

Gourmet 211

Chapter 211: Maybe You were All Family Thousands of Years Ago

Ah Ni curled up his snake tail. His upper torso was covered with scars, wounds that looked savage and hideous.

"To hell with that guy!" Ah Ni's eyes snapped with burning rage, but his heart was filled with bleakness. He had never realized how big the world was before leaving the Illusory Spirit Swamp. Back in the serpent-men tribes, his cultivation level of a sixth grade Battle-Emperor was already considered matchless. Rarely anyone dared to challenge him, and even when there were the occasional spirit beasts, he could easily slay them.

However, he was met with excruciating defeats ever since stepping into the human realm. The tribe elder was right in saying the human realm was much more terrifying than the Illusory Spirit Swamp.

That group of folks held Yu Fu and serpent-man Yu Feng hostage but left him here. This was clearly a conspiratorial scheme.

"Do they want me to go seek out senior Bu? This group of people is surely up to no good. If the senior, with all the kindness of his heart, tries to go rescue Yu Fu, he will definitely fall into their trap... I cannot bring harm to senior Bu!" Ah Ni clenched his fist with a dark and gloomy face.

However, if he didn't go find him, Yu Fu and Yu Feng would be in grave danger... This was a difficult decision to make.

"Huhn? Serpent-man?"

A curious mutter suddenly interrupted Ah Ni's indecisive thoughts. Ah Ni looked back in shock only to find two familiar shadows.

He recalled these two figures clearly, since they had also appeared in the tribe for the Ice Soul Monarch Lotus but left empty-handed.

"I thought you guys got here a long time ago... turns out you just arrived? But why are you all alone? If my memory hasn't failed me, the one needing Owner Bu's remedy isn't you," Wu Yunbai asked calmly. She was dressed in a white robe and eyed the wounded Ah Ni, very much intrigued.

Ah Ni's eyes flashed. He couldn't determine if Wu Yunbai could be trusted.

"Come on, let's discuss this in Owner Bu's store." Wu Yunbai saw through Ah Ni's unease, scrunched her brows, and charged ahead.

Master Ah Wu took a look at Ah Ni and walked forward.

The three of them arrived at Bu Fang's store.

Wu Yunbai came especially early today. She was still vexed about not getting to taste the lotus made Frost Blaze Path-Understanding Brew yesterday, and so got up extra early and hauled along Master Ah, who was dead asleep.

Bu Fang was slouching on the chair before his door. His eyes flashed when he saw the three figures approaching.

Bu Fang was dazed to catch sight of the serpent-men he hadn't seen for a long time. The young monk from yesterday had just mentioned the serpent-man, and here he was today.

That young monk yesterday... was clearly troublesome.

"Owner Bu, do you still remember this serpent-man?" Wu Yunbai arrived at the store, and first glimpsed at Blacky, who was happily gulping down Sweet 'n' Sour Ribs, before asking Bu Fang her question.

Master Ah Wu's also gaped with eyes unmoved. The dozens crystals worth of Sweet 'n' Sour Ribs was discarded to feed the dog. Now that was throwing God's gifts to the winds.

Blacky paused his feast of the Sweet 'n' Sour ribs and lifted up his doggy head to glower at the ogling Master Ah Wu. He snorted with his doggy nose, then turned around, facing his butt at Ah Wu before refocusing on his meat in the ceramic plate. His tail wagged in an adorable way.

"Senior Bu..."

Ah Ni came face to face with Bu Fang. His heart was filled with sorrow. He had finally met up with him! It had been a month since leaving the Illusory Spirit Swamp, with the specific purpose of finding Bu Fang. Now that he had finally tracked him down, a myriad of emotions burst in his heart.

Seeing Ah Ni so rattled, tears, snots and all, Bu Fang's eye twitched. Dear brother... must you be so worked up?

"Come on inside," Bu Fang responded.

He left his seat and entered the store.

Wu Yunbai inhaled deeply, then strode into the store. As soon as she stepped in, her complexion changed.

The spirit energy within the store had gotten even richer compared to the day before, and the mystifying waves of energy were also more distinct. It was as if peculiar Path-Understanding Notes buzzed incessantly by one's ears.

"The Path-Understanding Tree..." Wu Yunbai's gaze fixated upon the Five Stripes Path-Understanding Tree growing by the corner in a earth yellow flower pot.

The leaves on the Path-Understanding Tree had matured, having no longer the fresh, gentle color from before. Undoubtedly, the Path-Understanding Tree was beginning to ripe.

Master Ah Wu was most affected, since he was a seventh grade Battle-Saint and could make out the Path-Understanding Notes with higher clarity.

He felt a stirring inside, and had the urge to sit down cross-legged for cultivation training. After all, it was not everyday that one would encounter a ripening Five Stripes Path-Understanding Tree.

"Miss... this Path-Understanding Tree is about to mature. Owner Bu's flower pot is quite unusual. It probably has the ability to accelerate time, or else why would the tree grow so quickly!" Master Ah Wu observed solemnly.

As a seventh grade Battle-Saint, he was well aware of the circumstances in the Imperial City nowadays. Once the Five Stripes Path-Understanding Tree ripened, the unsettling equilibrium within the Imperial City would break instantly.

"Why don't you two see what you want to order, um... as for the serpent-man, where are the others? How come it's just you?" Bu Fang turned around and asked.

A cold shiver ran down Ah Ni's spine when he heard Bu Fang's words. He was still hesitant to respond, since he suspected that the bald man was untrustworthy and purposefully sought to lure in Senior Bu...

"I must not drag Senior Bu into this!" Ah Ni's heart sunk.

"Go ahead, don't be afraid. I say no to most requests. Speak your mind freely," Bu Fang said evenly. He could detect the struggle from Ah Ni's eyes, and hence recognized his degree of anguish.

Um... say no to most requests, Wu Yunbai was quite speechless at Bu Fang's remark. But indeed, Owner Bu was inflexible in his own way. If he had sold her a cup of Frost Blaze Path-Understanding Brew yesterday, she wouldn't need to pay a visit here this early in the morning.

The serpent-man Ah Ni felt an instant rush of relief and poured out everything.

Wu Yunbai and Master Ah Wu listened with their ears perked. This serpent-man's adventure was certainly more entertaining than their bland, eventless journey.

"Zhao Musheng?" Bu Fang glanced at the serpent-man and asked calmly.

"Yes! That abominable man is called Zhao Musheng! He captured us with a dishonorable ploy!" Ah Ni gnashed his teeth in anger, fuming with a bitter resentment.

Bu Fang gave it a thought, and recalled the man who attempted to battle the simulacrum of the dragon he conjured at the Double Calamity Dragon Head Array. He didn't expect this guy to enter the picture again, and this time redirecting the target at him.

"Senior Bu, that Zhao Musheng has definitely set up a trap for you. Please don't risk your safety for us. In the name of moral justice, I really do not wish for you, Senior Bu, to go to the rescue, but then again, Yu Fu and Uncle Yu Feng are my family, I..." Ah Ni's complexion was clouded with conflicting emotions as he rambled on.

Bu Fang was dumbfounded and gazed at this babbling fellow, completely tongue-tied.

He lifted up his hand to cut off the blathering Ah Ni, and remarked coolly: "Um... sorry for the slight interruption, I did not agree to going to the rescue."

Ah Ni was struck dumb, and Wu Yunbai was also startled as they both gazed at Bu Fang.

"I am only responsible for treating your Uncle Yu Feng. As for what happens on the way here, it is irrelevant to me," Bu Fang explained solemnly.

Ah Ni trembled, shaking uncontrollably. If Bu Wang was unwilling to come to their aid, then how could he ever save Yu Fu and Uncle Yu Feng?

Just as Ah Ni was about to open his mouth, the sounds of footsteps drifted from the alleyway. Another big crowd was forming by the store.

"Well, as you can see, my restaurant is pretty busy. As for rescuing hostages... I don't have the time for that." Bu Fang threw his hands in the air. He gazed at Ah Ni, then glimpsed at Wu Yunbai, before suggesting: "Huh... you can always ask her for a helping hand. After all, you are both from the Illusory Spirit Swamp. Even though you're from different species, you two could well have been a family thousands of years ago."

To hell with the "same family thousands of years ago" theory... Wu Yunbai did not know whether to laugh or cry.

But Wu Yunbai caught sight of the depressed, desperate Ah Ni, and exhaled a light breath, "Serpent-man, seeing that we were from the same family... ah pft! Seeing that we know each other pretty well, how about if we come to the rescue?"

"However, there are strings attached to our offer. We are hoping that you can introduce us to someone after returning to the Illusory Spirit Swamp... the Serpentine Sovereign."

Wu Yunbai's eyes instantly sparkled, beaming in radiance as she stared at Ah Ni.

Chapter 212: This Lady's Sword... is Thirsty for Blood!

"Miss... you mustn't!"

Master Ah Wu's eyes almost popped out after hearing Wu Yunbai's proposal. Oh gosh, my dear lady, why would you go stick your foot into a problem like this? In the Imperial City nowadays, a slight action may trigger an entire chain effect. We don't want to become a thorn in the flesh for the rest of the Battle-Saints. That would truly be troublesome!

Even though White Cloud Villa was quite powerful, at the end of the day, there were only two of them in the Imperial City of the Light Wind Empire.

Wu Yunbai completely ignored Master Ah Wu's objection, with her eyes still fixed on Ah Ni.

The high and almighty Serpentine Sovereign was a legendary figure who managed to singlehandedly build a serpent-man tribe powerful enough to counterbalance the White Cloud Villa.

Wu Yunbai grew up reading the legends of the Serpentine Sovereign as recorded by the White Cloud Villa. Even though she had lost count of which generation was the current Serpentine Sovereign, it did not diminish her enthusiasm toward the Serpentine Sovereign at all.

Ah Ni was dumbfounded, his brains suddenly stopped functioning. What was up with this human being before him? Why would you be so obsessed with the Serpentine Sovereign? Could it be... that they really were from the same family thousands of years ago?

The thought of that sent shivers down Ah Ni's spine.

"I grew up listening to the legendary tales of the Serpentine Sovereign. I have always yearned to see for myself what this mythical figure looks like, seeing that he was able to heavily wound my Herculean father, who wasn't able to recover until three years later."

The sense of excitement faded from Wu Yunbai's complexion as she flicked a glance at Ah Ni and explained coolly.

Um... this story sounded like it had taken a turn down the aisle of tragedy. Could it be that her fixation on the Serpentine Sovereign derived from the injury he caused on her father?

Ah Ni felt his mind running all over the place.

"Just give me the word, will you or will you not introduce us." Wu Yunbai crossed her arms, lifted her chin, and asked Ah Ni.

"Yes! If you really can rescue Yu Fu and Uncle Yu Feng, I'll do whatever it takes to plead with the head elder to arrange this meeting!" Ah Ni uttered with clenched teeth. Only once a year in the serpent-men tribe could one have an audience with the Serpentine Sovereign. This opportunity was truly rare.

"Consider this a done deal." Wu Yunbai was very satisfied. She chuckled lightly and snapped her fingers.

Master Ah Wu, who stood behind her, had tears streaming down his face. My dear lady... can we please not act capriciously and unrestrained? If you wanted to see the Serpentine Sovereign, why couldn't you simply ask the villa master once you return to the White Cloud Villa?

"Owner Bu, you must have Frost Blaze Path-Understanding Brew available today?! Give this lady a cup!" Wu Yunbai was over the moon at this moment. She waved her hands around boldly.

"My dear lady... can we give this a second thought?" Master Ah Wu coaxed.

However, Wu Yunbai completely ignored him, with her gaze landing on Bu Fang.

Bu Fang nodded expressionlessly, then turned around to head back into the kitchen.

Once he stepped into it, the sounds of footsteps echoed and travelled from the main entrance. Numerous figures had squeezed into the store.

