

Gold Chapter 691

Fields of Gold Chapter 691

“From what you're saying...you're the only one who is suitable for this job?” Zhu Junfan deliberately asked in this manner.

Zhu Junyang hurriedly nodded his head and stated in a solemn manner, “This official believes that I am the most suitable one! This official will use my own life as a guarantee and will do my utmost to protect the great imperial envoy's life. I am willing to sacrifice my own life if needed!”

Zhu Junfan angrily rebuked, “Don't say it as if you have such selfless reasons! You're protecting your own wife!”

“Who was the one who made my wife into the great imperial envoy ah?” Zhu Junyang arrogantly raised his chin up high.

“Quickly scam out of here! We still want to go back to sleep!!” Zhu Junfan furiously shoed the prince away.

Zhu Junyang saw that he had achieved his goal. As he was leaving the palace, he still had his usual constipated look on his face. However, those familiar with him would have been able to spot a glow in his phoenix eyes and tell that he was in an incredibly good mood.

Unfortunately, his good mood only lasted one day. On the next day, an imperial decree was sent out. It turned out that there were now two people in charge of the great imperial envoy's safety. The other one was Zhu Junyang's 'archenemy', the person he found incredibly annoying, Su Ran!

Zhu Junfan cackled inwardly, 'Stinky brat. You think that by disturbing our sleep we would let you get your way? If we didn't do something to make you unhappy, we wouldn't be surnamed Zhu!!' Alright ah, in actuality, he wasn't surnamed Zhu in his past life!

'Brat, don't you just want to take advantage of this situation to have a sweet honeymoon, traveling leisurely, with your wife while she's out on official duties? We will give you a nice third wheel then! Didn't you give plenty of excuses why you had to go along, giving us no choice ah? Well, our reasoning is also perfect. The great imperial envoy's status is too precious and her safety is of utmost importance.

It'd be hard for one person not to miss something from time to time, so a second martial arts expert should be added to the trip! As for an expert, who in this empire can compete with Chief Steward Su?'

Consequently, the group of two that was heading to Jiangnan had now become three. As for the person in charge of the experimental fields in Jinling, Official Wu, he had been summarily ignored.

All of the maidservants and bodyguards at Imperial Prince Xu's estate became excited when they heard the news of their masters heading out to Jiangnan. For the maidservants, being able to accompany their mistress when she left the capital to travel was a very status boosting event. Furthermore, right now was the start of the third month, where everything was growing and blossoming. Traveling to the south with its different climate and flora would allow them to appreciate sights they wouldn't be able to see in the north. All of the maidservants in the masters' courtyard did their best to show off their advantages to them in hopes of being selected to go on the journey.

However, His Highness had said that he planned on traveling lightly this time. He was only bringing Hou Xiaoliang as a bodyguard. As for the princess consort's maidservants, she was going to bring one who knew martial arts and one to take care of her daily necessities. He was afraid that if they brought too many people along, it'd disturb their cuddling together as a couple.

The requirement that one of them know martial arts had eliminated many prospective people. Inside the inner courtyard, there were only five who had martial arts skills. Among them included a bodyguard who had retired from Imperial Prince Jing's hidden bodyguard's ranks when she was in her thirties and didn't want to leave her spouse. She had been appointed as a small steward by Xiaocao in the inner courtyard.

Two of the other ones had been sent over by Sir Su and they were retired soldiers from the hidden guards. They were left in the main courtyard and were in charge of their safeties. As for the remaining two, it was naturally Xiaocao's Chunhua and Qiushi, who had been with her for many years. These two were the most suitable to be picked to go along. They were not only very skilled at martial arts but they were also familiar with their mistress's temperament and were able to manage her needs perfectly and up to standard. As expected, the mistress ended up picking Chunhua for this trip.

As for the maidservant to take care of Xiaocao's personal needs, Xiaocao ended up choosing Wutong. Naturally, Hou Xiaoliang had also privately breathed a few words into the prince's ear about this. Within the maidservants at the estate, Wutong had to be the one who had spent the most time with Xiaocao and had been performing very well for the past few years. She was also extremely loyal. In addition, she was gentle without being gutless, courageous without overstepping her boundaries, and Xiaocao was quite pleased with her.

Unfortunately, she was of age and there was Hou Xiaoliang staring from the side, so it was likely she wouldn't be able to keep the maid by her side for much longer. The imperial bodyguards of an imperial prince were all ranked officials. She couldn't have Wutong by her side, serving her, after she had become an official's wife. If that happened, it was likely that rumors would spread about her, stating that she was treating her servants harshly.

The group of people arrived at the docks the day after the imperial decree came out and boarded a comfortable large ship. The Great Ming Empire's shipbuilding technology was considered the most modern in the world at the moment. The large seafaring ships were all products from the imperial family. No matter whether it was in terms of safety or comfort, it was guaranteed.

At this time, the Grand Canal was unblocked and being renovated as it was the major method of transportation connecting the northern and southern parts of the empire together. It made it much easier to travel between the two areas. After entering the ship, the couple was granted the largest and most luxurious room onboard. Sir Su was in the room next to theirs. As for the old official, whose hair was turning white, he had been lodged in the room at the tail end of the vessel.

Although Official Wu had also taken a ship to travel to the capital, he had been on a private little ship. Whenever the waves or wind were more boisterous, the boat would rock heavily. This old official, who was over the age of fifty, was also extremely seasick the entire way there. By the time he arrived at the capital, he lost over half of his vitality.

Compared to now, he was standing steadily at the stern of the ship, gazing into the distance. On both sides of the canal, he could see the lush green scenery at the banks, while the aqua colored water completed the atmosphere. It felt quite surreal to him. As the ship steadily moved forward, he could hear the gentle lapping of the water and occasionally hear the sounds of some water birds singing...

He thought again about the experimental rice paddies back in Jinling. Now that he had been able to invite the expert from the agricultural sector over, he was sure that the paddies would be able to reach a high-yield status similar to the crops that had been experimented on in the capital. Perhaps, he had always wanted to imitate the seed breeding operation in the capital and establish one in Jiangnan. Thus, preparations must be made so that when the time came, the commoners of Jiangnan would also be able to live their lives with plenty to eat and truly become the prosperous people of the land of fish and rice! With his better mood, this old official didn't feel seasick either and had the energy to ask to see the great imperial envoy to ask her for some agricultural secrets.

What sort of secret measures could Yu Xiaocao have? In her past life, she was truly a born and bred northerner. Although she had grown plants, she had only raised the northern crops, such as wheat or soybeans. She had never touched rice paddies in her life. Her only secret weapon was the little divine stone, which acted as her golden finger. However...recently the little divine stone very rarely came out of the multi-colored stone. Did it encounter some cultivation difficulties?

[You're the one with cultivation difficulties! Can't you think optimistically for once?] A fair and pudgy little baby appeared inside Xiaocao's room. Then, at a speed that astounded the human eye, it slowly grew into a handsome and good-looking youth.

Yu Xiaocao was stunned silly by this sight. She asked in a flabbergasted manner, "Little Glutinous Dumpling...did your cultivation increase again? Is this a transformation or were you able to cultivate back your true body?"

[Don't speak nonsense if you don't know what you're talking about. Cultivate my true body? I don't need to do that. Isn't this divine stone's true body hanging out on your wrist ah? This is this human form that this divine stone has cultivated. How is it? Isn't it handsome ah?] The youth looked quite proud and pleased.

Yu Xiaocao, on the other hand, was a bit regretful, "Argh! I still think your little golden kitten form is a bit more convenient. How can I possibly explain the appearance of a young youth with me this time?"

[Hmph! You're already bringing your husband along, what's wrong with bringing your younger brother along too?] The little divine stone rolled its eyes at her. It strolled back and forth in her room and picked up her cosmetics box. It picked out her makeup and even took out a jeweled hairpin and tried it on!

Yu Xiaocao burst out into laughter, "Why didn't you choose a female form if you like cosmetics and jewelry so much? I could have dressed you up so beautifully that you could mesmerize the eyes of all the stinky men out there!"

"Who are you calling a stinky man?" Zhu Junyang had just walked in from the outside and saw that a strange youth had appeared inside his wife's room. The youth was even sitting on the bed. The prince immediately frowned and a cold light shone from his phoenix eyes.

[Hey! What do you want? Want to fight? Come, come, come, let's fight together. Other people may be afraid of you but this divine stone isn't scared at all! I'll slap you down instantly and you won't be able to get up!] The sound of the little divine stone's voice echoed inside his head. It was a familiar voice and had a tone that was asking for spanking, but it made it easy for Zhu Junyang to confirm this youth's identity instantly.

“Men and women should not physically touch. If you're using this form, you can't just casually appear inside the princess consort's room!” Zhu Junyang eyed the little divine stone with displeasure but didn't respond to the stone's provocations. Was there any need for him to squabble with a stone spirit? Wouldn't that be lowering himself to the stone's level?

[You're the stone spirit; your whole family are stone spirits!] The little divine stone deliberately walked to Xiaocao and began touching her hair while pulling on her hand. When it saw Zhu Junyang's face darkening, it felt quite gleeful in its heart, 'Are you jealous ah? Go choke on it!!'

Yu Xiaocao ignored the childish actions of the man and stone and pushed the little divine stone away with one hand. She fixed her clothing and walked towards the door as she asked, “Xiaoliang, are you done preparing the fishing rods and bait like I asked you to?”

Zhu Junyang had originally wanted to take this opportunity to act sickly sweet with his wife, but his plan had been completely ruined by that stupid stone. It was so annoying! When he saw his wife going up on deck to fish, he followed her closely from behind. As he exited the room, a golden figure rushed past him through his feet.

Following that, he could Wutong's surprised voice, “Isn't this Little Glutinous Dumpling ah? It's been a long time since I last saw it, so how did it appear on the ship?”

Yu Xiaocao shrugged her shoulders and casually said, “Who knows ah? This fellow always comes and goes as it pleases, so we never know where and when it might appear. Perhaps it found out that we were going out on a journey and hid in the luggage to board the ship!”

Wutong thought for a bit and thought that was quite reasonable. The cat was very small and it'd be very hard for people to spot it if it hid in a piece of luggage. It looked extremely cute right now as it lay on the deck of the ship, waving its tail around as it watched its master go fishing.

Wutong stepped forward and pulled the golden little kitten into her arms. She tapped its nose and said, “Don't be naughty on the ship. You're not allowed to climb on the ship's masts. If you fall into the water, no one will go down to rescue you! Obediently watch your master fish. If we catch anything, we'll add it to your food!”

The little divine stone didn't struggle and instead allowed Wutong to help it scratch its itches with a face full of pleasure. Zhu Junyang glared at it angrily. It'd be better if it kept its cat form the entire time. Why did it have to take the form of a handsome youth? This fellow was definitely doing all of this on purpose!

He glanced again at the lazy little cat that was being cradled in Wutong's arms. Zhu Junyang then cast a knowing look towards Hou Xiaoliang and his eyes glittered with an amused light.

Hou Xiaoliang felt the hair on his body rise when he saw his master looking at him. He wondered, 'I don't think I've done anything incredibly stupid or silly recently, right? Why is the master looking at me like that? Was there something wrong with the fishing poles and bait that I prepared for the princess consort earlier?'

“Shhhh, don't be loud! The fish took the bait!” Wutong had a nervous expression on her face when she saw the fishing line in the water sway. She used a hand to cover the little divine stone's face. The golden little kitten was stunned by this, 'Hey! Who's the one being noisy? By covering the nose and mouth, do you still want this cat to be able to breathe ah? If this divine stone was a true cat, I'd have suffocated to death ah! This is murder!'

Yu Xiaocao snatched the right timing and pulled sharply up on the fishing pole. A crucian carp about the size of a hand flew onto the deck. “Wow! It got caught! Your Highness, you're too awesome!!” Wutong finally let her hand down and the little divine stone used this opportunity to jump out of her arms.

Hou Xiaoliang immediately scurried over and helped her to unhook the crucian carp. Then he put more bait on the hook and threw the caught fish into the prepared bucket that had some water in it. Hou Xiaoliang carefully glanced over at his master—Look, aren't I being very thoughtful here?

Zhu Junyang looked at him briefly before picking up stool and placing it down next to his wife. He picked up a fishing pole and was about to sit down. Suddenly, the fishing pole in his hands was being pulled away by an external force. He waved an arm in that direction and was stopped by another person's hand.

When he raised his head to look, he saw that it was that annoying fellow, Su Ran! Hmph, not only did that annoying guy disturb his close coupledness with his wife, but he was also trying to take his fishing pole away from him. If he had to endure this insult, was he still a man? Thus, he forcefully pulled the pole back towards him.

Fields of Gold Chapter 692

Su Ran naturally wouldn't take this lying down. The two of them both had their hands on the same fishing pole while the other hand was being used to battle. Their movements were like lightning and so fast that the people watching could only see a faint shadow. It was a dizzying sight.

Hou Xiaoliang fared better. He had already seen his master's fierce side before. Wutong, on the other hand, observed all of this with her mouth wide open and her eyes bugged out. She was usually a very lively person but now resembled a stunned simpleton.

The two of them were making quite a ruckus as they fought energetically. Yu Xiaocao, who had been trying to fish at the side, noticed that not a single fish could be seen for quite some time and became infuriated. She threw her fishing pole to the side and stamped her feet. She took in a deep breath and screamed in a shrewish manner, "The two of you!! Stop right now——"

The two supreme experts reacted immediately to the roar of the lioness and froze. Each of them still had a hand on the fishing pole while the other one was still in the middle of their next movement. They looked as if they had been frozen in a certain moment in time. The two of them turned their heads to look at Yu Xiaocao, who had her hands on her hips, and sheepish expressions surfaced on their faces.

"If you guys want to fight, go fight in the river! Not only are you two messing up my fishing, but if two also accidentally damage the ship while sparring, what are we supposed to do? Greet the fishes personally in the water?" Yu Xiaocao furiously glared at the two childish culprits, whose combined ages were over sixty. She resembled a teacher scolding some wayward students. Although she wasn't old in age or tall, her demeanor was quite imposing.

