

PROTECT OUR CLAN LEADER

Chapter 21: Opening the Door to a New World for the Second Brother_1

...

In spite of these small interruptions, Wang Shouzhe didn't care too much. Instead, he steered the conversation back on track: "Second Brother, the live fish hold the highest value in your fish stall, right?"

"Yes, apart from the Spirit Fish, some superior live fish have the highest value. Like perch, herring, mandarin fish, eel, shad, snakehead, and others that are known for their freshness and are quite popular among prominent families and wealthy businessmen. The only requirement is that they remain alive." Wang Shoudi frowned, "Auntie Liu's fishing team has live-water cabins.

After disembarking from the live-water cabins, specific carriages have to be used to transport the fish to Changning Guard City overnight. They also need to be delivered to the buyers in the shortest possible time. Even the shortest delays can lead to many errors. Out of ten fish, six or seven would die, and when they die, their value drops by half and can only be sold as fresh fish."

Wang Shouzhe thought for a moment before speaking. "So, the cost of transportation and the high death rate of live fish are the two critical issues here. If we can solve these problems, even without increasing the quantity of catch, we could earn quite a bit extra every year."

The reason he was inspecting every aspect of the family business was that he wanted to see if he could implement some optimizations using his modern Earthman's mindset to increase the family's productivity.

"If Fourth Brother can find a way to reduce the death rate of the fish, we could confidently make an additional seventy or eighty Qian Gold. The loss hurts," Wang Shouyi said, "All profit lost with the dead fish."

"I can't say anything now, I need to take a look at your existing approach."

"Come with me, Fourth Brother." Wang Shouyi led Wang Shouzhe to the courtyard where two horse-drawn carriages were parked. Unlike ordinary carriages, they didn't have passenger compartments but were fitted with large wooden barrels. He said, "One

carriage carries live water and fish, while the other carries live water alone. Every two hours, some water in the fish barrel needs to be replaced.

However, even then, if there are slightly more live fish, some will die. I had been considering adding another carriage to carry live water, but this would significantly increase the costs."

Upon seeing Wang Shouyi's method of transporting live fish, Wang Shouzhe's eyelids twitched. The number of valuable live fish caught every day wasn't high; the highest was a couple of thousand pounds in a day.

Is such a shocking method necessary for transportation? The fish barrels were unexpectedly crude, with neither oxygen boosters nor filters—just a simple water change!

To change the water, they astonishingly needed one carriage just for that. Moreover, was Wang Shouyi really considering adding another carriage?

But then, Wang Shouzhe understood. It really wasn't Wang Shouyi's fault. Because this was the Profound Martial World where everyone was focused on improving their cultivation realm and individual martial power.

Not all human elites ignored the natural sciences. However, even if they achieved something in their research, they would selfishly hoard it. Knowledge was kept strictly confidential, making it difficult to disseminate.

One couldn't blame them. Even if Wang Shouzhe came up with something, he would keep it for his clan's secret use. To think that he would share it with other families was ridiculous.

In his past life, Wang Shouzhe was just a workaholic with no aspirations. During weekends and holidays, he often went fishing with his friends. When he caught too many fish, he once tried to use an oxygen pump to keep the fish alive for slow consumption. Still, the fish died quickly even with increased oxygenation. After some research, he learned some basic principles.

To keep fish alive for slow consumption, the aquarium has to meet three conditions.

Firstly, it's the amount of dissolved oxygen in the water. Fish need oxygen to survive, and the oxygen in the water is limited. A bucket with more fish consumes oxygen faster. This can be alleviated by increasing the oxygen.

Secondly, it's the cleanliness of the water. Fish excrement and food residues produce ammonia and nitrite. Respiration results in nitrogen. These could cause the death of fish which can be solved by changing the water or filtering.

Lastly, it's the temperature. The higher the temperature, the more active the fish, the more oxygen it consumes, and the more toxic ammonia it produces. Therefore, keeping the water relatively low-temperature is also quite effective.

Combining these three points, Wang Shouzhe and Wang Shouyi went into his study. After some thought, Wang Shouzhe drew a simple sketch on a piece of paper. The fish barrel had a filter at the top, and the filtered water rained down into the barrel. A simple drip-oxygenation method was applied.

Also, he explained the principle of oxygen and toxins to Wang Shouyi as simply as he could.

Wang Shouyi had been working at the fish stall for more than ten years and quickly understood the principle Wang Shouzhe was explaining. He exclaimed, "After hearing Fourth Brother's explanation, I understand a lot more. The elders used to say we needed to change the 'live water' because the fish needed the 'live Qi' in the water.

When the 'live Qi' was insufficient, the water became 'dead water,' and the fish would die. It never occurred to me that the rainwater drip method could increase the 'live Qi' in the water."

"This idea comes from ancient books. Whether it's effective or not is uncertain and requires more experiments for comparison," Wang Shouzhe nodded to himself. The term "vital energy" was easier to comprehend than the mouthful "oxygen."

"Fish eat vital energy and exhale dead energy. The increasing excrement in the water generates poisonous gas. It can be filtered out through layers of cotton cloth, crushed charcoal, and gravel, making the water non-toxic and therefore, preventing the fish from dying. Why didn't I think of this before?"

Wang Shouyi grew more excited as he spoke: "The points about temperature conditions my younger brother mentioned also make sense. Fewer live fish die in cold weather during transport, while more die in the summer. It turns out when the weather is hot fish are more active, meaning they require more vital energy...No wonder transporting them during daytime is not as good as at night!

If we added some ice to the water..."

The theory that Wang Shouzhe imparted seemed to open a door to a new world for Wang Shouyi, as things that had been perplexing him were suddenly clear now.

"As long as you understand, brother, you can have craftsmen build a few small devices for testing," Wang Shouzhe glanced at the sky, "It's getting late and I have other matters to handle, so I need to take my leave."

