

Gourmet 161

Chapter 161: The Ghost Chef of Qingyangzhen

Qingyangzhen was located right outside the Wildlands. It was a frontier town established by the Light Wind Empire because the Wildlands was a dangerous location with numerous spirit beasts nesting there. Some of these spirit beasts were powerful while others were weak. The stronger ones were even capable of attaining unimaginable levels, while the weaker ones were only third or fourth grade spirit beasts.

The outskirts, inner layer, and central zone of the Wildlands were like three circles nesting in each other and the spirit beasts residing inside were innumerable. Qingyangzhen, as the frontier town guarding the entrance to the Wildlands, naturally bore the brunt of the pressure.

Once the amount of spirit beasts exceeded a certain number, disastrous events like a stampede of spirit beasts would occur. Numerous spirit beasts would rush out from the Wildlands and trample on everything in their path. It was definitely a disaster for the residents of Qingyangzhen and only those who truly possessed strength could survive in such a calamity.

Qingyangzhen was such a town, where the strong gathered. Every single person who made a living there possessed high cultivation levels. The majority of them were adventurers from all around the Hidden Dragon Continent. They were not just from the Light Wind Empire, but also from other smaller countries.

They were gathered here in order to gain experience in the Wildlands as well as obtain crystals.

Through hunting spirit beasts, they were able to earn crystals by turning in the corpses. Every single spirit beast was a trove of treasure and could be used to exchange for many things. With profit as the driving force, many people would still arrive wave after wave even if they had to face terrifying stampedes of spirit beasts.

The Number One Restaurant In Qingyangzhen[1] was the only restaurant in the entire town and the first floor of the two-storey building was extremely spacious. The inside of the building was buzzing with activity and a steady stream of people was entering and leaving.

The aroma of wine and the fragrance of the dishes were wafting in the air. Shouts and laughter could also be occasionally heard.

In short, the scene within the restaurant was lively.

As Ah Lu who was gnawing on a chicken drumstick and Ah Wei who was carrying a black wok on his back stepped into the restaurant, a curvaceous and beautiful woman in revealing clothing approached them with her hips swaying. She said with a giggle, "Oh my, Ah Lu and Ah Wei, you're back? How did it go? Have you completed the old man's mission?"

Ah Lu pulled out a chicken drumstick from his apron and took a bite. As he chewed the morsel in his mouth with crunching noises, he said in a mumble, "Aunt Yue, we lost. As expected of the Light Wind Empire's capital, it's indeed brimming with talented individuals. Even though big bro brought out his trump card, he still lost in the end."

Ah Wei's face darkened and only gave the enchanting beauty a glance without saying anything. There was really nothing for him to explain. A loss was a loss. He could only blame himself for his own ineptitude in learning.

A hint of surprise immediately appeared on the lovely face of Aunt Yue. She thought, "Ah Lu and Ah Wei actually lost in the Hundred Family Banquet... even with their culinary skills? Has the culinary skill level of the Light Wind Empire's chefs really become that terrifying?"

"After all, Ah Lu and Ah Wei were personally taught by that old man!"

"It's alright, losing is fine too. It's better than having the two of you think your culinary skills are unrivalled under the heavens. It's not a bad thing for the two of you to suffer a little setback," Aunt Yue said with a chuckle as the mounds of flesh on her chest jiggled, causing the eyes of the customers in the room to light up.

The expressions on Ah Wei's and Ah Lu's faces immediately sank as they scanned their surroundings in displeasure before heading toward the second floor of the restaurant.

They stepped onto the second floor and produced creaking noises as they treaded on the seemingly old and rickety floorboards. The illumination gradually grew dimmer as the two proceeded and soon came to a halt before a small room.

Ah Wei respectfully knocked on the door and the ever-present arrogance on his face disappeared without a trace.

"Come in." After an elderly voice came from inside the room, the two brothers looked each other in the eye before entering.

"Master..."

Ah Lu and Ah Wei lowered their heads and softly called out to an elderly man dressed in a gray robe.

The elderly man was sitting on a sandalwood rocking chair while lightly waving a fan made from the feathers of an unknown spirit beast.

"You lost? And failed to obtain the prize?" There was a hint of mockery in the elderly man's tone, which made Ah Wei feel a sudden burst of shame. Before setting off, he confidently said he would definitely bring back the prize but he returned in defeat instead.

"I've already said before, the Hidden Dragon Continent is an extremely large place. Your worldview only encompasses a single well. If you observe the world while sitting in a well, you'll feel as if you're in possession of the entire world. However, in truth, you're only amusing yourself in a microscopic world," the elderly man said as he stopped the rocking chair.

The elderly man then stood up and his gaze landed on the two brothers. His face covered with wrinkles trembled for a moment before he said with a chuckle, "It's fine, there's no need for the two of you to blame yourselves either. Just take this as a lesson. A single failure is nothing. Work hard and take revenge on your own."

"Yes... Master, in truth, if I had used the Hundred Flavors Pot, I might not have lost!" Ah Wei was still somewhat unable to admit defeat.

The elderly man gave Ah Wei a glance and shook his head. "I passed on the Hundred Flavor Pot so that you'll let it ferment for ten years. If you use it in advance, that would only result in a loss in its energies. So what if you had obtained victory? The things you would lose... would far exceed what you would obtain. You should rejoice in the fact that you did not use the Hundred Flavors Pot.

"Ah Lu, describe the circumstances of your loss to me," the elderly man said.

Ah Lu was surprised for a moment and subconsciously reached out for a chicken drumstick. However, he stopped after thinking for a moment and seriously started narrating the events that occurred on that day.

The elderly man quietly listened on as Ah Lu gave a narration on what happened that day.

"Rainbow-colored Crescent Moon Dumplings? A dish made from ordinary ingredients was able to defeat Ah Wei's dish within a dish?" The elderly man's eyes narrowed as a hint of severity appeared on his face. "Since when did such a formidable chef appear in the Light Wind Empire? In order for dishes made from ordinary ingredients to win against those made from spirit energy ingredients, the flavors and textures of the ingredients must be fully exhibited. This is an extremely difficult task for any chef to accomplish..."

"Crunch, crunch. Master... The prize was won by that Owner Bu as well," Ah Lu said in a mumble while gnawing on a chicken drumstick.

The elderly man nodded and then started laughing while clapping his hands. "I didn't think anyone in the Light Wind Empire would still dare to compete over something with me, the Ghost Chef... I suddenly feel like meeting this Owner Bu."

Ah Wei was stunned for a moment and then his pupils constricted. He thought, "Is master going to personally make a move?"

"The seed of the Five Stripes Path-Understanding Fruit Tree... If it's successfully germinated, I wonder how big of a disturbance would occur," the elderly man quietly muttered.

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The sun had just risen over the horizon and sunlight was piercing through the clouds, illuminating the land with a golden gleam.

Snow was no longer falling but the temperature was still icy cold.

Bu Fang cooked a serving of Sweet 'n' Sour Ribs for Blacky as usual and then started practicing his cutting and carving techniques as well as cooking dishes.

Since he was aiming to become the God of Cooking, he was obviously unable to slack off in the slightest. Practicing everyday was absolutely essential because practice would gradually improve his culinary skill and strengthen his fundamental skills.

Within the ocher-colored flowerpot, the bit of greenery was growing taller and taller. The seedling which had just emerged from the soil the day before had already grown to a finger tall. It was indeed rather astonishing.

The aquamarine-colored leaves were covered with mysterious markings that made Bu Fang's vision blurry from looking at them.

"Just what exactly is this seed? Will something good grow from this?" Bu Fang puzzledly muttered as he touched a leaf with his finger. Then, he got up and went to remove the doorboards.

Fatty Jin came in a mad rush along with his army of obese men. After all this time, Bu Fang had become rather familiar with them. He entered the kitchen and soon came out with their food.

Ouyang Xiaoyi arrived together with the Xiao siblings. Xiao Yanyu was wearing a veil and appeared gentle and refined as always.

After their arrival, Luo Sanniang and a rather bashful figure arrived as well, which slightly surprised Bu Fang.

"Owner Bu, Juan'Er is looking for you. Are you available?"

The moment Luo Sanniang stepped into the store, she immediately started yelling out loud. This woman was quite attractive looking but did not possess even a shred of feminine quality...

Meanwhile, Juan'Er was shyly following after Luo Sanniang while carrying a lunch box. She was slightly out of breath as she stepped into the store.

Chapter 162: This Egg Tart... Tastes Awful

Bu Fang looked at the two of them in puzzlement. He was already used to Luo Sanniang's raucous behavior but why was this Juan'Er coming into his store with a lunch box?

Bu Fang gave the two a suspicious glance and then said with a smirk, "I am busy."

Luo Sanniang's expression suddenly stiffened for a moment and her eyebrows immediately knitted together. "What did you say?"

"It's opening hours right now... so I am busy. You're welcomed if you're here to eat. However, if you're seeking me for other reasons, please wait until opening hours is over," Bu Fang directly ignored Luo Sanniang's dissatisfied gaze and headed back into the kitchen.

"You... You rascal!" Luo Sanniang was furious. She was naturally well aware of Bu Fang's rules. However, she was unable to stand Bu Fang's attitude. Within the imperial city, who would dare speak to her, Luo Sanniang, in such a manner?!

"Sanniang, there's no hurry. Owner Bu is right, it's opening hours right now. We can't disturb other people's business," Juan'Er hurriedly said while grabbing onto Luo Sanniang who seemed as if she was about to fly into a rage. Her face was flushed with a trace of anxiousness.

In the end, Luo Sanniang gave in under Juan'Er's pleading gaze. She was actually not that angry. She was simply peeved by Bu Fang's attitude.

"I'll listen to you. In that case, let's eat something here while we wait. Even though that rascal is stuck-up and has a bad temper, his dishes are really delicious!" Luo Sanniang said while her eyes scanned her surroundings in search of a seat.

"Come here and sit down with us," Xiao Yanyu called out while beckoning to them with her fair and slender hand.

"My goodness, Yanyu, you're here as well." Luo Sanniang's eyes immediately brightened when she saw the Xiao siblings. She walked over toward them while pulling along Juan'Er and sat down next to Xiao Yanyu. "Oh my, Xiao Xiaolong. You little sissy, you're here too? What a coincidence."

