many noble maidens in the capital vying for her favor. She's also the only female official in the entire Great Ming Empire. Now she's even a fourth-ranked official and it's possible one day that she'll surpass you all!”

The smile on Uncle Zhao's face became even more brilliant, “Then I must work even harder in order to avoid being surpassed by the younger generation. Wouldn't that be so embarrassing ah?”

“The student has surpassed the master. You should enjoy the glory and achievements of the younger generation instead!” Yu Xiaocao cracked open a smile, revealing a row of perfectly white teeth, “Oh, that's right, I heard that Older Brother Han has now been promoted to the leader of a battalion now,

right? He has relied on his own abilities to slowly climb up! He's definitely much more talented than I am!"

"He's only a tiny little sixth-ranked military official. He's just killed a few pirates here and there. How could he be as talented as you? Your actions have benefited all of the commoners of the empire ah!" General Zhao gave a big thumbs up in approval.

"Uncle Zhao, let's stop complimenting each other now! The reception pavilion already has tea set out and the leaves being used today have been personally processed by me. The taste should be acceptable!" Yu Xiaocao pulled on Auntie Zhao's hand and welcomed all of the guests to head towards the pavilion to rest.

After they passed the wisteria flower gate, the group of people suddenly saw Su Ran, who was clothed entirely in white and had a deathly pale face. Despite his obvious poor health, he couldn't hide his inner elegance. The Zhao Family had known that he had been injured heavily and hasn't recovered yet, but they would have never expected that they would see Chief Steward Su at a welcome home party at Xiaocao's place. Clearly, Xiaocao had quite the status in the capital!

"Old General Zhao, General Zhao, I'm currently indisposed and it's difficult for me to get up to greet you." Su Ran apologized gently to them and didn't have a hint of his famous icy and aloof demeanor around him.

"No need to be so polite, Chief Steward Su. Your health is most important!" Old General Zhao had also heard what had happened to Su Ran. He was afraid that it'd be difficult for the man to make a full recovery, so he addressed the eunuch with equal parts politeness and slight pity.

The group of people entered the reception pavilion and sat down. The fragrant tea was quickly served up and, naturally, the food present included pastries personally made by Xiaocao. As they reminisced and chatted, they ended up inadvertently touching upon the topic of Su Ran's injuries. At that time, Xiaocao vehemently vowed that she would help him reach a complete cure.

Auntie Zhao remarked somewhat worriedly, "Xiaocao, I have never regarded you as an outsider. You're still young and are still inexperienced. You can't be too certain when you speak sometimes. Otherwise, if you can't fulfill what you promised, other people will end up hating you for it. Not even the imperial physicians are certain that they could fully heal Chief Steward Su's injuries. Even though you have some good remedies on hand, you can't make a complete guarantee..."

“Auntie Zhao, thank you for reminding me. I know you're doing this out of the kindness of your own heart towards me. However, don't worry, I am a hundred percent certain that I can heal Sir Su until he is completely healthy as if nothing had ever happened.” Yu Xiaocao picked up a plate of fruit mousse cake and placed it into Auntie Zhao's hands. Her eyes glittered with a warm light.

“Alright, as long as you're confident, that's what matters!” Lady Zhao knew that Xiaocao wasn't someone who would make a promise she couldn't fulfill, so she smiled in relief and took a bite of the cake. She exclaimed in awe, “Xiaocao, you are truly incredibly talented. The cakes you've made are not only so enchanting that people almost can't bear to eat them but they also taste incredibly good!”

“Auntie, I made too many earlier. You should take some back when you head out later.” Yu Xiaocao intimately nestled next to Auntie Zhao in a way that was exactly like how she used to act around the older woman back when they were still at the old Zhao Residence halfway up the West Mountain in Dongshan Village.

Although Old General Zhao was a military official, he was quite fond of tea. Currently, he was spellbound by the fragrant and mellow taste of tea that had been served to him. After taking two sips, he looked towards Xiaocao and said, “Lass, even when you were in Dongshan Village you knew how to process tea. After all these years, I can't seem to get the taste of your tea leaves out of my mind. None of the teas that are sold on the market, no matter how expensive they are, can compete with the taste of the tea that you've made!”

It was obvious why the other tea leaves couldn't compete with the tea that she personally pan-fried and processed. This was because the other tea artisans didn't have the giant cheat item, the little divine stone, on their hands ah! It wasn't that she was bragging, but even the most precious Da Hong Pao in the imperial palace couldn't compete with the taste brewed from her own tea leaves.

“Grandfather Zhao, I made around ten catties or so of spring tea. If you don't disdain my wild tea for being crude, you can take back two catties with you to drink. Next spring, I'll make sure to process more and have someone send it to you at the border garrison. In the future ah, I will supply all of the tea that you drink!” Yu Xiaocao was always generous to the people she saw as her own. It was only tea leaves. The back mountain behind the imperial plantation had a dozen or so old tea shrubs which should produce more than enough tea leaves for her purposes.

Old General Zhao nodded his head in satisfaction and continued to quietly enjoy the taste of the young tea. General Zhao asked about Yu Hai, who had been good buddies with him back then, “Lass Xiaocao,

has your father been well lately? Does he have any hint of his old injuries now? At the time, if it weren't for your father's bravery, then there wouldn't be me, the 'Longhu General' ah!"

"Uncle Zhao, my father is even more healthy and strong than he was before. He can even jog around easily with a hundred-catty sack of wheat seeds on his shoulders! The farmstead in Tanggu and the business there are all being managed by him and my older brother. My father also talks about you constantly and often mentions that if it weren't for you teaching him how to hunt so well, he wouldn't have been able to bring home game from time to time. Without that food, it's possible that I, an unfavored lass, would have already died from disease or starvation now ah! If the dangerous situation had been reversed at the time, I'm sure you, Uncle Zhao, would have chosen to save my father just like he chose to save you. Otherwise, why else would you two be considered close friends?" Xiaocao felt her heart tremble a bit after remembering the dire situation that her family was in at that time. It was also the event that turned their fortunes. They had used that opportunity to split from the main family. Otherwise, they would still have that old witch leeching blood off of them even now!

"Oh right, my father should be entering the capital the day after tomorrow. If he knew you had come back from the borders, he would definitely be extremely happy." Yu Xiaocao suddenly remembered that she didn't mention the news about Grandfather Zhao and Uncle Zhao coming back to the capital in her letters to her family, so she felt a bit annoyed at herself.

General Zhao Bufan chuckled loudly and said, "At that time, I'll need to drink a few more cups of wine with your father. I heard that the strong alcohol made by the Yu's Family Business has a unique taste and very limited sales. Even those with money may not be able to buy any. Your Uncle Zhao has been thinking about it even when I was out in the northwest!"

