

## Protect OCL 31

### Chapter 31 'Beekeeping Notes'\_1

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Especially among those well-versed in preserving health, some old ancestors at the Spirit Platform Realm can live to nearly two hundred years old, often witnessing the birth of their eighth, or even ninth, generation bloodline descendants.

If they can further achieve the Heavenly Human Realm, their lifespan could reach up to four hundred years. The whole family would prosper accordingly, a scenario that can even be described as enjoying collective prosperity.

Therefore, elated, Old Ancestor Mingsheng took out a classic, ancient beast-skin book and handed it to Wang Shouzhe: "This is the 'Insect Master Notation.' Consider it my gift to celebrate a new Insect Master in the Wang family. It's the notes of an independent cultivator at the Spirit Platform Realm, who excelled in controlling Spirit Bees hundreds of years ago.

It records some techniques and key points for rearing various types of Spirit Bees. Nevertheless, this is only a reproduced copy, inevitably there may be places where it falls short. It should be used as a reference only."

Wang Shouzhe was startled, then overjoyed: "Thank you, Old Ancestor, for your timely assistance."

Although Luo Jing now has the talent to be an Insect Master, the single copy of the "Insect Scripture" present in the family is clearly inadequate.

Without a doubt, this 'Insect Master Notation,' focused solely on Spirit Bees, benefits Luo Jing greatly, who is in possession of a Purple Crystal Spirit Bee nest.

"Having obtained such benefits, it's time to leave; do not annoy this old man anymore," Old Ancestor Mingsheng impatiently dismissed the visitors.

"I take my leave then, I respectfully take my leave," Wang Shouzhe had reaped many benefits from this trip and quickly pocketed the 'Insect Master Notation'. He then respectfully left the pavilion, Yue Ming of Yingxiu.

Old Ancestor Mingsheng watched Wang Shouzhe's retreating figure from afar, feeling somewhat ecstatic, yet a touch dejected. His ecstasy stemmed from the fact that this descendant sharing his bloodline displayed an extraordinary caliber with great potential. His dejection, however, was born from the fact that none of the young males from the two generations of the Lu family could compare to Shouzhe.

Fortunately, there was still Xiaoxiao.

Fondly stroking the head of the sleeping Lu Xiaoxiao, Old Ancestor Mingsheng commented: "This child, having awakened the Departing Fire Body of our Lu ancestor, is already remarkable, despite its thin presence. Indeed, it appears the Heavens are blessing our Yingxiu Lu Family."

The legacy of each Profound Martial Prominent Family is never as simple as it appears. And every founder who opened up a territory to establish a prominent family belongs to a generation of incredible talent.

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Having reaped numerous benefits and bidding farewell to Old Ancestor Mingsheng, Wang Shouzhe was guided by a maid to his guest room—the Honorable Guest Residence.

This was a space designated by the Lu Family for accommodating distinguished guests, an entire courtyard situated beside the lake was set aside for him, and adjacent to it were several additional rooms prepared for the attendants of the honorable guests.

The members of Wang family who came along, as well as Wang Luo Jing, were all off assisting with the disaster relief. Taking advantage of the rare peace and quiet, Wang Shouzhe ordered the Lu maids to prepare a bath for him. After a relaxing soak where he washed away days' worth of fatigue, he instructed others not to disturb him and went into cultivation mode.

Be it the Gongsun Clan of Shanyang or the Lu Clan of Yingxiu, they all served the best Spirit Food to the party of Wang Shouzhe on their way, and he had been eating non-stop without having enough time to properly digest the qi and blood.

Besides, he had just learned a great deal about cultivation from Old Ancestor Mingsheng today, which provided him with many enlightening insights. Once he entered meditative concentration, he quickly fell into a state of cultivation.

This session of cultivation continued until dawn the next day. His meridians and acupuncture points were all in a state of fatigue, and his vigorous qi and blood had been consumed a lot, but his eyes were filled with vibrancy. It was clear that he had made significant progress, taking another firm step closer to the seventh stage of the Qi Refinement Realm.

This filled Wang Shouzhe with delight. After combining some modern Earth thinking and the guidance of Old Ancestor Mingsheng, his understanding of the path of Qi Refinement had become much clearer.

When he stepped out of his room, Wang Zhong had been waiting outside, bowing and saying: "Family Head, my uncle's visit awaited. He heard you were in seclusion for cultivation and did not dare to disturb you. He is waiting for you in the living room."

Wang Shouzhe asked Wang Zhong to lead the way to the living room and casually asked, "How did the disaster relief go yesterday?"

"It all went well. After receiving our letter, the Lu family prepared many things in advance," Wang Zhong said in admiration, "Miss Luo Jing was truly outstanding. In a short period, she managed to contain several Nine-star Bug Kings and suppress the signs of a bug disaster outbreak."

When Wang Zhong mentioned Luo Jing's name, his tone was clearly filled with heartfelt respect. Evidently, Luo Jing's performance impressed and won the admiration of the attendants of the family.

It seems that Luo Jing indeed possesses the talent to be an accomplished Insect Master, and she has been making progress over a short period.

Lost in thought, Wang Shouzhe stepped into the guest living room of the private quarters and said to Lu Zhengjie, "I apologize for my late arrival. I hope my uncle-in-law can forgive me."

"No worries, no worries." Lu Zhengjie rose with a jovial smile, "Shouzhe, our Lu Family owes you a lot this time. You stepped in and curbed the insect plague right at its onset."

A drastic drop in grain production would not only mean an economic loss, but it could also trigger a string of ripple effects.

Daqian was founded on the basis of the Profound Martial Prominent Family, a family with various privileges locally, yet also bearing the responsibility of maintaining peace for its people. The power and entitlements of the Profound Martial Prominent Family clearly surpassed those of ancient earthly gentry, as did its obligations and responsibilities.

"My uncle-in-law flatters me. The Wang Family and Lu Family are connected by blood. Assisting each other is only natural," Wang Shouzhe humbly responded with a smile.

After a brief exchange of pleasantries, Lu Zhengjie said, "We've also had a breakthrough in the case of the murdered wealthy merchant. The Independent Cultivator was not as tough as we initially thought. After only four hours of interrogation, he confessed everything. We've recovered all the hidden ill-gotten gains, and he will be executed publicly soon to serve as a warning to others."

"The unattached life led by an independent cultivator can be a hidden danger," Wang Shouzhe noted with a frown. "If we cannot control the ingress of these independent cultivators, eventual recurrence of such cases is inevitable."

"That's a bit difficult; most independent cultivators wander around taking on the identity of peddlers. The Daqian Law has no provision against independent cultivators wandering around." After Lu Zhengjie wrinkled his brows, he changed the subject, "By the way, we were able to quickly solve this case because of you, Shouzhe. The Garrison Office decided to award you fifty Qian Gold as a bounty.

Although not a significant amount, it's already the maximum reward we could muster."

"Thank you, my uncle-in-law, for facilitating this from within." Wang Shouzhe was quite satisfied with this conclusion. Fifty Qian Gold was not a trivial sum. Some independent cultivators were ready to risk their lives for this quantity of gold.

After receiving the bounty, Wang Shouzhe asked for leave.

He left two household heads to aid Wang Luo Jing, entrusting his uncle-in-law to jointly protect her in the plague extermination. The insect plagues of the Lu Family and the Gongsun Clan have only been initially curbed. The tameability of the wild insect kings was still too low; there was a need for repeated strengthening.

For the next more than ten days, she would need to shuttle back and forth between the Lu Family, Gongsun Clan, and the Wang family.

Wang Shouzhe had a lot of affairs to handle himself; it was impossible for him to be involved throughout the whole process. He could only entrust Luo Jing's safety to the Lu Family and Gongsun Clan.

After bidding farewell, he gave the "Beekeeping Manual" to Wang Luo Jing.

Mounted on his black steed, leading two household heads at his side, Wang Shouzhe made his way back to Changning Wei. With the absence of cumbersome carriages and traveling lightly on horseback, the group arrived at Changning Wei after only a few hours.

Just as he settled down in the annex behind the Ping'an Wang Family's fish stall, preparing to rest and visit Qian Zhushi from the Qian Family's business the next morning, to his surprise, Qian Zhushi of the Qian Family's business had already arrived at the Wang Family's annex.

Evidently, he had his eyes and ears placed at the city gate.

Once they met in the living room, before tea and fruit could be served, the plump Qian Zhushi began to grumble, "Brother Wang, you really left me in a lurch this time."

"Brother Qian, what are you talking about?" Wang Shouzhe personally poured tea for Qian Zhushi and spoke calmly, "I kindly helped clear the inventory of insect repellent powder for your Qian family's business. Am I not supposed to do that?"

Qian Zhushi drank his tea in one gulp, not caring if it was hot, and replied angrily, "Brother Wang, we're at this point, let's not beat around the bush. You clearly used our Qian family business to gain considerable wealth without spending a dime. Bravo, you played your cards well."

"Brother, you flatter me. Profiting from information asymmetries is the way of the merchant." Wang Shouzhe laughed, "If Brother Qian was in my position, I'm sure you would have done even better."

"Information asymmetry, information asymmetry." Qian Zhushi murmured twice before sighing helplessly, "Brother, I admit you have a point. But you're about to make a fortune without putting in

a penny, and that has indeed put me in a tricky spot. If I cannot successfully resolve this matter, it may not end well. Brother, please show mercy."

"Brother Qian, there's no need to worry. Didn't I tell you before that I was going to render you a great service?" Wang Shouzhe spoke in a relaxed manner, "This service will not only allow you to offset your past mistakes but could also greatly increase your standing."

"What?" Qian Zhushi looked at him in disbelief.

Chapter 32 Secret Alliance \_1

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He gaped at Wang Shouzhe for a long while before saying, "Little brother, you wouldn't be trying to deceive me, would you? Or set me another trap to fall into? Given my current situation... Is there any chance for me to redeem myself?"

"The cause of the insect plague and the reason why Insecticide Powder is gradually losing its effect, as well as the direction for the research on New Bug-killing Powder..." Wang Shouzhe stated lightly, "If this information is not enough for Old Brother Qian to turn his fate around, then I have misjudged you."

"Is this true?" Qian Zhushi suddenly stood up, a powerful aura erupting from him that equaled the peak of the Vital Energy Refining Realm. His eyes sparkled, "If this is a significant contribution, then you, Shouzhe, are a true brother to me, Qian Xue'an."

What a powerful aura!

Even Wang Shouzhe was slightly surprised. Qian Zhushi kept his abilities hidden, but he was at such a high level of cultivation. Truly impeccable for the affluent Qian Family of Longzuo County. Even a minor official within a branch was this powerful.

With a glimpse into their power, it could be seen just how formidable the Qian family of Longzuo County was.

"Is Principal Qian using this major achievement to seek a chance to break through to the Spirit Platform Realm?" Wang Shouzhe narrowed his eyes slightly, noticing that Qian Zhushi was demonstrating his aura not in a random manner, but to express his value and potential.

"You understand me, little brother," Qian Xuean returned to his harmless smile after showing off his strength, "To be honest, I am a side branch son of one of the Qian Family bloodlines. My status and treatment can be imagined within the family, the difficulties I faced to get where I am today.

If there is no major contribution, the chance of seeking family support to break through to Spirit Platform Realm is very slim. No matter the result, I would be grateful, if you provide me with support."

"Old Brother Qian, do you know why I did not submit this achievement to the Academic Palace myself?" Wang Shouzhe laughed, as if testing Qian Xuean's wisdom.