Among the the first crowds was the Ouyang family. It was evident that the breakthroughs of the three Ouyang barbarians from yesterday came at a shock. Hence, they hurriedly charged toward the store this morning.

Ouyang Xiaoyi stuck out her head, her eyes peering toward the kitchen. If Owner Bu wasn't in the store at this time, he must be in the kitchen.

"Let me know if you want to order anything."

Ouyang Xiaoyi began tending to her duties, which included keeping the order of the store.

"Today's Frost Blaze Path-Understanding Brew is limited to five cups for sale." Bu Fang's calm voice drifted from the kitchen, after which he himself appeared with a white jade wine jar in his hands. His complexion was cool and indifferent.

Even though the crowd was displeased that the available amount of the wine had yet again decreased, they didn't voice any objections. This was a wine that could assist one to reach breakthroughs... When the fruit was the scarcest, its taste was the sweetest. That was the way of life.

Bu Fang placed the white jade wine jar on the table and took off the lid. There was still one third of the wine nectar left within the white jade wine jar. A rich wine fragrance instantly burst forth from the wine jar, intoxicating everyone.

In the early morning, a wine aroma wafted out of the small alleyway, engulfing the space around it.

Splloosh Splash, Bu Fang scooped up a cup of light cyan colored wine nectar with a bamboo tube. Stripes of cloud-shaped moires hovered above the wine cup, with its rich concentration of spirit energy faintly quivering.

"Your Frost Blaze Path-Understanding Brew, please enjoy," Bu Fang said as he handed the wine cup to Wu Yunbai, who was unable to hold herself back.

Wu Yunbai received the cup with her eyes absolutely glued to the wine nectar. She licked her ruby lips, swallowed a mouthful of saliva, and took a sip of the wine.

A burning, pungent flavor instantly rushed into her mouth, sending chills down her body. Her eyes lit up as she raised her head and took three more sips. With three gulps down her throat, the cup of wine was completely devoured.

Bu Fang caught the cup that Wu Yunbai flung across dizzily, and placidly turned to look at her.

Wu Yunbai's entire face became pink red, her flushed cheeks made her look adorable. After a light burp, Wu Yunbai took a step with her body shaking back and forth and her head spinning. Not before long, she landed flat on the floor.

"Miss!" Master Ah Wu was astounded and quickly stepped forward to support Wu Yunbai, yet the latter had already sunk into a deep drunkenness.

This one cup of Frost Blaze Path-Understanding Brew had an alarming amount of strength. The so-called "pass out with one cup"... was obviously not a joke.

"Owner Bu... please excuse us. Here is five hundred crystals, we'll be one our way." Master Ah Wu was speechless at the young lady who had just vowed to come to the rescue but ended up knocked out cold after one cup of wine. My lady... aren't you a tease?

Bu Fang accepted the crystals and nodded his head.

Master Ah Wu said no more, supporting Wu Yunbai as he walked out of the store. He also summoned for the very much lost Ah Ni to follow along.

The three of them quickly disappeared from the store.

Bu Fang tapped the white jade wine jar with a bamboo tube and successfully caught everyone's attention. He announced coolly: "Only four cups left."

The crowd was immediately stirred up, their scramble for the goods caused a commotion.

After the last four cups of Frost Blaze Path-Understanding Brew have been sold, Bu Fang packed up the white jane wine jar and took it back to the kitchen.

After the wine sale, the store resumed its regular business operations. The Ouyang family left carrying a passed out Grandpa Ouyang. Xiao Xiaoyong also had to support Xiao Yue, who lay on the floor smacking his lips, to find his way out of the restaurant...

"What a pity, there is a new dish today, but nobody wants to give it a try." Bu Fang curled his lips and muttered as he witnessed one customer leaving after another.

"Hey oh, Owner Bu, the store has been bustling with business these mornings! Now it is hard to squeeze even if we get here early." The big-bellied Fatty Jin stepped into the door with his heavyset troops as he remarked casually.

It was yet another couple of unexciting yet pleasant business hours.

"Xiaoyi, serve the dish."

"Ay!"

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Wu Yunbai lay sprawled on the bed motionless like an octopus. All of a sudden, her body trembled. She pulled blindly at everything around her, making a mess of the bed spreads.

She crawled up from the bed, pouted her lips, the expression on her face changing constantly. She rubbed her throbbing head and peered at the nightfall through the windows. Her eyes suddenly narrowed into a squint. She emitted a light breath, which was still rich with the smell of alcohol.

Wu Yunbai was startled, and then began to inspect herself to see whether the Monarch Lotus-made Frost Blaze Path-Understanding Brew, one she did not have the chance to feel for herself after passing out, has helped her reach a breakthrough.

"This... this... oh my god!"

Wu Yunbai was simply dumbstruck. Within her energy core, a spinning lake of spirit energy was incessantly emitting true energy. If one could compare her true energy vortex from yesterday to a small pond, then today it has transformed into a huge lake.

Who would have thought that a cup of wine could help her reach a breakthrough whilst in a deep sleep.

The true energy vortex was as if a lake, setting off large waves as it circulated... this signaled that she had officially stepped into the echelon of seventh grade Battle-Saint.

Wu Yunbai's eyes widened, and her ruby lips cracked open to form a laugh.

She stood unmoved, felt a tug at her heart and subsequently a force of energy rushing down to her feet. Her entire body elevated in the air. She walked on void space as she took a few steps all tipsy. With that, Wu Yunbai could not contain her excitement.

Elevated Steps, only seventh grade Battle-Saints could achieve that.

"There really is a breakthrough! And all accomplished soundless and without a stir. Even though it was dependent on my personal foundations, Owen Bu's wine nectar was undeniably magical... I was worried that passing out from the wine would cause me to lose the best window for a breakthrough. Who would have thought that I could directly attain an upgrade!" Wu Yunbai clenched her fists excitedly, and couldn't suppress the mirth in her heart.

She walked out of her room and caught sight of Master Ah Wu all stretched out, snoring loudly in his sleep.

Serpent-man Ah Ni also sat on his rolled up serpent tail with his eyes shut.

Standing before this scene, Wu Yunbai narrowed her eyes. A trace of gentleness flashed across her eyes before opening her mouth to howl.

"Master Ah Wu!"

Master Ah Wu instantly jumped up in fright, with his drowsy eyes widened. Serpent-man Ah Ni also opened his eyes, very much confused.

"Come on, let's go rescue the hostages! This lady's sword... has been thirsty for blood since long ago!"

Wu Yunbai threw her arms up in the air in a heroic manner.

Chapter 213: A Moonless and Windy Night... to Butcher a Dog

"Miss... what did you just say?"

Master Ah Wu's heart quivered. He couldn't believe that the young miss just made such a lofty and heroic statement.

Wait... But before Master Ah Wu could open his mouth to dissuade Wu Yunbai, his eyes suddenly widened as he stared at her in a daze. Wu Yunbai true energy stirred and kept rising, which led to his heart palpitating with excitement.

"Miss! You broke through to become a Battle-Saint?!"

Master Ah Wu entered into a state of excitement and his mental tiredness totally vanished as his eyes shone like a bright star.

On the side, the serpent-man Ah Ni's heart also leapt into his mouth. How did this crossdressed girl suddenly attain a breakthrough to become a Battle-Saint? She was still so young!

In reality, Wu Yunbai did, in fact, look very young. In other words, around the age of twenty and yet, her cultivation level had already exceeded most of her peers.

As expected of disciples of the White Cloud Villa. They truly deserve their reputation as a mysterious and gigantic faction.

Maybe... they really had a fighting chance to save both Yu Fu and Uncle Yu Feng! Ah Ni's originally faltering heart filled with hope again.

Wu Yunbai's mouth curled into a smile as she nodded her head to acknowledge. As she released her true energy, an even larger pressure emerged from her body, forcing the serpent-man to retreat a few steps back.

"It's really the aura of a Battle-Saint! Wonderful, if the villa master finds out that the young miss has achieved a breakthrough, he will be thrilled!" Master Ah Wu said as he danced in excitement.

"Owner Bu's Frost Blaze Path-Understanding Brew really is the good stuff. Not only was the essence of the Ice Soul Monarch Lotus Seed absorbed into the wine, it even combined all the other precious Spirit Herbs into one. With that scorching sensation... Its medical effect is definitely not weaker than the seventh grade Ice Soul Monarch Lotus. It deserves its price of 500 crystals." Wu Yunbai's exclaimed.

Was it really worth exchanging a mere cup of wine for the chance for a Battle-Emperor to break through to Battle-Saint?

Yes, it was definitely worth it!

"Master Ah Wu, let's hurry and rescue them now. Since we promised that serpent-man that we would do so, we have to live up to our words. Such a moonless and windy night is perfect for taking action. Besides, I want to try out the strength of a Battle-Saint!" Wu Yunbai broke into a beaming smile, tinged with excitement.

Master Ah Wu's face stiffened up. To be honest, he was wary of taking part in this rescue mission. Given the current state of the Imperial City, even if one were a Battle-Saint, they weren't entirely safe from danger either!

Furthermore, his goal here was to ensure the safety of Wu Yunbai. Naturally, he didn't wish for her to be embroiled in such a risky endeavor.

However, after seeing the strong determination of Wu Yunbai, he had no choice but to give in to Wu Yunbai as he changed into dark clothes and prepared to set out.

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On that moonless night, as the chill wind blew, it stirred the sand on the ground.

A streak of shadow emerged from an corner. A figure with a bald head with multiple scars on it could be seen jumping from wall to wall at an incredible pace, with almost no sound being produced at all.

With a flip off the wall, the bald figure landed at the entry of an alleyway.

As the bald figure lifted his head, a pair of avarice-filled eyes revealed themselves. Peeking out, he turned his gaze onto the way of Bu Fang's squarish little restaurant. There, a plump black dog could be seen snoring away.

"It's such a rare sight to see such a plump dog. Tonight, on this wonderful moonless night, I can have a good feast!"

The man tried to stifle his laughter.

He remembered that the wily fox, Zhao Musheng, mentioned to him before that a scary spirit beast resided in the tiny restaurant. However, nobody knew what its cultivation level was. Hence, he needed to be careful in this snatch-the-dog mission, in case the spirit beast which Zhao Musheng is wary of would notice him. That would truly be... dreadful.

"This humble monk is just here to snatch a watchdog... That supreme beast should not be too bothered by that. After snatching the dog, I will immediately run away without looking back... there shouldn't be any problem there!!" Baldie formulated what was, in his mind, the perfect plan.

Turning his thoughts back to the plump, juicy black dog, he couldn't help but reminisce about the delicacies he could experience. That dry-grilled dog meat, red braised dog meat, honey-glazed dog meat...

The more he thought about it, the more he couldn't wait to take action.

"This humble monk is known as the Terminator of Dogs! Big black dog in front, here I come!"

Baldie snickered. As he moved cautiously toward the front, he took care not to stir up any large movements, to avoid being noticed by the supreme beast protecting the restaurant.

Baldie moved agilely like a swallow. It even seemed as though he was flying toward the restaurant. With each step he took, his pace grew even faster.

His sight fell on the black dog lying on the ground, that thoroughly fattened black dog, chock full of meat...

"That's good ! I cannot feel the pressure of any spiritual beast. It looks like that incredibly strong supreme beast didn't notice me." Baldie heaved a sigh of relief, but he still remained on alert, fearing that the savage monster would lock on to him.

The black dog remained on the ground, with its nose twitching ever so slightly as it remained blissfully asleep, without any signs of awakening.

Baldie let out a sound of delight as he looked at the dog.

As his hand made a small movement in the air and flicked his wrist, a frigid cold glint of a dagger appeared and rested on his hand. The dagger shone, becoming a frightening sight in the moonless night.

"Such a plump dog, it's perfect for dry-pot dog meat!"

