

Battle Through the Heavens #Chapter 61: Disguise - Read Battle Through the Heavens Chapter 61: Disguise

Chapter 61:Disguise

While the three clans began to leave through the entrance of the auction house, the respective clan leaders gave phony smiles and unpleasant laughs; as they left each other's sights, a trace of hostility and mockery appeared on their faces.

The three clans swaggered across the hall as they left and whenever they passed by, the people would quickly move aside.. In Wu Tang City, there were virtually no other powers that could rival the three great clans.

Once again, Xiao Zhan half-heartedly said a few words to the nearby Ao Ba Pa. Suddenly, Xiao Zhan's movements stiffened and his footsteps halted.

Looking at Xiao Zhan's movements, everyone shifted their gazes to his line of sight, and their bodies could not help but tremble slightly. Even Jie Lie Bi and Ao Ba Pa's faces changed a bit.

At the hall's other entrance, three figures slowly walked out. The person leading them was unexpectedly Primer Auction House's chief auctioneer Ya Fei. As frequent customers of the auction, Xiao Zhan and others all knew this woman's true face. Although this woman usually puts on an appearance filled with smiles, everyone knew that this woman was actually very arrogant. Previously, Ao Ba Pa wanted to invite her to have a meal but was directly met with an exceptionally "polite" refusal. From this incident, people understood that this woman, unlike her outward appearance, was not easy to get close to.

Today however, this haughty woman, contrary to her normal self, was respectfully guiding guests. This really did make Xiao Zhan and the others amazed.

Eyes blinking a little, Xiao Zhan and the others' gaze shifted once more to the rear and their faces continued to change.

At the back of the group of three, the Auction's alchemist elder Gu Ni was smiling and said a few words into the ears of a mysterious black-hooded person. His smiling expression was all over his face, so much so that a trace of flattery could be seen.

If Ya Fei's deferential attitude had caused Xiao Zhan and the others to feel amazed, then the attitude Gu Ni displayed made them feel stunned.

As Wu Tan City's highest ranked alchemist, usually only the three clan heads could meet him. When they did, they were respectful and did not dare to be impolite in the slightest.

As a 2nd tier alchemist, Gu Ni maintained that pride of being an alchemist. When he spoke, he spoke indifferently, making others revere him even more.

But this type of person, he unexpectedly showed such respect without even trying to hide his flattering smiles. That that person he's trying to win the favor of.. Who could this person be?

The sight brought shock. Finally, their gazes slowly shifted onto the center's black-cloaked figure.

Sweeping over the shadowy figure's plump stature, Xiao Zhan anxiously thought in his mind, "Who is this person? Someone who can make Primer Auction House's most important people respectfully send him off? What would a person of this level come to Wu Tan City for?"

Licking his somewhat dry lips, Xiao Zhan looked around from left to right and actually found that Jia Lie Bi and Ao Ba Pa were also curious and shocked.

Raising his eyes expectantly at the three incoming people, Xiao Zhan's face squeezed out a small smile, walked forward two steps, and smiled: "Lady Ya Fei, Gu Ni elder. Ha ha. It really is rare to see you two appear together."

When Ya Fei and Gu Ni came out earlier, the two had already caught sight of the clan leaders. Looking at Xiao Zhan coming out to speak, their movements were still the same. But only after the black-cloaked person stopped did they heave a sigh of relief.

"Ha ha. We're sending off a precious guest, that's all." Ya Fei lightly laughed.

"Oh. Ha ha..." Jia Lie Bi also approached smiling. Shortly after, his gaze shifted from Ya Fei to the black-hooded person and politely asked: "Ha ha. I don't know if this mister is also from Wu Tang City? Ha ha, you look somewhat unfamiliar to me."

"Cough ... Jia Lie Clan Elder, this mister is Primer Auction House's precious guest" Gu Ni elder's eyebrows furrowed and coughed to warn Jia Lie Bi to not ask questions carelessly .

Hearing Gu Ni elder's warning tone, Jia Lie Bi's complexion slightly changed and whispered to himself: "Even Gu Ni elder acts this fearfully? What is this person's identity?"

Seeing how Jia Lie Bi was met with a tactful retort, Xiao Zhan swallowed what he was about to say. Looking at Gu Ni's cautious stance, this black-cloaked person was obviously on a completely different level of existence from them. At the moment, he had no choice but to laugh a bit and then tactfully withdraw.

“You are Xiao Zhan of the Xiao Clan, right?” Just when Xiao Zhan was about to withdraw, the silent black-cloaked person suddenly asked in a dull tone.

Hearing this elderly voice, Xiao Zhan stared blankly a bit. Soon after, he hesitated and then nodded.

“I heard that the young master of your clan relied on this Foundation Elixir to leap to the 9th Duan Qi. Ha ha, this really causes me to be in awe.” The black-cloaked person laughed dully.

Met with this sort of courteous treatment, Xiao Zhan felt delight in his heart and smiled: “My son has good luck.”

Waving his hands in a carefree manner, the black-cloaked person smiled: “Luck is also part of one’s power. In the future if there is ever an opportunity, I would like to meet him. Maybe he can even become an alchemist.”

In a somewhat stunned manner, Xiao Zhan appeared as if he did not understand what the elder was saying.

“Ok.... in the future if there is ever an opportunity, I will look for your Xiao Clan to collaborate together.” Smiling, the black-cloaked person turned around to face Ya Fei and Gu Ni: “There’s no need to send me off, I still have some business to do. I will leave first.”

After speaking, Xiao Yan didn’t wait for their reactions and walked in big strides out of the auction house.

Stroking his face in an ineffable way, Xiao Zhan turned his head and actually saw Ya Fei and Gu Ni staring at him, faces filled with envy.

“Xiao Clan Leader, do you recognize that old mister?” Ya Fei asked.

“It was my first time seeing him.” Xiao Zhan forced a smile and shook his head nervously towards Ya Fei and Gu Ni, who held strange expressions on their faces.

“Sigh, the Xiao family has been blessed.”

Gu Ni gently shook his head. He shot a glance at the Foundation Elixirs, which Jia Lie Bi held tightly to his chest as if they were precious treasures, and said indifferently: “Those things were refined by him.”

Having heard what was said, the complexions of the three family heads changed wildly.

After a short while, Xiao Zhan's face lit up with delight; he hadn't expected that the black-cloaked elder would be an alchemist. Looking at Gu Ni's previous attitude, it was clear that the elder was a much higher ranked alchemist than even Gu Ni!

If a second tier alchemist was able to make them courteous and modest, then what about a third or even a fourth tier alchemist?

Heavens, his kind of clan did not have the qualifications to even meet this type of senior.

"We've profited greatly this time...." Thinking back to when that black-hooded person offered to collaborate in the future, Xiao Zhan's two eyes immediately lit up and he involuntarily mumbled to himself.

To the side, after their shock faded, Jia Lie Bi and Ao Ba Pa's eyes flashed with envy as if they were like rabbit's eyes.

TL: Rabbit eyes are red = red eyes = envy

Chapter 62:Slap

Leaving the auction house, Xiao Yan wandered the streets for some time. When he saw that there weren't too many people around him, he slipped into a nearby alley. Taking off his black cloak, Xiao Yan grumbled: "Teacher, you almost exposed me back there."

"Hehe, what I just did; wasn't that what your heart desires as well?" From the unadorned, pitch-black ring resounded an amused Yao Lao's laugh.

These words caused Xiao Yan to helplessly shake his head, but it was true that he felt a bit apologetic towards his father. Twice he had auctioned some products and thus twice he had extorted money from Xiao Zhan. He kicked the cloak into the gutter, whispering: "I'll make it up to him by finding an opportunity to collaborate with the Xiao Clan in the future. That should net him a bit of compensation."

With prized ingredients in hand, Xiao Yan stuffed them inside his bosom. After exiting the alley, he practically flew back to the Xiao Clan's residence.

Since Xiao Zhan and company weren't back yet, the place felt kind of empty. The guards at the gate, seeing the Xiao Clan's super-duper talented young master, didn't dare obstruct him. Seeing their behavior, the young master flashed a smile and then dashed in.