As the Clan Leader, Wang Shouzhe wasn't here to invent and create. Besides, knowing is easier than doing, he might not be particularly good at manually handling such things.

As long as Wang Shouyi understood the principles, he was capable enough to undertake the following work.

"Don't rush off, younger brother," Wang Shouyi grabbed his arm, "You rarely come to the fish stall, and I, as your elder brother, have not yet properly hosted you. Let's take lunch at the Hundred Taste Pavilion. The live fish they serve are supplied by us, and their dishes are all exceptionally good. There are still several things I haven't figured out.

What is this siphon effect drainage you mentioned? And how does a manual pump increase the water tank's vital energy? How does the manual pump principle allow water to flow upwards..."

Enough already!

Listening to his brother's endless string of questions made Wang Shouzhe's head spin a bit, but he acknowledged that it was a good thing. Wang Shouyi had been running the fish stall for many years and if he could really master this knowledge, the business would definitely prosper. This would also mean making a significant contribution to the family.

In Changning Weicheng, the Wang family was not the only ones in the fish stall business. Over ten prominent families were managing such businesses. In particular, the Liu Clan and Zhao Clan were even larger than the Wang family.

If their fish stall could have better performance, they would squeeze the living space of their competitors while generating more wealth for themselves.

Therefore, Wang Shouzhe took some extra time to give Wang Shouyi a "primer course". Both the siphon effect and manual pumps require pipes. The use of pipes in this world was relatively crude, limited to only bamboo, clay, and copper, but these would suffice.

It was fine that they could not yet produce a manual pump. They could use the siphon principle to draw water from the bottom and manually pour water into the filtration layer. This way, the transport capacity of one cart was greatly increased and the survival rate of the fish was significantly boosted.

Wang Shouyi was fascinated by the conversation and continued to barrage Wang Shouzhe with questions even over lunch at the Hundred Taste Pavilion.

"Elder brother, is the Hundred Taste Pavilion really one of the best restaurants in Changning Weicheng?" Wang Shouzhe found the food there average at best, though the ingredients were undoubtedly high-quality.

Of course, in terms of seasoning, it was superior to the cooks in the Wang family, but the flavour still lagged considerably behind those on Earth.

"Younger brother, this meal cost us 32 copper coins and 73 shillings..." Wang Shouyi grumbled about the cost, "These hard-earned savings of mine are spent on such delicious dishes, and you're still not satisfied?"

Wang Shouzhe stroked his chin, guessing that the disparity was due to monosodium glutamate (MSG), which had been omnipresent in all corners of the food world on Earth, raising the bar for his taste buds.

If he could figure out how to make MSG, could it become an industry as well?

...

Chapter 22: Purple Crystal Spirit Bee Hive

...

However, this idea was fleeting because Wang Shouzhe knew only that the earliest sodium glutamate was extracted from kelp, but the content of sodium glutamate in kelp is very low, making it difficult for industrial operations.

Modern processes all extract sodium glutamate from crops like soybeans through microbial fermentation.

Yet, Wang Shouzhe had almost no understanding of the refining process and principles of sodium glutamate, and developing it himself would have been extremely time-consuming. Therefore, he had to set aside the notion of quick wealth and decided it was safer to start by improving and optimizing the family industry.

"Second brother, now that you understand the principle, I hope you'll expedite the experimentation and improvement, and make sure not to waste the hard work of Uncle Six's fishing brigade in catching the live fish. Of course, you also need to protect our Wang family's secrets. I trust you know better than I how to do that."

After giving a few instructions, Wang Shouzhe led his household guards to take his leave.

For Wang Shouyi, who had received the "inheritance," he was eager to try it out. He was too impatient to even see Wang Shouzhe off, so he hurried to start his experiments. If successful, this traditional family industry of a fish stall could play to its strengths.

At the eastern city gate of Changning Defense.

Once out of the city, there was a straight and wide official road.

Wang Shouzhe, accompanied by two household guards, rode his horse at a gallop, and after some time and a few stops, they reached the Changning ferry terminal in Peace River within half an hour.

The Changning ferry terminal was a government-run ferry, actually controlled by the government officials of Changning Defense, where the reach of the three prominent families of Ping'an Town also came to an abrupt halt, marking a clear boundary line.

A guardian from the Wang family had already been waiting there, who came forward to greet them upon their arrival: "Wang Wu greets the Family Head."

"Dispense with the formalities. Have Grandmother and my fifth sister arrived?" When Wang Shouzhe left the family late at night, he had left a letter for Gongsun Hui, instructing her to act according to the plan outlined in the letter.

"Reporting to the Family Head," Wang Wu said respectfully, "Elder Madam Hui and the fifth young miss's carriage is waiting up ahead."

Guided by Wang Wu, Wang Shouzhe quickly met up with Gongsun Hui and the others. After boarding the carriage, Gongsun Hui poured a cup of tea for Wang Shouzhe, her brows knit with worry: "Zhe Er, is the matter as serious as your letter described?"

"I'm afraid it's even more severe than we imagined," Wang Shouzhe said after taking a sip of tea to settle his spirits and frowning, "The Qian Family's trading company has industries all over Longzuo, yet they remain oblivious to the situation. This suggests that no significant power within Longzuo County has issued a warning about the impending disaster."

"How could this be?" Gongsun Hui exclaimed with pale countenance, "So many prominent families in the entire Longzuo County are all unaware? If so, won't many of the common people suffer?"

"Grandmother worries too much. If the sky were to fall, there would still be tall people to hold it up. What our little Wang family can do is to go with the flow and figure out how to survive and grow, which is the right path," Wang Shouzhe said calmly. "However, Grandmother does have a point. In the vast Longzuo County, it cannot be that we are the first to detect the insect calamity.

Perhaps most people will overlook it, but surely some families have noticed the strangeness and made preparations in secret. Or perhaps someone has already issued a warning, but the news has yet to reach Changning."

