

Read Gourmet of Another World

Chapter 71: Dry-Fried Rock Carp

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Qian Bao, who was wearing a brocade robe, was walking with his hands placed at his waist with his belly thrust out, exposing his belt embedded with dazzling jadeite. The reason he walked in this manner was to feel the envious gaze from others when they looked at his belt, in order to satisfy his vanity.

"Who would be so conceited as to dare say that the Immortal Phoenix Restaurant's dishes are not delicious?" Qian Bao was instantly displeased when he heard that someone said the restaurant's food tasted bad.

When he stopped next to elder sister Chun and followed her gaze, he saw Xiao Xiaolong and the others.

"Oh, isn't this our imperial city's prodigy, young master Xiao? It's been a while since you've patronized our restaurant. Oh my, goddess Yanyu and princess Ouyang are here as well. Excuse me for not welcoming you earlier. Eh? This is..."

Qian Bao knew how to conduct himself, or in other words, he knew how to do business. He was excellent when dealing with people. In simpler terms, he was a sly person. Hence, he was able to build up a small restaurant from nothing into Immortal Phoenix Restaurant's current scale.

Obviously, there were many people behind his success. However, Qian Bao's own effort and talent definitely played a part as well.

"You can address him as young master Bu," Xiao Xiaolong smiled as he introduced Bu Fang. He did not dare to announce Bu Fang's name. The black-hearted restaurant was renowned within the imperial city recently and had already become the biggest competitor of the Immortal Phoenix Restaurant. If he chose to announce Bu Fang's name at that very moment, there was no guarantee that Qian Bao would not erase Bu Fang.

"Young master Bu?" Qian Bao thought as he tried to search his memories. However, he did not recall any notable families with the surname Bu.

However, Qian Bao still smiled as he performed a fist and palm salute to Bu Fang and said, "I see, you're actually young master Bu. I've heard much about you. Are our dishes not to your liking?"

"It's not that they're not to my liking. It's that they're badly cooked. I give a poor rating," Bu Fang expressionlessly said in a serious manner.

"They're badly cooked?" Qian Bao was slightly dumbfounded as he looked at Bu Fang's serious expression. It had been a while since he met someone that dared to find fault at the Immortal Phoenix Restaurant.

When Immortal Phoenix Restaurant was first built, people from other restaurants would come over to find fault with their food. At that time, there were indeed flaws in their dishes. However, at the moment... As the restaurant expanded, they spent lots of money to hire chefs from all over Light Wind Empire and each of the chef had their own signature dish. This eventually created the Immortal Phoenix Restaurant's current reputation.

"Young master Bu, you must be joking. You can ask anyone from within the imperial city. Who would dare to say that the Immortal Phoenix Restaurant's dishes are not delicious?" Qian Bao said with a smile on his face. However, the words he said were filled with arrogance.

"If it's not delicious, it's not delicious. These dishes were badly cooked. You can serve any dish and I can point out the flaws to you," Bu Fang simply said. He could not be bothered to argue with Qian Bao.

Bu Fang's words caused Qian Bao to slightly narrow his eyes as he thought, "This brat is truly arrogant. He actually dared to speak such nonsense? Does he really have so much confidence?"

"Very well! Since young master Bu insists, I'll serve up a dish and let the chef have a face to face confrontation. If you're able to convince my chef, I'll admit it," Qian Bao simply said as the smile disappeared from his face.

"Are they really going to have a face to face confrontation?" Xiao Xiaolong and the others were startled for a moment and then they became extremely excited. Qian Bao might not know the identity of Bu Fang, but they knew him well. Since Bu Fang dared to say those words, then he would obviously be certain since Bu Fang's culinary skills were much stronger than the chefs from the Immortal Phoenix Restaurant.

"No, I don't need your approval. How about this, let's have a wager. If the flaws that I point out can convince your chef, you'll let me go to the third floor. On the other hand, if I lose, I'll compensate with a hundred times the price of these dishes. How about it?" Bu Fang expressionlessly said.

Everyone sucked in a breath of cold air. "A hundred times the price as compensation, this Owner Bu is truly prosperous! With so many dishes, the total cost had already exceeded five hundred gold coins. With hundred times the price... that's at least fifty thousand gold coins!"

Even Qian Bao's heart skipped a beat when he heard the wager. His gaze when he looked at Bu Fang no longer contained any trace of belittlement.

How could the identity of someone who dared to use fifty thousand gold coins as a wager be that simple? Furthermore, he was accompanied by Xiao Xiaolong, the son of a court official. Clearly, his background was not simple.

Was the objective of the other party to enter the third floor of the Immortal Phoenix Restaurant? Was his desire to taste the dishes of the third floor? Could he be planning to find fault on the third floor?

Within that instant, Qian Bao thought of many things. Finally, his eyes narrowed as he said, "Very well! I agree!"

Bu Fang nodded and signaled Qian Bao to choose any dish as he wished.

Qian Bao placed his hands behind his back as he said, "Elder sister Chun, get someone to serve the signature dish of the second floor, the Dry-Fried Rock Carp!"

When elder sister Chun heard Qian Bao's words, her eyes immediately lit up. She thought, "As expected of the owner! With this dish, let's see whether this brat can still find any fault!"

The Dry-Fried Rock Carp was the best dish within the second floor of the Immortal Phoenix Restaurant. It was originally supposed to be promoted to the third floor. However, since the owner decided that the third floor would only have three dishes, the Dry-Fried Rock Carp was eventually bumped off.

However, be it the taste or the appearance, the Dry-Fried Rock Carp was qualified enough to enter the third floor!

"Young master Bu, please have a seat and wait a moment," Qian Bao said while smiling. He beckoned Xiao Xiaolong and the others to sit down and wait for the dish to arrive.

Bu Fang did not say anything as he sat down on his seat and quietly waited for the Dry-Fried Rock Carp that Qian Bao mentioned.

Meanwhile, Qian Bao was happily chatting with Xiao Xiaolong and the others.

After a while, they could smell a rich fragrance wafting in the air, causing many of the customers on the second floor to look around for the source.

Elder sister Chun was approaching while carrying a large plate and a large amount of steam was rising from it. This time, she did not even dare to swing her voluptuous hips, fearing that she would spill the dish.

An obese man wearing a chef's uniform was following behind elder sister Chun with a prideful expression.

"The Dry-Fried Rock Carp is here, please enjoy your meal," elder sister Chun charmingly said as she bent and placed the dish onto the table.

"Owner Qian, I heard someone is here to find fault. I came over to see whether this fellow can point out any flaws regarding my dish!" The obese man walked toward Qian Bao and loudly said.

Bu Fang glanced at the obese man and that obese man turned to face him as if he felt something. The muscles on his face were quivering.

"Are you the brat that came here to find fault?" The obese man's perception was quite accurate as he glared at Bu Fang and said.

"Master Chen, this is young master Bu. Don't try to scare him," Qian Bao said while smiling.

Bu Fang remained expressionless as he shifted his gaze away from the obese man and toward the Dry-Fried Rock Carp.

The color was bright and eye-catching, with a mixture of gold and red. A layer of thick sauce which contained many ingredients was releasing a sweet aroma. The fish which underwent deep-frying was exuding a rich fragrance that aroused his appetite.

Just based on the appearance alone, this dish was not bad.

Bu Fang picked up his chopsticks, while everyone looked on, he dipped it within the sauce and then placed it into his mouth.

Xiao Xiaolong and the others held their breath as they fixedly stared at Bu Fang. Master Chen and Qian Bao also swallowed their saliva as they looked at Bu Fang.

After Bu Fang tasted the sauce, he picked up a piece of the fish and placed it into his mouth. After savoring it, he put down his chopsticks.

From the beginning to the end, there was not even a slightest expression on Bu Fang's face. No one could figure out what he was thinking.

Suddenly, the mood became heavy and everyone held their breath.

Chapter 72: The Roasted Flower Duck That Wishes to Ascend

"Young master Bu... how is the taste?"

After a while, Bu Fang was still not saying anything. Xiao Xiaolong and the others were slightly unable to bear it any longer, while Qian Bao had already impatiently opened his mouth and inquired. His eyes were fixedly staring at Bu Fang.

Master Chen folded his arms across his chest as he calmly looked on. This dish of Dry-Fried Rock Carp was his speciality. He had been cooking the dish for dozens of years and his familiarity with it had already reached a peak. Within his heart, it was already perfect.

Bu Fang lightly breathed out as he lifted up the cup of water from the table and drank a mouthful. Only then did his gaze shifted toward the others.

He indifferently opened his mouth and gave his assessment, "Compared to those dishes previously that were filled with mistakes, this dish of Dry-Fried Rock Carp can be said to be one grade higher."

Bu Fang's words instantly caused everyone to relax and Xiao Xiaolong and the others were smiling as well.

"Owner Bu actually praised this dish. Looks like the taste of this dish should be pretty good. Then we should definitely give it a try."

While thinking like this in his mind, Xiao Xiaolong immediately picked up a piece of fish with his chopsticks and put it into his mouth. The savory taste of fish suddenly erupted within his mouth. The faint spiciness that spread within his mouth caused his eyes to suddenly lit up.

Xiao Xiaolong nodded and said with a smile, "This dish is indeed pretty good. It's much more delicious than the previous ones."

When Qian Bao heard those words, his eyes immediately narrowed and he could not conceal the smile on his face. Since they were all praising this dish, from his point of view, he should have won.

To be able to easily earn fifty thousand gold coins, Qian Bao's mood was feeling joyous and delighted.

"Young master Bu, if that's the case, this time... it's my victory?" Qian Bao said with a chuckle.

However, Bu Fang's reaction caused his heart to skip a beat. Bu Fang strangely glanced at him and a faint smile appeared on his face.

"I was only praising the taste of this dish. Compared to the previous dishes, this dish is indeed not bad. However, it's only not bad, but the flaws are still present."

"Hmm?" Everyone was stunned by his words.

Their gazes once again focused on Bu Fang. They did not expect such a sudden change of events from him.

"There are three steps to the cooking process of this Dry-Fried Rock Carp, right? Firstly, place the processed rock carp into a wok of oil and deep-fry until the skin wrinkles. Secondly, stir-fry the other ingredients. Thirdly, place the deep-fried rock carp and the fried ingredients into the wok and dry-fry them together."

Bu Fang slowly said. Master Chen's pupils slightly constricted because Bu Fang's analysis were exactly the same as his own cooking steps!

"Hmph! So what? Those are only the general steps. There are many meticulous processes in each step as well. Those are the important points when cooking this dish," Master Chen sneered as he confidently said.

