

The Eternal 111

Chapter 111: Master Yunxiao

Han Qianfang chuckled and whispered, "Maybe it's our kiddo Yunxiao."

Chen Lin said in a deep voice, "I can't believe you two still have the mood to make fun when the situation has turned for the worse!"

Luo Yunshang was shocked, and she looked at Yunxiao in amazement. Both she and Jia Rong knew the master Zhang Qianfan and Xu Han were talking about was exactly the fifteen-year-old boy in front of them.

Now that he was called out, Yunxiao naturally could no longer keep silent.

He jumped off his horse, and he walked up to the platform under the glazed eyes of the crowd. With a smile on his face, he said, "I just gave you a little advice. Your breakthrough is entirely a matter of accumulation. I don't deserve your gratitude."

Li Yunxiao?

Master Yunxiao?

Everyone's jaw dropped to the floor!

"Does he think that anyone with the name Yunxiao is a master? How could this boy be so cheeky as to walk up and admit he is a master? He really doesn't know the meaning of death!"

Qin Yang was startled at first, but then a sarcastic smile appeared on his face, and he could not help but want to laugh.

Meanwhile, Li Chunyang's face fell and he cried out in a deep voice, "Stop fooling around! Get off the platform right now!"

As he said that, he dashed over and stood before Yunxiao. He could not believe his grandson would make such a joke at this moment. Even a Martial Grandmaster would have to suffer if he offended a fourth-tier alchemist, not to mention Yunxiao.

Every powerful alchemist was followed by strong warriors. For example, Yuan Hao was followed by Su Xiang, who was only one of the many warriors following the alchemist. Therefore, most people would rather offend a Martial Grandmaster than a fourth-tier alchemist.

“This boy got his head hit on the lintel when he left home. I hope you can pardon his nonsense!” Li Chunyang explained in panic.

Yunxiao was stopped beneath the stairs, and when he heard Li Chunyang ask him to get off the platform, he answered, “Oh,” as he turned and walked back.

“Hold on, Master Yunxiao!”

Zhang Qingfan cried out in a hurry as he and Xu Han strode up, shoving Li Chunyang to the side and flicking their sleeves in front of Yunxiao. They tidied up their clothes, and then bowed deeply to him while speaking respectfully, “We thank you, Master Yunxiao, for the guidance!”

“What!”

The courtiers, the eight hundred thousand soldiers, and everyone else felt their eyeballs drop to the floor. They rubbed their eyes over and over again, and some even bit their lips to confirm if this were just an illusion. In that instant, at least a hundred thousand men were bleeding from their lips.

Li Chunyang’s lips were bleeding as well, but he thought it was not enough. So, he also bit his tongue, arm, and hand, and found that he could feel pain from all of them.

Li Changfeng was even more aggressive as he slapped himself on the head. Blood spurted out of his crown and smeared half his face bloody, but he did not seem to mind. “I can clearly feel the pain...so what’s going on?”

There were hundreds and thousands of people both on and beneath the platform, but all held their breath and none made a sound. For a moment, a weird silence hung in the air.

Yunxiao did not step forward to help both men up, as if it were only right and natural for him to accept their bows. He smiled lightly and said, "I've said that your breakthroughs are entirely a matter of accumulation. Remember, the road of alchemy is still very long, and fourth-tier is just the beginning."

Fourth-tier is just the beginning...

"Hah! How daring!" Yuan Hao was so angry that he laughed. "What an insolent boy! Brother Zhang, Brother Xu, so this little punk is the Master you were talking about!"

Wang Chen's eyes flashed with surprise as he found the remark very familiar. He remembered his master, Yang Di, used to say that as well, and his tone was surprisingly similar to that of this boy.

Sun Zhengzong's expression changed drastically when he saw Yunxiao's face. "YOU!" he shouted in both shock and anger. "Master Yuan Hao, this is the boy I told you about! He's a cheater! He had cheated the alchemist badge!"

Zhang Qingfan and Xu Han flew into a rage.

"Watch your mouth, Yuan Hao!" Zhang Qingfan snapped. "I thank you for coming all the way to assess me, but if you insult Master Yunxiao again, I'll sever my ties with you!"

"Sun Zhengzong, I am the one who gave Master Yunxiao his alchemist badge. How can he be a cheater?" Xu Han said in a cold voice, "Had it not been because Tianshui's alchemist association is only a fifth-level branch and can only give out second-tier badges, I'll have given Master Yunxiao a fourth or even fifth-tier badge!"

Both Yuan Hao and Sun Zhengzong were taken aback. They did not expect such a violent reaction from both men.

“Ridiculous! I can’t believe both of you, as fourth-tier alchemists, can be fooled around by a fifteen-year-old boy,” said Yuan Hao coldly. “He may be amazingly gifted, but it is just ludicrous to hear you call him a ‘Master’!”

Yunxiao only smiled as he stopped the fuming Zhang Qingfan and Xu Han. His divine sense was cultivating within the Divine Realm Tablet in his soul-form; therefore, it was not easy for anyone to find out his actual alchemy level. Besides, he did not care a fig about these doubts and ridicules, and he did not think there was a necessity to argue with them.

“According to the rules, anyone who faked or cheated an alchemist badge must be killed! And Master Xu Han, you can’t get away with it either!” said Sun Zhengzong.

Yunxiao’s eyes grew cold. “Are you saying that I’ve cheated my second-tier badge?”

“Of course, you did!”