Human nature is universal.

After encountering this situation, Wang Shouzhe immediately kept it a strict secret and prepared to seize the opportunity for profit, and most of the other families that had discovered or stumbled upon the situation probably had the same thought.

Moreover, Wang Shouzhe had discovered this issue quite late and merely managed to respond to the situation. Even publicizing it would only hasten the outbreak of chaos and be of no benefit to the overall situation.

"Zhe Er, you're right. Our small family is already doing well if we can take care of ourselves now," Gongsun Hui said, letting go of the worries, "The Da Qian government, Purple Abode Academic Palace, and those prominent clans will surely step in to save the day in a critical moment.

Zhe Er, that you thought to help the Gongsun family at a time like this, Elder Madam Hui would like to thank you on behalf of the Gongsun Clan of Shanyang."

"This is nonsense, Elder Madam," Wang Shouzhe smiled, "the Gongsun Clan and our Wang family have intermarried for generations, already blending our bloodlines; it is our duty to help and look out for each other. Besides, I haven't visited my maternal grandfather in a long while, I should pay him my respects."

As far as Wang Shouzhe was aware, the intermarriage between Gongsun Clan and Wang family indeed ran deep. Take the current Clan Leader of the Gongsun Clan, Gongsun Mo, for instance; his own grandmother was the direct descendant of the fourth generation of the Wang family—Wang Lingdie. Even Elder Madam Gongsun Hui had to address her as her great-grandmother.

And in the fourth generation, the direct lineage of the Wang family also married a direct daughter from the Gongsun Clan, who was Wang Shouzhe's great-grandmother.

Thus, one could see just how close the direct lineages of the Gongsun Clan and the Wang family were to each other.

As soon as the words 'maternal grandfather' aired, Gongsun Hui paused slightly, then revealed a delighted expression, emotionally saying, "Zhe Er, you've truly grown up, becoming sensible."

Although Gongsun Hui was not Wang Shouzhe's birth mother, she was his father's first wife, making her father, Gongsun Mo, naturally Wang Shouzhe's maternal grandfather. However, Wang Shouzhe's predecessor had been somewhat reclusive since childhood, having visited Gongsun Mo a few times in a rather cold manner, with little warmth between them.

For Gongsun Hui, having remarried Wang Dingyue and given birth to just one legitimate daughter without a son, she poured all her affection and attention into her stepson, Wang Shouzhe.

According to the laws of Great Qian Land and the rules commonly followed by all Profound Martial Prominent Families, the relationship between a father's first wife and the legitimate son must be regarded as that of a true mother and son, whether they are blood-related or not.

While Gongsun Hui was chatting, the fifth sister, Wang Luo Jing, sat obediently all along, and even if she found it boring, she just blinked and dared not interrupt.

"Luo Jing, your fourth brother has brought you a gift, have a look and see if you like it?" Wang Shouzhe offered her a wrapped package.

Wang Luo Jing opened it and found a beehive. Instantly, she covered her mouth with delight, and murmured, "Is this, this beehive so round and smooth, with hexagonal openings, slightly crystalline and lustrous... Could it actually be the legendary Purple Crystal Spirit Bee Hive? Thank you Fourth Brother, this is wonderful."

Wait a second, what in the world is a Purple Crystal Spirit Bee?

Wang Shouzhe's face showed a hint of surprise, "Luo Jing, your learning is not yet thorough, this is clearly a Tiger Head Spirit Bee Hive."

Wang Luo Jing paused, biting her lip, she said, "I understand, Fourth Brother, you're testing me again. The Insect Scripture records that Tiger Head Spirit Bees and Purple Crystal Spirit Bees look quite similar at Level One, with the subtle difference being the slightly more slender body of the Purple Crystal Spirit Bee.

However, their hives are significantly different; Tiger Head Spirit Bee Hives are generally flatter and rougher around the openings, while those of Purple Crystal Spirit Bees are round and their hives appear crystalline. This suggests that this swarm of Purple Crystal Spirit Bees is still at the Level One phase, just starting to crystallize.

If they advance to Level Two, the hive will be more than ten times larger than this, and will gradually assume the form of Purple Crystal."

As she spoke, Wang Luo Jing carefully turned out several bee pupae, immediately showing a pained expression on her small face, "The person who harvested this hive is foolish, many of the pupae and larvae are dead, oh... This really is a Purple Crystal Spirit Bee Hive, and only a few dozen pupae are still alive, what a pity!"

"Is it really a Purple Crystal Spirit Bee?" Wang Shouzhe's expression also grew strange, "Did I unintentionally pick up a treasure?" Given his status as a Young Clan Leader, he naturally had to learn a great deal, and Tiger Head Spirit Bees were relatively common and well-known to him.

However, he knew very little about Purple Crystal Spirit Bees, only that they were a rare species capable of growing to Level Two Spirit Bees.

Gongsun Hui, listening from tChapter 23: "Young Clan Leader" of the Gongsun Clan

...

The Enlightenment Pill can improve one's talent, said to be specially developed by an Alchemy Great Grandmaster to enhance human cultivation talent.

That Alchemy Grandmaster had devoted his entire life to developing the "Enlightenment Pill," but the result was still quite disappointing, as the Enlightenment Pill only offered a slight improvement for those with Profound Martial Talent of lower class.

Moreover, it could only slightly improve the Profound Martial Talent, not significantly.

Even so, for a nine rank lowest-tier Prominent Family like the Ping'an Wang Family, the Enlightenment Pill was already a very high-level "God-level Pill."

Especially for someone like Wang Shouzhe, who was at the lower class A level of Profound Martial Talent, it was extremely practical. He was touted as a young genius, only half a step behind the Old Ancestor Longyan in his younger days, bearing the hopes of the family's future.