Bu Fang nodded and pointed toward the Dry-Fried Rock Carp and said, "That's right, then I shall point out your inadequacies from the details aspect. Firstly, when you're processing the rock carp, you made cuts on both sides of the fish. You made two cuts on each side, right? This is your first inadequacy. You should've made the cuts based on the length and width of the fish. According to the length of this fish, making three cuts would be the best, with two short cuts and one long cut. This would allow the fish to completely absorb the flavor during the deep-fry and dry-fry process."

Master Chen frowned. He had always made two cuts regardless of the size of the rock carp. He was already used to it and had never thought whether three cuts would be better.

"As for how deep the cuts should be, I don't think there's any need for me to say it. Next would be the deep-frying period. Due to the problem with the cuts, the deep-frying process was longer which caused the fish to age. This resulted in the rock carp losing its tenderness... The stir-frying of the other ingredients wasn't bad since no skills were needed. Lastly, it's the problem with the dry-frying. The dry-frying time was short by a few breaths. The broth was not thick enough and the fish had not sufficiently absorbed the flavor."

Bu Fang simply said. However, his words had already caused Master Chen to be dumbfounded. At first, Master Chen was going to retort, but when he thought about Bu Fang's words, he realized that cooking in this manner might be better.

Gulp.

Master Chen swallowed his saliva. His chubby face was filled with sweat and his eyes were filled with incredulity. He thought, "Is this fellow a monster? How could he analyze so much flaws with this dish just from tasting it?!"

Xiao Xiaolong and the others were astounded as well. "Owner Bu... How amazing! He only tasted it once and was able to cause the Immortal Phoenix Restaurant's chef to be speechless."

"Ma... Master Chen... Is what he said correct?" Qian Bao's current expression was already slightly unpleasant as he asked Master Chen who was having cold sweats.

Elder sister Chun who was standing nearby was completely stunned. She did not think that this young master Bu was actually this powerful, that he could cause Master Chen to have cold sweats with a few words.

"Owner Qian... What young master Bu said is indeed correct. I've been cooking Dry-Fried Rock Carp for dozens of years and I understand very well how each step would affect the taste... What young master Bu said were aspects that I've never thought of all these years," Master Chen calmly accepted Bu Fang's advice as he sighed and said to Qian Bao.

Qian Bao went into a daze. The fifty thousand gold coins... were suddenly gone!

Bu Fang glanced at the stupefied Qian Bao, then stood up and expressionlessly walked away.

"Xiaoyi, follow me. We're going to the third floor."

"Ah... Eh? Wait for us!" Xiao Xiaolong and the others were immediately awakened from their astonishment. They hurriedly followed after Bu Fang.

Qian Bao had also recovered from his stupor and his expression was slightly unpleasant. He clenched his teeth and followed after Bu Fang as well.

Qian Bao brought the four of them to the third floor. This was the most honorable floor of the Immortal Phoenix Restaurant and was ordinarily not opened to the public.

"Young master Bu, please!"

Qian Bao had become serious as well. The previous scene had already made known that Bu Fang was not speaking nonsense and was someone with capabilities.

The surroundings of the third floor was indeed much better than the second floor. Just from entering, they could feel the dense amount of spirit energy drifting in the air. Qian Bao actually spent a huge amount of money to set up a magic formation that gathered spirit energy on the third floor!

Xiao Xiaolong and the others were utterly speechless. They had never been to the third floor and were finally able to enter due to Bu Fang. They were instantly overwhelmed by the novelty.

"Young master Bu, please have a seat. I'll get someone to serve the dishes! The third floor of the Immortal Phoenix Restaurant has only three dishes," Qian Bao said.

Bu Fang nodded. He sat down at an eight-immortal table made from red sandalwood and quietly waited for the dishes to arrive.

With a grave expression, Qian Bao left the third floor and went to instruct people to prepare the dishes.

Xiao Xiaolong and the others were curiously looking around. When facing novelties, most people would be filled with curiosity.

However, Bu Fang was sitting there without moving. His eyes were closed as he waited for the dishes to arrive.

After approximately half an hour, Qian Bao returned. A servant girl with a voluptuous body was following behind him. She was wearing a dress which barely covered her beautiful legs.

"Young master Bu, this is the supreme area's first dish, the Red Braised Spirit Pork."

Bu Fang nodded. His gaze fell on the large porcelain plate in front of them. There was a piece of scarlet and alluring pork placed on the plate, which was exuding a rich fragrance. The first impression he had was that it was fat but not greasy, and seemed exquisite and beautiful like a red jadeite.

"This is the supreme area's second dish, Sweet 'n' Sour Drunken Ribs!"

It was another beautiful and voluptuous servant girl carrying a dish. She placed it in front of Bu Fang and removed the lid. The tangerine-colored Sweet 'n' Sour Drunken Ribs was reflected in his eyes.

Bu Fang raised his eyebrows. He looked at the dish with interest as the corner of his mouth widened into a smile. Sweet 'n' Sour Ribs?

"The third dish, which is also our supreme dish, the Colored-Glass Roasted Flower Duck!"

When Qian Bao announced the last dish, his tone became much more confident and he became extremely proud. He was subconsciously revealing his confidence in this last dish.

Bu Fang narrowed his eyes as he looked at the self-confident duck with a body that seemed like colored-glass as it loftily stood on the plate. Its wings were slightly spread apart, as if it was going to flap them and fly away, while its neck was curled into a S-shape.

Bu Fang blinked and he could not help but feel puzzled... "Is, is this really a Roasted Flower Duck? Is this really not a roasted duck that wishes to ascend?"

Chapter 73: Whether You Believe or Not Has Nothing to Do with Me

"Young master Bu, originally, according to the rules, you're not qualified to enter the third floor of the Immortal Phoenix Restaurant. That's because up till now, this supreme area has only admitted the court ministers, His Majesty as well as the prince. I've only allowed young master to enter due to your ability to assess dishes. Otherwise, even if you had acted shamelessly, I would never allow you to enter the third floor."

Qian Bao said in a serious manner. He regarded the supreme area as important, which is why he acted prudently.

If the general area and the distinguished guest area were the Immortal Phoenix Restaurant's basis for establishing itself within the imperial city, then the supreme area on the third floor would be the basis of its reputation.

Qian Bao was only solemnly regarding Bu Fang since he was able to easily list out the flaws within the cooking process of the Dry-Fried Rock Carp that even Master Chen could not detect.

Bu Fang's assessment of the Immortal Phoenix Restaurant's dishes as he made his way to the third floor could be considered a huge insult to their reputation. Qian Bao could not let this humiliation live down. He must find a way to save his reputation and the only way was the third floor.

Bu Fang glanced at Qian Bao and expressionlessly said, "If someone wishes for me to evaluate their dishes, I might not be in the mood to care about it. If it wasn't for special circumstances, I really can't be bothered to taste your garbage dishes."

Bu Fang's tone was extremely indifferent. Even though his words sounded like ridicule, there was no intention to ridicule in the slightest. It was as if he was stating the truth.

Qian Bao suddenly froze for a moment and he was speechless. However, he narrowed his eyes as he suddenly laughed and said, "Then would young master Bu please taste these three dishes?"

"These are the top three dishes of the Immortal Phoenix Restaurant."

Xiao Xiaolong and the others were blinking as they yearningly looked at the three dishes that had alluring appearances.

The dishes from the supreme area of the Immortal Phoenix Restaurant were not something they could normally see. Even though these dishes might not be as delicious as the food in Bu Fang's store, eating at the third floor was not about enjoying the taste of the food. It was about enjoying the identity and status.

Firstly, Bu Fang tasted the first dish, the Red Braised Spirit Pork. This was a dish made using an ingredient from a spirit beast, although it was only the low-end meat from the first grade spirit beast, Battle Boar. However, the chef's skills were pretty good and the meat was succulent after cooking. It was comparable to the Dry-Fried Rock Carp.

However...

"Since this is the meat from a spirit beast, then the choice of the ingredient should be very prudent. For this dish, choosing the meat from the Battle Boar is the wrong choice. The meat from the Battle Boar is more suited for making stews, while the meat from the Flame Boar is the best choice for braising. Also, the control over the heat during the braising process is still lacking and the braising liquid is... too sweet."

After having a bite of the dish, Bu Fang expressionlessly put down his chopsticks and mercilessly gave his assessment. Suddenly, several flaws of this first-rate cuisine were pointed out by Bu Fang.

Qian Bao was dumbfounded. He hurriedly ordered the servant girl to record down the flaws mentioned by Bu Fang.

Qian Bao was not too surprised that Bu Fang was able to find so many flaws within the Red Braised Spirit Pork. After all, the level of this dish was almost the same as the Dry-Fried Rock Carp.

"Young master Bu, try this dish as well, Sweet 'n' Sour Drunken Ribs," Qian Bao said.

However, the result was beyond his expectations. Bu Fang's assessment of this dish was extremely low and the flaws he found were even more numerous than in the Red Braised Spirit Pork.

Qian Bao was stunned. He thought, "Why? Sweet 'n' Sour Drunken Ribs is definitely slightly more delicious than Red Braised Spirit Pork..."

Xiao Xiaolong and the others were stifling their smiles. Showing off Sweet 'n' Sour Ribs in front of Owner Bu, it was like he was asking for a scolding. From their point of view, Bu Fang's Sweet 'n' Sour Ribs was unsurpassable.

Bu Fang ignored Qian Bao as his gaze shifted toward the Roasted Flower Duck that seemed to wish for ascension.

"This food presentation... is slightly interesting." The corner of Bu Fang's mouth twitched as he used his chopsticks to poke the duck's body. A slight rebound force was transmitted to his hands through the chopsticks.

"Clap clap!" When Qian Bao saw that Bu Fang was about to try the signature dish, Roasted Flower Duck, he suddenly and energetically clapped his hands.

Then, that voluptuous servant girl who was wearing the dress that revealed her legs gracefully walked next to Bu Fang. A burst of fragrance exuded from her body.

Bu Fang frowned as he indifferently said, "Don't get so close to me. The fragrance coming from you is affecting my judgement toward this dish."

"Ah?" That servant was startled and her pretty face was filled with confusion. Her hand that was holding the dagger stopped in mid-air and she seemed a little helpless.

Qian Bao was stunned for a moment and then started to frown. He employed these beautiful servant girls for the sake of attending to those high officials and dignitaries. He even specially spent huge amount of money to buy high grade cosmetic products for these servants girls to become even more lively and charming. He did not think that his methods would negatively affect the customers' appetite instead.