“Very well!” Yunxiao sneered. “I’ll have a match with you today. If you lose, does that mean your alchemist badge is a fake one?”

That gave Sun Zhengzong a pause, but then he quickly put on a disdainful smile and said, “Oh? You want to have a match with me?”

Li Chunyang could not believe what he heard, and he looked worried. He knew Yunxiao was a genuine second-tier alchemist, but Sun Zhengzong was a third-tier alchemist. The gap between them was huge.

“Since you are so confident, why don’t we have a bet?” said Yunxiao.

“What an interesting boy! How would you like to bet?” asked Yuan Hao.

“The loser will kneel and kowtow three times to the winner in front of all eight hundred thousand soldiers and all the courtiers, and then bow deeply and make way for the winner whenever we meet. Also...” Yunxiao paused for a moment, staring at Sun Zhengzong. “I want you to take out all the things

you've been given by the Li Family over the years as the wager. Master Yuan Hao will be the judge. What do you think?"

Sun Zhengzong was taken aback. He was not afraid of having a match with Yunxiao, but the wager...well, it did not really matter if he lost those things, and he would just feel pity for some time at most. But, if he lost the match, he would have to kneel and kowtow in front of so many people. For a moment, he stood frozen on the spot.

"Why? Are you afraid? A mighty third-tier alchemist like you is afraid of me, a fake second-tier alchemist? Hah!" Yunxiao's unconcealed disdain filled everyone's mind with doubts.

Sun Zhengzong's face turned red. "Who said I'm afraid of you? I'll have a match with you! It is just that I fear you can't come out with an equal amount of wager!" He took off a storage ring from his finger and wiped away his seal on it, then handed it to Yuan Hao.

Yuan Hao was slightly surprised after he had inspected the ring's contents with his divine sense. He smiled at Sun Zhengzong, and the expression on his face clearly read, "You sure are giving the boy a hard time."

Sun Zhengzong sneered proudly, looking at Yunxiao from the corner of his eye like a rich man staring at a poor fella. Yunxiao laughed in his heart when he saw that.

Zhang Qingfan and Xu Han exchanged a glance, then both removed their storage rings and handed them to Yunxiao. "Take all our things, Master Yunxiao!"

Sun Zhengzong's face flickered, and his eyes gleamed with anger, but he did not dare to speak a word. He could not afford to offend two fourth-tier alchemists at the same time.

Yunxiao rejected their offers. He took off his own ring and said smilingly, "I have the wager ready here." After saying that, he wiped away his seal and placed the ring in Yuan Hao's hand.

As soon as he glanced at the contents with his divine sense, Yuan Hao was startled, and he gave Yunxiao a surprised look. "The value of Yunxiao's things is higher than Zhenzong's."

“What!” Sun Zhengzong’s eyelids twitched as he stared incredulously at Yunxiao. He had taken most of the things away from the Li Family’s treasury, and although there were still many things left, he knew they were not worth too much.

Yunxiao laughed again in his heart. The military operation had brought him a fortune. Although most of them were gold coins, which were nothing to an alchemist, they were still quite scary when they came in tremendous numbers.

And, he had not missed Xu Pinghong and Li Wenshi’s storage rings either. There was even a demon beast egg in Xu Pinghong’s ring, the value of which was immeasurable.

If all the gold coins and Primordial Stones in his ring were to pile up, they could easily form a few hills. Yuan Hao was genuinely stunned by them.

“Never mind about the extra.” Yunxiao waved a hand. He knew he would win, so he naturally did not mind the difference in their wagers.

Sun Zhengzong was so furious that his face turned blue. It was like he saw a beggar on the side of a street, and just as he put out a mocking smile, the beggar scooped out a handful of gold coins and threw them at his face.

Yuan Hao was slightly surprised. He did not know from where Yunxiao’s confidence came. And when he saw both Zhang Qingfan and Xu Han sneering, his heart skipped a beat. Could this boy really be a master?

He carefully studied Yunxiao once again. Although there was some mystery about the boy, he could tell his actual age with a glance, which was only fifteen years old.

Even if Yunxiao were indeed a genius, or an alchemist cultivated by some top power in the continent, it was impossible for him to reach the third-tier at such a young age, let alone defeat Sun Zhengzong, who was a seasoned third-tier alchemist.

With a smile, he asked, “How will the match be fought?”

Sun Zhengzong said seriously, "Please set a theme for us, Master Yuan Hao. This will be fairer!"

Yunxiao smiled faintly as he waved a hand and said, "There's no need to be so troublesome. You can choose whatever you are best at as the topic of the match, as long as it is within the field of alchemy. I have no problem."

"What!"

That startled Sun Zhengzong and Yuan Hao at the same time. Although the difference of a tier between alchemists was tremendous, some alchemists' achievement in certain topics were not necessarily weaker than those who were one tier higher.

Sun Zhengzong would have been a little concerned if Yunxiao insisted to choose a topic he was best at, which was why he proposed to let Yuan Hao set the theme. By doing so, he was also showing his respect to Yuan Hao, and he hoped he could win some favor.

But now...

Chapter 112: Competition

Yuan Hao asked carefully, "Have you really decided, Yunxiao? I genuinely doubt whether you do know anything about alchemy. You ought to know that every alchemist has something he or she is especially good at, and even I am no match for Zhengzong in some topics."

Yes, he did not think Yunxiao would win. But, the boy was, after all, someone respected by Zhang Qingfan and Xu Han. He did not want to mess up his relationship with two fourth-tier alchemists because of this, so he tried to sound a warning.