With a vigorous dash, Xiao Yan arrived at his own room and took out the ingredients out of his bosom. He treated the ingredients as one would treasure. Cupping his hand, he scooped them out and placed them on the table.

The first was a withered yellow plant with five ink-black leaves. That was the Inkleaf Lotus; each leaf represented 10 years of age.

The Snake Venom Fruit was round and about as big as half a fist. If the dark-green fruit was put beneath the nose, one would smell a sweet and sour tanginess. The Snake Venom Fruit was quite rare, being found only near the lairs of 5th Rank or above snake magical beasts! Due to the fruit's association with the snake, the fruit's cold yin element was abundant and as a result, the fruit was frequently used as a mediator for the effects of a medicine.

TL: Yin and Yang, Yin is the "dark" side.

Spirit Gathering Grass, despite mostly looking like normal grass, had a small, yellow light at the tips. The stronger the light, the more pure the grass' energy.

The Rank 2 Water Attribute Magic Core had a rich, azure-blue color. When put on the table, it not only moisturized the surrounding air but also drenched the table! Needless to say, the water property of the core was evident.

After his eyes swept across the ingredients once more, Xiao Yan used a low voice to impatiently ask: "Teacher, all the ingredients are present. Can we start refining?"

"Why are you so impatient, it's not like the ingredients are going to sprout feet and run away. We can't be interrupted while refining, it's still light out. What if by some off-chance, somebody comes in and we're interrupted? Someone would learn about me and the ingredients would go to waste." Within the ring, Yao Lao rang out: "It's better to refine at night."

Hearing these words, Xiao Yan dejectedly shook his head and let out a sigh. What else could he do other than hide the ingredients in a cupboard, lie on his bed and wait for night to descend?

After lying for about half an hour, his door was abruptly kicked open with a "bang!"

A pair of sexy, slender legs walked in. Turns out it was Xiao Yu. She scanned the room and seeing that Xiao Yan was napping, she coldly injected: "Young master, dinner isn't going to eat itself. Do you expect to receive an invitation or something?"

The process of Xiao Yan shifting from nap mode to full alert barely took a moment. Sitting upright on the bed, he looked dazedly at Xiao Yu and after quite a while, he broke into a cold sweat: "Damn it, damn it, good thing teacher didn't start the refining process a while ago; this b*tch..."

Thinking about the "what if" situation caused Xiao Yan's heart tremble; one could almost hear the "gulp" resounding from his throat. However, after shifting his gaze to Xiao Yu, he started to feel rage boil from within.

The corners of his mouth twitched, and then Xiao Yan took a long breath, finally calming down. As for the fear he felt a while ago, it was converted to fury: "Idiot, do you know what manners are? Are you smart enough to enter but too dumb to knock?! Where's your upbringing?!"

This was the first time Xiao Yu saw an outwardly furious Xiao Yan and as a result she could only look on like an idiot. His stream of verbal abuse caused her charming face to ashen and at the same time she nipped her silver tooth. Then the pair of sexy legs moved, in fact charged, directly towards Xiao Yan: "Little bastard, I kicked your door down. So what? From now on I'll be kicking it down every day!"

With Xiao Yu charging at him, wanting to teach him a lesson, Xiao Yan was ashen-faced as well. He lifted up his palm and clenched it: "Vacuum Palm!"

A strong suction force rushed towards Xiao Yan's palm, causing the assaulter, who attempted to stop just in front of the bed to instead land on top of it.

After attaining 9 Duan Dou Qi, Xiao Yan's Vacuum Palm's suction strength increased by quite a bit. A few days ago, moving the body weight of a person was simply unfathomable, but now it was quite possible.

Although Xiao Yan was a bit surprised by the increase in efficacy, the feeling didn't last long and quickly turned into indignation. With a flip of his body, he managed to subdue that pair of sexy legs and shortly after, he ruthlessly pressed his butt against her flat and smooth, jade-like underbelly and then quickly leaned over to press down both of his hands to restrain her hands.

Finding herself once again in such an embarrassing posture with Xiao Yan caused Xiao Yu to feel a bit dazed. After a moment, that attractive face flushed red in a most alluring fashion and a violent struggle ensued. Xiao Yu once again bit her silver tooth, cursing in a rage: "Little bastard, go away!"

Due to the struggle to lock her two palms in place, Xiao Yan's also felt quite tired. At the start of another bout, he suddenly gave way and pulled Xiao Yu's palm, causing her to flip over.

After the flip, Xiao Yu's back was arched as her long legs stretched out over the bed.

But Xiao Yan wasn't in the mood to check them out. He gnashed his teeth, raised up a hand, and without hesitation, slapped downwards

"Pa!"

The crisp sound fluttered inside the room and then into oblivion.

"Learned your lesson yet? Don't enter my room without knocking first!"

Chapter 63: The Heavenly Flames Ranking

At the dining table, Xiao Yan shot a crooked glance at the ferocious eater sitting in front of him. As Xiao Yu ate, her silver teeth made crunching sounds. Curling his lips, Xiao Yan recalled the previous peculiar yet splendid feeling and his right hand's fingers couldn't help but stroke the hollow of his palm.

Seated across from him, Xiao Yu, who had been staring maliciously at Xiao Yan the entire time, saw his movements and her charming face turned red again.

Looking weirdly at Xiao Yu grinding her teeth, and then seeing the nearby Xiao Yan's nonchalant attitude, Xun Er wrinkled her eyebrows in suspicion. Soon after, she shook her head helplessly, and little by little swallowed the food in front of her.

Xiao Yan's gaze skipped over Xiao Yu and stopped on the body of Xiao Ning. At this moment, Xiao Ning's face was filled with joy; the curves on his mouth almost extended halfway across his face. Fingers lightly tapping the edge of the table, Xiao Yan, taking delight in other people's misfortunes thought to himself: "This guy should have already received the Foundation Elixir, right? Little does he know, the elixir doesn't have much of an effect to those at 8th Duan Qi or above..."

Laughing quietly to himself, Xiao Yan's line of sight swept over the surroundings in a somewhat bored manner. Looking at his smiling father, his heart was bewildered: "The family communal meal, isn't it only held during certain holidays? What's there to be so festive for today? Could it be that spending a large amount of money to buy the Foundation Elixir is an event worthy of being celebrated?"

Letting his imagination run wild, Xiao Yan naturally didn't know that this family communal meal was because of the words said by the mysterious black-cloaked person about collaborating with Xiao Clan if there was ever an opportunity to.

Working together with a second tier or higher alchemist would earn them profits that would make most people's eyes red with envy. It was even possible that the family could thereby leap up in rank, rising higher than the other two great families. Thus, it was no surprise that the usual steady and calm father would be so happy. And for those several other elders, they were even more so, grinning from ear to ear. Looking at their half closed old eyes, it was evident that this good fortune that had dropped out of the sky made them somewhat dazed.

The festive mood at the communal meal slowly faded and upon seeing his father's wave of farewell, Xiao Yan promptly jumped out of his chair. He then rushed out of the hall and went straight to his room.

Not long after Xiao Yan left, Xiao Yu clenched her teeth and chased after him but could not find a single shadow. Helpless, she could only stamp her feet in hatred and left with a heart filled with rage.

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Returning to his room and having learned the hard way from his own personal experience, Xiao Yan did not yet ask Lao Yao to immediately refine the medicine. After closing the door and window, he lazily rolled onto his bed and feeling muddle-headed, fell asleep.

Late at night, after everyone had fallen asleep, lying on the bed, Xiao Yan opened his two eyes. He eagerly jumped off the bed and took out the hidden away ingredients from the cupboard. Carefully placing them on the table, he turned his head. Looking towards Yao Lao, the ghost that was floating a foot off of the ground, Xiao Yan gently asked: "Teacher, you're ready now, right?"

"At long last you've learned how to be a bit careful; refining pills requires an extremely quiet environment. If I am disturbed, the consequences are very severe. Right now, I won't feel any retaliation damage, but later when you begin learning alchemy, if you continue to be careless, then I'm afraid you will lose your little life a bit sooner rather than later." Yao Lao walked to one side of the table and gently touched each ingredient with his ghostly palm. Nodding his head slightly, his dull tone of voice carried a little bit of severity.