"The issue of Insecticide Powder is very significant, while your Ping'an Wang Family is weak," Qian Xuean said with the same cheerful smile, "Even if you contributed your research findings to the Academic Palace, they might not be grateful given their condescending attitudes. But the Qian Family of Longzuo is different. With this information, we can negotiate with the Academic Palace.

Even if we can get an additional tenth of the profits from selling the New Bug-killing Powder, that would be a huge amount of money! So, you chose to give me this big accomplishment, it is what you termed before... "

"Maximizing benefits," Wang Shouzhe filled in, sipping his tea.

"Exactly, that's the word," Qian Xuean reiterated solemnly. "But there is a condition for this: I must show gratitude towards you, Shouzhe. We can sign a secret pact about this, and if I betray it, you can make it public and ruin my reputation completely. As you know, our Qian Family values trustworthiness, you know what would happen if one's personal reputation is ruined."

This Qian Zhushi is indeed a clear-headed friend.

Wang Shouzhe calmed his heart. In these times, the fear is casting pearls before swine, wasting efforts on a thankless person.

Through previous interactions with Qian Xuean, he realized that Qian was a person who paid great attention to details and was sensitive at heart. Otherwise, how could he have come this far being a side son of a direct bloodline in the family?

"Old Brother Qian, if we sign this secret pact, we will be on the same boat," Wang Shouzhe asked one last time, "Are you sure about this?"

Qian Xuean pondered for a moment before speaking: "If the pact was with someone else, I would have needed to consider it." He paused, then looked intently at Wang Shouzhe, saying earnestly, "But forming a secret pact with you, Shouzhe brother, is a desirable opportunity for me. You are discreet yet daring, and your ability to turn situations around impresses me greatly.

I firmly believe that standing on the same side as you is my lifelong fortune."

His words may seem exaggerated, but Wang Shouzhe could feel Qian's genuine sincerity, and he decided immediately to draft the secret pact.

Abiding by the principle of letting the wicked go first, Wang Shouzhe painstakingly drafted the pact with comprehensive and unambiguous terms, specifying the mutual responsibilities and duties.

When Qian Xuean finished reading the alliance contract, he found himself frozen in place, not because the terms were too complicated or demanding, but because they were overly simple and equal. In his mind, his own future either ended dismal or soared to incredible heights, but all of it was in the grasp of Wang Shouzhe.

Even if the terms were a bit harsher, it would have been normal, at least he had mentally braced himself for it.

"Brother Shouzhe, this contract..." Qian Xuean furrowed his eyebrows slightly, "Perhaps more restricting clauses for me should be added?"

"Old Brother Qian, I am looking for allies not underlings." Wang Shouzhe said while leisurely sipping his tea. "Since we are allies, naturally we should adhere to principles of fairness and justice, mutual respect and mutual assistance.

If there comes a day when you feel the alliance has lost its meaning, you can refer to the last clause, with a compensation of 10,000 Qian Gold, the alliance can be annulled."

Qian Xuean took a deep breath, signed and stamped both contracts, then bowed deeply, "The breadth of Shouzhe's mind is something I've rarely seen in my life. I swear, as long as you don't betray me, I will not betray you, or else may I be struck by lightning and die."

"Your words are too serious, Brother. From today onward, we are brothers, sharing honor and disgrace together." Wang Shouzhe was very satisfied with this outcome. After collecting the contract, he handed the previously prepared documents to Qian Xuean, "How to operate next, I believe you understand better than me."

Qian Xuean concentrated on the documents, the more he read, the more fascinated he became, "Incredible, incredible, yet it makes perfect sense. Brother Shouzhe, this information is extremely precious, it can prevent future batches of Insecticide Powder from becoming ineffective again."

This document was written by Wang Shouzhe himself, trying as much as possible to express in simple and clear language how the honey bugs developed resistance, and if one wants to kill the current drug-resistant honey bugs, the old formula of Insecticide Powder needs to be adjusted.

As for how to adjust and how to experiment, Wang Shouzhe did not offer any advice, letting the Academic Palace find out on its own.

Furthermore, Wang Shouzhe hadn't considered at all about developing a new Insecticide Powder, the interests involved in this were just too big. This was the equivalent of levying an insecticide tax on all the fertile lands in Longzuo County, the astronomical interests involved could easily crush the Wang family.

"Okay okay okay, with this great contribution." Qian Xuean's eyes sparkled, "If I can't make good use of this, then I've lived my 38 years in vain."

He solemnly stored the contract, and said to Wang Shouzhe with a grin, "Brother Shouzhe, I must admit. If it wasn't for this great contribution, I would truly hate you, you played your cards too well. But now, well, I can only say brother, you've done well."

"I just went with the flow." Wang Shouzhe smiled, "How much are you shopkeepers planning to pay to redeem the contract?"

"Originally, we shopkeepers had a psychological bottom line of twice the price of the contract.

Of course, the best scenario would be to make you back off, and settle it with a few thousand Qian Gold." Qian Xuean squinted his fat eyes, "However, this locust plague is very fierce, various

prominent families predict that without effective measures, the production could decrease by 60 to 70 percent, which is equivalent to a loss of about ten Copper Coins per acre.

If disaster relief could be applied in time with a double dose of Insecticide Powder, the loss could be reduced to one or two Copper Coins."

"So according to Brother, the psychological bottom line of those prominent families is about six Copper Coins per acre for Insecticide Powder?" Wang Shouzhe has also made calculations about this, and he laughed, "Then won't the Qian Family's trade firm not only not lose, but make a profit by buying back the contract at twice the price?"

"Wrong." Qian Xuean squinted and smiled, "The psychological bottom line of those prominent families is at least twelve Copper Coins, or even more. Furthermore, they would have to beg us, the Qian Family, to sell to them, because the existing stock of Insecticide Powder is far from enough to save all the prominent families."

"Instead of making more losses, they might as well not invest, and just let the crops decrease." Wang Shouzhe frowned, not quite understanding.

"You should know, Brother, that the Daqian law prohibits manipulating grain prices during years of surplus and disaster, which on the surface seems like an excellent policy to pacify the people." Qian Xuean sneered, shaking his head, "But in fact during the years of disaster, it actually does more harm than good. Merchants don't get up early without profits.

If the price of grain doesn't rise, how many merchants are willing to transport grain all the way to Longzuo?"

"Therefore, the overall shortage of food in Longzuo has become a confirmed situation. Most of the prominent families have enough grain reserves to cope with the disaster, but there will inevitably be a considerable part of the population who even with money would find it difficult to buy grain.

Just take our entire Changning County for example, the total population is over half a million, but the total number of fertile lands is only 1.5 million acres."

Chapter 33 Turning Point of Fate\_1

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Wang Shouzhe broke out in a cold sweat as he thought about the hungry civilians. In a situation where they couldn't buy grain even with Qian Gold, what would they do to survive? Sell their children? Sell their homes and properties?

"This means that the more grain a prominent family has in its possession this time, the more they can control the situation. Through other means, they can make up for the losses and make the family even stronger." Qian Xuean, an excellent businessman, succinctly described the follow-up to this calamity.

"The Daqian Officials and the Purple Abode Academic Palace will transport grain from other states and counties, right?" Wang Shouzhe, who had traveled to this world from Earth, could not bear to see civilians suffering.

"They will. But the process of collecting, transporting and selling grain at a fair price in different counties will take time," Qian Xuean said seriously. "Actually, the Academic Palace and the Government Office have started relief since today, but it is almost impossible to aid the entire Longzuo County in a short time. Especially our Changning, located in a remote area..."

Seeing Wang Shouzhe frown, he said: "Younger brother, I know you have a kind heart. I also can't bear to see this scene. But we are not strong enough to help. At this critical moment, it is good enough for us to take care of ourselves."

"Brother Qian is right; I was being too sentimental." Wang Shouzhe knew this principle. He sighed and said, "So you mean that I should ask the merchant to repay me at triple the contract price?"

"Younger brother, you have to understand. Even if they compensate three times, it is a breach of contract by the Qian Merchant Company. If it is not necessary, the company absolutely does not want to damage its reputation by breaching the contract," Qian Xuean winked. "I offer you a number: hold out for ten thousand Qian Gold and food worth three thousand Qian Gold to cancel the contract."

"What?"

Wang Shouzhe's eyelid twitched; Qian Xuean was even more ruthless than him. In his initial estimation, if the other party could buy back the contract at double the price, he would be satisfied.

The price was already more than triple the compensation, and food worth three thousand Qian Gold was even more valuable.

"Anyway, you have already offended the current shopkeeper of the Qian Merchant Company. Why don't you offend him even more?" Qian Xuean chuckled, "Moreover, even at this price, the Qian Merchant Company won't suffer losses and will still make a profit."

Everything Qian Xuean said sounded reasonable, but was it really good to trap his own family to death like this?

As if he had seen through Wang Shouzhe's thoughts, Qian Xuean explained seriously, "Firstly, the Qian family is so big that a compensation of ten or twenty thousand Qian Gold is trivial. Secondly, I am just a common child. If you hadn't helped me, I would have had a hard time achieving anything in my life. This is a way to repay your kindness. Thirdly, I really hope you can become stronger.

It is more beneficial for our alliance if you are stronger."

"Alright, let's do this." Such a huge benefit made it impossible for Wang Shouzhe to refuse. The Wang family was poor right now. If such a large amount of money could be pumped in, it would be a chance for the family to rise.

"In that case, let me handle this on your behalf," Qian Xuean seemed to have made up his mind. "When I report to the shopkeeper, I'll push for a 30% increase, then haggle a little to give him some consolation. Besides, you need to swear not to publicize this. The Qian Merchant Company can't afford to lose face."

Of course, he wasn't going to publicize it. Keeping it quiet while making a fortune was the best option.

Wang Shouzhe rose to his feet and bowed, "In that case, thank you, brother. One more condition needs to be added. The Insecticide Powder can't be sold to the two prominent families in Ping'an, the Zhao Clan and the Liu Clan." For Wang Shouzhe, strengthening himself was a good thing, but weakening his enemies was even better.

"I would have taken this condition into account even if you hadn't mentioned it," Qian Xuean replied with a smile. "Besides, there will likely be an imbalance and shortage of Insecticide Powder due to this disaster. The Zhao Clan and the Liu Clan are just small families in Ping'an; they already find it extremely difficult to secure a share of the Insecticide Powder. Congratulations, younger brother!"

From the perspective of the Wang family in Ping'an, the Liu Clan and the Zhao Clan were both troublesome and strong, but in the eyes of Qian Merchant Company, they were just two ordinary small families.

"Congratulations to both of us!"

The two of them broke into laughter, their negotiations concluded.

Without delay, Qian Xuean smashed his cup on the ground and stormed off, shouting, "Wang Shouzhe, you've gone too far! Do you think our Qian Merchant Company is easy to take advantage of? Just you wait...!"

Then he strode out, flanked by two silent guards at the door.

Wang Shouzhe was quite pleased with Qian Xuean's reactions and tactics; it seemed he had chosen the right ally.

Just then, his second brother, Wang Shouyi, walked in anxiously, "Shouzhe, that Principal Qian has come to see you several times in the past few days. Is there a problem?"

The Wang family couldn't take any more hits right now.

"Don't worry, second brother, it's good news for our family." Wang Shouzhe replied with a smile, then changed the subject, "By the way, how is the research going on the live fish equipment?"

Upon hearing this question, Wang Shouyi immediately perked up, "In all honesty, Shouzhe, your ideas are truly unique and ingenious. The mere implementation of showering and rotating water in barrels to introduce air could be enough to revolutionize the fish storage and transportation industry.