Baldie licked his lips as the dagger ferociously lunged at the big black dog.

In order to snatch away the dog without so much as a squeak, he had to be ruthless and precise. With one stroke, blood must be spilled and the dog silenced forever without a chance at even barking. He had practised this maneuver countless times before, and even the location he planned on striking was one he sussed out after numerous experimentations; there was no better location than this to drain its blood.

Screech---

An ear-splitting screech, one so jarring that it gave those who heard it goosebumps, sliced through the dead of night amplified to deafening proportions by the deathly silence of this tiny alleyway.

Baldie was stunned. He couldn't believe that the dagger, which he used to savagely stab the dog, not only failed to leave a single scratch on the dog, but it bent as well, as though it was stabbing a piece of rock.

"Is this possible?" His eyes narrowed as he kept the damaged dagger and took out another sharpen dagger to stab the dog again.

I stab!

I stab!

I stab again!

I'll stab your a**! Baldie fell on his butt in disbelief after the three stabs, with his eyes glued on the now bladeless dagger in his hand. In his heart, a foreboding sense of unease began to wrap around him like vice.

He looked at the dog again.

The black dog finally opened its drowsy eyes, slowly turned its head around, and with twitch of its mouth, stared back in an almost human-like fashion.

"Damned bald donkey, what are you doing tickling this lord dog in the middle of the night? Is it fun or something?"

It was a man's voice, calm and affable.

However, the voice carried the force of thunder as it blasted toward Baldie and left him trembling as he stepped back. His face was white, as if he had seen a ghost.

This... This plump dog... can freaking speak?!

Blacky rolled its eyes. Even though it didn't understand what was this donkey doing stabbing him in the middle of the night and even though that dagger didn't hurt it in the slightest... this dunce had clearly disturbed this lord dog's sleep. Unforgivable!

Under the dazed stare of the bald man, Blacky actually stood up on its hind legs, nearly causing the bald man's eyes to pop out of their sockets. Eyes hanging by a mere thread, he gawked at the fat dog approaching him while doing the... catwalk!

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On the second floor of the restaurant, Bu Fang was still sleeping soundly without knowing what was happening outside, in the alley. However, even if he knew about it, all he would do was frown.

Coming in the middle of the night to provoke Blacky... this bald donkey should have seen it coming.

At the same time, within the doorway of a resplendent courtyard in the Imperial City...

Three shadows wearing black clothing proudly stood at attention.

"So, this is the place?" Wu Yunbai couldn't help but ask as she stared ahead at the courtyard.

Snake-man Ah Ni nodded his head. With regards to this place, he was sure that both Yu Fu and uncle Yu Feng were locked up inside.

"Miss, this isn't some ordinary mansion. Are we really going to go in?" Master Ah Wu knitted his eyebrows as he looked at the manor. He had this sense of uneasiness, as if it was dark bottomless pit, waiting to swallow them all.

"What's there to be scared of... Master Ah Wu, do not forget, this miss is finally a Battle-Saint and can wield the semi-divine tool... the Cloud Sword!" Wu Yunbai said with confidence.

Hearing that, he paused for a moment before relaxing. That's right. The young miss was a lady who possessed a semi-divine tool, a seventh grade Battle-Saint. An ordinary Battle-Saint wasn't even a match for her, so perhaps he was really worrying too much.

"Let's go... to save them," Wu Yunbai said in a serious tone.

Even with an hidden trump card, one must still exercise caution with the current state in the Imperial City.

The true energy of the three people surged forth as they rushed toward the manor.

Chapter 214: Humble Monk only Envied Lord Dog Muscular Juicy Body

On the Imperial City's street, in a quiet alleyway, outside Fang Fang's little store.

As the cold moonlight radiated down and covered the ground, it illuminated the alleyway where a plump, big black dog could be seen striding like a cat, casting a long shadow.

The big black dog emotionlessly looked toward the bald donkey in front of it, a bald donkey who dared to use a dagger on the Lord Dog.

At the current moment, in his heart, Shang De felt as though ten thousand black big dogs were galloping toward him. How could this plump big black dog in front of him actually open its mouth and speak? What was going on?

Barely containing the terror in his heart, Shang De got off the floor. Thinking of a hundred possibilities, the severity of the situation suddenly dawned on him.

"A dog which can speak... I'll be damned! I hope this dog is not the spirit beast Zhao Musheng is referring to?" In an instant, his confusion was cleared up as if a bolt of lightning had streaked across his mind, banishing the darkness clouding it. Turning to look at the dog, his face turned as pale as a sheet, as if he had seen a ghost.

The spirit beast he remained on guard against for the better part of the day, through some cruel twist of fate, turned out to be the target of his skullduggery tonight! Standing there, eyes watering and

face etched with indignation and grief, Shang De truly felt like cursing the heavens for his misfortune.

But how could such a powerful spirit beast be a plump dog? Could a plump dog even become a spirit beast?

As Blacky strode forward, with its smug look seemingly intending to taunt his opponent, which caused Shang De's heart to tremble with fear. He thoroughly regretted his action. Why did he give in to a moment of desire and decide to trouble this black dog.

"From your body... this Lord Dog could sense a killing intent." Blacky emotionlessly spoke, its voice mild yet somehow charming. "Why do you bear such killing intent toward a dog?" spoke the Lord Dog with its mild voice as he stopped in his path, looking at Shang De.

Shang De's eyes widened. He grabbed his head with his hands and then slapped it. Under the uncaring eyes of the Lord Dog, he suddenly leapt into the air and with a forceful kick of both his legs, stepping onto the wall. Judging by his actions, he was planning to flee within the span of a breath.

Watching the panicking bald donkey stumble to get away, Blacky extended its doggy tongue and licked its dainty little doggy paws.

"I'm asking you a question here. What are you running away for?"

Blacky muttered curtly after which he violently swiped a dog paw onto Shang De's back.

With his heart totally swept up like a tsunami, the startled Shang De only had one single thought in his mind, which was to run away as fast as possible.

Although he could not sense any spiritual energy movement from that plump black dog, when he stared at the dog, his heart couldn't muster a single ounce of resistance. That sensation... it was like when he faced an eighth grade spirit beast in an endless desert before.

At that time, his cultivation level was only up to Battle-King, while he was facing a War-God spirit beast.

"And... that War-God spirit beast also knew how to speak."

What the heck, encountering a spirit beast which could speak, there's only one word: run!

Boom!

Just as the thought of running crossed Shang De's mind, an incredible pressure appeared behind him. His body suddenly froze, unable to make a single movement, as the paw slammed him into the ground.

"Why did you, in the middle of the night, try and use a dagger on this Lord Dog?" Blacky raised its dainty little doggy paws while sighing.

Shang De's face was now full of fear. Even with his full-fledged muscular body, he was unable to make any movement, as though he was chained up... This threatening feeling was even scarier than the pressure he felt from that War-God spirit beast in the past!

Damn this dog!

"For some reason, this Lord Dog feels that you harbor bad intentions... Fess up, unless you wish to end up like this..." Lord Dog spoke.

Crash!

Shang De groveled on the ground, with his whole body full of cold sweat. Glancing to the side, his pupils suddenly shrunk, as he saw that the floor paved with bricks had shattered into multiple fragments... A dog paw print could be seen superimposed on it.

"Lord Dog, Big Brother Dog! Please show some mercy!" Shang De felt like crying, being bullied like this.

"Hmmm?"

Blacky rolled its eyes at the gutless bald donkey.

"Well, I humbly came in the quiet night, well, it's because... I admired Lord Dog's heroic and well toned muscular physique, so I was thinking..." Cold sweat could be seen dripping from Shang De's head... Should he said it out?

"And so what do you want?" Lord Dog blinked as it said.

"So I was thinking... about borrowing a slice of dog meat, to taste!" Shang De's heart trembled as he finally blurted out the statement he was in the midst of mulling over. He immediately shut his mouth. In his heart, he knew he was in deep trouble.

True to that, at that instant, a surge of turbulent malicious aura fell on his back.

"You dare say you wanted to eat dog meat?!"

Boom!

As though a slumbering beast had just been aroused, an oppressive aura enveloped the city.

At that very moment, the whole Imperial City boiled over. All the Battle-Saints who were sleeping soundly almost pissed in their pants as they opened their eyes and dashed out of the room, each of them feeling the frightening aura.

That aura was just too overwhelming!

At that instant, no matter who it was, their started to shiver.

In an inn, Ni Yan opened her eyes, twisted her slender body and leaped off her bed before dashing out of the room and into the sky.

A delicate shadow could be seen following behind her.

"Sister Ni Yan... this pressure! Could it be a War-God spirit beast?"

Ye Ziling was not aware of the action of arming herself with long bow on her back, clutching tightly with her palms full of sweats.

"No... there's something weird with this aura, it's seems to be much stronger than a War-God spirit beast, as if..." Ziling knitted her eyebrows. She found this aura familiar, as though she had felt this before.

"No matter what, there's going to be trouble brewing in the Imperial City! " Ni Yan sighed.

...

"Young Miss, should we still act?" Master Ah Wu's whole body trembled. Faced with the aura, his face turned dark.

"To think that within the Imperial City lay such a scary existence... This overwhelming pressure is at the same level as the Master of Cloud Villa! When did Light Wind Imperial City process such a hidden trump card? No! Let's use this chance. While everybody is stunned by this aura, we should immediately take action to rescue the prisoners!" Wu Yunbai bit her lips as she said.

Master Ah Wu's face paled. It looked like there was no choice but to take action. Having made the snake-man Ah Ni stay at the entrance to be their lookout, two shadows could be seen leaping over the walls.

...

Shang De's body could be seen shivering, "I told you I didn't want to speak at all, look at you... you got angry already!"

His heart was full of bitterness. He truly only wanted to catch a plump dog for its dog meat. To think that this dog, which was basically a pig at this point, hid such a frightening power within itself.

"Eat dog meat?! Who gave you the gall to eat dog meat?" Blacky was furious. Its entire body covered with dog fur could be seen radiating light.

Boom! Boom!

The tiles on the floor started to shatter as they could not withstand the tremendous pressure.

"Lord Dog! Let's speak calmly!" A ray of light radiated out, engulfing him. To think that Shang De was able to break out of Blacky's pressure. A Buddha simulacrum could be seen appearing from his body as he leapt off the ground to get back on his feet.

Shatter!!!

However, before he got the chance to continue to speak, a dog paw covering the sky cruelly patted down, and the Buddha simulacrum shattered like glass into many fragments.

Like a falling star, he felt as if his whole body was bursting into flames as he fell from the sky.

With his night clothes in tatters and multiple slashes on his skin. His whole body was flattened, while he vomited blood nonstop.

Boom! Boom!

A loud explosion could be heard throughout the Imperial City in the night, with sound waves cascading through, followed by the deep silence that came next.

On the outer walls of the Imperial City, a deep crater was carved into its stony walls, from which bricks could be seen falling down

A shadow struggled to crawled out of the crater. With his whole body bloodied, he barely managed to stand up. From his chest, pieces of buddhist relics could be seen falling into pieces.

"That damned dog.. such a misfortune!"

Shang De was truly covered in blood Were it not for those precious buddhist relics helping him to take on most of the damage, he would likely have become a meat patty already.

After eating dog meat for so long, finally he was beaten by a dog... All he could say was that he totally deserved this.

With his injured body and his heart feeling desolate, he slowly made his way toward Zhao Musheng's manor.

Blacky sniffed his nose indignantly. Still angry, he glared at Shang De's broken figure, sighed and lay down at the restaurant entrance.

...

Upstairs, Bu Fang leaned against the window. Seeing that the alleyway floor was destroyed again, he crinkled his mouth into a smile.

"I already asked Blacky to be more gentle on the stone pavement, yet it got destroyed again."

Looks like there was no choice but to ask someone to come and repair the pavement on the following day. Bu Fang sighed as he closed the window and climbed back into bed, preparing to sleep.