Lowering his head in shame, Xiao Yan scratched his head as he received the instructions.

Only after seeing Xiao Yan's obedience, did Yao Lao heave a sigh of relief. He drearily spread out his palms and a white flame burst forth.

With his soul perception continuously controlling the fire's temperature, Yao Lao took advantage of the idle time and cast a glance at Xiao Yan who was staring curiously at the fire in Yao Lao's palm. Slightly hesitating, Yao Lao quietly whispered: "The ranks of most alchemists can be distinguished from the color of their flame."

"Ordinary alchemists have flames with a faint yellow color. As their rank increases, the flame color turns darker and the strength of the flame grows stronger."

Having heard what was said, Xiao Yan blinked, pointed at the flame in Yao Lao's hands and asked: "Then teacher, why is yours white?"

"Haha, what I previously said was for the commonly-seen alchemist flames. However within the alchemist circle, besides relying on Dou Qi as a catalyst for the flame, there is also another method..." Yao Lao smiled with a hint of pride.

"That is, borrowing the flame!"

“Borrowing the flame?” They weren’t unfamiliar words. He understood what each word meant, but Xiao Yan was at a loss. How can one borrow the flame needed to refine pills?

“That’s right, borrowing the flame.” Nodding his head, Yao Lao chuckled: “Within this boundless world, there exists some heaven and earth Heavenly Flames. Perhaps the flame came from within a meteor that fell from the heavens or perhaps the flame came from the depths of a volcano, forged through hundreds of thousands of years by the lava... the power of these Heavenly Flames is many times greater than the power of flames created through Dou Qi. Refining pills with these flames can even increase the effectiveness of the medicine. Only, these heaven and earth Heavenly Flames are exceedingly violent and are seldom to come by. And even if you see one, it is extremely difficult to control.”

“A lot of alchemists spend their entire lives searching for these Heavenly Flames and still fail to obtain one. After all, in order to control a Heavenly Flame, you need to bring the flame into your body; however, the nature of the flame is wildly destructive. Even the Magic Gold Diamond which is one of the hardest metals, is unable to contain the Heavenly Flame’s heat and your fragile human body You would burn yourself alive. Therefore, only the extremely few lucky winners can, by chance, refine a small amount of Heavenly Flame. Once the flame join together with the body, these types of people, without an exception are people of outstanding talent within the alchemist world.”

Stunned for a long while, Xiao Yan licked his lips, his gaze was closely watching the white flame in Yao Lao’s palm and could faintly feel an ice-cold sensation.

“Teacher’s flame must be a type of Heavenly Flame, right?” Xiao Yan inquired.

“He he.” Lifting up his flame, Yao Lao’s face gave off a light glow. Eyes blazing, he spoke: “In the Dou Qi Mainland’s alchemist society, the known Heavenly Flames are ranked in the “Heavenly Flames Ranking”. There are a total of 23 types and my flame is ranked 11, known as the “Bone Chilling Flame”. This type of Heavenly Flame only appears every hundred years, when the eclipse occurs in the extreme cold and extreme Yin intersect.....”

“Bone Chilling Flame?”

Without blinking, Xiao Yan stared at that surging white flame and softly murmured to himself.

Chapter 64: Creation of the Qi Gathering Pill

“To obtain the “Bone Chilling Flame”, I had waited in a place without light for eight long years, and when the moment to assimilate the flame finally came, despite all my preparations I was nearly burnt to ashes.....” Yao Lao sighed as he shook his head; a

rare lingering fear could be seen on his normally serene face. Looks like that encounter had left a strong impression on him.

“Hehe, although it was extremely dangerous, having obtained the “Bone Chilling Flame” in the end, it was all worth it.” Yao Lao proudly declared as he waved about the white flame in the palm of his hand as if showing it off to a large crowd. He then smiled as he continued to elaborate: “With a Heavenly Flame, not only can you refine pills of better quality, but also, when encountering a foe of the same level he would not be a match for you.”

Hearing this, Xiao Yan gazed at that raging dull-white flame, his face filled with envy.

Seeing that envious look on Xiao Yan’s face, Yao Lao let out a laugh as a devious expression flashed across his face. His tone changed as he said: “Something like a Heavenly Flame is still a long way off for you. For now, your greatest wish should be to become a Dou Zhe as soon as possible.”

Feeling regretful, Xiao Yan nodded his head. He could only temporarily slurp back the drool that had formed due to his longing for the Heavenly Flame and drag himself back to face reality.

Yao Lao lightly smiled at the sight of Xiao Yan coming back to his senses. At the center of his hand, the white flame continued to burn as wisps escaped to soar up into the air, only to dissipate shortly after.

A dry hand picked up a stalk of Ink-leaf Lotus and gently dropped it into the flame.

As the Ink-leaf Lotus came into contact with the “Bone Chilling Flame”, it was instantly burned into the form of an ink-black liquid which rolled about within the flame, revealing its hidden luster.

The white flame churned as it grew more and more intense, yet Xiao Yan noticed that strangely, the air surrounding the white flame grew colder and colder.

Yao Lao was concentrating all his attention into controlling the temperature of the flame within his palm. If the temperature were just a slight bit higher, the ink-black liquid would be evaporated into nothingness.

After the temperature of the flame was maintained at a certain point for a period of time, specks of yellow impurity suddenly appeared within the ink-black liquid.

Gazing at the yellow specks of impurity, Yao Lao finally gave a slight nod. With a light flick of his finger, the yellow specks gathered and separated with some of the ink-black liquid into a smaller ball of liquid and was expelled from the main body.

After expelling the yellow impurities, other tiny light yellow impurities started appearing one after another. Likewise, these impurities were cleaned up by Yao Lao.

The white flame continued to burn, within it, the ink-black liquid which was originally half a fist large had shrunk to a mere thumb size amount.

Deep black liquid rolled about at the center of the white flame, like a black pearl, serene and mysterious.

When the first stalk of Ink-leaf Lotus was the size of a thumb, Yao Lao finally stopped calcining. He continued by dropping the other four stalks into the flame, calcining them into four black pearl-like balls of pure liquid.

After a long period of purification by the "Bone Chilling Flame", five small bodies of fluid slowly fused together. At the moment of fusion, the volume expanded by a large extent, however, a split second later, it shrunk to only a thumb size.

Having spent a long time rolling about in the white flame, it was as if within the inky-blackness of the liquid, a small white flame could be seen dancing about.

Seeing this, in one fluid motion Yao Lao quickly grabbed the Snake Venom Fruit on the table and threw it into the flame.

Once the Snake Venom Fruit entered the flame, it was transformed into a dark green fluid which emitted traces of icy air. Removing the impurities from the dark green fluid, Yao Lao gradually covered the dark green fluid with the now burning ink-black fluid.

"Zi! Zi!....."

Strange noises echoed about as the two liquids of different attributes met and a white smoky plume rose from within the raging flame.

As the plume of smoke given off gradually decreased, a rough pill-like object started to form from within the flame.

Gazing serenely upon the almost formed pill, Yao Lao slightly inclined his head. Once again he threw the Spirit Gathering Grass and the Water Attribute Rank 2 Magic Stone into the flame.

Melt into liquid, remove impurities, fuse together..... these three types of actions were complicated procedures which required a meticulous effort. Yet Yao Lao managed to accomplish all of them as if they were a single fluid motion, not even stopping a single time.

Having seen Yao Lao's sharp and precise movements, even Xiao Yan, an outsider to the Alchemist ways who had yet to understand even the basics of the art could not help but praise Yao Lao in his heart.

Neutralizing the rampaging power in the Magic Stone with the Spirit Gathering Grass, the pure light blue energy was poured into the pill-like object as it was still forming.

When the last drop of blue energy entered into the pill, the bumpy-looking pill-like object was restored into a smooth and slippery shape. A dull blue gleam could be seen hovering on the surface of the pill, making it look both splendid and magnificent.

Though finished with all the steps, Yao Lao did not stop there. Instead he warmed the pill in the flame for almost ten minutes before finally extinguishing the white flame within his palm.

When the flame died away, Yao Lao's left hand swiftly sucked a jade bottle from the table towards him and fluidly stored the pill, colored in shades of dark green and light blue, into the bottle.