After hearing her words, Xiao Xiaolong almost vomited out a mouthful of blood in anger. Every time he met her, Luo Sanniang would call him a sissy. This was simply... maddening!

"Coincidence... My ass!" Xiao Xiaolong thought while letting out a snort and ignored Luo Sanniang by turning his head away from her.

"Xiaoyi, serve the dish," Bu Fang's voice came from the kitchen as a rich fragrance filled the entire place and caused everyone present to become slightly mesmerized.

Hearing that, Xiaoyi skipped over to the serving window and took away the dish placed there.

The atmosphere within the store was caught up in an excitement toward food once more. Everyone was heartily enjoying their meals.

When most of the customers finished their food and left after paying their bill, the store gradually regained its quietness once more.

"Owner Bu, are you finally free now?" Luo Sanniang asked in annoyance while rubbing her slightly bulging stomach.

Bu Fang wiped off the water droplets on his hands before he pulled a chair over and sat down. He looked at Luo Sanniang and nodded.

"Well, what do you want? I can't promise I'll be able to help even for ordinary matters," Bu Fang said.

Luo Sanniang raised her eyebrows in response. However, she could not be bothered to get angry with Bu Fang anymore. She pulled Juan'Er over and said, "Juan'Er is the one looking for you."

Bu Fang was surprised for a moment. He gave the bashful woman before his eyes a glance, noticing her face was flushed in embarrassment. He could not figure out her intention for finding him.

Juan'Er seemed to have plucked up a lot of her courage as she placed the lunch box in front of Bu Fang and solemnly said, "Owner Bu... I... Yesterday, I went back home and tried making your... egg tarts. So, I want you to taste them."

"Hmm? This woman made egg tarts after returning home yesterday?"

Bu Fang was startled as he gave her a surprised glance. The steps of making egg tarts were rather complicated. Did she really make them after only eating them once?

Bu Fang was immediately filled with curiosity. He really wanted to see just what sort of egg tart this woman managed to make.

"You made egg tarts? Hmm... Show them to me," Bu Fang said.

Juan'Er originally thought Bu Fang would refuse. Contrary to her expectation, Bu Fang actually agreed to her request. Her eyes immediately brightened. She hurriedly opened the lunch box and carefully took out a porcelain plate. In the middle of the plate, there was an... umm, egg tart.

The corners of Bu Fang's mouth involuntarily twitched as he expressionlessly looked at the egg tart placed in front of him. He felt like laughing but found himself unable to do so.

Even though the thing before his eyes resembled an egg tart, its color and smell was... Even from a distance, Bu Fang could smell a strange aroma.

"Is this burnt?" Bu Fang asked with a frown as he picked up Juan'Er's egg tart and looked at the burnt marks on its surface.

"I... I couldn't control the heat properly. This is already the best one," Juan'Er said.

Bu Fang nodded without thinking her answer was strange. Afterall, there were no ovens in the Light Wind Empire. It would be weird if she could actually make egg tarts without burning them. The fact that Juan'Er could actually produce an egg tart like this was already pretty good.

Thus, Bu Fang did not say anything else. He found a spot that was not burnt and chomped down.

The egg tart made by Juan'Er was not soft enough and was actually rather hard. Furthermore, it was baked for too long and became uncomfortable to chew.

While Bu Fang was tasting the egg tart, a frown was on his face the entire time. His expression was very solemn.

Everyone within the store was holding their breaths as they watched Bu Fang. He was awe-inspiring whenever he was appraising dishes.

Xiao Yanyu and Xiao Xiaolong had both witnessed Bu Fang's venomous tongue before. They could more or less predict what was going to happen next... The dish was definitely going to get roasted by Bu Fang.

After swallowing the morsel in his mouth, the frown disappeared from Bu Fang's face. He glanced at the bashful woman standing next to him, whose hands were nervously clasped together. For a moment, he was at a loss for words.

Honestly speaking... the egg tart could be considered a dark cuisine[1]. It was simply hard for anyone to sing praises about its taste. However, it was still much better than actual dark cuisine. At the very least, it was still edible.

However, when strictly evaluated through every aspect, this egg tart was completely worthless.

Nonetheless, this was her first time making egg tarts. After only tasting them a day before, she came to find him with the egg tart for his evaluation. Just this courage and willpower alone was enough to impress Bu Fang.

"Owner Bu, why don't you say something? Just tell us whether it's good or not," Luo Sanniang said. She was an impatient person. When she saw Bu Fang's hesitation, she could not help but urge him to speak.

Juan'Er was staring at Bu Fang with a face filled with expectation. She was truly fond of making egg tarts.

Bu Fang pondered for a moment while lightly drumming the table with his slender fingers. Then, he looked up at Juan'Er and asked, "Why did you make egg tarts after going back home?"

Juan'Er was stunned for a moment and then anxiously replied, "Because I like egg tarts!"

Bu Fang was slightly shocked by her blushing appearance. She did not seem to be faking her expression. She was truly captivated by egg tarts and had completely fallen in love with the dish.

Sometimes, food possessed such a charm that could completely mesmerize a person. Even though it could be their first time tasting a dish, they would still be fascinated by this peculiar charm.

Just like how Juan'Er was captivated by egg tarts.

Bu Fang lightly breathed out and placed the egg tart back on the porcelain plate.

He raised his head and looked at Juan'Er.

"My assessment of your egg tart is very simple."

Luo Sanniang and the others immediately perked their ears in curiosity.

Bu Fang gave them an indifferent glance and said, "It tastes awful."

Chapter 163: The Second Teleportation, Illusory Spirit Swamp

"It tastes awful?!"

Juan'Er's expectant gaze immediately grew dim after hearing Bu Fang's assessment, like a crystal shattering into thousands of sparkling fragments.

Without taking her feelings into account, Bu Fang did not go easy on her in the slightest. Luo Sanniang was dumbfounded.

On the other hand, Xiao Yanyu and Xiao Xiaolong were extremely surprised. According to their understanding of Owner Bu, he should have started passionately giving a long-winded assessment on this dish. How could he have stopped after merely saying three words?

It tastes awful? It was not like they had ever heard him describe anything as delicious...

"You rascal, what do you mean by that? Juan'Er worked hard to make the egg tarts without sleeping last night. Can't you even say something nice?" Luo Sanniang furiously said in dissatisfaction.

Bu Fang expressionlessly gave the livid Luo Sanniang a glance and replied, "Why should I say something nice? Would saying something nice help her improve her culinary skill?"

Luo Sanniang's expression suddenly froze for a moment. She was unable to say anything in response. Indeed, anyone could say something nice. However, saying nice stuff would only cause others to become complacent. They would become unable to realize their own flaws and lose sight of themselves. If they could not even recognize themselves, how could they improve?

"There's nothing here for me to assess. Your egg tart just tastes awful. In other words... it's unpalatable," Bu Fang said. As he looked at her, his gaze was like a sharp spear that looked straight into her innermost being, causing her mind to slightly tremble.

"I... I..." Juan'Er felt wronged and her eyes instantly turned red. How could she feel happy when her work was mercilessly criticized after staying up the entire night?

"Calm down, let me finish first," Bu Fang said as a smile appeared on his lips and his eyes became slightly softer.

"If you really want to make egg tarts that taste good, I'll give you two more chances to let me try your egg tarts. If you're able to obtain my approval, I'll point out the flaws in your egg tarts. Otherwise... forget about it," Bu Fang said.

Both Juan'Er and Luo Sanniang were surprised. They did not expect Bu Fang to actually say something like that. What exactly did his words mean? Was he going to give pointers to Juan'Er?

Xiao Yanyu and Xiao Xiaolong were stunned as well.

Bu Fang stood up and took a breath. He faced them and said, "Alright, today's opened hours has ended. Everyone, please leave."

Afterward, Bu Fang's gaze landed on Juan'Er once more as he said, "Remember, you only have two chances. If you're unable to fulfill my expectations... then I can only offer my apologies."

After Bu Fang finished speaking, he turned around and entered the kitchen.

The people in the store looked at each other and then started leaving one after another.

Juan'Er had yet to recover from her astonishment. Was Bu Fang telling her to make egg tarts and let him taste them? Did that mean that if her egg tarts could gain his approval, he would teach her the true method of making egg tarts?

The horrible feeling that she felt when Bu Fang criticized her egg tarts suddenly disappeared.

If she could receive pointers from Bu Fang, she was confident that she could make delicious and adorable egg tarts.

"Thank you, Owner Bu. I'll definitely work hard to earn your approval!" Juan'Er seriously said while bowing ninety degrees.

Afterward, Juan'Er left the store while pulling along Luo Sanniang. She excitedly hurried back to the Marquis' manor and started the preparations to make egg tarts. She was determined to make egg tarts that could obtain Owner Bu's approval.

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In the cold winter night, the pair of bright moons hanging high up in the sky were strongly radiating a cold moonlight which seemed to have draped a veil over the earth.

Bu Fang returned to his room after he finished practicing his cutting and carving techniques as well as brewed the Ice Heart Jade Urn Wine. He washed up and then leaned back on the headboard of his bed.

"The wine which I am planning to brew should use the Three Stripes Path-Understanding Fruit as the main ingredient while the Phoenix Blood Herb as well as other spirit herbs shall be complementary ingredients. If a portion of the Phoenix Blood Herb had not been used to cure Ji Chengxue, it would've been a pretty good main ingredient as well," Bu Fang muttered to himself.

However, other than the Three Stripes Path-Understanding Fruit and Phoenix Blood Herb, Bu Fang did not have any other suitable spirit herbs at the moment. Therefore, he needed to start considering the problem of obtaining other spirit herbs.

The requirements for the other spirit herbs might not need to be as strict, but... they should not be too terrible either. Afterall, Ni Yan once mentioned that the wine, Dragon's Breath, was brewed using numerous valuable spirit herbs and then left to ferment at the bottom of a spirit lake for a few years. The resulting wine was definitely exceptional.

"System, bring me somewhere where I can harvest spirit herbs. Spirit herbs are considered ingredients as well, so I should have the right to go," Bu Fang called out to the system in his mind.