The old official at the back of the ship had heard the ruckus and looked over to see this surprising scene. He was stunned speechless. The people being scolded like schoolboys were not easy folk to deal with. One was the cruel and merciless, infamous head of the imperial hidden guards, while the other was an imperial prince, a highly skilled war hero with a face as cold as a glacier.. Despite their reputations, they were both acting like weak little chickens in front of the young woman and taking her scoldings like meek children.

It wasn't completely surprising that Imperial Prince Xu was taking this without a peep. After all, he was the husband of the great imperial envoy and Official Wu had heard the rumors in the capital that the prince was a husband who pampered his wife to no end. Chief Steward Su's reaction, on the other hand, completely perplexed him. This man who was clothed entirely in white was obediently accepting his verbal punishment with a smiling face. Was he truly the same Chief Steward Su who was known to be vicious, cunning, and cold to his bones?

"Then ah...may I ask, Great Imperial Envoy, how should we be fighting in the river?" Su Ran meekly asked. Were they supposed to compete in swimming and catching fish in the water?

Yu Xiaocao gave a sidelong glance at the two people and crossed her arms in front of her chest. She tapped the deck with one foot as she huffed, "Aren't you both very skilled ah? Hmph! Here are two pieces of wood. You both can stand on them while they float in the river and you two can fight up to three hundred passes. Whoever's shoes don't get wet is the winner!" Following that, she threw in two pieces of wood that were about the size of a person's palm straight into the water. They were quite thin but she hinted at them to get started!

Zhu Junyang and Su Ran exchanged looks as they didn't know whether they should cry or laugh at the little lass's absurd expectation. Zhu Junyang let go of the fishing pole that he had been fighting with Su Ran over and walked towards his wife. He pointed at the pieces of wood, which were halfway submerged in the water, and said, "Do you want to kill me, your husband ah? That piece of wood wouldn't be able to hold a bird that landed on it, let alone me, alright?"

"You both are skilled at martial arts. Can't you make yourselves as light and lithe as a swallow ah?" Yu Xiaocao snorted a few times as she fully expressed how displeased she was at the two of them for delaying her fishing. In order to vent her temper, didn't she need to make things a bit difficult for them?

Su Ran lightly chuckled and sat down at the side as he stated, "Only the experts written in those wuxia novels have the ability to cross a river while stepping on floating reeds. Your Highness, Imperial Prince Xu, how about...you try it?"

"Hmph! You're the number one expert in the empire. If you can't even reach that level, why would this prince even bother trying to attempt such a task?" Zhu Junyang's wit was also quite good.

Yu Xiaocao stuffed a fishing pole into her husband's hand and grunted a couple of times before she said, "I don't think it matters anymore ah! You two were unable to figure out who's better than the other

earlier, right? Then use fishing to decide! Starting from now, whoever catches the most fish and the largest fish will be the winner! The loser will have to wash the dishes from our lunch. Begin now!”

“A competition is just a competition; neither of us are afraid of the other!” The two of them weren't considered fishing experts. They picked up their respective fishing poles and baited the hooks. Then they stared at the river as they cast their hooks, and, in an instant, there wasn't a sound to be heard.

It was finally quiet. Yu Xiaocao let out a sigh and ordered Hou Xiaoliang to bring a fishing pole to her. Since these two unreliable guys were likely unable to catch much, she needed to do all of the work herself. Who knew when they would be able to eat a grand fish banquet ah?

Hou Xiaoliang whimpered, “Your Highness, the ship only has two fishing poles and this subordinate brought them all over earlier...” Argh! His mistress was mighty and was able to easily push around those two great lords like they were nothing. As a tiny shrimp, wouldn't he be punished heavily if he wasn't able to do things right?

“There's no more? Then bring over a bamboo rod and some fishing line. Wutong, go get a sewing needle. We can make our own fishing pole!” True experts didn't need fancy equipment to show off their skills!

Zhu Junyang bent the sewing needle into the shape of a hook with his bare hands. Following that, they threaded the line through the needle's eye and then stuck it onto the bamboo pole that had a diameter as thick as a baby's wrist. Yu Xiaocao then put some dough seasoned with sesame oil on as bait and pulled the little divine stone's claw over to imbue some spiritual energy on it. Okay, all preparations were done!

She placed her stool in an area close to where Zhu Junyang and Su Ran were sitting. She cast the fishing line expertly and fixed the fishing pole at the side of the ship. Before long, there was movement on her pole. She waved a hand at Hou Xiaoliang and then pointed at the pole, hinting that he should bring it up. It wasn't that she was unwilling to work. In fact, this fellow had found a bamboo pole that was too thick for her to easily pull on. Her arms and legs were skinny, and she didn't have enough strength ah!

Hou Xiaoliang knew exactly what he needed to do. If he was able to serve his mistress well, he would be able to hug the beauty earlier. He was very obedient in front of Xiaocao. As soon as he got the order, he stepped forward and pulled the pole up forcefully. A river carp that looked to weigh around four to five catties waved its tail as it wiggled on the hook.

Hou Xiaoliang immediately flicked the pole up and the river carp fell onto the deck with a thud and it began to struggle even more heavily. He leapt over and caught the river carp before taking it off the hook. He presented to his mistress as he flatteringly said, "Your Highness, you are truly an astounding expert! This river carp can be cooked and be a fine main dish at the meal!"

Yu Xiaocao nodded her head in satisfaction and replied, "Not bad. Looks like we have the main ingredient for exploding garlic fish!"

She revealed a victorious smile at the two people next to her and bent down to bait the hook so she could continue fishing. Before long, another fish was caught. When the pole was lifted up, they saw a large catfish that weighed around seven to eight catties. As Hou Xiaoliang was reeling the fish in, the fish struggled mightily and almost pulled the man off of the deck!

"Haha! We now have our Sichuan poached sliced fish in chili oil ah!" Yu Xiaocao deliberately pretended to be talking to herself. The expression on her face, however, betrayed just how proud she was!

Following that, Xiaocao continued to catch fish left and right while the two fellows behind her didn't have anything to show for their continued wait. They could only pathetically watch as fish continued to get hooked onto her pole and fill the water bucket next to her until it was almost full!

"Uh...could it be that the lass has caught all of the fish here so I'm not able to get any?" Su Ran mumbled to himself. He stood up and took his fishing pole and chair to the other side of the ship to try—he wasn't convinced that he wouldn't be able to get a single fish all morning!

Zhu Junyang also found a new space that was a bit farther from his wife. He frowned heavily as he stared at his fishing line in the water in a serious manner. Eh? He saw the line move! He forcefully pulled the pole up but there wasn't anything there!

Following that, he either saw that the fish hadn't gotten on the hook or that his bait had been eaten away. All in all, he had very few opportunities where a fish was actually on hook. However, the bait on his hook disappeared much more frequently. From that, it showed him that there were fish to be had but it was skills that were in question now!

"Xiaoliang, faster, faster! Pick up the pole! If you're late, the fish will be gone!!"

“Don't rush, don't rush!! The fish is testing things out right now——now it's okay, go pull the pole up!”

“You dunce, weren't you too slow ah? The bait has been completely eaten! No worries, let's try again!”

When he turned his head over, he saw his wife leisurely sitting down on the chair as she ate strawberries that Wutong brought to her mouth. The bright red juice from the fruit had dyed her pink lips a darker color and her nimble little tongue lapped up the sweet juice from the sides of her mouth.

Argh! There was such a vast difference in treatment here! His wife had someone holding an umbrella to block the sun, someone feeding her fruits, and someone in charge of manning her fishing pole. The lass only had to flap her lips and tell Hou Xiaoliang when to bring the pole up. As for himself? He was all by himself and hadn't caught a single fish all morning.

Wait! Why was his wife catching fish so easily? It had to be related to the bait she was using. She must have made it herself. His wife was very skilled so the bait she made must be out of the ordinary. This wasn't okay. In order to avoid having a date with some greasy plates this noon, he needed to get some bait from her.

Zhu Junyang stood up and walked to his wife. He glanced at the bait box next to her and stealthily reached a hand in. At this time, another large hand with long fingers had also reached in at the same time. When he turned his head around, he saw that annoying fellow, Su Ran, behind him.

The two people exchanged fierce looks with each other and the air around them began to tremble. However, Xiaocao's one remark, 'you're not allowed to fight; each person is allowed ten baits from the box to make this a fair competition!' immediately doused out the flames between the two of them.

“Hmph!” After retrieving their bait, the two of them headed back to their post. Now, they no longer had the problem of fish not taking to their bait. However, the two people's fishing skills were still quite bad. Over half of their bait had been eaten off the hook, while the remaining half had only been used to catch small river carps about the size of their palms. Not a single one weighed more than two catties. On Xiaocao's end, on the other hand, she always caught large fish and a vast variety of them. She could almost open a fishmonger's store now!

“Oh my goodness ah! A big guy is on hook now! Xiaoliang, you need to be careful with this one. Don't pull hard on the pole as the line may snap ah! You need to first lead this guy around so it uses up its strength. Once it's tired, then you can bring it onboard ah!”

Yu Xiaocao's butt had finally left her chair as she excitedly stood up and went to the edge of the ship. She instructed Hou Xiaoliang on how to reel this large fish in. Zhu Junyang and Su Ran both came over after hearing the ruckus.

Hou Xiaoliang had a face full of excitement as he fought carefully with the struggling large fish on the line that was swimming back and forth.

“Be careful, don't let the line get too taut ah!” Hou Xiaoliang immediately followed her instructions.

“Look at the strength of this guy; it must be a big fat one! Bring the pole over to the side, perfect, just like that! Okay, now pull it right and left; we need to make this guy dizzy!!” Yu Xiaocao used her hands to illustrate the way he should be moving the pole.

“Be careful, that guy is trying to escape! Hou Xiaoliang, use your strength in the same direction the fish is going, right! Just like that!!” Yu Xiaocao intentionally instructed him in ways to use up the fish's energy. At this time, it wasn't the right opportunity to fight fire with fire.

Fields of Gold Chapter 693

Hou Xiaoliang followed her orders exactly and swiftly went back and forth. He let the line loose and then pulled it quickly back as he dragged the struggling fish right and left.

“Avoid pushing it head on and use its strength against it. Think of it as borrowing the opponent's force to easily push aside a thousand catties. If you do it correctly, the fish will not be able to escape and we will be able to catch it!” Yu Xiaocao noticed that her two audience members were listening attentively, so she elaborated on her strategy.

At this time, over half of that large fish's energy had been used up. Xiaocao hinted at Hou Xiaoliang that it was time to reel it in. He had a serious look on his face as he gripped the fishing pole tightly before carefully bringing it up. They could first see the fish's head peeking through the water, followed by its body. What a specimen! From its head alone, one could tell that this fish weighed at least thirty catties. As its body left the water and it was brought up on deck, the people onboard could see that this was a large fish that was at least two meters long. It struggled heavily on the ship.

“Has this fish become aware ah?” Zhu Junyang asked in a slightly judgmental manner.

The little divine stone glared at him. Would an aware fish be so stupid to get caught by a baited fishing hook? This was merely a stupid and dumb large fish!

“Little Glutinous Dumpling, come back here now! You might get injured by that fish's tail!” Wutong held onto its tail and brought it back into her arms, “Do you want to eat fish? You can eat after it's cooked at noon. Don't worry, we caught a lot today so you definitely have a share!!”

That gargantuan fish continued to struggle mightily on deck, as if it was trying to protest one last time that it didn't want to die. Its tail slapped the ship, making a 'pah pah' sound. From time to time, it would try to leap up and then fall heavily back down.

The ship's coxswain heard the noise and ran over, “Wow! What a big sturgeon. It must be at least fifty catties, right? It's not that I'm trying to brag but my wife is a good hand at cooking sturgeon. If Your Highnesses don't disdain it, I can have my wife cook this sturgeon for you.”

Xiaocao only knew how to prepare the most commonly eaten types of fish. As for sturgeon and other rare fish, they looked to be much too high class and she didn't want to damage such good ingredients!

They had quite a good haul today, so the fish feast for lunch was incredibly beautiful and delicious. There was fresh steamed bighead carp, sweet and sour river carp, exploding garlic fish, Sichuan poached fish in chili sauce, pine nut fish, fish ball soup...the vast majority of the dishes were made by Xiaocao and the cook maids in the ship.

As for the coxswain's wife, she was truly a good cook who showed her experience in living on the water. The methods she used for cooking the sturgeon opened Xiaocao's and the imperial prince's cook maid's eyes on new methods. With one sturgeon fish, she was able to come up with six different dishes: chopped peppers with sturgeon belly meat, spicy pickled vegetables with sturgeon fillets, spicy roasted sturgeon, light fried sturgeon fish fillets, sturgeon fish head with black bean sauce, and black pepper sturgeon steaks. Every dish was incredibly fragrant and delicious, and not a single person could stop eating after tasting them.

In the end, Xiaocao and the two men, as well as Official Wu, ate until they couldn't bend over anymore. With their servants helping them, they strolled back and forth on the deck to help aid in digestion. There was still quite a bit of food leftover from their fish feast, so all of their subordinates benefitted from this. Hou Xiaoliang rubbed his protruding little belly and let out a burp. He sighed happily at Wutong, "In this lifetime, my greatest fortune was being able to serve Imperial Prince Xu as I've been able to eat so many delicious delicacies. This life was truly worth it!"

"Just look at you! Looks like this lifetime will only be used to stuff that silly face of yours!" Wutong rolled her eyes at him and stealthily popped a digestive pill into her mouth. The lavish fish banquet today was truly too delicious. She, who usually had an iron self-control, had also been unable to resist the temptation to stuff herself. That wouldn't do! In the future, no matter how scrumptious the food looked, she needed to restrain herself. Otherwise, with such a mistress who loved coming up with new dishes, she'd become so fat that she'd be unable to walk anymore!

Hou Xiaoliang snickered and said, "Think of the commoners; don't they spend their entire lives working in order to bring food to the mouths of their families? We now live in a good era as the common people at least have enough food to fill their stomachs. If we were still living in the past dynasty, as soon as a natural disaster came by, there'd be starving people everywhere with corpses lining the road..."