He pondered for a moment and then let the servant girl withdraw. Then he personally held the dagger and began to handle the duck.

Qian Bao evidently had some knowledge of handling this dish. His hands were steady as he quickly sliced off a portion of the meat and served it to Bu Fang.

Bu Fang wrapped the meat within a spring roll wrapper with some cabbage and added a little vinegar. Then, he swallowed the entire thing.

The taste of the duck meat and the cabbage when mixed together was just perfect and created an indescribable texture. When added with the chewiness of the spring roll wrapper, Bu Fang experienced an ineffably delicious taste.

He had to admit that the taste of the Roasted Flower Duck was extremely good.

"Young master Bu, how is the taste of the Immortal Phoenix Restaurant's signature dish?" Qian Bao licked his lips as he intensely stared at Bu Fang. He was confident that this dish that the emperor praised as the number one duck within the Light Wind Empire would be able to subdue this fellow.

"Hmm, this dish is indeed pretty good," Bu Fang once again sliced off another piece of duck meat. This time, he did not wrap it with the spring roll wrapper and directly ate it.

He was someone that enjoyed delicious food as well. Every single chef was an authentic glutton.

"Then, young master Bu... Could you point out any flaws within this dish?" Qian Bao took a deep breath and said, as he closely stared at Bu Fang.

Bu Fang leisurely drank a mouthful of water and simply said, "This dish can be said to be the most perfect dish within the entire Immortal Phoenix Restaurant. The taste is very good.

"I can guess, this dish is made by strictly following the steps of a recipe. Not a single character was missed and every single detail was taken note," Bu Fang said.

Qian Bao's pupils suddenly constricted as he stood up. He was intensely staring at Bu Fang and the deepest parts of his eyes were filled with incredulity.

Indeed! This dish of Colored-glass Roasted Flower Duck was from a recipe that he obtained by chance. It was because of this recipe that he could operate the Immortal Phoenix Restaurant to its current state and obtain the support of that distinguished person.

"You're not wrong by following the steps of the recipe. However, as you're too rigid and lacked a certain flexibility, you overlooked a few important points. You need to understand that every single recipe underwent numerous revisions and attempts before they were recorded. They are not perfect and there's still room for improvement as well. Just like this dish, a mistake appeared in the choice of ingredients."

"The choice of ingredients?"

"That's right, the recipe stated that mature ducks should be used, correct? Furthermore, it should be high quality spirit ducks. However, choosing young ducks is actually better. The skin of the mature ducks is too tight and the flesh is too tough. As for the other flaws, they're not important so I won't mention them," Bu Fang expressionlessly said.

Qian Bao took a deep breath and calmed himself down. However, his complexion was not very pleasant.

He did not agree with Bu Fang's statement. "Young master Bu, this dish of Roasted Flower Duck, as the signature dish of our restaurant, has already gone through numerous trials. I do not agree with your argument of cooking with young ducks. I believe even more in the method recorded in the recipe."

Even though Bu Fang's words sounded reasonable, Qian Bao would not easily believe him. After all, it was the signature dish, so how could he lightly make amendments?

Bu Fang indifferently glanced at him and said, "Whether you believe it or not has nothing to do with me. I was only assessing the dish. Alright, I've already assessed all of the dishes. Then, I shall take my leave. This is for my bill."

Bu Fang stood up and placed five crystals on the table. Then, he elegantly headed down the stairs.

Qian Bao's expression was sullen as he stood on the spot. As he looked at the three dishes on the table that were basically untouched, the emotions in his eyes were wavering.

"Young master Bu... Who exactly are you!" Qian Bao took a deep breath and muttered to himself. Then his gaze shifted toward Xiao Xiaolong who was just about to leave.

"Young master Xiao, could you tell me the identity of young master Bu... Someone who could point out the flaws of a dish in such a detailed manner is definitely not an ordinary person. Is he an imperial chef from the imperial kitchen?" Qian Bao asked as he performed a fist and palm salute.

Xiao Xiaolong was stunned for a moment and a mischievous smile suddenly appeared on his face. He narrowed his eyes and said, "Isn't Owner Bu really awesome? Not only are his culinary skills high, his ability to assess dishes is first-rate as well. I was truly impressed."

"Owner Bu?!" Qian Bao knitted his eyebrows together. Then he narrowed his eyes as he sucked in his breath and said, "Is this person... the owner of the black-hearted store?"

Xiao Xiaolong mysteriously smiled and did not reply. He turned around and followed after Bu Fang's back figure.

At that moment, Bu Fang was slowly walking with his hands behind his back. The system's solemn voice was resounding within his mind.

"Congratulations to the host for completing the abrupt mission: taste the thirteen dishes of the Immortal Phoenix Restaurant and find out their inadequacies. The mission reward will now be released."

Chapter 74: Go to That Store Owner... and Kill Him

With the scarf wrapped around his neck, Bu Fang walked out of the Immortal Phoenix Restaurant. The moment he stepped out of the warm interior of the building, the cold air rushed into his face, causing his entire body to shudder. He could not help but cross his arms across his chest as he walked.

However, even though the temperature was very low, Bu Fang was feeling abnormally fervent. The reason was the system just announced in his mind that he succeeded his mission and he was about to receive the mission reward.

Ten percent of true energy cultivation progression, and the advanced cooking method of a dish from Immortal Phoenix Restaurant were very generous rewards. Bu Fang was obviously feeling overjoyed.

Xiao Xiaolong and the others had caught up with him and were walking next to him. Ouyang Xiaoyi and Xiao Xiaolong were chatting nonstop and continuously praising Bu Fang's mystical and wondrous ability to render the Immortal Phoenix Restaurant's chef speechless just by tasting the dish once.

Xiao Yanyu had once again put on her veil and concealed her peerless beauty. She seemed calm and elegant as she quietly walked along with them.

The four of them bid farewell as they reached the entrance of the alleyway. Xiao Xiaolong and the others went back home while Bu Fang stepped into the alleyway and returned to his store.

At the entrance of the store, Blacky was fast asleep on its belly. Even though Bu Fang returned, he was still soundly asleep.

"The mission reward has been released. Ten percent of true energy cultivation progression has been obtained. The system will now randomly draw from the dishes that were assessed." The system's solemn voice rang out in Bu Fang's mind.

Bu Fang was slightly startled. His eyes narrowed as his mind settled down. He was suddenly curious about which dish he would draw.

Obviously, the dish he least wanted was the Sweet 'n' Sour Drunken Ribs since he already had Sweet 'n' Sour Ribs on his store's menu.

Within his mind, the names of various dishes rapidly flashed by and continuously changed. This was the system performing a random drawing...

At last, the changing of the dishes gradually became slower and then stopped. Finally, it was reflected clearly within Bu Fang's mind.

"The dish, Pan-Fried Flower Crab, has been drawn. After advancement, it is now Pan-Fried Tyrant Flower Crab."

Bu Fang could not help but recall the alluring and fragrant Pan-Fried Flower Crab and started to drool. Compared to drawing the Sweet 'n' Sour Drunken Ribs, the Pan-Fried Flower Crab was already considered pretty good.

Since a wooden board was hung at the entrance informing customers that business was suspended for that day, many customers excitedly arrived only to dejectedly depart. For example, Fatty Jin and his buddies waited for a while and only resentfully left after realizing that the store was really not opening for business.

The other customers also experienced the same situation.

After Bu Fang returned to the store, he did not plan to open for business as it was getting late. After a quick change of clothes, he stepped into the kitchen and was ready to start learning the new dish, Pan-Fried Tyrant Flower Crab.

...

Immortal Phoenix Restaurant.

Qian Bao was sitting upright on a chair with one hand holding his chin while frowning. He seemed to be thinking about something.

"Young master Bu is actually the owner of the black-hearted store? He actually came to Immortal Phoenix Restaurant and criticized all of our dishes. Who does he think he is? How dare he look down on us!" Qian Bao clenched his fist and furrowed his eyebrows in fury.

Suddenly, he unclenched his fists and sighed. "However, even so... This Owner Bu's level is high indeed. To be able to analyze a dish just by tasting it once, how terrifying!"

He originally planned to have the chefs on his side challenge Bu Fang's store. However, from the looks of it, it was fortunate that they had not gone yet. Otherwise, their reputation would have gone down the drain. It was evident that there was a marginal difference in ability between Bu Fang and the chefs of the Immortal Phoenix Restaurant.

However, Qian Bao could not resign himself to let things live down like this. Swallowing his own anger was not his way of handling affairs.

Wait a moment! Qian Bao's eyes suddenly lit up as if he thought of something.

"I can let the chefs compete with him in cutting techniques! Without putting in a certain amount of time, it's impossible for anyone to master it! Even though we can't compete with Owner Bu when it comes to cooking methods, we can still defeat him with skills that require time to master!"

Qian Bao excitedly banged the table as a smile appeared on his face and finally laughed out loud. Then, he ordered his subordinates to gather all of the chefs. He needed to pick the chef that was most skillful with knives.

Qian Bao had already witnessed Bu Fang's understanding of dishes and cooking methods, so he could only proceed from the cutting techniques aspect.

While Qian Bao was busy assembling his chefs and preparing to pick out the chef most proficient in cutting techniques, a Blood Phoenix Chicken was already secretly delivered to the crown prince's palace.

Within the majestic palace of the crown prince, Ji Chengan was standing with his hands behind his back. He was curiously looking at the metallic cage made from fine iron in front of him. Within the cage, a lustrous chicken, that was entirely blood red in color, was imprisoned.

"Is this the fifth grade spirit beast, Blood Phoenix Chicken? The appearance is peculiar indeed," Ji Chengan nodded and said as the corner of his mouth curled up.

Xushi was respectfully standing at a distance as he said, "The Blood Phoenix Chicken is a fifth grade spirit beast with a fast movement speed. Even though its combat ability is very weak among the fifth grade spirit beasts, it's still comparable to a fourth grade Battle-Spirit. It took them some time to capture it."

"You did well, Xushi," the crown prince emotionally said as he turned around and looked toward Xushi.

Xushi bowed once more and did not say anything else.

"The Blood Phoenix Chicken and the Sage Herb are all prepared. Even the valuable medicinal ingredients are mostly gathered. Now, we only need to have Owner Bu cook the Elixir Cuisine. If this Elixir Cuisine can improve father's health, then my position as the emperor... will be settled." The crown prince stood with his hands held behind his back as he excitedly looked toward the Great Hall at a distance with many thoughts going through his mind.