The system remained silent for a long while before it solemnly said, "Does the host really wish to proceed with a teleportation and carry out the capturing and harvesting of ingredients?"

"Yes," Bu Fang seriously replied.

Then, the system became silent once more. After a long while, its voice rang out, "Setting coordinates, teleportation will be ready in approximately two hours... During this period, the host may begin preparation work."

"Two hours?" Bu Fang nodded. Two hours was not much but it was enough for him to make some preparations.

However, there was actually not much for him to prepare. He mainly needed to sleep and have a good rest. Many of the things were already inside the system's storage space.

Thus, Bu Fang went back into the kitchen and added some containers filled with seasoning into the system's storage space before returning to his room. He climbed onto his bed and fell asleep.

With this slumber, he slept for two entire hours.

Only when the system's voice started resounding in his mind, did Bu Fang open his eyes. A tiny white dot of light was hovering above his head. It was rapidly flying around, drawing a mysterious teleportation array.

As someone who experienced teleportation once before, Bu Fang appeared unhurried and relaxed. He leisurely put on his clothes and tied up his hair with a woolen rope. When he finished washing up, the drawing of the teleportation array was just about to finish.

Finally, after a few more breaths, the teleportation array was completely drawn. It was emanating a strange light that illuminated Bu Fang's entire body.

A violent wind suddenly started blowing and engulfed everything in the room.

Bu Fang's figure standing within the gale was soon enveloped and disappeared without a trace.

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The Illusory Spirit Swamp was a boundless and vast region that was located north of the Wildlands and the Light Wind Empire.

Within the Hidden Dragon Continent, there were four great dangerous locations: Wildlands, Illusory Spirit Marsh, Hundred Thousand Great Rivers, and Wuliang Mountain...

The Illusory Spirit Swamp was a dangerous location that was as equally famous as the Wildlands and innumerable spirit beasts were inhabiting there as well. However, the spirit beasts were different from the ones in the Wildlands. Many of them dwell beneath the swamps and respired the spirit energy within the swamp to strengthen themselves and continuously increase their cultivation.

Even though the Illusory Spirit Swamps was a dangerous location, there was an abundant amount of spirit energy and water in the area. Since it was a much better environment for spirit herbs to grow compared to the Wildlands, high grade spirit herbs were far more common there. Within the Hidden Dragon Continent, many adventurers would choose to explore the Illusory Spirit Swamp. If they could chance upon a sixth grade spirit herb... they would have struck gold.

With profit as the driving force, many people would naturally head there in droves.

No matter which of the dangerous locations, the situation was the same.

Within the peaceful Illusory Spirit Swamp, a white dot of light suddenly appeared and then rapidly flew around in the sky. In a short while, a mysterious teleportation array was drawn in the air.

A violent wind suddenly came whistling from the teleportation array and caused the swamp water to swirl into the air.

The peacefulness of the swamp was instantly broken. The birds nearby were startled, causing them to flap their wings and fly away.

When the violent wind dissipated, the swamp water instantly spilled back onto the ground.

A slender figure appeared after the violent wind completely died out.

Chapter 164: The Serpent-Men Tribe in the Illusory Spirit Swamp

Within the boundless Illusory Spirit Swamp that glittered with gorgeous colors under the glare of the sunlight, a flock of birds were taking flight after getting startled by a barrage of noises.

Bu Fang raised his eyebrows as he stepped onto the mushy ground.

"Where am I?" Bu Fang's expression slightly darkened when he realized he was not in the Wildlands where he previously went but in an unfamiliar location. At a glance, there were bodies of water and vegetation everywhere.

As Bu Fang took a step forward, the squishy ground made him feel rather uneasy. Judging from the terrain, he should be in a swamp. With the bodies of water and vegetation everywhere, there was not even the slightest resemblance between this place and the Wildlands...

Where exactly... did the system dump him?!

How could any spirit herbs of worth be found in such a place? Could there be a bug in the system? As a result, he might have been accidentally sent to the wrong place.

After covering the soles of his feet with true energy, Bu Fang felt he could safely roam within the swamp. He was completely surrounded by wetland and the terrain was extremely muddy. Bu Fang was sure that without the aid of true energy, he would definitely be engulfed by the swamp within a few steps.

A fifth grade Battle-King possessed a large amount of true energy and walking on the surface of water by covering the soles of his feet with true energy was not an especially difficult technique. Basically, any Battle-King was capable of doing so. In the first place, Bu Fang's ability to control true energy was much stronger than the average Battle-King. So, it was not surprising that he could do so as well.

The splashing noises produced as his feet made contact with the water's surface travelled far within this large and open area.

The strange noises that were constantly coming from the swamp around him caused a frown to appear on his face and put him on alert.

"I should quickly find the spirit herb and return as soon as possible... This environment is really making me feel uncomfortable," Bu Fang muttered to himself as he continued moving forward.

As one of the four great dangerous locations in the Hidden Dragon Continent, how could there not be any spirit herbs growing in the Illusory Spirit Swamp? As Bu Fang moved forward by himself, his eyes were constantly scanning his surroundings in hope of catching a glimpse of a spirit herb.

Suddenly, as Bu Fang took a step forward, bubbles started appearing on the surface of the water. Bu Fang calmly watched as something burst out from the water and splattered muddy water everywhere.

The creature was an extremely ugly spirit beast. It was not very big but its sudden appearance still caused a slight frown to appear on Bu Fang's face.

The body of the toad-like creature was covered with a layer of black mud that gave off a revolting smell. It was staring straight at Bu Fang with its vocal sacs puffed up.

"This should be a third grade spirit beast, judging from the weak intensity of spirit energy emanating from its body," Bu Fang muttered as he gave the creature an indifferent glance. The current him was completely unconcerned with the likes of a third grade spirit beast.

Even though he was inept in combat, dealing with a third grade spirit beast was still quite easy for him.

Bu Fang flicked his finger and an energy bullet filled with true energy instantly flew toward the toad. The toad made an odd noise and spat out putrid sludge from its mouth at Bu Fang's energy bullet.

It was an easy matter for a fifth grade Battle-King to deal with a third grade spirit beast. Even if Bu Fang was inept in combat, the difference in their cultivation level was unchangeable. He could deal with the creature by purely relying on his true energy.

Bang! The energy bullet pierced through one of the toad's legs. The creature shrieked in pain and then dived back into the swamp. It splattered the putrid mud everywhere and disappeared in an instant.

Bu Fang did not give chase. Or to be more exact, he could not be bothered to. He was completely uninterested in using this toad-like spirit beast as an ingredient.

Therefore, Bu Fang no longer paid any heed to the creature and continued moving forward while stepping on the surface of the water.

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The serpent-men tribes were the most commonly seen tribes within the Illusory Spirit Swamp. There were similarities between them and humans but there were also many differences as well.

Firstly, the method of reproduction for the serpent-men was different from humans. Humans reproduced through live birth while the serpent-men reproduced through laying egg, which might be due to having a serpentine lower body.

There were quite a lot of strong warriors within the serpent-men tribes. Every one of them was a natural born warrior because the Illusory Spirit Swamp itself was a place where only the fittest survived. Here, those who were weak would only get devoured by the spirit beasts hiding in the swamp.

The serpent-men had their own ruler just like humans. Even though their society only consisted of tribes, the entire race was unified under their sovereign. Within the Illusory Spirit Swamp, there were serpent-men tribes of various sizes everywhere. In each serpent-men tribe, there was an elder who could use magic arrays to communicate with their sovereign.

Within one of the serpent-men tribes, the members of the tribe were peacefully living their everyday lives while swaying their brightly colored serpentine tails.

Like humans, they had social interactions and houses. Even though the sort of housing built in wetlands was crude, it was still their home and possessed an indescribable meaning for the serpent-men.

A scrawny, elderly serpent-man baring his upper body was slithering over the wetlands while swaying his serpentine tail. He was speaking to a muscular, young serpent-man in a distance. "Ah Ni! Send some of the stronger guards to watch over the medicinal herb farm. It's almost time for harvesting, we can't let anything untoward occur. Last year, our tribe was criticized by our sovereign, so we must do a good job this year."

The serpent-man called Ah Ni immediately broke into a grin, revealing his razor sharp teeth. "Yes, I'll go right away! Elder, don't worry. The harvest is definitely going to be bountiful this year. Many of the spirit herbs are ready to be harvested, especially that Ice Soul Monarch Lotus is just about to bloom. When the time comes, we'll definitely earn our sovereign's praise if we offer up the harvest along with the lotus!"

The elderly serpent-man rolled his eyes at the robust serpent-man and said in exasperation, "Don't be careless, pay close attention and make sure nothing bad happens... Oh, that's right. That bunch of crafty humans from the White Cloud Villa will definitely find out that the Ice Soul Monarch Lotus is about to bloom. You must watch out for them."

"If any of those crafty humans dare to appear in front of me, I'll definitely tear them into pieces!" Ah Ni's eyes revealed a hint of malice. As he clenched his fists, the muscles on his body slightly bulged and true energy overflowed from him. The intensity of true energy emanating from him was actually comparable to an ordinary sixth grade Battle-Emperor.

The elderly serpent-man smiled and shook his head. After bidding farewell with the elder, Ah Ni slithered toward their medicinal farm while leading a few other young serpent-men.

...

Splash!

A small boat made from unknown materials was swiftly gliding across the vast Illusory Spirit Swamp. There was a brightly flashing magic array carved on the stern of the boat. The magic array was providing a powerful driving force that propelled the small boat forward.

The boat made travelling within the swamp extremely fast and convenient.

A white cloud symbol was etched on the side of the spirit boat. The white cloud appeared realistic, as if it was going to come to life.

Three figures were sitting cross-legged in the spirit boat. The auras emanating from them were very strong and caused the grass around them to buckle under the pressure.

Suddenly, the young man with fair complexion sitting in the middle slightly opened his eyes. He was very good looking and the rosiness in his fair skin made him look extremely alluring.

The young man's forehead was covered with a layer of bangs that was fluttering in the wind.