However, Wang Shouzhe himself was well aware that his talent, while considered good within Changning's sphere, had only a hopeful chance of impacting the Spirit Platform Stage. By comparison within the entirety of Longzuo County, it was hardly worth mentioning.

His overall conditions just barely met the enrollment requirements of the Purple Abode Academic Palace, and whether he would be accepted still depended on subsequent tests.

Fortunately, even among those in the lower class A, Wang Shouzhe was considered a standout, only a step away from the middle-grade talent. If he had the chance to take the "Enlightenment Pill," he might very well make further progress by leaps and bounds, joining the ranks of those with middle-grade talent, which would be a completely different story.

The Old Ancestor Longyan, Wang Longyan, had genuine middle-grade talent.

In the population of tens of thousands in Changning, the probability of middle-grade talent emerging was very low. Once it appeared, even the Purple Abode Academic Palace would actively vie for it, providing focused training upon admission.

However, the Enlightenment Pill belonged to the category of Level Three Spirit Pills and was very scarce in production. Even when Zhou Xuan, the Old Ancestor, was alive, he couldn't guarantee that he would be able to obtain an Enlightenment Pill.

Seeing the uncertainty in Wang Shouzhe's eyes, Wang Luo Jing, sitting beside him, said docilely, "Fourth Brother, I will definitely work hard to get you the Enlightenment Pill."

"Luo Jing, you must not spoil your Fourth Brother too much," Gongsun Hui said with a smile as she stroked her head. "You can try to revive the Spirit Bees, but don't worry too much if you can't; cultivating a swarm from some Purple Crystal Spirit Bee pupae is no easy task. If you fail, consider it an experience gain and don't put too much pressure on yourself."

"Madam Gongsun is right," Wang Shouzhe hastily added, "Luo Jing, the bee nest was bought for you to play with anyway. It doesn't matter if it's spoiled. Accumulating experience as an Insect Master isn't an overnight feat."

Wang Luo Jing was only twelve years old, which, on Earth, would have made her a sixth-grade elementary school student. Wang Shouzhe certainly didn't want to put too much pressure on her.

"Auntie Li, Fourth Brother, I understand," Wang Luo Jing obediently responded, then carefully pondered over the Purple Crystal Spirit Bee hive she was holding. Her gaze was incredibly focused and captivated, as if she had received her most beloved toy.

Only then did Wang Shouzhe remember that his little sister seemed different from ordinary people, having an innate obsession with insects. Even her own brother, Wang Shounuo, had said that Luo Jing could squat in the yard watching ants for days and nights when she was two or three years old.

Well, let her be. It's okay to let her tinker with it.

Both Wang Shouzhe and Gongsun Hui knew how to be discreet, keeping their mouths shut and trying not to disturb her as much as possible.

The carriage proceeded smoothly along the official road without any jolts, especially after entering Shanyang Town, where the road was completely even.

The Gongsun Clan of Shanyang had been managing this stretch of land for over two hundred years and had become firmly entrenched. They owned some special industries that required high-quality roads, so they spent a lot of money on road maintenance every year.

Traveling on the smooth and solid road surface, one could lift the carriage curtain and see a mountain range with a high, arched back visible in the distance.

That was a remnant of the Six Flat Mountain chain, winding past the outskirts of Ping'an Town and piercing through the Peace River before rising into the last high stretch of the remnant mountains.

This segment, rising like the spine of a giant dragon, was steeper and more rugged than the rest of the Six Flat Mountain range, hence it was named Longji Mountain.

The northwest side of Longji Mountain was known as Shanyin, while its southeast side was called Shanyang.

Shanyang was dominated by the Gongsun Clan, while Shanyin was the undisputed territory of the Liu Family.

Wang Shouzhe and his companions purposely took the route through the Changning ferry crossing from the northern side of the river to enter Shanyang in order to deliberately avoid the waters near Shaoying Gorge, which was the territorial water domain of another great Prominent Family of Ping'an Town, the Zhao Clan.

Less than half an hour after entering the Shanyang territory, the sound of galloping horses approached rapidly as several knights rode swiftly up the main road.

One of the knights was Wang An, one of the Soldiers of the Wang Family, who had been dispatched in advance as an envoy to the Gongsun Clan in Shanyang to announce their itinerary.

Before Wang Shouzhe's carriage, Wang Wu and Wang Yong, two of the family guards, spurred their horses forward, keeping a certain distance between the approaching knights and the carriage.

This was the duty of the household guardians, even if among the group of knights were their own people.

"Wang Yong, report to the Family Head at once." As Wang An and the other knights came to a halt, each of them dismounted, he called out loudly, "The Young Clan Leader of the Gongsun Clan has personally come to welcome the Family Head and Madam Gongsun."

The voice was so loud that it was heard inside Wang Shouzhe's carriage.

"It's my brother." Gongsun Hui, who had always carried herself with dignity and grace, suddenly revealed the joyous expression of a young girl. However, realizing that Wang Shouzhe and Wang Luo Jing, the two younger members, were also in the carriage, she quickly composed herself to display the demeanor of an elder, and spoke solemnly, "Zhe Er, Luo Jing.

According to the customs, let us get off the carriage to meet our uncle."

Wang Shouzhe was extremely rare to see such a youthful demeanor from the matron, and he couldn't help but smile inwardly, realizing that although she was usually serious and dignified, she was actually only nineteen when she remarried to Wang Dingyue and had

given birth to her sister Luomei at the age of twenty-two, just eight years ago, making her actual age only thirty.

If she were in a major city on Earth like Beijing or Shanghai, there would be plenty of thirty-year-old unmarried women who typically referred to themselves as girls.

But let's not digress.

Following Gongsun Hui, the two of them got out of the carriage, and at this moment the Young Clan Leader of the Gongsun family, also accompanied by two household guardians, came forward to meet them.

Gongsun Qiang, the rightful eldest son of the current Gongsun Clan. With a fair complexion and clean-shaven, he had quite the heroic appearance, and his lean figure appeared even more handsome and imposing in his attire.