The preliminary results have been quite promising, so the next step is to modify the buckets of water on the horse carts and the ponds in the shop."

"You must accelerate this process, Brother, and build more farming ponds in this backyard," Wang Shouzhe laughed. "Otherwise, our sixth uncle will certainly come to beat you."

"Indeed, these past few days, the number of live fish from our sixth uncle's supply has been rising..." Wang Shouyi clasped his hands, "Excuse me, Fourth Brother, I must get going." With that, Wang Shouyi hurried away.

Hehe, Wang Shouyi's initiative was becoming stronger by the day, which was an encouraging sign. It made sense, given the improving fortunes of our family that inevitably boosted everyone's morale.

Wang Shouzhe attached great importance to the fishery and fish stall, the two main family assets. Previously, the combined annual net profits from these two operations were just around four to five hundred Qian Gold. However, after implementing his recommendations and adjustments, it was a piece of cake for the profits to exceed a thousand.

He was even confident that by next year, the profits from the fisheries and fish stalls would surpass the combined earnings of the three major farms.

Making a good profit by seizing the opportunity to promote the insecticide powder was certainly a cause for delight. However, the development of the family business was the true foundation for a family's strength.

Besides, the three thousand Qian Gold worth of grain mentioned by Qian Xuean also brought a slight headache to Wang Shouzhe. Controlling food during a famine equaled seizing opportunity, there was indeed no doubt about that..

But what did three thousand Qian Gold worth of grain look like? Estimating based on current grain prices, it was about fifty to sixty thousand dan of grain, which would be enough to feed twenty thousand people for a year!

It should be noted that the total population of Ping'an Town was less than thirty thousand.

The transportation and storage of such a massive amount of grain was a major challenge. The Ping'an Wang family's major farms naturally had their own granaries. However, these granaries were already rather full with old grain from the previous year and with the expected output of the current year, they might be able to cram in an additional ten thousand dan at most.

But there's always a solution to a problem.

When Zhou Xuan, the founder of the main residence, was designing it, he considered the future development of the family. There were fifty houses solely for important family members and hundreds of other rooms.

Most of these houses and rooms were vacant, so stacking tens of thousands dan of grain was a piece of cake. In times of disaster, the safest place was the main residence of a prominent family.

Each prominent family's main residence was strategically located where it was easy to defend and hard to attack, and was the most fortified, making people feel safe to store food there.

In addition, it had been mentioned before that the Wang's main residence was built against a mountain and near water.

The mountain was Liuping Mountain and the water source was a small lake named Zhuwei Lake. The lake was named by Zhou Xuan after his favorite legitimate daughter, Wang Zhuwei.

Zhuwei lake was not very big, it occupied about ten thousand acres of water, but it was a natural barrier and backyard for the Wang's main residence.

The most crucial factor was, it had a naturally-formed yet artificially-adjusted river channel. After going a few miles up the river, there was a bifurcation that led to two major farms, excluding Silkworm Manor.

The main river channel of Fenggu Farm was sinuously connected to Zhuwei Lake, with a total distance of around twenty miles.

On the upper stretch of the Fenggu Farm channel, was a sluice constructed by Zhou Xuan called Fenggu Sluice. This sluice was built to regulate the waterlevel in the river, but because it used a single-gate winch pattern, it was impassable for ships.

However, this wasn't a big issue, as regular maintenance was required to keep the Fenggu Sluice clear, ensuring the water level remained deep...

Wang Shouzhe quickly sorted out his thoughts and immediately wrote two letters, summoning Wang Zhong and Wang Yong.

"Family head." Both retainers seemed upbeat, clearly optimistic about the future development of the clan.

Wang Shouzhe handed over the letters to the two household head staff, Wang Zhong and Wang Yong, instructing, "After you deliver the letters, you don't need to return immediately. Stay there and lend a hand."

After the retainers took their leave to carry out their tasks, Wang Shouzhe sat alone, slowly sipping his tea. His eyes flickered, revealing his internal anxiety. If everything went smoothly, this insect plague could actually become the turning point in the declining fate of the Wang family.

Chapter 34: A Slight Stir Can Affect the Whole Situation\_1

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Time passed quietly for two days.

Wang Shouzhe spent these two days in the Changning mansion, cultivating his mind and spirit, enjoying some spiritual tea, practicing cultivation; he was leading a rather comfortable life.

However, outside the mansion, the world had changed within these two days. With the intensification of wheat irrigation, the first wave of insect disaster broke out with a thunderous momentum, spreading across the entire Changning Guard City area; all the clans were in chaos.

As a reduction in crop yield was inevitable, the prices of agricultural by-products — other than the staple foods strictly controlled by the Daqian government office — started to rise. Even the business of salted and smoked fish from the Wang family's fish stalls improved greatly, with prices also significantly increased.

In the scenario of a shortage of staple food, salted and smoked fish, which can be preserved for a long time, can also maintain life's continuity.

All the rice merchants have stopped selling grain to the outside world. Meanwhile, the rice stores run by the Daqian government office have started to sell in limited quantities. Long queues have formed outside these shops and the city guards have intervened to maintain order.

Drinking his tea, Wang Shouzhe heard the news from all sides, causing ripples in his otherwise calm heart. If it weren't for the fact that his family had a gem like Wang Luo Jing, perhaps they would be fraught with worry and stress right now, wouldn't they?

Instead, they rather leisurely watched the events unravel.

"Fourth Brother, someone from Qian's Merchants has delivered a letter." Wang Shouyi personally delivered the letter to the backyard, his eyebrows knitted in concern, "Besides, half of the salted and smoked fish inventory sent by Sixth Uncle in the past two days has been sold already. Looking at the other clans' fish stalls, they have all started to limit purchases and significantly raise prices.

Should we also raise our prices?"

Limit sales of salted fish too?

Wang Shouzhe frowned as he took the letter. It seemed the news of widespread grain shortage had triggered panic. The scene wasn't unfamiliar to him; he had seen too many panic-buying crowds triggered by disasters or rumors on Earth.

As for the sale of salted and smoked fish going too fast — the inventory that had come over in batches amounted to about 800 or 900 dan. Before the price increase, the price of salted and smoked fish varied from 20 to 30 shillings per catty depending on the quality of the fish. Usually, one dan cost between 20 and 30 copper coins.

The price has now risen to 30 to 40 copper coins per dan, but the demand seemed to be increasing even quicker.

"What about fresh fish and live fish?" Wang Shouzhe asked.

"The price of live fish hasn't risen, but the price of fresh fish has generally increased by 20%." Wang Shouyi reported, "Many people buy fresh fish and pickle or smoke them at home, or they reduce the consumption of staple food and eat more fish. Therefore, the prices of salt and firewood have also gone up."

As expected, when one string is plucked, all are touched.

The outbreak of the drug-resistant aphids immediately impacted all aspects. When the prices of basic necessities such as salt, firewood, coal and other materials rose, the prices of everything else would rise along with them.

"Second Brother, you can follow the market price increase." Wang Shouzhe said, "As for limiting sales, we can tell the public we are limiting salted and smoked fish to 20 dan per day, but in reality, we will sell up to 50 dan."

"Fifty dan? That's a whopping five thousand catties..." Wang Shouyi said in astonishment. "Can Sixth Uncle catch up? Even if Sixth Uncle can, the Dingpu warehouse wouldn't have the time to smoke and salt that much."

It is currently the peak fishing season. If Wang Dinghai's fishing team operates as they usually do, a few thousand catties of fish can be secured by 10 boats working strenuously — each boat averaging a few hundred catties of ordinary fish.

Most of it would be salted or smoked at the Dingpu warehouse. Normally, the capacity of the sun-dried and smoked fish there could just about cope with 800 dan a month.

But SIXth Uncle (Wang Dinghai) has already fully replicated the fixed-moving harp net fishing method, which even ordinary people can operate. The daily output will continue to increase, and during this peak fishing season, it is not unusual for the whole fishing team to catch up to ten thousand catties of fish.

"Increase the manpower and space for fish processing. You can use the vacant land and rooms of Fenggu Farm and Prosperous Farm. Also, get our idle servants and clansmen to work. We need to ensure that the output of smoked fish and salted fish exceeds 2,000 dan this month." Wang Shouzhe ordered, "Second Brother, you will oversee this work."

"As long as Sixth Uncle can keep up, I won't have any problems." The fighting spirit ignited instantly in Wang Shouyi. Two thousand dan of smoked and salted fish in a month would require at least three to four thousand dan of fresh fish for production as the weight of the fish would significantly decrease after being butchered and smoked or sun-dried.

If Sixth Uncle could really provide the supply, it would be a perfect opportunity to make money. How could he, Wang Shouyi, lag behind?

During the fishing season in previous years, the catch was the cheapest. Therefore, a large portion of ordinary catches would be processed into smoked and salted fish and slowly sold over time. The annual production and sales of smoked and salted fish were only about 2,000 to 3,000 dan. Meanwhile, the total sales of fresh and live fish amounted to only about 2,000 dan a year.

The total turnover is difficult to exceed one thousand Qian Gold, about half of which has to be credited to the accounts of the fishing team.

But now is different.

If this month truly produces more than two thousand loads, selling fifteen hundred loads of smoked and pickled fish, following the increase to forty copper coins per load, that would equal six hundred Qian Gold in turnover.

This does not include the sale of fresh and live fish... This month could potentially equal the usual annual turnover.

Therefore, Wang Shouyi feels as if his blood is burning! If not now, when would he fight so passionately?

"All right, then I'll leave the running around to you, second brother." Wang Shouzhe wrote an order from the clan leader, signed it, sealed it with the leader's seal, and handed it to him, saying, "With this, you can mobilize the house servants and withdraw Qian Gold from the family treasury."

"No need for Qian Gold for the time being." Wang Shouyi took the order letter, emotionally saying, "The salted fish in stock this time sold too quickly, I still have nearly two hundred Qian Gold on my books, enough to operate."

"Second brother, busy is busy, but don't make mistakes in a rush, overlooking errors in the accounts." Wang Shouzhe casually warned.

Wang Shouyi was startled, his eyes became serious and he quickly said, "Fourth brother, rest assured, as a member of the family, I will absolutely not violate the family rules. Every month I will hand over the accounts to the accounting room presided over by Aunt Five, and do not dare to overlook anything."

"You've worked hard, second brother." Wang Shouzhe formally saluted him, "Such an opportunity is hard to come by in a thousand years, whether the Wang family can escape its fate of decline, it depends on the full efforts of everyone in the clan."

Wang Shouzhe was still very satisfied, his second brother may have average cultivation talents, but he was very dedicated to the family business. Compared to Sixth Uncle Wang Dinghai, the old big farmer, he was far more careful and steady.

"Fourth brother, you are too kind, these are my duties." Wang Shouyi hurriedly returned the salute and said, "So I will take my leave and handle various matters."

After he left, Wang Shouzhe settled his mind, before opening the letter from Qian Xuean, inviting him to meet at the Jucui Manor outside Changning Weicheng. The secret mark left on the letter showed that Qian Xuean had fulfilled his promise.

However, even though he trusted Qian Xuean, he didn't dare to take any risks this time and preferred to be prudent in all things.

Immediately, he dressed up slightly and directly left the city. Instead of going to Jucui Manor first, he rode his black steed towards Shanyang. Not long after, he met Wang Zhong at a small manor a few miles outside the city.

"Wang Zhong, how are things going?" Wang Shouzhe asked.