"Miss... Err, young master, we're just about to reach a serpent-men tribe. The Ice Soul Monarch Lotus that you're looking for is in the tribe's medicinal herb farm," the man sitting in front of the young man said as he turned his head and looked at the young man.

The young man opened his eyes and a faint smile appeared on his lips as he looked toward the barely visible crude buildings in the distance.

"Let's stop somewhere near the tribe and find out more about their medicinal herb farm."

Chapter 165: The Serpent-Men's Medicinal Herb Farm

"Elder brother Ah Ni!"

"Elder brother Ah Ni, good day! Are you here to check on the herb farm?"

"Elder brother Ah Ni's cultivation is getting stronger and stronger! His true energy level is really impressive!"

...

With his chest held high, Ah Ni slithered over the moist ground of the swamp. His upper body was bare, exposing his powerful muscles as well as strange markings which made him appear slightly fiercer.

As Ah Ni moved along, the serpent-men nearby respectfully greeted him. Some of them had respectful expressions on their faces while others looked at him with envy in their eyes. Ah Ni was not the person with the highest cultivation in the serpent-men tribe but he was viewed by the tribe leader and the elder as the most promising tribesman because of his youth.

As a sixth grade Battle-Emperor, Ah Ni frequently went hunting for fifth grade Spirit Tail Crocodiles and could tear them into pieces with his bare hands, which was an incredible feat for a serpent-man.

Since the serpent-men were capable of forming societies within the perilous Illusory Spirit Swamp despite the constant threat from the countless amount of powerful spirit beasts roaming about, they naturally had their own rules of survival.

In order for the serpent-men to safely survive in such a hostile environment, they must first deal with the spirit beasts. Therefore, the serpent-men used the capability of slaying Spirit Tail Crocodiles, which were the greatest threat to them, as the benchmark for determining the strong among them.

Those capable of slaying the Spirit Tail Crocodiles were the true warriors of the serpent-men.

Ah Ni's tribe was considered small among the serpent-men but its population was surprisingly large. Compared with humans, the amount was comparable to a small town.

Even though their dwellings were crudely made, they were still buildings. With rows upon rows of buildings, it gave off the feeling of a small town.

Ah Ni had once heard from the elder that a large city built by the serpent-men existed somewhere within the Illusory Spirit Swamp. The neatly ordered buildings in the city were extremely magnificent and even comparable to cities built by humans. The serpent-men residing in the city were able to live happy lives under the reign of the Serpentine Sovereign.

In that place, there were neither Spirit Tail Crocodiles nor other terrifying spirit beasts to constantly threaten their lives. There, their offsprings could lead stable lives from the moment they hatched from their eggs and grow up without a care in the world... That was the sort of world that Ah Ni and the other tribe members all longed for.

Slap! Ah Ni struck the ground with his tail and caused the icy water to splash everywhere.

A pair of serpent-men warriors armed with spears immediately bowed toward Ah Ni in a respectful manner.

These two serpent-men warriors were standing guard in front of an area surrounded by a crude bamboo fence. This was the most important area within the tribe, the medicinal herb farm. There were many valuable spirit herbs growing in here. Even though most of them were only third or fourth grade, there were some fifth and sixth grade spirit herbs. There was even a seventh grade Ice Soul Monarch Lotus that was about to bloom.

"Good work, don't let your guard down. Make sure to pay attention to any signs of trouble near the herb farm. Those crafty humans have dog-like noses. Once the spirit herbs are ready to be harvested, they will definitely come running after the smell. We must definitely not let those damned humans profit from our hard work," Ah Ni said while patting a guard's shoulder.

That serpent-men warrior immediately puffed out his chest and solemnly nodded.

The corners of Ah Ni's lips curled into a smile. He then slithered past the guards into the herb farm.

When Ah Ni entered the herb farm, his nose was immediately assailed by the rich herbal fragrance in the air and he was mesmerized with the strong scent.

"Ah Ni, why are you back here again?"

While Ah Ni was taking in a deep breath and revelling in the herbal fragrance, a bewitching voice suddenly reached his ears. A group of serpent-women was slithering out from the inner parts of the herb farm.

These serpent-women had serpentine lower bodies just like Ah Ni but their upper bodies were just like any human woman. Their well developed chests were wrapped in linen cloth which they obtained from trading with the humans.

The leader of the group was an extremely beautiful serpent-woman. Her face appeared to have been meticulously sculpted by the heavens themselves and her voluptuous figure was unmatched among the serpent-women.

"Yu Fu, you're really getting more and more beautiful! One day, you'll definitely become my wife!" Ah Ni said as he looked at the serpent-women leading the group with a mesmerized expression.

A slight frown immediately appeared on Yu Fu's face as she coldly looked at Ah Ni and asked, "Why are you here today? The herb farm has always been our responsibility. Are you questioning our ability to perform well?"

Ah Ni licked his lips and said with a smile, "Yu Fu, please don't misunderstand, you have my utmost trust. It's just that since the Ice Soul Monarch Lotus is close to blooming, the elder wanted me to be here to prevent those crafty humans from stealing the herb."

Yu Fu's complexion immediately became much better after hearing his reply. She nodded and said, "In that case, come with me."

Then, the group of serpent-women went ahead and led the way. Ah Ni, who was watching Yu Fu with a mesmerized expression, hurriedly wiped away the saliva running down from the corner of his mouth and followed after them.

...

"Hmm... It's only a third grade spirit herb, too bad."

With an abundant amount of true energy gathered on his soles, Bu Fang squatted down and plucked a blade of aquamarine leaf sticking out from the soil. The long and thin leaf had a single black vein running across its surface.

Bu Fang had already been wandering about in the vast Illusory Spirit Swamp for over half a day. During this time, he found many spirit herbs but they were basically only second or third grade. Once in a while, he would find fourth grade spirit herbs as well, but fourth grade spirit herbs were still worthless in Bu Fang's eyes.

He needed a spirit herb that could be mixed together with the Phoenix Blood Herb as well as the Three Stripes Path-Understanding Fruit to brew wine. Fourth grade spirit herbs... were insufficient.

As the bottom of his feet was covered with true energy, Bu Fang appeared to be hovering above the water. However, he would still produce noise as he walked on the water's surface.

After walking for a while, Bu Fang found another fourth grade spirit herb along the way. With a better than nothing attitude, Bu Fang killed the snake-like spirit beast that was guarding the spirit herb before storing it in the system's storage space.

"Hmm? What's that?" After walking for a while more, Bu Fang puzzledly looked toward a large mass of shadow in the distance, which appeared to be buildings.

"There's actually buildings here? Did someone really set up a village on this mushy swamp?" Bu Fang was extremely surprised. Logically speaking, the soft ground of the swamp was completely unsuitable for constructing buildings.

Even though Bu Fang was somewhat perplexed, he was still feeling quite pleased. At least... it was a sign of human presence.

Therefore, Bu Fang increased his pace and headed in the direction of the buildings.

As Bu Fang gradually moved toward those buildings, something rapidly approached from a distance and went past him, causing water to splash toward him. Fortunately, Bu Fang's cultivation level was not weak. With a true energy barrier, he managed to keep himself from getting drenched.

Bu Fang expressionlessly gave the wooden boat that sped past him a glance and pursed his lips.

As he had expected... There were people living here and it was suddenly becoming lively.

"That boat-like thing seem to be rather convenient for travelling within the swamp," Bu Fang thought.

...

The spirit boat came to a halt and three figures stepped off the boat. The soles of their feet were also covered with true energy, allowing them to firmly stand on the wetland.

With a wave of his hand, the spirit boat was put away by the young man with a fair complexion standing in the middle.

"Young master Wu... Wasn't there someone standing there just now?" One of the man could not help but ask as he recalled the scenery as the spirit boat sped past. He seemed to have caught a glimpse of a human figure back there.

The woman who was being called young master Wu... Oh, the woman who was currently disguised as a man indifferently gave the man a glance and said, "Who cares if there was someone there or not? Our objective is the Ice Soul Monarch Lotus. As long as he doesn't interfere in our business, it has nothing to do with us. After all, this isn't our White Cloud Villa, we're in the territory of the serpent-men."

That subordinate nodded with a grave expression. The serpent-men tribe was not to be underestimated. He did not dare to be careless either, especially with the young master around. The young master's identity was special. His job was to ensure that she did not suffer even the slightest injury.

"Let's go, our target destination is the rear area of the serpent-men tribe. That should be the location of their medicinal herb farm. We'll look for an opportunity to sneak in," young master Wu said while revealing a hint of excitement on her face.

That subordinate immediately forced a wry smile and could only nod in response.

Leaving behind one person as a lookout, young master Wu and the other subordinate headed in the direction of the rather dilapidated fence in the distance.

That was the direction of the serpent-men tribe's herb farm.

Chapter 166: Just Exactly Who Is Sabotaging Us?

The serpent-men tribe's medicinal herb farm was enormous. Even though its perimeter was surrounded by a simple bamboo fencing, the interior was filled with the characteristics of an herb farm.

Ah Ni was following after Yu Fu and the other serpent-women. As he observed the spirit herbs around him which were continuously emanating rich amounts of spirit energy, his eyes were filled with amazement.

These spirit herbs were planted within their respectively assigned areas and the types of spirit herbs planted in each area were determined through strict planning. Therefore, he felt that everything within the herb farm was orderly arranged.

Yu Fu and the other serpent-women were members of the tribe who were specially assigned to cultivate spirit herbs. They developed their familiarity and understanding with spirit herbs through the teachings of the older generation and took over the responsibility of cultivating the spirit herbs.

"The Ice Soul Monarch Lotus is a very valuable seventh grade spirit herb. Nearly every part of the herb is usable and filled with terrifying amounts of spirit energy, and its seeds are especially valuable. Moreover, its taste and texture are extremely good. It's not just a medicinal herb but also an excellent ingredient," Yu Fu explained as she slithered ahead while swaying her serpentine lower body.

Yu Fu's master had once told her that seventh grade spirit herbs like the Ice Soul Monarch Lotus were not only extraordinarily valuable for their medicinal value but also their usability.

"However, the Ice Soul Monarch Lotus is so precious. How could anyone easily use it as an ingredient? Isn't that a waste?" Ah Ni subconsciously said. From his point of view, some things were meant to be eaten but there were some things that would be wasted if eaten.