This night, however, would most likely be a sleepless one for the Battle-Saints of the Imperial City.

Chapter 215: The Wind Whistled and Misery Came

A resplendent courtyard, throughoutly surrounded by pavilions and terraces, and partitioned by a miniature stream that ran right down the middle. All that framed within the picturesque backdrop of a false mountain from which the courtyard's river drew its lifeblood from, round and round, meandering through its stony crags.

As the moonlight shone over the entire courtyard, it reflected off the stream, turning it into a river of stars.

In a certain corner, two figures gently descended onto the plush greenery, ever so gently, so as not to be heard by others. With a face stiff with anxiety, Master Ah Wu closely kept pace with Wu Yunbai

as she traversed the courtyard. This was the courtyard Ah Ni had told them about, the one where the serpent-man was held captive within. It was also the one where Zhao Musheng resided in.

"Young Miss... be careful, since this Zhao Musheng was so insistent that Owner Bu paid him a visit, there's no way he wouldn't leave traps behind or perhaps an ambush of sorts." Master Ah Wu prudently noted.

Wu Yunbai nodded her head. She knew of that as well. There was simply no way Zhao Musheng wouldn't make any preparation when dealing with Owner Bu.

Standing within the courtyard, they couldn't help but feel a little spooked by the serenity and almost deathlike solitude of the courtyard, barely broken by the intermittent whooshes of the flowing water.

"Let's move... we still have to find where the snake-man is being held prisoner," Wu Yunbai said.

With a zip, the two figures disappeared into the distance ahead, ever so quietly.

Zhao Musheng stood within a certain room, with his hands behind his back. At his side was a table on which rested a cup of tea still fresh from the teapot, which billowed its aromatic fragrance throughout the room.

Suddenly, his lips curled into a smile as he raised the cup to his lips and took a sip. Eyes closed, he took a moment to savor the fragrance before slowly leaving the room.

Stepping out, he couldn't help but blow a breath of hot air in response to the slight chilliness outside. Mere moments later, a rush of mental energy surged out of the man who took but one step forward and flew into the air!

Back within the courtyard, the roar of a wild beast could be heard crashing through the silence of the courtyard, deafening those who heard it and nearly destroying the courtyard in the process.

From within, came a multitude of tyrannical laughs that echoed thunderously in the air.

Boom! Boom!

As flows of true energies clashed, the resulting shockwaves tore through the resplendent courtyard, turning it into a horrific battleground in just the blink of an eye.

At that, Zhao Musheng grinned. "So, he finally took the bait."

Dashing through the air, he came to a stop above the courtyard only to see a chaotic battle already in progress beneath. There, he saw a multitude of figures surrounding another group of figures.

"Hmm? It's not Bu Fang?" He paused for a second upon realizing that it wasn't Bu Fang who the experts below were surrounding.

"Haha! Zhao Musheng, so these two fellows are the targets this time? Once we capture them, we will get the Five Stripes Path-Understanding Fruit Tree?" Came a boisterous yell from below. It was a topless brute seated atop an equally fierce looking cheetah, that issued that thunderous laugh.

Surrounding him were three other experts who also commanded a beast of their own. These were the men who surrounded Wu Yunbai and Master Ah Wu.

As Master Ah Wu stood there, hand clasped tightly around a serpent-man, his face couldn't be any paler nor graver even if he wished it.

That Zhao Musheng really did set up a trap for Bu Fang, and to think it was such a terrifying one as well...

Four seventh grade Battle-Saints along with two sixth grade beasts. Such a team was basically invincible within the imperial capital. Such a showing for a mere fifth grade Battle-King... that Zhao Musheng must have really taken the threat of Bu Fang seriously.

Standing in the midst of said trap was Wu Yunbai, with her brows knitted together and true energy surging.

"Men from the Third Godly Temple of the Wildlands, huh? To think the esteemed Third Godly Temple of the Wildlands would stoop so low as to collude with the insignificant Mahayana Island... your faces aren't worth much, I see!" Wu Yunbai coldly declared.

Third Godly Temple of the Wildlands wasn't a faction foreign to her. It was, after all, a power that could rival the White Cloud Villa's. However, these two factions were located in different regions with the White Cloud Villa occupying Illusory Spirit Swamp while the Third Godly Temple of the Wildlands occupied the central regions of the Wildlands.

While she said they were colluding, the only one who could dispatch so many Battle-Saints had to be the Third Godly Temple of the Wildlands. A mere Buddhist sect like the Mahayana Island couldn't provide such a showing even if they tried.

"Oh? A pretty little thing like you actually knows about us? Seems like your background isn't that bad either!" Sneered the brute seated atop the cheetah, as he threw a look at Wu Yunbai.

Zhao Musheng descended upon one of the false peaks and with a frown, called out to Wu Yunbai and Master Ah Wu, "Why is it you two rescuing the serpent-man? Where's Bu Fang?"

Hearing that, Wu Yunbai merely threw him an impudent look and said nothing.

"Forget it... since you two are willing to risk yourselves for Bu Fang, your relationship with him shouldn't be that simple either. Capturing you two for a negotiation with him should yield the same results as well." Zhao Musheng emotionlessly declared before turning to look at the Battle-Saints below him.

"Capturing them will give you a chance at the Five Stripes Path-Understanding Fruit Tree. Men... for the fruit tree... what are you all waiting for?"

"Hey, hey, Zhao Musheng, I hope you aren't lying here, for your sake as well as mine, otherwise you'll regret it!" The brute glanced at Zhao Musheng and laughed coldly after which he whistled. Immediately, the cheetah beneath sprang into action.

...

Rumble!

Within the Imperial City, a chain of explosions rocked the city without rest. All around, a frightening blast of wind swept through everything in its path.

Amidst the storm of dust, a figure could be seen dashing out, hands wrapped around a snake-man. The figure touched the floor outside of the courtyard where Ah Ni, who had been waiting outside all this while, immediately reacted.

"Move! We're leaving first! The Young Miss will act to cover our backs, quick!" Yelled Master Ah Wu, with a face as dark as the night and just as cold.

Hearing that, a chill gripped the heart of Ah Ni but he didn't say a word. Summoning his true energy levels, he flew off after the distant figure of Master Ah Wu.

Back within the courtyard, the explosions continued with no signs of abating. In fact, they grew even more intense with sword energies peppering the air around the courtyard. By now, this furious battle had long since made its presence known to the entire imperial capital.

Multiple Battle-Saints were already quietly observing the earthshaking battle with their consciousness.

Amongst them was a figure clad in a fiery red robe who silently swayed in the air as he toyed with his slender fingers.

"Musheng, that idiot... Stirring up such a scene at a time like this, aren't you just asking for trouble by sticking out like that? The pressure from that eighth grade beast had just dissipated not too long ago and you are already causing such a ruckus..." A disdainful Mu Lingfeng frowned.

The fact that the little restaurant which possessed a Path-Understanding Fruit Tree seemed to possess an eighth grade watchbeast was undoubtedly a piece of bad news for him. Such a beast was strong and with it guarding the store, he would have to pay a steep price in order to attain that tree.

"Looks like I have to request an elder's aid... the Five Stripes Path-Understanding Fruit Tree... I must have it." Mu Lingfeng's eyes narrowed as he twisted his finger. An instant later, a fiery bird appeared within his hand. Lowering his head, he muttered several words to the little bird after which it chirped and flapped away.

"By the time the elder arrives, that Five Stripes Path-Understanding Fruit Tree should be ready to bear fruit as well... by then, it will be time to act."

Mu Lingfeng breathed deeply and then turned his attention back to the battle raging below. He quietly scolded the fool once more before flying away.

...

The corner of Wu Yunbai's mouth were stained with blood. As her chest heaved, the Cloud Sword and her arm both trembled.

Even though she had the Cloud Sword with her, facing off so many experts alone was still a tough task. Thankfully, she still had the White Cloud Villa's jade talisman with her. Activating it, she finally managed to escape that deadly trap. Had it not been for that trump card of hers, she would have probably lost her life back there.

After all, those experts from the temple clearly weren't going to show her mercy.

Gripping the semi-divine tool in one hand, she painfully clutched at her wounds with the other while speeding off into the distance. Suddenly, her face froze as she looked into the distance.

Right there was a dishevelled bald man dressed in rags, hobbling toward her while clutching injuries of his own.

"What's a beggar doing loitering around the streets in the middle of night?" She muttered to herself as she swallowed a gout of blood. Amidst her confusion, her eyes suddenly narrowed as she finally recognized who that man was!

"It's you?!" Obviously, she recognized who that bald monk was, especially given the undisguised killing intent in her eyes right now. "Isn't that bald man the guy ferrying news to Zhao Musheng?"

As for the bald man, the look he had on right now could only be described as thunderstruck. In order to savor a piece of dog meat, he nearly got himself killed by a slap from a dog. Truly, his lucky couldn't get any worse. Yet, just as he finally managed to drag himself to the doorstep of Zhao Musheng's manor, he found himself face to face with a sword-wielding pretty face with the word "kill" written all over her face. Exactly what did he do to deserve such a fate?!

"Damned donkey! Die!"

With a furious yell, the Cloud Sword, clad in piercing sword light, swung right at the bald monk.

Puchi

A spurt of blood later, the bald monk was sent flying away, blood raining in his wake.

Still clutching her wounds, she felt a resounding thud echo from behind her after which she threw the bald donkey a final look and a harrumph before disappearing into the night.

The wind whistled and misery came...

Eyes filled with tears, the bald monk stared at the moon hanging high above him and swore to never eat dog meat again.

...

At the break of dawn, the first rays of the morning peeked through the windows of a tiny restaurant and bathed its owner's face in a warm soothing light. Stirring from his deep slumber, Bu Fang wrinkled his nose and opened his eyes.

It's the start of another beautiful day.

Bu Fang leaped out of bed and after freshening up, came to the kitchen to begin his daily knife work and carving practice. After finishing his routine, he then prepared a serving of Sweet 'n' Sour Ribs and walked out of the store, ribs in hand, to Blacky's sleeping spot.

"Blacky, it's time for breakfast..." Bu Fang gently called out. However, the reaction he received stunned him. Normally, this black dog of his would fall head over heels for a plate of ribs, and yet Blacky didn't seem the least bit interested today as he lazily sauntered over after throwing the plate of ribs a disdainful glance.

Looks like this plump dog of his must have really been pissed off by last night's incident. Seeing that, Bu Fang couldn't help but wonder exactly what did that fellow do to provoke such lasting ire from his dog.

However, since Blacky didn't seem to want to talk about it, he naturally had no way of finding out either. Walking back to his restaurant, his nose was greeted by a tantalizing fragrance that faintly lingered in the air.

Bu Fang turned his gaze to the Path-Understanding Fruit Tree he kept in the corner and stared wide-eyed. This tree of his actually bore three adorable little green fruits for him! That was where the fragrance originated from.

So the Five Stripes Path-Understanding Fruit Tree was finally going to start bearing fruits?

Chapter 216: Miraculous Donburi

Bu Fang knitted his eyebrows as he slowly made his way toward the Five Stripes Path-Understanding Fruit Tree. Sniffing the scent, it brought a sense of refreshment and clarity to one's thought.

As the leaves of the Five Stripes Path-Understanding Fruit Tree swayed, the patterns became animated, with every thread of the patterns ever so conspicuous. Within the lush leaves, three round and green fruits appeared. While the fruits were not large and fully ripened, they had a faint cloud pattern etched on them. It bore some resemblance to the Three Stripes Path-Understanding Fruit.

When he extended his hand and gently stroked a fruit with his fingers, a slight amount of spiritual energy undulated outwards, scattering a chill fragrance. As it spreaded through his body, it gave Bu Fang a sense of comfort.

