CULTIVATION IS CREATION

Chapter 4: Learning the Basics

Keeping a secret in a sect full of cultivators is about as easy as hiding a penguin in a peacock sanctuary. Everyone's always watching, analyzing, looking for any advantage or weakness they can exploit. And here I was, trying to conceal the fact that I had what amounted to a spiritual video game interface in my head.

"Your energy circulation is improving, Young Brother Ke Yin," Senior Sister Liu commented during morning practice. "Though your method is... unconventional."

I tried not to look nervous. "Unconventional how, Senior Sister?"

She made a vague gesture with her hand. "Most beginners circulate spiritual energy like water flowing through channels. Yours moves more... systematically. Almost mechanical in its precision."

Warning: Circulation pattern potentially identifiable. Recommend randomizing flow variance by 15% to appear more natural. I silently thanked Azure for the heads-up. The little spirit had proven invaluable over the past few days, helping me navigate the basics of cultivation while keeping our unique situation under wraps. "I've been practicing very diligently, Senior Sister," I said carefully. Which was true – I just didn't mention the helpful UI elements and progress bars that made it significantly easier. She studied me for a moment longer before moving on to critique the next disciple. I let out a quiet breath of relief. "You're attracting attention," Wei Lin muttered from his meditation cushion beside me. "That's the third time this week Senior Sister Liu has singled you out." "I'm just following the basic instructions," I protested. "Same as everyone else."

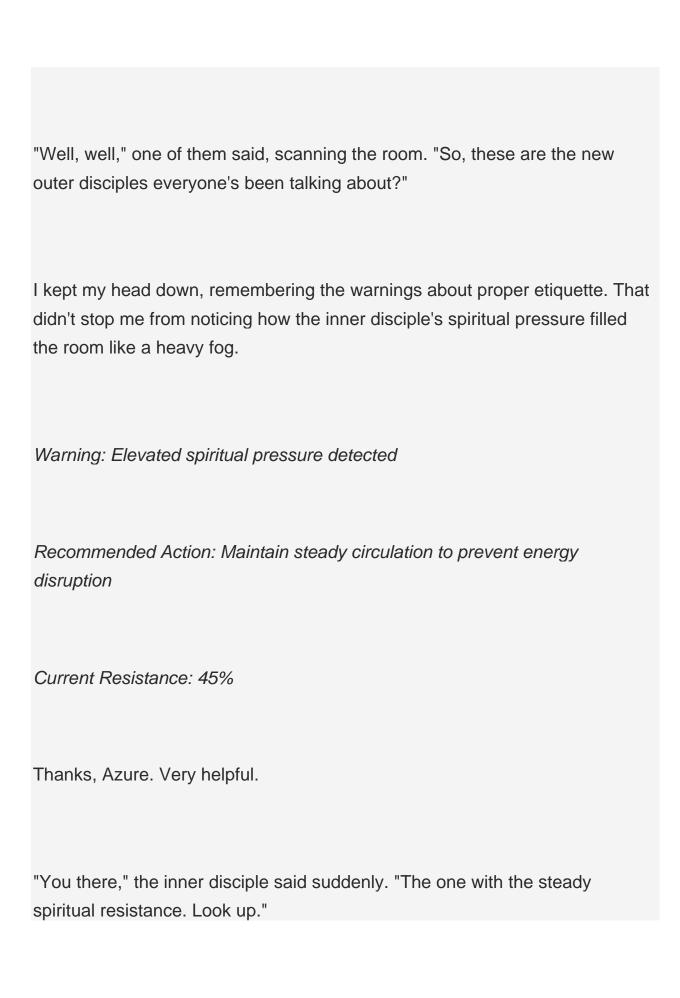
Wei Lin snorted softly. "Right. And I'm secretly the Sect Master's long-lost son. Nobody progresses this smoothly without special techniques. Which, I remind you, my family would be happy to provide..." "Still focusing on the basics," I cut him off. This was becoming a daily conversation. "But I appreciate the offer." The truth was, I did have special techniques – they just weren't the kind Wei Lin was thinking of. Current Status:Inner World Size: 2.3 cubic meters Energy Density: 23/100 Features Unlocked: Basic Circulation Paths, Energy Collection Array (Level 1) Azure had explained that while every cultivator eventually developed an inner world with its own spiritual manifestation, my system provided unique advantages. For one thing, I could see exactly how everything worked, complete with numbers and progress bars. For another, Azure wasn't limited to the usual role of a spiritual guide.