For the sake of becoming the emperor, he invested far too much. Every single step was like walking on thin ice. That was because he was afraid that if he took the wrong step, his beloved younger brother would obtain a ruinous weakness that would completely destroy him.

"Xushi, make preparations. I will personally head to Owner Bu's store tomorrow. We must ensure the Elixir Cuisine is produced." The crown prince solemnly said, "Before we succeed, information about this Elixir Cuisine must be kept a secret. Do not let King Yu's subordinates find out about this."

"Yes, Your Highness!" Xushi respectfully said.

King Yu's manor.

Within a secret chamber, King Yu, Ji Chengyu, opened his eyes and turbid energy was expelled from his mouth. The true energy outside of his body was seething like boiling water. After a long while, it began to calm down and drew back within his body.

"Sixth grade Battle-Emperor is truly difficult to reach. I've been stuck at this bottleneck for over a year." King Yu heavily breathed out while feeling slightly helpless. However, he knew that he should not rush when it came to cultivation and he did not know of any solution either.

The door to the cultivation chamber was opened. A figure enveloped within a black robe was standing at the entrance and a hoarse voice sounded out. "Your Highness seems to be troubled over cultivating matters? Actually, Your Highness could use our Soul Sect's cultivation method. Advancing to sixth grade Battle-Emperor would not be an issue."

King Yu glanced at him and sneered. "After that, I'll turn into a monster that doesn't resemble humans or ghosts like you? I am someone who is going to be the emperor. How could I have an ugly appearance like the likes of you?"

King Yu's words were slightly sarcastic, but this was his usual style of speaking. The head elder of Soul Sect, Hun Qianyun, was not angry despite being on the receiving end and only eerily chuckled.

Suddenly, a figure came from the door and handed over a secret letter to Ji Chengyu.

Ji Chengyu nodded and without making any attempts in concealment, he directly tore open the letter and started reading from it. As he read the letter, his expression became somewhat grave.

"This brother of mine has truly been working hard for the sake of becoming emperor. Even this sort of method was employed. Everyone is well aware of father's health. There's simply no possibility of a cure at this point. He's actually placing his hope on a little store's Elixir Cuisine? How laughable."

As a burst of energy gushed out from King Yu's palm, the letter was immediately set on fire. Finally, it turned into ashes and drifted away.

His eyes were extremely cold as he spoke with a trace of coldness in his voice, "Hun Qianyun, it is time for you to show your capabilities. Since my elder brother wishes to prolong father's life... then I shall stop him. Tonight, bring your men to that Fang Fang's Little Store and kill the owner. Remember, it must be a silent assassination. After all, that store is extraordinary according to the rumors."

Hun Qianyun began to laugh with his hoarse voice. "When it comes to assassination... if the Soul Sect claims to be in the second place, no one in the world would dare to claim first place. King Yu, just wait for my good news."

Chapter 75: Pan-Fried Tyrant Flower Crab

"Head elder... Do you need us to move out?" the two Soul Sect members standing behind Hun Qianyun asked.

There seemed to be a spirit fire pulsating within Hun Qianyun's pupils. It gave others an eerie feeling, as if they were facing a wraith that escaped from hell.

"Do you not realize that King Yu is testing us? Even though King Yu has joined forces with us, he's still someone that belongs to the imperial court after all while we're from the sects. Our relationship is originally like that of fire and water. If King Yu wasn't aiming for the throne, he wouldn't dare to violate the taboo and cooperate with us," Hun Qianyun simply said. Every time he spoke, the spirit fire in his pupils would throb once.

"Humans, for the sake of benefits, will always take a risk. No matter what sort of identity you have, this will always be the case."

"Then... what does head elder intend to do?" the two members of the Soul Sect puzzledly asked.

"A few days ago, Hun Qianduan and the Sword Monarch escaped to that store. They relied on the protection of the store to obstruct the pursuit of Xiao Meng and Lian Fu. That mysterious store's strength is absolutely unimaginable for us. According to the rumors, there's a ninth grade supreme beast watching over the store. King Yu's objective is for us to sound out the actual situation. If we can succeed in killing him... that would be best," Hun Qianyun slowly said.

"However, even two seven grade Battle-Saints like Xiao Meng and Lian Fu were intercepted. If mere Battle-Emperors like you two were to go, it would be akin to committing suicide..."

The pupils of the two Soul Sect members immediately constricted as they felt a chill suddenly rise up from the bottom of their feet.

"Let Ah Long and Ah Hu go. They're both fifth grade Battle-Kings. If they rely on our techniques, they might be able to succeed in the assassination. Even if they fail... we'll only lose two Battle-Kings," Hun Qianyun said as he turned around.

...

As the night descended, the early winter night brought a nip in the air. Gray clouds were quietly moving under the influence of the wind in the skies, concealing the two crescent moons that were calling out to each other.

Within Fang Fang's Little store, Bu Fang had already changed into a comfortable set of clothing. His long hair was tied up with a woolen rope and his forehead was free of any bangs.

"The Pan-Fried Tyrant Flower Crab is a dish that tests the quality of the ingredients and the control over the heat during the pan-fry process," Bu Fang muttered as he entered the kitchen. At the moment, he was planning to practice the dish that was randomly drawn, the Pan-Fried Tyrant Flower Crab.

The flower crab, also known as *portunus pelagicus*, was a type of sea crab. It was known as flower crab due to the white spots on its shell. The meat of the flower crab was both tender and rich in nutrients.

Of course... This was true regarding an ordinary flower crab.

Based on Bu Fang's understanding of the system, the Tyrant Flower Crab would definitely not be an ordinary flower crab. It would definitely be a spirit beast.

When he entered the kitchen, there was a large water tank on the floor. There was no water within the tank, but a gigantic flower crab with its claws and legs tied up was placed inside.

This flower crab was beautiful. Its shell was fiery red in color while densely covered in crimson patterns, forming a dazzling picture.

"The Tyrant Flower Crab is a fifth grade spirit beast from the sea region of the Wildlands. Its attack power is extremely strong and its fighting ability is terrifying. It usually lives in a group and is one of the scariest groups in the sea region of the Wildlands. However, its meat is delicious and is an extremely good ingredient," The system solemnly introduced the Tyrant Flower Crab's information to Bu Fang.

Bu Fang narrowed his eyes. He already knew that the Tyrant Flower Crab would definitely not be an ordinary sea crab. The objective of the system was cooking fine food. The ingredients provided would definitely be first-rate.

Bu Fang expressionlessly grabbed a kitchen knife with a pointed end from above the table. The kitchen knife was glimmering with sharpness. As Bu Fang casually flicked his wrist, the kitchen knife began to twirl in his hand.

The Tyrant Flower Crab, which was tied up with a woolen rope, was obediently lying within the water tank. It was hard to imagine that it was actually a fifth grade spirit beast.

As Bu Fang flipped the Tyrant Flower Crab over, it was still cluelessly foaming at its mouth.

Once the belly of the Tyrant Flower Crab was exposed, Bu Fang stabbed the uppermost part of the belly with the tip of the kitchen knife. Within that instant, the Tyrant Flower Crab suddenly began to struggle. Its eyes were whirling around endlessly while the foam produced from its mouth increased.

After around half an hour, the Tyrant Flower Crab finally stopped struggling and the woolen rope used to tie its claws had also loosened. After prying open the abdomen shell and removing it, Bu Fang began to clean and process the Tyrant Flower Crab.

Once everything was settled, Bu Fang took out a frying pan. He poured some oil into it and let the pan heat up first.

Taking out the heavy kitchen knife which Bu Fang used everyday for his morning Meteor Cutting Technique practice, he removed the woolen rope that was used to bind the Tyrant Flower Crab.

Once the temperature of the oil was hot enough, Bu Fang's eyes suddenly became sharp. The heavy kitchen knife was viciously swung and it immediately split the Tyrant Flower Crab into two. The cut made was extremely smooth.

Bu Fang's hand speed was extremely fast. During the instant when the Tyrant Flower Crab was cut open, before the crab butter could flow out, he immediately moved the entire crab onto the frying pan.

Tsss...

A rich fragrance instantly emerged from the frying pan. That was the reaction caused by the meeting between crab meat, crab butter, and hot oil.

Next was the control over the heat. Regarding this, Bu Fang was already quite experienced. Even though the Tyrant Flower Crab was gigantic, it was not a problem for him.

Soon, the Pan-Fried Tyrant Flower Crab was ready to be served.

The Tyrant Flower Crab, which was split into two, was placed onto a plate and its exterior shell had assumed an even brighter shade of red. Due to the oil covering its surface, it was glittering underneath the illumination of the lighting.

The smell of the crab butter was extremely fragrant after it was pan-fried. In addition with Bu Fang's ability over controlling the heat, the meat of the crab was white, fragrant, and tender. As it exuded billows of steam, it aroused one's appetite.

Bu Fang licked his lips. After wiping off the water droplets on his hands, he sat down on a chair and began to heartily eat the Pan-Fried Tyrant Flower Crab.

"As expected, this is a hundred times tastier than the Immortal Phoenix's Restaurant Pan-Fried Flower Crab. How can my culinary skills be so formidable?" Bu Fang shamelessly thought as he ate.

Half of the Tyrant Flower Crab was just nice for Bu Fang, so the other half was reclaimed into Whitey's stomach.

After cleaning up, Bu Fang stretched his body and yawned. After eating for the entire day, he was feeling slightly exhausted and was going to have an early rest. Having enough sleep was extremely important for a young man aiming to become the God of Cooking.

As the lights went out, everything returned into darkness and silence once more.

Deep in the night, the sound of something moving through the air suddenly emanated from the entrance of the alleyway. The pitch-black figures were almost impossible to capture by the naked eye in the darkness.

The movement of the two people were agile as they slowly advanced while sticking to the quartzite walls of the alleyway. They were practically not making any sound.

Bu Fang's store was divided into two floors. The first floor was the business area, while on the second there were many rooms with windows and Bu Fang's room was among them. Bu Fang's room was very comfortable with a large open window. Every morning, the sunlight would be projected through the window and the room would be nicely warm.

However, as it was in the middle of winter, Bu Fang locked the window to prevent the cold wind from entering.

The two figures stealthily stuck close to a window, with both of them standing on each side. Their auras were completely concealed.

At the entrance of the store, Blacky who was soundly asleep suddenly moved. It drowsily opened its doggy eyes and glanced upward.