"Phew....." A long sigh escaped his lips as Yao Lao threw the jade bottle to Xiao Yan. He then proceeded to smugly say: "Take a look."

Carefully accepting the jade bottle, Xiao Yan excitedly brought it under his nose to take a whiff. A familiar fragrance entered his nostrils which made him feel renewed with energy.

While eyeing the bluish green pill within the bottle, Xiao Yan's outstanding soul perception let him vaguely know that this Qi Gathering Powder was better than the one previously brought by Nalan Yanran in both quality and effectiveness!

At the thought of Nalan Yanran's look and tone as she held the pill, Xiao Yan let out a mocking smile.

Shaking his head, Xiao Yan tightly gripped the warm jade bottle, heavily heaving out a breath. It had been four years, now he could finally once again step into that level.....

Chapter 65: Dou Zhe Advancement

Though Xiao Yan had obtained the Qi Gathering Pill, he did not immediately consume it. Rather, he let out a deep sigh as he forcefully suppressed his impatience and made himself get into bed to rest.

Xiao Yan knew that if he started the process to become a Dou Zhe in his current state, the chances of failure were over 70%. Although Yao Lao could easily create another Qi Gathering Pill, Xiao Yan did not want to take an unnecessary risk that could be easily avoided.

Seeing that Xiao Yan was able to resist the enticement of immediately breaking through the Dou Zhe level, Yao Lao nodded his head with a sense of satisfaction. With that gratified look on his face, his body dazzled as he transformed into ray of light and disappeared into the ring.

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After the completion of the Qi Gathering Pill, Xiao Yan's training pace gradually slowed into a stable rhythm. Everyday, he did an hour of Dou Qi training before going to the mountains at the back of the Xiao Clan to practice his Dou Skills. If he had time, Xiao Yan would accompany Xun Er to stroll about Wu Tang City. All in all, an extremely satisfying leisurely life.

When five days of this easy going life had passed, Xiao Yan finally felt that he was at the peak condition. It was now the best time to try to become a Dou Zhe.

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In the mountains behind the Xiao Clan estate, there existed a hidden cave under a cliff. This cave was about a meter wide and had been specially chosen by Xiao Yan as his training ground. On the other side of the cliff were misty clouds while further down under the mist was the Devil Beast Mountain Range, filled with many fierce beasts. Below the cliff was a precipice so deep you could not see into its depths. The only entrance to the cave was a narrow trail which had already been concealed by Xiao Yan using branches and stones. Thus Xiao Yan was very sure that if he chose this place to make a breakthrough, he would not be interrupted by anyone.

Slowly breathing in, Xiao Yan brought out the jade bottle. Tilting the bottle, a blueish green pill rolled out.

Gazing upon the glossy and smooth Qi Gathering Pill, a small smile formed on Xiao Yan's face. He once again inhaled the fragrance that would ease one's heart. Licking his lips, Xiao Yan unhesitatingly popped the pill into his mouth.

As the Qi Gathering Pill entered his mouth, an ice-cold sensation could be felt transmitting from his mouth. A split second later, a luke warm pure energy essence started transferring from his mouth into his body, eliciting a violent jerk of Xiao Yan's body.

With a serene face, Xiao Yan used both hands to quickly form the hand seal of absorbing Dou Qi. His breathing steadily eased as the Dou Qi within his body responded to his thoughts and started to rapidly tangle with the strong and pure essence from the pill to rapidly refine it.

Within the small cave, the originally tranquil air suddenly heaved as lines of white Dou Zi Qi gathered from the air and surged continuously into Xiao Yan's body.

Biting his lip in pain, the two energies collided within his body and caused waves of pain to emanate from the channels all over his body. Thankfully, Xiao Yan's channels were much tougher than an ordinary person's and thus even though it was painful, it would not cause too much damage to him.

In his body, the Dou Qi surrounded the pure green energy essence, rapidly refining it. Green energy was continuously being changed into white Dou Qi and with the newly formed Dou Qi to propel the process, the Dou Qi within Xiao Yan's body rapidly expanded to the point where it could be seen growing with the naked eye.

Even though the pure essence from the pill was being refined unceasingly, the essence kept flowing endlessly. Everytime the Dou Qi managed to refine a batch of essence, a new and bigger batch of green energy would gush forward.

With both Dou Qi being refined within his body and absorbed from outside, the Dou Qi within Xiao Yan's body gradually filled a large portion of his body's channels.

As before, the refining process continued. When the pill essence finally started to diminish, Xiao Yan who was drunk on the rapid growth of his power suddenly realised that the Dou Qi in his body had swelled to a critical point and could no longer be increased.

The increasing Dou Qi caused Xiao Yan's channels to twitch as the corners of Xiao Yan's mouth split open in response to the waves of intense pain.

"Quick! Condense the Dou Qi cyclone! Before it explodes!" Yao Lao shout was like a clap of thunder, exploding out in Xiao Yan's heart.

Taking in a deep breath of cool air, Xiao Yan's hand seals suddenly changed in a flash of understanding. Touching his thumbs and middle fingers at the same spot, the ten fingers in his hand formed a weird hand seal.

Xiao Yan had taken this step years before and therefore when he used it once again, it flowed like water, smooth and undeterred.

Following the change in hand seal, the surging Dou Qi within Xiao Yan's body suddenly flooded downwards under a wild and ferocious sucking force from the abdomen.

When all of the Dou Qi had gathered into the abdomen area, the white Dou Qi started turning to a milky white color.

"Quickly compress the Dou Qi! Use your soul perception to compress it, if the Dou Qi fails to be condensed into a cyclone, you will once again drop to the 8 Duan Qi!" Yao Lao's shout resounded once again in Xiao Yan's heart.

Slightly nodding his head, Xiao Yan concentrated his mind to the task. In an instant, his outstanding soul perception acquired control over the Dou Qi. The rapid compression started.....

The milky white Dou Zi Qi resisted the guidance of the soul perception, violently churning about.

Though the resistance was in no way weak, Xiao Yan's soul perception had shocked even Yao Lao. Thus the Dou Qi resistance was akin to a praying mantis trying to block a car, only slightly resisting before grudgingly pulling back.

When the Dou Qi was compressed to the size of a palm, it froze and stopped moving.

"Compress again!" Yao Lao shouted.

Gritting his teeth, Xiao Yan screwed his eyes shut. The spiritual perception surrounding the white Dou Qi abruptly peaked in power before ruthlessly pressing down!

"Bang!"

A light muffled noise quietly sounded within Xiao Yan's body.....

Following this, the resistance from the Dou Qi finally dissipated, leaving behind a drained Xiao Yan.

A heavy sigh escaped as Xiao Yan fell powerlessly to the ground, his chest rose and fell rapidly due to exhaustion.

As he laid on the cold floor of the cave, Xiao Yan yet again experienced abundant energy that he had not felt for four years. A smile floated upon his lips, growing wider and wider until at last it became a chuckle, a hearty laughter, a howling laughter.....

Chapter 66:Flame Mantra

After lying on the icy, cold, rock floor for a long time, Xiao Yan finally managed to catch his breath. The genuine happiness plastered across his face was hard to conceal as he tested out his numb legs before once again entering a training posture.

Xiao Yan breathed out gently and slowly closing his eyes he let his thoughts gradually delve into the mysteries of his body.

Inner View: a support technique unique to those of Dou Zhe level and above. The greater one's strength, the deeper one would be able to explore and penetrate the deeper mysteries of one's body.

His thoughts ventured into his abdominal area, where a milky white palm-sized Vortex slowly stirred. Cream-white energy swirled around the Vortex in a nebulous mist.

Observing the tiny Vortex with his thoughts, Xiao Yan nodded his head –he was satisfied. Although the Vortex was tiny, the energy contained within it was more than ten times more potent than what he had when he was 9 Duan Qi!

Dou Zhe and 9 Duan Qi had different natures. The energy assimilated before becoming a Dou Zhe was actually called Dou Zi Qi, after becoming a Dou Zhe, the assimilated energy was now known as true Dou Qi!

Though there was but a one word difference between their names, the true difference was more like comparing heaven to earth: completely incomparable.