"Go go go! You say it so realistically and scarily as if you had personally experienced it!" Wutong glared at him and roundly scolded him.

Hou Xiaoliang saw that she didn't believe him and became a bit agitated, "Believe me! I've heard those elders who have lived many years talk about it before. Before the end of the past dynasty, the imperial court was greedy and avaricious while the officials were corrupt. One year, the Huai River had massive flooding and commoners living at the banks of the river became homeless and destitute. The court barely just managed to scrape some relief funds together, but the local officials in the area took a greedy bite for their share and ended up absconding off with more than half of it...it was said that in some areas, there wasn't a single living person left in a village. The people died of drowning or starvation. Vultures circled in the air above the disaster zone as they waited for the starving people to take their last breath before they swooped down to enjoy a delicious feast..."

"Ugh...can you choose a different term besides 'delicious feast' to describe this? You're doing this on purpose, right? Do you still want people to be able to enjoy food in the future?"

Wutong pinched Hou Xiaoliang's arm. He was truly a bit dumb and was nothing like his master! Imperial Prince Xu treated his princess consort incredibly well, as if she was a precious treasure that needed to be

coddled and protected at all times. Didn't they say that a certain type of master would have a certain type of servant ah? How come she couldn't sense a whiff of similarity between these two ah?

“Alright alright, it was my bad, my bad! Wutong, have you made a decision yet? When will you consent to marry me? I'm already twenty-three years old and my family is starting to fret from impatience. If I hadn't vehemently refused, my parents would have already made an engagement between me and some other maiden!” Hou Xiaoliang was also impatient now. Many of his childhood friends already had kids old enough to go out to the store to buy soy sauce on their own, yet he hadn't even married a wife.

Last time, when he saw one of his good friends, he felt quite battered afterwards. Argh, other people had no problems marrying their wives. He, on the other hand, had such a difficult time!

Wutong had already become convinced after hearing Xiaocao's thoughts on the matter. However, she couldn't consent so easily to his proposal. Her mistress had said that the harder it was for a man to obtain something, the more he treasured it. She rebuked Hou Xiaoliang with one sentence, “Your master was twenty-five when he finally married my mistress. You still have two years to go, so why are you in such a hurry?”

“The reason why His Highness married Her Highness so late was because Her Highness wasn't of age earlier ah! You've already reached the age of majority, so why do we need to wait until I turn twenty-five ah?”

“My mistress said that men who are older know how to treat their wives better. Look at His Highness; he treats the princess consort so well and listens to all of her opinions and commands!” Wutong pouted in the direction of their two masters. The epitome of a good husband, Imperial Prince Xu, was currently carefully supporting his wife as they strolled on the deck. He would even help her massage her stuffed belly from time to time.

Hou Xiaoliang immediately interjected after hearing this, “I'm not young either and I'm nothing like those rash, young youths. Whatever type of master one is will have the same type of servants. Don't worry, after you marry me, who would I treat well besides my own wife? At that time, you will be in charge of everything at home. We can discuss outside affairs together. Whatever you say, I'll listen!”

“Her Highness said that if a man's words were to be believed, then even pigs would fly! Promises said before marriage will always be forgotten immediately afterwards! Her Highness has also said that all men have roving eyes. They forget about their red flag at home and go out to find multi-colored ones

instead! Her Highness has also said..." Wutong began using her fingers to count out all of the 'faults and crimes' that men had.

Hou Xiaoliang felt his skull go numb at this—"Your Highness, can you not make things so difficult for a man? Was your plan in telling your maidservants all of these bad things about men to keep them by your side and not marry them off ah?" After thinking a bit, he was relieved again. Since his master was able to pass the princess consort's 'test', then why couldn't he?

"Wutong, I know you still don't completely trust me! We should use time to relieve your fears ah!! The patriarch of my family has also suffered from the tricks of concubines before, so he had set down a family law that says 'one may only take in concubines if one is heirless at the age of forty'. Thus, you don't need to worry about me taking in concubines or bed warmers ah! I will promise you that I will only be preoccupied with our family and I won't go out drinking or gambling. If I break this vow, may the Heavens strike me with lightning..." Before he could finish his crazy vow, he was stopped by a little hand at his mouth. Hou Xiaoliang hurriedly took this hand into his palm and used his thumb to gently stroke the back of her hand.

Wutong's face had turned completely red as she pulled lightly at her captured hand. She was unable to free it, so she allowed him to keep it as she scolded him bashfully, "Bah! You're such a sly pervert and sneaky hoodlum!"

"I'm only interested in you, so I'll play my tricks on you!" Hou Xiaoliang's mouth seemed to be as sweet as honey. When he saw a glimmer of joy in Wutong's shy eyes, Hou Xiaoliang's admiration towards his master increased another few steps—following in his master's footsteps truly was the right thing to do! Men needed to be more silver tongued. Furthermore, the other important point was to always take advantage of an opportunity to act a little roguish. After all, the worst outcome was getting slapped in the face! He had thick skin, so what was he afraid of? A virtuous woman's weakness was a persistent man, and that ancient saying was true!

Yu Xiaocao had caught the interactions between the two out of the corner of her eye. She elbowed her husband and grumbled resentfully, "Your subordinate is trying to steal my trusted assistant away! My Wutong is such a good little cabbage but that stupid pig, Hou Xiaoliang, is taking her away from me!"

'Uhhhh...Wife, didn't you say that fellow Hou Xiaoliang resembled a hyper monkey ah? How did he turn into a pig today? What did it matter ah? Wife is right!'

“Mhm, mhm! That fellow does kind of resemble a pig when he's being a pervert!” Zhu Junyang earnestly agreed with his wife's opinion.

Su Ran snickered at the side. Zhu Junyang glanced at him briefly, silently expressing that he had nothing to say to a single dog. What was wrong with pampering, cajoling, and loving his wife?

Yu Xiaocao sighed and stated in a somewhat lost manner, “It looks like I need to train a few more talented maidservants up faster. Otherwise, once Wutong and Pipa and the others marry, I won't have any good assistants left!”

“Don't worry, isn't that lass, Yingchun, quite shrewish? I'm sure she'll be able to handle things on her own.” Zhu Junyang did his best to console his wife as she was feeling a bit downcast.

Yu Xiaocao still shook her head, “But Yingchun is around the same age as me. After two more years, I need to let her go. That's not okay. I need to write a few letters and have Meixiang and Pipa pick out a few smart maidservants and begin training them properly.”

Zhu Junyang saw that his wife seemed a bit down so he hurriedly changed the subject matter, “In front of us is Cangzhou Prefecture. I heard that their donkey burger, mutton intestines, and cured bacon is quite good. When we go ashore, this prince will take you around and you can try some local delicacies to see if their reputation is deserved!”

Yu Xiaocao's spirits immediately perked up when delicious food was mentioned. In her past life, she had watched a well-known foodie show, 'A Bite of China'. One of the episodes showed a donkey burger and it had left a deep impression on her. She would have never expected that she'd have the opportunity to try it herself now.

For this trip to Jiangnan, in her eyes, the official business was secondary. Seeing the beautiful sights and tasting the local delicacies was the true purpose of this trip for her!

Chopped or shredded donkey meat or offal is placed within a huǒshāo or shao bing, a roasted, semi-flaky bread pocket

Fields of Gold Chapter 694

Therefore, in order to make his little wife happy, on the exact evening they arrived at the boundary of Cangzhou Prefecture, Zhu Junyang gave the order to have the ship dock. The two people...no, that's not right, plus Su Ran, so it should be three people, changed into ordinary people's clothing and came off of the ship without a single servant along with them.

The docks had a seafaring ship docked there. Although the harbor in Cangzhou was a bit more simple and crude compared the newly constructed one in Tanggu, it still had a decent amount of lodging and eateries in the area.

That night, there were a lot of vendors of snacks open. Although many of them were located in crude looking shacks, they could smell delicious aromas wafting out of them.

“Donkey burger! This is the authentic donkey burger from Hejian County!!” One particular shack had someone bawling out an advertisement in a thick dialect accent and Xiaocao's attention was immediately caught by it. She followed the direction of the voice and was instantly mesmerized by the savory fragrance that came out of the eatery.

“Uncle, give us three donkey burgers and make sure to add extra meat please!!” Xiaocao ordered from the forty year old man who was selling the food.

“Alrighty ah! Three donkey burgers coming right up! Please wait for a moment!” The man skillfully grabbed and portioned out some dough before pulling each portion into a long strip. After brushing on some oil and sandwiching them together, he placed it on a hot, flat bottomed pan. After the griddled bread was cooked, he then placed them into the stove to make the outsides crispy and flaky.

“Miss, please choose a piece of meat! I'll give you whichever one you want!” The man pointed at the donkey meat inside the pot.

Xiaocao picked out a piece of meat that had equal proportions of fat and lean parts alternating through it. The man sliced it into thin pieces and then seasoned it with some green chili peppers before adding some seasoned savory sauce to it. The most important ingredient was the sauce and that often determined whether the donkey burger would be tasty or not!

“Miss, eat it while it's hot as that's when it tastes best! This one will now make some for your two older brothers!” The man had clearly misunderstood the relationship between the three people. However, Xiaocao wasn't in the mood to correct him because——the donkey burger was seriously too delicious!!

As the proverb said, 'In the Heavens there is dragon meat, while on earth there is donkey meat', the donkey meat within the donkey burger was tender and soft. It was a bit more delicate compared to beef, wasn't as fatty as pork, and didn't have a strong odor like mutton. It was very unique and incredibly tasty!

Xiaocao ate the crispy and flaky donkey burger in large bites. The luscious donkey meat filled her mouth with flavor and a satisfied expression surfaced on her face. When she saw that the two burgers for the men had also been cooked, Xiaocao asked what the bill was and gave the vendor thirty copper coins. The three of them strolled along the docks as they ate.

After they made a big circle around the harbor, the three of them then tasted the famous mutton intestines from Cangzhou Prefecture. The broth that came with the intestines was milky white and glistened brightly. The mutton intestines were fatty without being greasy and had an aroma that mesmerized people. It didn't have a bit of fishiness to it and instead seemed to have a slight sweet taste instead. The more a person ate, the more addicted they would become and the more they loved the dish.

From the vendor's description, the mutton intestines soup had a warm character so it was able to dispel asthma and stomach colds. Furthermore, sheep's head soup had the effect of nourishing the brain and eyes and it was suitable for the elderly with dementia symptoms to drink. Sheep's tongue soup could strengthen and nourish the body as well. It was a suitable food for those recovering from a serious illness. Then there was mutton tripe soup...

Yu Xiaocao tried a few bites of everything and made sure to remember the taste and properties of these dishes. She was planning on writing them all down when she got back to the ship and send a letter back to the Medicinal Cuisine House in the capital. That way, Yangliu could develop these dishes into new ones for the restaurant and increase the variety of foods offered there.

Xiaocao, who had eaten and drunk to her fill, also bought some local bacon to bring back to the ship. She was planning on adding it to the noon meal tomorrow. She also bought a few jars of Cangzhou's preserved dried vegetables.

Cangzhou's preserved dried vegetables had a distinctive flavor and unique style. The vegetables were golden yellow and had a fragrant odor to it. It had a sweet, salty and slightly spicy taste and the combined flavors delighted the palate with all four major flavors. It could be used as a side dish for the meal or it could be stir-fried or added to soup to add flavor. It could also be cooked together with winter bamboo shoots and make a famous dish in Cangzhou called 'two winter stir-fry'. This dish was crisp and tender with a fresh and sweet aroma...

After they got back to the ship, the maids, servants and imperial bodyguards, who had alternated coming and going, except for Wutong and Hou Xiaoliang, had all come back. Another quarter of an hour passed and the two of them finally came back, joking along the way. Hou Xiaoliang's two hands were full of bags as he was carrying snacks and curiosities that couldn't be found in the capital.

The ship rested at the dock for one night and, the next day at dawn, set sail again. The next area they were going to pass by was Dezhou Prefecture. When Xiaocao thought of Dezhou's pulled chicken, she felt her saliva pool in her mouth again.

However, Official Wu risked death to have the ship only briefly pass by. Xiaocao could only sigh and think of the pulled chicken.

Official Wu almost wanted to cry at this point, 'Great Imperial Envoy, you're not here to sightsee and taste food, so can't you take your official duties seriously? Farming doesn't wait for anyone!! The several hundred mu of experimental fields in Jinling are waiting for you! Can't we just travel all day and night to get there faster? The local delicacies won't run away. On the return trip, you and the two important imperial guards can eat and relax as much as you want then! Alright ah??'

When Wutong gave Official Wu's proposal to her mistress, Xiaocao finally remembered that she was an imperial envoy now and couldn't fool around too much. Thus, she didn't try to make things difficult for the old official who only worried about the empire and its people.

Following that, other than docking to resupply itself, the ship didn't stop temporarily anymore. As they left the border of Cangzhou, the canal became more narrow and the speed of the water increased. There were towering mountains and cliffs on both sides of the canal and they were now in an uninhabited region of land. It looked like a good place for murderous bandits and pirates to hang out.

When Xiaocao told her thoughts to her husband as a joke, Zhu Junyang had a solemn look on his face as he stated, "You're right! There are often pirates who prowl around this area. The ships that pass through

here either have to pay up a protection fee to avoid getting attacked or they end up losing some goods. However, as long as the ships don't resist, these pirates will only take goods and not hurt any people.”

Just as they were talking, a few swift boats showed up and aggressively headed in the direction of their official ship. Behind them also appeared similar looking boats and they were now pincerd between these two fleets. These ships pressed on towards their vessel and the coxswain hastily ran over and bowed towards Zhu Junyang, “Your Highness, pirates have appeared and we're surrounded by them!”

“Are you sure they're pirates?” Zhu Junyang narrowed his long phoenix eyes. Most pirates would only try to attack ordinary merchant ships. Their ship was obviously on governmental business, so pirates should be fleeing at the sight of them. Why would they come towards them instead? There was definitely something odd about this scenario!