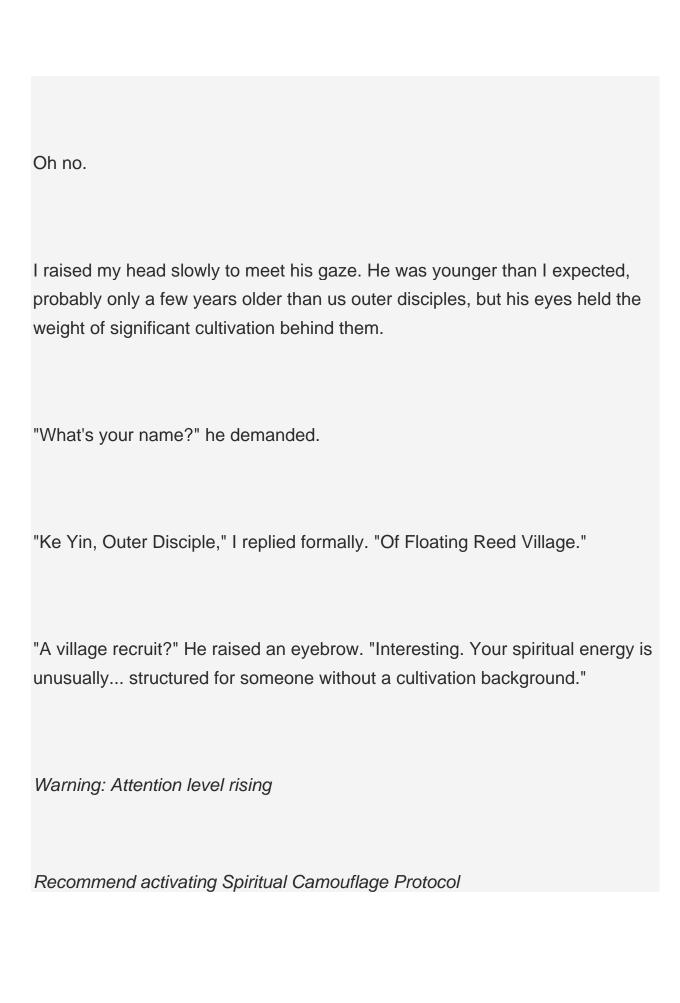
"Most inner world spirits are like gardeners," he'd explained during one of our evening training sessions. "They help maintain the spiritual landscape and provide basic guidance. Thanks to the System, I can offer much more precise assistance."

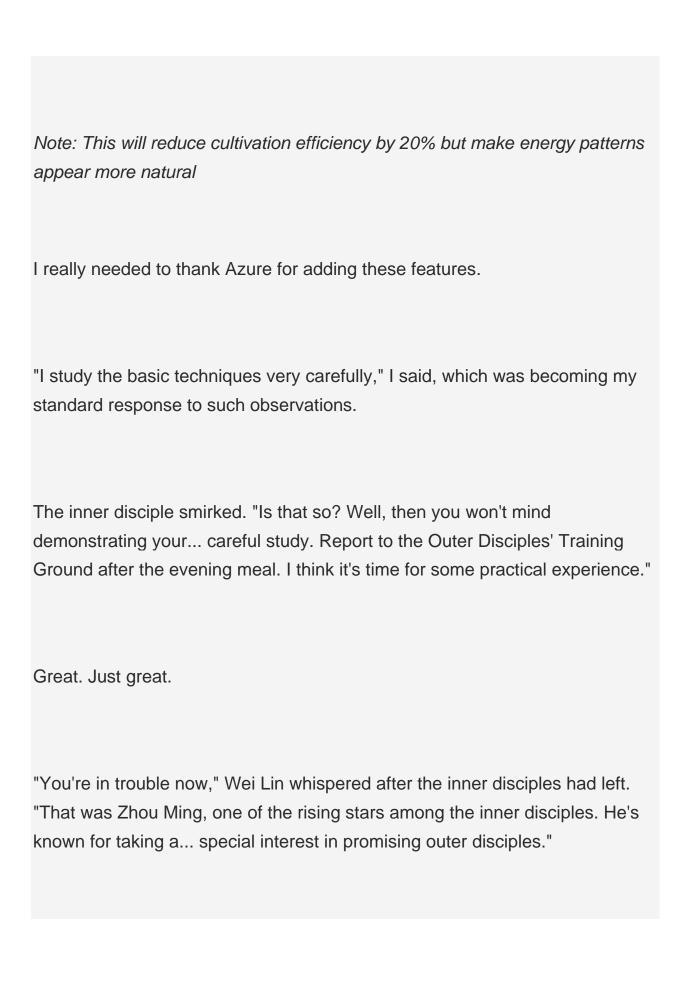
The morning session eventually ended, and we broke for the mid-day meal. I had just sat down with my bowl of rice when a commotion broke out near the dining hall entrance.