Yunxiao smiled. "You will see whether I do know anything about alchemy later. Just let him choose the topic, lest he is unconvinced when defeated by me. I want him to kowtow three times to me today, sincerely convinced."

What an arrogant tone!

Yuan Hao's pupils constricted slightly, and he felt a little angry. "In that case, Zhengzong, you will choose the topic." When he had finished, he narrowed his eyes and kept quiet, waiting for mayhem to ensue.

Sun Zhengzong swallowed. Although what he was about to say would lose him some honor, victory was more important than anything to him now. "Let's keep this simple. We will see who's got better pill refining skills," he paused, his eyes gleaming grimly. Then, he went on with a hideous grin, "...but with third-tier medicinal pills!"

"What!"

Sure enough, that took everyone aback.

By now, the crowd already knew Yunxiao had the badge of a second-tier alchemist, and that meant he was, at most, a second-tier alchemist. But, Sun Zhengzong proposed a match of refining third-tier medicinal pills. That was not something a noble alchemist should have said, or so everyone thought.

The vague reverence they had for the profession of alchemist burst in that instant.

"Aren't alchemists all proud fellas? I thought they will never resort to such a scheme! How can he be so crafty when his opponent is generous enough to let him choose the topic?"

A hint of anger crept up Yuan Hao's face, and he felt ashamed for Sun Zhengzong. Meanwhile, Zhang Qingfan and Xu Han were flaring. "Sun Zhengzong, you are a disgrace to all the alchemists in the world!" Zhang Qingfan snapped. "If you still have a little pride in being an alchemist, choose a proper topic to compete with Master Yunxiao!"

Sun Zhengzong snorted. He dared not to argue with Zhang Qingfan, so he turned to Yunxiao and sneered, "Why are you so quiet? I thought you were very boastful just now? Haha! If you are afraid, you can just admit defeat and kneel in front of me right now."

Yunxiao looked at him as if he were a great fool. "Have you finished? Enough dreaming? When do you want to start? I don't have time to play with a monkey like you."

“You!” Sun Zhengzong’s face was blue with rage as he screamed, “Have you heard what I said? We will see who’s got a better pill refining skill with third-tier medicinal pills!”

“You don’t need to repeat your shamelessness. I heard you, and so did everyone else. Do you have any other rules? Speak them now, lest you refuse to admit defeat later.”

Fearing that Sun Zhengzong would come out with some other rules that could bring disgrace on the Firecrow Empire’s alchemist association, Yuan Hao quickly said, “There are no other rules. You just have to refine a third-tier medicine pill each. We will compare the medicinal strength if they are the same type of pills. And if they are different, we will compare the purity. You may begin now, and you have two hours.”

An empty space was quickly cleared out on the platform to serve as the competition venue. Luckily, the platform was large enough, so all the courtiers and the eight hundred thousand soldiers could watch from their positions.

Both the princes had a bitter look on their faces. They did not expect that their fight for the title of crown prince would turn into a private competition between alchemists. Perhaps in these people’s eyes, the crown prince of a small state was nothing when compared to a third-tier alchemist.

Qin Yue’s palms were sweaty. He knew he would be completely defeated if he failed to take the title of crown prince today, now with all his trump cards exposed. He also knew that Yunxiao was the key to his success.

After all, Qin Yang’s strongest supporter, the fourth-tier alchemist Zhang Qingfan, held Yunxiao in high esteem. As long as Yunxiao was willing to speak a word or two to him, even if that could not change his stand, it could at least make him slightly neutral. Moreover, there was another fourth-tier alchemist, Xu Han, who had not stated his stand clearly.

Qin Yang, too, had noticed that. He stared with a glum face at Yunxiao, hoping Sun Zhengzong could defeat or, if better, destroy this monster who had appeared out of nowhere.

Their sister, Qin Ruxue, was looking at Yunxiao nervously, and her palms were even sweatier than Qin Yue’s. Ever since Yunxiao walked up the platform, her eyes had not left his face even for a brief moment.

It was only now that she knew he had been hiding his strength so deeply. She felt embarrassed, for she had always defended him in the academy. But, it turned out that she was just making a fool of herself.

At the thought of that, she felt a lump rise in her throat.

“Let’s see how a fake alchemist like you is going to refine a medicinal pill today!”

Unsmiling, Sun Zhengzong walked over to the empty space on the platform and said to Yuan Hao, “I will refine a Seven-spin Bodhi pill. I need red glow leaf, white sunstone, prick of sky scorpion, aurora water, leaf of spinning parrot, and bodhi seed. Master Yuan Hao, please prepare three sets of the ingredients for me.”

Yuan Hao’s eyelids twitched as he said approvingly, “Bodhi pills are the type of medicinal pills that can best display the strength of an alchemist. It takes three spins to form, five spins to level up, and when it is spun seven times, it will be a third-tier pill. Moreover, there is a great difference even between the pills that are spun seven times.”

He casually threw out a heap of ingredients, three of each.

When it came to pill refinement, every alchemist had a certain success rate. No one could guarantee he or she would succeed every time. So, alchemists always prepared few sets of ingredients for backup.

“What about you, Yunxiao?” Yuan Hao asked curiously. He did not have high hope for this boy. At such a young age, he would be considered amazingly gifted if he could refine a first-tier medicinal pill.

Yunxiao smiled and said, “I’ll refine the same pill as him. It will be easier to compare.”