"Don't worry ah, Uncle Zhao, there is definitely enough good alcohol today to be had! Although other people may not be able to buy any, how could people from our own family not be able to have any?" Yu Xiaocao knew that her Uncle Zhao only had one particular hobby and that was that he enjoyed drinking some alcohol here and there. In any case, Uncle Zhao was probably going to spend a good amount of time in the capital in the future. Thus, with the good relationship between their families, he would definitely not lack for good alcohol to drink.

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"Hahaha, I was waiting for those words of yours!" Zhao Bufan laughed even more uproariously.

Auntie Zhao gave him a look and then smiled, "You clearly don't see yourself as an outsider. Do you know how much a jar of 'Jiannanchun' or 'Gujinggong' costs ah? They're a couple hundred taels a bottle. As an uncle, do you really feel okay taking advantage of Xiaocao's generosity?"

“Auntie Zhao, these words truly make us seem like outsiders then! As the younger generation, what's wrong with giving a few bottles of alcohol to my own uncle? Are you implying that the words you said before, when you stated that we were as close as a family, were just for politeness sake?” Yu Xiaocao cutely swayed back and forth with Auntie Zhao's hand in her own as she exclaimed in an adorable manner.

“Lass Xiaocao is right. We're not outsiders!” Zhao Bufan grinned until his eyes scrunched up into a small line.

Xiaocao chatted about household matters with Auntie Zhao while Old General Zhao happily enjoyed the tea in front of him. Zhao Bufan conversed idly with his martial brother Fang Zizhen.

As they talked, the topic of the conversation had turned to Zhao Han. Xiaocao asked out of concern, “Auntie Zhao, will Older Brother Han be spending the New Years at his garrison again? It's been so many years but he hasn't come back once to celebrate the New Years. Does he really need to work this hard ah?”

“But of course! Originally, I wanted him to go into the northwest with his grandfather and father, but he was as stubborn as a donkey then and insisted on advancing through the ranks through his own efforts. Last year, I used the excuse of feeling under the weather to trick him home. He only spent two days at home before he went back! It's as if the garrison wouldn't be able to survive if he wasn't there to oversee things.” Auntie Zhao had a belly full of complaints whenever she talked about her only son. She also felt bad. The last time her son came back he was tanner and thinner...

When Uncle Zhao heard this, he remarked in disapproval, “Being a man means you need to advance your career and protect your home and country. The seas around our country haven't been very peaceful lately. Han'er is just doing his part in keeping the peace. Don't be an impediment to his duties ah!”

Zhao Bufan was quite pleased with his son's abilities and hard work. He had just reached the age of twenty but had already been promoted to the leader of a battalion, which was a sixth-ranked official's position. As someone in the military, how could one obtain merits and promotions without any battles to fight? For the next dozen or so years, the northwest would likely be very calm, with only a few skirmishes here and there. Serving in the navy was also a good choice as in recent years the Wokou pirates and other ruffians wouldn't be as bold as before in their attacks.

Auntie Zhao glared at him with suppressed anger and sighed, "People always say that it's important to first establish a family before pursuing a career. Lass Xiaocao is younger than him by four to five years, but she'll be getting married at the start of the new year. Yu Hang is younger than him by two years but is about to become a father. He, on the other hand, is already in his twenties but he's still alone by himself. He never comes home. Just when will someone like him come back to show me his wife ah?"

Zhao Bufan picked up his cup and drank a sip of tea, "Han'er is only around twenty-two to twenty-three, so why are you in such a hurry ah? His Highness, Imperial Prince Xu, is only older than Han'er by two years and he isn't married yet."

Zhu Junyang, who was at the side helping to take care of the guests, wanted to express his own feelings of indignation at this, 'Hmph! This prince is not like that foolish son of yours. He clearly knew the little lass from childhood yet he had no idea of his true feelings and let me take advantage instead...ahem ahem, in any case, this prince needs to thank him for being slow in the feelings department. Otherwise, how could I possibly be able to find such a perfect wife?'

Auntie Zhao had been pushed into a frenzy by her husband, "Imperial Prince Xu has long known the target of his affections and has only been patiently waiting for Xiaocao to grow up. After all, last year in the spring, he finalized his engagement with Xiaocao. If Han'er had his own marriage matters all tidied up, how could I be so worried now?"

Auntie Zhao glanced briefly at the sweet and adorable Yu Xiaocao and a flash of melancholy passed through her heart. Clearly her own family had known Xiaocao's family first, so why didn't they strike first and set down a childhood betrothal down then? If they had done that, then Imperial Prince Xu wouldn't have been able to butt in! Where else would she be able to find such a sweet, hardworking, and perfect daughter-in-law like Xiaocao?

"Auntie Zhao, don't worry. Marriage is something that is ordained by the heavens and is controlled by fate. Thus, it will happen when it happens. Older Brother Han is so outstanding and has such a great family background. If you let the word out, I'm sure there are plenty of young noble maidens in the capital who would come clamouring for him ah!" Yu Xiaocao wittily interjected as she tried to soothe Auntie Zhao.

"If only it would come as you say! May the heavens bless your Older Brother Han such that his marriage becomes official very soon. That way I would no longer have to worry about this!" Auntie Zhao clapped her hands together and bowed towards the sky.

After chatting a bit longer, Xiaocao finally stood up and said, “Godfather, help me entertain Grandfather Zhao and the others. I'm going to the kitchen to whip up a few dishes. Grandfather Zhao, Uncle Zhao, Auntie Zhao, please sit here first. In a bit, you will all be able to try my food.” Zhu Junyang had also been instructed by his little wife to go and spend time with Sir Su. Zhu Junyang's response: 'I don't want to go!'

Auntie Zhao also stood up, “How could I not know about your culinary talents, lass? When we were still in Dongshan Village, you didn't even have a full set of spices yet you were still able to craft a table of delicious foods. At that time, you were still a tiny thing who had just reached the height of the stove. In the blink of an eye, you've grown into a beautiful young maiden. Let's go, Auntie will go be your sous chef. In the past, when we were living in the residence on the West Mountain, didn't we work together? I still recall those memories fondly ah. Although it was harder at times, our whole family was still together, living happily as one...”

“Alright ah, is there any point in saying more? I think you have too much time on your hands, causing you to think too much!” Zhao Bufan interrupted her. In actuality, he had also known it had been hard on his wife to live alone in the capital by herself. All she could do was think about her father-in-law and husband, who were at the borders, defending the empire. However, as a manly man who had the duty to protect his country and home, how could he be solely preoccupied with his immediate family?

Xiaocao hurriedly changed the subject out of compassion and said, “Auntie Zhao, every year my family cleans and fixes up your family's residence in Dongshan Village. All of the furniture and household items are also preserved as well! When Older Brother Han goes on break, he'll even stay there a couple of days. The villagers in Dongshan Village constantly speak of you all. If you have time on your hands, you can go back there a few days to see Older Brother Han or find my mother to chat a bit.”