Xiao Yan consciously directed his thoughts to take control of the Vortex. Under its control, a thread of milky white Dou Qi was swiftly extracted from the Vortex and allowed to swirl around.

Continuously controlling the Vortex, making it spew forth and absorb back the Dou Qi with his thoughts, Xiao Yan's mastery slowly increased. Only when he was satisfied did Xiao Yan finally stop this game-like training and withdraw his thoughts out of his body.

His tightly shut eyes suddenly opened, revealing a milky white light that lingered for about ten seconds before fading away within his black pupils.

Xiao Yan then opened his mouth to spit out a mouthful of murky and impure air, after which his complexion brightened noticeably.

Rolling his head from side to side to stretch his neck, cracking sounds could be heard which drew out a grin from Xiao Yan. As he lifted his head to gaze at the ghostly figure of Yao Lao who was floating just outside the cave, Xiao Yan smiled brightly and said: "Success."

"Hmpf, it is your good fortune to have successfully condensed a Qi Vortex on your first try." Yao Lao replied in an indifferent tone as he nodded his head.

"More like I depended on my own abilities?" Xiao Yan retorted as he loosened his shoulders. Suddenly, he remembered something as a fawning look appeared on his face. Stretching out a hand, he asked somewhat bashfully: "Teacher, I have already reached the Dou Zhe level, isn't it time to give me a Qi Technique?"

Yao Lao rolled his eyes. His body floated into the cave and he slowly sat before Xiao Yan. He thought for a while before he asked with a solemn expression: "What Qi Technique do you want?"

“Well, the.....the thing that’s more strange than a Heaven Tier Qi Technique, the one that can.. that can evolve.” Xiao Yan scratched his head and asked in a somewhat embarrassed tone.

Hearing Xiao Yan, a look of conflict flashed across Yao Lao’s face and unexpectedly, he remained silent.

“Master, what’s wrong? Did you lie about that Qi Technique?” Seeing the look on Yao Lao’s face, Xiao Yan couldn’t help but nervously ask.

“The Qi Technique that I told you about, can indeed evolve, I didn’t fool you.” Yao Lao whispered.

Hearing Yao Lao confirm his question, a sense of happiness rushed to Xiao Yan’s face. Twisting his hands, he carefully asked: “Then can you let me use it?”

“This strange Qi Technique can indeed evolve but the risk is very high.” Yao Lao exclaimed after being silent for a long time.

Seeing the look on Yao Lao’s face, Xiao Yan slowly pulled his hand back and asked, “How high?”

Yao Lao smiled bitterly, “In my life, I have never seen anyone train this Qi Technique or heard about anyone that uses this Qi Technique. So, I don’t know how high the risk is, however, with my experience and upon seeing the difficulty of this Technique, I would say that the maximum success rate would not be more than 20%.... ”

“20%?” Xiao Yan’s face stiffened, “It’s that low?”

Yao Lao sighed and nodded, “I’m afraid that it is that low.”

Smiling bitterly and massaging his forehead, Xiao Yan was still reluctant to give up on the chance to learn an evolving Qi Technique. The temptation for a Qi Technique that could evolve into a Heaven Tier Qi Technique was simply too big.

“Teacher, can you give me an overview of this Qi Technique?”

Yao Lao rubbed his palms together and whispered after a while, “This Qi Technique’s requirements to “evolve” is related to the Heavenly Flames that I’ve told you before.”

Xiao Yan’s eyes narrowed and he kept silent while listening carefully.

“Okay, I obtained this Dou Qi technique through an accident. This Qi Technique originally was nameless. However, I gave it a name called “Flame Mantra”. Speaking up to here, Yao Lao tried to hide the mixed expression on his face. It seemed the process to obtain this Dou Qi technique was not as easy as he had told previously.

“Flame Mantra can indeed evolve, but one of its preconditions is that it needs a “Heavenly Flame” as raw material. With each evolution, it needs to swallow one type of “Heavenly Flame!” Yao Lao’s voice became somewhat rough: “You need to know that “Heavenly Flames” are some of the most violent forms of energy in this world. Even if you find it, no one can guarantee that you will be able to swallow it. In the past when I discovered this “Bone Chilling Flame”, I was almost burned alive to nothingness by it...

“The scariest part of this Method is the need to assimilate the various “Heavenly Flames” any one of the Heavenly Flames could place a Dou Huang on the precipice between life and death, I dare not imagine what would happen to a person who had two types of Heavenly Flames in their body.....”

Gazing at the unfathomable look that Yao Lao had, Xiao Yan was also frightened stiff, swallowing Heavenly Flames to evolve? God dammit, you can’t even be sure of whether you will be able to consume the flame or if the flame will consume you! The creator of this Qi Method must have been one crazy person.

“Although this Technique is dangerous beyond your wildest dreams, I do not doubt its potential. If it is truly mastered..... in the Dou Qi Continent, with the exception of a few irregulars..... no one else would be your match.” Yao Lao sighed.

Xiao Yan nodded, slightly awed at its potential. If someone were able to control a few types of Heavenly Flames, even a Dou Sheng would not dare take that person lightly. Of course that is only if that someone does not first get consumed by the Heavenly Flames.....

Eyeing Xiao Yan, Yao Lao hesitated for a while before asking: “Now, do you..... still want to learn it?”

Xiao Yan slightly shivered in silence.

Chapter 67:Choice

Regarding the “Flame Mantra”, Xiao Yan truly did not want to abandon it. After all, to be able to evolve to a Tian Dou Qi technique, the ability was really enticing. On this enormous Dou Qi continent, a Tian Rank Dou Qi Technique would be equal to a ticket to become the strongest.

Although the Qi method was powerful, the success rate was not even 20%. This fact would discourage most people. With his 10 fingers intersecting tightly together, Xiao Yan’s face changed continuously, bouncing between hesitation and distress.

Watching the apprehension on Xiao Yan’s face calmly, Yao Lao’s old face also showed a mixed expression. After a while he sighed softly: “This matter can only be decided by yourself. I also do not want to meddle too much. However, I want to ask you one thing.....What are your feelings toward the girl Xun Er?”

“Eh?” To be asked about this issue by Yao Lao startled him. Xiao Yan’s face blushed somewhat. Opening his mouth after a while and with a forced smile, he said: “Teacher, why do you suddenly ask about this? Xun Er is my younger sister. Towards her.....what feeling could I have?” At those last words, Xiao Yan seemed to feel somewhat weak.

“Hehe, sister? You also know that you do not have the slightest blood relation to her. This beautiful girl is only about 15 or 16 years old, yet the Xiao clan’s young generation already admires her endlessly. When she is grown up, what is there to say anymore?” Speaking up to here, Yao Lao shot a glance to Xiao Yan. Smiling dimly he said: “If you think about the possibility that one day another man might marry her. How would you feel?”

Forcing a faint smile on his face, Xiao Yan pursed his brows slowly. He let out a light breath and whispered: “Seems.....a little hard to accept.”

“Hehe, since you can feel that it is somewhat hard to accept then in your heart you don’t simply think of her as only your younger sister.....” Yao Lao was smiling yet not smiling as he spoke.

His face red once more, Xiao Yan was speechless and he mumbled somewhat. Spreading out his arms helplessly with a forced smile, he said: “Teacher, what do you actually want to say?”

“All of that was to clear your mind about what feeling you have towards her.....Since you and her already have unclear thoughts, you should judge your own strength and your development potential.” Congealing his face, Yao Lao gulped and somewhat doubtfully spoke: “The girl’s background is a little frightful. I do not know the exact truth about her background. Somehow, the small Xiao Clan has some kind of a relationship of with them. However, only this cannot fill the wide gap between you. The gap of status between you two is really too immense. Even if the girl likes you, those people behind her can not agree to it in any way!”

Closing his eyes, Xiao Yan intersected his palms together and held them tightly.

“This continent is a world where strength is respected. To have strength is also to have dignity. Previously you saw the behavior of Nalan Yanran. The reason as to how she is capable of acting so haughty and how she was able to look down on you is because of her background: her strength is greater than yours!” Looking at Xiao Yan’s appearance, Yao Lao sighed with sincere and earnest words.