As the group proceeded through the herb farm, they soon arrived at the central area. This was the center of the herb farm where many valuable fifth and sixth grade spirit herbs were planted and being cultivated.

Even without including the Ice Soul Monarch Lotus, the spirit herbs here were extremely valuable.

"That's the Ice Soul Monarch Lotus. Right now, it's still in an unripe state. When the herb has completely ripened, the flower bud will completely spread open. I've never seen the blooming of an Ice Soul Monarch Lotus either, so I have no idea how beautiful it is when it's in full bloom," Yu Fu said.

A distance away, there was a small pond encircled with bamboo fencing. The water of the pond was clear and transparent. There was not even the slightest algae floating in the water and it was even emanating a faint fragrance.

A delicate, pale blue closed lotus bud was floating on the surface of the pond with a few pieces of lotus leaves around it. When viewing from a distance, the lotus bud seemed to be hidden behind a layer of blurry fog and the markings on its surface were barely discernible.

The lotus leaves were deep green in color, appearing darker due to the complicated and mysterious markings on its surface.

Ah Ni stood next to the pond and took a deep breath. As he felt the abundant amount of spirit energy flowing into his nostrils, he could not help but exclaim in astonishment. "How beautiful... So, this is the Ice Soul Monarch Lotus?"

"That's natural, since there's no one who can resist the beauty of the Ice Soul Monarch Lotus. It's even more beautiful when it's in full bloom. Unfortunately, the blooming of the Monarch Lotus only lasts for a short moment. According to my master, it only lasts for a few breaths." A hint of yearning and pity appeared on Yu Fu's exquisite face.

The corners of Ah Ni's mouth curled up as he scanned his surroundings and said with a smile, "There should still be half a day before the Monarch Lotus fully blooms. When the time comes, humans might appear. We have to protect the Monarch Lotus well."

Yu Fu gave Ah Ni a glance and replied, "Of course, we've waited so long for the Monarch Lotus to bloom. How could we allow those humans to easily snatch it away? Moreover... when the Monarch Lotus blooms, its intense spirit energy will definitely attract the spirit beasts in the surroundings. During that time, powerful spirit beasts might appear too. You must watch out for them as well."

"There's nothing to be afraid of. With me around, there's no problem at all!" Ah Ni patted his chest with confidence.

...

Young master Wu and her subordinates easily got over the bamboo fencing. The defense fortifications built by the serpent-men tribe were basically equivalent to nothing. A mere bamboo fencing was simply not going to stop anyone.

"Hmm? It appears this serpent-men still have some tricks up their sleeves. There's a magic array drawn in each of these fields. If someone attempts to steal any of these herbs, the magic arrays would activate and the serpent-men warriors would be alerted. No wonder they've only set up a bamboo fencing," young master Wu muttered to herself while knitting her good-looking eyebrows together.

Since she had already discovered the serpent-men's traps, she could not be bothered to look at those low grade spirit herbs any more. In her eyes, these spirit herbs were not really that valuable.

After all, there were already innumerable amounts of fourth and fifth grade spirit herbs in the White Cloud Villa. Their medicinal herb farm was several times larger than the serpent-men tribe's. If it was not for the seventh grade Ice Soul Monarch Lotus, she would not even bother to come here.

"Young master, there's a large amount of spirit energy coming from the field up ahead. Let's head in that direction," her subordinate said after sensing the spirit energy in the air.

Young master Wu nodded and reminded her subordinate to be more careful. After all, they were currently trespassing. With the animosity between serpent-men and humans, there would certainly be some trouble if they were discovered.

If that really happened, it would become even harder for them to obtain the Ice Soul Monarch Lotus.

Therefore, the two of them suppressed their aura and slowly headed in the direction of the Ice Soul Monarch Lotus.

...

Bu Fang had been walking for a long while. Even though the group of buildings appeared close at hand, he still had to travel for quite a distance before reaching the perimeter of the herb farm.

"A fence? That's a bit funny." A smile appeared on Bu Fang's lips as he vaulted over the bamboo fencing.

The softness of the soil in the herb farm was much firmer compared to the swamp outside. Even though it was still softer than normal soil, it was at least not the sort of terrifying mud that would cause someone to sink after stepping into it.

Well-ordered fields were scattered throughout the herb farm. With a single glance, Bu Fang's field of vision was filled with a sea of spirit herbs. There were some really valuable spirit herbs here but the others were comparatively ordinary.

After giving his surroundings a quick glance, a trace of joy appeared in Bu Fang's eyes. He did not think that there was actually man-made herb fields here. It was truly a pleasant surprise.

It was already a miracle to encounter a village within the sparsely populated Illusory Spirit Swamp. He did not anticipate that the village would actually have their own herb fields.

"This is a rather valuable fifth grade spirit herb! It's actually just left here like this?" Bu Fang puzzledly looked at a spirit herb that appeared to be a butterfly suspended in place. His eyes narrowed as he squatted in front of the spirit herb.

Spirit energy was steadily hovering above the spirit herb and releasing a faint fragrance in the air.

"Not bad, it wouldn't be a bad idea to use this as a supplementary ingredient for the wine." Bu Fang's eyes lit up as a smile appeared on his lips.

...

Young master Wu was fully suppressing the aura emanating from her body and her subordinate was doing the same thing as well. This was one of the White Cloud Villa's secret techniques, the Turtle Breathing Technique, which allowed its user to conceal their aura and cultivation level. It was a rather useful technique.

"I can already sense the Ice Soul Monarch Lotus in the distance. However, there's a lot of people around that area. We have to be careful not to be discovered... There's still some time before the Monarch Lotus bloom, we'll make our move once it happens," young master Wu said.

Her subordinate solemnly nodded in response. The two of them hid themselves in an herb field and gazed toward the pond where the Ice Soul Monarch Lotus was located in the distance.

"Is that the Monarch Lotus?! As expected... What an astonishing amount of spirit energy!" her subordinate exclaimed in astonishment.

"Stop talking and just wait. You're going to alert them of our presence," young master Wu whispered while fiercely glaring at her subordinate.

The subordinate's expression stiffened for a moment before he hurriedly nodded.

Suddenly, a great change abruptly occurred in the serene herb farm. When young master Wu noticed that the magic array underneath her feet started activating on its own and was sealing off the herb field like a cage, she quickly backed away.

"What's going on? Why did the magic array activate?" Young master Wu was extremely flustered.

"Who's there?!"

"Who dares to intrude upon our tribe's herb farm!"

"How audacious! Get out here right now!"

Ah Ni, who was relishing in the beauty of the Ice Soul Monarch Lotus, suddenly opened his eyes and let out an angry roar. As true energy gushed out from his body, his eyes swiftly locked onto the place where young master Wu and her subordinate were hiding.

He sensed a spirit energy fluctuation appearing in that area just now. Without a doubt, someone was hiding there!

This immediately caused Ah Ni to bristle with rage. "These damned humans... They actually dared to intrude into our herb farm! This is simply unforgivable!"

Meanwhile, young master Wu was even more exasperated and her pretty face was contorted in fury.

"Damn it... Just exactly who sabotaged us?!"

Chapter 167: Eh? Mermaids?

Wu Yunbai, the young master of the White Cloud Villa, exhibited an astonishing talent for cultivation ever since a young age and was thus heavily nurtured by the master of the White Cloud Villa. At present, she was already a sixth grade Battle-Emperor and was only a step away from becoming a seventh grade Battle-Saint.

She was hailed as the most talented within the younger generation. If it was not for her identity as a woman, she might have already been chosen as the successor to the master of the White Cloud Villa.

The White Cloud Villa was an extremely powerful faction within the Illusory Spirit Swamp. It was not a sect but was far more dreadful than any sect. Among the sects, the Celestial Arcanum Sect might be the only one who could contend against them. Furthermore, the master of the White Cloud Villa himself was a person with a formidable level of cultivation.

At the moment, Wu Yunbai's expression was grim. All of the magic arrays in the herb farm were activated and each of the herb fields was enveloped by a mysterious magic array. It became impossible for them to steal the herb without alerting the serpent-men.

In addition, Ah Ni, Yu Fu, and the other warriors of the serpent-men tribe had discovered the location of Wu Yunbai and her subordinate, and were currently rushing toward them.

Dreadful amounts of true energy were emanating from the serpent-men, especially Ah Ni who was exuding a malicious aura just like a savage monster. His eyes were extremely menacing and veins were bulging all over the muscles on his upper body.

When Wu Yunbai's subordinate realized that their presence was already discovered, he let out a furious roar. The hair all over his body were standing on their ends and his eyes were wide like bronze bells. As he pushed his palm forward, a torrent of clouds suddenly gathered around him and then surged forward toward the serpent-men.

"Cloud Expelling Palm!"

Ah Ni's eyes turned cold and a smile appeared on his lips, revealing his razor-sharp teeth. The malice in his eyes became even more intense.

"As expected, the two of you are from the White Cloud Villa. Are you here for the Ice Soul Monarch Lotus? I won't allow you to succeed!" Ah Ni started sneering as he placed his hands together and gathered true energy into his hands. Suddenly, he pulled his hands apart and a pitch-black spear appeared in between them.

At that moment, Wu Yunbai had also regained her composure. Her fair face was calm and serene as she gave the serpent-men a glance and said with a frown, "Don't kill them, just immobilize them. After all, we're just here for the spirit herb."

Her subordinate, who was much more serious than before, gave her a profound smile and replied, "Don't worry, miss, I know what to do."

Wu Yunbai immediately glared at him. "What did you just call me? Either call me young master Wu or just young master!"

That subordinate coughed in embarrassment and then turned to face the serpent-men with a grin. The aura emanating from his body suddenly surged and a dreadful, mountain-like pressure came crashing down upon the serpent-men, causing all of their expressions to change.

"A seventh grade Battle-Saint! Oh no!" Ah Ni's expression slightly changed. He did not think that the person in front of his eyes was actually a seventh grade Battle-Saint. The likes of Battle-Saints held prominent positions even within the White Cloud Villa, so how could such a personage serve as a subordinate of this pretty boy? Could it be... there was something special about the identity of this pretty boy?