Auntie Zhao also thought that this idea was feasible and smiled, “Then that will have to wait until after you and Imperial Prince Xu are married. Didn't you say that your parents will be here in the capital the day after tomorrow ah? At that time, your mother will have more than enough to preoccupy her.”

Xiaocao wasn't the least bit bashful when the subject of her own marriage came up. She even shamelessly said, “At that time, Auntie Zhao should come over and help more often. Otherwise my mother won't be able to handle everything.”

“Okay, okay, okay! At that time, I will come over every day and help you, you shameless little lass, prepare your dowry!” Auntie Zhao tapped Xiaocao's head a few times. Why was this little lass such an odd ball sometimes?

All of the ingredients had long been prepared and ready to go in the kitchen. The servants had washed all of the raw foods and had followed Xiaocao's instructions on what to cut into cubes vs slivers. Now, they were just waiting for the 'head chef' to appear. On the stove, there was a pot of 'Buddha Jumps Over the Wall' bubbling merrily and blowing off steam. The aroma of the pot wafted through the air, tantalizing everyone it encountered.

“This is the signature dish of Medicinal Cuisine House——Buddha Jumps Over the Wall, right? It truly lives up to its name. Just the smell of the dish alone could make a person fall into ecstasy!” Auntie Zhao saw that all of the ingredients had been prepared in the kitchen and there were even some that she couldn't recognize. Thus, she realized that there was very little she could do to help now.

Yu Xiaocao had shamelessly used the fruits of future people's efforts and grinned, “Isn't the seafood in our Dongshan Village famous ah? In my free time, I wondered if I could come up with a dish that used a lot of top-notch seafood and other ingredients! 'Buddha Jumps Over the Wall' was the result of my slow experimentation. In terms of ingredients, it requires at least eighteen, such as sea cucumbers, abalone, shark fins, shark lips, peppercorn and other famous and expensive materials. Furthermore, this dish replenishes the body, eases and lubricates the lungs and intestines, and prevents inflammation. Not only does it taste divine but it also heals the body! Thus, although it is on the expensive side, there are plenty of people who want to try it!”

“You are truly being too modest now. Who doesn't know that the Yu's Medicinal Cuisine House's 'Buddha Jumps Over the Wall' requires a three month wait ah?” Although Auntie Zhao very rarely left her residence, there was very little that happened in the capital that escaped her notice.

“This only means that there are plenty of people in the capital who don't lack money! The emperor is a wise ruler as the common people's lives are only improving as time goes on!” Yu Xiaocao gleefully chirped. During this entire time, her hands had never stopped moving.

“This looks like ground meat, right? Are we making dumplings for lunch?” Auntie Zhao saw that she was mixing up the already minced meat together with slivers of water chestnut and egg white, so she couldn't help but ask out of curiosity.

Xiaocao rolled the meat mixture into large meatballs as she explained, “I'm planning on making Four Treasures meatballs. This dish embodies the meaning of luck, good fortune, long life, and happiness all in one.”

Before long, she had finished making the four large meatballs. Following that, she had the servants pour oil into a large pot and heat it up until it was smoking. Then she placed the meatballs into the hot oil, frying them until they became a golden brown. Next, she took out another pot and added an appropriate amount of hot water, soy sauce, star anise, scallions and ginger before placing the four large meatballs in. On low heat, she let them stew before raising the heat to finish the cooking. The finished Four Treasures meatballs had a lustrous golden shell and a fragrant aroma. It was obvious that Xiaocao's culinary skills had improved again.

Following that, she also made 'pan-baked pork fillet', 'West Lake fish in vinegar gravy', 'hand-held mutton', 'steamed pork with rice flour', 'braised intestines in brown sauce', which were all famous dishes...and everything had been prepared perfectly. First on the table were the cold appetizers. These included 'capital roast duck', 'unique roasted chicken', 'pickled pepper chicken feet', 'century eggs with tofu', 'pig ears with chili oil', and 'tree fungus salad'. Since most of the guests present were men and most men preferred eating meat, she deliberately made sure to have more meat dishes present.

When all of the beautiful and delicious dishes appeared on the table, everyone looked at them appreciatively. Zhao Bufan couldn't help but say a few compliments, "Lass Xiaocao's culinary talents are too good. She could even become a chef at Zhenxiu Restaurant!"

Zhu Junyang unhappily retorted, "Many of the chefs at Zhenxiu Restaurant have personally taken lessons from my lass ah! If it weren't for my lass, I'm pretty sure Zhenxiu Restaurant wouldn't even be standing very steadily in Tanggu Town!" His meaning was clear. Comparing his lass with the head chef at Zhenxiu Restaurant was an insult to her culinary talents and skills.

Fang Zizhen became quite displeased after hearing the prince throw around the words 'my lass'. He glared hatefully at the youth and coldly huffed, "My Cao'er isn't a part of your family, Imperial Prince Xu. You need to be more careful with what you say in order to avoid harming my Cao'er's good name and reputation!" Oh ho, there was a fight brewing between the father-in-law and son-in-law now.

In order to be able to marry his little lass smoothly, how could Zhu Junyang possibly dare to confront Fang Zizhen, his future godfather-in-law, right now? He was quite sullen in his heart though—in about half a year's time, the little lass would be a part of his family! They were already engaged so what was wrong with him saying 'my lass' from time to time?

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Zhu Junyang's phoenix eyes flickered as he looked towards Yu Xiaocao. That lass was currently grinning simple mindedly. The thing that made him the most angry was that the little lass was personally helping that fellow Su Ran ladle up a bowl of 'Buddha Jumps Over the Wall' and she even blew on the soup a bit as if she was afraid he would get scalded...

“Ahem ahem!” Zhu Junyang coughed fakely a couple of times. When everyone turned their heads to look at him, including the puzzled Xiaocao, he slightly frowned and pretended to look out of sorts as he sighed lamentfully, “Argh, I don't know if I wasn't used to the crude environment of the northwest, but I wasn't able to eat very well there. Lately I've been feeling under the weather quite often. Not sure if I'll ever get back to full health...”

Old General Zhao and his son were speechless at this.

Everyone who had served in the northwest knew that, from time to time, they would sneak into the enemy side in the middle of the night and steal some cattle and sheep from them. These stolen goods were then used to reward the soldiers with some added meat to their rations. As the commander of the northwest army, Zhu Junyang ate quite a lot of beef and mutton while he was there. In addition, this fellow frequently took his trusted aides along to infiltrate deeply within the prairie and hunt game. They ate and ate until all of them were plump and brawny. Who within the army didn't know that Royal Prince Yang had a set of barbecue condiments on hand that caused any meat that he roasted to taste incredibly delicious and unique?