"Great... judging from its appearance, it is going to ripen soon", Bu Fang curled the corner of his mouth, and his heart rejoiced.

Bu Fang witnessed the Five Stripes Path-Understanding Fruit Tree's growth from a single seed to maturity. His heart had grown fond of it.

He stood up and sighed. Taking a final look at the Five Stripes Path-Understanding Fruit Tree, he turned and walked back into the kitchen.

As the restaurant continued its daily operation, the fragrance of dishes scattered throughout the store, intoxicating the diners.

Ouyang Xiaoyi could be seen hopping around joyfully. It had become a daily habit of hers to come over to the small restaurant to work; it was much better than rote cultivation at home.

Even though she helped out every day, her cultivation speed did not suffer at all. The cultivation atmosphere in the shop was most ideal thanks to the Five Stripes Path-Understanding Fruit Tree scattering out the Path-Understanding Notes, which were highly beneficial to cultivation.

"Xiaoyi, serve the dish."

Bu Fang's emotionless voice drifted from the kitchen. Ouyang Xiaoyi came to the front of the window and took an Egg-Fried Rice which was emanating a mesmerizing aroma. Having worked as a waitress for a long time, she had grown accustomed to the fragrance, although, occasionally, she would still lose herself in the aroma. She was more resilient than most people.

This was one of the difficulties any restaurant waitress must conquer.

Serving the Egg-Fried Rice to a customer, Ouyang Xiaoyi smiled as she retreated a few steps back. Suddenly, she noticed multiple shadows entering the store entrance as she tilted her head toward them.

"Where is Owner Bu? Hurry, ask Owner Bu to come over..."

With her face white as a sheet, Wu Yunbai staggered into the restaurant. Behind her was Master Ah Wu. He looked worried. Ah Ni and Yu Fu could be seen behind them, supporting an unconscious serpent-man.

When Ouyang Xiaoyi saw the serpent-men, her heart was filled with curiosity with regards to the strange serpent-man race.

"You guys wait here. My smelly boss is currently in the kitchen," said Ouyang Xiaoyi. After following Owner Bu for some time, her way of speaking had become simple yet concise.

"Master Ah Wu, don't be so anxious. Let's find a seat to sit down first," Wu Yunbai voice was a bit weak, her face white and lips drained of their rosy colour.

Master Ah Wu nodded his head as he pulled a chair out for Wu Yunbai to sit.

Yu Fu was a bit fearful when she looked at the restaurant's interior. "This is senior's restaurant? After going through so many hardships, at last, we have arrived."

Yu Fu's pretty face was full of scars, there were many ripped scales on her tail, which was covered in injuries.

After a long time, Bu Fang wiped the grime off his hand. He came out of the kitchen, nodded his head at Yunbai and her group after seeing them.

His glance fell on the serpent-woman Yu Fu, and after seeing the unconscious serpent-man Yu Feng, he knitted his eyebrows.

That serpent-man's breath was much weaker than before. It was obvious that during the journey here he suffered some serious injuries.

"You are injured?" Bu Fang emotionlessly spoke as his gaze finally fell on Wu Yunbai, who was also covered in injuries.

"Just some small injuries, nothing too serious." Wu Yunbai maintained her stance, even though her face was white.

"Owner Bu... I already said that there were some issues with Zhao Musheng. He insisted for you to go over intending to kill you. If yesterday you were the one who went instead, I'm afraid you would have died multiple times already... Luckily, Young Miss broke through to Battle-Saint last night, or else the mission would have most likely ended in failure," Master Ah Wu said in indignation.

That Zhao Musheng was truly a despicable man, to think that he colluded with the people from Godly Temple of the Wildlands. If the master was here, Zhao Musheng would have been beaten to death by a single palm.

However, the moment Wu Yunbai was injured, Master Ah Wu used a scroll rune to send a secret message back. White Cloud Villa dispatched one of their four commanders, Commander Zhankong. When the time came, Zhao Musheng would still be beaten to death by a single palm.

After all, Commander Zhankong was an eighth grade War-God!

"Oh, your luck is not bad." Bu Fang wasn't too surprised after listening to Master Ah Yu. Zhao Musheng definitely would make some preparations since he dared to trouble Bu Fang. After all, he did suffer in the hands of Bu Fang before.

However, Bu Fang was curious exactly what this Godly Temple of the Wildlands was made of.

"Since you are injured, I would recommend ordering the restaurant's new dish. Perhaps it will be of some help to your injuries." Bu Fang spoke in a serious tone to Wu Yunbai as he looked at her.

Wu Yunbai was startled. Her injuries were grave, and thus any ordinary elixir would be ineffective, yet a simple dish would work?

However, as she thought about Bu Fang expertise in Elixir Cuisine, her eye shone. "Right... this chef in front of me is not an ordinary chef, perhaps he does really has a way."

"New cuisine?" Wu Yunbai had some anticipation as she turned behind to look at the menu. After scanning around, her eyesight locked onto the new dish which had just been added.

"Dragon Blood Meat Donburi?" Wu Yunbai paused for a while, as she felt some novelty to this cuisine name.

"Two hundred crystal... it's quite expansive!" Wu Yunbai sighed.

"The taste is not bad, and it should help your injuries," said Bu Fang seriously.

"Let's order a set. Crystals are not an issue, what's most important now is to heal Miss' injuries." Master Ah Wu anxiously urged him before Wu Yunbai could speak.

Bu Fang nodded his head before he turned to make his way into the kitchen. As he passed by the feeble serpent-man Yu Fu, he added, "Wait a while, till the restaurant opening hours are over."

Ah Ni was speechless as he saw the back of Bu Fang entering the kitchen. He could not utter a single word.

Back in the kitchen, Bu Fang took out some Dragon Blood Rice from a clay pot. After washing, he passed the water used to wash the Dragon Blood Rice to Ouyang Xiaoyi, for her to water the Five Stripes Path-Understanding Fruit Tree.

After putting the Dragon Blood Rice into a steamer, Bu Fang started to prepare the handmade beef barbecue sauce. He took out a tenderloin portion of the Wandering Dragon Cow. Spinning the kitchen knife in his hand, flowery patterns started to appear.

...

As Bu Fang carried the Dragon Blood Meat Donburi out of the kitchen, the aromatic fragrance of the beef barbecue sauce and Dragon Blood Rice diffused into the surroundings and the people sniffed the air in delight.

"Your Dragon Blood Meat Donburi, please slowly enjoy it." Bu Fang spoke as he placed the dish in front of Wu Yunbai.

Yunbai's eyes twinkled as she looked at the Donburi dish, however, her eyes soon revealed a flash of disappointment as it did not meet up to her expectation of an Elixir Cuisine.

Since it wasn't an Elixir Cuisine, would it have any effect?

Yunbai was clueless. However, she still used a porcelain spoon to scoop some Dragon Blood Rice to put into her mouth, under the envious stares of the other patrons.

Scalding! Fragrant!

Those were the first impressions the Dragon Blood Meat Donburi gave, as the scalding yet thick fragrance overpowered her taste buds, leaving them slightly numb.

The Dragon Blood Rice was chewy while the beef barbecue sauce was thick with flavor, even though it was not known what sort of spirit beast meat was in the beef barbecue sauce. It had a delightful mouth feel. After chewing for a while, Wu Yunbai pale face regained its rosy color. It could be due to the surging hot energy or due the recovering of her injuries. As she stretched her neck and gobbled down on the rice, her eyes sparkled. The spoon in her hand never stopped moving, as chumps of rice were continuously fed into her mouth.

Bu Fang was satisfied with Wu Yunbai's eating manner. With regards to delicacies, one should eat without constraints. That liberating way of eating was how you showed respect to any delicacy.

Eating in a hamfisted manner only meant that the food wasn't enticing enough.

Wu Yunbai widened her eyes as she continued. As the Dragon Blood Rice entered her stomach, she felt a hot sensation rising from her stomach. Her energy core became like an oven as turbulent spiritual and vitality energies gushed, enveloping her entire body.

At that very moment, her injured body was filled with energy. Through the activation of her cultivation method, her spiritual energy was turned into True Energy as it circulated the entire body and pulse. As energy gathered at the place of injuries, they were healed.

Her body, battered in grave injuries, was healed at an incredulous pace, visible to the naked eye.

Wu Yunbai's heart was surprised and shocked. To think that a bowl of the Dragon Blood Meat Donburi... was powerful enough to heal her injuries! It was simply miraculous!

Chapter 217: An Elixir Cuisine that Manifests Vitality Energy

A donburi was quickly brought before Wu Yunbai and was devoured just as quickly by her, with nothing left behind, not even a grain of rice.

She had just finished her meal and yet it didn't take long before her face managed to regain of some its rosy hue, as if a mass of dense vitality energy was circulating within her right now. Belching, she released some of the stored up energy.

Feeling that warming burn in her energy core, her face brightened up. Owner Bu truly lived up to his name; with just one bowl of Dragon Blood Meat Donburi, her wounds actually recovered this much. Although they weren't completely healed up, they were at least much better than before.

"Owner Bu, this beef of yours seems a little different. Why is it so packed full of energy? That rice too, the mouth feel of it was rather chewy, but once I swallowed it, my body was filled with vitality energy, like I had just eaten some miraculous medicine." Wu Yunbai exclaimed, mouth sputtering with praises in every word.

Bu Fang grinned slightly as he took in her praise. That rice she just ate wasn't just any old rice grain, it was Dragon Blood Rice. Although it was just rice watered with a pseudo-dragon blood, its effects were vastly superior to that of ordinary rice grains and even better than certain breeds of spirit energy rice.

In short, not only was it a delectable ingredient, Dragon Blood Rice was also a medicinal ingredient.

As for the beef, was there even any doubt that it was special? Carved from the seventh grade Wandering Dragon Cow, there was no way it wouldn't be brimming with spirit energy. The taste was vetted by Bu Fang himself. It was superb.

Born of these two ingredients, it was only natural that the finished dish possessed such an unparalleled taste.

Right now, Wu Yunbai's body was filled with a surging mass of spirit and vitality energy. She needed a place to cultivate so as to digest this energy and recuperate at the same time.

Thus, Master Ah Wu and her swiftly bid their farewells to Bu Fang and left.

Before leaving, she threw Ah Ni a glance that was steeped in meaning: "I hope you won't forget about your promise."

Ah Ni nodded before bowing respectfully to express his gratitude for her aid in this mission.

Wu Yunbai accepted the gratitude silently and then left with Master Ah Wu.

"Owner Bu... is it about time we begin the emergency treatment of my uncle, Yu Feng?" Ah Ni anxiously asked.

Yu Fu, equally anxious, threw the owner an expecting look as well.

However, Bu Fang merely swept his eyes over them blandly before saying: "Be patient, I already said that once our opening hours are over, I will personally brew some elixir cuisine to save him. Naturally, I won't go back on my words so just rest easy and wait. Don't rush me."

As calm as can be, he then returned to the kitchen.

At the side, Ouyang Xiaoyi cozied up the Five Stripes Path-Understanding Fruit Tree and sat down in a comfy spot beneath, one eye closed while the other remained open. While it wasn't strictly considered cultivating, basking in the scent of the fruit tree was enough to aid one's cultivation.

Like that, a day of operation ended in a flash during which this little restaurant was graced by a number of acquaintances who left after enjoying some small dishes. For the most part, they were here to observe the growth status of the fruit tree.

As two slightly obscured crescent moons rose over the darkened horizon, the restaurant finally closed up for the day. Walking out of the kitchen, he wiped off the stains on his hand, pulled up a chair for himself to sit and then turned to look at the trio, all in a calm and orderly fashion.

On his previous trip to the Illusory Spirit Swamp, he managed to retrieve some seeds from the Ice Soul Monarch Lotus. That lotus originally was one of the serpent-man tribe's heavenly treasures. Having taken such a valuable ingredient, Bu Fang naturally needed to show them some sincerity. That was why he elected to save that serpent-man, Yu Feng.