Ah Ni was not a fool. When he realized his opponent was a seventh grade Battle-Saint, various thoughts rushed through his head and he immediately came up with his own speculations about Wu Yunbai's identity.

However, his current situation prevented him from pondering any further. Dealing with the might of a seventh grade Battle-Saint was already beyond his capability. Even though the difference between a sixth and seventh grade was only a single grade on the surface, the actual difference between the two was basically insurmountable.

However, Ah Ni was not too worried either. Even though his opponent was a Battle-Saint, the elder watching over the herb farm was a seventh grade Battle-Saint as well.

Sure enough, while Ah Ni was still preoccupied with his own thoughts, the aura of a serpent-men Battle-Saint appeared from behind him.

...

A smile appeared on Bu Fang's lips as he looked at the spirit herb protected behind a magic array. Like he expected, no one could feel at ease about leaving spirit herbs in such a basic herb farm without having security precautions. Judging from its complex appearance, the magic array was clearly unusual.

As Bu Fang reached out a finger and touched the magic array, he narrowed his eyes from the numb feeling coursing through his body.

He then stood up and looked around his surroundings. He noticed that the magic arrays in the other herb field were activated as well and realized he might have accidentally done an incredible deed.

"Hmm? The aura of a seventh grade Battle-Saint?" Bu Fang suddenly felt a wave of dreadful aura coming from a distance. He was not a stranger to the pressure mixed within the aura.

Bu Fang had personally met a few Battle-Saints like Xiao Meng and Zhao Musheng, so he was quite familiar with the feeling of their true energy. However, he did not expect to witness a clash between Battle-Saints in such a basic herb farm.

"There are seventh grade Battle-Saints in such a rural place too?" Bu Fang thought in amusement.

Bu Fang gave the spirit herb protected behind the magic array another glance before he continued moving forward. It was impossible for two Battle-Saints to fight each other for no reason, so something good must have brought about the battle. Within this herb farm, the only thing that two Battle-Saints would fight over was most likely some high grade spirit herb.

Just the thought of spirit herbs was enough to energize Bu Fang. The objective of this trip was precisely for the sake of acquiring spirit herbs...

After continuing ahead and turning a few corners, Bu Fang was suddenly surprised for a moment when he saw several figures heading toward him from a distance.

"Eh? Mermaids?" Bu Fang muttered in astonishment. However, after getting a closer look, he realized those figures were not the legendary mermaids... Their upper bodies were just like humans but they had serpentine lower bodies that were densely covered with scales.

"Serpent-men!" Bu Fang exclaimed in astonishment. This was his first time witnessing strange races from another world, so there was actually an inexplicable agitation in his heart.

The group of serpent-men who were armed with spears were hurriedly rushing toward the location of the battle between the Battle-Saints. When Bu Fang spotted them, they also spotted Bu Fang.

"Who's there?!" one of the serpent-men warriors angrily shouted while brandishing the spear in his hand.

Bu Fang was surprised for a moment by the fact that the serpent-men were not as friendly as expected.

"I..." Bu Fang wanted to say something but he was not given the chance. That serpent-man immediately thrust his spear at him.

"It's a human who has trespassed upon our tribe's herb farm, kill him without any quarter!"

As he felt the dreadful aura emanating from the spear, the corners of Bu Fang's lips twitched. He thought, "What do you mean by trespass... Who exactly are you attempting to stop with that fencing of yours?"

That bamboo fencing was extremely worn out and some parts had even fallen apart. Forget stopping anyone, it might not even manage to prevent some of the smaller spirit beasts from entering.

Back then, Bu Fang calmly entered just by stepping over the fencing...

However, these serpent-men were uninterested in Bu Fang's thoughts. They enveloped their spears with true energy and started attacking Bu Fang.

The cultivation levels of these serpent-men were not low. They were all fourth grade Battle-Spirits, which was more than enough for the guards of a medicinal herb farm.

However, Bu Fang was at the very least a man who could be called a Battle-King. Why would he be afraid of these little serpent-men? Even though he was inept in combat... his cultivation level was still the real deal.

Bu Fang stood in place with a sharp gaze as true energy burst out from his body with a loud noise. The piece of woolen rope used to secure his hair fell apart as well.

The serpent-man who first thrust his spear was shocked by the sudden development and his expression became extremely grave. A fifth grade Battle-King?!

Those serpent-men immediately stopped advancing. They were only fourth grade Battle-Spirits but the human in front of them was a fifth grade Battle-King. Perhaps their lives would all end here...

The serpent-man craned his neck and shouted while putting up a brave front, "You damnable humans! Are you here to steal our spirit herbs? You'll have to step over my dead body first!"

Contrary to his expectation, Bu Fang slowly suppressed the true energy emanating from his body. With his hands held behind his back and an unfathomable expression on his face, he looked at these serpent-men and let out a snort.

"Why should I step over your dead body just because you're telling me to? Wouldn't that make me lose face?" Bu Fang replied.

The expressions of those serpent-men immediately stiffened... and then they looked at each other in confusion.

...

Dozens of miles away from the serpent-men tribe, the surface of the water suddenly started bubbling. Then, something large emerged from the water and swiftly headed in the direction of the serpent-men tribe.

Plop, plop!

Somewhere within the swamp, a large pack of toad-like spirit beasts were swiftly leaping in the direction of the serpent-men tribe.

Nearby, there were many other spirit beasts that were bizarre-looking but emanating powerful auras slowly moving along as well.

Suddenly, a large herd of spirit beasts had gathered around the serpent-men tribe without anyone realizing.

Chapter 168: The Scary Human Armed with a Kitchen Knife

"Miss, hurry up and go, I'll hold that serpent-men elder back."

Wu Yunbai's subordinate was releasing an intense amount of true energy from his entire body as he blocked the attack from an elderly serpent-man who was swinging his tail around like a weapon. The aura of this elderly serpent-man was very powerful, since he was a seventh grade Battle-Saint after all.

The two of them rose into the sky and started fighting in the air. The Ice Soul Monarch Lotus was not that far away and they did not want to accidentally damage the Monarch Lotus during their fight. That was a result that neither side wanted. Therefore, the both of them reached an unspoken agreement and continued their battle in the sky.

Wu Yunbai calmly gave the battle in the air a glance and then leisurely started retreating while holding her hands behind her back.

"Human, where do you think you're going!" Ah Ni angrily shouted. With a roar, his spear came whistling through the air at Wu Yunbai.

With a frown on her face, Wu Yunbai raised her slender hand and threw out a palm strike. A massive cloud of fog suddenly appeared and spread everywhere, as if a curtain was draped over the land.

When Ah Ni rushed out of the hazy fog, Wu Yunbai's figure was already long gone. He let out an infuriated roar and slammed the ground with his tail in frustration. Then, he swiftly slithered away while heading in an outward direction to chase after Wu Yunbai.

With her hands held behind her back, Wu Yunbai was lightly tapping the ground with her toes and covering a large distance with every step. Suddenly, her figure slightly trembled before coming to a stop and she looked somewhere in the distance in puzzlement.

There, a young man with a slender figure was holding... Hmm? A kitchen knife?

Wu Yunbai's expression immediately became extremely odd. Why was there a human holding a kitchen knife in the serpent-men tribe's medicinal herb farm? Furthermore, right in front of that person... three serpent-men were prostrating themselves before him.

At that moment, the three serpent-men prostrating on the ground had already lost their arrogance from before. The only thing remaining in their hearts was pure terror. Everything was not because of anything else but because of that damnable kitchen knife in that damnable human's hand.

The moment when the kitchen knife appeared, they felt a throbbing feeling that seemed to have originated from the depths of their bloodline and the flow of true energy within their bodies came to a complete standstill.

Was this thing really a kitchen knife? Who exactly was this person standing in front of their eyes?

At that moment, the serpent-men were on the verge of bursting into tears. In the first place, they were already weaker than this human. Then, this human took out a kitchen knife that could suppress them... How were they going to put up a fight in such a state?

A smile appeared on Bu Fang's lips as he gave the three serpent-men prostrating on the ground an indifferent glance. Even though the serpent-men were half-human and half-snake, they still possessed the bloodline of snakes. Snakes had a messy relationship with dragons while the Golden Dragon Bone Kitchen Knife contained the dreadful aura of a dragon. Therefore, it was no surprise that the kitchen knife had a suppression effect on the serpent-men.

After twirling the knife around in his hand, Bu Fang stopped paying any attention to these three serpent-men and slowly walked away from them.

Just then, Wu Yunbai walked out of the fog with her hands behind her back and the two of them crossed paths.

Wu Yunbai's gaze landed on Bu Fang. As she sized up this slender young man, a hint of suspicion appeared in her eyes. This young man was only a fifth grade Battle-King, where did he find the courage to enter the serpent-men tribe's herb farm on his own?

Even though this tribe was only a subsidiary tribe among the serpent-men, there were still many powerful serpent-men warriors garrisoned here. A fifth grade Battle-King... was simply weak to the point of being laughable.

While Wu Yunbai was sizing up Bu Fang, Bu Fang was doing the same to her as well. He was sizing up the pretty boy in front of his eyes.

Bu Fang remembered clearly that the pretty boy in front of him was one of the members aboard the little boat that sailed past him earlier on. It turned out that the other party's objective was this herb farm as well.

"Who are you? Don't you know that this place is dangerous?" Wu Yunbai said. The tone of her voice was cold and lacked the gentleness of ordinary girls.

"You should hurry up and leave, there're seventh grade Battle-Saints fighting in there. If you go in any further, you might get caught up in their battle."

Wu Yunbai did not say too much to Bu Fang. She only gave him a friendly warning and walked right past him.

Suddenly, just when Bu Fang's face was still filled with bewilderment and his eyes were still focused on her, a figure charged out from the depths of the herb farm along with a dreadful wave of aura.

A spear was sent stabbing in Wu Yunbai's direction.

Bu Fang, who was standing blankly between them, was naturally the one who bore the brunt of the attack.

"There's another human?! You audacious humans, do you really think our tribe's herb farm is the White Cloud Villa's back garden?! Die!" Ah Ni was immediately enraged when he spotted Bu Fang. He let out a roar as he thrust his spear straight at Bu Fang.