If he claimed that his body was weak and sad, Old General Zhao would be the first to jump out and state that he was lying! However, when he saw Imperial Prince Xu look over in his direction, he understood a simple point— a certain person was feeling jealous and was now playing pathetic to get attention!

How could Yu Xiaocao not know what tricks this fellow was playing? Obviously he saw her ladling up some Buddha Jumps Over the Wall for Sir Su and became incredibly jealous! In front of all of these people, she also couldn't say much and silently ladled up a bowl for him as well. She glared at him surreptitiously and said, “The reason why 'Buddha Jumps Over the Wall' has become the signature dish at the Medicinal Cuisine House is because it has the ability to replenish a person's yang energy, ease constipation, clear the lungs, and prevent cold energy from settling into a person's body. Thus, you should eat more.”

Following that, she served up a bowl of the soup to everyone present. Although Old General Zhao didn't spend much time in the capital, he had also heard of the fame of the Yu's Medicinal Cuisine House, especially the dish, 'Buddha Jumps Over the Wall'. All of the rich and powerful individuals in the capital praised this dish to the skies. Old General Zhao was also considered an old glutton and sent his servants over to reserve a spot at the Medicinal Cuisine House. However, who would have thought that all of the private rooms had been reserved for the next ten days? As for 'Buddha Jumps Over the Wall', there was a three month wait in order to eat this dish...so was it easy to eat something scrumptious anymore?

Luckily, the owner of the Yu's Medicinal Cuisine House was an old friend of the Zhao Family. Today, she had welcomed them back with a feast that included 'Buddha Jumps Over the Wall'. Furthermore, the creator of this dish had cooked it for them today. He needed to savor this food as much as possible!

Old General Zhao first used a spoon to bring up some soup to his mouth. He lightly blew on it before taking a sip. The rich and savory taste of food exploded onto his taste buds. He ate a few more bites in quick succession before he finally remarked in pure satisfaction, "This dish has simply been simmered in a ceramic pot but it has a very complicated and delicate flavor while preserving the unique taste of each ingredient. The food is soft, tender and moist with a dense savory taste. It's rich without being greasy and every ingredient adds its own flavor to the whole. It is incredibly delicious. Very good, very good! It's worth waiting three months to eat this!"

"Grandfather Zhao, if you like it, I'll give you the 'most honorable' membership card to the Medicinal Cuisine House. Members who have this card have supreme authority to eat at the restaurant and don't need to reserve a spot in advance or wait in line. They can eat as much as they wish..." There were only five special membership cards available and they were made out of carved pieces of nephrite and inlaid with pink diamonds. These cards looked very classy and elegant. She had only given out two 'most honorable' membership cards so far. One had been given to the emperor and the other had been given to Imperial Prince Jing's Estate.

When Old General Zhao heard this, he shook his head repeatedly. What a joke, only the emperor could be considered 'the most honorable above all'. As for Imperial Prince Jing, he was Imperial Prince Xu's father and Xiaocao's future father-in-law, so it was fine for him to take it. He, on the other hand, didn't have the virtues or connections. How could he dare to get the same treatment as the emperor?

When Yu Xiaocao saw that he was persistent in declining her offer, she didn't force it and said, "In actuality, it doesn't matter whether or not you have this card. I'll inform the manager of the store that when you go and give him your identity, there will naturally be someone who will bring you to your own private room to eat there."

Only then did Old General Zhao nod his head in agreement. Zhao Bufan chuckled, "Can this special private room of yours only be used by your Grandfather Zhao? Can your Uncle Zhao also enjoy the glories of this benefit?"

"Of course you can! However, you need to make sure you discuss things with Grandfather Zhao to avoid going there on the same day." Yu Xiaocao smiled. In actuality, she rarely went to the Medicinal Cuisine House to eat there herself. Thus, the private room that was set aside for her was hers in name only.

The two Zhao Generals looked at each other and expressed their satisfaction. That lass Xiaocao hadn't distanced herself from them just because they moved away from Dongshan Village and hadn't seen each other for a long time. Instead, she remembered them accordingly.

Following that, the rest of the meal went by smoothly and happily for both the guests and hosts. 'Pan-baked pork filet' had a golden color and delicate texture. It was salty and savory. 'Sweet and sour crispy pork' was flaky on the outside and tender on the inside with a tasty sweet and sour flavor. It truly stimulated people's appetites. 'West Lake fish in vinegar gravy' had a tasty sweet and sour flavor while also containing the savory flavor of crab. 'Steamed pork with rice flour' had the sweet scent of glutinous rice permeating into the fatty cuts of meat, making the dish incredibly rich.

The father and son pair from the Zhao Family had similar tastes and both fell in love with the taste of 'braised intestines in brown gravy'. The dish used cleaned pig intestines that were first blanched in boiling water before being deep fried. Following that, more than a dozen condiments were roasted slowly over a low fire to create the sauce. It was sour, sweet, fragrant, spicy, and salty. It truly contained all five flavors. The dish had a red and glossy appearance and the meat was soft and tender. The giant platter of large intestines had pretty much been monopolized by this father and son pair.

Auntie Zhao covered her face helplessly. Fortunately, they were guests at Xiaocao's residence. If they were at anyone else's banquet, the hosts might have thought that she privately treated her husband and father-in-law quite harshly and restrained their food intake. Otherwise, why else would they eat as if they were a bunch of hungry ghosts? However, she still thoughtfully picked out food for these two men. After all, was there any delicious food to be had when they served in the frontiers of the northwest?

After lunch, the group began idly chatting again and couldn't avoid the topic of the upcoming nuptials between Imperial Prince Xu and Xiaocao. The two of them had set their wedding date in the third month of the upcoming year. That day was chosen after Princess Consort Jing had taken the birthdate data from both parties and gone to the head priest of Tianan Temple, which was just outside the capital, to divine some good dates. Although Tianan Temple could not compare to the fame of Huguo Temple or White Horse Temple, it was said that they were the best at divining good dates. Thus, many people who lived far away from the capital would travel long distances to get their dates divined.

The old priest gave Princess Consort Jing three dates. There was the sixth day of the third month, the eighteenth day of the ninth month, and the twelfth day of the last month. Princess Consort Jing didn't even think about it before choosing the first date. How could she not understand her son's feelings? She had never thought that her youngest son could have so much perseverance and patience before, but he

had waited for the little lass for around eight to nine years. Her son's thoughts were probably the same as her own. He wanted to bring the little lass back to his home as his wife as soon as possible!