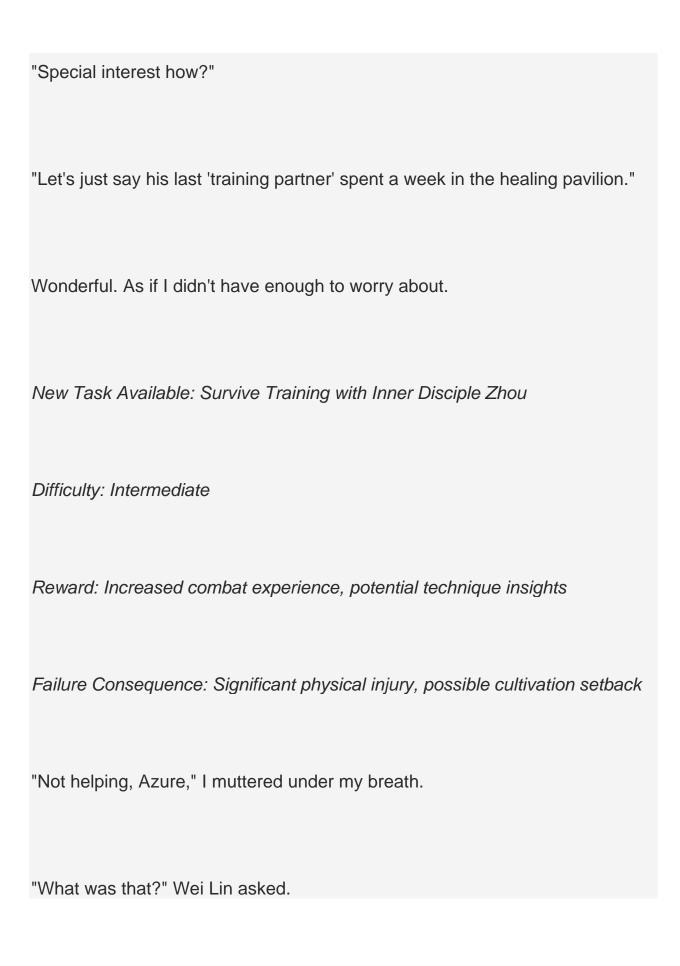
"Inner Disciples!"

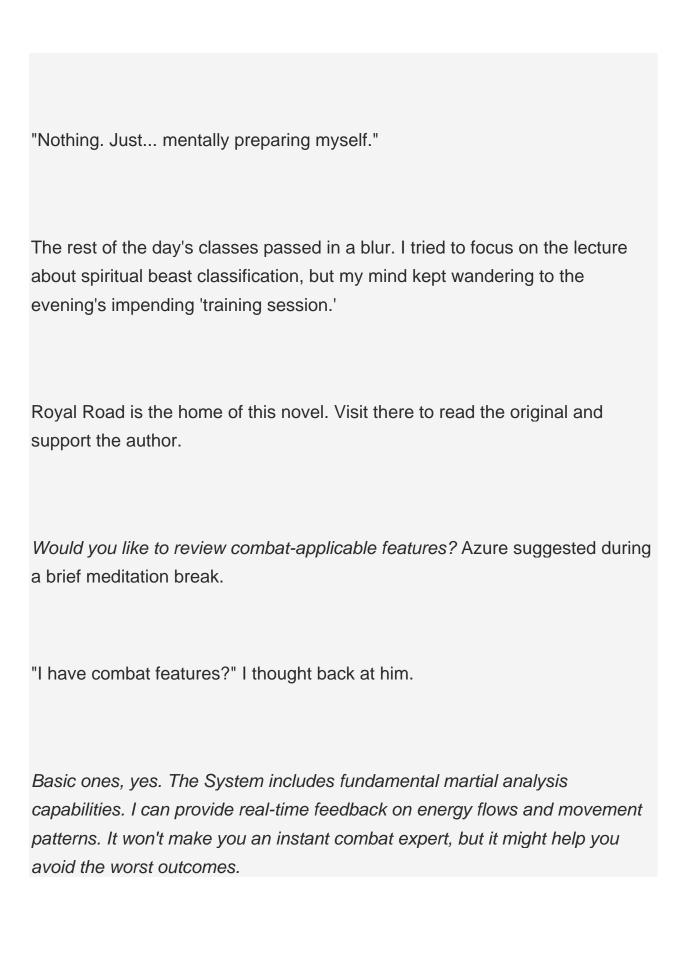
The warning spread quickly, and everyone scrambled to stand and bow as a group of older disciples entered. Their robes were more elaborate than ours, with patterns that seemed to ripple like water catching sunlight.