“The power behind Xun Er is more frightening than the Faction of the Misty Cloud. Therefore, in their eyes, you are only but a worm. Even though you have outstanding talent, they are unlikely to see you as anything important. Truly, through the years, they have already seen many extremely gifted talents.....only if you are able to make them fear your strength , will you have fulfilled your wish.”

Xiao Yan touched his nose and with a shrug, he asked softly: "Will practicing 'Flame Mantra' give me that kind of power?"

"Actually, only by successfully practicing 'Flame Mantra' will you have that chance!" Yao Lao shook his head and he stared again.

Sighing lightly, Xiao Yan braced his chin. The smile of that elegant girl in the former days appeared ineffably before his eyes slowly. The silver bell-like laughter hovered in his ear.

Taking a long breath Xiao Yan smiled bitterly and said: "Teacher has said this much and still calls it not meddling with my decision?"

"Hehe....." Yao Lao stroked his withered and aged face as he let out an awkward laugh. Slightly embarrassed, he replied: "Okay, I admit I may have had some intentions of goading you, but from my point of view, I really hoped that you would practice this 'Flame Mantra'."

"You should know that I am currently just a mere spirit right?" Yao Lao spread out his arms as he asked.

Xiao Yan nodded.

"Other people may have died, but since my soul perception is much stronger than others, I have somehow strangely survived in this form....." Yao Lao smiled bitterly as if he was mocking himself.

"I do not like to live this way, each day feels like a fake and empty illusion to me. I still have things that I must personally accomplish, therefore, I need to leave this spirit state."

"Teacher wants to revive?" Xiao Yan blinked in slight disbelief. Stunned, he continued: "In this world, there should be nothing that would be able to revive the dead right?"

"Under normal circumstances, it is so." Nodding in agreement, a passionate expression appeared on Yao Lao as he continued: "Yet according to some obscure descriptions of the 'Flame Mantra', if successfully mastered, one would be able to blend a few types of Heavenly Flames together to forge a body that could house a spirit. Obtaining such a body, would be a sort of rebirth for me....."

"In the ring, I have endured countless years in a world without daylight all in hopes of one day meeting a person who has a strong enough soul perception that is able to meet my requirements. I am very lucky to have finally met you." A deep sorrow was etched into the lines of that wrinkled and aged face, though it could only be perceived by a very observant person.

Yao Lao gazed into Xiao Yan's pitch black pair of eyes that stared back at him, smiling bitterly, he continued: "Heh, just take these words as the idle rumblings of an old man. Alas, though I've said that I would not interfere, in the end, I could not help but speak, I am truly....."

Sadly shaking his head, Yao Lao stretched forth his gnarled hands. With a small wave, one black and one red scroll faintly glimmered as they appeared in each hand.

"The red scroll is a fire attributed Low Di Qi Method while the black scroll is the 'Flame Mantra'....." Yao Lao smiled as he raised both hands. His withered face softened slightly as he gently said: "Make your own choice and think about the factors that drive you, as long as you remember that whatever your choice, you will always be my disciple and I will never blame you for it."

Xiao Yan's palm supported his chin as he stared blankly at the two glittering scroll in front of him. A long time later, he licked his lips and raised his shoulders lazily while smiling: "Although I am afraid of death, without power there is no honor. I refuse to go through the kind of humiliation that Nalan Yanran gave me that day ever again. And still, even if it does not go well, I can always change to another Qi Method."

Shaking his head, a brilliant smile lit up Xiao Yan's already delicate face. In Yao Lao's slightly red and moist eyes, the figure of Xiao Yan could be seen stretching out his hand to firmly grab the black scroll.

When his hand touched the scroll, it transformed into a stream of information which poured directly into Xiao Yan's head.

Chapter 68: Fallen Heart Flame

In the narrow cave, Yao Lao watched with closed eyes as Xiao Yan trained his Dou Qi. Rubbing his reddish eyes with his hands, Yao Lao knew that he was one of the reasons why Xiao Yan had chosen this dangerous technique. Emotions welled up within his old heart as he turned to face the sky. With a low sigh, he murmured: "Rest assured, I will definitely nurture you into the most outstanding Alchemist....."

After making the breakthrough to become a Dou Zhe, one would possess the qualifications to practice a Qi Method. After practicing a Technique, the attributeless milky white Dou Qi within the body would change into the same attribute as the practiced Technique.

One did not need too much time for the first Dou Qi change, thus barely two hours later, Xiao Yan slowly opened his eyes from his cross legged sitting position.

Having practiced the Dou Qi Technique, Xiao Yan looked full of vitality and vigor compared to before. In high spirits, his delicate face shone even more with the glossiness of a beautiful piece of jade.

Xiao Yan blinked a few times as his eyes adjusted to the lighting in the cave which had become much brighter than before. Lightly smiling, he knew that this increase in sensitivity was due to the practice of the Qi Method.

“Have you succeeded?” Yao Lao asked with a smile on his face.

“Yeah.” Xiao Yan nodded as he held out a fair palm. The Qi Vortex within his body swirled, as a stream of pale yellow Dou Qi left the vortex before finally stopping at an acupuncture point on his palm.

Materializing Dou Qi could only be achieved by those who had attained at least the Da Dou Shi level. The current Xiao Yan obviously did not possess that level of strength, thus the Dou Qi in his body was unable to emerge from the acupuncture point on his palm. The Dou Qi stayed stuck causing Xiao Yan’s fair palm to be gradually suffused in a light yellow glow, like an almost burnt out candle, barely able to scatter away the darkness.

Light yellow was the color of a fire attributed Low Huang Qi Method. The higher the rank of the Qi Method, the deeper the color.

As his eyes gazed upon the meager yellow light on his palm, Xiao Yan helplessly shook his head. Lifting his head, he forced a smile as he said: “Before this “Flame Mantra” evolves, my Dou Qi would be of a lower rank than almost everyone else. No need to consider those of a higher level, I can’t even be sure of winning over someone of the same level who had practiced a Xuan Level Method...”

“Though the “Flame Mantra” is only at the Low Huang now, its might would not lose to that of a Middle Huang. Moreover, although the Qi Method is weak, don’t you still have your Dou Techniques? Three Xuan Level Dou Techniques are enough to make up for the gap in your Method.” Yao Lao smiled as he consoled Xiao Yan. Shortly after he added a warning: “Since your Qi Method is inferior to others, it also means that your endurance levels cannot compare to theirs. Therefore, in future battles, you need to be more efficient, no more wasted movements and every move must contain your full force behind it! Make sure to end each fight quickly!”

Xiao Yan nodded in understanding, however his face puckered as if still somewhat depressed.

Seeing this look on Xiao Yan and knowing his personality, Yao Lao helplessly shook his head. With no other alternative, he could only pay the price and say: “When you have thoroughly mastered the three Dou Techniques you now possess, I will once again give you a new Dou Technique. You’ll be biting off more than you can chew right now, you should understand this principle right?”

“What rank?” Xiao Yan’s eyes lit up as he very carefully inquired.

Angry yet happy at Xiao Yan's cautious appearance, Yao Lao stroked his beard and coldly snorted: "All I'll say is that it won't be lower than the level of "Octane Blast"."

At these words, Xiao Yan face immediately lit up like the sun. Octane Blast was a High Xuan Dou Technique, what could be higher than that?

Di Level!

Though Di Level was only one grade better than High Xuan Level, the distance between the two was as wide as the grand canyon. With enough wealth and a bit of luck, one could occasionally obtain a High Xuan Dou Technique from a high-ranking auction. Yet a Di Level Dou Technique could be said to be priced beyond the market as it was once heard that in the imperial capital of Jia Ma Empire, the price of a Di Level Dou Technique had rocketed to a sky-high price of about ten million, which was equivalent to an entire year of taxes from the entire Jia Ma Empire.

Although it was merely one grade of difference, the price between the two was more than a hundred times. From this it could be seen that Xuan Level and Di Level were two completely different concepts.

Thinking about this almost legendary level, Xiao Yan's feelings boiled over, wishing he could compel Yao Lao to teach it to him straightaway. However, after considering the status and relationship between the two of them, he decided to obediently give up on that comical idea.