"Reporting to the Family Head, fortunately, I did not disgrace your commands, the Young Clan Leader of Gongsun has come as promised and is waiting in the manor." Wang Zhong said with slight excitement, he had been waiting outside the manor for seven or eight hours.

Most of the power of the Wang family is located on the south bank of Peace River. If they want to find a large number of transport carriages, they can only rely on the Gongsun clan in Shanyang. Now his relationship with the Gongsun Clan is in the honeymoon phase, and this small request should not be rejected.

He entered this small manor of the Gongsun Clan in Shanyang outside Changning City, and met Gongsun Qiang, and greeted him, "I've kept my uncle waiting for a long time."

"I haven't been waiting for long, but what is your secret request for twenty horse-drawn carriages, heavy-duty carriages specifically for ore transportation? What do you intend to do?" Gongsun Qiang, a man of low EQ and impatience, was curious as soon as he saw him.

"It's nothing special." Wang Shouzhe said calmly, "Just transporting fifty to sixty thousand loads of aged grain." Since he was involved, naturally he wouldn't be able to hide the quantity.

"...."

At that moment, Gongsun Qiang's eyes almost popped out, "Favorite nephew, don't you know nowadays grain is hard to buy? And you want fifty to sixty thousand loads...

At that?

He had an impulse to swear. Compared to this favorite nephew who is a clan leader, he felt that he, a thirty-eight year old "Young Clan Leader", seemed to have completely wasted his years.

Chapter 35: Opening Transport Line\_1

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"Shouzhe, where on earth did you get fifty to sixty thousand dan of grain from?" Gongsun Qiang gasped, speaking in an almost disbelieving tone.

The Gongsun Clan of Shanyang is considered powerful, possessing tens of thousands of acres of fertile land. However, even so, the production of grain for a season does not reach fifty to sixty thousand dan! Moreover, the grain produced by a prominent family's fertile lands must be shared with tenant farmers and annual taxes must be paid per acre.

Additionally, there are also reserves for grain seeds and consumptions like insecticide powder.

From this, you can see what an astronomical figure fifty to sixty thousand dan of grain is. Even under normal circumstances, it would be extremely difficult to gather that much grain all at once, let alone under the current situation.

"I bought it from Qian's Merchant House through a friend's connection," Wang Shouzhe said, "Uncle, we should not delay any longer and set off to Jucui Manor first. The carriage will follow."

The carriages of the Gongsun Clan were specially reinforced for the transportation of minerals. The horses chosen to pull the carriages were robust and highly enduring heavy draught horses from the North. Each carriage was pulled by four to five of these horses, capable of carrying weights amounting to thousands to tens of thousands of jin.

Bought it through a friend's connection?

Gongsun Qiang's eyelids twitched uncontrollably, wondering where this kind of friend came from. Could he have one too? Filled with envy, jealousy, and a slight disbelief, he followed Wang Shouzhe to Jucui Manor.

Jucui Manor is one of Qian's properties, specially designated for the storage of various bulk goods. Many bulk goods range from tens to hundreds of thousands of dan; there is absolutely no need to transport these to Changning Weicheng.

As for the fear of being attacked and robbed, that's simply a joke.

Not to mention the considerable armed force within Jucui Manor, but also the reputation of the Qian clan in Longzuo; no one would dare to harbor evil thoughts.

After seeking a meeting through the doors of Jucui Manor, Qian Xuean, principal officer of Qian, came out with a gloomy face. He seemed unwilling to give Wang Shouzhe a pleasant look.

Then, he represented the Qian family in handling the transfer. Both parties re-drafted a contract, where the Qian family "repurchased" the contract of the insecticide powder from Wang Shouzhe.

The price was quite reasonable: ten thousand Qian gold in cash and sixty thousand dan of aged grain in stock. After repurchasing the original 5,000 bags of insecticide powder, the Qian family could sell them for at least 15,000 to 20,000 Qian gold, naturally, there would be no loss.

About such "disgraceful" matters, the shopkeeper of Qian's Changning Branch didn't want to show his face, so he entrusted everything to Qian Xuean. The invisible shopkeeper had obviously planned to shift all the blame for the mistakes onto Qian Xuean.

Therefore, Qian Xuean was so gloomy as to almost drip water during all the procedures. From beginning to end, he didn't want to say a word to Wang Shouzhe.

After all procedures were taken care of, he angrily handed Wang Shouzhe a large stack of gold notes and a road pass for sixty thousand dan of grain, then left with his sleeves flouncing.

Such fraudulent acting left Wang Shouzhe astounded. He couldn't help thinking that once Qian Xuean successfully ascended to the Spirit Platform Realm, he would undoubtedly become a prominent figure.

After everything was settled, Wang Shouzhe found Gongsun Qiang who was waiting outside, "Uncle, the procedures for obtaining sixty thousand dan of aged grain have been completed. Once your people arrive, we can start transporting the grain."

Gongsun Qiang's body trembled, his mouth agape in shock. It was real, the nephew had really "bought" a total of sixty thousand dan of grain. He was just astonishingly unbelievable.

Soon, Gongsun Qiang's twenty-carriage convoy slowly arrived, accompanied by eighty robust miners.

In the grain silos piled up like a mountain, the aged grain was packed in rice bags, with one bag weighing exactly one hundred jin or equivalent to one dan. However, those miners easily carried three to four bags at once and started to load the carriages.

"Uncle, how much can one carriage hold?" Wang Shouzhe, who had lived for two lifetimes, had never seen such an abundance of grain. Even though he had estimated in his mind, the volume and quantity still far exceeded his imagination.

"Load, just load, stack it up till a hundred dan, our carriages have been specially reinforced, and the North heavy draught horses are no vegetarians, they can pull it." Gongsun Qiang's eyes were also turning red. He had lived a lifetime and had never seen so much grain piled up together.

The powerful Gongsun Clan of Shanyang usually stores about twenty thousand dan of grain, which is enough to feed thousands of laborers for a year. The tenant farmers and miners of the Gongsun Clan in Shanyang, including their families, add up to at most several thousand people.

A hundred dan? That's ten thousand jin of grain...

Wang Shouzhe was slightly taken aback, somewhat beyond his expectation, this is indeed a mysterious magical world, not only do ordinary people have much greater strength, but even such northern heavy-type draft horses are so powerful. More so if they were spirit beast level war horses, they would be even more formidable.

The miners obviously were accustomed to heavy labor, every four people were assigned a wagon, and after six or seven rounds, the cart was loaded. One by one, the special ore-pulling wagons were overloaded with grains.

But even so, it was only about two thousand loads.

According to this mode, wouldn't they have to make thirty trips? Forget about it, they might as well take their time, after all, they didn't expect to transport this batch of grain in a short time.

Fortunately, at this time, Qian Xuean appeared again. Still with a cold face, he said, "Our Qian's business prioritizes reputation, and we will never embarrass our customers. You can rent our heavy-duty cargo wagons, twenty copper coins a day for the wagon, the driver's salary, and feed for the heavy-duty draft horses is included. You have to take care of the loading and unloading."

Obviously, Qian Xuean bravely decided to join in for assistance.

However, Gongsun Qiang, who was standing by, almost spat out old blood. Although the price offered by the other party was reasonable, it also undermined his hard work, didn't it?

Originally, Gongsun Qiang wanted to take this opportunity to help and with a thick face ask his older nephew Christian to give him some grain.

"In that case, thank you, Middleman Qian," said Wang Shouzhe happily, "we will rent another thirty wagons."

The number of wagons owned by the Qian merchant group far exceeded that of the Gongsun clan, and their business spread across Longzuo, therefore, the load of their wagons was naturally extremely high, not inferior to the wagons of the Gongsun clan by any means.

After fifty wagons were fully loaded, they drove out of Jucui Manor one after another.

Jucui Manor is only ten miles away from the Changning ferry crossing. Under normal circumstances, the wagon should be able to arrive in less than two hours. However, the Changning ferry crossing was crowded and Wang Shouzhe didn't want to make a big noise just yet, in case something unexpected would happen.

After the wagons passed the three-way junction, they took the road to Shanyang, but after two or three miles, it turned in the direction of Peace River and arrived at a dense forest entrance. From here, the wagons could no longer enter.

However, just a hundred steps or so into the dense forest, there was a vertical cliff five or six zhang high, and there was a natural water bay twenty or thirty zhang wide under the cliff.

By this time, Sixth Uncle Wang Dinghai had already received notice from the head of household and had led his team to wait here with the boats, including fishing boats and ferries, basically, all the usable boats from home were brought here.

This kind of transportation is laborious but very covert.

From the wagons to the dense forest, then to the cliff and onto the boat, it requires about two hundred and fifty steps. Wang Shouzhe let the miners and the head of household all stand in position, every three steps one person, passing the grain in a relay manner.

After everyone adapted a little, they realized the benefits of this simple manual transportation line - it was steady, orderly and efficiency gradually increased. The speed of loading the boats could reach one load in one or two breaths, while also greatly saving the time and physical strength of running back and forth.

In just over two hours, all the grain from the fifty wagons was unloaded remarkably. Afterwards, the wagon team returned to Jucui Manor to fetch the next batch. While Wang Shouzhe followed the boats across the Peace River all the way to the Fenggu Sluice.

There were even more people at Fenggu Farm, with a total of two hundred tenant farming households. Providing one hundred and fifty strong laborers was a piece of cake. Using the same method, the grain was transported across the Fenggu Sluice and temporarily stored in Fenggu Farm.

The boats on the inland river were not enough, there were only about five or six of them, and they had to slowly transport on this last line.

The successful opening of the difficult transportation line allowed Wang Shouzhe to relax, while also making him greatly dissatisfied with his own transportation line.

The first thing was the excessive dependence on public ferry crossings and the lack of privately constructed secretive small docks.

The next was the inconvenience from Peace River to the inland rivers as the water levels on both sides were inconsistent. The single sluice gate couldn't be opened at will for a long time otherwise it would cause flooding. About this point, he must figure out a way to construct a ship lock that will allow ships to pass.

Furthermore, the family was noticeably lacking in shipping and wagon transportation. Maybe with the current scale of the Wang family, this shortcoming was not very obvious, but as the family continues to grow and expand, this shortcoming would seriously impede the family's development.

It appears that establishing a complete transportation channel of their own is an urgent matter.

Chapter 36 Family Cohesion\_1

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However, these are systemic major projects, which will definitely not be completed overnight. Even if one is anxious, it cannot be rushed. Wang Shouzhe simply boarded a relatively larger ship on Peace River, stepped on the tall rice bags, and went all the way through the waterway of Fenggu Farm back to the Wang family's main residence.

The ships on Peace River are all very small. The largest ship is only about eighteen meters long, just carrying five hundred bundles of grain has reached its limit, its loading capacity is far less than the river ship. Moreover, it is not wind and sail powered, only relying on the boatman's paddling and punting to move.

Luckily, the water flow of Peace River is stable. With the help of paddling and punting, the ships can just manage to move. It's just that the winding and twisted riverway of twenty miles has taken more than an hour to travel. Converted to Earth's speed, it's just over two kilometers per hour.

The fleet passed through the river's horn mouth and entered Zhuwei Lake.

On the not very wide Zhuwei Lake, the house complexes of the Wang's main residence under the steep mountain wall can already be seen. But Wang Shouzhe wasn't in a hurry to go back. Instead, he continued to observe the topography of Zhuwei Lake on the ship.