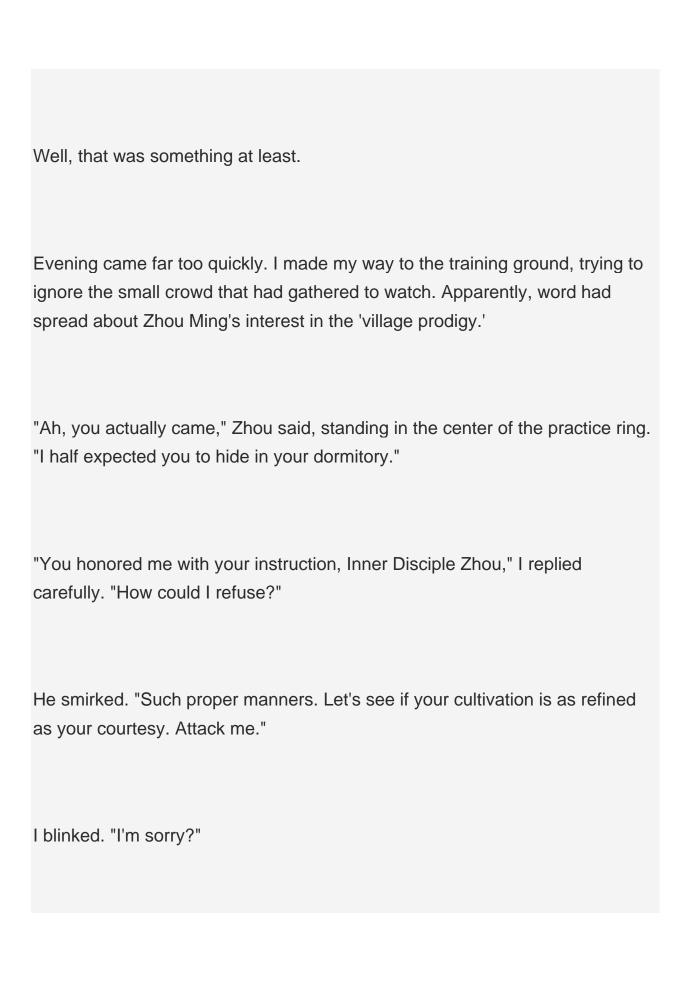




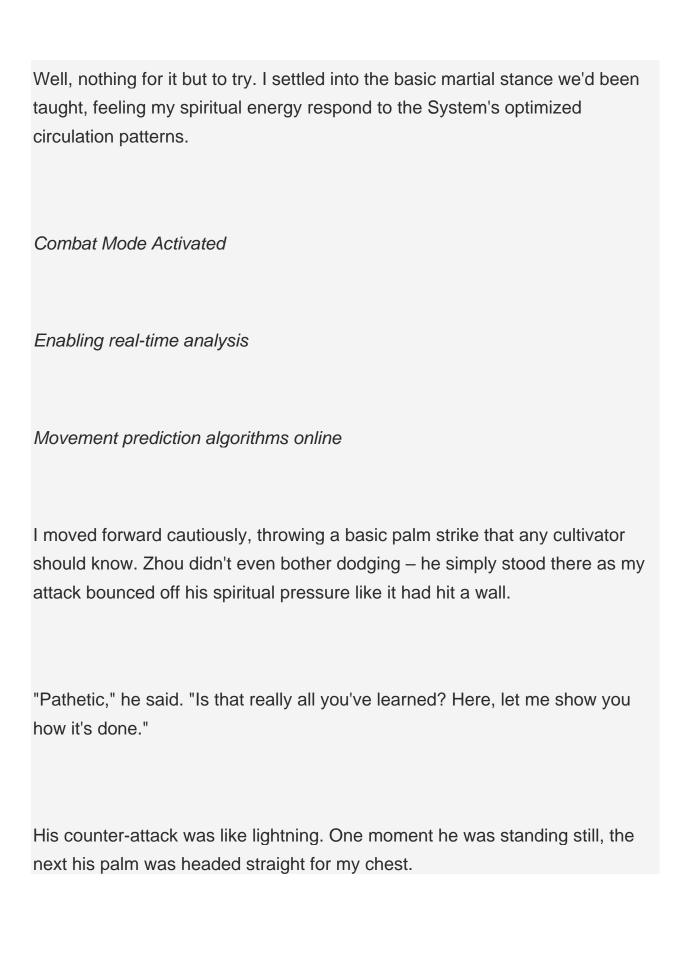


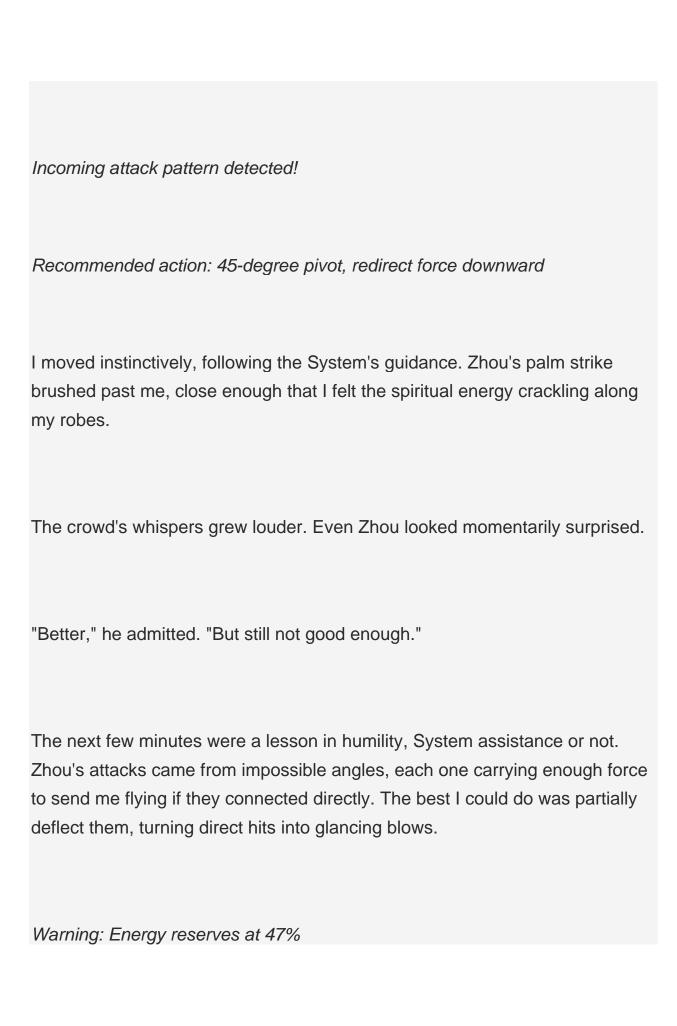


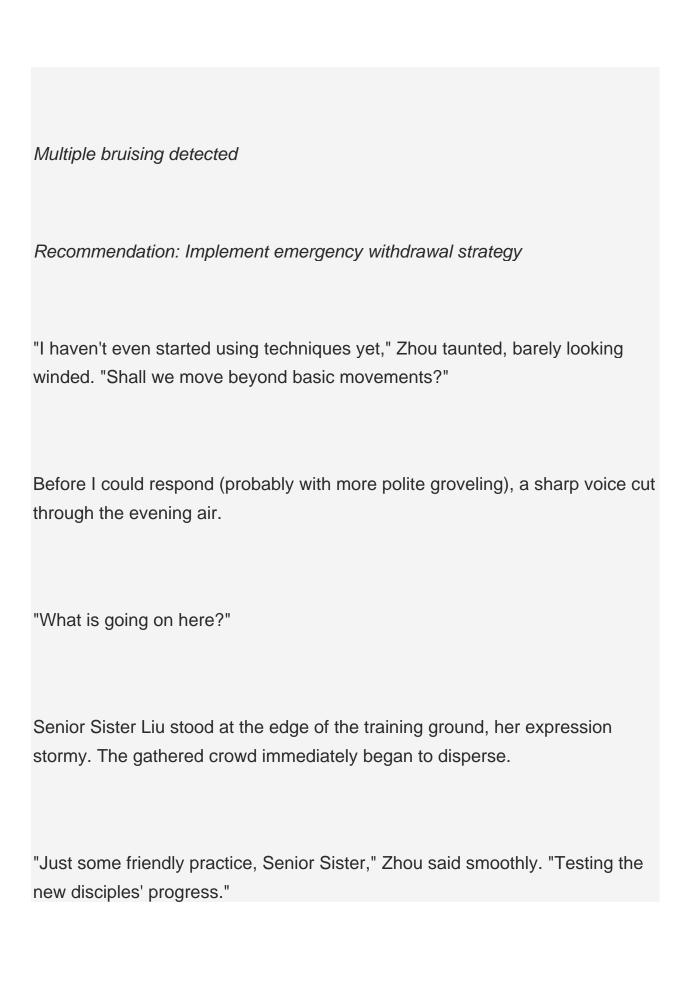


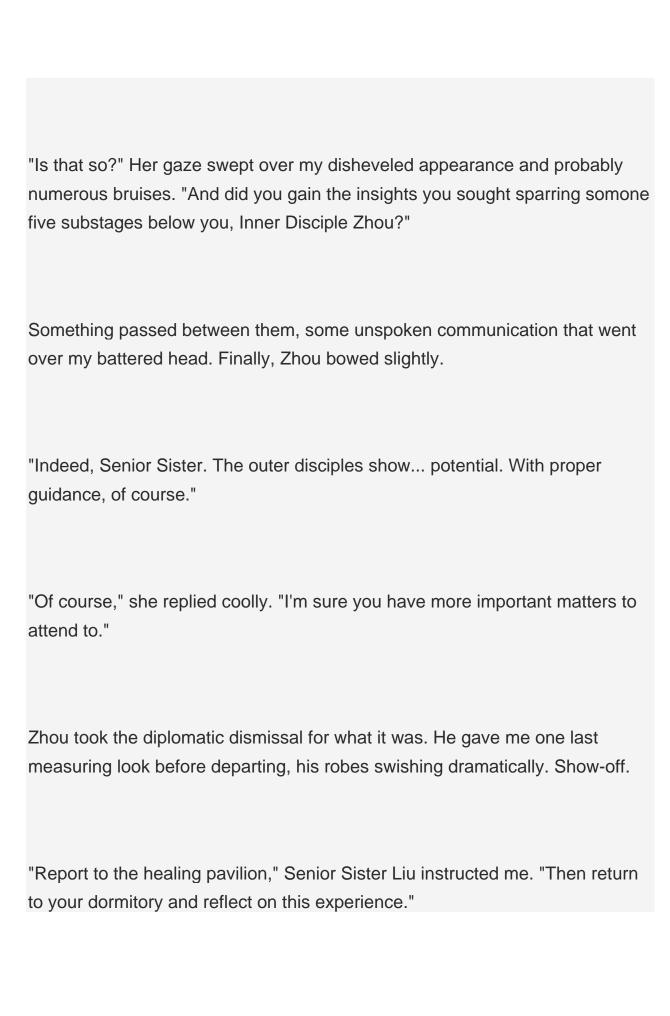


"Attack me," he repeated. "Show me these basic techniques you've studied so carefully. Don't worry – I'll restrict my cultivation to the first level of Qi Condensation. That should give you a fighting chance maybe."
