

Carefree Path of Dreams

Chapter 24: Inner Power

At night, it was quiet in the secluded valley.

The Zhou Family was now extremely obedient to Fang Yuan. Even when Fang Yuan chased them out of the valley, they took it lightly and went on to build grass huts outside of the valley.

Little did they know that Fang Yuan had planned all these to get himself out of trouble.

Wouldn't it be trouble if they found out that Fang Yuan ate Vermillion Jade Rice, and drank Questioning Heart Tea for every meal?

After having his fill, Fang Yuan sat on a bamboo chair and examined his wound.

"Good... You are beginning to heal..."

He had an amazing physical quality to begin with. After a full meal of Vermillion Jade Rice, the healing accelerated.

There was increased blood flow to his wound and it felt less painful.

"A speedy recovery would be best, otherwise others might find out!"

With his current level of [Medicine] together with his herbs, it would have already been a quick recovery, but it was another happy surprise realising the Vermillion Jade Rice's hidden ability.

Thinking about his accomplishments, Fang Yuan smiled to himself.

Although he did not have time to loot the entire mansion, the rewards from Song Yujie and Song Zhigao were enough.

Other than money, Fang Yuan looted a Spirit Returning Heart Manual from Song Yujie!

This was obviously a high-level Spirit Returning Sect manual, which Fang Yuan took as his own. He memorised the entire manual, before destroying it completely.

"Spirit Returning Sect has no morals!"

He recited the Spirit Returning Heart Manual in his mind, his face looking stern.

This was because in the manual, there were lapses in the crucial parts. Obviously, these lapses were meant to be covered and explained by the master in order for the disciple to be able to understand. It was a form of insurance for these higher-level martial arts.

If Song Yujie had any doubts about the Heart Manual, he could look for Song Zhong.

But for himself? Even if he managed to save Old Zhou, could he expect him to betray Spirit Returning Sect and share this big secret with him?

'Hu... It seems that if I don't join them, even if I try hard enough, I won't be able to learn the full thing...'

Fang Yuan shook his head and took a look at his stats:

"Name: Fang Yuan

Essence: 1.8

Spirit: 1.6

Magic: 1.5

Age: 18

Cultivation: [Martial Artist (3rd Gate)]

Techniques: [Black Sand Palm (Grade 3)]

Skills: [Medicine (Level 1)], [Botany (Level 3)]"

At this point in time, behind [Medicine], the (Level 1) began jumping, and a short while later became (Level 2), with its description changing,

"[Medicine (Level 2)] - You are already a skilled doctor and can treat the majority of illnesses. You could achieve a greater effect with the help of normal mountain herbs."

"Normal mountain herbs, this means that spiritual medicine would not have any effect on my progress..."

Fang Yuan shook his head and felt that he was a little too greedy.

Of course, it was a pleasant surprise for him to attain a higher level in [Medicine].

His real joy was being able to fill his experience bar in Black Sand Palm after killing Song Yujie, as though he was able to break through the next gate anytime.

'In the 12 Golden Gates, the first 8 are Initial, Rest, Life, Restriction, View, Pain, Shock and Death... it would be an accomplishment itself being able to break through from the 3 Prosperous Gates to the next 2 Peaceful Gates, and an eye-opener for those who practice the most basic martial arts.'

Fang Yuan looked at this palm, enlightened.

Martial artists who broke through the 3rd Gate were already uncommon, but those who broke through the 4th and 5th Gates were the elites, especially to younger martial artists.

Even Song Yujie himself, who was like Song Zhong in his younger days, could only break through the 4th Gate.

"From the 4th Gate onwards, even if the experience bar is full, something more has to be done to break through the next gate?"

Fang Yuan looked at this fully-filled experience bar, and without hesitation, "Advance my Black Sand Palm to the next grade!"

"Ding!"

A loud sound followed, as he noticed the '3' behind [Black Sand Palm (Grade 3)] jump, and transformed to '4'!

[Black Sand Palm (Grade 4)]!

"Mmm!"

Fang Yuan clenched his teeth and noticed his palm turned pitch-black. Veins were distinct like worms, as though they were crawling up his arm.

A gush of hot air originated from his palms and travelled up his arm, breaking through many barriers before settling down at his chest.

This heat energy was different from anything he felt before, as his abdomen felt stronger and stronger.

"Is this... inner power!?"

Fang Yuan became really excited.

"[Black Sand Palm (Grade 4)], the skill initially strengthened the external parts of my body, but it's now starting to have an effect inside the body?!"

Inner power was the essence of power for martial artists and was a foundation for high-level martial arts techniques. The sword essence that came from Song Yujie was an example of the use of inner power.

Fang Yuan's strength diminished when it encountered the sword essence. If not for the poisonous effect brought about by the Black Sand Palm, Fang Yuan would have died under Song Yujie's hands.

"Sadly, the inner power when cultivated through the Black Sand Palm is rudimentary and cannot compare with the Spirit Returning Sect's Heart Manual... The highest I can go will be the 5th Gate...."