However, Wang Shouzhe knew that this "uncle," the clan's young leader, was already thirty-eight years old and his cultivation had reached the peak of Level Eight in the Vital Energy Refining Realm.

"Little sister," Gongsun Qiang strode forward quickly, smiling warmly, "You've finally come home after such a long time, and you didn't even notify your big brother in advance so that I could go out to Shanyang to welcome you."

Gongsun Hui, being the youngest among her siblings, was the most doted upon in the family, and Gongsun Qiang was particularly fond of his little sister.

"Brother," Gongsun Hui returned the greeting with a modest bow, her demeanor graceful and proper, "It's my duty to come back and visit father and brother. How could I trouble you to personally come and welcome me? Zhe Er, don't you want to greet your uncle?"

She subtly signaled Wang Shouzhe with her eyes.

Understanding her cue, Wang Shouzhe immediately bowed with his hands clasped and said, "Shouzhe greets uncle."

Gongsun Qiang stared at him, scrutinizing Wang Shouzhe for a good while before squeezing out, "Shouzhe has grown up quite a bit, truly a young man of valor, surpassing your father by a lot."

Although he was Gongsun Hui's elder brother, his impression of Wang Shouzhe's father was not favorable, and he even held some hostility towards him.

The reason, of course, was that his cherished little sister ended up remarrying an older man than himself, which irked him greatly.

Afterward, he had several altercations with Wang Dingyue due to personality clashes and simply stopped visiting the Wang family altogether.

This time, when Wang Dingyue died, although he was the brother-in-law, he didn't visit and instead sent family elders and several direct relatives to help.

Upon hearing these words, Wang Shouzhe's expression darkened. Even though he was a transmigrator, the memories of his predecessor had merged with his own, and he was also Wang Shouzhe. [Chapter 24: The Child Follows the Mother](#)

...

However, Wang Shouzhe would never readily express such evaluations. He had mingled in the workplace on Earth, and although his understanding of human relationships was not profound, it was passable.

"Uncle, you give me too much credit," Wang Shouzhe said, neither arrogantly nor humbly, "The relationship between people depends on fate. Aunt has been as kind to me as if I were her own, and I am as grateful as if reborn. Whether Uncle jokes with me or even if you were to hit me or scold me, Shouzhe would have no complaints whatsoever."

These words carried a hidden message, suggesting to Gongsun Qiang that Shouzhe respected him because of Aunt's kindness. Otherwise, based on Gongsun Qiang's own merit, he probably wouldn't have earned Shouzhe's respect.

"Indeed. My little sister has always been intelligent, virtuous, and kind-hearted," Gongsun Qiang nodded incessantly, praising Gongsun Hui casually.

Wang Shouzhe was momentarily speechless. No wonder the Elder Clan Leader Gongsun, despite his old age, had not yet stepped down—it turned out that this Young Clan Leader really wasn't "polished" enough. It's no surprise that he and Shouzhe's "late father," Wang Dingyue, didn't see eye to eye.

Gongsun Hui, standing to the side, pressed her forehead with embarrassment, her cheeks flushing with shame. Her big brother was quite good in all aspects, except he lacked emotional intelligence. Was she supposed to be unkind and ostracize a young legitimate son who wasn't biologically her own? That would make her an immoral and sinister person...

"Zhe Er is my legitimate son. It is my duty to take care of him," she hastily added. "By the way, brother, how is father's health?"

At the same time, Gongsun Hui couldn't help but feel emotional. She hadn't really noticed it before, but after watching Zhe Er's performance since taking the position of Clan Leader,

And compared to her own brother, she couldn't help but feel there was quite a gap. She began to worry about the Gongsun Clan. It seemed her brother had eaten in vain for thirty-eight years.

"Father is doing well," Gongsun Qiang, aware of his slip of the tongue, chuckled twice before continuing more seriously, "It's just that lately, he has been upset and lost his appetite, always thinking of my little sister. As soon as he heard you were visiting your maternal home, he urged me to come to escort you back immediately."

"Aunt, it's windy outside; it's best to return to the carriage and hurry on our way," Wang Shouzhe said with a salute. "I'm sure grandfather is already anxious. I'll accompany Uncle on horseback."

The black stallion Wang Shouzhe had been riding earlier was led by the head of the household the entire time, and now it came in handy.

"Very well, Zhe Er, have a good chat with your uncle," Gongsun Hui signaled with her eyes, and then, taking Wang Luo Jing with her, they returned to the carriage.

Wang Shouzhe clearly understood Gongsun Hui's intention. With the Wang family in decline, they relied almost entirely on Elder Longyan for deterrence and support. Strengthening the relationship with the Gongsun Clan could be very beneficial for the Wang family.

Therefore, Wang Shouzhe rode the black stallion, leading the way with Gongsun Qiang, engaging in sporadic small talk. His attitude towards Gongsun Qiang was polite, based on respect for Gongsun Hui's sake, and he would not fawn over the Gongsun Clan without principles or limits.

In any world, whether relationships with in-laws or alliances, they are based on mutual interests and equal strength. The strong would not respect you any more for your grovelling or sycophantic behavior.

On the other hand, Gongsun Qiang, observing Wang Shouzhe, realized that this "inexpensive great-nephew" was far superior in conversation and demeanor to his peers, and at such a young age, his cultivation base was about to reach the Advanced Vital Energy Refining Realm, with immeasurable potential for the future.

Such a young elite was nowhere to be found in the entire Gongsun Clan of Shanyang.

Especially since Gongsun Qiang's own son, Gongsun Yan, was only a year younger than Wang Shouzhe. He normally thought quite highly of that boy, but upon comparison, Gongsun Qiang suddenly felt stifled and, with a sense of suffocation, subconsciously grew a bit more affectionate towards Wang Shouzhe: "Shouzhe, it's not often you visit Shanyang."