The lake is slightly elliptical, about six to seven miles long and four to five miles wide, totaling over 10,000 Mu in water area. The lake is clean and beautiful, surrounded by mudflats and reed ponds, making the scenery naturally beautiful.

Perhaps the "natives" would find it desolate, but Wang Shouzhe, who was used to big cities and traces of human everywhere, found this pristine scenery particularly pleasing, and as a result, his mood was much better.

If such a large water area is used to raise spirit fish, it would be excellent, Wang Shouzhe pondered silently.

However, Zhuwei Lake also has a major disadvantage, the lake is too shallow, generally less than three meters deep, and there is too much silt accumulated at the bottom. Not to mention raising spirit fish, even the farming of ordinary large fish deems the water level too low.

Also, in this mysterious magical world, the large-scale farming of fish is not mainstream. At most, it is to throw some small fish into the pond after catching them and let them grow freely.

The reason for this is firstly, there are a lot of fish in the wild, even with crude fishing techniques, there will always be a good catch as long as one goes fishing. Secondly, due to the limitations of fishing technology, it is difficult to invest funds and manpower for farming in the vast lake, it's better to do wild fishing in the resource-rich Peace River.

Take Sixth Uncle Wang Dinghai for example. It took twenty weavers two months to hardly weave a small trawl net... you can imagine the difficulty of large-scale surround fishing in the lake.

The biggest difficulty of fish farming lies in the management of water quality, density, disease, scientific feeding, and other technologies. If not careful enough, fish can die in large numbers, leading to a total loss of capital.

However, there are countless Profound Martial families in this vast world, and naturally, some families have achieved some results in fish farming. Just like the Lu Clan of Yingxiu, they have mastered some fish farming techniques and have developed an industry.

The Profound Martial families, however, cherish their production techniques very deeply and make great efforts to keep them secret. In some core industries, even the women of the family are not allowed to participate, for fear that they will spread the technology when they get married.

Even with Wang Shouzhe's relationship with the Lu family, it is impossible to get their fish farming technology.

The tight guard over each family's technology also results in the overall backwardness of production technology in the entire Profound Martial world. Although the patent technology strategy on Earth has many complaints, it has indeed caused a technology storm, with various scientific inventions flourishing in a short time.

Having said that, Wang Shouzhe felt that it was better for the Profound Martial world not to flourish, as his biggest advantage now was that he was "experienced", having a "forward-looking" vision more than this world.

He has a vague understanding of many technologies, but he knows that there is such a thing and generally the direction. For example, the well-known Monosodium Glutamate (MSG), this wonderful product which changed the human taste system.

If you let Wang Shouzhe do it, he wouldn't be able to do it in ten to eight years.

But if a group of clever people were asked to specifically study this area and carry out similar research, because the direction is relatively clear, they could probably do it in twenty to thirty years if they were lucky.

If the luck wasn't so good, as long as the related technology continues to accumulate, surely it could be done in a hundred years, right?

There are also spinning and weaving equipment, such as the famous must-have for transmigrators - the "Jenny Loom". Even if Wang Shouzhe is beaten to death, he couldn't draw the blueprint. But he also knows that there is such a thing and roughly some vague directions of the principle. If a group of craftsmen were asked to slowly work on it, one day it could be figured out.

If this thing comes out, it will absolutely be more powerful than Wang Luo Jing, the "Insect Master".

Of course, all these are just speculations. Without the strength to sustain the family, promoting these things would be a clear invitation to the path of self-destruction. Take for instance the Changning's Xu Family, whose main business is the textile industry.

They will certainly turn against the Wang Family the minute the "Jenny Loom" comes into play, since it certainly destabilizes the fundamental survival of the Xu Family.

Leaving that aside for now.

The fleet where Wang Shouzhe is situated in, gradually picks speed across Zhuwei Lake. Within an hour, they reached the back yard dock of the Wang Family's main residence.

Although this dock and the waterway are not frequently used, most of the food and crop supplies from the farms pass through this route. Though slower, shipping by water carries more loads. Additionally, it means fewer carriages and horses which are way more expensive to maintain compared to humans.

The usually deserted dock at the backyard of the Wang Family's main residence was filled with bustling crowd. Leading the pack are two women, one of which happens to be Wang Shouzhe's wife, Gongsun Hui. Standing at a distance behind her is a young girl, Wang Luotong.

Following them are four heads of household, of whom, three are female. It's worth noting that out of the nine heads of household in Wang family, three are females.

When the ship was about to dock, with the distance of about twenty odd feet, Wang Shouzhe leaped into the air, flew over the crowd like a big bird and landed on the dock merely within two breath spans.

This is Wang Shouzhe's current ability to fly. While completely superior to any long jump or high jump champion on Earth, it's nothing compared to the mythical martial arts practitioners who can fly in the sky and shatter mountains with a single punch.

"Madam, why did you come back? Don't you want to spend more time with your maternal grandfather at your mother's place?" Wang Shouzhe saluted the Gongsun hui.

"Earlier, you had asked my brother, Gongsun Qiang, to help you with some tasks in your letter and I asked Wang Zhong for details. I found out that someone is needed to assist you in managing the main family residence," Gongsun Hui responded. "Although I don't know the exact details, I thought that I should return to the family and help out as soon as possible.

As per your letter, only part of the backyard warehouse has been emptied out so far."

"Thank you for your hard work, madam. For now, part of it is sufficient," Wang Shouzhe saluted again, feeling a warmth and gratitude in his heart. Madame Gongsun Hui had always been on the side of the Wang Family, helping him manage it to the best of her abilities.

"Fourth Brother." Wang Luotong saluted Wang Shouzhe. Her eyes were filled with excitement. After all, her fourth elder brother had entrusted her with some tasks in his letter.

What did that represent? It indicated that her fourth elder brother held her in high regard. She, too, wanted to, like her younger sister Wang Luo Jing, devote her heart and mind to the family and her fourth brother.

"Luotong, you've worked hard. Huh, you've broken through to the third level of the Vital Energy Refining Realm?" Wang Shouzhe squinted, and through the Observation Technique, he noticed that Wang Luotong's aura was much more powerful than before, and she was having difficulty controlling the overflow of her aura. "Congratulations!"

"Thanks to you, Fourth Brother," Wang Luotong replied, her cheeks lightly flushed with joy. "If it was not because of you who had the family treasury send me a Cultivation Pill, I couldn't have made the breakthrough so quickly."

"That's because you've been working hard; you've been honing your skills at the peak of the second level of the Vital Energy Refining Realm for a while," Wang Shouzhe said appreciatively. "Keep it up and set an example for your younger siblings and juniors."

Having known her situation, of course, he wouldn't sit by and watch her slowly grinding at the peak of the second level of the Vital Energy Refining Realm. Hence, before he left, he had a Cultivation Pill sent to Wang Luotong from the family treasury.

She did manage to put in effort and make an immediate breakthrough. At least it's much better than that little rabbit Wang Zongwei, who is still struggling at the high segment of level two Vital Energy Refining Realm even at the age of twenty.

"Yes, Fourth Brother, I will definitely do my best," replied Wang Luotong, her smile radiant and nodding vigorously. To her, gaining her fourth elder brother's recognition was a joyful event.

While the crowd was conversing, the grain ships docked one after another.

Madam Gongsun Hui directed the heads of household, servants, and slaves in transporting the grain to the empty rooms. Wang Luotong joined in as well, teaming up with the other female heads of household in doing the majority of the grain transportation.

Having broken through to the third level of the Qi Refinement Realm, her strength and stamina were far superior to those of ordinary servants and slaves. She was able to carry four to five bags of rice at a time, and still maintain a brisk pace. Although Madam Gongsun Hui initially wanted to stop her, she was deterred by Wang Shouzhe's signal.

If Luotong wanted to contribute to the family in this way, then she should be allowed to do it.

Since even the fourth young mistress of the family had participated in the transportation of the grain, sweat dripping from her, the other heads of household, servants, and slaves put in more effort. They worked diligently without any sign of fatigue, demonstrating morale and teamwork.

The unity and loyalty of a family is built up bit by bit like this.

Chapter 37: Mother and Son Heart-to-Heart\_1

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Of course, Wang Shouzhe and Gongsun Hui could not participate without discretion, otherwise it would instill fear and unease instead of boosting the morale of the household staff and servants.

With the logistic channel foundation in place, Wang Shouzhe was no longer involved in it. Such a large quantity of food transport wasn't something to be accomplished in a short while.

This wasn't some game world where a mouse click completes the food transportation mission.

Moreover, as a clan leader, he should focus on the bigger picture. If he were to get hands-on with everything, from beginning to end, then what use would the clan members and the household staff be?

Even Gongsun Hui, the lady of the house, was asked to leave. Wang Luotong, a female member of the family, was put in charge of the final stretch of the transportation line. The girls in the family also needed to shoulder responsibilities.

As he walked and chatted with Gongsun Hui, they passed through the large backyard garden and entered the rear courtyard of the Wang Family's main residence, slowly making their way to the Young Clan Leader's courts where he grew up.

The personal attendant, Wang Gui, leading two servants in tidying up the courtyard, immediately stepped forward to perform a salute when he saw Wang Shouzhe and Gongsun Hui, "Respects to the Family Head and the Madam."

Wang Gui served Wang Shouzhe. He hailed from the collateral line of the Wang family and had a clear background. Most importantly, he was a promising youth with Class C talent, a rarity among the collateral line.

Despite being a mere personal attendant, serving the Young Clan Leader from a young age, he was destined to become Wang Shouzhe's confidant. Once he was established, and gave birth to offspring with quality bloodline, he would have the opportunity to be reclassified into the main family line, and his name would be added to the family records.

"Wang Gui, this is a Shanyang Spirit Seed, brew a pot of its tea for Madam and me." Wang Shouzhe passed the spiritual tea he brought back to Wang Gui.

"Spiritual Tea?" Wang Gui, who has been with Wang Shouzhe for ten years, looked dazed, having only seen spiritual tea once or twice before.

"Zhe Er, absolutely not. This is for you alone, given by your maternal grandfather," Gongsun Hui immediately declined. "These are the crucial years for your growth, you should try your best to reach the Level Eight or even Level Nine of the Vital Energy Refining Realm. That would be more in line with your strength as a Clan Leader!"

"Madam, please don't refuse. Weren't you curious where we got this batch of old grain from? Let's have some spiritual tea, and I'll tell you everything." Wang Shouzhe invited unwaveringly, and scolded Wang Gui, "Why are you still shocked? Go and brew the tea."

"Yes, of course." Wang Gui shivered and quickly left.

With her son so determined, Gongsun Hui had no good reasons to refuse. They sat opposite each other at a square table in the side hall of his courtyard. Before long, Wang Gui served a pot of spiritual tea along with some fruits and snacks, then bowed his head and withdrew.

"Zhe Er, this courtyard of yours no longer suits your status as a Clan Leader." Gongsun Hui looked around and said, "Wait till I complete my year of mourning, I'll move out of the main yard and make room for you. This way it will be convenient for you to bring Miss Liu home."

"Madam, there's no need." Wang Shouzhe casually smiled and poured a cup of tea for both of them. "I like this courtyard, and I'm used to living here. You just live here comfortably with Sister Luomei, and don't cause any unnecessary fuss."

"How can you call it a fuss? You are now the family head and should live in the main residence," said Gongsun Hui. "Plus, just because you are comfortable here doesn't mean Miss Liu will be. Once she joins the Wang family, I have to hand over the household accounts and finances to her, this is the rule in prominent families."