The coxswain also realized that there was something off about this and said, “The markings on the ships really are the markings of pirate ships...it's reasonable to say that most pirates wouldn't dare to directly attack a government ship. Could it be someone else pretending to be pirates to attack us?”

The coxswain was also one of Zhu Junyang's subordinates, and he was in charge of trade between the northern and southern parts of the country. Because he was very familiar with the canal and was experienced in guiding ships, he had been appointed to this trip.

Zhu Junyang lightly waved a hand and gave an order, “Ready the cannons at the front and back of the ships, then fire a couple of warning shots. If they continue on attacking us foolishly, then let them come ah!”

The coxswain grinned broadly and excitedly said, “Yes! This subordinate will follow your orders! Time to make them see what we're made of! Everyone, begin to light the 'guns' ah!”

“Okay ah!!” More than a dozen sailors appeared on deck and the sound of their assent thundered across the ship.

Xiaocao found all of this quite interesting and smiled, “My Lord, the people serving beneath you are all very clever. When it's time to battle, they all become extremely energetic!”

“Some of these people are retired soldiers from the army, so their warlike tendencies have been engraved into their bones. Some of the others are some bandits that I tamed. Although they're called bandits, they're mostly people who had been forced into that life out of dire circumstances. Not a single one of them is a coward!” In the past ten years, as Zhu Junyang himself matured, he not only consolidated his power at court but also found some capable subordinates among the people to help him do tasks!

Bang—Bang—Bang—Yu Xiaocao could only feel the deck tremble a bit. After a few guns finished firing, she heard the sailors cheering, “We hit, we hit!”

Hou Xiaoliang appeared out of nowhere and revealed two rows of sparkling white teeth, “Leader, Old Cai and the others are pretty good at using the cannons. They sank two opposing ships!”

Yu Xiaocao leaned against the side rails of the ship and went up on her tiptoes to look in the distance. There were two opposing ships that had stopped moving now as they slowly sank deeper into the water. The remaining ships, however, didn't seem deterred by this and continued to sail towards them. Clearly, they had come prepared!

The coxswain directed the battery of cannons at the bow to fire a few more shots at the opposing fleet. Another two ships were hit and gradually sank. The battery at the aft also destroyed two other ships. The opposing fleet's ships were too fast and when the distance between them closed, the cannons could no longer be used!

“Brothers, it's time to fight!!” The coxswain bellowed loudly as he took off his outer, more restrained jacket, revealing a short-sleeved jumpsuit. His arm muscles bulged menacingly. At this time, a large and long hatchet had also appeared in his hands. The sailors on the ship all revealed their own weapons.

The opposing ships threw up hooks towards their vessel and they swooshed through the air. Zhu Junyang pulled back his curious little wife and gently pushed her in the direction of the inner rooms of the ship as he said, “Be good ah! Go hide in the rooms for now and it'll be over very soon. Chunhua, make sure to carefully protect the princess consort...”

“That ah...I can help too!” Yu Xiaocao waved the firearm in her hands as she had been previously complimented as a natural in using one.

“Be good! In a moment, it will be very chaotic here and I don't want you to become splattered with blood!” Zhu Junyang helplessly tried to convince her. His wife was too brave and that made it hard for him.

Yu Xiaocao pouted a bit and then reluctantly said, “Alright ah— you be careful too.”

With Chunhua and Wutong protecting her at both sides, Xiaocao headed towards the rooms on the ship. Suddenly, she saw a head wrapped in a black cloth appear on her right at the side of the ship. She excitedly bounced, “Chunhua, quickly slap this fellow away for me!”

As she spoke, her eyes roved around and she spotted the bamboo pole, which was as thick as her arm, that had been used previously to fish a few days ago. She hurriedly holstered the gun onto her waist, grabbed the bamboo pole with both of her hands, and forcefully smacked a pirate who had just appeared on deck.

That unfortunate pirate screamed and fell face first into the water. The pirate behind him saw this and became a bit more cautious. When the bamboo pole headed his way, he grabbed onto it and stopped it from hitting him.

When Xiaocao saw that the pole had been grabbed, she tried to pull on it but was unable to move it. She stopped trying to fight force with force and took out the gun from her waist with her right hand. She stepped forward and aimed at the pirate who was only a couple steps away from her.

“Hey!” When that pirate just about thought he had succeeded in boarding the ship, Xiaocao waved her left hand at him as her right hand steadily aimed the gun at him. The smile on her face was bright and brilliant. The pirate stared down the black barrel of the gun with alarm and seemed to have realized what this object could do.

Fields of Gold Chapter 695

Bam! The gun barrel flashed and smoke billowed out of it. That pirate didn't have the chance to observe this new firearm before he got hit.

Zhu Junyang was already entangled in a fight with an old and skinny man. Someone who was able to fight properly with the cold and callous prince was truly an expert.

When he heard the noise of a gun going off where Xiaocao was, Zhu Junyang's expression immediately became colder and he decided not to play around with the opponent anymore. The long sword in his hands immediately stopped for a moment before it flashed like lightning and struck without any openings.

“The sword with no openings?!” The old expert was truly someone who was knowledgeable. He twisted his body to the right a few steps to avoid the slash from the sword but he was still a bit slow. Although he avoided getting his vitals hit, he still got wounded on his left side and a long gash, about the length of a foot, was now open.

“Hou Xiaoliang! Go escort the princess consort back to the rooms and guard her well there. If any people dare to get close, slaughter them immediately!” Zhu Junyang didn't press on his advantage and instead called over Hou Xiaoliang, who was currently fighting fiercely in high spirits, and gave him an important task.

“Yes! Whoever tries to harm the mistress will have to step over my dead body to do so!” Hou Xiaoliang's eyes shone with a cold light and his entire body was drenched in the enemies' blood. He resembled a bloody battle god. The fact that he had been able to stay by Zhu Junyang's side for all of these years showed that he had his own skills. In terms of martial arts, he was quite talented and would be considered one of the top experts in the jianghu.

After seeing his capable subordinate escorting Xiaocao back to the room and guarding the entrance, Zhu Junyang felt himself relax a bit as he focused on fighting the people boarding the ship. This lass had clearly agreed to his proposal earlier but, in the blink of an eye, she had come out again to play around. She truly wasn't easy to take care of! Once he finished his task here, he needed to teach her a lesson!

An old man dressed entirely in white and whose hair had turned entirely white and looked to be in his sixties secretly gave a look to his subordinates. Then, he sneakily moved his feet and headed towards the middle part of the ship.

“Gentleman Huang, it's been many years since we've last seen each other. I trust you've been well?” Su Ran, who was also dressed entirely in white, held a long sword in his hands as he blocked the older man's way.

A sinister look immediately appeared in the white-clothed old man's eyes as he coldly huffed, “Little Ranzi...no, I should call you Chief Steward Su. Betraying your master and exchanging it for wealth and power. Do you not feel guilty about this at all?!”

“Gentleman Huang has the wrong idea! Both the blood of the Han flow within our bodies and the previous dynasty was not of the same ethnicity as us. They made the Han people slaves and didn't see the common people as human. I resent the previous dynasty's callous tyranny and switched masters. This is called having ambition. If you insist on calling me a traitor...you are the one who is selling yourself out to your Mongol Masters, betraying all of the Han people and betraying your own group. I wonder if the ancestors of the Huang Family know about this and whether they're able to rest peacefully now?”

Su Ran's white clothing floated in the air as he had an elegant smile on his face. His whole demeanor resembled that of a gentle scholar and people who didn't know him would have erroneously guessed nine times out of ten that he was one. Those people would all be wrong though! His sword always encountered blood when it was unsheathed and people died whenever he fought. He was infamous for his decisive cruelty.

“Shut your mouth, you traitorous servant! This old man was blind at the time to think you had a good foundation, buying you to become one of my disciples. Who would have thought that you'd become an ungrateful one-eyed wolf? Everything you have started from me so everything will need to be ended by me ah!” Gentleman Huang nimbly waved his hand down and immediately the sounds of arrows swishing through the air could be heard. More than a dozen arrows flew in the direction of Su Ran. The incredible speed and force of the arrows showed that they had been all shot out of strong crossbows.

Su Ran calmly smiled and gently waved a sleeve. The flying arrows instantly changed their direction in mid-flight and went back to the archers who shot them. Only the sounds of mournful screams reached their ears. Fewer than half of the archers had been able to hide themselves in time, so the arrows that flew back had neatly skewered them in their bodies. The screams were from these unfortunate people.

Gentleman Huang's eyes flashed with a deep killing intent as he growled, “At that time, I should have let you starve to death in the wilderness instead of raising a tiger that invited calamity!”

“Cut the nonsense. If you're going to fight, just fight!” Su Ran's face was grave as if he was just waiting for the other person to show his sword.

A sharp and glistening sword had suddenly appeared in Gentleman Huang's hands. His movements couldn't be seen as the tip of the sword ended up pointing at Su Ran's throat.

Su Ran seemed to have predicted his opponent's swift attack trajectory. He lightly moved his feet and easily got out of the crisis. At this time, more and more enemies were on the official ship and there were now three long swords attacking Su Ran. They were all incredibly fast, which showed that they were experts.

Su Ran snorted coldly. He flipped his left hand and easily grabbed onto the hilt of one long sword. In mid-air, he suddenly let out a kick with his left foot, pushing his opponent off of the ship, splashing into the river water. The long sword in his right hand moved like lightning and emitted a cold light as it easily cut the other person neatly in half at the waist. The enemy screamed in horror.

When Yu Xiaocao heard this scream, she cracked open the door to reveal a small slit and was about to glance outside. Suddenly, a man thudded heavily into the door. If it weren't for Chunhua, who was supporting her, she would have been blown away!

When she lowered her head to look, she discovered it was the assistant, Hou Xiaoliang. He leapt out of the door like an energetic carp and hollered back, "Wutong, barricade the door behind you! Protect the princess consort!"

Wutong saw that he was being heavily preoccupied and didn't have the time to ask whether it was 'urgent or not' before Hou Xiaoliang charged out of the room to entangle with five enemy invaders.

Although Hou Xiaoliang was very skilled, his opponents were nothing to laugh at. The enemy had the advantage in numbers and pressed him until he was desperately fighting for his life, unable to do much else!

Yu Xiaocao and Wutong lay near the crack of the door as they worriedly looked outside. That was right! Didn't she have a hidden weapon called 'torrential pear blossom needles' in her pouch? This particular hidden weapon of hers had been picked up when she was at the stud farm near the border. The young master of the Medicine King Valley, Xu Ziyi, had given it to her to play with.

This concealed weapon had been obtained from the traitor that Xu Ziyu had captured. Inside, it could hold around a dozen or so needles that were as thin as a cow's hair. By gently pressing down on the mechanism, the weapon would let all of the needles fly forward. They were incredibly fast and the weapon was well hidden, making it hard for people to react against it.

Yu Xiaocao had once read a wuxia novel before and thought that the weapon, 'torrential peach blossom needles', was quite cruel so she gave the same name to this device. This time, she had especially brought along this little weapon, which resembled a tiny music box on the outside. She had coated all of the long needles within the device with a powerful sedating agent. Anyone who came in contact with this substance would fall into a deep stupor immediately. Even a sword poking at someone wouldn't be enough to wake those people up.

At this time, they could hear Hou Xiaoliang's muffled grunts outside the door. Wutong was anxious and couldn't help but open the door a little to look outside. At this time, she covered her mouth with her hand in order to not let out a cry of shock. Hou Xiaoliang had just been injured to the bone on his left side with a long sword with blood flowing out of his wound.

"Wutong, give me space! Chunhua, protect me closely!" Yu Xiaocao saw that Hou Xiaoliang struggled heavily to cripple two experts with his heavy injuries. There were three other experts who, although injured, were still in good shape. Those three people pressed on harder after seeing that the bodyguard had gotten hurt.

There was no time to waste. If she continued to cower inside, Hou Xiaoliang would likely lose his life. Once he died, then the three of them in the room would be easily subdued within moments. Although Chunhua was quite skilled, she was still much inferior compared to Hou Xiaoliang. With such experts stalking them, the conclusion was inevitable. If they used her to threaten her husband and Sir Su, then the consequences were unimaginable.

The door was pulled wide open. Chunhua protected her sides and used a sword to threaten away a little bandit. Xiaocao had her back towards the door as she lightly pressed down on the mechanism of the box that was in her hands. Following that, the sounds of needles swiftly flying out could be heard and 'torrential needle rain' flew out in a circular arc around her.

A bizarre sight had occurred in front of her immediately. The three opposing experts, along with Hou Xiaoliang and the seven to eight pirates around them, were now all slumped over on the ground in a stupor. Some of them even snored loudly.

Wutong saw Hou Xiaoliang on the floor and didn't care about her own safety as she held onto his arm in an attempt to pull him inside the room. Although he was slender, he had a tall and muscular figure, so he weighed at least a hundred and thirty-some catties.

Although Wutong had been born as a maidservant, she had been the young miss's personal maidservant for almost a decade and hadn't done any heavy work all of those years. Furthermore, she even had lower-ranked maidservants around her to order around. Everyone said that the maidservants from large noble families were more delicate than the young pretty misses of humble families. This wasn't an exaggeration at all.

However, the limits of humans were undefined. When there was a crisis at hand and she wanted to save her beloved sweetheart, she was able to use her own strength alone to drag him from the deck and into the room.

“Young Miss, why did you also make Hou Xiaoliang unconscious?” Wutong tore off Hou Xiaoliang's outer jacket and saw the open wound that was still oozing out blood. Her eyes immediately turned red. She knew that the princess consort always brought her personal medicine box out whenever she traveled, so after asking her mistress, she took out some medicine to treat his wounds.

Yu Xiaocao allowed her to use the special wound balm she had personally crafted. It was very effective in stopping blood from flowing and it was never sold to outsiders as it was for her own use.

When she heard the question, she rolled her eyes, “You can't make the needles from the concealed weapon dodge around things. Hou Xiaoliang had been fighting with those three experts. If I gave him a warning, the enemy would also be on guard. Here's the antidote; help him take it. Also don't forget to pull out the long needles from his back using tweezers.”