Stay a few more days this time; I'll have your cousin, young Yan, accompany you to hunt in the mountains."

"Thank you for your kindness, Uncle," Wang Shouzhe replied with a salute, "But there are many matters to attend to in the clan, and as the head, Shouzhe must leave after visiting grandfather."

Gongsun Qiang's heart felt even more blocked upon hearing this, his frustration growing. Indeed, his inexpensive nephew had become a Clan Leader at just eighteen. He was already thirty-eight and still only a Young Clan Leader. Moreover, until now, the Elder Clan Leader had shown no sign of wanting to retire.

All the way back, Gongsun Qiang was brooding and had very little to say.

The Main Residence of the Gongsun Clan of Shanyang was built against Longji Mountain, with a steep and easily defensible position, surrounded by sturdy and towering walls and watchtowers, creating an imposing atmosphere.

This time, Wang Shouzhe arrived as the legitimate son of Gongsun Hui, not in the capacity of a Clan Leader for an inter-family exchange; hence, after a brief exchange of pleasantries, he was invited into the main hall.

Inside the main hall, the current Clan Leader of the Gongsun Clan, Gongsun Mo, and his first wife of the Gongsun Chen Clan were seated at the place of honor, both dressed formally, which underscored the importance they placed on Gongsun Hui and Wang Shouzhe's visit.

"Unfilial daughter pays respect to father and mother." Gongsun Hui stepped forward to greet them, tears rolling down her cheeks.

"Hui'er." Gongsun Chen moved forward to lift her daughter, looking her over with emotion, "My child, it has been three years since you've visited your maternal home. Are you well taken care of in the Wang family?"

"Mother, the Wang family has been extremely kind to your daughter, but, but Ding Yue he..." Upon mentioning this, Gongsun Hui couldn't stop her tears from falling and was visibly heartbroken.

"Ah~ that rascal Ding Yue, he really shouldn't have, shouldn't have taken reckless risks. Can't he just live a good life with you?" Chen Clan's matriarch's face was a mix of annoyance and sorrow, "It's truly hard on our child."

"That's enough, you old woman, if you don't understand then don't blather nonsense," said Gongsun Mo with a stern face, "We of the Profound Martial lineage should strive valiantly. As a Clan Leader, Ding Yue must have had reasons he couldn't avoid. It was nothing more than misfortune."

"I don't understand? It's all because of you, you old coot," Gongsun Chen retorted with a hint of agitation, "Talking about how that boy Wang Dingyue is talented and promising, destined for the Spiritual Platform, and you agreed to give away our precious daughter to continue his line! You..."

At this point, she seemed to remember Wang Shouzhe was still present and abruptly stopped talking, showing an amiable and kind smile to Wang Shouzhe, "Shouzhe, grandmother is just upset over Ding Yue's death and got a bit emotional. Oh my, you've grown so strikingly commanding and handsome in the three years we haven't seen you, come let grandmother take a good look at you."

Wang Shouzhe couldn't help but smile inwardly; now he understood the saying about a son picking up habits from his mother. His big uncle, Gongsun Qiang's habit of speaking without a filter must have been inherited from old Lady Chen.

He wouldn't hold a grudge against an elderly lady, and immediately stepped forward to bow, "Shouzhe pays respect to grandmother."

"Very good, very good, the child has grown up quite handsome," Gongsun Chen, holding Wang Shouzhe's hands, looked him over with growing fondness, and asked with concern, "Shouzhe, are you betrothed? The girls from our Shanyang Gongsun Clan are all exceptional beauties, would you like to..."

Gongsun Hui's face darkened, and she hurriedly interrupted, "Mother, Shouzhe is my legitimate son, and it is against the rules for him to marry a legitimate daughter of the Gongsun Clan."

Intermarriage within Profound Martial families usually requires tracing back to the fourth generation to ensure they do not descend from the same person; there can be exceptions under special circumstances.

Although Gongsun Hui is Wang Shouzhe's legitimate mother and there is no blood relation, according to tradition and rules, this still has to be considered, especially in the current context of marriage within the family.

"If a legitimate daughter is not an option, there are a few girls in the direct lineage..."

Gongsun Chen hadn't finished speaking when Gongsun Mo couldn't help but roar again, "Old woman, have you lost your mind? Shouzhe is the legitimate son of the Wang family, and a Clan Leader no less, how can he marry a girl from the direct lineage!"

"You're the one who's lost your mind, old man. Since the Gongsun Clan cannot find a suitable match, then let him marry a girl from the Chen Clan instead," said Gongsun Chen, "The girls of our Donggang Chen Clan are also renowned for their beauty and brilliance."

"Mother, the Donggang Chen Clan doesn't have a suitable girl for Shouzhe either," Gongsun Hui explained helplessly, "Besides, Luo Yi was betrothed to the Young Clan Leader of the Chen Clan several years ago. She was to be married this year, but with Ding Yue's recent passing, she must observe a year of mourning before the wedding can take place."

"Oh, is that my great-nephew Chen Fangjie?" Gongsun Chen suddenly brightened up, "I've met Fangjie. He's reliable and talented; the Wang family has good judgment. It's just a pity for Shouzhe... I'll think it over..." Her status within the Chen Clan was rather significant.

"Mother, please don't speculate anymore," Gongsun Hui hurriedly stopped her from making random matchmaking, "Shouzhe's marriage has been settled, and he is to wed the legitimate daughter of the Liu Family of Shanyin."

The Liu Family of Shanyin?

The color drained from Chen Clan matriarch's face.

...

Chapter 25: Shanyang Small Spirit Seed (Seeking PP)_1

...

"What's so great about the Shanyin Liu Family?" the Chen Clan grumbled, "They're all so arrogant, constantly engaging in sly tricks and plots. In my opinion..."

