

I. Dynasty 324

Chapter 324: Potatoes

Inside the grand hall, Xiao Ming and Yue Yun sat facing each other. After a long while, Xiao Ming finally closed the notebook.

He now had a general understanding of the current world. Overall, the European countries were still in the same places—they just had different rulers now.

Aside from being slightly more advanced in technology, there weren't many other differences.

"Your Highness, the Dutch have also taken over Ryukyu. This blocks our navy from sailing south. I believe we must reclaim Ryukyu. If we can take it, we'll be able to cut off Wokou and other countries from their trade routes," Yue Yun said.

Xiao Ming nodded. Yue Yun had a sharp eye. If they could seize Ryukyu and control the sea routes, then the Wokou's lifeline would be in his hands.

But that would have to wait. Right now, he didn't have the strength to capture Ryukyu. Just acquiring these three Galleon ships had already cost him heavily.

Still, the risk was worth it. Yue Yun had brought back corn, peanuts, potatoes, and chili pepper seeds.

"Let's not worry about Ryukyu for now. Your current task is to recruit sailors, train them, and wait for the Dengzhou fleet to take shape. That will be your time to command the seas."

Yue Yun nodded, his face lit with excitement. After landing at Dengzhou, he had visited the shipyard. They were building six warships simultaneously.

Two of them were first-class sailing warships. Once they were launched, he believed they'd be able to hold their own against the Dutch at sea.

Seeing Yue Yun so excited, Xiao Ming asked eagerly, "So where are the potatoes, peanuts, chili peppers, and corn?"

"Your Highness, I've already had them delivered to the storage warehouse at the government office. I brought back three full shiploads," Yue Yun reported.

Xiao Ming couldn't stop smiling. "Good! Let's go take a look while there's still time—we can still get them planted this season."

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The two arrived at the warehouse, where Xiao Ming saw heaps of potatoes stacked like small hills. Next to them were peanuts, then corn, and beside the corn were chili pepper seeds.

"This is amazing, just amazing," Xiao Ming said, rubbing his hands with excitement.

Potatoes, corn, and peanuts were all high-yield crops. Not only that, they were well-suited for dry land. If these crops were introduced in Qingzhou, he'd no longer have to worry about his people starving.

"Your Highness, these potatoes, peanuts, and corn taste really good. If we hadn't had them, we might have starved on that island," Yue Yun added. He had already tasted them.

"Of course. Not only are they tasty, they yield far more than wheat or rice." Xiao Ming turned to Zhao Long and said, "Inform the transport team—move these seeds to the slave plantations right away and get them planted."

Zhao Long acknowledged the order and left.

Since Yue Yun had just returned from a long journey, Xiao Ming wanted him to rest. After exchanging a few more words, he let Yue Yun go.

Then he returned to the manor and wrote a planting guide for potatoes, peanuts, chili peppers, and corn.

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The next day, he brought the manual to the slave plantations on both sides of the Tuo River in Qingzhou.

Originally, these lands didn't belong to Xiao Ming—they were owned by the Four Great Clans. But after the fall of the royal family, the Qin family, and others, these fertile lands became government-owned farms under his control.

To avoid wasting the land, he had assigned six thousand slaves to manage over a thousand hectares of farmland.

"Your Highness, can potatoes really yield four thousand jin per mu?"

Pang Yukun had shown great interest in the new crops. He had been waiting outside Xiao Ming's manor early in the morning, and now the two were on their way to the plantation.

As they talked, they arrived at the plantation village.

Ahead of them was a small village, no more than fifty brick houses from south to north.

The houses were neatly arranged—clearly built recently. Many slaves were running between the fields and the village.

Another similar village was visible in the distance. Each village's slaves were responsible for their own section of land.

"Your Highness, Chief Secretary Pang."

An honest-looking man ran over. He was the head of the village, in charge of managing the land and the people.

“Kui Si, did you properly store the goods that arrived yesterday?” Xiao Ming asked.

“Yes, Your Highness, everything’s safe,” Kui Si replied carefully.

Xiao Ming nodded. The slave plantations were still new under his rule, but in the future, they would become a major source of food for Qingzhou.

“Good. Now gather everyone in the village. I’m going to teach you how to plant these crops.”

Kui Si nodded and ran to the village center, where he rang a bronze bell. Before long, all the slaves in the fields had gathered.

Pang Yukun was there simply to observe and learn. He didn’t interrupt.

Xiao Ming’s visit, and the planting manual was no spur-of-the-moment decision.

Farming was a serious science. Potatoes, in particular, could degrade with each generation if not managed carefully. He had to set up a proper system for selecting and cultivating high-quality seedlings in advance.

After all, several generations of planting could lead to crop failure due to soil-borne viruses.

Today, Xiao Ming was here to teach Kui Si about seed selection. Whether it was peanuts, corn, chili peppers, or potatoes they all needed to be cultivated carefully to preserve the best traits.

So this first round of planting wasn't for food, it was for raising seed stock.

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Once all the slaves had arrived, Xiao Ming began explaining how to propagate potatoes using cut sections.

The potatoes Yue Yun had brought were large and healthy. Perfect seed stock for cutting.

He instructed Kui Si to cut the potatoes into pieces weighing about 20 grams each, making sure each piece had one or two eyes.

The knife used to cut them had to be sterilized with alcohol before use.

Then, once the potato pieces began sprouting, they could be used for 'eye-cutting propagation.' That meant removing the sprouts and planting them after which the potato would grow new ones, similar to how chives regrow after being cut.

While nurturing these young plants, the healthiest sprouts would be selected again.

It was still spring, perfect timing for growing seedlings, since wild potato planting worked best in autumn.

The process wasn't too hard, and Kui Si and the others understood it clearly.

Xiao Ming then moved on to explain how to raise seedlings for peanuts, corn, and chili peppers. He also ordered the creation of seedling bases in each plantation. With this system, these imported crops could be planted and expanded steadily across his lands.