There was a flash of anger in Sun Zhengzong’s eyes. ‘This boy is looking down on me!’

Yuan Hao was slightly taken aback. But, as he had witnessed the boy’s arrogance, he was not bothered by that. Just as he was about to take out the ingredients, he heard Yunxiao say, “I just need one set of the ingredients.”

“What!”

That shocked him, but he just sneered and said, “As you wish!” With a wave of a hand, a set of ingredients appeared in front of Yunxiao. Yuan Hao was fuming inside. Even he, a fourth-tier alchemist, dared not to claim that he could successfully refine a Bodhi pill every time. He could not wait to see how this arrogant boy would end the match.

Meanwhile, Sun Zhengzong rejoiced in his heart when he saw Yunxiao only request a set of ingredients, which to him was no different from looking to be defeated. He reached out his right hand silently, and a mini blue cauldron appeared in his palm immediately, which slowly grew larger under the control of his divine sense. Eventually, it transformed into a large cauldron about half the height of an adult and fell on the platform.

Yuan Hao’s eyes lit up as he praised, “Zhengzong, you really have a lot of treasures.”

Pill cauldrons were divided into four colors: purple, blue, black, and yellow. Between cauldrons of the same grade, purple cauldrons were the best, and the blue ones came next. Sun Zhengzong’s cauldron was a third-grade blue cauldron, which was very valuable.

“Hehe,” Sun Zhengzong grinned, “It cost me dearly to get this treasure, and I am reluctant to use it during normal refining.” He gave Yunxiao a cold look and said, “Boy, you should feel proud to be defeated by my blue cauldron today!”

“You’re nuts!” Yunxiao scolded disdainfully.

Sun Zhengzong’s nostrils flared. Suddenly, he realized that he was the one who always started it and then got scolded. It was like he had purposely invited all the humiliation. That made him close his mouth, and he thought, ‘This is a trap! He must be deliberately provoking me, and his purpose is to make me angry and eventually affect my refining. Yes, it must be!’ With that in mind, he forced a smile at Yunxiao, with which he wanted to tell the latter that he was not angry, and that his plan had failed.

Looking at that ugly smile, Yunxiao could not help bursting into laughter. “Haha! Look, he’s smiling even when I scolded him. Nuts! He is really nuts!”

“You!”

The ugly smile immediately turned into a furious look. Sun Zhengzong trembled with rage, for no one had ever humiliated him in front of so many people. “Shut your mouth! Let’s see if your pill refining skill is as good as your tongue!”

After saying that, he calmed himself down and focused all his attention on the refinement. The first thing he did was the selection of ingredients and purification. He quickly glanced through all the ingredients, which allowed him to fully understand their quality and volume, and then he began to calculate in his mind. Even then, he waved his right hand. At the gesture, a row of crystal containers appeared in front of him, all transparent and glittering brilliantly.

Normally, when an alchemist reached the third tier or above, purification could be done casually. But, Sun Zhengzong did it carefully. These crystal containers were used by him when he was still an apprentice alchemist, and it had been years since he last used them.

But, he took them out today, because he could not afford to lose!

“Red glow leaf, fifty years old. Purify its juice.”

“White sunstone, purity only seventy percent. Remove the impurity with Primordial Qi.”

“The prick of sky scorpion, seventy years old...”

While working skillfully, Sun Zhengzong murmured under his breath, as if he were all alone. The crowd was watching in silence with a pleasant feeling. During normal times, alchemists were all proud existences, and a third-tier alchemist was someone at such a great height that most of them could hardly get in touch with him. It was a rare opportunity for them to watch one refine a medicinal pill, so everyone was very attentive.

After he went through all the materials once, the few crystal containers were already filled with purified raw ingredients that could be directly refined. Suddenly, he slapped the cauldron with a palm, causing the lid to fly up. Then, a ball of blue flame rose from his palm and fell into the cauldron, and after that,

the lid fell back with a boom. A buzzing noise immediately rang out of the cauldron, and the blue color on its surface grew brighter and more striking.

“The Bluewolf Demon Flame!” There was a look of shock on Yuan Hao’s face, along with a flash of envy in his eyes. “Zhengzong, you are really wealthy!”

Sun Zhengzong smiled and said in a humble tone, “It is nothing when compared to Master Yuan Hao’s Soulburn Bee Flame, haha!” With a cold and proud expression, he turned and looked over his shoulder. But what he saw froze him, and he almost fainted for a moment.

Chapter 113: Pill Explosion

“You... What are you doing there!” Fuming, Sun Zhengzong jerked a finger at Yunxiao. “I thought we are having a match now!”

At some point, Yunxiao had found himself a fruit and was gnawing at it with his back leaning against the railing, smiling and nodding from time to time.

Sun Zhengzong almost coughed out a mouthful of blood when he saw that. He was trembling all over as he bellowed, “Master Yuan Hao, please throw him out of the match and declare him a loser!”

Yunxiao threw the pit off the platform and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, then said disdainfully, “Are you a fool? We have two hours. How long has it been? Can’t I even eat some fruit to replenish my strength?”

Yuan Hao was somewhat speechless, but he waved and said, “Zhengzong, just focus on your own refining. Before the time runs up, he hasn’t lost the match!”

Sun Zhengzong snorted coldly. “Keep making a fool of yourself. I will make you kneel and weep in front of me later!”

“Nuts!”

“You!”