Wang Shouzhe shook his head, "She's marrying in as your daughter-in-law, how could she suddenly take charge? Let's not talk about that now. Madam, have a cup of tea first. I'll tell you what happened on this trip in detail. There are many things that I need to discuss with you."

For Wang Shouzhe, Madam Gongsun Hui was mature and steady, and because of her status, she held great prestige within the family. Even the elders' prestige was not as high as hers.

If the family could be revitalized by daily cultivation, he wouldn't mind doing so. However, his vision and goals far exceeded those of the clan elders. As a young Clan Leader, if he wanted to implement broad reforms in the family, he would inevitably face resistance from the conservatives.

And Madam Gongsun Hui, as his strongest and most steadfast ally, was the legitimate daughter of the Gongsun Clan of Shanyang!

Gongsun Hui took a sip of the spiritual tea as instructed, her eyes filled with curiosity. Ever since her legitimate son took charge of the family affairs, he had matured rapidly and utilized strategies that even she couldn't comprehend.

After a brief pause, Wang Shouzhe explained how he had procured a large sum of funds and food supplies from the Qian family's business. Of course, he kept his secret alliance with Qian Xuean undisclosed.

Gongsun Hui's mouth opened wide in shock, her eyes gradually bulging in disbelief. This was simply too incredible, too audacious. Relying on early information about the outbreak of locust plagues, he had boldly manipulated the Qian family with such compelling force.

This strategy was something Gongsun Hui couldn't have thought of. And she was still frightened, after all, Shouzhe had pledged 4200 Qian Gold with the family's reputation as collateral! If his prediction failed, he would become the most extravagant spender in the history of the Ping'an Wang family!

Even though everything was successful, Gongsun Hui was still trembling, unable to calm herself. It was truly audacious!

"Please do not blame me, mother, for not consulting with you in advance.

The timing of this matter was fleeting and it would have taken too long for the family to deliberate," Wang Shouzhe calmly said as he drank his tea, "This funding can be entered into the family accounts, but for the several elders within the family, we simply announce that it was borrowed from the Gongsun clan of Shanyang and the Lu Clan of Yingxiu.

This is to prevent the elders from being unable to digest such news and causing a fuss."

"I understand." Gongsun Hui took two more sips of the spiritual tea to calm her nerves and eliminate her distracting thoughts. She finally understood why her legitimate son wanted her to hear the news while drinking spiritual tea. The impact of the news was too great, and he was afraid she wouldn't be able to handle it.

Settling her mind, Gongsun Hui slowly said, "The reason Zhe Er invited me to drink spiritual tea couldn't be just to deliver the news, right?"

"Hehe, Mother, your insight is sharp, Zhe Er's little tricks could not be hidden from you." Wang Shouzhe laughed, "Just looking at the family's system, there are some defects, especially in terms of ranking by bloodline, talent, and gender etcetera, without any competitive mechanism, and overindulgence in nurturing the younger generation."

Gongsun Hui frowned slightly, "You're referring to the Zongwei child, aren't you? I've heard about his affair, and now he's been brought back by Shouyi's men. I heard that Shouxin was so furious

after hearing that he rushed back from Silkworm Manor and almost broke Wang Zongwei's legs. I heard he is still locked up in the firewood room."

"Mother, what is your opinion on this?" Wang Shouzhe asked casually as he drank his tea.

Gongsun Hui pondered for a moment, "That child indeed messed things up bad, and as a clan leader and elder, openly reprimanding him is necessary. However, you must also consider the feelings of the Second Grand Elder and Uncle Dingchuan, as well as your elder brother Shouxin. After all, they have painstakingly managed the family for years.

It's not possible to transfer all his resources and privileges to Luotong forever, right?"

"You see, Mother, this is why Zhe Er invited you for tea and consultation. Even you think in this manner, let alone others," Wang Shouzhe said with a confident smile.

"Are you really going to strip Wang Zongwei of his resources forever?" Gongsun Hui asked in surprise, "Wouldn't you damage the relationship with your elder brother Shouxin then?"

"I can't say forever, but if he wants to take back what is his, no one can decide, me included," Wang Shouzhe replied calmly.

Gongsun Hui was taken aback, "If even you can't make the decision, then who can?"

Just when he was about to answer, a female voice from outside the door interrupted, "Fourth Uncle, is Uncle Shouzhe home?"

Gongsun Hui's expression changed slightly, "That's Wang Zongwei's mother, Mrs. Xu. Born into the Xu family of Changning, she has always been arrogant and difficult to deal with. Shouzhe, you need to be careful."

Wang Shouzhe laughed confidently, "Mother, you joke too much. Mrs. Xu is like a sister to me. After all, we are a family, what's there to talk about dealing with?"

Immediately, he went to greet her at the door. With a radiant smile on his face, he bowed and said, "Sister-in-law, you should have informed me in advance of your visit, so I could have come out to greet you."

Watching his seamless change of demeanor left even Gongsun Hui somewhat stunned. This legitimate child of hers was truly something. Comparing him to her brother Gongsun Qiang, and even her late husband Wang Dingyue, they both paled in comparison to him.

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Chapter 38: What Sorcery has the Fourth Brother Used?

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Standing before Wang Shouzhe was a middle-aged woman dressed with meticulous care. Her hair was adorned with a pearl hairpin, her wrist donned a jade bracelet, her feet in high-stepping cloud boots, and her body draped with an opulent multi-colored cloud-patterned silk dress, making her appear like a noblewoman from the city.

Furthermore, she had taken great pains with her makeup before her arrival, her face painted and lips lightly tinted crimson. She didn't look like someone in her forties at all, but rather like a mature beauty in her late twenties, a testament to her regular self-care. And her brother-in-law Wang Shouxin must dote on her quite a bit, spoiling her for sure.

It was just that her eyes were somewhat red, clearly having cried not long ago.

What was extremely rare was that she was also carrying a large bamboo basket, covered with a red cloth on top.

Upon seeing Wang Shouzhe's polite demeanor, Xu Family's initial tension and hostility in her heart dissolved somewhat, and she immediately returned the gesture with due reverence, "Xu Family pays respects to Fourth Uncle."

"Sister-in-law, you are too kind." Wang Shouzhe smiled sincerely, "Please come in, sister-in-law, come in and rest in the side hall, my mother is also present." Saying so, he cordially guided Xu Family into the side hall.

Xu Family's expression tightened as she saw Gongsun Hui and quickly paid her respects, "Xu Family pays respects to Elder Madam Hui." She always carried herself with pride, being from the direct line of the Changning Xu Family, she had married Wang Shouxin with the mindset of marrying below her.

But proud as she might be, she dared not put on airs in front of the direct daughter of the Shanyang Gongsun Clan.

Moreover, the Gongsun Clan was the wife of the First Clan Leader and the father's first wife of the current Clan Leader, her elder!

"Oh, it's Shouxin's wife who has come. What wind has blown you here?" Gongsun Hui's words carried a hint of pressure, but she said with a smiling face, "Come, come, have a seat and talk, just in time to taste the Spirit seed from my father-in-law's personal cultivation."

She took on the tone of an elder, and with "Shouxin's wife", she directly emphasized Xu Family's status as Wang Shouxin's spouse, clearly as a warning.

"No, no, no, I wouldn't dare to sit in front of Elder Madam Hui," Xu Family said with an awkward smile. She had not expected Madam Gongsun to be present, otherwise, she would not have dared to seek out Wang Shouzhe at this time.

And the tea they were drinking, just by hearing it was Spiritual Tea from Spirit seeds, was something she could not afford to drink given her position in the Changning Xu Family. Not to mention after marrying Wang Shouxin... it was even less likely.

"Fourth Uncle, you are the pillar of the family," Xu Family showed a slightly ingratiating smile and handed over the basket she was carrying, "Sister-in-law sees you working so hard in your cultivation, and brought you some fresh ingredients to replenish your body. I won't disturb your conversation with your mother now..."

Having said that, she set down the basket and prepared to leave.

"Sister-in-law, hold on," Wang Shouzhe smiled and stopped her, "It's not often you come to my place, have a cup of tea before you go. Besides, I haven't seen my brother Shouxin for a long time. I heard he has just gone back to the Main Residence. I will send someone to invite him over, and we can have a meal and chat together."

"This..." Xu Family was quite flattered, yet looked toward Gongsun Hui apprehensively.

"Shouzhe is the Head of the Wang family, if he asks you to sit, you sit down," Gongsun Hui's attitude softened somewhat.

Xu Family then sat down awkwardly. Though she was dressed lavishly, she displayed none of the distinguished air in front of the modestly dressed Gongsun Hui.

Wang Shouzhe called in Wang Gui and instructed, "Tell the head chef to cook up a big chunk of pork sent over by Grand Elder, but not to stew the meat too soft. Moreover, find a skilled kitchen maid to set up a small stove in our courtyard, slice two pounds of Spirit Horned Yak meat. Mm, and bring that jar of Spiritual Wine too. As for the fresh fruit and vegetables, you see to it."

"Yes, Family Head. Oh, and Sixth Uncle has sent a Fresh Red-Scaled Eel to the family ice cellar, even the most precious Spirit Eel Blood has been processed into blood tofu, saying that it is a catch personally made by the Family Head and belongs to your private stock, meant for your consumption alone," Wang Gui reminded on the side.

"Heh, never mind that," Wang Shouzhe laughed, "Take the best segment of the Red-Scaled Eel, and bring the blood tofu as well. The rest should be deposited into the public stock, distributed as needed, let everyone have a taste of the fresh catch. Once you've arranged everything, go invite my brother Shouxin over."

"Yes, Family Head," Wang Gui complied and left.

"Fourth Uncle, this is too generous... and it must have cost you dearly," Xu Family's body trembled as she spoke meekly, "Keep it simple, a little simpler."

"What are you saying, sister-in-law? Wang Shouxin is my brother, you are my sister-in-law. When our family gathers for a meal, how can we be casual?" Wang Shouzhe personally took a tea cup, poured a cup of Spiritual Tea for Xu Family, "Please taste this Spirit seed from Shanyang, drink it while it's hot for the best effect."

Madam Xu sipped the tea, trembling slightly. The bitterness and unique flavor of the Spiritual Tea flooded her senses, and suddenly, she felt an urge to cry.

She had been a maiden in the Xu Family of Changning for nineteen years and married into the Ping'an Wang Family for twenty-one years, yet never had the fortune to taste a cup of Spiritual Tea. That the first cup of Spiritual Tea in her life was offered by Wang Shouzhe was beyond her expectations.

Originally, she came here prepared to plead with him. If it was utterly impossible, she was ready to create a scandal and curse in the street to stir up a commotion and alarm all the clan members.

For the sake of her son, she had cast aside all her concerns and was willing to shed all her pride.

Yet, she had never anticipated that Wang Shouzhe, esteemed as a direct line of the family and a Clan Leader, would treat her with such respect, kindly hosting her, his elder sister-in-law.

"Fourth Uncle, that, that matter..." In that instant, Madam Xu found herself at a loss for words. Wang Shouzhe's friendly manner towards her and her husband made her hopeful that the situation might take a favorable turn.

"Elder sister-in-law, you're referring to Zongwei's matter, aren't you?" Wang Shouzhe had no intention of avoiding the subject. Instead, he smiled and said, "I've already considered the issue. Let's wait for Big Brother to arrive, and we can discuss while we chat. For now, elder sister-in-law, please have some snacks to fill your stomach."

"Yes." Madam Xu quickly swallowed her words, seeing Wang Shouzhe's attitude which did not seem to be holding onto the issue, yet she still felt some unease in her heart.