Wu Yunbai immediately stopped walking and silently swore. This young man might get instantly stabbed to death since he was standing right in front of her!

Killing a Battle-King who used a kitchen knife as a weapon was a matter of seconds for a sixth grade Battle-Emperor like Ah Ni.

Wu Yunbai turned around in order to warn Bu Fang. However, the scene that happened next made her eyes and mouth open wide in astonishment.

Bu Fang was frowning as he watched the spear grow larger and larger in his field of vision. His entire body was covered in goosebumps. Then, his pupils constricted and he subconsciously swung the Dragon Bone Kitchen Knife in his hand. With true energy injected into the knife, it suddenly started gleaming with a golden radiance.

The intense pressure emanating from the spear was instantly dispersed by Bu Fang's swing and then the kitchen knife that was gleaming with a golden radiance stopped right in front of him.

Boom!

Ah Ni was overwhelmed by the dreadful pressure that suddenly emanated from the kitchen knife. His complexion instantly turned pale as he felt a pressure descend upon him without any warning and he was pressed down onto the ground.

It was fear and reverence that originated from the depths of his bloodline. Ah Ni could not believe that all of the muscles in his body were trembling. He... was actually trembling? Furthermore, he was trembling because of a human?!

This person... Who exactly was he?!

Wu Yunbai's eyes and mouth were wide open in shock. She felt as if her world view was completely overturned.

What happened to getting pierced by the spear? Why was the serpent-men prostrating on the ground instead?

Bu Fang stopped inserting his true energy into the Golden Dragon Bone Kitchen Knife and it immediately regained its unassuming appearance. The true energy consumption while activating the full form of the kitchen knife was simply too high for him. Therefore, Bu Fang would usually not fully activate the full form during normal circumstances.

Ah Ni felt the pressure upon his body drastically weakened. He raised his head with much difficulty and fiercely glared at Bu Fang.

However, Bu Fang ignored his gaze. With a conflicted expression on his face, he glanced at the direction where the two Battle-Saints were fighting and then glanced at the swampland behind him.

"I wouldn't go in, if I were you. The battle between Battle-Saints is terrifying," Wu Yunbai said. After recovering from her shock, she could not help but become curious about Bu Fang.

Bu Fang gave her a glance and asked with a frown, "What are the Battle-Saints fighting each other for?"

"You don't know?" Wu Yunbai was slightly bewildered. Did the person in front of her brazenly marched into this place for a purpose other than obtaining the Ice Soul Monarch Lotus?

"They're naturally fighting over a spirit herb..." Wu Yunbai replied.

Bu Fang nodded and said, "All the more reason for me to stay."

Wu Yunbai's mind went blank for a moment. She thought that she had already explained quite clearly enough. Two seventh grade Battle-Saints were fighting over a spirit herb. Why would a fifth grade Battle-King still want to go in there? Did he wish to seek his own death?

"You're not leaving... Is it because of that spirit herb?" Wu Yunbai asked with a frown.

Bu Fang gave her a puzzled glance. He was obviously not leaving because of the spirit herb. What other reasons could there be?

"Of course," Bu Fang replied.

However, just then the ground started to violently shake and a loud rumble suddenly came from underneath the earth.

Wu Yunbai's pupils suddenly constricted and her entire body was enveloped in a cold chill. Bu Fang was expressionlessly standing still. The two of them slowly turned to look behind them...

Their entire field of vision was filled with a massive shadow that blotted out the sun. A gigantic and horrifying spirit beast emanating an aura filled with malice was slowly observing them with its blood-red pupils.

Ah Ni was looking up from the ground with a face filled with terror. His entire body was trembling like a leaf.

"S... seventh grade spirit beast, the Blood Crown Black Swamp Boa!"

Chapter 169: How Do I Obtain the Ice Soul Monarch Lotus?

The Blood Crown Black Swamp Boa was a powerful species of spirit beast that resided in the depths of the Illusory Spirit Swamp. This species naturally became fourth grade when they reached adulthood and then molted once every hundred years. A seventh grade Blood Crown Black Swamp Boa was a horrifying existence that had already molted three times with a lifespan of a few hundred years.

This humongous creature was emerging from the swamp and its height reached a few dozen meters. The scales all over its body were glittering under the sunlight and its eyes were the size of paper lanterns.

On top of the Black Swamp Boa's head, there was a lump of meat that resembled the comb of a chicken. It was entirely blood-red in color and filled with an abundant amount of spirit energy. That was where the essence of the Black Swamp Boa was located. As the Swamp Boa fanned out the two flaps like the hood of a cobra beside its head and flicked its forked tongue, a dreadful pressure was emanating from its body.

"This is a Blood Crown Black Swamp Boa that's about to advance into eighth grade. It must have been attracted by the aura of the Ice Soul Monarch Lotus," Wu Yunbai said with a grim expression. Suddenly, a figure swiftly sprinted over from a distance and stopped behind her.

It was the subordinate who was left outside as a lookout. His current expression did not look too good either.

"Miss, the area around the serpent-men tribe is flooded with spirit beasts. The Poison Frogs and Spirit Tail Crocodiles have gathered en masse. We're... completely surrounded!" The subordinate's expression was grave. A seventh grade Blood Crown Black Swamp Boa plus swarms of other spirit beasts was a disastrous situation.

Wu Yunbai did not think that they would suddenly find themselves in a dangerous situation either.

With so many spirit beasts in the surroundings, breaking through the encirclement would be difficult and very dangerous. The best solution at the moment was running back into the serpent-men tribe and let the seventh grade Battle-Saints deal with the Blood Crown Black Swamp Boa instead.

"Let's escape inside," Wu Yunbai said to Bu Fang and then took the lead by running back in the direction she came from.

Bu Fang was startled for a moment. He gave the Blood Crown Black Swamp Boa that was nearly covering the entire sky a glance and the corners of his mouth twitched. Then, he twirled the dragon bone kitchen knife in his hand and followed after Wu Yunbai.

He was not a fool... When facing such a humongous creature and a swamp of spirit beasts, avoiding them was the smartest choice.

Ah Ni was trembling as he got up from the ground. He hurriedly fled while carrying the other three serpent-men and also headed in the same direction as Bu Fang.

Suddenly, the Black Swamp Boa's eyes started glowing and its humongous body started to slowly slither forward. When Ah Ni turned his head and glanced back, he witnessed many of the herb fields being devastated under the Black Swamp Boa's advance. As he watched the numerous spirit herbs getting trampled, his heart hurt so much that he could not breathe.

However, he did not dare to turn back. Even though the serpent-men had a natural suppression effect on snake-like spirit beasts... the humongous creature behind him was simply far too terrifying. It was impossible for a serpent-men.

When facing such a dreadful Black Swamp Boa, escape was his only choice.

Bu Fang expressionlessly followed Wu Yunbai and soon reached an open area with a pond in the center surrounded by a bamboo fencing. Within the pond, a faint blue lotus bud was floating on the water.

Bu Fang's eyes immediately lit up when he saw the abundant amount of spirit energy hovering above the lotus bud. A seventh grade spirit herb! It was actually a seventh grade spirit herb!

No wonder there was a battle between the Battle-Saints. Furthermore, it attracted a seventh grade spirit beast and even a stampede of spirit beasts...

Not all seventh grade spirit herbs would attract seventh grade spirit beasts. However, there were some special seventh grade spirit herbs that would definitely attract seventh grade spirit beasts... because these special spirit herbs were capable of assisting spirit beasts in achieving a breakthrough in their cultivation. It was normal for these spirit herbs to trigger a great battle between seventh grade spirit beasts.

Back then in the Valley of the Fallen Phoenix, the scene where two seventh grade spirit beasts fought over the Phoenix Blood Herb occurred because the spirit herb could help them achieve a breakthrough. It was likely that the spirit herb in front of them also possessed such an effect.

This was a spirit herb that was comparable to the Phoenix Blood Herb!

Bu Fang's heart was thumping in excitement. This was simply a stroke of good luck. After searching for so long, he finally found the ideal spirit herb.

"Ice Soul Monarch Lotus... Ice attribute? The Phoenix Blood Herb is fire attribute. If I use the two herbs to brew the wine, it'll be an amalgamation of ice and fire. If I add the Three Stripes Path-Understanding Fruit into the mixture... it'll be perfect!" Bu Fang's eyes were completely lit up.

Boom boom!

The two Battle-Saints in the sky had stopped fighting and landed on the ground with grave expressions. The appearance of a seventh grade spirit beast was enough to demand their attention.

"A seventh grade Blood Crown Black Swamp Boa, was it lured here by the aura of the Ice Soul Monarch Lotus? Damn it..." The serpent-men elder silently snorted with a frown while flicking his tail.

From a distance, a large group of serpent-men slowly approached with an elderly serpent-men in middle.

"Head elder!" the serpent-men elder respectfully said after noticing the approaching person and the head elder nodded in response. His cloudy eyes were grave as he gazed at that humongous creature, Black Swamp Boa.

"Third elder, are you able to hold back this Black Swamp Boa?" the head elder gravely asked.

That third elder of the serpent-men tribe gave the Black Swamp Boa a glance and replied with a sigh, "No, this beast has already experienced three moltings. Furthermore, it's about to experience its fourth molting. With its horrifying combat prowess, I am not its opponent."

Even the third elder was not an opponent... Were they going to let this beast snatch away the Ice Soul Monarch Lotus that they had been cultivating for so long just like that? How frustrating...

The head elder let out a sigh and shook his head. It was because their tribe was too weak. If this was the serpent-men's imperial city, something like this would never happen. Their sovereign would need only to lift a finger to erase this beast!

Unfortunately, this was not the imperial city and their sovereign was not here either.

Just when the head elder was mulling over his options, Wu Yunbai suddenly stood out and said, "Head elder, why don't we work together..."

The head elder frowned as his gaze landed on Wu Yunbai and an intense pressure suddenly pressed down upon her. Even though head elder's cultivation level was not high, most people would be unable to withstand the powerful pressure that he was exerting.

However, Wu Yunbai was the young master of the White Cloud Villa after all and her mental strength was robust. With a faint smile on her lips, she indifferently looked back at the head elder.