The crowd whispered excitedly. Even with him restricting himself, this was like putting a kindergartener up against a professional fighter.
Analyzing opponent
Detected Cultivation Level: Qi Condensation Stage 6 (Currently suppressed to Stage 1)
Combat Style: Mountain Maker
Recommended Strategy: Maintain distance, focus on defensive movements, conserve energy
"Today would be nice," Zhou called out, his tone mocking.









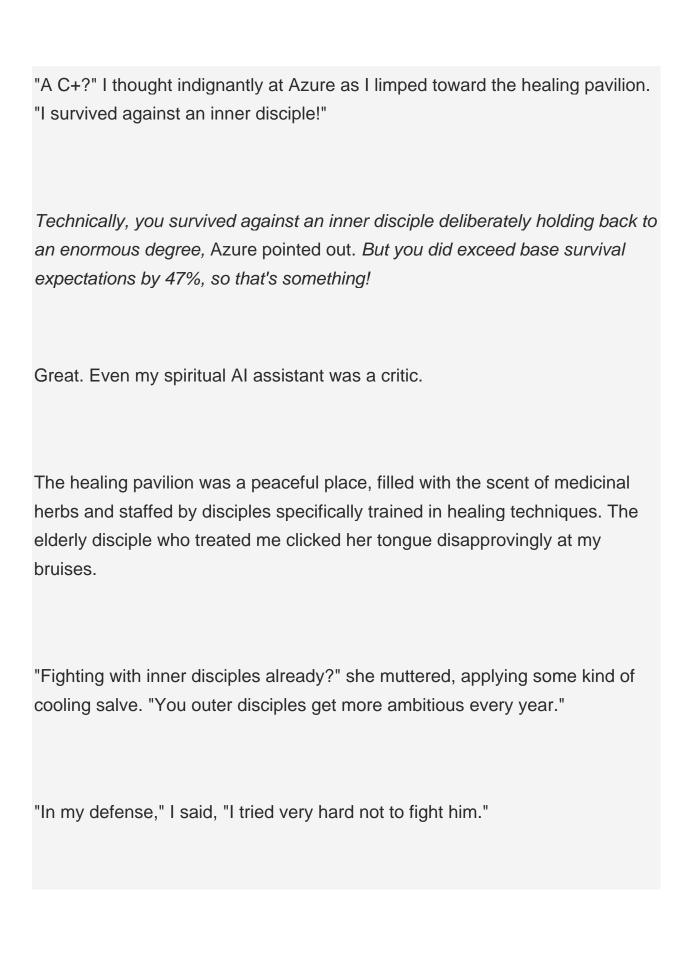
I bowed, wincing at my sore muscles. "Yes, Senior Sister. Thank you for your timely arrival."

A ghost of a smile crossed her face. "Timely? I've been watching for the past ten minutes. You survived longer than expected against a superior opponent while maintaining remarkable spiritual control. That itself is a valuable lesson, wouldn't you say?"