Not much later, the family cook arrived. After paying her respects to Wang Shouzhe, she was about to start a fire in the small kitchen in the yard when Wang Shouzhe stopped her, "No need to fuss too much, just prepare the fresh ingredients by thinly slicing the Spirit Yak meat and Red-scaled Eel into thin slices for plating, the thinner, the better.

Also, prepare a brazier with high-quality charcoal, another clean copper basin with clear water, and some salt."

Although the cook was perplexed, she dared not disobey the Family Head's command and went about the task as instructed.

"Zhe Er, what are you up to?" Gongsun Hui asked curiously. "Why are you lighting a brazier in this scorching heat?"

"You will know soon, Elder Madam," said Wang Shouzhe with a smile. "It is a cooking method I saw in ancient texts, quite innovative and very delicious."

"You, I can never figure you out, just don't waste precious Spirit Food," Gongsun Hui curbed her curiosity and began to tenderly comfort Madam Xu. She was very surprised at how Wang Shouzhe handled the matter concerning Wang Zongwei, at least he had not resorted to bullying tactics under the Clan Leader's authority.

However, knowing Madam Xu, she likely wouldn't give up just like that. Therefore, Gongsun Hui was all the more curious about how her son would handle what was to come.

A while later, Wang Shouxin rushed over led by Wang Gui. As soon as he entered the room, his face turned cold with anger, and he scolded Madam Xu, "You ignorant woman, how dare you, how dare you come looking for Shouzhe..."

At forty-three this year, Wang Shouxin had a square-shaped face and a beard; he looked dignified and commanding even without showing anger.

Unexpectedly, Madam Xu was not intimidated at all, her anger, previously suppressed by Wang Shouzhe and Gongsun Hui, suddenly erupted, "Wang Shouxin! What nonsense are you spouting? Zongwei is in such a state, how could I not come to ask your brother for leniency? Zongwei is my son, should I just watch him get beaten to death by you?

Or should I stand by as his future is stolen by that compensa... by Wang Luotong?"

Normally, the word 'loss' would have already slipped out. But in front of Wang Shouzhe and Gongsun Hui, she dared not utter such words, and swallowed them back in her urgency.

"You, you, you... Shouzhe is the Clan Leader, and besides, that little brute deserved to be beaten, to be punished." Wang Shouxin bellowed with a red face, "If it wasn't for your coddling him... I would have..."

But this tactic clearly could not subdue Madam Xu.

"Elder sister-in-law, Big Brother." To prevent their argument from escalating, Wang Shouzhe immediately raised his hand to intervene, "We are all family, what does it look like to argue like this? Let's sit down and eat first, and talk things over slowly."

"Yes, Uncle." Madam Xu immediately put on a docile demeanor, sitting down obediently, then gently said, "I'll listen to Uncle, we're all family, no fighting, let's talk reasonably."

"Sss!"

Taken aback, Wang Shouxin gasped, his mind filled with doubt and wonder. Had his younger brother used some sort of technique? He had never seen Madam Xu be so compliant and rational, instantly suppressing her fiery temper and even starting to talk sense?

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Chapter 39: I'll listen to you, Fourth Uncle\_1

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"Eldest Brother, please have a seat." Wang Shouzhe rose to his feet and extended a hand in invitation.

"Fourth Brother." Wang Shouxin's face, weathered by time, held a complex mixture of emotions, the most prominent of which was embarrassment. He paused as if wanting to say something, but ultimately decided against it before taking a seat.

"It's a rare occasion to feast together with my elder brother and sister-in-law." Wang Shouzhe cordially beckoned. "Let's all give the clear water hot pot a try."

The top-grade solid carbon fire basin with copper pot was boiling water, in which salt, cooking wine, and ginger had been added to remove the smell of meat. Slices of Spirit Horned Yak meat, so thin they were almost translucent, were dropped into the water, and they were cooked within seconds.

"This?"

Everyone hesitated, wondering if such a rudimentary method of cooking would yield something delicious and not ruin the precious Spirit Food.

However, when they put a slice of the tender meat in their mouths, they were thrilled by its fresh and succulent taste, and a warm surge of vital energy spread throughout their bodies from their bellies.

"The best ingredients should be cooked in the simplest of ways," Wang Shouzhe filled their cups with Spiritual Wine and leisurely said, "Only in this way can one taste the original flavor of the food. Eldest Brother, you started working at Silkworm Manor at the age of eighteen. In a blink of an eye, twenty-five years have passed. This is to honor your many years of dedicated efforts for our family.

Here's a toast to you."

Enjoying Spirit Meat with Spiritual Wine was a rare indulgence for Wang Shouxin, even at his age of forty-three. Especially moved by Wang Shouzhe's words, a warmth welled up in his heart, making him hurriedly raise his cup in reply, "It's my duty to do so, it always has been."

After they had downed their drinks, Wang Shouzhe turned to Mr.s Xu and solemnly offered a toast, "Sister-in-law, you've been with our Wang family for twenty-one years and have given the eighth generation of our Ping'an Wang Family two sons and two daughters. Your hard work and high merit are indeed great contributions to our family. This is a toast to you."

Upon hearing this, Mrs. Xu's heart stirred. Yes, who could understand her hardships? Besides Shouzhe, no one had ever praised her so eloquently. Raising her cup, she responded with slight choking, "Thank you, Fourth Uncle, for sympathizing with me."

This Spiritual Wine was truly sweet and restorative, making her feel as if she was floating.

"Mother, you married my father in your prime, not only do you manage our household, but you also treat my siblings and me as if we were your own, always taking care of us with all sincerity." Wang Shouzhe then offered a third toast, "I'll forever remember your kindness and benevolence in my heart."

Gongsun Hui paused, his nose twitched faintly, and he glared with moist eyes, "Luo Yi is my biological daughter, you're my biological son. I'm supposed to take care of both of you. Why bring it up for no reason?"

Despite his words, she drank the Spiritual Wine with joy. Shouzhe's gratefulness validated that her hard work over the years was not in vain.

As the conversation continued, everyone gradually opened up. After three rounds of drinking, the jug of Spiritual Wine was almost emptied. The Spiritual Wine, renowned for its intoxicating qualities, had already left everyone slightly tipsy.

"Fourth Uncle," Mrs. Xu gathered her courage, "I do recognize that Zongwei deserves punishment, but could you find it in your heart to spare him this time for the sake of your brother and sister-in-law? Rest assured, I will educate him properly after we return."

Upon hearing this, even Wang Shouxin stopped drinking, his eyes glinting in expectation. Even though he wished nothing more than to beat that miscreant to death, the kid was still his son, after all.

What parent doesn't wish for their child to excel?

"Sister-in-law, Brother, we're all family," Wang Shouzhe put down his cup and said seriously, "Zongwei is my nephew and represents the future hope of our younger generation in the Ping'an Wang Family. You both want your son to excel, would I, as his uncle, wish anything less than the same for my nephew?"

"Yes indeed, Fourth Uncle, you're right." Mrs. Xu agreed with a beaming smile, "Whatever discipline method you suggest, we'll follow."

"It's quite simple. From now on, in our family, the young ones under thirty will be judged on their character and accomplishments," Wang Shouzhe explained his ultimate goal, "I will implement a ranking system with first, second, and so on, sequence categories, totaling five in all. Each rank will enjoy different familial stipends and resources.

I will establish clear standards for assessment once a year."

"What?"

Even Gongsun Hui was taken aback at this.

It's true that the family would rank the younger generation, but it was usually based on factors like bloodline, potential, and age, and once set, it would not change.

"Moreover, I'm going to introduce a comprehensive merit system to the entire family.

As long as one contributes to the family, they can constantly earn Contribution Points, with which they can exchange for various cultivation resources from the family, even including Spiritual Tea, Spiritual Wine, Cultivation Techniques, and many other items found in the family treasure house," Wang Shouzhe explained seriously, "As long as you are capable, you can obtain more cultivation resources."

Wang Shouzhe's method, after all, originates from narratives in novels and games. It prevents a situation where all family members have an equal share regardless of their effort or merit. Though many family members currently bear their burdens willingly, this is not a sustainable plan in the long run.

After all, when everyone is poor, they are equally committed to working hard. However, once the family becomes wealthy, people's attitudes will change.

"But, but this..." Madam Xu stuttered, "What does this have to do with Wang Zongwei's situation?"

"Dear sister-in-law, you do not understand," Wang Shouzhe said, "Zongwei may not have outstanding talent, but he surely doesn't lack it, right? Why is it that he is already twenty years old but still only at Level Two in the Advanced Vital Energy Refining Realm, falling behind his younger siblings?"

It is because he was spoiled from a young age, with attention from his grand uncles, elder uncles, and even from you and his elder brother. This environment has caused him to lose his competitive spirit, unwilling to endure hardship, which gradually led to various bad habits."

"Can, can Zongwei still be redeemed?" Madam Xu asked weakly. Truth be told, she was extremely disappointed with her son's behavior. But no matter how disappointed she was, he was still her son.

"Yes!" Wang Shouzhe answered seriously, "That would mean depriving him of all resources, forcing him to rely on himself to fight for cultivation resources. He will understand the meaning of humility and then strive harder. Depending on his own efforts to grow and progress, he will mature."

"Fourth Brother is correct." Wang Shouxin slapped the table, seemingly in complete agreement, "That kid has been spoiled too much. How could he grow without experiencing any hardships?"

"But if Zongwei doesn't put in any effort..." Madam Xu hesitated, "Won't he miss the best time for cultivation?"

"Hehe, if he still doesn't want to work hard under such conditions," Wang Shouzhe scoffed, "Do you still expect him to achieve anything meaningful in his life? Don't worry, even if the Wang Family is not wealthy, we can still afford to raise a parasite. Sister-in-law, you don't just have one son, right?"

I think Wang Zongchang is quite good, he's already at Level Two in the Vital Energy Refining Realm at the age of thirteen. If his potential can be properly nurtured, he will undoubtedly become the pillar of our Wang family in the future."

Upon mentioning Wang Zongchang, both Madam Xu and Wang Shouxin revealed a look of gratification. Regardless of what had happened, their younger son was indeed quite promising, much better than his elder brother.

"Shouzhe, you're right." Wang Shouxin exclaimed as if he had finally made up his mind, "We will give that kid one last chance. If he still doesn't improve, let him fend for himself. As for me, I'll just pretend I never had such a son."

Just when Madam Xu was about to say something out of her anxiousness, Wang Shouzhe reassured her: "Sister-in-law, don't be too worried. Will my elder brother and I harm Zongwei? If he still doesn't improve, I will arrange it myself. There is no way we will not be able to handle that kid."

At these words, Madam Xu's heart calmed down. She thanked Wang Shouzhe gratefully: "Fourth Uncle, we will do as you say." Unconsciously, her gaze at Wang Shouzhe was filled with more respect and trust.

After the matter was settled, they ceased the discussion. Wang Shouzhe and Wang Shouxin, the two brothers, continued to banter and drink their spiritual wine, cherishing their brotherhood.

The banquet was over. Wang Shouxin, slightly drunk, was assisted home by Madam Xu.

Gongsun Hui, who witnessed all of this, looked at Wang Shouzhe with both relief and emotion. If the situation with Zongwei was not handled well, it could have caused a rift between the brothers.

However, not only did he handle it exceptionally well, but he also successfully united Madam Xu and Wang Shouxin. Consider this, even Wang Zongwei, considered the least promising in the family, was expected to earn his keep. How could anyone else still have reasons to object?