"Eh? What are these two fifth grade little rats doing here in the middle of the night? Their techniques are quite strange. Unfortunately, they've run into this lord dog... However, it's just two fifth grade little rats. This lord dog can't be bothered to take care of them. Bark. I am so sleepy."

Blacky snorted as it lowered its doggy head and continued sleeping.

The eyes of the two Battle-Kings from the Soul Sect flashed as one of them placed his hand on the window and the window immediately opened.

The two of them looked toward each other in surprise. They did not expect for things to be so easy. However, it was not the time for them to hesitate. The two of them agilely went through the window.

Chapter 76: Purple-Eyed Whitey, Extermination

As the two of them landed on the floor, they closed the window without making any noise. When it came to assassination, both of them were extremely experienced. Since they had even assassinated cabinet ministers from the imperial courts before, they did not attach any importance to the owner of a small restaurant. If their boss had not solemnly reminded them to be careful before they set off, they would not even bother to be this cautious as their assassination target was simply too weak.

The position where Ah Long and Ah Hu were located was not Bu Fang's bedroom. The interior of the room was empty and spacious. There was no one in sight.

Ah Long's eyes slightly narrowed as he pointed ahead. Their figures moved toward a door nearby. As the door was pushed open, there was unexpectedly no sound at all. Everything was quietly completed.

The two of them walked out of the room and reached a corner. The left corner led downstairs. The flight of stairs was eerie and gloomy as if it could devour a person's mind, causing them to uncontrollably feel terrified.

Ah Long swallowed his saliva and forced himself to look away. Their line of sight shifted toward a tightly closed door ahead of them.

The two of them were overjoyed as they looked at each other. From within that room, they could hear stable breathing. From the looks of it, the owner of the store should be within that room.

They lightly pushed against the door of the room, but it was clearly locked as the door did not even budge. Ah Long unhurriedly took out a slender wire from his pockets. The true energy within his body surged and a thin layer of true energy enveloped the surface of the metal wire.

As he inserted the metal wire enveloped by true energy into the keyhole, the lump of true energy transformed and immediately filled the keyhole. He slightly turned the metal wire and the sound of a lock opening rang out... The door was opened.

"Hmm? It's too easy?" Ah Long was surprised once more. It did not feel as dangerous as their boss had described.

The two of them pushed open the door and looked inside. Their eyebrows were knitted together as they could not see anything within the darkness. With no other choice, they intended to enter the room and immediately launch a killing move.

However, the two of them suddenly felt a chill cover their entire bodies. The step they were about to take was frozen in place as well.

That was a type of chill that extended from the bottom of their hearts and instantly enveloped their entire bodies, like the cold wind blowing from the Arctic Lands.

Their eyes suddenly widened and their pupils constricted to the size of a pea. They did not dare to make even the slightest move.

Two rays of red light suddenly appeared from behind them and locked onto their bodies.

"Wh... Who's there?!"

Ah Long's entire body began to tremble as he struggled to turn his head. As he looked behind, his eyes met with that ray of light...

Whitey's mechanical eyes were flashing red as its mechanical arms directly grabbed their necks and effortlessly lifted them up.

"Sensing the targets' killing intent toward the owner. Searching for a solution..."

"Solution has been selected and will be activated immediately."

"Solution: Extermination."

Rays of light burst out from Whitey's mechanical eyes, as if it was searching for some data. After determining the solution, Whitey's eyes suddenly turned into a deep purple.

The mechanical arms immediately tightened its grip.

Ah Long's face was filled with terror as he struggled to break free from the mechanical arms that were like steel pliers. They tried to manipulate the true energy within their body, but whenever it flowed into their hands, it would disperse before they could use it...

As Ah Long felt the grip around his neck getting tighter and tighter, his struggles were also becoming more intense as blood spilled from his mouth.

Whitey faced their fearful gazes without the slightest concern. It was as cold as a death god that treats all living things with indifference, while its purple mechanical eyes seemed extremely demonic within the darkness.

"Crack!"

With two crisp sounds, Ah Long and Ah Hu suddenly stopped struggling. Then, their bodies went limp and their heads hanged down. Dark red blood flowed from their mouths and dripped onto the floor, producing an eerie sound.

Whitey indifferently turned around while carrying the two who went limp as it left Bu Fang's room.

As the door closed, the blood stains on the floor suddenly disappeared...

Bu Fang sniffed the air as he drowsily lifted his hand and picked his nose. Then he smacked his lips and continued sleeping.

Bang bang!

Two corpses fell from the air and crashed into the quartzite floor of the alleyway. Blood was flowing out...

Blacky drowsily raised its head. When it saw the two corpses, it scrunched its nose and snorted. Then, it opened its doggy mouth and lightly exhaled. The two corpses were blown out of the alleyway by a sudden squall and flung onto the streets.

After doing this, Blacky contentedly lay down once more and continued sleeping.

...

Within King Yu's manor, a candle flame was slightly flickering.

An aged and gaunt figure wrapped within a black robe was deeply staring at the flickering candle flame. His eye sockets were filled with two lumps of azure spirit fire.

Suddenly, the spirit fire within Hun Qianyun's pupils became faint for a moment and the sound of something breaking rang out.

A sigh came from his mouth. "As I thought... That store should not be provoked. Ah Long, Ah Hu... died just like that."

Two figures silently appeared in front of Hun Qianyun and respectfully saluted.

"Ah Long and Ah Hu died. Go to the alleyway and retrieve their corpses... We failed the assassination this time. I'll go and seek forgiveness from King Yu." Hun Qianyun tottered out of the room with his back hunched over.

The two Battle-Emperors of the Soul Sect were feeling bewildered. Before Ah Long and Ah Hu set off, they already solemnly reminded them to be careful. However, not much time has passed... The two were already dead?

Two fifth grade Battle-Kings could not even struggle?

The two of them looked each other in the eye and could feel the fear in the other's eyes.

...

"Your Highness, we failed the assassination this time," with his back hunched over, Hun Qianyun simply said to King Yu.

King Yu was wearing a luxurious robe with his hair loose and a peaceful expression on his face. As he glanced at Hun Qianyun, the corner of his mouth widened into a smile.

"Understood, I'll give your subordinates a good burial. You may withdraw first," King Yu softly said.

Hun Qianyun's spirit fire slightly jumped. He did not say anything as he turned around and left. There was not even the slightest bit of intimidating aura or energy coming from his body. He was like an ordinary elderly man with one foot in his grave.

However, King Yu did not dare to underestimate him. Hun Qianyun was the number one expert within the Soul Sect. His cultivation level was profound and he was most specialized in the way of the souls. Reportedly, he had already entered the realm of a seventh grade Battle-Saint. However, there were others who said that he was only a peak-level sixth grade Battle-Emperor.

As King Yu watched Hun Qianyun's figure disappear, his eyes were gradually filled with interest.

"This old fox is truly ruthless. He actually used the lives of two Battle-Kings to display his sincerity. Very well... Then I shall trust you for the time being." King Yu looked demonically charming as the corners of his mouth curled up.

"Fang Fang's Little Store... What kind of secrets is this store that suddenly appeared hiding?"

Compared to the Soul Sect, King Yu suddenly discovered that he was more curious about that store.

A night peacefully passed.

The next morning, Bu Fang woke up early as usual. He first went to the kitchen and began his daily cutting technique practice. He held a heavy kitchen knife as he rapidly chopped up radishes. After finishing his cutting technique practice, Bu Fang began to cook Sweet 'n' Sour Ribs. It was breakfast meant for Blacky who was sooner or later going to turn into a pig.

Fatty Jin and his buddies majestically arrived with impatient expressions. As Bu Fang had suspended business the day before, they had to suffer from their craving for an entire day. After getting used to Bu Fang's dishes, the food from other restaurants were tasteless.

"Owner Bu! You're finally open for business! Oh my, there's a new dish! Come, give me a serving of every dish!" Fatty Jin ordered his dishes in an experienced manner.

Bu Fang expressionlessly nodded and headed toward the kitchen. His daily business had started.

Ouyang Xiaoyi arrived at the store while enduring the cold wind. She rubbed her hands together and removed her fur overcoat and her hat, revealing her rosy face. There was automatic heating in the store, so the interior was quite warm and very cozy.

Bu Fang cooked the dishes while Xiaoyi served them. The rapport between the two of them was becoming better and better.

At the entrance of the alleyway, King Yu, with an imposing appearance and extraordinary temperament, slowly approached while wearing a brocade robe. He stepped into the store and indifferently sized up the interior.

It was King Yu's first time coming to Bu Fang's store, so everything felt new to him. The astronomical prices of the dishes were especially interesting to him.

After ordering a jar of Ice Heart Jade Urn Wine and a plate of Sweet 'n' Sour Ribs, King Yu began to sample the delicacies of Bu Fang's store.

At the same time... He waited for the crown prince to arrive.

Chapter 77: The Crown Prince and King Yu

Within the porcelain wine cup, a liquid as clear as water from alpine springs was lightly swaying back and forth. A rich aroma—with an intoxicating scent that lingered around one's nostrils—was emanating from within the wine cup.

King Yu swirled the wine within the cup. When he tasted the wine, the mellow and spicy taste that erupted within his mouth caused the pores all over his body to tremble. It was the first time he drank such a delicious wine. It was far better than the Bejewelled Nectar Wine from the imperial palace.

"As expected of the store that was able to let father come in person. Just this wine itself is enough for the customers to linger within the store," King Yu lamented. This was the first time he came to Bu Fang's store. Previously, he had only heard the rumors. This time, after personally experiencing it himself, he was finally able to experience the charm of the store's delicacies.

The wine was a fine wine. The dishes were fine dishes.

That tangerine-colored Sweet 'n' Sour Ribs and that dense steam accompanied by the fragrance of meat was like a beautiful and captivating picture.

At the entrance of the alleyway, the crown prince was walking with his hands behind his back and his head held high. Xushi was the only one following him. His expression was solemn while carrying a gigantic steel cage with one hand.

"Hmm?" Bu Fang, who had just left the kitchen, puzzledly looked toward the entrance. He saw the crown prince and Xushi immediately placing a steel cage onto the ground after entering the store.

"Owner Bu, I've come once more," The crown prince chuckled and said as he intensely stared at Bu Fang.

If Bu Fang was able to cook the Elixir Cuisine, the emperor's health condition should improve. And so, as the person who offered up the Elixir Cuisine, the emperor would definitely be more favorable to Ji Chengan. His position as the crown prince would be even firmer and he would obtain an even greater advantage over his brothers.

As he thought about all these, the crown prince became even more fervent toward Bu Fang, who could cook the Elixir Cuisine.