"Teacher, when will you teach me Alchemy?" Temporarily letting go of the thoughts of the Di Level Dou Technique, Xiao Yan asked yet again.

"Alchemy is not meant to be learnt in this small and tiny clan." Yao Lao answered as he shook his head. Smiling, he continued: "In addition, almost half the time has passed since you made the three year bet between yourself and Nalan Yanran. It is foolish to stay in Wu Tan City any more, the training speed here is too slow. Furthermore, I am unable to utilise some training methods due to complicated and various reasons. Thus I want to bring you on a training trip for slightly over a year."

"More than a year?" Hearing this, Xiao Yan was somewhat hesitant, however when he thought about that haughty woman, he resolutely nodded his head and replied: "Okay, a year, so be it. When do we leave?"

"Let us wait for two months." Yao Lao smiled and said.

"Why wait for so long?" Xiao Yan asked in bewilderment.

"Because one month later is the time for Jia Nan Academy to enroll new students and you need to go register." Yao Lao lightly smiled as he replied.

Rolling his eyes, Xiao Yan forced out a smile and questioned: "What do I need to do there? I am not lacking in Qi Methods or Dou Techniques, what else can they teach me?"

"I'm not asking you to learn something there." Yao Lao gave him 'the eye' as his eyebrows creased. Lowering his voice, Yao Lao said: "You need to go to Jia Nan Academy to search for a type of "Heavenly Flame", I had previously obtained intelligence that in Jia Nan Academy there should be a type of Heavenly Flame called "Fallen Heart Flame". This Heavenly Flame is ranked 14th on the "Heavenly Flames List"! If you are able to obtain this Heavenly Flame, "Flame Mantra" could possibly evolve....."

"Fallen Heart Flame?"

Xiao Yan softly whispered this queer name to himself as his eyes gradually lit up.

Chapter 69: The Furious Xun Er

After settling everything, Xiao Yan slowly emerged from the cave. Following the mountain path, he sneakily climbed to the mountain top and glanced about to check that no one else was around. Finally, letting out a sigh of relief, he took large strides as he walked directly towards the clan home.

Leisurely returning to the clan, Xiao Yan chanced upon the three Clan Elders who hurriedly rushed past as they brushed shoulders with him in the front courtyard. Pausing his step, Xiao Yan was somewhat puzzled at the gloomy yet furious faces of the three Elders who had just left.

"Who has offended them now?" Amazed, Xiao Yan shook his head and turned around to find a green clothed young maiden scuttling out from a side path to stand, slender and elegant, before him.

At the sight of the adorable Xun Er who wore a smiling expression on her face, Xiao Yan's heart skipped a beat. Thinking back on what Yao Lao had asked in the cave, his face grew hot as he somewhat guiltily turned his gaze to the sky to act as if he was in thought.

Slightly dazed by Xiao Yan's unusual behaviour, it was only a moment later that Xun Er shook her head as she could not make heads or tails of the reason behind this change. Taking a step forward, she fluidly glanced over Xiao Yan as a look of surprise appeared on her delicate face. Both hands on her back, she leaned forward until there was only 1 cm between them, she feigned a smile and said: "Elder Brother Xiao Yan, you've advanced to Dou Zhe?"

Overwhelmed by the fragrant, warm breath that blew onto his face, Xiao Yan momentarily lost his wits. Furiously shaking his head to break the spell, he firmly forced

down his fluttering heart. Patting the head of the young maiden who was as tall as him, he grudgingly said: "Why can't you let me say it myself to satisfy my conceited tendencies?"

Hearing this, Xun Er's eyes slightly curved into the shape of a beautiful crescent moon. Like always, She extended out a fair, delicate hand and started to earnestly smooth the creases on Xiao Yan's clothes.

In the past, when Xiao Yan was treated this way by Xun Er, he did not think twice about it. Yet today, after the feelings in his heart had been exposed by Yao Lao, he was now suddenly disturbed by this gesture.

Near this path, other clansmen occasionally passed by. At the sight of Xun Er helping Xiao Yan to tidy his clothes like a wife, they could not help but be full of envy.

As he inclined his head to look upon her delicate and flawless face, a strand of fine black hair fell across her forehead. It emphasized the largeness of her eyes which fluidly wandered about, an exceedingly touching sight.

Staring blankly at Xun Er, the pace of Xiao Yan's breathing gradually increased as his gaze heated up with passion.

"Xiao Yan ge-ge.....you, what are you looking at." Xun Er quietly grumbled after she patted down the creases on Xiao Yan's clothes. She had finally become aware of his passionate gaze, her cheeks reddening in response.

"Ah? Oh....." coming to his senses, Xiao Yan's face also turned a shade of pink. Luckily his skin was much thicker than Xun Er's, after faking two coughs, he nonchalantly replied: "Nothing much, it's just that Xun Er has become more and more pretty."

Hearing Xiao Yan's words, Xun Er did not reply and gently snorted. However, her rosy lips lifted to form a pleased expression.

"Oh, right....." Recalling something, Xun Er abruptly cast a glance over Xiao Yan's body again before gently asking: "Since Xiao Yan ge-ge has already advanced to Dou Zhe, then a Qi Method has also be learnt?"

Xiao Yan's expression stiffened as he embarrassedly nodded in affirmation.

Slim fingers pressed against her snow white chin, Xun Er laughed merrily and said: "Would you let Xun Er see what level Qi Method it is?"

"*Coughs*.....uh Qi Methods...are just objects, that aside.....As long as one works hard, won't the level not matter?" Xiao Yan replied as he gave out a hollow laugh.

Observing Xiao Yan's expression, a dangerous glint slowly appeared in Xun Er's eyes, yet her tone remained gentle as she said: "Xiao Yan ge-ge, just let Xun Er take a look....."

At the obstinate Xun Er, Xiao Yan could only helplessly shrug his shoulders as he stretched out a hand. A moment later, a weak light yellow glow appeared.

"Xiao Yan ge-ge, this is the better Technique that you talked about?" Staring at the light yellow glow that looked as if it would be extinguished at any moment, Xun Er's face turned a little unsightly. Her rosy lips pursed, displaying the indignation in her heart.

Xiao Yan awkwardly laughed, unsure of how to explain.

"You clearly know that if you possess a high-grade Qi Method in the initial stages, it goes without saying that it would benefit your future training. Yet you rejected me, Xun Er was not trying to give you charity. Worst case scenario, you could have returned the Qi Method when you got a better one. However, now you're practicing the lowest tier of Qi Methods, is this not to spite me?" Xun Er's eyes widely opened as she glared at Xiao Yan in anger. Her long eyelashes sparkled with moisture.

Being capable of making the sweet-natured Xun Er use this manner of speech, it is possible to imagine just how much Xun Er was puzzled and furious at Xiao Yan's actions.

As his eyes fell upon a Xun Er who was biting her lips while stubbornly hoping for an answer from him, Xiao Yan helplessly shook his head. He forced a smile and replied in a low voice: "We have lived together for ten years, do you still not understand me? Do you really think that I would be the kind of person that would let go of a high level Qi Method and instead practice the lowest level of Qi Methods like an idiot?"

"But your Method...is undoubtedly of the Low Huang Level, I can feel it." Xun Er obstinately insisted after hearing Xiao Yan's reply; though the anger on her face had already slightly dissipated.

"A book cannot be judged by its cover, currently it is not convenient for me to tell you in detail about the reason but someday in the future, you will understand. The present me is definitely not letting my emotions cloud my judgement....." Xiao Yan said as he smiled.

"Really?" Gazing at the serious look on Xiao Yan, Xun Er mulled in silence for awhile before hesitantly asking once again.

"Yes, it's true, of course its true....." Xiao Yan hastily nodded his head. Fearing that she would continue to ask about the issue, he quickly changed the topic by asking: "Did something happen in the clan recently? How come the elders had such uncomfortable expressions?"