"Mother, concerning the establishment of the family merit point system, you will have to take on the task of keeping records and managing them," Wang Shouzhe suggested, believing Gongsun Hui was the best candidate for this task.

Later, they proceeded to discuss the merit point system in detail.

Meanwhile...

Under Madam Xu's support, Wang Shouxin had also returned home. Madam Xu, slightly tipsy and blushing, said: "Shouxin, your Fourth Brother is indeed not a simple character."

"Of course, look who his brother is," Wang Shouxin said with a smug, "If it were not him having to manage the family business, my Fourth Brother could probably have already become a scholar at the Purple Abode Academy by now." Today's decisions made by Wang Shouzhe had boosted his self-esteem, filling him with pride in front of Madam Xu.

"Look at you bragging... What do you think you're doing, you old bastard?" Madam Xu had only managed half of her sentence before being swept up by Wang Shouxin. An immediate scowl forming on her face, her temper flaring.

"Didn't Fourth Brother praise you as a significant contributor?" Wang Shouxin carried Madam Xu towards the bedroom, "We, as a couple, can't let Fourth Brother down. We must have more children to contribute more to the family."

"Wang Shouxin, you bloody bastard, you think I'm... Ah~"

Chapter 40: Obsession With the Golden Finger\_1

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The following five or six days passed peacefully.

For the grain transportation line, Gongsun Qiang and Sixth Uncle Wang Dinghai were the first to complete their tasks. As a reward, Wang Shouzhe promised Gongsun Qiang that the final wave of

old grains could be transported back to the Gongsun Clan. Of course, that would cost money and it would be sold to the Gongsun Clan at the market price.

As a result, this "cheap uncle" turned out to be a "hard man". He squeezed three thousand sacks back home with overloaded carts and miners carrying them on their shoulders. The next day, he hastily sent over two hundred Qian Gold for the grain purchase payment, looking as if he feared Wang Shouzhe would renege on his promise.

It's no wonder he is so eager. The famine in the whole Changning defence area is getting worse. The prominent families of Profound Martial, who can afford to hire an Insect Master or spend a lot of money to buy a massive insecticide, can still hold on.

However, most minor families are not so lucky. Insect disasters are rampant in the fields. They can only rely on a large amount of ash juice to kill insects, but faced with more and more honey bugs, its effectiveness is limited. Large scale reduction in yield is inevitable.

Wang Shouzhe also heard some even worse news. This disaster is likely to spread beyond Longzuo County. In that case, having grain in hand becomes even more valuable.

At the same time, Wang Shouzhe was not idle either.

Daily cultivation was essential. Recently, due to his good diet, his bodily vigor was exuberant. Every day, he could clearly feel his cultivation base steadily progressing towards the seventh level of the Qi Refinement Realm.

Of course, the path of cultivation is not easy. It is a process of gradual transformation and strengthening of the body, requiring persistent effort to make steady progress.

He also wished he could be like the protagonists in those mythical novels, who consumed medicinal pills every day and casually broke through realms, or who simply killed a chicken or a dog and saw their experience points soar.

However, in his world, all these were pure fantasies. No matter who it was, their cultivation realm was achieved through persistent cultivation.

Besides cultivation, Wang Shouzhe was also tinkering with his system panel.

If transmigration does not come with a system, then he had to create some earth-based system panels himself.

The first was the family expenses.

Before understanding the panel, Wang Shouzhe's idea of clan expenses was quite vague. But after comparing it with his wife's account book, he was really shocked to realize how huge a family's expenses were.

Let's take the tributes and resources Wang Shouzhe enjoys as the clan leader as an example.

The allocated ordinary materials every year include:

300 catties of fine rice (24 copper coins), 150 catties of fine noodles (15 copper coins), 200 catties of various vegetables (8 copper coins), 400 catties of fruits (48 copper coins), 20 catties of candied fruit (20 copper coins), 250 catties of pork (75 copper coins), 150 catties of ordinary beef and mutton (60 copper coins), 100 chickens and ducks (60 copper coins), 30 geese (45 copper coins), 100 catties of eggs (20 copper coins), 20 catties of pork fat (8 copper coins), 20 catties of premium bean oil (12 copper coins), 10 catties of high-quality soy sauce (20 copper coins), 5 catties of fine salt (20 copper coins), 1 catty of snowflake salt (10 copper coins), 10 catties of snowflake sugar (20 copper coins), 1 catty of aromatic seasoning (10 copper coins), 5 catties of incense (25 copper coins), 500 catties of fine wood charcoal (15 copper coins), 30 rations of firewood (6 copper coins), Expense for clothes and bedding (100 copper coins), and other daily necessities (20 copper coins).

Just for the partial ordinary items Wang Shouzhe consumes, it adds up to a total cost of 6 Qian Gold and 51 copper coins every year. He looked at the list and felt that he was a big eater. But indeed, his appetite is truly impressive.

He is now almost at the seventh level of Qi Refinement realm, his food intake is far beyond ordinary people. Moreover, cultivation is not only about sitting in meditation and refining Qi but also practicing Profound Martial techniques, movement techniques, swordsmanship, bow control, and horse riding. All of these consume a huge amount of physical energy.

Those ordinary foods can just about satisfy him now. His wife, Gongsun Hui, often uses some of her salary to supplement Wang Shouzhe's meals.

Of course, that's just a small part of it. The big part is the annual allocation of cultivation resources for Wang Shouzhe.

60 catties of Spirit Rice (12 Qian Gold), 60 catties of Spirit Fish (20 Qian Gold), 60 catties of Spirit Meat (20 Qian Gold), 12 Little Pei Yuan Dan (120 Qian Gold).

A total of 172 Qian Gold of cultivation resources every year for him alone. And as his cultivation realm advances, this part will have to continue to increase. Otherwise, it won't keep up with his consumption.

This is why Wang Shouzhe, at such a young age, is about to reach the seventh level of the Qi Refinement realm. It's not just because of his outstanding talent for cultivation but also because of the resources the family has invested in him.

Just think about it, the Wang family's output of Spirit Fish is only about 400 catties per year on average, and he Wang Shouzhe alone takes up 60 catties.

As for the Spirit Meat, the sources are more varied. They are usually obtained through hunting or purchasing, as the Wang family does not have the financial power or capability to breed Spirit Horned Yaks.

As for hunting, after the autumn harvest each year, the family organizes an autumn and winter hunt with the primary goal being to train the younger generations of the family and also to supplement some meat.

But because they dare not venture deep into the wilderness, they rarely catch any Fierce Beasts. At least, for the past five years, the Wang's autumn and winter hunts have not killed any Fierce Beasts. Therefore, the main source of Spirit Meat for the Wang family is purchased from outside, which is a huge expense.

In addition, as the current clan leader, Wang Shouzhe also gets a monthly allowance of 5 Qian Gold, which adds up to 60 Qian Gold a year. This personal fund can be used at his discretion. As clan leader, there are many places where he needs personal money.

Therefore, just Wang Shouzhe's direct consumption in a year costs about 240 Qian Gold. This does not include the maintenance of family houses, the cost of carriages and horses, the expenses of dedicated servants, because those are calculated under other family expenditures.

So when you calculate all these expenses, it's a staggering sum.

If he takes a formal wife, she certainly won't be allocated so many resources for cultivation, probably about one third. However, the consumption of clothing and food and the maintenance for the wife of the clan leader will be the same as that for the clan leader, which will result in an additional expense of a hundred or so Qian Gold.

Furthermore, the rest of the family clan's expenses were also staggering.

All bloodline family members, including Wang Shouzhe, had an annual average spending of around 1800 Qian Gold. The total expenditure and benefits of the nine clan generals along with their families also amounted to close to 350 Qian Gold.

Furthermore, there were seven underage or child generals being nurtured, the cost of resources for this section was around 80 Qian Gold. Additionally, there were over a hundred family servants, divided into various rankings, with an annual total expenditure of around 170 Qian Gold.

Just the personnel in the main residence of the prominent family consumed 2400 Qian Gold per year. Of course, this 2400 Qian Gold was not entirely spent on Qian Gold, a significant part of it was resource allocation, using Qian Gold as a measure.

For instance, the Bai Yu spiritual rice produced in the spirit fields of the Prosperous Farm, when this batch of resources entered the family, it would be accounted for in the farm income accounts and when it was distributed to someone as a resource, it would ultimately be reflected in the value of Qian Gold.

Similarly, the fish, fresh fish, spirit fish, etc., produced by Sixth Uncle Wang Dinghai's fishing team were also recorded in the income account when they entered the family, and the clan would also record an expenditure account.

Of course, such accounts only deal with the exchange of goods, and there would be no real Qian Gold transaction on paper. Therefore, what the fishing team calls 'profit', usually refers to a paper profit, not actual tangible Qian Gold earned. This part of the profit has already been converted into supplies for the family clan.

However, it is unavoidable for such a large Profound Martial Family to have a huge consumption of goods. In fact, because the Ping'an Wang Family is too poor, their total expenditure is already considered low, Longyan Old Ancestor, and those clan elders of the "Night" generation have all been economizing and trying to save expenses.

Fortunately, within the family's industries, there are still three major pillar industries.

Among these, Fenggu Farm, which is purely an agricultural industry, currently has the lowest income on paper, while other industries like the Prosperous Farm have a higher value due to having 20 spirit fields.

Also, Xinmao Silkworm Farm primarily produces raw silk and provides Changning's Xu family with a long-term stable supply. The overall income is mainly in Qian Gold.

Moreover, the other two family businesses, the Ping'an Wang's Fish Stall and the Fishing Team, are managed by the younger generation. In the past, their income was far behind that of the three major pillar industries.

However, this year, after Wang Shouzhe's turmoil, the Fishing team and Wang's fish stall will inevitably take off. It wouldn't be surprising if their profits even surpass the pillar industries.

Moreover, as the largest grain-producing farm this year, Fenggu Farm will also have its glorious moment with the arrival of the pest disaster.

Even more crucial is that, with a little information about the pest disaster, Wang Shouzhe boldly made a big move. That one deal with a pure profit of over ten thousand Qian Gold was enough to bring a qualitative change to the tight-living Wang family.

Thinking of that large stack of Da Qian Gold notes and the grains piled up in the backyard, Wang Shouzhe felt a bit ambitious!

The Ping'an Wang family will definitely take off!

He gathered his thoughts, and Wang Shouzhe focused his attention on the self-built earth system panel.

The main interface appears first.

[Family Name]: Ping'an Wang Family of Longzuo Changning

[Family Level]: Rank 9

[Family reputation]: [Township Reputation (75) - Extremely Famous][County Reputation (21) - Somewhat Famous][Prefectural Reputation (00) - Unknown]

[Family business]: 5 (Click to view details)

[Family Members]: [Inside the Clan (35)][Married out (10)] (Click to view details)

[Family In-Laws]: 6 (Click to view details)

[Family Generals]: [Adults (9)][Minors (7)] (Click to view details)

[Family Servants]: [Adults (112)][Minors (32)] (Click to view details)

[Balance Sheet]: (Click to view details)

Even after finishing this, Wang Shouzhe felt that he played too many games and read too many system novels in his previous life. He didn't feel comfortable unless he created a "system panel".

However, this system is relatively rudimentary, it is just composed of paper panels, and many templates need to be slowly added.

"Click to view details," Wang Shouzhe pretended to touch the clan industry's section, then jumped to the [Family Industry] details page.

In actuality, he just took out the little notebook of the family industry... which he had punched holes in and assembled himself...