At this time, the door to the outside had been opened and Yu Xiaocao immediately aimed the weapon towards the person coming in. This special box could be used three times, so it wasn't a one and done deal!

“Mistress, it's me!” Chunhua was afraid that the enemy outside would wake up, so she used her sword to permanently make them sleep. She had the scent of blood around her as she came in.

Yu Xiaocao watched as she re-barricaded the door and casually asked, “How's the situation outside? Is His Highness and Sir Su okay?”

“Although the enemy has a lot of people, they only had around twenty or so who could be considered true experts. Hou Xiaoliang has dealt with five here and His Highness and Sir Su have also defeated

several now. Your Highness, please relax. We have the advantage now!” After Chunhua had finished cleaning up the enemy around them, she had also glanced around the battleground outside and was now much more relieved.

Yu Xiaocao felt her heart finally settle down after hearing this. The words that came out of her mouth, however, were all complaints, “It's all his fault! He wanted to show off just how strong he was and didn't want to bring more bodyguards along. Now see, once we reached a crisis, we didn't have enough people on board, right? If he brought along a dozen or so soldiers from the Firearms Barracks, they'd shoot the enemy down with a bang. Hou Xiaoliang also wouldn't be injured now!”

“Your Highness, this subordinate is fine. It's only a small wound after all!” Hou Xiaoliang had taken the antidote and was now awake. He held his bandaged up shoulder as he picked up his sword to head out again.

Fields of Gold Chapter 696

Yu Xiaocao glared at him and stopped him by saying, “You should stop before you wound yourself and waste my good medicine. Listen, it seems to be getting quieter out there. The most you can do is go out and clean the battlefield. The wounded should act like the wounded...”

Her voice became silent as the sound of someone pounding on the door occurred! Yu Xiaocao glanced at Chunhua. Chunhua nodded, quietly went to the door, and suddenly opened it. At the same time, the 'rainstorm of pear blossom needles' in Xiaocao's hands also shot out. Dozens of ox hair-thin needles came at the tall figure at the door.

Although the light was behind him and his face couldn't clearly be seen, Yu Xiaocao still recognized the person from his figure.

“Oh no!” Yu Xiaocao couldn't help covering her face. Her man was turned into a hedgehog by her!

Zhu Junyang gently rolled up his sleeves, giving them a swing. All the ox hair needles were easily collected in his clothes. He returned the needles to his wife and rubbed her head. With a smile, he said, “You are planning to murder your husband!”

Yu Xiaocao put her arms around his thin waist and put her face on his chest before sticking out her tongue, “When you knocked on our door, your movements were too rushed. We thought it was the enemy becoming desperate, trying to take me as a hostage to threaten you!”

"It's good to be alert." Zhu Junyang praised her and gently pushed away his wife. With a smile, he said, "My clothes are dirty, so I'll go change them first!"

"Did you get injured?" Yu Xiaocao followed behind him, went around the screen, and took a purple robe from his luggage. Most of her man's clothes were black. After getting married, she asked the sewing department to make some clothes in other colors for him. Her man wearing purple made him look more seductive and bewitching!

Zhu Junyang raised his eyebrows and an evil and cheeky smile appeared on his face, "How about this prince strips bare so you can personally check ah?"

"No, I don't want that!" This guy loved to behave like a rogue whenever he thought he could get away with things! Yu Xiaocao put his clothes on the bed and turned to go out.

Just as she was about to leave, Su Ran pushed the door open to come in. His white clothes were stained with blood and it resembled red plum blossoms in the snow. He saw Xiaocao was fine and he nodded and said, "It's good that you're okay. It's messy outside right now, so you should stay in the room for the time being."

Yu Xiaocao obediently nodded in reply. She saw the bloody gauze that was wrapped around his arm and exclaimed, "Sir Su, you're hurt! Wutong, bring my medicine box over."

Su Ran waved his hand and said, "It's fine. It's just a small wound; there's no need to make a fuss!"

"How could that be? The wound must be treated. What if it gets infected?" Yu Xiaocao asked him to sit down on the stool. Then, she carefully untied the gauze on his arm and cut open a section of his sleeve, revealing a wound that was four fingers wide and was open like a child's mouth.

Zhu Junyang finished changing his clothes and came out from behind the screen. He saw his wife with her head bowed, carefully cleaning Su Ran's wounds with a high concentration of alcohol. He was very upset, "Chief Steward Su, don't you have an apprentice to take care of you? Go back and let one of your subordinate eunuchs take care of it!"

Su Ran raised his eyebrows and his eyes showed a clear look, "That apprentice of mine is more injured than me. He's currently lying in bed unable to get up!"

"I'll say, Chief Steward Su, your martial arts are getting worse! Just a few small thieves can hurt you like this. I'm suspecting that your reputation is false!" Zhu Junyang saw his wife helping the other man wipe some anesthetic on him before she sewed up his wound with lamb gut threads. The stitches she made resembled the most careful stitches in an embroidered piece and her careful appearance made him feel sorry for her.

"Imperial Prince Xu, that is not true! Out of the ones who besieged me, one of them was my master during my training and the other two were my classmates who received the same demonic training. Any one of them could be regarded as the best if they were in the Jianghu!" Su Ran's wound was re-covered with some clean gauze and it was tied with a beautiful bow.

Yu Xiaocao had long been used to the quarrel between the two childish men. She put away the medicine box and said to Su Ran, "Seven days later, remember to remind me to help you remove the stitches!"

"What medicine did you give me? It didn't hurt at all when you sewed it up!" Su Ran asked.

Yu Xiaocao grinned, "My homemade anesthetic...er, it's almost as effective as the anesthetic powder of the legendary Hua Tuo."

Zhu Junyang heard this and immediately asked, "Can this medicine be conveniently mass-produced? Many wounded soldiers on the battlefield have to be amputated to save their lives. However, there's no pain-relieving medicine. Most of the time it's very painful. With this medicine, many soldiers can be saved."

This anesthetic prescription was given to her by the little divine stone. The medicinal materials were commonly used and there wasn't a problem with mass-producing them. However, her Pharmaceutical Workshop had already taken the business of producing wound balm and high concentration alcohol for the army. If she added in the anesthetic, she was afraid that she would bring unwanted attention. She decided to publicize the prescription, which would be considered a good achievement for the country and its citizens!

Zhu Junyang heard her say this and he frowned. He immediately came up with an idea, "I'll write a memorial and report it to the imperial court. This way the court can let your pharmaceutical workshop become one of the government manufacturers..."

"The old guys in the imperial hospital, who are too idle and bum around all the time, can choose two people to be responsible for the research and development of new drugs!" Su Ran also added in a sentence from the sidelines. He received some news that some old guys headed by Imperial Doctor Wang were mumbling about Xiaocao, saying that she was just lucky. She cured several patients on pure good luck when in fact she had no ability.

These old guys, however, relied on their family recipes to get into the imperial hospital. They only thought of how to fight with each other and hadn't made any progress in their medical skills. It was time to make room for someone with real abilities to serve the emperor.

By dinner time, the outside had been cleaned up and the blood on the deck was washed with water. For the sake of safety, the ships that were about to enter the boundary of Huai'an today as planned landed at the wharf in Suqian.

The captain of the ship, along with the ship's staff, carefully checked the official ship inside and outside. Xiaocao took advantage of the opportunity to go ashore to look for food and local specialties.

The official ship stayed in Suqian for two days. Zhu Junyang took her to the nearby counties to taste the local fatty chicken slices, braised lion's head meatballs, double skin crucian carp, and pan-fried stuffed bitter melon. They also bought some dried daylilies, braised duck breast, and other such local specialties to bring back with them. If it weren't for the fact that they had a tail, Su Ran, accompanying them, then he would be even more satisfied.

The rest of the voyage was smooth. On the twelfth day, they entered Zhenjiang. The boat changed its course onto the river and traveled along the Yangtze River for half a day. Finally, they arrived at Jinling, the ancient capital of the Six Dynasties period.

When she thought back to the TV introductions of Nanjing snacks in her previous life, such as: beef potstickers, soy-sauce duck, soup dumplings, braised lion's head meatballs, sugared lotus root....her saliva was about to flood her mouth! Maybe in this era, she might not be able to eat all the delicious delicacies in the world but being able to eat at least one of them was good!

When Zhu Junyang saw his wife's gluttonous face, he couldn't help shaking his head. Could his wife's proficiency in cooking be related to her love of delicious food? Because she loved it, so she specialized in it? Also, the shops in her hands came from her love of money, right?

On the wharf, the inspector-general of Jinling and the governor of Zhili waited quietly in front of their people and horses, which had lined up into two lines.

"Here they come! Here they come!" The prefectural magistrate, with sweat on his head, galloped over from the quayside. In front of the inspector-general and governor, he, the head of a prefecture, had become an errand-runner.

The inspector-general and the governor were surprised. Looking out as far as they could see, they only saw a magnificent official's ship come ashore. They stepped toward the official ship and came to a stop in front of it. They quietly waited for the arrival of the imperial envoy.

A tall man wearing black with a cold face came out of the ship. The inspector-general rushed forward and respectfully said, "The inspector-general of Jinling pays respects to the great imperial envoy..."

Unexpectedly, the man in black waved his hand to him and said, "You've got the wrong person. I'm not the great imperial envoy. I'm just a small guard!"

The governor at the side, however, saluted respectfully, "This humble subject pays respect to Imperial Prince Xu. You've worked hard!" Zhu Junyang was very kind to the governor of Zhili. It could be said that without Zhu Junyang's mentorship and promotion, he might've not been able to climb to the position of governor in his life.

"There is no Imperial Prince Xu here! I'm just a small bodyguard beside the great imperial envoy!" Zhu Junyang patted the governor on the shoulder.

Governor Fan's heart was filled with surprise. What was the origin of this imperial envoy that made the rebellious Imperial Prince Xu willingly be his bodyguard?

The inspector-general of Jinling saw a gentleman in white getting off the boat. He thought, 'The imperial envoy coming is in charge of agricultural affairs and should be from the Ministry of Revenue. The one from before should be from the military, so this one should be the right one, right?'

"The imperial envoy has come all this way, you've worked hard..." Official You's face had a broad smile on it and he warmly welcomed the white-clothed man.

"You've got it wrong! I'm not the imperial envoy, I'm just a little bodyguard like Imperial Prince Xu!" Su Ran smiled slightly and walked past Official You.

"Official Wu, after you!" Yu Xiaocao adhered to the tradition of respecting the elderly and, being virtuous, she helped to support people who were over 50 years old.

Official Wu was flattered, "No, No! Your Honor, you should go first!"

What? Was the imperial envoy a teenage girl? Inspector-general You and Governor Fan's eyes were about to pop out of their heads. No, in terms of dress, she should be a beautiful young madam. This, this.... what was happening? Could it be a mistake?

When the two high-ranked officials heard that Official Wu, who was in charge of the experimental fields of Jinling, repeatedly calling the beautiful young matron in front of him with the title of 'Imperial Envoy' and insisting that she go first, they were stunned.

Official Fan: 'What's happening? Imperial Prince Xu and the head steward court eunuch are guards for a woman? Did I not sleep well last night so I'm hallucinating now?'

Official You: 'What can such a young imperial envoy, and a woman at that, do? If she saw a toad jumping out in the fields, she would be so scared that she burst into tears! Official Wu is too unreliable. Leaving for the capital for so long and this is the result!'

Hua Tuo - A Chinese physician who lived during the late Eastern Han dynasty. The historical texts Records of the Three Kingdoms and Book of the Later Han record Hua Tuo as the first person in China to use anaesthesia during surgery.

fatty chicken slices - this name is deceiving. It's actually a dish made of fatty ground pork, eggs, and some starch binding it together along with seasonings. Steamed into a meatloaf and then sliced thinly.

braised lion's head meatballs - not actually made out of lion. Name reflects the fact that these meatballs are very big.

Fields of Gold Chapter 697

However, in consideration of the other's identity as an imperial envoy, the two officials reluctantly came forward to salute. Official You, after all, was a veteran old official. He gathered up his doubts with a smile and said, "The great imperial envoy has worked hard, coming all this way. I've prepared some drinks and refreshments in the Lion's House to welcome and help you clean away the dust of the journey."

"The kindness of these two officials is something that would be disrespectful for me to decline!" Lion's House? Since the highest officials of Jinling chose it to receive the imperial envoy, it should be good right? She didn't know if she would have the chance to enjoy the authentic food of Jinling at that place. Xiaocao revealed a faint smile, that was unhurried and calm. It gave people a sense of unfathomability. In actuality, she was very happy in her heart.

Official You saw that the other party, although young, was graceful and generous and the contempt in his heart lessened. When she got off the boat, Imperial Prince Xu stepped forward and stretched out his arms to support her. Official You couldn't help but think of the rumors about Imperial Prince Xu and Princess Consort Xu that had circulated through the capital the last time he went to report his work.

Rumors said that Imperial Prince Xu, who was still Royal Prince Yang at the time, had been chasing after a female official. The female official at the time merely had a peasant family's background. Because she improved the seeds, allowing them to give high crop-yields, the emperor had assigned her to take charge of the Imperial Breeding Base. Afterwards, because of her great achievements, she was granted the fourth rank title of Clerk of the Capital for Grain. Was the imperial envoy sent by the emperor the Clerk of the Capital for Grain?

Looking at the way Imperial Prince Xu took care of the imperial envoy, he thought of the news that had just come from the capital—in the middle of the third month this year, Imperial Prince Xu married the Clerk of the Capital for Grain. Thus, didn't that mean that the great imperial envoy was Imperial Prince Xu's new wife?

Official Fan suddenly realized something. It seemed as if only Princess Consort Xu would be able to let Imperial Prince Xu be her bodyguard? However, what was the situation with Chief Steward Su? Two

great gods were sent out to escort her, which clearly showed the great importance the emperor attached to the Clerk of the Capital for Grain!