She walked away before I could respond, leaving me to contemplate her words.

Combat Analysis CompletePerformance Rating: C+Areas for Improvement:

- Energy efficiency (42% optimal)
- Attack timing (63% optimal)
- Defensive positioning (71% optimal)
 New Skills Unlocked:
- Basic Combat Analysis
- Movement Prediction (Level 1)



She snorted. "Next time try harder. Or at least learn some proper defensive techniques first." She pressed her palm against my back, and I felt cooling spiritual energy ease the worst of the bruising. "There. Try not to need my services again too soon."

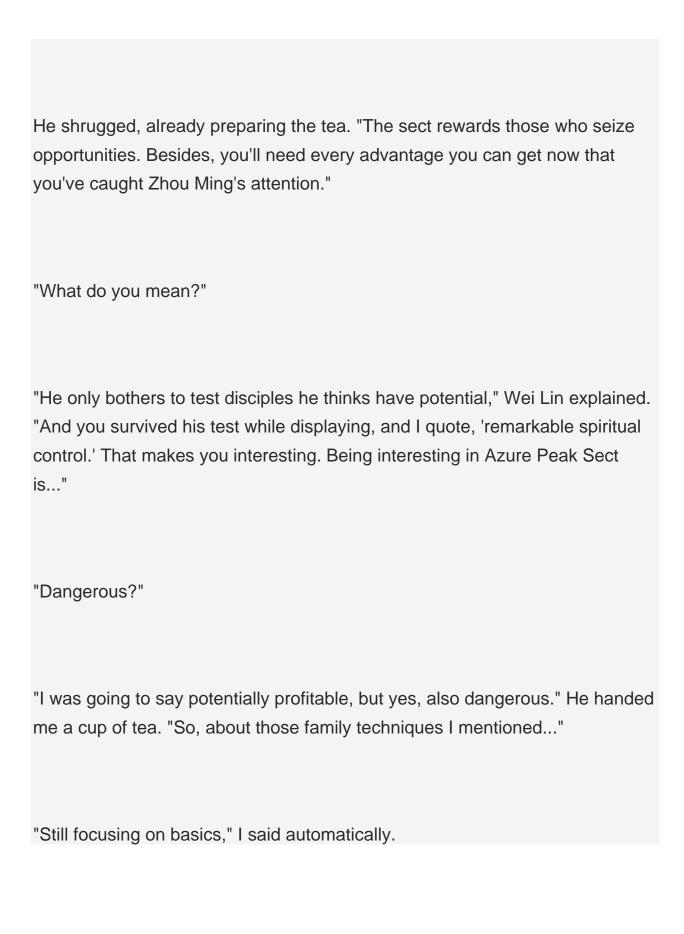
By the time I made it back to my dormitory, most of the pain had faded to a dull ache. Wei Lin was waiting outside my door.

"You're alive!" he said, sounding genuinely relieved. "And walking! That's more than Yuan Mei managed after his 'training session' with Zhou Ming."

"Barely alive," I corrected, unlocking my door. "And walking is a generous description of what I'm doing right now."

He followed me inside, producing a familiar tea set. "Medicinal spirit tea," he offered. "Good for recovering from spiritual exhaustion. Only thirty contribution points per packet, for a friend."

I couldn't help but laugh. "You're trying to sell to me while I'm injured? That's cold, Wei Lin."



He sighed. "Your funeral. Speaking of which, morning assembly is in six hours. Try not to die before then?"

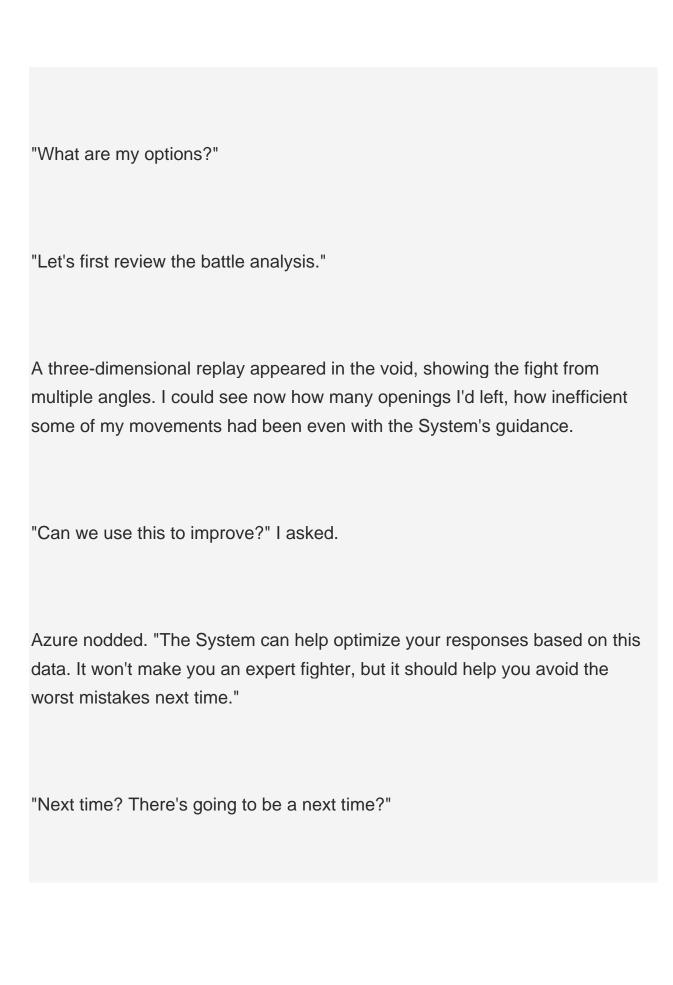
After he left, I settled into meditation position, wincing slightly. The spirit tea helped, I had to admit. Maybe I should look into bulk ordering...