"Your tribe only has a single Battle-Saint while our side has a Battle-Saint as well. If the two Battle-Saints work together, we should be able to deal with this Black Swamp Boa, right?" Wu Yunbai's words made a lot of sense. It was also the best solution at the moment...

The head elder contemplated for a long while and still could not come up with a better solution. Therefore, without any other choice, he nodded and said, "I accept your proposal but we won't give you the Ice Soul Monarch Lotus. Instead, after driving away the Black Swamp Boa, we'll compensate your help with a few sixth grade spirit herbs."

Wu Yunbai raised her eyebrows and smiled without saying anything. She only nodded to show her agreement.

Immediately, the two Battle-Saints looked at each other in embarrassment. Just moments before, they were still engaged in intense combat and now they were suddenly allies. It was rather amusing.

The humongous body of the Blood Crown Black Swamp Boa started coiling itself into a ball. It was rearing its gigantic head and flicking its tongue. It actually stopped moving forward.

"This beast has already gained intelligence. It's waiting for the Ice Soul Monarch Lotus to bloom before making a move!" The head elder's expression immediately crumbled as he watched the Black Swamp Boa that stopped moving.

"There's no need to hurry. It's a good opportunity for the two Battle-Saints to recover their true energy," Wu Yunbai said with a smile.

Bu Fang was watching them the entire time. He stared at the Ice Soul Monarch Lotus and could not help but make a frown. A seventh grade spirit beast, two Battle-Saints, and the serpent-men tribe... With so much opposition, his chances of obtaining the spirit herb were practically inexistent. However, the Ice Soul Monarch Lotus was indispensable in order for him to brew a wine that could surpass the Dragon's Breath...

Therefore, Bu Fang's gaze shifted away from the Ice Soul Monarch Lotus and landed on the elderly figure of the head elder.

"That... I have a question. If I wanted this Ice Soul Monarch Lotus, would you... consent?"

Chapter 170: The Serpent-Men's Cuisine

Bu Fang's voice was not loud. With the bestial roars coming from outside of the tribe, his words were mostly drowned out.

At first, the head elder took no notice of Bu Fang; or, in other words, he was completely ignoring Bu Fang. A mere fifth grade Battle-King was simply unable to attract his attention. From his point of view, Bu Fang was just one of Wu Yunbai's servants.

However, when Bu Fang said those words, the head elder's gaze immediately froze and Wu Yunbai's face stiffened for a moment as well. When they looked toward Bu Fang and saw the earnestness on his face, they were suddenly struck with bewilderment.

Did he come here to make jokes? A mere fifth grade Battle-King was actually dreaming of obtaining the Ice Soul Monarch Lotus. Why did he not ask for the moon too!

Wu Yunbai's expression became extremely odd. She did not think this young man would actually spout such nonsense. Did he not realize that the two seventh grade Battle-Saints were guarding the Ice Soul Monarch Lotus? There was also the Blood Crown Black Swamp Boa waiting outside... Where exactly did he find the courage to say such words?

"Your servant really likes to joke around... I've already said before, this Ice Soul Monarch Lotus is very important to our tribe. If you're asking for any other sixth grade spirit herbs, I'll gladly fulfill your request. However, if you're insisting on the Ice Soul Monarch Lotus... then the deal is off," the head elder said while slightly waving his tail.

"Servant?" Wu Yunbai blinked her eyes as she thought, "Looks like they've misunderstood his identity..."

Bu Fang furrowed his eyebrows. From the head elder's reply, it did not seem like they would let the Ice Soul Monarch Lotus fall into the hands of others. Things were going to be difficult in that case.

The Ice Soul Monarch Lotus was the best ingredient for brewing that Bu Fang had encountered so far. It was an excellent spirit herb that was highly compatible with the Phoenix Blood Herb and Three Stripes Path-Understanding Fruit. Bu Fang was reluctant to give up just like that.

However, Bu Fang knew well enough that the head elder would definitely not just hand over a seventh grade spirit herb like the Ice Soul Monarch Lotus. Therefore, he was still thinking of a method to obtain the Ice Soul Monarch Lotus.

"This serpent-men tribe's need for the Ice Soul Monarch Lotus is a little too extreme. Could there be... a secret reason behind this?"

Bu Fang narrowed his eyes and pondered for a while but still could not figure out that secret reason.

With its humongous body coiled into a ball nearby, the Blood Crown Black Swamp Boa silently waited for the blooming of the Ice Soul Monarch Lotus while overlooking the herb farm.

The blooming of the spirit herb would be the moment when the Blood Crown Black Swamp Boa strikes.

A large group of spirit beasts was gathered around the Black Swamp Boa. These spirit beasts had vastly different appearances. Some were extremely ugly while others were fairly pleasing to the eye. They were all quietly waiting while lying down next to the Black Swamp Boa.

When the Black Swamp Boa made a move, they would follow suit and swoop down on the tribe.

This wait lasted for a long while. In the sky, two crescent moons quietly emerged from the clouds and radiated cold rays of moonlight. The moonlight illuminated the icy-cold scales of the Black Swamp Boa and made its appearance eerie.

"There's still a few more hours until the blooming of the Ice Soul Monarch Lotus. Everyone, please follow me into our tribe to have a meal first," the head elder said.

Wu Yunbai raised her eyebrows and then nodded before heading into the serpent-men tribe along with her two subordinates.

Bu Fang was still spacing out. He was thinking up a method to obtain the Ice Soul Monarch Lotus but woke up when Wu Yunbai gently tapped his shoulder.

"The head elder of the serpent-men is inviting us for a meal. I've never eaten the serpent-men's cuisine before. Let's go together," Wu Yunbai said.

Bu Fang was surprised for a moment. The serpent-men's cuisine? He was originally going to refuse but his eyes immediately lit up after hearing those words and he gave a slight nod.

The warriors of the serpent-men led the way while slowly slithering at the front.

Meanwhile, Bu Fang followed behind them along with Wu Yunbai and her subordinates. They were led along a path in the middle of a cluster of crudely-built buildings.

Bu Fang was not too concerned about the condition of the buildings. He was observing the surroundings with eyes filled with curiosity. He knew very little regarding the living habits of a tribal community especially those from another world. It was precisely this lack of understanding that piqued his curiosity.

Even though these residences of the serpent-men were not large, every single building underwent long periods of renovation in order to reach their current size.

Above the entrances of these residences, Bu Fang noticed rows of dried fishes. The moisture of these dried fishes were completely removed after prolonged exposure to the wind and sun, allowing them to be stored for a longer period.

Not only fishes were being dried. Bu Fang also saw many pieces of dried meat as well as some dried fruits.

As this place was a swamp, the high humidity sped up the rate of food spoilage. With the difficult living conditions, the serpent-men could only use such a primitive method to preserve their food.

After the group walked for a while, they detected a faint fragrance wafting toward them. This was the familiar smell of food.

The group reached an open clearing. Somewhere nearby, a voluptuous serpent-woman was stirring the contents of a large black wok with a metal spatula. The faint fragrance was drifting out from the wok.

"Our tribe is a small place. If there's any inadequacy in our hospitality, please excuse us," the head elder said to Wu Yunbai.

Wu Yunbai performed a fist and palm salute in response but her eyes were inquisitively gazing toward the large black wok. She was extremely curious about the sort of food that the serpent-men ate.

Obtaining ingredients was not an issue since they were living in the Illusory Spirit Swamp. However, the culinary level of the serpent-men might be a huge problem. After all, they were constantly embroiled in a fight for survival against a hostile environment. Their research on food would naturally be less advanced than that of humans.

"Please start eating, this is the fish soup made by our tribe's number one chef. There's nothing much in the Illusory Spirit Swamp, except for this fish. This species of fish can be found in the puddles seen everywhere. Don't underestimate them, though, as they're a rare delicacy," the head elder said with a smile. Then, serpent-men servants brought out ceramic bowls and placed them in front of Wu Yunbai and the others.

Bu Fang received a bowl of fish soup as well. As he clasped the warm bowl of fish soup in his hands, his expression suddenly became rather odd.

Fish soup? They actually served fish soup to him...

Bu Fang was obviously knowledgeable with fish soup. After all, his Fish Head Tofu Soup received praise from many of his customers. However, this was his first time tasting the serpent-men's fish soup as well. Today was an opportunity for him to try out something new.

"The main ingredient of this dish is actually a type of low grade spirit beast. However, having a low grade is actually better since many of our people are able to capture them," the head elder exclaimed.

This fish was considered their staple food. Within the swamp, where growing crops was not possible, this type of fish was commonly seen on their dinner tables...

Wu Yunbai was clasping a bowl of fish soup in her hands as well. The soup appeared slightly white in color. The liquid was not very clear but the aroma was pretty good. The overall appearance was quite appetizing.

Many of the serpent-men sitting around them were holding ceramic bowls with smiles on their faces. They had absolute confidence in their fish soup. After all, this was a cuisine that was created by them! It was more than enough for subduing some humans.

As Wu Yunbai drank a mouthful of the slightly hot fish soup, its rich flavor spread in her mouth and sent a jolt through her mind.

"Not bad, it's very delicious! It's more delicious than the average fish soups cooked by human chefs. It's fresh and fragrant," Wu Yunbai earnestly said with praise and then continued drinking a few more mouthfuls.

The serpent-men suddenly burst into laughter. The fact that they could subdue this human was a happy matter for them as well.

Having their favorite fish soup acknowledged by others was a form of happiness, even if their race was different.

However, just when everyone was drinking the fish soup and praising its delicious flavor, a voice filled with disdain rang out. "You call this a fish soup? The fishy smell was not completely removed. Furthermore, the taste is so horrendous. This is simply a waste of an ingredient."

Everyone was slightly stunned by the voice that suddenly rang out. Even the alluring serpent-woman who was cooking the fish soup was startled.

They all turned toward the source of the voice and saw the scene where Bu Fang spat out the mouthful of fish soup in his mouth with an expression filled with disgust...

Bu Fang's face was almost scrunched together from revulsion to the point where many of the serpent-men were questioning their own life choices... Did the fish soup really taste that terrible?