The two highest officials of Jinling finally understood what was going on. They looked at each other and their contempt disappeared. Official You even became excited. If the Clerk of the Capital for Grain was as miraculous as the rumors said, did that mean the rice breeding base of Jinling would be able to be established and develop into something like the Imperial Breeding Base? That would be a marvelous achievement. When he returned to the capital to report on his work two years later, he would definitely have the opportunity to be promoted!

In Jinling's most famous restaurant, Lion's House, Xiaocao gleefully sampled sauced pork ribs, Jinling braised duck, sweet-scented lotus root, and Jinling's soup dumplings.

The Jinling braised duck was dark-skinned with tender meat. It was rich but not greasy, fragrant, and delicious. The dish was fragrant, spicy, crispy, and tender. The meat was chewy, tender, and tempting. It made people salivate and could never be forgotten once eaten. Due to its functions of clearing away excess heat, detoxification, nourishment, aid in blood clotting, and reducing diarrhea, Xiaocao decided to add it to the menu of her Medicinal Cuisine House.

Regarding the method of cooking and the recipe, Xiaocao gave this problem to her man. She believed that a simple braised duck recipe couldn't defeat his imperial highness. However, she never thought that the boss behind the Lion's House was Governor Fan of Zhili. Imperial Prince Xu expressed to him his interest in the dishes of the Lion's House. Before he even spoke, Official Fan gave him the Lion's House to thank him for his kindness and the promotion he received in recent years. In the end, the governor just wanted to hug the prince's thigh.

Yu Xiaocao picked up a soup dumpling, which looked similar to her own. However, Jinling's soup dumplings were more authentic as they had the three traits of a pure translucent-white outside, rich fragrant soup, and a delicious taste. The skin of the soup dumpling was crystal clear, chewy, and smooth. The stuffing was fresh, aromatic, and smooth. There was a lot of soup in each dumpling and had a slight hint of sweetness. When one sucked on the dumpling with a reed tube, the broth flowed out, Xiaocao ate an entire bamboo steamer basket of dumplings in one breath. She devoured the food in front of her until she had food stuffed up to her throat before she reluctantly stopped.

However, when the sauced spareribs were served, Xiaocao couldn't sit still. The sauced ribs tasted sweet with a unique flavor. They had a red color, tender meat, rich aromatic bones, and the sauce was salty with hints of sweetness within. Xiaocao braved her bulging stomach and tasted two ribs. She finally had to put down her chopsticks regretfully.

When the sugared lotus root was on the table, she could only gaze at it with a pathetic look in her eyes. Her eyes resembled that of a wounded animal's, with a pitiful light in her big eyes.

Zhu Junyang was angry and thought it was funny at the same time. He told Wutong to let her mistress take a digestive pill before he relaxed. He had a good idea of how much the lass could usually eat. Today, she had eaten twice the amount! This greedy lass wasn't afraid that she wouldn't be able to handle it.

"Aren't we going to be staying in Jinling for some time? If you like it, I will bring you here to eat every day!" Zhu Junyang slowly put down his chopsticks at his wife's pitiful expression. If she didn't have enough then she didn't have enough. His wife shouldn't cry over this!

The wilted Yu Xiaocao immediately became energetic again, "Then let's come tomorrow to eat the sugared lotus root! And that braised Lion's head meatballs seem to be pretty good too, and..."

"Are you sure your stomach can handle it?" This lass, her eyes were bigger than her stomach. He couldn't help saying a word to remind her.

Xiaocao wilted again before immediately saying, "If I can't eat everything...then at least I can have a taste of everything!"

"Are you sure you can stand it?" Zhu Junyang couldn't help stopping her,

Xiaocao scratched her head, "It seems that I can't! What should I do? There are too many delicacies in Jinling to eat!"

Governor Fan watched the interaction between Imperial Prince Xu and the princess consort and silently roasted them in his mind. Everyone said that the prince had decided on her when she wasn't even ten yet and had waited for her to grow up. Today he'd seen that the prince favored the princess consort like she was his daughter, and this situation gave him goosebumps.

"The great imperial envoy is right. Jinling is a famous ancient capital of five dynasties (Author's note: The Ming dynasty's capital wasn't in Jinling due to the founding emperor being a transmigrator). It's not only

prosperous and rich but also full of delicious food. The Lion's House is just the tip of the iceberg. Many of the local delicacies are among the citizens. Jinling's snacks all have different flavors. It would be a pity if the imperial envoy didn't taste them one by one!" Official Wu was just afraid that there wasn't an excuse for the imperial envoy to stay longer. He saw that she loved delicious food so much, so he decided to seize this opportunity that the heavens gave him.

Yu Xiaocao heard this and became even more upset, "Official Wu, you're purposely trying to get me in trouble! You know that I'm gluttonous but you're tempting me!"

Official Wu hurriedly denied, "Great Imperial Envoy, the emperor didn't set a deadline for your return. You can spend more time in Jinling to experience the local conditions and customs and taste all the snacks of Jinling..."

Xiaocao was immediately full of energy. That was right! She could use the excuse of observing the growth and harvest of the rice in the experimental fields of Jinling until this crop of rice was matured and harvested. At that time, when she brought the new data back, no one would use her to make an issue of!

Besides, if conditions permitted, she wanted to experiment with hybrid rice. She knew the rough idea of how to go about it but the key was experimentation. When she thought of it this way, a bright smile came to her face.

When Zhu Junyang saw this, he gave an approving smile to Official Wu and poured him a cup of wine. The other people at the table were old experts at observing, seeing this, how could they not understand? This Imperial Prince Xu was someone who doted on his wife without a bottom line. That was to say, as long as Princess Consort Xu was happy and satisfied, he would view the person who made her content in a better light.

Who was Imperial Prince Xu ah?! He was the emperor's favorite right-hand man and had a high reputation and status in both the court and military. In the world of officialdom, it was very difficult to advance without a backer. Only a fool would not take advantage of getting closer to such a big and powerful backer!

In the following days, Yu Xiaocao found that those Jinling Officials, who had doubts about her identity, suddenly became very thoughtful and welcoming.

First of all, the villa where she lived with Imperial Prince Xu was a scenic, beautiful and quiet place. It was said this was the estate of the richest family in Jinling. Everything she ate and used all suited her to a T. It seemed that everything was all specially prepared for her according to her preferences. These people were well-intended and had done their work very carefully. For example, they knew that she usually liked to make her own snacks and food, so the kitchen was well prepped and they had even sent over a new oven to be installed in.

The inspector general also invited a Jinling tour guide to serve Imperial Prince Xu and Princess Consort Xu. In their spare time, they were taken around the famous scenic spots of Jinling, brought to every corner of Jinling for tasty food, and were told some legends and literary quotes from Jinling.

After a day's rest in the estate, Xiaocao rode to the experimental estate that was more than ten miles away from Jinling under the eager eyes of Official Wu. It was said that this piece of estate was originally the property of a certain vassal of the former dynasty. After the collapse of the former dynasty, it was taken over by the imperial court. When the officials of Jinling reported to the imperial court saying that they would set up a test field in the south, the emperor set aside these thousand acres of good land to support agricultural experiments.

Most of the estate's many paddy fields were still planted with traditional rice. Only three mu of good farmland near the manor were to be used as experimental fields.

At this time, it was entering the fourth month of the year. The temperature south of the Yangtze River was higher and the planting time was earlier than in the north. Thus, the rice in the fields were already as high as a person's shin. The rice in the experimental fields were growing better. From the distance, it looked like a thick green carpet. The scene full of green looked very refreshing.

Official Wu pointed to the experimental field, silently compared it to the others, and said, "Imperial Envoy, look at the rice seedlings here. They're not as good as those of the Imperial Breeding Base in the capital. The ones in the capital seem to be stronger."

Yu Xiaocao thought, 'I always go over the wells and rivers in the suburbs in the capital every three to five days. Thus, the water irrigating the capital all has some spiritual energy in them. The ones here naturally can't compare.' However, she could only keep this to herself and not let it out!

As a result, due to the different climate, soil, and water, the growth of the rice would also be affected to a certain extent. Then she showed Official Wu and some experienced farmers some of the advanced rice planting methods she picked out from her past life.

The experimental fields had been placed in front of the emperor and the imperial court supported it so much so that it couldn't be placed in the hands of those not in the trade. Official Wu was born in a peasant family and only became an imperial official at the age of forty. He had only become a small seventh-ranked official. Now that he was reaching the age of retirement, he was still only a sixth-ranked official.

Fields of Gold Chapter 698

Official Wu wasn't one of those people who only knew how to study. Prior to passing the court examinations, he had been with his family's tenant farmers and personally helped his family manage their rice paddies. On the year he turned forty, he gave himself a goal. If he was unable to pass the exams again, then he would completely renounce his studies and spend the rest of his life experimenting with the rice paddy fields to get higher yields. After becoming a court official, he was also very interested in agricultural management and often traveled to farming villages, living and eating with these people, and becoming more experienced in the ways of farming. Because of that, the experimental paddies in Jinling had been put under his jurisdiction and he had also been promoted two levels.

When he saw the methods that Xiaocao gave him, he was struck silly. He even struck the table in amazement when he reached the main point. Many things that had puzzled him in the past were now completely clear to him after he read the great imperial envoy's writings on the topic. It was no wonder that the emperor had placed so much importance on a mere woman. She really was more knowledgeable and talented than others! The emperor truly was a wise and capable ruler!

If Yu Xiaocao had known that Official Wu saw her in this way, she would have felt quite embarrassed. The things she had written down were all stuff she had put together piecemeal from the stuff she had learned in her past life about farming. She was only a little dwarf standing on the shoulders of giants! How could she possibly be that impressive?

Other than going out to try some delicacies from time to time, Xiaocao spent most of her time after she arrived at Jinling on the 'hybrid rice paddies'. In her previous life, the hybrid rice paddies were able to produce a thousand and five hundred catties of rice per mu. Even the rice paddies watered with mystic stone water in this era could only get up to six hundred catties per mu.

It was said that hybrid rice paddies were the result of Yuan Longping's, the father of hybrid rice, research and he had discovered a type of hybrid rice one day in a field somewhere. Yu Xiaocao decided that, in order to deceive others on the true process, she also needed to find a naturally occurring hybrid rice paddy somewhere. Following that, then they could begin research on it.

Following Xiaocao's proposal, the emperor had already sent down an imperial order to have Jiangnan begin to try to grow two seasons of rice in one year. Because Jinling had experimental paddies, some of them were planted on the early side. Official Wu was originally afraid that the temperatures at the start of spring would be too cold and affect the seedlings' growth progress. However, he didn't expect that the rice seeds brought over from the capital grew very well despite the lower temperatures. The ordinary rice seeds, on the other hand, only had so-so germination and survival rates.

After Official Wu finished transcribing a copy of the great imperial envoy's 'Rice Growth Strategy Guide', he immediately began his work in the fields and didn't even bother returning home to visit. His entire mind was preoccupied on getting the fields up and running. He had to admit the rice seedlings grown by the methods provided by the great imperial envoy truly did better than the ones planted with traditional methods. When he felt the panicles of these rice plants, he could tell that they were at least a factor larger than the regular ones and were also more plump. The rice paddies grown with the new methods also had a shorter growth cycle, so it was likely that they'd be able to harvest them in the sixth month.

As it got closer to harvest time, Yu Xiaocao came by more frequently to the experimental rice paddies. In the past, she would go over every three to five days to supervise the work there. Now she came by every other day to inspect things. There were many plants in the experimental fields, so she couldn't possibly look every single one over. However, she had her cheat item on hand and it'd be a waste for her to not use it.

She had the little divine stone emit its spiritual energy to make the young plants become more vigorous and strong. Then, she had Official Wu and his assistant come over to record them. Within the rice paddies, she ended up finding a real 'crane within a flock of chickens' rice patch. It had thick and tall stalks with plump kernels of rice. She carefully counted the number of rice seeds within the panicle and found that it contained around two hundred grains. It truly exceeded the number of grains found in other plants.

Alright ah, she now had the opportunity to give an experimental direction for Official Wu and his subordinates to look at. The most important part of hybridized rice was the 'hybridization' portion. In her past life, Xiaocao had been a little fan of the father of hybridized rice and looked over many things in regards to hybridized rice. However, since she was merely a layman, she only knew the foundations of breeding hybridized rice.

She knew that in order to make hybridized rice paddies, she needed three types of rice. One type had to have sterile pollen, and one type had fertile pollen. When the sterile type was fertilized with the pollen from the fertile type, they created hybridized rice, which was the third type. Although this type of hybridized rice had a higher yield, the amount it produced was around the same as the rice that was

grown with mystic-stone water. Furthermore, it only lasted for one season and couldn't be used for the next. They needed to continue to pollinate the sterile type with the fertile type to make more seed.

Based on that, they needed to have one set of fields devoted to breeding and the other set for harvesting. In the breeding fields, they needed to grow and plant the ones with sterile pollen before being fertilized with regular pollen while the other fields were the ones used to grow the hybridized rice plants for harvest.

In the fields, she found all of the rice plants with sterile pollen and marked them. They were set aside to be used in the breeding fields. When she got back to her personal courtyard, she concentrated solely on writing down all of the methods she could remember about 'hybridizing rice paddies' into a little pamphlet in preparation of giving it to Official Wu, so he could have other people investigate it. In terms of growing rice, she was merely an amateur dabbler and couldn't compare to Official Wu, who had spent decades in the fields working with the farmers.

His hard working wife had completely forgotten Imperial Prince Xu, who was quite heartbroken by the matter. They had previously agreed upon traveling and seeing the sights here, right? Weren't they going to try all of the delicacies to be had in the Jinling area? Hadn't they agreed on journeying around Jiangnan to experience the saying: 'the skies have the Heavens and the earth has Suzhou and Hangzhou'? Zhu Junyang stared at the back of his princess consort as she steadily worked through the night, ignoring him. Why did he have to marry a wife who was a workaholic ah?