The crown prince raised his hand and grabbed the cloth covering the steel cage. With a sudden pull, the interior of the steel cage was exposed.

A Blood Phoenix Chicken with blood-red feathers was quietly standing within the steel cage. Its eyes were swiveling around its sockets.

"Blood Phoenix Chicken?" Bu Fang was slightly stunned. Then, he looked at the crown prince strangely. He did not expect the crown prince to actually go through the trouble of catching a Blood Phoenix Chicken.

"That's right, it's only natural that Owner Bu would recognize this Blood Phoenix Chicken. However, do you recall what you've said before?" the crown prince smiled and said.

Bu Fang was expressionless as he walked around the steel cage once. He carefully examined the Blood Phoenix Chicken and could not help but compare it with the one provided by the system. He discovered that this Blood Phoenix Chicken provided by the crown prince was in every way inferior to the one provided by the system.

"The ingredients provided by the system are all high quality products that went through careful selections. They're the cream of the crop among all the major varieties," the system's serious voice rang out within Bu Fang's mind.

Bu Fang nodded. He believed that the ingredients provided by the system were definitely the best.

He had indeed agreed that he would personally cook the Sage Herb Phoenix Chicken Soup for the crown prince if the ingredients were provided.

"What about the Sage Herb and the other medicinal ingredients?" Bu Fang asked.

The crown prince's eyes immediately lit up. With a wave of his hand, a leather bag filled with medicinal ingredients appeared in his hand and he handed it to Bu Fang.

The Heavenly Sage Herb was kept within an exquisite wooden box which he carefully handed over to Bu Fang as well.

The Heavenly Sage Herb was very expensive and its value was comparable to the Blood Phoenix Chicken. Moreover, it was very difficult to harvest as it only grows within the Wildlands. That was a terrifying place with innumerable high grade spirit beasts. Even a seventh grade Battle-Saint might perish when exploring the Wildlands.

However, as the Heavenly Sage Herb was only a fifth grade spirit herb, it was located at the outer perimeters of the Wildlands. So the crown prince was still able to collect it by spending a large amount of money.

Receiving the Sage Herb that did not look too good, Bu Fang nodded and simply said, "Cooking the Sage Herb Phoenix Chicken Soup takes a long time. Today's operating hour is almost over. Come here earlier tomorrow to collect the Elixir Cuisine. Since you provided the ingredients yourself, you're allowed to bring the dish back."

The smile on the crown prince's face froze as he thought, "You're not cooking today? Just because the business hours is over?"

"Owner Bu, I really need this Sage Herb Phoenix Chicken Soup. Could you cook it right now?" the crown prince asked with a frown. These ingredients used up a large amount

of his savings. He wanted to personally watch as Bu Fang cooked the dish, otherwise he would not be at ease.

Bu Fang glanced at the crown prince and said, "The Elixir Cuisine is not as simple as you think. A lot of techniques are needed and I need to concentrate. If you don't believe me, you can go back and ask your imperial chefs.

"Honestly, the quality of the ingredients that you provided can only be considered so-so. I am really not interested in them. However, I really hate it when others doubt me. This is the first time, so I'll forgive you. However, if there's a next time, you can take your ingredients back," Bu Fang expressionlessly said as he indifferently looked at the crown prince.

Ji Chengan was furious! Who would dare to speak to him in such a manner within the empire! And even dare to threaten him!

"You..." The crown prince took a deep breath. When he thought about the store's background and Bu Fang's culinary skills as well as the miraculous Elixir Cuisine, the corner of his mouth widened into a smile as he suppressed his anger.

"I am not doubting Owner Bu. Fine, then I shall send someone to collect it tomorrow. I hope Owner Bu won't disappoint me," the crown prince said.

"Hahaha!"

Just as the crown prince finished speaking, a burst of laughter filled with ridicule came from nearby.

The crown prince slightly frowned as he looked toward the source of the laughter and immediately spotted King Yu.

King Yu lifted up a wine cup and emptied it. Then he stood up and walked toward the crown prince with a warm smile plastered on his face like a refined scholar.

"My beloved elder brother, I didn't think I would meet you here. Tsk, tsk, tsk. Are you here to let Owner Bu cook the Elixir Cuisine? This is for extending father's... life, right?" King Yu simply said with a trace of a smile on his face.

The pupils of both the crown prince and Xushi constricted. Previously, their attention was focused on Bu Fang, so they did not realize King Yu was within the store as well.

"How could he be here?!" The crown prince was both agitated and furious!

The crown prince suddenly glanced toward Xushi with a meaningful look in his eyes. Xushi's body shuddered as he fearfully took a step back and bowed toward the crown prince.

"Hahaha! What a coincidence, second brother. It looks like you were attracted by Owner Bu's food as well." A smile was on the crown prince's face as he nodded toward King Yu.

King Yu, Ji Chengyu, was a peak-level fifth grade Battle-King. He was only a step away from becoming a Battle-Emperor. Among the three princes, his cultivation level was the highest.

Even though the crown prince, Ji Chengan, and the third prince, Ji Chengxue, were both fifth grade Battle-Kings as well, they were only at the initial stage. Compared to King Yu, they were a lot worse.

"Indeed, Owner Bu's dishes are truly delicious and the wine is the best in the world. Elder brother, you should give it a try when you have the chance." King Yu chuckled as he placed some crystals onto the table and slowly walked out of the store.

The smile on the crown prince's face gradually disappeared as he gloomily watched King Yu's figure fade away within the alleyway.

With a high cultivation level and half of the imperial court supporting him, his young brother, Ji Chengyu, was the crown prince's greatest competitor and the source of his restlessness.

"Owner Bu... You really can't cook it today?" the crown prince turned toward Bu Fang and asked.

"I can't," Bu Fang simply replied as he expressionlessly turned around and sat down on a chair. "In addition, the service charge for cooking this dish is fifty crystals. Don't forget to pay."

"Fifty crystals?" The crown prince narrowed his eyes. With a wave of his hand, crystals were placed onto the table. Then, he turned around and stormed off in anger. As the crown prince, he did not lack money.

Xushi sighed as he followed after the crown prince with a frown on his face.

Soon, their figures disappeared within the alleyway as well.

"All right, Xiaoyi, today's business hours is over." Bu Fang stood up and patted Ouyang Xiaoyi's head. After seeing her off, he picked up the steel cage and entered the kitchen.

Chapter 78: Close to Level Up

With a loud clang, Bu Fang put down the steel cage within the kitchen. He stretched his body and languidly glanced toward the Blood Phoenix Chicken standing idly within the cage.

"System, if the quality of the Blood Phoenix Chicken is slightly poorer, would the effects of the Elixir Cuisine be affected?" Bu Fang puzzledly asked.

"If the quality of the ingredient is poor, the effects of the Elixir Cuisine would naturally be poor as well. This is common sense," the system solemnly said. Bu Fang was suddenly choked up by its words.

He glanced toward the Blood Phoenix Chicken once more. Coincidentally, the chicken turned its head as well and its swiveling eyes were fixated on Bu Fang.

"Well, this is an ingredient provided by that crown prince himself after all. If the effects aren't good, it's not my fault," Bu Fang indifferently thought and his conscience immediately became clear.

After closing up the store, Bu Fang did not immediately start cooking. He rested for a while and called out his system panel to have a look.

Host: Bu Fang

Gender: Male

Age: Twenty

True Energy Cultivation Level: Third Grade (Has already achieved the ability to manifest true energy outside of the body. As the God of Cooking in the fantasy world, you will definitely need to make use of true energy when cooking. Work hard, young man.)

Cooking Talents: Unknown

Skills: Level One Meteor Cutting Technique (80/100)

Tools: Fragments of God of Cooking (3/4)

God of Cooking overall rating: Apprentice Chef (You can finally cook ingredients with your true energy. Practice your cutting technique and the road to becoming the God of Cooking will open for you. Work hard, young man.)

The current turnover is three thousand six hundred crystals. True energy conversion degree: 900/1000

System Level: Three Stars (Conversion ratio is at twenty-five percent.)

As he focused on the system panel, Bu Fang's expression did not change but his mind was somewhat agitated. The turnover had already reached three thousand six hundred crystals. He only needed to earn another four hundred crystals to level up the system and his cultivation level would increase as well.

And four hundred crystals was just about his turnover for a day.

"Looks like I'll most likely level up after tomorrow's opening hours is over. Will there be any special reward for reaching fourth grade Battle-Spirit? However, I should be able to complete collecting the God of Cooking set by that time as well," Bu Fang muttered.

After resting for a while, he stood up and headed toward the kitchen. Preparing the Sage Herb Phoenix Chicken Soup needed a lot of time and also required using true energy during the cooking process, so Bu Fang did not dare to be careless.

He opened the door of the steel cage and immediately grabbed the Blood Phoenix Chicken. Even though its spirit energy was suppressed by the system, the struggle put up by a fifth grade spirit beast was not weak either.

However, Bu Fang was an experienced chef after all, and handling ingredients was an easy task for him. After a while, he finished processing the Blood Phoenix Chicken.

After taking out the Heavenly Sage Herb from within the exquisite box and some of the needed medicinal ingredients from the leather bag, Bu Fang began to prepare the Elixir Cuisine, Sage Herb Phoenix Chicken Soup.

...

King Yu was in a rather cheerful mood as he returned to his manor. Perhaps tasting delicious food and fine wine might be the reason, but Ji Chengyu felt as if he was floating as he walked.

"I didn't expect that store's dishes to be that delicious. That Ice Heart Jade Urn Wine is truly unforgettable." As King Yu recalled the captivating taste of the Ice Heart Jade Urn Wine, he could not help but lick his lips as a trace of intoxication appeared in his eyes.

Here was another fellow captivated by Bu Fang's food.

King Yu suddenly felt somewhat regretful. He would have been able to taste these delicacies at an earlier date if he had gone to Fang Fang's Little Store earlier.

Just when King Yu was thinking about the dishes cooked by Bu Fang, the head elder of Soul Sect, Hun Qianyun, appeared in front of him along with his subordinates. They were all wearing black robes and their appearances were quite sinister and terrifying.

Even though his eyes flashed with disdain for a moment, King Yu was still smiling on the outside as he looked at them.

"Did you obtain any result while visiting that mysterious store?" Hun Qianyun's hoarse voice, like the sound of gravel rubbing together, rang out, giving goosebumps to any listener.

"That elder brother of mine has already caught the Blood Phoenix Chicken. He brought it to the store along with valuable medicinal ingredients and asked the owner to cook the Elixir Cuisine. However... that Elixir Cuisine will only be completed tomorrow," King Yu simply said.