Fortunately, her son had set his sights on her very early and made his claim. Otherwise, with the little lass's fame and fortune in the capital, there were plenty of people who would want to take her as a wife or daughter-in-law. After all, the little lass's abilities and immense fortune were an enticing lure that many people couldn't resist. For example, she had caught the emperor's eye, so if they had a relationship with her, that would be the same as entering the emperor's eye themselves. Thus, they would be able to be on speaking terms with many influential officials...

Zhu Junyang clearly showed that he approved of his lady mother's wise and brilliant decision. Now they had just entered the tenth month, so there was less than half a year from the date of their marriage. The betrothal gifts and other things had long been prepared by him and his father's estate, but he still felt like there wasn't enough. In his eyes, only by sending a large amount of gifts and precious items could he show the world just how much he and Imperial Prince Jing's Estate esteemed and respected the little lass.

He had already sent people over to renovate the residence that the emperor had given him. As the future masters of the estate, he and Xiaocao would naturally live in the main residence. He was planning on bringing the little lass over on another day so she could also voice any opinions she had about the renovations. After all, this was the place she was going to live in the future. He needed to do his best to make it cozy, relaxing, and up to her standards!

The two Zhao generals and Chief Steward Su Ran all considered themselves to be on Xiaocao's family side. Thus, they also participated in the discussion about what to add to the betrothal and dowry gifts.

They talked and talked and somehow ended up on the topic of Zhu Junyang's 'Wisdom Jade Pavilion'. Manager Zhang was truly a genius. Even though his master hadn't been back in the capital for more than a year, he still made sure the business at the store was up and roaring the entire time. He did especially well with Xiaocao's idea, which was gambling with raw jadeite and nephrite ores. This had already become a very popular feature at the store.

Although the people living in the southwest were doughty, the environment there was a bit chaotic. Nevertheless, the subordinates under Zhu Junyang weren't pushovers. Shop Manager Zhang especially had gone once to the southwest to find the most famous expert in identifying jade ores. With the help of this person, he daringly bought two jadeite ore mines that had just opened and then came to a business agreement with a few local mine owners. On the first trip, he came back with over twenty

carriages full of jadeite raw ores. It was quite difficult considering the lapses in communication in this time period!

As soon as the jadeite ores got to the capital, Shopkeeper Zhang winningly invited Xiaocao over to pick a few. Within the twenty or so carts, Xiaocao picked out a stone that produced a piece of jadeite that was about the size of a basketball and was a pure emerald green color. She happily took that into her hands. In addition, she also picked out a piece of crystal red jade and golden yellow jade.

One had to admit that Manager Zhang had a good eye. After buying two jadeite mines, both of these mines produced raw ores that were quite likely to produce good stones. Out of ten rough ores, there was at least one that had a good piece of jade it. Thus, in twenty carriages, it was quite likely that he'd get around ten pieces of the glass-type or the better quality ice-type jades.

After Manager Zhang asked her to, Xiaocao helped him pick out a few other pieces of jade to become the selling points of the store. The jadeite 'great master' that Manager Zhang had invited over was quite shocked by Xiaocao's abilities. Every single one she picked produced great quality stones. He would never have expected that there would be a hidden expert in the capital of the Great Ming Empire. A young and beautiful young maiden was actually better than him, someone who had worked with jadeite ores for more than a dozen years, at picking the right ores.

Once the delicate and fine jadeite jewelry and decorations came onto the market, the bright colors and lustrous stones combined with the fine craftsmanship instantly attracted a bunch of fans. Although the prices of these new stones were not low, it couldn't stop the capital's noble matrons and maidens from pursuing them.

The clamouring for these new stones especially reached a fever pitch once Princess Consort Jing appeared at a flower banquet wearing an entire set of deep emerald green jadeite jewelry and head ornaments. The dense and concentrated color seemed as if it could drip out at any time. Under the direct light of the sun, the stones appeared a lake blue with a few streaks of teal within. Then, in the blink of an eye, the color seemed to have changed into a bright green. The constantly changing shade made it unpredictable and incredibly beautiful. This set of jadeite jewelry made Princess Consort Jing look even more dignified, noble and elegantly beautiful.

Furthermore, Yu Xiaocao had also invited many of the capital's noble maidens over to her first 'tasting banquet'. At the party, the delicious food was no longer the focus of the young ladies' conversation. Instead, they were all mesmerized by the red jade bracelet that was on Xiaocao's wrist. It was the shade of rosy red that appeared in the sky at sunset, and she also had a set of head ornaments in the exact

same color that were carved into delicate flowers. The color glowed brightly and the texture of the stones were lustrous and glossy.

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Compared to the white jade, light green jade, and even the mutton-fat jade that they had seen a lot of, the young maidens much preferred this type of jade that had gorgeous and dazzling colors. A couple of them were about to get married and were especially enthused about this new type of jade. If they could wear a set of bright red jade hair decorations on their wedding day, then they would definitely be the talk of the capital!

With Princess Consort Jing and Yu Xiaocao both making an all-out effort to personally advertise this new type of jade, it very quickly became popular within the noble and high borns in the capital. Within moments, Wisdom Jade Pavillion's jadeite goods were all sold out. Shop Manager Zhang was not only keeping an eye out on the artisans who were working overtime to carve and make the jewelry but he was also paying attention to the workers in charge of transporting more material. He was so busy that he was on his feet constantly yet he still had a body full of energy!

Since the jadeite was selling so well, Manager Zhang made the executive decision to open all of the raw ores so that they could use and sell all of the jadeite within. As for his future mistress's idea of using these ores as a gambling product, he had also smelled the whiff of a golden opportunity. There were quite a few wealthy rascals in the capital who were itching to 'gamble'. The blazing popularity of the horse racing track and amusement arena in the capital was just a peek of what was possible.

However, 'gambling on stones' was definitely an unfamiliar concept to the people of the capital. The fact that one could possibly pick a raw ore, open it to reveal beautiful jade and jadeite, and become rich overnight was an incredibly enticing lure to many of the gamblers in the city.

Manager Zhang clearly was a capable person. Although he didn't plan on using the first batch of raw ores in this gambling business, he still invited a group of customers who were fascinated by the new stone to participate in a public ore opening. As the unassuming rocks were opened one after another in front of the audience, revealing gorgeous and dazzling veins of jadeite, the people found themselves astounded. This was the first time they had ever seen something as mystical as this!

Manager Zhang also picked a few lucky people from the audience and gave them the opportunity to pick out a jadeite raw ore to be opened in front of everyone. Naturally, all of these rocks had all been previously inspected by the jadeite grand expert and the shop's future mistress. Although there were a few stones within the batch that didn't have anything interesting inside, more than half of the specimens contained jadeite. However, the quality of the jadeite within could not be guaranteed and was dependent on luck.