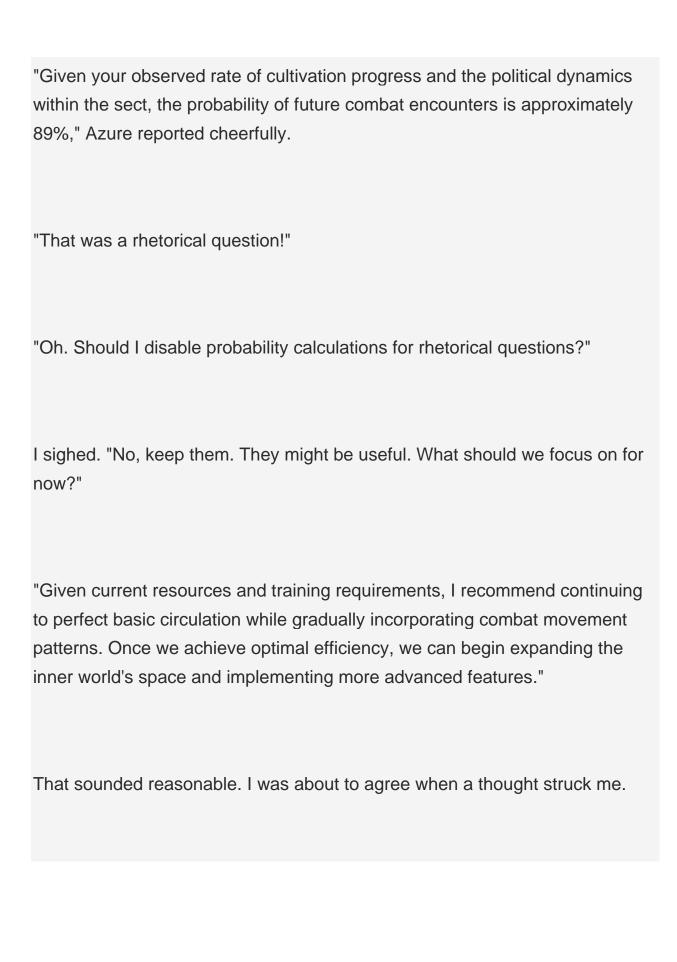
Entering Inner WorldProcessing combat experience data...

Updating spiritual architecture...

My inner world had changed since its first formation. The empty void now contained glowing circulation paths that pulsed with spiritual energy, and a simple array near the center helped collect and refine ambient energy. It wasn't much compared to what experienced cultivators could create, but it was progress.

Azure materialized, looking concerned. "You took significant damage in that encounter, Master. Should we prioritize defensive improvements?"





"Azure, what exactly are you? I mean, I know you're my inner world spirit, but you seem... different from how the lectures describe spiritual manifestations."

He tilted his head, considering. "I am a unique existence created by the interaction between your transmigrated soul, this world's spiritual systems, and the System interface. I have aspects of a traditional inner world spirit, yes, but also elements of what you call artificial intelligence. I exist to help you navigate this new existence and optimize your cultivation path."

"And the System itself?"

"Think of it as training wheels for your soul," he suggested. "Your modern Earth consciousness isn't naturally equipped to handle cultivation concepts, so the System translates everything into terms you can understand and work with. As you progress, you'll rely on it less and less directly, though its benefits will remain."

"So I'm not cheating?"

Azure actually laughed at that. "Master, you died and transmigrated into another world. I think the normal rules stopped applying somewhere around

then. Besides, every cultivator has advantages they were born with or stumbled into. Yours just happens to be more... systemized."

He had a point. And it wasn't like I was using the System to directly power up or skip stages – it just helped me understand and optimize what I was already seeing.