“Yea, recently the Jia Lie Clan managed to invite a first tier Alchemist from god knows where. At present, their marketplace has a new remedy called ‘Return of Spring Powder’. This remedy is cheap yet effective, making it extremely well received and loved by the mercenaries in Wu Tan City.” Xun Er nodded as she furrowed her eyebrows and continued explaining: “Because of the influence from the ‘Return of Spring Powder’, the traffic in the Xiao Clan marketplace has been cut by almost half and because of this loss, the merchants from the marketplace have relocated to the Jia Lie Clan’s Marketplace. Though it had only been a few days, the Xiao Clan has already suffered economically by quite a bit, causing Uncle Xiao to worry about this event.”

Hearing this, Xiao Yan nodded his head in understanding, no wonder the three Elders had such gloomy expressions.

Xiao Yan slightly narrowed his eyes as he rubbed his nose, sneering in his heart: “Just a mere first tier Alchemist, does Jia Lie Clan really think he’s something?”

Chapter 70:Investigation

Xiao Yan found an excuse to part with Xun Er before stealthily slipping out of the clan. Pausing quickly to think, he decided to go to the nearest small marketplace owned by the Jia Lie Clan.

Although he was not interested in helping the Elders to ease their troubles, he hoped within his capabilities, he could be of some help to his father. To help, he would need to know where to start, thus, Xiao Yan needed to first investigate the Jia Lie Clan’s marketplaces.

This small marketplace owned by the Jia Lie Clan was positioned in a somewhat remote area and thus usually enjoyed a small crowd. However, when Xiao Yan walked into the marketplace, he was overwhelmed by the jam-packed streets and the deafening clamor of the crowds.

On the wide street, people rushed about. Some bare-armed and burly men were shouting while desperately pushing their way through the crowd. From the faint smell of blood emitting from these men, they were probably bloodthirsty mercenaries. Due to being in frequent contact with death, they held a great love for healing ointments, after all, when penetrating deeply into dangerous lands, a little healing ointment might be just the right price to buy back a comrade’s life.

Standing at the entrance of the marketplace, Xiao Yan saw a few mercenaries carrying small wooden cases while pushing their way out of the crowd before joyously darting out of the market.

“Those cases should contain ‘Return of Spring Powder’ right?” Quietly whispering this line, Xiao Yan also entered the street and used all of his might to burrow into the crowd. At a stall selling ‘Return of Spring Powder’, he spent a hundred gold to buy a case.

Holding the case as he once again painstakingly squeezed out of the crowd, Xiao Yan finally let out a breath of relief. Thinking back at the proud and impatient faces of the medicine sellers, he could not help but sneer bitterly in his heart: those dogs who use their position to bully others.

As he walked out of the market with the case, Xiao Yan lifted the case lid. Within it were ten small bottles made of a crude material, probably the lowest grade of jade stone. It would be impossible to maintain the effectiveness of the medicine with this kind of material.

Opening the bottle, a mildly green fluid which emitted an extremely weak medicine smell was found to be contained within.

“Teacher, can this even be called medicine?” Somewhat amazed at the diluted medicine, Xiao Yan could not bear but ask in his heart.

“Yea, it can count as the lowest grade of healing medicine with some healing effects. This kind of simple healing medicine is not hard to make and because of its commonness, it can only be sold at a cheap price. This is why only a few first tier alchemists bother to manufacture it.”

“It is indeed very cheap, one hundred gold for ten bottles is ten gold per bottle. To an Alchemist, this is really shameful.” Slightly nodding his head, Xiao Yan hesitated for a moment before asking: “Teacher, do you have any remedies that are somewhat better than this?”

“A lot, but those potions are too low level so I seldom manufacture them.” Yao Lao paused before speaking again: “Do you want to manufacture them for the Xiao Clan? That’s good since you are already a Dou Zhe, it is time to try your hand at refining some medicine.”

“Oh? I get to refine?” Xiao Yan was slightly astonished at Yao Lao’s words.

“Could it be that you still expect me to personally handle this kind of thing?” Yao Lao unhappily retorted before proceeding with his instructions: “First, go to the Auction House to find a somewhat better quality medicine cauldron. Afterwards, you need to purchase a big batch of basic medicine ingredients. At the early stages, a new alchemist depends on mass producing pill to gain experience.”

Xiao Yan licked his lips with an eager expression on his face. Throwing the case into a ditch by the roadside, he ran quickly towards the location of the Primer Auction house.

Right before he arrived at the Auction House, Xiao Yan once again donned the black mantle in a hidden corner before taking his time to slowly approach the Auction House.

All of the staff at Primer Auction House were already familiar with Xiao Yan's disguise, thus when they saw a figure wearing a black mantle slowly advancing from afar, one of them quickly entered into the Auction House to inform Ya Fei and Gu Ni.

Hearing their subordinates' announcement, Ya Fei and Gu Ni simultaneously abandoned their current work to appear at the Auction House door and were all smiles as they led Xiao Yan into the guest room.

"I have made this visit to ask for your help in obtaining a quality cauldron." The old voice sounded from under the black gown. Then, with both hands, he brought the cup of tea towards his mouth to take a sip.

Aware of the other party's status, Ya Fei was not at all surprised at his request. Smiling while nodding her head, she beckoned to call a serving girl. Ya Fei softly gave the girl a few instructions before waving her hand to send the girl off.

"Haha, sir, you have come at such an opportune moment, just this morning the auction house received a medicine cauldron refined by fiery flames. This cauldron was forged by the famous blacksmith from the Jia Ma Empire, Master He Er. Not only does it amplify the Dou Qi Flame, it is also made of some rare metals that help to increase the chances of successfully refining medicine. These days, these kinds of medicine cauldrons are highly praised by the Alchemists of Jia Ma Empire." Ya Fei explained as she smiled, her eyes moved about bewitchingly.

"Mmm." The old voice carried a slightly pleased tone. Slightly hesitating before asking again: "Also prepare for me a low level "Storage Ring" with 500 stalks of Blood Clot Grass, 600 Bone Growing Flower, 500 Poppy Flowers, 500 Lively Fruits....."

Hearing these requests, Gu Ni's eyelids jumped up slightly. Even the lowest grade "Storage Ring" costs about 70 to 80 thousand and though the latter medicine ingredients were not that rare, the large quantity required meant that it would take no less than 100,000 gold to prepare. Lastly, if the medical cauldron mentioned by Ya Fei was auctioned, it could fetch a price of about 150,000. All these things added up, without 300,000 gold it would be difficult to manage.

Ya Fei was likewise stunned by the request. The auction house was not owned by her alone and thus she had to report most of the profits and transactions to the headquarters. Privately using 300,000 worth of funds was not impossible but it would definitely be found out by her superiors.

Lightly biting her red lips and taking a bit of time to weigh the benefits a fourth tier alchemist could bring, Ya Fei gave an easy smile as she said: "Old sir, everything will be prepared in an hour."

"Haha, good....." For the first time in front of Ya Fei, Yao Lao normally unenthusiastic tone was replaced by a pleased laughter.

A fair hand emerged from beneath the black gown to fish out a blue jade card and place it on the table. Yao Lao smiled and said: "I am not sure if this money is enough for the purchases..... but you can add in another set of Qi Gathering Pill materials."

Hearing what was said, Gu Ni complexion changed faintly. Another set of materials for a Qi Gathering Pill? Wouldn't that be another 50,000 gold?

Rosy lips slightly parted, Ya Fei was a little angry too. Although the other party was a fourth tier Alchemist, this was too much.

Though she was angry, Ya Fei kept these feelings in her heart, not letting even the slightest bit show on her lovely face by donning a fully smiling expression. Thinking to herself for a moment, she laughed bitterly in her heart. Reminding herself that sometimes sacrifices had to be made for the greater good, she had no choice but to sigh and nod, indicating her agreement.

"Haha, looks like the two of you have misunderstood. This set of materials is not for myself, I was only thinking of helping out by making a "Qi Gathering Pill" for you. Letting you two pay for the cost of the materials shouldn't be too much right?" The old voice coolly laughed.

A slightly dazed but still lovely face was soon after suddenly filled with joy, Ya Fei's wits were temporarily scattered by this abrupt yet pleasant surprise. A short period of time later, Ya Fei finally managed to suppress her flushed face and calm down. Making eye contact with the similarly joyous Gu Ni, she somewhat nervously replied in a soft voice: "Then I'll have to thank you sir."