Sun Zhengzong suddenly found that he was inviting humiliation again. Hurriedly, he turned around with a livid face and stopped talking, focusing all his attention on refining.

After some time, the cauldron was fully activated by the demon flame. Runes constantly flashed across its surface and flew out into the air at times. Sun Zhengzong quickly took out the prepared ingredients from the containers and poured them into the cauldron, then began to carefully control the flame, sending a few incantation seals into the cauldron from time to time.

Soon, a rumbling sound could be heard from inside the cauldron while jets of air shot out of the few holes on the lid. It was the signs that the pill was about to take shape.

Sun Zhengzong slapped the cauldron hard with a palm, causing the lid to fly up. A beam of blue light immediately shot out from inside as he sneered, “Trying to run away from me?” Without hesitation, he threw out a few incantation seals, trapping the light with them. A glittering pill could be seen jumping up and down within the seals as plumes of blue smoke rose from within the cauldron, pouring into the pill.

He was extremely tensed at this moment, because this was the last step for the pill to take shape. The nascent pill spun at high speed over the cauldron, absorbing plumes of blue medicinal strength. As its color grew brighter, its grade rose as well.

“Three spins, first-grade...”

“Five spins, second-grade...”

The waves of aura exuded from the nascent pill kept rising. All alchemy products of third-grade or above would possess a certain degree of sentience, and the risk when forming the pill would increase as well, So, it required a great external force to temper the pill.

“Six spins... it only takes one last spin!”

With a serious face, Sun Zhengzong's fingers grabbed toward the nascent pill like an eagle's claw. Attracted by him, the Bluewolf Demon Flame in the cauldron rose, sending tendrils of flame toward the nascent pill. Meanwhile, the waves of aura exuded from the pill grew more violent.

"Seven spins, take your final shape!"

Just as he was about to lose control of it, Sun Zhengzong's pupils constricted and his face turned pale instantly as he focused his soul power on one point and crazily stabilized the medicinal pill, placing it into the blue flame to temper and shape it!

As a result, the violent fluctuation began to be slowly suppressed. There was a look of joy on Sun Zhengzong's face, and his eyes gleamed excitedly. He knew he was just one step away from succeeding. 'The refining process is rather smooth today,' he thought, 'I didn't expect to make it the first time.'

Yunxiao watched coldly from the side and suddenly narrowed his eyes. A hint of evil-looking crimson color flashed across his pupils, and then a faint fluctuation spread across the void.

Yuan Hao was watching the refining attentively and nodding from time to time. Suddenly, he frowned, then looked over toward Yunxiao in surprise. He just had a weird feeling, but he did not find anything unusual. He gave Yunxiao a suspicious look, then turned his gaze back to Sun Zhengzong's refining, waiting for the last step to be completed.

"What is going on?"

Sun Zhengzong was startled. His soul power wrapping around the nascent pill seemed to be pulled by something, and it suddenly broke apart and faded away. In that instant, the violent pill essence, which he had suppressed, lost control, and an extremely dangerous aura spread out of the pill into the surroundings.

"Not good!" Shocked, he hurriedly mustered his soul power and pressed it down onto the nascent pill. However, as soon as he touched it, his soul power was knocked back.

It was too late! With his cultivation base, he could no longer make the pill spin one last time.

“How did this happen?” Sun Zhengzong stood with a blank face, staring at the pill as it began to emanate waves of frightening aura.

Yuan Hao’s eyes narrowed as he gave Yunxiao another suspicious look. He had a vague feeling that the strange fluctuation he sensed just now was related to this boy, but he did not find anything that could trace back to him. Could it be a delusion? He did not believe Yunxiao had the ability to play tricks under his nose. Knowing that the refining of the pill was on the verge of failing, he sighed and cried out, “Su Xiang!”

“Understand, Master Yuan!”

Su Xiang answered; he knew what Yuan Hao meant. He walked out lightly, and with just a step, he was in front of the cauldron, throwing a fist at the nascent pill. The jarring noise caused by the fist piercing through the air filled all courtiers’ ears with sharp pain, causing them to cover their ears and squat.

Bam!

The punch hit the nascent pill and knocked it flying away, leaving a long straight blue line in the air. When it went about a hundred meters away from the platform, the pill exploded.

Rumble!

The explosion produced a large cloud of blue energy over the eight hundred thousand soldiers before gradually fading away. The force was so powerful that all the soldiers looked frightened and horrified.

The explosive force was at least at the level of a Great Martial Master. If the pill were to explode on the platform, at least half of the courtiers would die on the spot.

Everyone’s forehead was covered with cold sweats. Only now did they realize that it was not a pleasant thing to watch an alchemist refining, but extremely dangerous.

Throughout the history, there was no shortage of tales about alchemists who blew themselves up during the process of refinement. So, most of the alchemists had a certain degree of cultivation in martial arts, and only then could they survive all the explosions.

After a moment of trance, Sun Zhengzong rested his gaze on Yunxiao, his eyes filled with strong hatred. Although he did not know it was caused by Yunxiao, and he thought he had not controlled it properly, he needed a place to vent the emotions in his heart. Therefore, he turned his depression into hatred against Yunxiao.

“What are you looking at? What an idiot! You thought you are better than me by refining faster? Now you have to start all over again just like me!” Yunxiao mocked in a cold voice.

“You!” Sun Zhengzong was so angry that his beard twitched and his face turned livid.