"Oh? It'll only be completed tomorrow?" Hun Qianyun narrowed his eyes. The spirit fire pulsed for a moment, as if he was thinking.

King Yu nodded and said, "The Elixir Cuisine is not an ordinary dish after all. Even the owner of that mysterious store will need to spend some time to cook it. However, this is great news for us."

"Are you thinking of sending us to ruin the soup tomorrow?" Hun Qianyun puzzledly asked.

"That's right, it must be ruined. Father is not only old and frail, he suffers from numerous undiagnosable illnesses as well. Forcibly extending his lifespan will only prolong his suffering. As his son, I don't want to see my father suffer..." King Yu simply replied. Then his gaze shifted toward Hun Qianyun and said, "Prepare some men along with experts from within my manor and set up an ambush at the entrance of the alleyway tomorrow. Remember, you must ruin that Sage Herb Phoenix Chicken Soup."

"If you fail this time... You and your men can just get lost."

Hun Qianyun was indifferently standing at a distance. When he heard King Yu's words, the spirit fire within his eyes suddenly trembled. Then he saluted and withdrew from the room.

As King Yu watched Hun Qianyun's disappearing figure, the corner of his mouth widened into a smile. Then he looked away into the distance and yelled out, "Prepare a horse for me, I am entering the palace."

...

The crown prince palace, on the left of the Gate of Heavenly Mystery.

The crown prince, Ji Chengan, had a gloomy expression as he sat high above while looking down on the kneeling Xushi. The corners of his mouth were twitching, indicating that he was suppressing his anger.

Xushi was feeling both terrified and helpless. He understood that the crown prince had already begun to suspect him, ever since they met King Yu at Fang Fang's Little Store.

"Xushi, can you explain to me why King Yu would appear within that store?" the crown prince asked.

"I... don't know." Xushi's expression froze.

"After instructing you yesterday that our visit must be kept a secret, we met King Yu the moment we arrived at the store... Are you telling me this is all just a coincidence?" The crown prince chuckled.

"Your Highness... Are you doubting me?" Xushi raised his head and solemnly looked at the crown prince. "I've been following Your Highness for many years. How could Your Highness not understand the way I work?"

Xushi's tone was somewhat indignant and dejected.

Ji Chengan was slightly startled. When he saw Xushi's dejected appearance, his cold expression became gentle. He believed that Xushi would not betray him.

He was suspecting Xushi only because he was irritated by the expression that King Yu gave before he left. Why should the crown prince be bullied by a mere king?

"Alright, I was only befuddled by anger. There's no way I wouldn't know about your loyalty. Right now, go and prepare some experts first. Since King Yu already found out that we asked Owner Bu to cook the Sage Herb Phoenix Chicken Soup, then collecting the soup tomorrow will definitely not be safe. Go look for more experts who are at least fifth grade Battle-Kings."

"Understood, Your Highness. I'll withdraw first," Xushi solemnly nodded and saluted as he left.

However, after a while, Xushi—who had just left—hurriedly returned with an anxious expression on his face.

"Your Highness, I just received news that King Yu... entered the imperial palace to meet His Majesty."

The crown prince raised his eyebrows and a trace of coldness flashed in his eyes. After silently cursing, he hurriedly changed his clothes and headed for the Great Hall to meet the emperor as well.

...

As the night descended, the two crescent moons were suspended high above the sky with dark clouds shrouding them.

Several figures suddenly landed in the alleyway where Fang Fang's Little Store was located. They were all wearing black garments that allowed them to move around unnoticed at night. The aura exuding from them was throbbing as true energy violently surged from their bodies.

"Tomorrow's operation must not fail... We must definitely finish setting up the magic array by today."

Among the figures, a stooping figure appeared. Two lumps of eerie spirit fire were flickering within the darkness as a hoarse voice reverberated in the air.

Chapter 79: Entering the Magic Array with the Chicken Soup

Imperial palace, Great Hall.

The crown prince hurriedly entered while wearing a luxurious robe. Within the Great Hall, the emperor was languidly sitting on throne with one hand holding his chin. His body would lightly tremble from time to time as the sound of faint coughing came from his mouth.

When the emperor saw the crown prince entering the Great Hall, a smile immediately appeared on his face as he softly said, "Chengan, you came. From what I heard from your second brother, you went to Owner Bu's place and prepared the Elixir Cuisine for me?"

When Ji Chengan heard his words, his expression slightly changed. However, he still respectfully bowed toward the emperor and said, "Father, I was only worried about your health. I heard that Owner Bu's Elixir Cuisine has the effect of prolonging life, so I sent my men to purchase a Blood Phoenix Chicken from the Wildlands and asked Owner Bu to cook the Elixir Cuisine."

King Yu, Ji Chengyu, was within the Great Hall as well. He was standing in a distance with a smile on his face as he watched the crown prince with interest. He deliberately entered the imperial palace just to inform his father about this piece of news.

Ji Chengan was planning to conceal his actions from their father, so that their father would definitely be impressed when he finally presented the Elixir Cuisine that could prolong lifespan. However... since Ji Chengyu informed their father about this piece of news first, the effect would not be as shocking.

Furthermore... The most important point is that since their father already found out about the Elixir Cuisine, a gleam of hope would definitely sprout within his heart. And once the Elixir Cuisine was ruined, this trace of hope would be crushed as well. When that time came, the difference between expectation and outcome would surely affect their father's opinion of the crown prince.

King Yu's eyes were flashing brilliantly as he looked at the crown prince with a bright smile on his face.

The crown prince had already cursed King Yu countless times within his mind. How could he not understand King Yu's thinking. He originally concealed his actions from the emperor just to achieve the effect of impressing him. However, with the disrupting actions by King Yu, the resulting effect would surely be greatly reduced.

"Your actions are considerate, but I know my illness very well. However, I understand your intentions." The emperor gently smiled as a rare trace of kindness appeared on his face.

The crown prince could only force out a smile. The only thing he could do was hope that Xushi could safely transport the Elixir Cuisine to the palace.

However, he knew that King Yu would definitely not let things proceed smoothly.

...

Bu Fang was slightly frowning while his hands were placed over the cover of the claypot. True energy was continuously flowing from his body into the claypot and continuously affecting the ingredients contained inside.

Bu Fang was still unfamiliar with true energy culinary, so he did not dare to be careless in the slightest. He was afraid he would made a mistake and ruin this dish.

Fine beads of sweat appeared on his forehead, but Bu Fang ignored them and was fully focused on cooking with true energy. Finally, there was a slight change in his expression and the corner of his mouth slightly curled up.

After dispersing the true energy, Bu Fang pulled back his hand and heavily breathed out. He lifted up a glass of water from the table and drank a mouthful.

This water was cold, fresh, and sweet. It was mountain spring water provided by the system that contained spirit energy and was nourishing to the body.

He lifted up the lid of the claypot and took a look. The Blood Phoenix Chicken was quietly lying within the claypot. As the chicken soup bubbled, the jelly-like, translucent flesh would gently tremble. The color of the chicken soup appeared as amber. However, it was not as bright as the previous one Bu Fang cooked for Xiao Yanyu. This was

caused by the difference in quality of the ingredients and Bu Fang could not do anything about it either.

The essence of the Sage Herb and medicinal ingredients had permeated into the meat of the chicken and the soup, and a rich fragrance was wafting from the claypot.

The cooking of the Sage Herb Phoenix Chicken Soup was finished.

After putting the lid back on the claypot, Bu Fang stretched his body and his neck while walking toward the entrance of the store. As he removed the door boards, the cold winter air rushed into his face. Bu Fang, who was feeling tired after working throughout the night, felt slightly refreshed and slightly recovered from his fatigue.

After opening up the store for business as usual, Bu Fang placed a plate of Sweet 'n' Sour Ribs in front of Blacky and rubbed its immaculate fur. Then Bu Fang stood up, pulled up a chair and contentedly curled up on it. He wanted to rest for a short while.

However, this break did not last long before Fatty Jin arrived with his buddies. Bu Fang could only start his busy day.

On the main street of the imperial city, Xushi was heading toward Bu Fang's store while leading a group of people. The auras exuding from these people were very strong and the fluctuations of their true energy were almost distorting the air.

Xushi did not dare to be careless in the slightest about the operation to transport the soup. The crown prince was already dissatisfied with him. If he also messed up this matter, he might as well take a hike.

So he specially brought five Battle-Kings along with him to transport the soup, just in case something were to happen. After all, five Battle-Kings were already considered top tier combat power within the imperial city.

The entrance of the alleyway was quiet and peaceful. As Xushi stepped into the alleyway, he immediately began to frown. He seemed to sense a cold burst of energy rising from the bottom of his feet.

Was he imagining things? Xushi lowered his head and looked at the floor. It was still the old quartzite flooring. There was even moss growing between the gaps of the tiles. Everything was the same as usual.

"Perhaps I was just imagining things," Xushi thought as he shook his head and bitterly laughed. Then he led the group into Bu Fang's store.

Within the store, there were a few scattered customers enjoying their meals with relish. They were all rich and influential people living within the imperial city. Like Fatty Jin, they did not lack money.

"Oh, you're here." Bu Fang expressionlessly nodded when he saw Xushi step into the store.

"Wait for a while, the smelly boss is still cooking," Ouyang Xiaoyi charmingly said as she motioned Xushi to wait.

Xushi was somewhat nervous, but he still composedly nodded.

After a while, Bu Fang finished cooking the last dish and let Xiaoyi serve it to the customer. Then he personally carried out a claypot from the kitchen. That claypot was still giving off steam as a rich fragrance spread everywhere.

Xushi's eyes immediately lit up as he thought, "This is definitely Owner Bu's Elixir Cuisine! There's no mistake!"

Xushi carefully received the claypot that Bu Fang passed over. After solemnly expressing his thanks, Xushi bid farewell to Bu Fang and left the store. The five Battle-Kings followed after him with grave expressions on their faces as well.

From the moment Xushi received the Elixir Cuisine, his chest began to tighten and he became extremely alert.

Violent true energy emerged from each Battle-King and surrounded Xushi to form a protective barrier.

Blacky, who was lying at entrance, lazily lifted its eyes to glance at the group of people. Then it snorted and went back to sleep.

Suddenly, a burst of chilly wind that was even colder than the bone-chilling wind blew into the alleyway from the entrance.