Truth be told, it was a form of equivalent exchange.

Due to the extenuating circumstances then, the Wandering Dragon Cow Meat Congee was only able to slightly alleviate that serpent-man's condition. Now that they were all in the imperial capital, it fell on him once more to brew up another batch of elixir cuisine. Given that he had promised them before, he naturally wasn't going to skimp on the effort now.

Calmly, he plopped himself down onto the chair and began chatting with the serpent-man Ah Ni.

Having spent an entire day in the kitchen, even Bu Fang needed some time to relax. However, Ah Ni and Yu Fu were clearly too anxious for that right now. Given a choice, they would rather have Bu Fang immediately start working on the brewing.

Finally, after getting enough rest, Bu Fang stood up and, under the expecting gaze of the two snake-men, walked back into the kitchen to begin his brewing.

Previously, in the serpent-man settlement, he only had the most primitive of cooking implements to work with. Using those crude tools, the Wandering Dragon Cow Meat Congee he boiled had barely a tenth of its original medicinal power. Now that he was in his own personal kitchen, such a problem naturally didn't exist.

"Blood Crown Wandering Dragon Cow Meat Congee? Hmm... some changes are needed here." Standing before his stove, his deep contemplations were only interrupted by a few sporadic blinks of his eyes.

First, he retrieved from his system's inventory a gigantic slab of the Blood Crown he sliced off from the head of that seventh grade Black Swamp Boa. That Blood Crown was where the Black Swamp Boa stored its vital energy, thus it was the main ingredient for this batch of elixir cuisine.

"Perhaps adding in some Dragon Blood Rice might improve the efficacy of the elixir." He murmured to himself while stroking his chin.

The more he thought about this change of his, the better it sounded to him and his eyes brightened up in response.

Green smoke coiling about his hands, he summoned forth his Golden Dragon Bone Kitchen Knife and with a quick flourish, sliced off a chunk of the Blood Crown.

In order to process the Blood Crown, one needed to use the Golden Dragon Bone Knife. No other knife would serve here, as they wouldn't be able to seal the opening caused by the cut. Unless that opened was sealed up, the energy within would constantly leak out, turning the Blood Crown worthless within moments.

The Golden Dragon Bone Kitchen Knife was imperative in brewing elixir cuisines precisely because of its ability to preserve the vitality and spirit energy within the ingredient even after it had been sliced.

Bu Fang grabbed a handful of Dragon Blood, though not much. It was merely half of what he used to prepare that donburi.

Retrieving a casserole from the kitchen cabinet, he then tossed the washed Dragon Blood Rice into the kitchenware and poured in a generous serving of Heaven Alps Spirit Lake Water provided by the system. After being chopped up, the Blood Crown was tossed into the casserole as well.

Next came the Wandering Dragon Cow Meat. This time, he sliced off the bottom round of the beef. Naturally, he used the Golden Dragon Bone Kitchen Knife as well, perfectly sealing the spirit energy within.

Tossing all the ingredients into the casserole, Bu Fang turned on the stove and started the slow brew. As the ingredients stewed within, he put a single hand over the lid of the casserole and continually channeled his true energy through it.

The brewing of elixir cuisine was, in a lot of ways, a test of the brewer's degree and quality of control over his true energy. Furthermore, the brewer must know the combined effects of each and every ingredient within his dish like the back of his hand. That was why brewing elixir cuisines was such a exhausting and challenging task for the vast majority of chefs.

Even Bu Fang had to expend a decent amount of true energy and energy in order to brew a good batch of elixir cuisine, especially this particular batch of Blood Crown Cow Meat Dragon Rice Congee. Because the ingredients used were all extraordinary, the spirit energy reaction between each was a lot more complicated and minute. Such details required a greater degree of true energy control, and this increased the overall difficulty of the task.

For roughly half an hour, Bu Fang maintained his infusion of true energy. By now, his forehead was drenched in sweat and yet he merely trudged on with brows furrowed, not daring to loosen his focus for even a second.

With regards to the culinary arts, Bu Fang had always adopted the highest of standards. It was his hope that every dish he put out was the best. Thus, he put his heart and soul in every dish he cooked, just so that it wouldn't disgrace his art.

Soon, a rich and uniquely fragrant congee smell began to escape from the lid of the casserole. It had an exquisite feel to it, as if it was an extremely fine thread that weaved its way through your nostrils ever so smoothly like pure silk.

"That's the smell! Even though it's slightly different from that time... that's definitely the smell! I remember it very clearly!" Raved a visibly excited Yu Fu, arms clutching Ah Ni's own as he took in the fragrance wafting out of the kitchen.

Seeing that, Ah Ni couldn't help but nod and smile ruefully. However, while he might have acted as such, his heart was just as excited as his companion's.

The fragrance itself was in the midst of being brewed; first it had a reserved quality to it before bursting forth in an intoxicating wave.

The moment the two serpent-men noticed a lean figure walking out of Bu Fang's kitchen, they immediately straightened their backs.

From within, he brought out a piping hot casserole that steamed with a fine, silken fragrance.

Blob Blob!

Even after it was placed on the table, the bloody congee within was still boiling hot. As the bubbles burst, a waft of fragrance was released into the room.

"Blood Crown Cow Meat Dragon Congee. This should be enough to fully treat your father's ailments, so go ahead and feed it to him." Bu Fang explained to Yu Fu as he massaged his stiff fingers.

The serpent-woman nodded her head, with excitement written all over her face. Walking up to the casserole, she eyed the boiling hot congee and chewed on her lips.

She pulled out a celadon bowl and laddled a spoonful of congee into the waiting bowl. As she did so, the vitality energy within almost seemed to materialize and hiss at her like a serpent.

"This... this..." She found herself at a loss for words. For vitality energy to manifest such a phenomenon... How terrifying...

"If nothing goes wrong, this elixir cuisine should be able to treat his ailments," Bu Fang said with a calm nod of his head. As his serious gaze fell upon the excited daughter, his gaze softened slightly.

Chapter 218: How About I Serve as the Guardian of this Small Restaurant

Yu Fu ladled a spoonful of piping hot Dragon Blood Congee into the waiting celadon bowl, where the vitality energy within soon surged and coalesced. Using a porcelain spoon, she carefully scooped up a bit of the congee and cooled it with a blow. As she did so, that dragon-like vitality energy dissipated, leaving behind a rich fragrance.

This was a bowl of Dragon Blood Congee and not some dessert congee. Because Wandering Dragon Cow Meat was added into the mix, the congee was slightly salty and that was reflected in the fragrance that wafted across the room.

The slightly red congee was carefully fed to the unconscious Yu Feng, and after two small bowls of it, the snake-man's countenance began to show some visible improvement. Instead of that deathly pale hue he had before, there was an increasing redness in his cheeks.

Unlike the previous time, the effect of the elixir cuisine was a lot more pronounced. The moment the third bowl was finished, Yu Feng suddenly opened his eyes, revealing what looked like vitality energy swirling within his pupils.

A surge of energy waves rushed out of his body and blew away Yu Fu, who was in the midst of preparing another spoonful of congee.

Humm...

As if a ripple of energy was roiling about within him, Yu Feng's entire face turned blood-red like it was on the verge of bleeding.

An instant later, he spat out a mouthful of black fluid that filled the area with a pungent stench.

Previously, the serpent-man's reaction wasn't so pronounced. The fact that he acted this way had exceeded Bu Fang's expectations, though it didn't cause him much panic in the end because it was precisely the kind of effect he was looking for.

This single bowl of congee was packed full of ingredients which contained vitality energy. Just that Blood Crown alone was enough to cause Yu Feng to awaken. Adding in Dragon Blood Rice to supplement its effect made the efficacy of the elixir even more pronounced.

Yu Feng's aura surged for a moment before finally stabilizing a while later. As his inky black hair dryly slapped against his face, his contaminated sweat continuously rolled down his face, following the curve of his lower jaw till they finally dripped onto the floor.

These droplets contained within them the impurities of his body. Upon replenishing his vitality energy, his metabolism recovered as well, signifying that he had completely recovered.

"Father!" Yu Fu cried out, excited to the point of weeping. This journey of recovery was truly a dangerous one, fraught with so much hardship that almost made her lose her life multiple times. Looking at the recovered Yu Feng, there was nothing that could have pleased her more right now.

Yu Feng's eyes had a certain depth to it now. Reining in his aura, he threw his daughter a loving look before nodding at a visibly excited Ah Ni standing right beside her. Finally, he turned his eyes to Bu Fang.

With a wave of his snake tail, he came up to Bu Fang and shook his hands while sincerely thanking him.

"My gratitude, Owner Bu, for the elixir. Such a massive favor is one Yu Feng will never forget."

Narrowing his eyes for a moment, Bu Fang eyed the snake-man who had recovered thanks to his miraculous elixir cuisine, with admiration and jubilation filling his heart as he accepted the serpent-man's gratitude for his hard work.

"There's still a bowl of Dragon Blood Congee left over there. Once you finish it, your injuries should be completely healed up," Bu Fang said.

The serpent-man nodded his head and thanked Bu Fang once more before slowly finishing up the last bit of congee.

While that bowl of congee was medicinal in nature and filled with overwhelming vitality energy, it was also a rare delicacy to be savored. As the snake-man downed the congee, a sense of satisfaction filled his heart. By the end, he almost swallowed his own tongue by mistake as he slurped up the last bit of congee.

"Owner Bu's culinary skills are truly a marvel. Once more, I extend my gratitude for Owner Bu's aid. I'm not sure if we will ever be able to return this massive favor!" As he said that, the serpent-man looked Bu Fang right in the eyes.

Bu Fang, on the other hand, merely brushed it off with a wave of his hand. "I don't need you guys to do anything for me. My Ice Soul Monarch Lotus was obtained from your tribe and thus I promised your high elder that I would save you. This is an equivalent exchange between us. There's no need to harp on it."

Even though he said that, the serpent-man, Yu Feng, still knew deep down in his heart that this act of saving him wasn't something a mere Ice Soul Monarch Lotus could compare to. Although it was a valuable ingredient, Yu Feng knew very well that this bowl of congee contained at least two other ingredients that were just as valuable as said lotus.

"If Owner Bu doesn't mind... how about this one acting as a guard for him. In a vast city like the imperial capital, it must be hard for Owner Bu to run his business... While this one might not have too many skills, his cultivation is at least decent..." Offered the serpent-man after a moment of contemplation. For a top seventh grade Battle-Saint of the serpent-man tribe to act as a chef's bodyguard, that should be more than enough to repay the favor he was shown.

And yet in the face of this request, Yu Fu and Ah Ni displayed a rather curious expression.

Stunned, Bu Fang didn't know whether to laugh or cry at the moment...

"It's alright... being a bodyguard and all... er..."

"Does Owner Bu not look favorably upon this one? This one's cultivation might not be considered the top within the snake-man's capital, but dominating the imperial capital of Light Wind wouldn't be a problem at all..." Yu Feng declared with absolute confidence in himself.

At the side, Yu Fu and Ah Ni couldn't help but roll their eyes at him.

Where did he think this was? This was the renowned restaurant of Owner Bu... it was precisely this tiny, unassuming restaurant that threw the entire imperial capital into the turmoil it faced right now...

Who knew how many Battle-Saints had tried to pry into the restaurant's secrets and who knew how many experts struck out at it due to a lack of self-control. Even so, look what had happened so far.

The restaurant was still happily opening for business everyday.

This restaurant truly wasn't lacking in protection... especially not from him.

"Our restaurant isn't lacking in bodyguards, so there's no need for your esteemed self to be worried. Since your esteemed self has recovered, this one has fulfilled his promise. In that case, seeing as our operating hours have passed, it's time for this one to close the shop... Everybody, if you don't mind me not walking you all out..." Not interested in wasting anymore time on this, Bu Fang replied with a placid look on his face.