“Please hurry up, both of you! You have less than the time it takes for half an incense stick to burn.” Yuan Hao’s voice rang out. Sun Zhengzong was shocked, and he quickly gathered up the ingredients and began the second round of refinement.

Yuan Hao gave Yunxiao an indifferent look and said coldly, “Master Yunxiao, are you planning to watch like this from the beginning to the end?” His voice had a rich sarcastic tone.

“Hah! Of course not.” Yunxiao gave him a faint smile. Then, he jumped lightly twice and spread out his arms as he began to exercise.

“Bend your arms, one, two, three. Ha! Ha!”

“Press your legs, one, two, three. Ha! Ha!”

“Twist your waist, one, two, three. Ha! Ha!”

“Exercise your wrists, one, two, three. Ha! Ha!”

“Turn to your left, then to your right. Ha! Ha!”

Everyone watched with wide eyes and dropped jaws as he began to exercise. It was a set of most basic exercises that built one’s body, a warm-up exercise for the soldiers before training. Almost every soldier in Tianshui knew it. However, Yunxiao did it in such a funny way that everyone who looked at him felt their eyeballs about to drop.

Li Chunyang was about to bellow at him and ask him to stop being a disgrace, but then he thought it would be better for him to shut his mouth and watch quietly from the side.

“Alright, I’m done with the warm-up exercise. Time to start the refinement.”

Yunxiao walked over to an empty space beside Sun Zhengzong. He seemed to be pondering something and kept tapping at his own head with a finger. All eyes were upon him, eager to watch how he was going to end this.

Suddenly, Zhang Qingfan stepped forward and said, “Master Yunxiao, please use my pill cauldron!” He clapped his hands, and with the gesture, a simple-looking cauldron dropped out of the void. It was purple all over, which meant it was a third-grade purple cauldron.

Sun Zhengzong’s heart skipped a beat, and he was slightly tensed up. Although an alchemist’s level mainly relied on his or her own strength, instruments could also provide great help. At least, his opponent’s purple cauldron was several grades higher than his blue cauldron.

“Keep it, I don’t need it.” Yunxiao gently slapped the purple cauldron, causing it to instantly shrink and then fly back into Zhang Qingfan’s hand. Zhang Qingfan was taken aback, but then he calmed down and retreated. Since Yunxiao rejected his cauldron, he believed he must have a better cauldron.

Although a third-grade purple cauldron was already the strongest cauldron among all third-grade instruments, as he already developed a reverence toward Yunxiao, he would never doubt the latter’s strength.

Sun Zhengzong felt his heart fall back into his chest, and he breathed a sigh of relief. But at the same time, he was a little surprised. 'Why is this boy refusing a third-grade purple cauldron? Does he have a fourth-grade cauldron? No, that cannot be! Even if he does have one, there is no way he can control it!'

With a smile, Yunxiao said to Yuan Hao, "Master Yuan, please lend me ten pieces of superior-grade Primordial Stones. All my wealth is with you now."

Yuan Hao frowned. When Yunxiao rejected the purple cauldron, he already confirmed his judgment of this boy. 'He is just messing around and playing dumb. When he loses the match later, he will definitely come out with all the tricks to reject the result. Hmph! As long as I am the judge, I will not allow him to do that!'

"Take it!" Yuan Hao grudgingly threw ten pieces of superior-grade Primordial Stones into Yunxiao's hand as he stared coldly at him.

Yunxiao held the ten stones in his palm. Suddenly, a jet of Primordial Qi ejected from his palm and shattered them, and for a moment, the sky was veiled by the stone powder. Meanwhile, he threw out his palm, from which came spewing out a force that gathered all the powder into a line, waving gracefully like a white silk ribbon with the movements of his arm.

"What is he doing..." Yuan Hao's eyes looked puzzled, but then he snorted angrily and said, "Is he playing a trick again?"

Wang Chen was standing beside Yuan Hao and had not been talking, but as soon as he saw Yunxiao's movements, his eyes widened in disbelief.

Yunxiao began to wave the ribbon, using it to draw all kinds of patterns on the ground. Bit by bit, the Primordial Stone powder fell on the ground, forming into one formation after another that were interconnected.

Chapter 114: Flame Movement

"Sure enough!"

A towering wave raged in Wang Chen's heart as he watched in shock. His master, Yang Di, had often used this method of conjuring a formation with Primordial Stones, and his techniques were almost identical to this boy!

No, the boy seemed to be more skillful than his master! But, how was that even possible?

Yuan Hao's eyes turned from cold to suspicious, then serious. He had not learned this method, but when he was a second-tier alchemist, he had witnessed Lord Yang Di demonstrate it during a lecture. That was when Lord Yang Di had just become a fifth-tier alchemist. He did not expect that he would see it again after so many years, much less performed by a boy.

Could it be that this boy was one of Lord Yang Di's disciples? He gave Wang Chen a look, but when he saw the shock and incredulity in his eyes, he rejected the speculation.

When Jia Rong and Luo Yunshang, who were standing in the army, saw Yunxiao about to begin refining, they hurried over and watched him silently from the side. Jia Rong was very excited. Every time Yunxiao refined something, he could always obtain tremendous benefits. He was even more excited when he saw Yunxiao was using a brand-new method this time.

With clenched jaws, he thought to himself, 'Just wait and see, you bunch of toads living under the rocks! How dare you look down on Young Master Yun! When this is over, his reputation will surely shake the entire world of alchemists in the Firecrow Empire!'