The Shanyin Liu Family and the Shanyang Gongsun Clan are only separated by a single Longji Mountain. This mountain is rich in resources and minerals, so there are often frictions between the two families. Naturally, they can't be said to have a harmonious relationship.

"Enough! You old hag, do you think you can recklessly discuss the marriage alliance between the Wang and Liu families?" Gongsun Mo couldn't sit still any longer and quickly stood up to roar, "Gongsun Qiang, help your mother to rest. Shouzhe and I have some matters to attend to."

Gongsun Qiang quickly helped the still babbling elderly woman to leave, and Gongsun Hui also said, "Zhe Er, keep your great-grandfather company for a while. I'll go talk to my mother first."

Gongsun Hui's goal today, to stir up matters, has already been achieved. As someone of her status, it would be inappropriate for her to participate in the conversation between Gongsun Mo and Wang Shouzhe. Then, she leaves hand in hand with Wang Luo Jing.

Once everyone else had left, Wang Shouzhe saluted Gongsun Mo and said, "Shouzhe greets his great-grandfather."

"Zhe Er, there is no need for formalities. Come, taste this spiritual tea grown by your great-grandfather." Gongsun Mo was well-prepared for Wang Shouzhe's arrival and immediately ordered his men to serve Spiritual Tea and Spirit Fruit.

Spiritual Tea and Spirit Fruit are considered luxuries in the Profound Martial Clans as they must be grown in Spirit Fields, which are critical strategic resources for any family. Gongsun Mo just serves this spiritual tea and spiritual fruit, which are grown in his few acres of Spirit Fields, to entertain his honorable guests.

As for the Ping'an Wang Family, they currently only have enough Spirit Fields to grow White Jade Spiritual Rice, not even enough to meet the consumption needs of the clan. So naturally, they wouldn't use the fields to grow lesser economically beneficial plants like Spiritual Tea and Spirit Fruit.

"Thank you, great-grandfather." Wang Shouzhe wouldn't play coy when offered Spiritual Tea and Spirit Fruit. After taking a seat, he started to enjoy the offerings.

The glowing color in the tea cup made of Spirit Jade was enchanting, with a fragrance that was enticing. A sip of it filled his mouth with a tinge of bitterness. But in the next instant, a sense of coolness surged up to his forehead, making Wang Shouzhe feel refreshed. It swept away all the gloomy feelings and thoughts.

"Excellent tea." Wang Shouzhe couldn't help but praise, "This spiritual tea is robust and fragrant, leaving a lingering aftertaste. It also aids in calming down one's mind and clearing its unwanted thoughts."

"Ahaha, I didn't expect Zhe Er to understand tea." Gongsun Mo felt comforted and introduced proudly, "This tea is known as the Shanyang Small Spirit seed. I found this wild spiritual tea seedling accidentally in Longji Mountain's depths when I was young. After nurturing it for several decades, it now yields over a pound every year. The two old ancestors in the family also like it very much.

Here, let me give you an ounce every year."

When it came to giving away an ounce, a barely noticeable twitch appeared on the corner of Gongsun Mo's mouth, showing some reluctance. This, of course, was understandable. Growing Spiritual Tea was not like growing White Jade Spiritual Rice, which can be grown intensively.

In a Spirit Field of one acre, perhaps only a few Spiritual Tea plants can be cultivated, and daily elaborate cultivation and maintenance is essential. The processes of picking, kneading, and fermenting are particularly meticulous.

Therefore, the cost of even an ounce of Spiritual Tea is extremely high.

"Thank you, great-grandfather. If you insist, then I won't hold back." Wang Shouzhe knew that Gongsun Mo intended to support him, so he wouldn't refuse.

In the current Wang family, only he, Wang Shouzhe, is worthy of Gongsun Mo's investment, much like how Gongsun Mo once gave his daughter to Wang Ding Yue as a continuation of the marriage. If one day Wang Shouzhe were to ascend to the Spiritual Platform Realm, he would undoubtedly remember this great kindness.

More importantly, Gongsun Mo and his wife both adored Gongsun Hui. And Wang Shouzhe is Gongsun Hui's biological son, which makes him her future support in the Wang family. Therefore, for the sake of his daughter, Gongsun Mo would try his best to allocate some resources to support his grandson-in-law, Wang Shouzhe.

Of course, all this is based on the fact that Wang Shouzhe himself has good potential, and he has a loving relationship with Gongsun Hui.

If Wang Shouzhe were an ungrateful wretch, Gongsun Mo would naturally not bother. If the Wang family were to completely decline, he could simply bring his daughter and granddaughter back to the Gongsun Clan.

After a round of pleasantries, the two finally got down to business.

After drinking a cup of tea, Gongsun Mo's expression gradually grew serious: "Zhe Er, I initially had some doubts after receiving the message you sent this morning. After personally investigating the farm and conversing with the veteran farmers in our clan, I was finally convinced.

Just as you said, there is indeed a possibility of an aphid plague, which may reduce the crop yield by more than 60% compared to last year. On behalf of the Gongsun Clan..."

"Grandfather, let's not say such formalities," Wang Shouzhe interrupted, "Even if I didn't issue a warning, each family will become aware of the rapid aphid outbreak either today or the day after tomorrow based on its progression over the past couple of days."

The initial signs of an aphid infestation are not obvious, and crop yields are affected by aphids to some extent every year. Therefore, farmers would usually ignore the initial appearance of aphids. But once it breaks out, the aphid eggs buried in the soil will emerge in a very short time, catching people off guard.

"Your statement is mistaken." Gongsun Mo shook his head, "Our Gongsun Clan in Shanyang has a total of 16,000 acres of fertile land. The winter wheat yield this season is calculated at 15 copper coins per acre, which is a total of 240,000 copper coins, equivalent to 2400 Qian Gold.