The inside was already guarded by Whitey and the exterior had the plump dog... err, Lord Dog, guarding it. To either of them, a Battle-Saint at the peak of the seventh grade was merely a toy...

"Alright, since Owner Bu doesn't need this one's services, this one won't insist. However, this one will remain in the capital for a year. Should this restaurant face any trouble... this one will do his best to help. Should Owner Bu need this one's help, please feel free to ask for such." Having said that, Yu Feng left the restaurant with Ah Ni and Yu Fu without even waiting for Bu Fang's response.

Helplessly looking at the trio leave, a strange look crossed his face.

"That serpent-man... why is he so stubborn? Was it because I was too indirect with him? Sigh... if I knew it would turn out like this, I would have just said so already, a mere seventh grade Battle-Saint... really isn't qualified to be our guard."

He pursed his lips and couldn't help but laugh a little to himself. Closing the door boards, he cleaned up the celadon bowl and the casserole before returning to the kitchen and practising on a few dishes. Having done that, he returned to his room to turn in for the night.

Back in the hall, the Five Stripes Path-Understanding Fruit Tree exuded an even richer fragrance. Looks like the little tree was growing up hale and hearty.

...

"Yu Fu... who was it that inflicted such serious injuries on you?" As Yu Feng slithered slowly out of an alleyway, his face couldn't help but darken while he eyed Ah Ni's and Yu Fu's injuries.

He already wanted to ask this question back in the restaurant, but out of deference for Owner Bu, he held back. Now, however, there was nothing holding him back anymore.

That was his daughter... to think the day would come where she ended up covered in injuries like that. Clearly, a great deal had happened while he was unconscious.

Hearing that, Ah Ni grew a little agitated himself. Now that Yu Feng had recovered, it was as if they had gained a support to rely on within this city where the Battle-Saints ran amok.

Ah Ni proceeded to recount all that had happened to them while Yu Feng was unconscious, including how Yu Fu was captured by Zhao Musheng and was tortured. He also mentioned how he promised Wu Yunbai something in exchange for rescuing Yu Feng and Yu Fu.

"That brazen old cur! He actually dared to injure my daughter... He's clearly looking for death!" Having heard all that, a flash of murderous intent made its way across Yu Feng's eyes. With a burst of light, an inky black long spear appeared out of nowhere within his palms. Immediately, a burst of bloodthirsty aura rushed out of the ominous black spear.

"Ah Ni, lead me to that old cur, I swear I'll skewer him to death with this spear!" Howled a furious Yu Feng.

However, Ah Ni knew exactly how frightening that manor of Zhao Musheng's was. Even with two Battle-Saints like Wu Yunbai and Master Ah Wu, they barely managed to avoid death. No matter how strong Yu Feng was, rashly breaking into that manor would probably end in misfortune.

Thus, he worked in concert with Yu Fu to placate the serpent-man's anger and then suggested that they paid a visit to Wu Yunbai first. Calming down, Yu Feng nodded his head. He knew just as well as the other two which was the more prudent choice. However, that didn't stop him from adding Zhao Musheng to his must-kill list.

"Oh right, Ah Ni, I want you to purchase an apartment near Owner Bu's restaurant. We'll live there for a year. Since I promised that I would protect his restaurant for a year, I must keep to my words." Giving it some thought, he said that while handing over several crystals to Ah Ni.

Clearly not prepared for that, Ah Ni accepted the crystals with a dumbfounded look on his face.

"Hmm? Ah..."

Chapter 219: Eighth Grade Experts, Arrived!

Outside the majestic gates of the Imperial City, verdant sprouts reared their tender heads as the end of winter heralded the arrival of spring. Having been covered in snow for an entire season, the soils around the capital finally began to show signs of revival. All around, a burgeoning aura of life washed over the lands.

Along the wide main road just outside of the capital, a crisp clip clop could be heard echoing over the horizon. From a distance away, a figure slowly loomed into view.

It was an old man dressed in a full-bodied robe, riding an ashen-gray donkey while holding a gigantic wine gourd in his hand. As he made his way toward the capital, he would take a swig from his wine gourd from time to time, all the while swaying right and left.

With a satisfied look on his face, the old coot would hum a small ditty between each swig of wine.

Standing beneath those majestic gates of the imperial capital were three figures with their backs perfectly straight as they stood there watching while the chilly winds ruffled their coats.

As Tang Yin laid eyes on the looming figure of a donkey-riding old man, his eyes lit up. "Master, the senior has arrived." Tang Yin couldn't help but quip to Ni Yan, the woman standing beside him.

Ni Yan nodded her head and pursed her lips. That old drunkard sure had a sense of humor... to think he actually chose to ride a donkey here all the way from Wuliang Mountain. Could there be anything more comical than that?

"So this is the Senior Hu, whom master always talks about." Longbow strapped over his back, Ye Ziling opened her eyes wide to get a closer look at the old senior who came riding a donkey.

"If you're trying to say that your master always talk about an old drunkard, then yes, that's him." Ni Yan smiled and gave Ye Ziling a jovial pat on the back.

Once more, the rhythmic clip clop of the donkey cut across the quiet of the icy air. Suddenly, within the mere moments it took for their hearts to jump in surprise, what was originally a distant figure actually appeared before them in an instant.

Still reeling from the surprise, Ni Yan gasped. But that donkey was just... Why was its trotting speed so quick!?

"You damned brat, an old bag of bones like me can't take this kind of shock anymore. If this old man doesn't see this Five Stripes Path-Understanding Fruit Tree, then you can forget about ever touching his wine ever again!" The old man snapped, mouth wide open, after which he took another swig of wine.

Hearing that, Ni Yan immediately griped to herself, "as if anyone would think about that Dragon's Breath of yours when they had Owner Bu's Frost Blaze Path-Understanding Brew over here in the capital."

The old drunkard flipped himself over the donkey's back, secured his wine gourd to his waist and then pulled up his pants before flashing Tang Yin and Ye Ziling a roguish smile. With donkey in tow, he proceeded onwards toward the imperial capital.

"So this lass is that old witch's disciple?" *clicking tongue* "Well, isn't she a pretty one." The old drunkard smiled once more after giving Ye Ziling a throughout look.

Immediately, she returned the old coot an alarmed look.

Like that, the four of them continued their light-hearted banter as they walked toward the gates. Yet, just as they were about to enter the capital, a thunderous bestial howl echoed in the distance.

Ni Yan and the others promptly whipped their heads in the direction of the howl. As for the old drunkard, he made sure to take another swig of his wine before turning around as well.

All they saw in the distance was a giant black dragon with its wings fully extended, bellowing as it flew in their direction. As it did so, its body let forth a surge of mighty aura that could have only come from a pseudo-dragon like itself.

"Oh hoh, a seventh grade spirit beast, Black Hell Dragon?" The old drunkard chuckled.

Unlike the senior, Ni Yan and the others were all suffering under the pressure of that mighty dragon. Suddenly, their eyes narrowed as they noticed a figure standing aloft on that dragon's back.

It was a hunched-back old man with an aura as steadfast and heavy as a mountain.

"That's... an expert from the Godly Temple of the Wildlands?" Ni Yan murmured.

So an eighth grade expert from the Godly Temple of the Wildlands had finally joined the fray.

...

Within a small courtyard in the imperial capital, the Ghost Chef Wang Ding was in the midst of dissecting a fifth grade spirit beast with a few flourishes of his cleaver.

His hands were so nimble that the cleaver almost seemed to dance in his palms. With every flourish, a slice of spirit beast meat came flying off.

In mere moments, an entire spirit beast was stripped clean by his practised slices.

Storing the cleaver, the Ghost Chef wiped his hands clean before shakily making his way back to a tiny house within the courtyard. There, he sat down on a rocking chair and slowly rocked himself.

Just in front of the rocking chair was a gigantic black wok. The wok was bubbling with a white steam that gave off a strange odor as it wafted around the room.

After sitting there for a while, the Ghost Chef stood up and brought in a giant bucket. Within the bucket was the meat he had just dissected not too long ago.

Lifting up the lid on the wok, a rush of steam shot out and into the sky.

With an inscrutable look in his eyes, Wang Ding stared at the bubbling in the wok. His lips curled into a slight smile, after which he tossed all of the meat within that bucket into the wok.

Crackle... The meat began threshing about in the wok at a rapid speed.

Hands quivering, the Ghost Chef retrieved a tiny jar from his tunic and flipped open its lid. From within, he fished out a dark purple pill with two of his nearly dried up fingers.

Laughing creepily, he crushed the pill between his wizened fingers and poured the powder into the wok before covering it once more.

"That's the 35th fifth grade spirit beast... another two more and the Essence Meat Broth should be ready. By then, the fight for the Path-Understanding Fruit Tree should've started.

The Ghost Chef shakily made his way back to his rocking chair and plopped himself down comfortably. As he did so, he covered his legs with a plush fur blanket before resuming his rocking.

...

Over the past few days, the tiny restaurant had seen increased traffic. A number of Battle-Saints had long since lost their patience and had to see for themselves how far the Five Stripes Path-Understanding Fruit Tree had grown.

Of those that came, a number had been thoroughly conquered by the small restaurant's chef after having a taste of some his dishes. From then on, they became daily customers. After all, being able to savor such delicacies while basking in the Path-Understanding Notes of the fruit tree honestly wasn't a bad deal at all.

Within an earthen flower pot, tucked away in a corner of the restaurant, the Five Stripes Path-Understanding Fruit Tree grew. Its leaves had taken on a dark green hue and were riddled with a profoundly complex set of veins. There were five of them that coiled around it like a tiny snake.

Hidden amongst the leaves were three spirit fruits, the size of an infant, hanging tantalizingly off the tree's branches. As they barely hung onto the branches, four light blue clouds could be seen engraved onto their peel.

Those present knew that the moment the fifth cloud appeared, that meant the fruit had completely ripened.

Today, however, there were only four cloud engraved; it was still one short of the magical five.

"Xiaoyi, serve the dish." The faint voice of Bu Fang echoed from the kitchen.

A moment later, a bowl of piping hot Fish Head Tofu Soup was placed onto the windowsill of the kitchen by Bu Fang.

Ouyang Xiaoyi weaved around the dining hall along a path she taken multiple times before, dish in hand, till she finally came up to the table of a man dressed in a red robe.

"Your Fish Head Tofu Soup, please enjoy," Ouyang Xiaoyi said in her usual bubbly voice before winking at the handsome man dressed in a set of red robes.

For the past few days, this man visited them on a nearly daily basis. Each time, he would order a different dish and after finishing it, would leave right away, unlike the other Battle-Saints who loitered around for a long time, like flies.

"Many thanks." The man smiled warmly at Xiaoyi before turning his attention to his soup.

By now, Mu Lingfeng had been thoroughly conquered by the delicacies of this tiny restaurant. The first time he had a taste of its heavenly dishes, he received the shock of his life. Every pore in his body quivered from delight and his heart practically leapt out in joy.

He wasn't the only one either. Around him, a number of Battle-Saints had grown accustomed to this daily routine of finishing a dish or two and leaving right after.

"Such a pity... Once this fruit tree matures, this tiny shop will turn into a battlefield. I doubt it will survive then... I wonder if I will ever get the chance to savor such delights again." Mu Lingfeng lightly sighed to himself.

"Hmm?" Just as he took a few sips of his soup, his consciousness stirred. He promptly took out a jade talisman; it seemed to be sending a message of some sort.

"Elder Bian is already here?" Mu Lingfeng gasped in surprise, with one hand still ladling the fish soup with a blue and white porcelain spoon while the other operated the jade talisman.

"Pooley!"