After he was done with everything, the expression on Yunxiao's face turned placid. His look of an unbridled son of a rich family was completely gone, replaced by a demeanor of serenity and elegance, and he had a faint smile hung on his lips. For a moment, he was exuding a calm, deep air that would not change even if the sky collapsed and the earth shattered.

Yuan Hao's pupils constricted abruptly as he was utterly shocked. It was not only because of the changes in Yunxiao's expression, but also the rings of soul power fluctuations spreading out of him, which had quickly risen to the level of a first-tier alchemist.

"How did he do that!" Yuan Hao felt he could hardly stand still as waves of shock pounded at him over and over in his heart. He could not believe that Yunxiao could hide his strength under the divine sense of a fourth-tier alchemist.

Rumble!

Yunxiao lightly pointed out a finger. A burst of air shot out of it and hit on the Primordial Stone powder, producing a string of sparks that instantly kindled the powder and set them ablaze, with flames half the height of an adult rising wildly up into the air.

‘What is he doing? Trying to char some meats?’ thought Sun Zhengzong. He was puzzled, because he knew nothing about the technique. But, his eyes widened in shock quickly, because he saw Yunxiao throw the only set of ingredients he had all into the flame.

‘He didn’t classify nor purify the ingredients, and he didn’t even need a cauldron? He just burns them all over the flame?’ At this moment, Sun Zhengzong’s knowledge of pill refinement began to show some cracks. He shook his head and thought, ‘Focus, focus! This boy is just messing around, and his intention is to distract me! I can’t fall into his trap!’ With that in mind, he held his breath and focused all his attention back on the refining.

Yunxiao quickly performed a few incantation gestures with both hands and sent them into the roaring flames. Immediately, the disordered flames began to transform, shaping into various things like dragons, phoenixes, mountains, trees, and even naked girls. The sight of them took everyone’s breath and petrified them.

Yuan Hao was completely baffled. With a blank face, he murmured under his breath, “This...his flame controlling technique...”

Wang Chen’s face was serious as he said in a deep voice, “Yes, that’s the flame controlling technique invented by Lord Gu Feiyang—the Flame Movement!”

Astounded, Yuan Hao said, “Is he and your Master...”

Wang Chen shook his head slightly. There was a puzzled look in his eyes as he said, “I’ve never heard Master say he has a disciple like this. In addition to my Master, Jun Ruyun, the son-in-law of the Guwu Empire, had also inherited Lord Gu Feiyang’s alchemy legacy. Could this kid be Uncle-Master Jun Ruyun’s disciple?”

Yuan Hao paused for a moment, then shook his head and said, "I don't think so. If he is really Lord Jun Ruyun's disciple, he would not have stayed in such a small place like Tianshui, not to mention that the Guwu Empire is thousands of miles away from here."

Wang Chen thought of that too, and he felt it become more and more incredible and difficult to understand.

The flames turned into various forms, burning the ingredients that hovered over them separately. Each was meticulously controlled; the ingredient that required only brief scorch had a tiny flower emanating warm heat beneath it while the one that needed to be tempered with high heat had a bear roaring at it. The prick of sky scorpion was held in the mouth of a flaming toad, turning red as it burned at it. The entire refining process was simply a lively and beautiful painting.

"It's him! It must be him!"

Luo Yunshang watched with tears trickling down her cheeks. She was not one hundred percent certain before this, but when she saw the Flame Movement, she no longer had doubts. The person behind Yunxiao must be that man!

"Master Yuan Hao, who do you think will win the match?" Wang Chen could not help but ask when he saw both men come to the step of forming the pills.

Yuan Hao paused, and then he said with a wry smile, "Before Yunxiao used the Flame Movement, I had no doubt that Zhengzong will be the winner. But, I'm not so sure now."

Wang Chen chuckled. "I think Master Sun Zhengzong will win. Although Li Yunxiao is skillful, he only has the soul power of a first-tier alchemist. He can't hope to refine the Seven..."

His words came to an abrupt stop as if a toad had been shoved into his mouth, and his eyes grew so wide that his eyeballs seemed to almost pop out of the sockets.

After Yunxiao's Bodhi pill spun three times, his soul power suddenly soared, reaching the level of a second-tier alchemist!

Yuan Hao's mouth dropped open as well, and he said in shock, "What? Has he been holding back his soul power? He was using first-tier soul power before three spins, second-tier after that...Don't tell me his soul power will rise to third-tier later! How did he manage to control his soul power so precisely? Even I can't detect his actual strength! Is there really such an amazing cultivation technique in the world!"

Wang Chen swallowed hard, as if he had just swallowed a toad, and he felt sick in his chest. With his forehead covered in cold sweat, he said, "My Master once told me that a good alchemist could use his soul power at the right place, without causing any wastage. So, if an average alchemist can only refine a medicinal pill, those alchemists of the same tier who know how to minimize the wastage of their soul power can refine at least three pills!"

There was a look of shock mixed with envy in Yuan Hao's eyes. "Your Master is right. Look at Yunxiao's face! His pill has spun four times, and yet he still appears so calm as if it is nothing. Although Zhengzong's pill has spun five times, he seems at the end of his tether already!"

Wang Chen nodded with a wry smile. He knew his master was right, but it was an extremely advanced soul controlling technique that even his master had just begun to learn. So, how did a fifteen-year-old boy know the technique and could even use it?

At this moment, apart from Yuan Hao and Wang Chen, who were talking in low voices, everyone was shocked and looked dumb.