Fang Yuan knew that he was just one step away from attaining the highest standard of Black Sand Palm as harnessed by its creator, Kou Feng.

He looked at the description,

"[Black Sand Palm (Grade 4)] - External martial arts, and if mastered, one's palm would become as strong as steel, and able to break gold and jade. There are a total of 5 grades, and now currently at Grade 4. Comes with stronger poison abilities and strengthened inner power!"

'With more inner power, I can break through more gates!'

Fang Yuan took a deep breath, controlled the energy within his abdomen, and prepared for the breakthrough of the 4th Gate, Restriction Gate.

"Crack!"

A sound was heard, and immediately he felt an even larger amount of energy within his abdomen. The inner power within him flowed freely.

'Breaking through gates is one thing, and crossing realms is another!'

Fang Yuan thought to himself silently.

He was truly a martial artist at the 4th Gate now. If he continued to practise the Rough Breathing Technique, he would be able to train that to Grade 4 too, just that he would

be unable to break through another Restriction Gate and reap its benefits one more time.

Furthermore, to break through the 5th Gate, he would have to see which technique of his would break through the 5th Gate first, and it did not depend on the how many techniques he had. Within the martial artists, there was an unspoken rule of how one should not try to master everything.

'A martial artist at the 4th Gate must train their inner power. Without any Heart Manual, the Eagle Claw Skill can only break through the first 3 gates... But if the Heart Manual compliments it, there would be tremendous improvements and even the potential to break through the 3 Perilous Gates!'

Fang Yuan considered to himself seriously.

The potential of the Black Sand Palm was the same as the Rough Breathing Technique and only had the potential to break through the 5th Gate.

If he wished to break through the Pain Gate, he would need to find a higher-tier martial art to practice.

'I would never dare to practise this incomplete Spirit Returning Heart Manual. I wonder, in the end, would the stats window show me that the skill is completed, or would it try and predict the way ahead for the Black Sand Palm...'

Fang Yuan touched his chin, smiled and realised he became greedy.

He dismissed his inner power, and his palms appeared normal again, as though he was a normal young man. No one would able to associate him with being a murderer.

"Did my stats increase?"

After a while, as the heat energy from his inner power dissipated, Fang Yuan took a look at his stats board and realised the following changes:

"Name: Fang Yuan

Essence: 2.2

Spirit: 2.0

Magic: 1.5

Age: 18

Cultivation: [Martial Artist (4th Gate)]

Techniques: [Black Sand Palm (Grade 3)]

Skills: [Medicine (Level 2)], [Botany (Level 3)]"

'The bigger the danger, the better the chance to improve oneself. The higher the cultivation level, the harder it is to advance, especially when it comes to the 3 Perilous Gates. If one fails, he might lose control of himself and even lead to death, but the rewards are worth the risk!'

Fang Yuan was extremely satisfied at seeing the increment for his Essence and Spirit.

At this moment, the sun rose and the sun rays peered through his window.

"Unknowingly, the night has passed!"

Fang Yuan took a deep breath and stood up, shook his legs a little, but then realised that his legs were never numb to begin with, but rather, full of energy. As for the wound on his chest, it was almost healed and a scab was already forming.

At this rate of healing, a complete recovery would be done in no time and there might not even be any scar.

"This is indeed good news!"

He laughed, walked out of the door and intended to boil some water and brew tea.

When he reached the entrance of the valley, he saw Minister Lin and the Zhou siblings supporting another man, all waiting at the entrance.

"Zhou Tong wishes to thank young master for saving my life!"

Old Zhou did not seem too old and looked quite healthy. When he saw Fang Yuan, he shook off Zhou Wenxin's hand and prepared to pay his respects to Fang Yuan.

"You have only just recovered, you should spend more time resting!"

Fang Yuan casually replied.

"Mmm, I would like to have a word with young master, if you will!"

Zhou Tong turned around, looked at the Zhou siblings with a serious look, and thanked Minister Lin, "I am eternally grateful for Brother Lin's help!"

"Haha, Brother Zhou, you're too courteous!"

Minister Lin was aware and could tell straight away that Old Zhou wanted to have a private talk with Fang Yuan, and said, "I have other things to see to, I'll take my leave first!"

With him, he brought along the Zhou Siblings and left the entrance of the valley.

"Old Zhou, please speak your mind!"

Fang Yuan brewed a pot of tea and sat down quietly.

"This tea..."

Old Zhou lifted his teacup, took a sip and his expression changed, "Not bad!"

Since Old Zhou was an outsider, Fang Yuan did not brew the spiritual tea, but these tea leaves were still grown and hand-picked by him, and with the complement of the Meditative Tea Ceremony, it still managed to surprise Zhou Tong.

'He must be a talented person, to be able to brew tea of such standards. I should get straight to the point...'

After one cup of tea, Old Zhou suddenly exclaimed, "Ah! There is misfortune within the family!"

It seems that he was still unaware of his predicament.