When the stones were opened in front of everyone, revealing the sparkling and pure jadeite within, the lucky customers who had been selected to choose a raw ore couldn't help but reveal proud expressions. As for those who selected duds, they couldn't accept their loss and begged to choose another one...everyone was leaping to participate, which pushed the popularity and legend of these jadeite stones into a whole other level.

Naturally, these opened ores of jadeite were still the property of Wisdom Jade Pavilion. There were some people who were reluctant to lose the jadeite that had been opened in front of their eyes and immediately paid a high price to buy it right then and there. Then, they asked the artisans at Wisdom Jade Pavilion to help them process the raw jadeite. There were even some who directly took the raw jadeite back home to keep as a souvenir of this amazing day. Everyone who had been invited to participate in this jadeite ore extravaganza were naturally old customers of Wisdom Jade Pavilion. Thus, who among them would care about the money required to buy some pieces of jadeite?

Under the hard work of Shopkeeper Zhang, jadeite jewelry became extremely popular within the capital's high society. The noble matrons would often deliberately wear a new dazzling set of jadeite jewelry at the various parties they gathered at to show themselves off. As for the other ladies and maidens, even if they were a bit hard pressed for money, they would end up gritting their teeth to buy a set of jadeite hair ornaments or a jadeite bracelet. Otherwise, how could they show their faces at the next banquet?

It wasn't just the noble matrons and maidens who were competing amongst themselves. Even the imperial court's old officials began showing off. Whoever had a jadeite belt decoration hanging off his waist would also be subject to the envious stares of his colleagues. Other people couldn't compare to Imperial Prince Jing. He would have a new jadeite belt accessory switched out every few days and each one, whether it was in terms of its color or crystal clarity, was a piece that was incredibly valuable and precious to the discerning person's eyes.

Some of these accessories had been picked out for him with the help of Princess Consort Jing, while others had been given to him by his son. However, the vast majority had been given to him by his future daughter-in-law to show her filial respects to him. He was the only one with a future daughter-in-law with an extremely discerning eye. Every single jadeite ore she picked produced a top-notch quality stone. Furthermore, the ones she opened were always used to make ornaments to be sent to him and his wife.

After receiving countless ambiguous looks from his colleagues, Imperial Prince Jing felt incredibly refreshed from head to toe! He truly felt like he had a rich and imposing aura now as he could use a set

of jadeite accessories and then toss it aside to use another. It was the feeling of a rich tyrant ah! Oh what was that? People were envious of him? Well, they just weren't lucky enough to father a good son who had found a good daughter-in-law for him.

Once jadeite jewelry and accessories came into vogue, Wisdom Jade Pavilion was flooded with money every day. Its business wasn't in any sense inferior to the Yu's Medicinal Cuisine House or Blossoming Beauty. Using the analogy of the goose that laid the golden eggs to describe Wisdom Jade Pavilion wasn't an exaggeration at all.

However, 'Wisdom Jade Pavilion', the goose that laid the golden eggs, had actually been offered up as a betrothal gift. Manager Zhang had ended up hearing the news through some unofficial channels and pursed his lips at the thought. It looked like he was about to change masters very soon. Although the Yu Family would definitely not try to take advantage of Imperial Prince Xu and would send Wisdom Jade Pavilion back as dowry, it still meant the owner would ultimately change!

However, in Manager Zhang's eyes, his future mistress was famous within the capital for having good business sense, so she would obviously be much more reliable than Imperial Prince Xu, who was a boss who left everything to his stewards to handle! After all, wasn't the reason why jadeite was selling so well related to the fact that his future mistress had casually given him an idea on how to advertise properly? He had a feeling that as long as he followed his future mistress's orders, he wouldn't regret it!

Other than Wisdom Jade Pavilion, Zhu Junyang also added all of the fruits and vegetables stores under his name to the list of betrothal gifts. Within the capital, there were around a dozen or so of these shops in the capital and all of them were supplied with fruits and vegetables grown in the plantations and orchards in the suburbs. With the super cheat item, the little divine stone, on hand, not even the vegetables and fruits produced in season by the imperial farms could compare to the tastes of these specially raised plants.

After eating these specially grown vegetables and fruits, how could the picky nobles and officials possibly be able to stomach eating ordinary fruits and vegetables anymore? Naturally, it was obvious that these fruit and vegetable stores ran a brisk business. Even though their products were much more expensive than the normal stores, they didn't have to worry about their fruits and vegetables sitting out to rot. Furthermore, the out of season vegetables and fruits they sold were naturally extremely popular too!

Out of all of the stores under Zhu Junyang's name, these fruit and vegetable stores were among the most profitable. Now, they were all on the betrothal gift list. In Zhu Junyang's eyes, the reason why the

profits of these stores were so high were related to his little lass. As a man, not being able to give his wife money and also taking advantage of her talents was really too shameful.

Thus, it made the most sense to give them all to his wife. The little lass used to always quip, 'After marriage, what was his was hers and what was hers was still hers!' If she was able to handle it, what was wrong with him handing all of his businesses over to her?

Nevertheless, with such a hardworking wife at his side, Zhu Junyang felt quite a bit of pressure. If he didn't do his best, then he would end up becoming a husband who relied on his wife to eat and drink. The little lass would happily raise him but he would lose out on the pleasure of making money so his wife could spend it. Thus, would there be any meaning left in his life at that point?

Old General Zhao, General Zhao, and Fang Zizhen all had their heads lowered, inspecting the betrothal gift list that Zhu Junyang had given to them. Within the list, there were all sorts of gold, silver, jewels, gems, antiques and paintings written. It was enough to dazzle a person's eyes. Then there were precious damasks and silk brocades that could only be found within the warehouses in the imperial palace. It was too much for their eyes to take in. Further down, the list contained properties, farmsteads, and stores galore. It was enough to make a person dizzy. That didn't include the rare treasures listed. Any one of those would be more than enough to shock a person speechless.

Imperial Prince Xu's wealth was truly too astounding! The three men looked at each other and they could all see the same type of surprise in their eyes. Imperial Prince Xu was truly too willing to give anything to that lass Xiaocao. They now regarded Imperial Prince Xu with an additional look of approval and admiration in their eyes. Oh right! The more lavish the betrothal gift was, the more it showed just how much the bridegroom's side valued the bride's side! Would Imperial Prince Xu truly end up sending all of his property and wealth to that lass Xiaocao as his betrothal gift?

This thought of theirs wasn't out of the realms of possibility. Zhu Junyang had truly given almost half of his belongings as betrothal gifts. What was wrong with that? He was fine with it, so who could stop him?

"Uh...Your Highness, do you want to take this list back home and discuss it first with Imperial Prince Jing and Princess Consort Jing?" Old General Zhao also thought that this list was a bit too excessive and was afraid that Zhu Junyang had done it privately without consulting his parents. This would lead to Xiaocao's future father-in-law and mother-in-law resenting her. After thinking about this for a bit, he opened his mouth to tactfully remind the prince.