As for that fellow, Su Ran, as soon as they arrived in Jiangnan, he had disappeared. It was said that the famous mountains around Jinling had all been toured by him. Furthermore, he would come back from time to time to brag and boast about the sights he had seen and the foods he had eaten. The most annoying part was that this fellow would always bring some snacks back from his travels, which would always take his wife's attention away. Every day, when she wasn't talking about work to him, she would be complimenting that loathsome fellow, Sir Su. It was truly too infuriating. Just who was her husband here?

When his wife ate some dried persimmons that the stinky fellow Su Ran brought back and began complimenting him again, Zhu Junyang seriously couldn't take it anymore! He shot himself towards his wife and seriously let her know just how jealous he was. He especially made her experience just how a jealous and thirsty man could be once he lost his control! Alright ah, he was just looking for an excuse for his own advantage!

The next day, Yu Xiaocao only managed to crawl out of bed at noon while rubbing at her sore waist. She had finally finished writing her pamphlet on 'the strategy to breed hybrid rice' and brought it along to

find Official Wu. After giving it to him, she spent another long stretch of time explaining the contents to him. Her task was now off her shoulders, so it was time for her to placate her ignored husband.

Official Wu acted as if he had received the most precious treasure. In the seventh month, he had completely organized the breeding fields and hybridizing fields. As for the great imperial envoy, she had gone off with her husband and left Jinling. They had just arrived at the border of Yangzhou Prefecture. They were eating sweet and tender lotus seed heads and seated in a small sailboat on the West Lake picking lotus flowers!

In the seventh month, the Jinling experimental rice paddies had obtained their first harvest. Currently, they were at eight hundred catties of rice per mu. Such a large crop yield made Official Wu, as the person in charge, cry tears of pure joy. In the past half year, he had put all of his energy and hopes on the experimental fields. His hard work hadn't gone to waste. He had also succeeded in raising high-yield rice paddies. The yields from this experiment were even higher than the one in the capital. It was truly extremely good news!

Official Wu wanted to give the good news to the great imperial envoy, but he didn't know where she was at the moment. She could be in Suzhou, Hangzhou, or even more south...who knew ah!

Official Wu quickly pivoted his energies on the problem of developing hybridized rice. The great imperial envoy had told him that if he were able to develop hybridized rice then the yield would likely be higher than the current experimental fields by a whole factor. What was a whole factor? That was to say, the yield could get up to a thousand and five hundred catties per mu. Heavens! Wouldn't he be dreaming then? Or was the great imperial envoy crazy and spouting nonsense?

No! How could he possibly not believe in the great imperial envoy's words? If it weren't for her, the rice paddies would still be stuck at two to three hundred catties per mu. In the past, if anyone had told him that the rice paddy harvest could reach six hundred catties per mu, Official Wu would have definitely slapped them for impertinence. But now, wasn't that fact true ah? The great imperial envoy had said that hybridized rice paddies could go over a thousand and five hundred catties per mu, so that meant it was possible! If it weren't, then it meant that he hadn't worked hard enough and didn't reach the goals of the great imperial envoy.

Official Wu, who was in his sixties, had become Yu Xiaocao's loyal die-hard fan at this moment!

By the time the breeding paddies and hybridization paddies were in full swing, Yu Xiaocao and her husband had already traveled all around Jiangnan. On their way back, they had encountered the

merchant caravan train that was in charge of bringing back raw jadeite ores to 'Wisdom Jade Pavillion'. Yu Xiaocao expressed that she was very interested in seeing where the ores were mined in person. As a man who doted upon his wife to no end, Imperial Prince Xu naturally wouldn't disappoint her. Thus, the loving couple headed out with the merchant caravan to go to the southernmost tip of Yunnan Province.

The land in that area was surrounded by mountains and was heavily forested. The locals there were tough and intrepid. Fortunately, the merchant caravan from Imperial Prince Xu's Estate had already made a name for itself. No matter whether it was the small tribes in the area or the chiefs in Myanmar, none of them dared to look down upon them. Furthermore, with the southwestern army of the Great Ming Empire stationed there, they would have to think very hard before deciding to attack them.

Zhu Junxi and Han Xiaomu had gone back to their military post in the southwest after attending Xiaocao's wedding and getting swiftly engaged themselves. Yu Xiaocao and Zhu Junyang had especially taken a trip to the Rui Province's military station and stayed there overnight. They went there to see General Han and also came with many snacks for their second older brother and future second sister-in-law. The vast majority of what they gave to them were snacks that Yu Xiaocao made herself along with some candied fruits and dried meats. It took up an entire large basket.

Han Xiaomu was very touched by all of this and hugged...the large basket full of goods with an excited expression on her face. She almost didn't want to let it go. Ever since she had tried the food that came out of Xiaocao's hands, this tough and fierce female general had prostrated herself in front of Xiaocao's culinary skills. Xiaocao's position in her heart had gone straight up and she was now even more admired than her own fiancé, Zhu Junxi. Zhu Junxi could only shake his head and sigh—there was nothing he could do with such a gluttonous future wife on hand!

They had been back in the southwest for over three months now. Thus, it was impossible for them to have any of the food they brought back with them no matter how hard they tried to scrimp and save. Every time she had to eat the 'pig's swill' in the cafeteria, Han Xiaomu thought longingly of Yu Xiaocao. She only spoke of the other girl and thought of her constantly. Zhu Junxi was now even jealous of his own younger sister-in-law!

Fortunately, when they left the capital, his lady mother had prepared a bunch of spices and condiments for barbecuing meats for him. He may not be good at other cooking methods, but at least he was good at barbecuing. With the addition of these special spice blends, he had conquered the female general's stomach and got his fiancée's attention back on him and not his younger sister-in-law.

However, Han Xiaomu ate the fragrant, tender, and fatty barbecued meat as she asked, “The spice blends you used must have been made by Younger Sister Xiaocao. This type of taste and flavor can only be created by an expert like her.”

Zhu Junxi growled, “Younger Sister Xiaocao, Younger Sister Xiaocao! Every day you only talk about her. If I didn't know better, I would have thought that she would be the one living with you for the rest of your life ah!”

Han Xiaomu chuckled, “If I were a man, I would definitely snatch Younger Sister Xiaocao over!”

The thick scent of jealousy congealed around Zhu Junxi as he sourly remarked, “If you were a man, then what would I do? Also, are you sure you can defeat my younger brother? When he loses control of himself, you will end up losing your life!”

“Don't I have you to protect me ah?” Han Xiaomu sliced off another plate of roasted mutton leg and began to eat it with great relish!

“So now you think of me? If you were a man, I wouldn't care if you died!” Zhu Junxi lamented angrily.

Han Xiaomu continued to simple mindedly eat her barbecued meat as she casually remarked, “What are you angry for ah? Are all men this petty and narrow-minded? Or is it just the people in your Zhu Family who are this way? Your younger brother is the same. I only spoke a few extra words to Younger Sister Xiaocao yet he glared at me so fiercely! His eyes are more beautiful than most women's so who would be afraid of him?”

“My little ancestor, please don't say anymore ah!” What was she blabbering on about, saying that his Zhu Family were all petty and narrow-minded? One couldn't forget that the most noble person in the empire was also surnamed Zhu! Furthermore, saying out loud that his younger brother was more beautiful than a woman was something that was forbidden and taboo for his younger brother. If that fellow overheard her, then no one would be able to save this woman who liked to cause trouble!

“General Zhu, General Mu, there's a youth named Zhu Junyang who wants to see you both...” One of the soldiers assigned at guarding the barracks came over to bring a message. The young soldier was currently wondering, 'Zhu Junyang, Zhu Junxi, the names only differ by one character. Could this guy possibly be General Zhu's brother? However, the two of them don't look alike at all. If it weren't for the

fact that the young man had a tall and sturdy figure, I would have thought that it was General Zhu's younger sister dressing up in man's clothing to find her older brother!

'Psh, speak of the devil and he appears! Why did he run over to where the southwest army is stationed? Did the emperor give him a secret mission or something?' Zhu Junxi grumbled in his heart as he sternly told his future wife, "In a bit, when we see Imperial Prince Xu, you absolutely cannot mention his good looks. I'm telling you, the two of us combined cannot win against him!"

"He's really that powerful?" Han Xiaomu's excited manner made Zhu Junxi's head hurt—it was too tiring to have a future wife who was so warlike!

However, when his future wife saw Yu Xiaocao by his younger brother's side, she immediately forgot her desire to spar with Zhu Junyang. She instead pulled on Xiaocao's hand as she chirped happily, "Younger Sister Xiaocao, you also came along? Don't you have official matters to attend to ah? How do you have the time to leave the capital and play? It's really too good that you were able to come. The minced meat sauce, jerky and canned fruits that you gave me before I left have all been eaten. Make some more for me please! I'm telling you, ah, there are a vast variety of fruits here. If you can make dried or canned fruits out of them, I'm sure they'll be very delicious!"

Zhu Junxi was dumbfounded by this and made an apologetic gesture to his younger brother, who had a displeased expression on his face. He pulled Han Xiaomu over and said, "Calm down a bit. You asked a bunch of questions at once, so don't you need to give Princess Consort Xu some time to reply ah? Furthermore, they just got here and you need to give her some time to rest first..."

"That's right ah! Younger Sister Xiaocao, are you tired? The house only has my father and me and I live in a large courtyard. How about you move in with me, drink some water, eat some fruits and rest a bit? You came just at the right time! Right now, the mangosteens, papayas, mangos, and bananas are all ripe. You can eat as much as you want..." Han Xiaomu chattered on without stopping and her lips flapped on and on. No one else was able to get a single word in.

Yu Xiaocao hid her smile and had Wutong take out a food box when there was a pause in the talking. The box held a bunch of meat floss inside. At this time of year, the south was hot and humid so it was hard to keep other foodstuffs from spoiling too quickly. Only meat jerky and meat floss items were able to stay fresh for a longer period of time.

“So delicious!” Han Xiaomu pinched off a piece of meat floss and let it dissolve gently in her mouth. A burst of savory, fragrant, and sweet flavor...all of them were harmoniously blended together and made a person feel intense bliss from eating it.

“This is called meat floss and it was made with pork. There's also fish meat floss, chicken meat floss, and beef meat floss. Other than eating it directly, you can sandwich it between two crackers to eat, use it as a topping for rice porridge, use it as a filling inside rice balls...if I have the time, I'll make some meat floss bread for you to try.” Yu Xiaocao couldn't help but soften a bit when she saw the other girl hug the box full of food in a hoarding manner.

Han Xiaomu nodded her head repeatedly and had an excited and touched look on her face, “Okay ah, okay! Younger Sister Xiaocao, you are truly the best! If I were a man, I would definitely want to marry you and bring you back home!”

“Ahem ahem!!” The expression on Zhu Junyang's face darkened even more. As soon as they arrived at the army camp, his wife's attention had been taken by someone else. Now another person had come out of the cracks and was trying to steal his wife away from him. This was absolutely not okay, even if this person was female!! The only reason why he had never hit a woman before was because no woman had ever crossed his line too far. His wife was absolutely a taboo target for other people!

Han Xiaomu wasn't the least bit frightened by him, “What are you coughing for? If your throat is itchy, go eat some licorice drops!! I was only joking around. It's not like I would truly try to steal your wife away from you! Why do you need to be so petty ah?”

“This prince just has a petty personality! As long as it has something to do with the princess consort, this prince cannot be generous! Even jokes are not okay!!” Zhu Junyang snorted coldly.

“Hmph! So tyrannical! Younger Sister Xiaocao, your man has such a bad temper and tyrannical manner, are you sure you can handle it? Are you sure you're not getting bullied by him every day ah? That's not okay! You can't be too gentle and sweet——he doesn't hit women, right? Heavens! What could be done?” Han Xiaomu pinched off another puff of meat floss and stuffed it in her mouth in a worried manner. She couldn't beat Imperial Prince Xu and had no way of saving Younger Sister Xiaocao from the depths of despair. What to do?

Yu Xiaocao suppressed her desire to laugh and used her eyes to placate her husband, who was about to explode in fury as she gently said, “Older Sister Mu, he doesn't hit women and definitely wouldn't hit his

wife. He treats me very well ah! All of the men from Imperial Prince Jing's Estate love their wives very much. Once Older Sister Mu marries, you'll know that for the truth.”

Zhu Junxi gave a grateful look towards her. Ever since the two of them had gotten engaged in the third month, the lass had always dodged his question on when they were going to get married. Furthermore, General Han obligingly went with his daughter and said that everything was up to her. For himself, he thought the two of them weren't young anymore and it was the right time to get married now. Otherwise, as the older brother in the family, his son might end up having to call his younger brother's children 'older brother' and 'older sister'. Wouldn't that be so annoying ah?

Could it be that lass had gotten the thing called 'wedding jitters' that the emperor had talked about before? Argh, what was to be done then? His future wife believed his younger sister-in-law a lot. Perhaps with this younger sister-in-law around it was the best opportunity for him to convince her to set a date on their wedding.

When Han Xiaomu heard this, she glanced at her stunningly handsome fiancé and remembered what her father had talked to her before. In actuality, Han Xiaomu had a decent understanding of herself and saw herself quite clearly. She calculated a bit and decided she didn't have many pros but had a whole lot of cons. She had a bad temper, wasn't gentle, wasn't considerate, was too carefree, and didn't have a whiff of a gentle lady. It was hard for a man, especially such a good specimen of a man, to be blind to those weaknesses of her and love her for herself. What else did she need at this point?

That being said, even a man like Imperial Prince Xu, who looked like a cold devil on the outside, knew how to pamper and spoil his wife after marriage. Thus, someone like her fiancé, who had always been good, would definitely be better. Younger Sister Xiaocao had said that the Zhu Family knew how to pamper their wives, so it must be true! Mhm...the next time he brought up the topic of marriage, she should go along with it right?

Zhu Junxi glanced at his younger brother, who was taller than him by half a head and was stunningly talented. Even when he was just standing there casually, he resembled a leisurely king of the jungle and had an air about him that he couldn't compete with. The stories from the northwest stated that his brother was an undefeated god and was a cold death god to their enemies. He was so frightening that the foreign invaders turned tail and ran when they saw him. At such a young age, he had also been titled an imperial prince as thanks for his military achievements...when he thought of how jealous he was of his younger brother in the past, it seemed like a farce now!