Suddenly, Mu Lingfeng couldn't help but spit out the mouthful of fish soup he drank. His eyes suddenly widened as he accepted the message within the jade talisman, with a look of incredulity on his face. Truly, he didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

"Sheng Mu, that moron... he actually called for Elder Xia? He's even rushing here right now with the elder in tow... What exactly is he up to? Is he trying to make a move right now?" Mu Lingfeng had a dumbstruck expression on his face at the moment.

In fact, the Three Godly Temples of the Wildlands weren't as united as they seemed; each temple often competed with each other. Mu Lingfeng, himself, belonged to the Imperial Beast Hall. The Elder Bian he mentioned earlier was an expert of said Godly Temple.

As for Sheng Mu, he belonged to the Ferocious Divine Hall. Like the name suggested, he was all brawns and no brains. Elder Xia was an elder of the Ferocious Divine Hall and was a famously stupid but destructive man...

With the Five Stripes Path-Understanding Fruit Tree so close to maturity, the fact that this bunch of people were rushing here right now... wasn't it a bad thing?!

Chapter 220: So What if I Beat You Up?

Not an extra shadow could be found in the splendid and magnificent main halls of the palace inside the Imperial City. Everyone, including the eunuchs and palace maids, was sent away by Ji Chengxue.

He sat on the throne all alone, with his eyes lightly shut. He was not sleeping, but in deep contemplation. At this point, the circumstances of the Imperial City had gotten out of hand, particularly beyond his control. Even though he was technically the emperor, he couldn't help but feel helpless and powerless.

Xiao Meng had sent in new intelligence. From such reports he learned of many news. The Imperial City nowadays was no longer one that fell under his command. Even eighth grade War-Gods have begun to appear. They were a kind of existence that eclipsed even the most powerful forces of the Imperial City, which meant that the Light Wind Empire itself could not even put up a good fight.

In the past, there were only seventh grade Battle-Saints. With Xiao Meng at the peak of seventh grade Battle-Saint, he was still able to awe the crowd and subdue any opposition. But before an eighth grade War-God... he was rather insufficient.

These eighth grade War-Gods whom one rarely hears of had suddenly appeared in the Imperial City. Their target was the Five Stripes Path-Understanding Tree, which was located in Owner Bu's store. Given that, Owner Bu's store was destined to suffer.

Rubbing his brows, Ji Chengxue opened his eyes and sighed.

"Nevermind, there's no point in beating myself over with this as I can't come up with any good solutions. Owner Bu will be on his own. Perhaps he has a trump card, given that supposed Supreme Beast on guard, maybe... it won't be that easy for these eighth grade War-Gods to go in and destroy everything."

...

Wu Yunbai studied the man standing before her, who wore casual clothes and a silver mask covering half of his face. She instinctively recoiled, taking a step back.

"Brother Zhan Kong, why... why are you here as well?" Wu Yunbai said with a slightly awkward expression on her face.

That masked man, in a guarded manner, scanned the floor that Wu Yunbai lived on with his eyes and wrinkled his brows.

"Ah Wu said you were heavily wounded, but given how you look... it doesn't seem that bad?"

His voice was charming, but with an added hint of rigidity and aloofness.

"Commander Zhan Kong, she was indeed deeply wounded a couple of days ago. But with the help of someone in particular, she had fully recovered." Master Ah Wu responded with great reverence. The ice-cold man before him was no simple figure.

This was one of the four greatest commanders of the White Cloud Villa. His cultivation level was at eighth grade War-God and his combat abilities were forbidding. He had once ripped apart a seventh level spirit beast with his bare hands, and showered his body with its blood.

"Who hurt you?" Zhan Kong's eyes spun behind the mask and fell upon Wu Yunbai, as he asked softly.

"None of your business. I'll avenge myself," Wu Yunbai replied stubbornly.

Zhan Kong gazed at Wu Yunbai calmly and suddenly walked toward the room. He extended his hands and patted Wu Yunbai's head.

"Ah Wu, come with me. Tell me, who hurt her... and who saved her."

"Ah... yes!" Ah Wu was startled, but quickly followed him.

Wu Yunbai bulged her cheeks as she gazed at the back of this towering man. She humphed to herself before catching up to them with stomping feet.

"The Mahayana Islands, Buddhist Sect?" Zhan Kong flicked a puzzling glance at Ah Wu. A force of influence so paltry dared to provoke someone from the White Cloud Villa?

But he didn't ask much more, as he only needed to know who wounded Wu Yunbai.

"Then, who rescued her?"

"The owner of a small store. The store very much hyped recently in the Imperial City as it has possession of a Five Stripes Path-Understanding Tree," Ah Wu answered respectfully.

"Oh? That store? On my way here I bumped into an old bird of the Ferocious Divine Hall. His target seemed to be the store... If I guessed right, it should be the same as the one you just mentioned," Zhan Kong remarked.

Wu Yunbai's complexion changed. An old bird of the Ferocious Divine Hall? A fellow able to grab hold of Zhan Kong's attention must be an eighth grade War-God... Could it be that the Ferocious Divine Hall had begun making their move on the store? They finally got tired of waiting?

"Zhan Kong..."

"Say no more. I know what you want to suggest. But I have my own plans. Rest first. The water of the Light Wind Empire's Imperial City is too muddled right now. My objective this time is to simply to bring you back to safety, so as to fulfill the villa master's orders. So, you better behave yourself."

Zhan Kong simply cut off Wu Yunbai's words, stood up, and walked out of the room with his hands behind his back.

Wu Yunbai was furious... such a conceited, insolent man!

"Ah Wu, watch her well. Do not let her out of the room before I return." Zhan Kong glimpsed at Master Ah Wu, who was standing nearby, as he instructed.

Ah Wu felt his heart tremble and a chill running down his spine as he nodded in a hurry.

Afterwards, Zhan Kong no longer took notice of them and left the inn entirely.

Zhan Kong stood on the streets of the Imperial City, one that bustled with pedestrians. His eyes flashed a sense of calmness and as he took a step forward, everything surrounding him flashed by at the speed of light.

In an instant, the step was complete, and he found himself standing before a luxurious courtyard.

He peered at this courtyard, with his eyes dimming with apathy.

"Simply the trivial Mahayana Island, a piece of trash without even an eighth grade War-God, dares to hurt the junior villa master of our White Cloud Villa. Here's an idiot who had acted recklessly and blindly."

Zhan Kong shut his eyes beneath the silver mask. The corners of his eyes quivered as he curled his lips.

No big movements were to be seen. Zhan Kong simply raised a hand, grabbed at the air, and a full gush of spirit energy instantly gathered at his palm.

Within that space, an enormous spirit energy palm had surfaced. That palm was gigantic yet delicate. One could see the fine lines that covered it. A formidable force of energy spread upon the palm.

Zhan Kong tilted his head, gazed at the spirit energy palm hovering over the luxurious inn, and pressed it slightly downwards. In that moment, the winds and clouds shook, causing the buildings within that luxurious courtyard to shake uncontrollably.

Within the courtyard, a cross-legged Zhao Musheng sitting in a secret chamber snapped open his eyes. Terror flashed across them.

"I wonder which warrior has arrived. Zhao Musheng has failed to receive and welcome you, I apologize for that!"

With a howl, Zhao Musheng broke out with the most terrifying force of energy that he could muster and rushed out to the courtyard. He floated midair within the courtyard, and just as he finished speaking, he lifted his head. Witnessing the giant palm that had effectively covered the sky, his pupils shrank and his heart trembled.

"Zhao Musheng? You came out at just the right moment... As you've hurt someone from our White Cloud Villa, you shall face your death."

Zhan Kong peered at the floating Zhao Musheng coldly and his lips curled. Without another word, he pressed down with his palm.

Bam!!

After a thunderous sound, Zhao Musheng felt that incredible force of pressure fall on his body. All the bones in his body were crackling due to the pressure.

"Damn it!"

Zhao Musheng's eyes were filled with infinite terror. This daunting force of pressure was unmatched... The one before his eyes turned out to be an eighth grade War-God!

The spirit energy palm continued to press down, causing the grounds to shake. Zhao Musheng was sent sprawling onto the floor, and in that very moment, the magnificent courtyard around him was turned into a pile of ruins.

If someone inspected all of this from above, he would see that the grounds of the courtyard had sunk in. All that was left was a huge handprint.

What followed was an earth shattering shock that extended outwards, causing the entire Imperial City to shake.

This tremendous noise caught much attention within the Imperial City.

Xiao Meng, resting in the Xiao quarters, felt his heart jumping to his throat. He could sense the terrifying force of pressure, and couldn't help but emit a long breath.

An eighth grade War-God... has finally made a move!

Boom Boom Bang!

Rocks exploded and splintered. A bloody Zhao Musheng burst out from this explosion. He glared at Zhan Kong harshly.

Zhao Musheng did not say another word, but turned around and stepped up his feet, with intentions to leave.

However, Zhan Kong's eyes beneath the mask were cold and ruthless. His garment crinkled as he stirred again. Behind him emerged a magnificent pair of wings formed by the convergence of vapor energy.

In a split second, he appeared next to Zhao Musheng.

"Did I say you are allowed to leave?" Zhan Kong asked placidly.

"Don't take this beating to the extreme!" Zhao Musheng bellowed. Little did he expect an eighth grade War-God to make a move on him. He was not prepared at all to almost face his death.

"So what if I beat you up? You think you have grounds to talk when you've injured my people?" Zhan Kong retorted coolly. His body twirled and out came a kick that landed directly on Zhao Musheng's body. That formidable strength almost ripped apart the air.

Zhao Musheng spit out a large mouthful of blood. He appeared aged and fragile as ever in that moment.

He staggered and then found his balance as he stood amidst the air. He wiped off the blood dripping by the corner of his mouth as a hideous look flashed across his complexion.

He crushed a blood colored jade pendant into pieces, and instantly a shining gold Buddhist silhouette manifested around him. The Buddha's palm struck fiercely towards Zhan Kong, and as it swung down, the golden Buddha transformed into a blood red and ferocious form.

Zhan Kong took a deep breath, leaped up, and after a 360 degrees swirl, directly teared that blood Buddha apart.

The gigantic blood Buddha dissipated, leaving behind only blood red streaks of light.

"Very good... I thought it would be a battle to the death. Turns out he used a distractin to run away. I guess that's what they call getting wiser as you grow older, but whatever... merely a branch off of

a Buddhist Sect, there's nothing to worry about." The wings on Zhan Kong's back had faded as he landed smoothly on the floor. He adjusted his shirt as he murmured to himself.

With hands behind his back, he turned around to leave. Behind him... what used to be a courtyard was now merely a pile of debris.

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On the streets of the Imperial City, a couple of fearsome, burly blokes dressed in leather garments dashed through recklessly.

The one in the lead was a man with muscles bulging like small mountains. His force of energy was heavy and majestic. As it fluctuated, it emitted a thunderous roar.

Suddenly, his ears twitched. He gazed at the swirl of smoke rising from afar and curled his lips.

"Someone actually made a move first before me, Xia Da... very well, I can't fall behind!"

"Sheng Mu, that store is there. Let's go faster! I can't wait to get this moving!" Xia Da smiled coldly. The muscles on his face had scrunched up into a terrifying look.

Sheng Mu rode on a cheetah. He laughed and pointed at the alleyway ahead. "Elder Xia, a left turn ahead and we will reach the store... I was previously collaborating with that fool Zhao Musheng. That bonehead said it would be easy to obtain the Five Stripes Path-Understanding Tree. I can't believe I was stupid enough to believe him. We wasted so much time and got nothing in return. That's why I had to seek guidance from you, the elder."

"Haha! You are such a moron. If we are here to seize it by force, what's the point of beating around the bush? Just directly charge over there! This elder will show you what absolute dominance looks like! All those from my Ferocious Divine Hall should never flinch or recoil as they tread through this world. Just go ahead and do it! Don't have the jitters, just go ahead!"