Yu Xiaocao, who had gone outside to make some pastries for the afternoon tea, entered the room again. When she saw her godfather, Grandfather Zhao, and Uncle Zhao muttering over the betrothal gift list incessantly. She casually took the list from their hands and sat next to Zhu Junyang. She grinned and remarked, "What's this about the betrothal list? Let me look...was this fellow too stingy and gave you guys a list you look down upon? It doesn't matter. If we're not satisfied with this list, then we can push back our wedding date a bit farther ah!"

Auntie Zhao glared at her and stated in a scolding tone, "How could you possibly change a wedding date that has already been set? You little lass. Everything else about you is good but you're just too pure and don't think before you speak. Fortunately, Imperial Prince Xu understands your personality and won't blame you for it..."

Zhu Junyang knew that Lady Zhao's words were meant for him so he immediately expressed his position, "The little lass's personality matches this prince's taste the most. This prince disdains those noble maidens who only speak in riddles and refuse to say what's on their minds! Old General Zhao, please don't worry! My lady mother has always stood at the little lass's side and she personally wishes that I would send all of the estates and businesses under my name to the little lass. Sometimes I feel like I was a kid picked up from the side of the road and Xiaocao had been personally birthed by her!"

"Hee hee hee! This shows that I am loved by all. Birds of a feather flock together ah! You're already so big but you still want to fight for favor with me? Isn't that too embarrassing ah?" Yu Xiaocao bantered as she mirthfully met his eyes. Only then did she lower her head to inspect the betrothal gift list in front of her.

"This prince is ecstatically happy that my lady mother likes you, so how could I possibly fight for favor with you? Once you marry over, not only will my mother spoil you but I also plan on spoiling you until you are the happiest woman in the world. You absolutely will not regret your decision!" Zhu Junyang shamelessly said some sweet nothings in front of all of the elders. His honeyed words made Su Ran, who was drinking medicinal tea at the side, grimace in disgust.

Auntie Zhao's face turned bright red and glanced at the little maiden next to her who was sniggering like a fool. She couldn't help but silently sigh at the silly little girl's stupidly good fortune. Her son had truly lost. With Zhao Han's slow-witted nature, he would never be able to say such slick and corny words. Royal Prince Yang...Imperial Prince Xu looked cold on the outside but he was surprisingly adept at expressing his feelings.

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"Wow ah! You're giving me so many shops as a part of the betrothal gift ah! Then the dowry I'm preparing absolutely can't lose to you, right? Zhu Junyang, you're so devious ah! In order to catch me,

this giant fish, you're quite willing to send out the bait!" Yu Xiaocao saw the dozen or so estates and shops on the list and felt like she had suddenly been rocketed from a small wealthy woman into a giant tycoon.

"Just what are you saying? Imperial Prince Xu views you with importance which is why he is giving you such an excessive amount of items and estates as a betrothal gift!" Auntie Zhao lightly patted the little lass in an effort to hurriedly mediate between the two. She lightly sighed inwardly. Why did the little lass always have to say things that made it difficult for other people?

Zhu Junyang felt bad for the little lass as he watched her being patted in the same location for a while. He opened his mouth to say, "Without the Wutong tree, how could one attract the golden phoenix? If I don't offer up enough capital, then how would I be able to show just how precious and valuable Xiaocao is to me? You deserve the best!"

"Hee hee! You truly have a good eye!" Yu Xiaocao casually placed the list of betrothal gifts on the table and sent an admiring look towards Zhu Junyang. "Don't worry, I won't let you be at a loss here. This maiden's residence absolutely can handle and return such a magnificent betrothal gift. However, now I'm worried about whether or not the dowry I bring during the wedding might be too excessive or not?"

"This dynasty at the moment hasn't set down clear-cut customs for marriage. However, the previous dynasty did, but since we've already switched dynasties, who cares about the customs of the previous one? That being said, Imperial Prince Xu is now an imperial prince, so even if his princess consort's dowry is a bit on the larger side, who would dare to voice their complaints out loud?"

Fang Zizhen also believed that his daughter deserved the best. He had obtained so many good things over the years for the sole purpose of making sure his daughter would be able to lift her head proudly on the day she got married. What was wrong with having a lavish dowry? If the residence was able to support it and wanted to give a lot for the dowry, what could other people do about it?

"Well now I'm relieved!" Yu Xiaocao shamelessly wondered if she would end up becoming known as the woman who had the largest dowry in the Great Ming Dynasty. Having a dowry train that spanned five kilometers was a dream every nobly-born maiden yearned for, right?

Zhu Junyang accompanied Xiaocao as they sent off the three members of the Zhao Family to the front gate as well as his future father-in-law. Fang Zizhen glared at him with an ambiguous and telling look as he said, "Your Highness, you should also head back soon ah. After all, you're not married yet, so it's best to keep those gossip tongues away!"

“Lord Father-in-law is right. Once Chief Steward Su is all settled, this prince will head out immediately!” Zhu Junyang righteously and shamelessly used Su Ran's name as an excuse. He was a bit unhappy that this fellow would be able to live in the outer courtyard of the Yu Residence for a while. Although this fellow's identity was special, he still had his stunning looks and those from the outside, who might not know of his eunuch's status, may start having odd thoughts when they saw an 'adult man' who wasn't related to Xiaocao living at the Yu Residence.

Fang Zizhen had a cursory understanding of Su Ran's current condition after talking to his daughter. Although he was also not entirely happy with this situation, his daughter had said that 'a doctor has the heart of a parent' and didn't have any other intentions. Furthermore, that fellow...ahem ahem, although it wasn't something that was nice to say, that fellow wasn't truly considered a man ah! That being said, in a couple of days, Yu Hai and his family would enter the capital. At that moment, they didn't need to worry about the impropriety of the situation anymore.

When he saw that Zhu Junyang had an acceptable excuse, Fang Zizhen didn't bother trying to quibble with him anymore as he still had things to accomplish that afternoon.

After he saw Fang Zizhen mount his horse and leave, Zhu Junyang turned around to look at that adorable and spoiled little maiden next to him and smiled, “Are you satisfied with the betrothal gift list that I gave you?”

“It's alright ah!” Yu Xiaocao slightly shrugged her shoulders and revealed a crafty smile, “If you also added in Treasure Pavilion to the gifts, then this maiden will be completely satisfied!”

Hou Xiaoliang, who had been standing slightly behind his master this entire time, raised his head to look at his future mistress briefly as he thought, 'Miss Yu's appetite is quite big. The master has given more than half of his estates to her but she still hankers after my master's Treasure Pavilion.' One had to know that the income from Treasure Pavilion accounted for around eighty percent of his master's total income.