“?” Zhu Junyang sensed that his second older brother had been staring at him and glanced over questioningly at him.

Zhu Junxi pointed at the nearby thicket and suggested, "Come walk with me over there ah."

Zhu Junyang lightly nodded his head but first headed over to Xiaocao's side. He lowered his head to her ear and spoke a few words. Xiaocao looked over and then slightly smiled before gently nodding her head.

Once again, Zhu Junxi was struck by just how much this younger brother of his treasured his new wife. Prior to heading out, he always went over to tell her. It was as if he was afraid that she might be worried if she didn't see him around. Who would have thought that the family's most cold and aloof person was the one who had the most emotions in the end? Perhaps, the reason why he hadn't been able to persuade General Mu to set a date for him was right there...

"Did you know? When I was young I had always been envious and jealous of you. The reason why I ran into the army was to be far away from you as I was afraid that if I stayed around you for too long, I wouldn't be able to control my jealous feelings and become a loathsome person that even I would hate." The two brothers slowly walked around in the quiet forest for a long while before Zhu Junxi finally stated the purpose of this walk after lightly sighing first.

Zhu Junyang was flabbergasted by his confession, "You envied me and were jealous? At that time, I was like a dumb beast, being forced onto death row. I was violent, ill tempered, and often lost control of myself. I even hurt myself from time to time. Someone actually envied me at that time?"

"That's right ah! It was because of your problems that our lady mother poured all of her care and attention on you. Lord Father also did everything he could and begged our imperial grandfather to send his most trusted steward over to you as a guard. As for me, I was only older than you by a few years and was still a child then. I wished for someone to care about me but I was always ignored by everyone."

Zhu Junxi smiled bitterly for a moment before he continued, "Out of us four siblings, Eldest Brother is the heir and held the hopes as the successor of Imperial Prince Jing's Estate. Older Sister was the only girl and had been pampered and spoiled all her life. You, we don't even need to mention as the entire estate revolved their attention around you as they were all afraid you might explode at any time. It was only me..."

Zhu Junyang lightly shook his head and his eyes were as calm as a quiet spring. He stated in an emotionless voice, "Second Brother! The person who should have been envious of others was me! Do

you understand what it's like to have a devil living in your heart, one that would devour all of reasoning at any moment and make you harm all of your loved ones within a moment's notice? Do you know how a little child would feel if he was afraid to get closer to people and couldn't rely on his most beloved lady mother? Can you imagine what it is like to slowly lose more and more control of yourself and realize that one day you may transform into a mindless monster and never come back? Do you realize how scary that is ah? Now that you know, are you still envious and jealous of me ah?"

Fields of Gold Chapter 700

With Zhu Junyang's special ability, he naturally could tell that there was something bothering his second brother for all this time, causing the rift between them. In the past, he didn't wish to investigate further. Perhaps they now had the opportunity to repair these misunderstandings.

Zhu Junxi patted his shoulder and grinned, "After arriving in the army, I've encountered more people from all walks of life and my views of the world have gradually broadened. From that, I've become more understanding. Now, you have your own career and family and I have my own direction to work hard at. If I still act like a child, striving for the favoritism and love of our parents, wouldn't that be silly?"

"Second Brother, as parents, it's hard not to spend more time and attention on the weaker and more troublesome child. In actuality, I have always envied you and Eldest Brother the most. If I had the choice, I would rather be like all of the other children and have a carefree and happy childhood. I'd be able to act spoiled and willful in front of our parents." Zhu Junyang looked at the young lady who was smiling as brightly as the flowers around her. His eyes gentled considerably—Thank the Heavens for allowing him to meet the only hope he had in this lifetime.

Zhu Junxi also looked in the same direction as his younger brother and saw two young ladies, laughing loudly. His lips curved up into a smile as he said, "Let's go! I know where the wild pigs here like to hide. Your archery skills are good, so let's bring a wild pig back. Didn't Younger Sister-in-law say that she knows how to make meat floss and jerky ah? Without any meat, how can she make any?"

"The two of you sure know how to order people around! My wife and I just arrived here and we're being pushed into hunting wild pigs and making jerky." Although complaints flowed out of his mouth, Zhu Junyang didn't stop walking forward. The two brothers headed deeper within the jungle.

In the mottled darkness of the forest, the sound of Zhu Junxi's laughter could be heard, "What's wrong? Are you feeling bad for your wife? Don't worry ah, we won't have your wife do a thing. General Mu has several female soldiers under her command who are more than capable. Your wife only needs to flap her lips and it'll get done."

By the time Han Xiaomu finished eating half a box of meat floss and devoured the few remaining dried apricots that Xiaocao had left, the two brothers came back carrying a large wild pig that weighed around three hundred to four hundred catties. For lunch, the meat from the wild pig had been divided up. Half of it had gone to add on a dish to the high ranking soldiers and Zhu Junxi's personal aides. The rest had been allocated for preservation. A large portion was going to be used to make jerky while a smaller portion was going to be made into meat floss.

The next morning, Xiaocao followed up on her promise and used some simple tools and ingredients to make some meat floss bread and meat floss pastries. The southwest was hot and humid, making it difficult to keep food for long. Han Xiaomu finished devouring these new goodies in the span of two meals. She even begged Xiaocao shamelessly, asking her for the method to create these breads and pastries. She was planning on having one of her female soldiers who was good at cooking learn these recipes. As for herself, she was someone who even needed molds to make acceptable looking cookies, so she knew that she wasn't up to par for this.

Zhu Junyang and his wife rested at the army camp for two days before they left for the border next to Myanmar. Over there, Wisdom Jade Pavilion's Manager Zhang had come to an agreement with one of the princes there and he was able to buy a jadeite mine. The jadeite mined from that spot was quite good. However, the mine was on the smaller side and had been previously used before Wisdom Jade Pavilion bought it. Thus, the supply of jadeite coming out of there was gradually not enough to fulfill the shop's needs in the capital.

Currently, the jadeite ore gambling business required the most raw ore from the store. Wisdom Jade Pavilion's jewelry business, on the other hand, had fallen second. The prospect of becoming rich overnight not only attracted the people from noble and wealthy families but also became popular with people from middle class families. There were some who would save up a bunch of money in order to buy an ore to gamble, and there were truly some lucky customers. There was one who had selected an ore that produced jadeite that was of crystal ice quality and above. Wisdom Jade Pavilion bought that specimen off the lucky customer at a very high price. After Manager Zhang spread the news about this, the gambling side of the business became even more popular.

The reason why Zhu Junyang came over this time wasn't just to satisfy his wife's curiosity. He had another motive as he wanted to see if he could buy another jadeite mine.

After touring his wife around their current jadeite mine, Zhu Junyang had a middleman send a message off to the prince and proposed buying another mine from him. With Wisdom Jade Pavilion's booming business as an example, the vast majority of jewelry merchants in the Great Ming's capital had all set their eyes on this slab of fat meat. Thus, the people mining jadeite ore no longer had to worry about not being able to sell.

The prince of Myanmar naturally wouldn't allow a foreigner to get all of the profits here. However, he also knew of the identity of the person in front of him. It was the Great Ming's Empire famous God of War—Imperial Prince Xu. Having a connection to this impressive personage would increase his bargaining chips at gaining the throne in the future. Thus, if he openly refused this man's request, it would damage the relationship between them. The prince, instead, decided to go about this in a roundabout manner.

“Within these mountains, there are a lot of untapped jadeite veins. How about Your Highness choose to buy an untouched mountain instead? Perhaps you may even come across a large jadeite ore in there that is way better than the mines we currently have! If Your Highness doesn't have any experienced people in finding mines, this humble prince can lend you a few people.” The prince from Myanmar was very sincere in his conduct.

Not all of the mountains in this area bordering Myanmar had jadeite ores. Clearly, buying a mountain to find mines was also a big gamble.

When he saw that Imperial Prince Xu's face remained cold and aloof, as if he was displeased by this suggestion, the prince hurriedly added, “Your Highness, please don't worry. This humble prince has several jadeite experts under me. With them working together, I'm sure seven to eight times out of ten, the mountain they identify will have a good jadeite vein. The mountain that you propose to buy will also be sold to you at a very reasonable price by me.”

Zhu Junyang stayed silent, '...this prince hasn't even said anything yet you are already making the terms a bit sweeter for me. It looks like having a cold poker face has its advantages too.'

Yu Xiaocao remembered that the little divine stone had once said that naturally occurring mines of precious materials would all harbor a thick concentration of spiritual energy. Didn't that mean she could use the little divine stone as a cheat item and be able to easily find any unearthed jadeite mines?

When she thought of this, she tampered down the excitement in her heart with great difficulty and pulled at her husband's sleeve as she quietly said, “How about...we look around these mountains first and take it as a beautiful tour of the scenery?”

Zhu Junyang would never refuse a request from his wife. He immediately made the decision: buying a mountain was just buying a mountain ah!

When the young prince from Myanmar saw that the young lady next to Imperial Prince Xu had merely said a few words and the esteemed personage immediately changed his mind (Zhu Junyang: I hadn't even made a decision. Why are you saying I changed my mind?), he knew then that the woman was highly regarded by the imperial prince. Thus, he immediately became a few fractions warmer towards her.

As a giant vinegar jar of jealousy, Zhu Junyang naturally wasn't happy about this. Why was an adult prince who was around twenty years old treating his wife so politely? What were his intentions? Did he think that he, the husband, was dead ah?

The Myanmar prince didn't know that his attempt at flattery had gone flat and he had almost felt his face go numb from the sudden cold aura coming off of Imperial Prince Xu. His Highness's personality was truly as the rumors said: temperamental to the extreme! The imperial prince was just fine earlier, so why did he suddenly change his demeanor?

For the next few days, with the company of the young Myanmar prince and his jadeite experts, Zhu Junyang and his wife, along with a giant third wheel—Chief Steward Su Ran, leisurely toured around the few mountains in the area.

These mountains were blanketed densely with thick vegetation and weren't the type of scenic and beautiful mountains that were touted in poetry. Other than poisonous snakes and insects, there were also vicious beasts and poisonous miasma to contend with. Xiaocao had consulted with the little divine stone to create some special medicine that repelled insects and snakes. When it was placed in their scent satchels, the poisonous creatures voluntarily avoided them like the plague. As for vicious beasts, with Zhu Junyang and Su Ran around, who were both killing machines, there was nothing to be afraid of. As for poisonous miasma, a single all purpose detoxification pill was more than enough to protect them.

The group of people strolled around the no man's land of the deep mountains without a single issue. This made the Myanmar's prince's group feel quite flabbergasted. They all said that the ruler of the Great Ming Dynasty was the true born son of the heavens. As one of the imperial relatives, was Imperial Prince Xu also blessed by the heavens?

The young Myanmar prince was superstitious so he was even more respectful and polite towards Imperial Prince Xu.

'Little Glutinous Dumpling, have you found anything in these past ten days?' One night, Xiaocao, who was resting in a cozy cave, was simultaneously roasting a snake as thick as a person's wrist as she conversed mentally with the little divine stone.

[I did detect some mines but the amount of spiritual energy coming off of them was too little. These veins absolutely don't have a lot of jadeite in them, so buying them would be a venture that loses money.] The little divine stone had transformed into its golden little kitten form. It stretched lazily and hid behind Xiaocao after being eyed fervently by the prince from Myanmar.

The young prince reached out a hand to pet the little divine stone's golden fur but ended up getting clawed for his attempt. A long red line appeared on the back of his hand. However, he merely grinned and said, "Your Highness, your pet's fur is bright and it's very spirited. It's not like an ordinary cat."

Yu Xiaocao enjoyed herself as her husband fed her a piece of roasted meat. She savored the food with her mouth before she gently wiped the corner of her lips and played teasingly with the little cat's front paws. Only when the little divine stone looked at her resentfully did she place it down and smile, "Is that so ah? This princess didn't think it had any special in particular."

She continued to mentally converse with the little divine stone, 'There are so many mountains and hills here. Just how long will it take for us to walk through them all? How about you exert yourself at night and speed around the immediate area to see if there is anything interesting around?'

[You sure know how to order people around!] The little divine stone complained for a bit yet still gracefully exited the cave.

The prince from Myanmar asked worriedly, "There are a lot of fierce beasts in the mountains, would it get into trouble from wandering around outside? Should you send a few people to keep guard?"

"No need!" She was pretty sure that the stone had transformed into a beam of light and had gone off into the forest as soon as it exited the cave. Yu Xiaocao came up with an excuse, "Little Glutinous Dumpling is very clever and most animals can't possibly catch it."

That night, Xiaocao snuggled deeply within her sleeping bag, which she had sewn herself, and slept peacefully next to her husband. The young Myanmar prince saw this and felt quite puzzled inside, 'Didn't they all say that the noblewomen from the Great Ming Empire were delicate and squeamish ah?'

Princess Consort Xu, on the other hand, seems to be an exception. She's followed along with us, a bunch of men, for all these days but didn't complain a single bit. The trails here are hard to work and even an experienced hunter would feel tired after an entire day. Why did Princess Consort Xu seem fine? Is it possible that...Her Highness is also an expert at martial arts?'

The prince suddenly felt like the temperature in the cave had gone down by several degrees and couldn't help but shiver a few times. He discovered that Imperial Prince Xu was staring at him in an unfriendly manner. Only then did he realize that he had been looking at Princess Consort Xu for a bit of a while and had caused a certain vinegar jar to get angry. Imperial Prince Xu was a bit too protective of his wife. Even looking at her too long wasn't okay with him!

This couple was truly too odd. It didn't seem right that they were going on a trip to improve their relationship as they had brought along an unrelated person (Su Ran, the third wheel). Could it be that the emperor of the Great Ming Empire wanted to do something to Myanmar and sent them over to investigate? That also didn't seem right. This couple had been in the mountains for several days. Other than hunting and gathering some medicinal herbs, they hadn't done anything else! Furthermore, they never seemed to be interested in asking him and his group about the jadeite mines. Argh! He needed to observe them more!