This is just the onset of the aphid outbreak, and even if we reduce the crop yield by 20%, we can save the losses of 400 to 500 Qian Gold. Besides, I have already sent clan members and the head of the household to the mountains to catch grasshopper insects and the Nine-star insects as per your arrangements."

Grasshopper insects and Nine-star insects, regardless of whether they are insect kings, are still ordinary creatures and cannot even be considered as level one spiritual insects. Normally, no one would pay attention to them. But they can still be found in the deep mountains of Shanyang.

While the two were talking, a head of the household came to report that the first batch of caught grasshopper insects and Nine-star insects has been delivered.

"In that case, let's not delay. I kindly request that you send your trusted household head to accompany us," Wang Shouzhe rose to his feet, "In disaster relief, every moment counts."

Soon, the maid went to summon Gongsun Hui and Wang Luo Jing. They rode horses together towards the largest farm of the Gongsun Clan. This was a massive farm covering a total of 7000 acres of fertile land.

This obviously shows that the wealth of the Gongsun Clan of Shanyang far surpasses that of the Ping'an Wang Family.

The tenant farmers of the entire farm were all busily working. They used traditional lye from plant ash and mixed it with a double dose of insecticide powder to exterminate the insects. This method was quite effective. If they had enough insecticide powder, it seemed that they could also control the outbreak of this insect disaster.

Unfortunately, the Gongsun Clan had only stockpiled a small amount of insecticide powder, which was insufficient to control the overall situation.

"Fourth brother~" Wang Luo Jing had spent over an hour taming three grasshopper insect kings and a nine-star insect king, and she appeared very fatigued. "Due to the hasty preparations, these insect kings were only tamed in a basic way. They can barely be commanded to move. Let the heads of the household release all the wild grasshoppers and the nine-star insects."

"Luo Jing, you've worked hard." Wang Shouzhe tenderly stroked her head, took out a spirit fruit he had grabbed previously from his pocket, "You need to refresh yourself first, we can't delay the disaster relief."

"Fourth brother, don't worry." Wang Luo Jing obediently nodded. After eating the spirit fruit, her strength had recovered considerably, "As long as we can control the insect kings, the grasshoppers and Nine-star insects won't run around. But it's not possible for them to summon small insects on their own and then fly back here."

Afterwards, Wang Luo Jing commanded the insect kings and insects into the thousands of acres of wheat field as best she could. After a lot of hustling, it was already dark.

At this time, Gongsun Mo personally arrived at the scene, also bringing chefs and a lot of spirit food, cooking dinner on the spot. A room was cleaned up within the farm for the Clan Leader, the Young Clan Leader, a clansman named Gongsun Zhong, and his wife Wang Liuyu.

Wang Liuyu is a member of the Wang family. She now seems to be just over thirty years old, although she should be forty. However, due to good maintenance, she looks much younger. Judging by her dress and demeanor, she seems to be living a comfortable life.

"I pay my respects to aunt and uncle," Wang Shouzhe was the first one to greet them with cupped hands.

"Ah, ah, Shouzhe, you are too courteous." Gongsun Zhong, who was rather dark and stout, reportedly worked in the Gongsun Clan's mines. Although his status among the direct members of the clan was not low, he was a simple and blunt person, not good at social interaction.

Wang Liuyu also quickly returned the courteous greeting, showing immense respect for Wang Shouzhe. Although her generation was older than Wang Shouzhe's, Wang Shouzhe was nevertheless from the main lineage and the clan leader of the Wang family.

However, Wang Luo Jing instantly threw herself into Wang Liuyu's arms, calling out adoringly, "Aunt."

Compared to the blood relationship, Wang Liuyu was the second daughter of the grand elder Wang Xiaozhi. Being Luo Jing's biological aunt, their relationship was naturally affectionate.....

How could he remain unresponsive to Gongsun Qiang's inappropriate remarks?

"Brother, don't talk nonsense," Gongsun Hui's face turned stern with annoyance, and she said sharply, "Apologize! Otherwise, I'll return to the Wang family at once."

"Er! Alright, it was my mistake," Gongsun Qiang hastily chuckled and apologized, then turned to Wang Shouzhe and said with a bow, "Your uncle also offers his apologies, and I hope you won't take offense. It's just that your father and I weren't compatible in nature, but on reflection, both his talent and achievements far surpass mine."

He was not wrong, as by the age of forty, Wang Dingyue had already reached the peak of Level Nine in the Vital Energy Refining Realm and was on the verge of glimpsing the Spiritual Platform Realm.

For Gongsun Qiang to reach that level, he still had a long way to go.

Even though Gongsun Qiang was already thirty-eight, as a Young Clan Leader, his mood was entirely transparent.

Yet, his forthright nature meant he was not a difficult person to deal with. This was Wang Shouzhe's silent assessment of Gongsun Qiang. ...

he side, was also startled, covering her mouth, she teased, "Zhe Er, you didn't really buy this thinking it was a Tiger Head Spirit Bee Hive, did you? How much Qian Gold did you pay?"

"I was just strolling through the market when I found this hive. Thinking of Fifth Sister's potential as an Insect Master, I bought it for her to play with..." Wang Shouzhe chuckled, "After some haggling, it went for ten Qian Gold. It seems both that Independent Cultivator and I were mistaken, heh heh~"

"It's more than a mistake, you were both blind," Gongsun Hui joked with a laugh, "The Purple Crystal Spirit Bee, among Level Two Spirit Bees, once mature, produces Purple Crystal Spirit Honey, which has the effect of consolidating the foundation, nurturing the essence, and beautifying the complexion. It's a major ingredient in a variety of Level Two Spirit Pills.

And if they can produce 'Purple Crystal Bee King Honey', that's a standard Level Three Spiritual Material, and a main ingredient in the well-known Level Three Spirit Pill, 'Enlightenment Pill'."

"Hiss~" Wang Shouzhe gasped, "The Enlightenment Pill, isn't that the fabled pill said to enhance Profound Martial attributes?"

...