Zhu Junyang reached out his hand and tapped her adorable little nose. He lamented in a voice full of love, “You, ah, are truly a tiny little money grubber! Since you've opened your honored mouth, then this prince will have to agree otherwise it will seem like I'm being too miserly. Alright! When I get back, I will add Treasure Pavilion to the list as well...”

Hou Xiaoliang had long become used to his master's bottomless ability to pamper his wife. Even if his master had said right now that he was going to give all of his businesses over as a betrothal gift to her, there still would be no ripples in his heart.

“Don't, don't! I was just casually joking, that's all! You've already given me every business that makes money in your hands. If you end up being hard-pressed for money later on, then people will laugh at you!”

As an imperial prince, he would only have more subordinates and servants beneath him, so he would naturally have increased expenditures. Xiaocao believed that she was a 'virtuous' person and didn't want to be so tight-fisted with his purse that her man had to be stingy whenever he went out. Money had very little relation to whether a man would turn bad or not. The crucial point was whether he still had her within his heart!

“This prince knows what's going on. I'll give it to you, so you should take it!” Zhu Junyang tasted a flood of sweetness when he saw his little lass considering him first. He used a large hand to ruffle her hair for a bit before continuing, “In my heart, you are the most precious thing in the world!”

Yu Xiaocao felt extremely touched by this statement. She raised her head and revealed a brilliant and glittering smile, “As long as you don't leave, I won't abandon you! Whether or not someone has sincere feelings for you isn't measured by money or the amount of betrothal gifts. Thus, you should still keep those businesses...”

Her first statement caused Zhu Junyang's enchanting pair of eyes to light up. He held onto the little lass's soft and tender hands as he gently said, “I will love you for the rest of my life, so let's grow old together. In this life, don't ever think that this prince will ever let you go. Everything that is mine is yours, including myself!”

If a person from the ancient times became enlightened, then his ability to say terms of endearment would blow a modern man out of the park. Yu Xiaocao felt her cheeks grow hot and she bit her lip before smiling, “Since you say it like that, then do we really need to care whether or not our estates and stores are in your hands or mine?”

“However, this prince wants everyone in the capital to know just how much I regard you! I don't want other people to look down on you...” The little lass's cheeks, which were normally as lustrous and pale as the finest mutton-fat jade, now had two enchanting red clouds blooming on them. Zhu Junyang felt a bit bewitched looking at her.

Yu Xiaocao lowered her head in embarrassment after seeing his fervent eyes that were completely filled with love and adoration. She inadvertently began to draw circles on the ground with the tip of her foot. An 'old' man, who had been single for twenty-five years, truly had some astounding offensive abilities in the romance department. It really made it hard for a person to resist.

Under the warm light of autumn, there were two figures that could be seen. One had a tall, strong, and elegantly handsome figure while the other was short, delicate, and adorable. They looked incredibly harmonious together and the pair of them made a sight that other people couldn't look away from.

Ning Donglan quietly stood at the corner of the street as he gazed at these two familiar figures from a distance. That adorable and special little girl was currently revealing a shy countenance that only a young lady could have. Ning Donglan knew that, within the capital, Yu Xiaocao was considered to be an unconventional young maiden. Compared to the other noble maidens who were gentle, refined, sweet, lively, and cautious, she was quite fickle and unpredictable.

At the imperial plantations, she was extremely confident. When she was with her friends, she was bright and pretty. In front of a powerful enemy, she was calm and composed...but he had never seen this type of her before. Apparently, in front of the person she liked, she could also be embarrassed and shy and would reveal what other girls often showed. She could also show that she wanted to lean against someone.

He really wanted to be the one standing in front of her now, to be able to affect her every frown and smile, to be the man that she loved with all of her heart! Unfortunately, in her life, he had arrived too late. He could only gaze at her from a distance and silently give his blessings to her...

Zhu Junyang seemed to sense something and turned his head to look towards a specific distant corner. Ning Donglan had already dodged into one of the side stores on the street, leaving an empty and desolate street corner. It somehow seemed as melancholy as a cool breeze.

"What are you looking at?" Yu Xiaocao advanced a step and curiously looked in the direction that he was gazing at. She didn't see anything special and looked back at him with a confused look while she inquired.

Zhu Junyang frowned slightly and lowered his head to look at the young lady in front of him before smiling again. He pinched her cheek and softly said, "Nothing! Let's go and see your Sir Su. He should be awake now."

Su Ran, who had just eaten lunch and drunk his medicine not long ago, had been escorted to one of the guest rooms in the outer courtyard to rest. His injuries had severely sapped his energy. Even if he wanted to endure and discuss the betrothal gift list with everyone to get more good things for the lass, he wasn't able to. Under the effects of the medicinal tea, he fell into a lethargic sleep. In fact, the eunuch he had brought along with Zhu Junyang had to help him organize the guest room.

"Sir Su, how are you feeling? Was sleeping here okay?" After knocking on the door, she entered the room to see that clever little eunuch currently helping Sir Su wash up. Yu Xiaocao revealed a sweet smile on her face.

The little eunuch who was helping him was one of the many disciples under Su Ran. He knew the chief steward usually regarded his words as precious as gold, so he smiled and hurriedly replied, "Thank you, Royal Princess Jinan, for concocting your special medicine. The chief steward hasn't been able to sleep so well in a long time. In the past, he would always wake up halfway through from pain and have a full body of cold sweat on him..."

"Go down first ah!" Clearly, this eunuch's attempts to be helpful were not appreciated. Su Ran faintly gave him a look and the little eunuch immediately felt cold sweat pour out of his pores. He hurriedly bowed and left the room.

Xiaocao stopped the eunuch, "Go brew another cup of the medicinal tea I gave you. Sir Su, you need to drink more of this medicinal tea as it will help your body recover better." The latter sentence was to warn Su Ran and had a hint of 'cajoling a reluctant kid to take medicine' to it.

The subordinate eunuch sent her a grateful look and hurriedly stepped out. He had only been sent out to serve the chief steward after the master had come back to the capital with heavy injuries. Before he took this position, he had been instructed that the chief steward didn't like social niceties, so he needed to be clever. He had only been in this position for a short while but had analyzed the chief steward's likes and dislikes incorrectly. It looked like he needed to be more careful in the future.

Su Ran didn't attempt to engage with Xiaocao's childish tone. He was an adult but he was being treated like a child. He really didn't know what to say. However, when he raised his head and saw the constipated look on Imperial Prince Xu's face, he immediately felt his spirits rise and his heart lighten.

“If I obediently follow your orders, will I get a reward ah?” Su Ran deliberately asked.

Zhu Junyang muttered in a grouchy manner, “We're trying to heal your body. It's up to you if you want to obey. But isn't your face too thick to also want a reward for this?”