Xushi and the others, who were transporting the Elixir Cuisine, had just reached the entrance of the alleyway when they felt goosebumps all over their body at the same time. Their eyes instantly widened and emitted radiance as they scanned their surroundings.

"Who's there! Come out!!"

With a shout, a Battle-King expert concentrated true energy onto his fist and viciously smashed it toward a single direction.

Oom.

As the fist filled with true energy smashed into the empty air, the pupils of the Battle-King suddenly constricted. He realized the floor of the alleyway was radiating black light.

Two black circles filled with symbols appeared on the simple quartzite flooring and were rotating in the anticlockwise direction.

"Damn it! This is the killing array of the Soul Sect, the King of Hell's Soul Rending Array!"

Xushi's expression became pale in that instant and his pupils nearly lost all luster.

Suddenly, the black light rose up and completely enveloped the entire group, as if they were pulled into another world.

With the sound of footsteps, several figures wearing black robes appeared and surrounded the alleyway. The aura of these figures were extremely powerful and the aura of the stooping elder leading them was even more terrifying.

As the two lumps of spirit fire pulsated, Hun Qianyun opened his mouth and said, "The prey has entered the magic array... Begin the elimination."

Chapter 80: Who Is Using Embroidery Needles to Poke Your Lord Dog?!

Boom boom!

The black energy was just like a black mist that rose from under the ground and instantly enveloped the entire magic array. A terrifying desolate atmosphere pervaded the alleyway.

The expressions of the five Battle-Kings were grave as they formed a circle around Xushi, who was carrying the Sage Herb Phoenix Chicken Soup. Their mission this time was to protect the Elixir Cuisine, so they must focus all their attention on protecting Xushi, who was carrying it.

The black energy enveloping the air, under the guidance of the two black circular magic arrays rotating in the anticlockwise direction, gradually formed a gigantic simulacrum above them. This simulacrum was filled with an extremely terrifying aura.

"This is the King of Hell's Soul Rending Array! It's the Soul Sect's secret magic array... Why would it appear in this place?!" Xushi's eyes were filled with incredulity.

Suddenly, he seemed to have thought of something. His pupils constricted as he looked toward the distance. There, he saw several figures wrapped in black robes appearing.

"You're from the Soul Sect?! Are you here to ruin this Elixir Cuisine?" Xushi shouted in a stern voice.

"Do it, don't waste your breath on him. Remember, there must be no survivors... Our identity must not be exposed." A hoarse voice as ear-piercing as gravel being grinded rang out.

The figures wrapped in black robes did not say anything as they swiftly moved toward every corner of the magic array and completely surrounded Xushi and the others.

Hun Qianyun, whose eyes seemed to have two lumps of spirit fire pulsating within, slowly walked out from the shadows with his back hunched over.

At that moment, Xushi had already completely fallen into despair. Even though he was acting cautiously, he still fell for King Yu's trap.

Xushi had always assumed that no matter how insane King Yu was, he would only send some powerful assassins to ruin the Elixir Cuisine. However, he never expected King Yu would actually conspire with experts from the sects!

The sects were able to contend against the imperial court for so many years precisely because of their mysterious methods and secrets. Thanks to that, they were able to forcibly survive under Emperor Changfeng's continuous attacks year after year.

Every single cultivator within the empire was well aware that the sects were powerful and not to be trifled with.

Magic array was a method that the sects were specialized in using.

"King Yu actually dared to conspire with experts from the sects... Is he not afraid that His Majesty will find out?!" Xushi clenched his teeth and angrily roared.

Hun Qianyun lightly exclaimed his surprise as his line of sight shifted toward Xushi. He began to laugh as he said, "How would the emperor find out? Once we eliminate you... No one else will know."

Xushi wanted to continue speaking, but the experts from the sects were already tired of wasting their breath on him. They immediately triggered their true energy, and the black simulacrum above Xushi and the others suddenly launched an attack at them.

A gigantic palm formed completely with black energy was viciously heading toward Xushi. Its energy fluctuation was extremely violent.

"Block it!" Xushi angrily roared with bloodshot eyes.

A Battle-King loudly shouted as the true energy throughout his body practically gained substance. He rose into the air and launched his attack toward the palm with all his strength.

However, this tremendous attack by the Battle-King was like a mayfly trying to shake a tree. It did not cause even the slightest damage to the palm.

Bang!

With a loud noise, that Battle-King was ruthlessly smashed into the ground. The impact produced an intense tremor and cracks appeared around the area...

The true energy within the body of the Battle-King completely dissipated. He was actually swatted to death by the palm strike!

Xushi suddenly felt a chill in his heart. As expected, the might of the magic array was extremely powerful.

Hun Qianyun faintly smiled as he pointed toward Xushi with a withered finger and said, "They... must all die."

...

The crown prince was sitting cross-legged within his palace. His eyes were closed as he tried to calm himself and quietly cultivate. However, after cultivating for a while, he still could not help but open his eyes and heavily breathe out.

"Fuuu... I wonder how Xushi is doing. My eyelid has been twitching for a while, and I've been having a bad feeling." The crown prince was frowning as he stood up and looked out of the window.

He originally thought asking Owner Bu to cook the Sage Herb Phoenix Chicken Soup and offering it to his father was a good move. However, he did not expect a trick employed by King Yu would turn it into a bad move that sabotaged him.

The crown prince was feeling somewhat helpless as well and could not help but feel regretful. He was currently between a rock and a hard place and could only hope that Xushi was able to safely bring back that Sage Herb Phoenix Chicken Soup. Only then, he would be able to avoid being hoisted by his own petard.

.....

King Yu's manor.

King Yu was standing in front of the fish pond with crystal powder in his hands as he contentedly fed the fish. As he watched the fish within the pond continuously fighting over the crystal powder, the smile on his face became colder and colder.

...

Sensing a slightly stifling feeling, Bu Fang—who was curled up on a chair—was slightly frowning as he stood up. He walked toward the entrance of the store and looked toward the direction of the alleyway's entrance.

What he saw was a gigantic humanoid simulacrum blocking the entrance of the alleyway.

"What are they doing over there? Don't they know that what they're doing is hindering my business?" Bu Fang was frowning and was somewhat displeased.

The location of his store was already out of the way. Of all the places to stir up trouble, these people had to choose the entrance of the alleyway. Were they purposely making life difficult for him?

Ouyang Xiaoyi curiously stuck out her head as well. When she saw the towering and majestic simulacrum, her rosy face was filled with astonishment.

"Smelly boss, what are they doing?" Xiaoyi puzzledly asked.

"They're stirring up trouble," Bu Fang simply said as he patted Xiaoyi's head. The moment he finished speaking, his eyes narrowed as the gigantic simulacrum suddenly exploded and a figure shot toward the direction of the store.

"Owner Bu, save me!" A heart-wrenching shout rang out.

Xushi was charging toward them in a miserable state. He was bleeding all over his body and one of his arms was completely broken. As he made the mad dash toward them, blood was continuously dripping. However, his other arm was still tightly holding the scalding claypot.

Bang! When Xushi arrived in front of Bu Fang, he was already completely exhausted. As he knelt on the floor, blood was gushing from his mouth and he was bleeding from his arm. He was shivering as he held onto the claypot. He did not let even a single drop of chicken soup spill from the claypot.

Frightened by Xushi's wretched appearance, Ouyang Xiaoyi hurriedly hid behind Bu Fang and timidly peeked out.

Bu Fang knitted his eyebrows together as he looked toward the simulacrum that was slowly heading toward his direction and looked toward Xushi who was bathed in blood. For some reason, he was suddenly feeling very angry.

"They actually dare to beat up my customer like this?! This is clearly an act of provocation toward Fang Fang's Little Store!" Bu Fang expressionlessly said but his voice was very cold.

"O... Owner Bu... The Sage Herb Phoenix Chicken Soup... must not be ruined!" Xushi trembled as he tried to pass the scalding claypot to Bu Fang. His eyes contained a trace of imploration and helplessness.

A burst of black energy suddenly gushed out from his body and instantly covered Xushi's skin. Black smoke was seeping out from his facial orifices.

Bu Fang's eyes focused onto Xushi. He felt the sliver of imploration in his eyes and could not help but reach out for the Sage Herb Phoenix Chicken Soup.

However... a black spear was suddenly shot toward them at close to supersonic speed and directly pierced through the claypot.

With a loud crack, the claypot broke into pieces. At that moment, time seemed to have stopped for Bu Fang and Xushi.

The spear pierced through the claypot and directly headed toward Blacky—who was soundly asleep—and collided with its head.

With a bang... The spear broke into pieces and Blacky drowsily opened its sleepy eyes.

"Son of a... Who used embroidery needle to poke your lord dog?! Step forward right now!"

Blacky puzzledly looked around the surroundings and its doggy eyes finally locked onto the simulacrum at the distance.

Xushi watched with a blank stare as the claypot broke into pieces. The Sage Herb Phoenix Chicken Soup spilled all over and the crystal clear, jelly-like chicken meat rolled on the ground...

With a long sigh, Xushi closed his eyes in despair as smoke seeped out from his facial orifices... His entire soul was completely incinerated.

"You must be the owner of the mysterious store..." A figure wrapped in a black robe walked over. Behind him was the simulacrum of the King of Hell controlled by the gigantic magic array.

"Were you the one who killed him? Was the soup ruined by you?" Bu Fang coldly turned his head and said as he expressionlessly looked at the person in the black robe.

The spirit fire within Hun Qianyun's eyes lightly pulsated as he chuckled and said with a hoarse voice, "They say that your store is extremely mysterious, and even a seventh grade Battle-Saint like Xiao Meng was repelled. The might of this King of Hell's Soul Rending Array is not inferior to a Battle-Saint. I really want to test out the depth of your store... and pay homage to the two little guys that died."

Bu Fang knitted his eyebrows together as he glanced toward Hun Qianyun and coldly said, "I asked whether you were the one who killed him, whether you were the one who ruined the soup... You only need to answer yes or no!"

"You're really asking for it! How dare you be so arrogant when you're standing in front of my King of Hell's Soul Rending Array! So what if I were the one who killed him? So what if I ruined the soup?" Hun Qianyun was somewhat angry as well. True energy suddenly gushed out from his body and the simulacrum of the King of Hell became even more solid.

Blacky lazily got up from the ground. It glanced at the simulacrum of the King of Hell and rolled its eyes.

"Even if the King of Hell really climbed out from the netherworld, this lord dog wouldn't be afraid. What's a knockoff like you trying to play at?" A gentle and pleasant voice of a masculine male suddenly rang out from Blacky's mouth and echoed within the alleyway.