The match between the two gave everyone a very strong visual impact. Sun Zhengzong was covered in cold sweat from head to toe, his face extremely pale and his movements clumsy like a laborer who was moving bricks in desperation. On the other hand, Yunxiao's movements were graceful and smooth, with incantation seals flying around him like butterflies dancing around a flower. His handsome face looked pleasing to the eyes with the flickering flame shone at it.

A short moment later, Yuan Hao blurted out as if someone had struck him on the chest with a hammer, "Third tier! His soul power has risen to third-tier now!"

When the Bodhi pill spun the fifth time, the soul power emanated from Yunxiao grew even stronger, jumping straight up to the level of a third-tier alchemist.

Zhang Qingfan and Xu Han exchanged a shocked glance. Their eyes were filled with unconcealed astonishment and joy as they held their breath and watched every movement of Yunxiao attentively. The reverence in their eyes was so thick that it was as if they were not looking at a person, but the endless road of alchemy.

As soon as he saw their expressions, Qin Yang felt a burst of unusual depression in his heart. He knew the situation had begun to turn for the worse for him. He exchanged a look with Gao Feng, who was standing behind him, and both saw the worries in each other's eyes.

Sun Zhengzong had also discovered Yunxiao's aura, and his heart was already filled with towering waves and tremendous pressure. At the moment, his nascent pill had entered the stage of seven spins, which was where he had failed previously. Throwing all caution to the wind, he clenched his jaws and roared.

Meanwhile, with a slap of a hand in the air, a dark blue jade talisman appeared in his palm, flashing with blue light as tiny electric arcs darted out of it.

As soon as Yuan Hao squinted at it, he jumped from his seat and cried out, "A Primordial Thunder Talisman!"

Wang Chen was startled as well, and he said shockingly, "Is he going to use thunderbolts to condense the pill?"

If an alchemy product was over fifth-tier, a natural phenomenon would be triggered and the force of thunder would be produced when it was taking shape during the refining process, which was the legendary thunder tribulation!

It was because the object was overly heaven-defying; therefore, its existence was not permitted by the Heavenly Dao, and thunderbolts would be sent to destroy it. So, the biggest challenge any objects above fifth-tier had was not from the strength of alchemists' soul power, but whether they could withstand the thunder tribulation.

However, objects that had gone through thunder tribulations were extremely powerful, and hence the fifth-tier was a watershed for alchemists. Many alchemists could refine fifth-tier objects, but most of

them would turn into ashes in the face of the thunder tribulations, stopping the alchemists from becoming fifth-tier alchemists.

Yuan Hao was one of such alchemists.

The Primordial Thunder Talisman in Sun Zhengzong's hand was a fifth-tier jade talisman. It contained a trace of thunder force that some mighty alchemist had forcibly taken when an object was transcending the thunder tribulation. Such a jade talisman was extremely valuable. It could be used directly when refining lower-tiered objects, triggering the force of thunder to improve the object's grade. Moreover, since the thunder force in it had already been refined, it would not produce a strong damage, and was safe to use. Therefore, it was viewed as a precious treasure by all lower-tiered alchemists.

Sun Zhengzong turned and saw that Yunxiao's refinement had entered the stage of six spins. A trace of resolution immediately replaced the reluctance in his eyes. Abruptly, he activated the jade talisman in his hand and slapped it on the cauldron.

Chapter 115: A Thunder Tribulation?

Rumble!

A thunderous sound rang out of the cauldron like the mighty roar of heaven and earth. Everyone's eyes widened as they watched thunderbolts crackle and dart out of the blue cauldron, rushing up over the nascent pill and instantly shattering its violent essence. Then, a blue thunderbolt wrapped the pill and began to temper it.

"Eight spins!"

Sensing the waves of pill aura spreading out of the nascent pill, Yuan Hao let out a faint sigh and said, "Li Yunxiao is about to lose the match. The Bodhi pill has entered the eighth spin. Moreover, it is being refined by the thunderbolt. Even if it can't spin the ninth time and reach the fourth-tier, it will not be too far from it."

Wang Chen said lightly, "It will be a glorious defeat though. It's just that the bets are too damaging." With a wry smile, he shook his head.

Yuan Hao seemed to think otherwise, and he said, “Young people are inevitably short-tempered and always feel arrogant and proud of themselves with a little achievement. It is a good thing for him to be lessoned.”

“Haha! The pill is taking its final shape now!” Sun Zhengzong’s eyes burned with wild joy as his hands flashed with incantation gestures. Surrounded by thunderbolts, the Bodhi pill over the blue cauldron emanated a shocking medicinal strength as it reached the peak-level of eight spins.

Rumble!

Suddenly, the third-tier blue cauldron was blown apart in the instant the pill took shape, as if it could no longer withstand the tremendous pressure. The vessel shattered into pieces and shot into all directions. Many warriors jumped out of the crowd and stopped the shreds from hurting people.

Sun Zhengzong’s face was covered in pity and pain, but when he looked at the final product in his palm, an eight-spins Bodhi pill, his gloomy mood vanished instantly. Exulted, he roared with laughter. “Haha! An eight-spins Bodhi pill! Boy, unless you can refine a fourth-tier Bodhi pill that has spun nine times, you have lost the match!”

There was a hint of a smile on Yuan Hao’s face as he said approvingly, “Zhengzong, it seems your strength will improve a lot after this refinement. Although you’ve destroyed a third-tier blue cauldron, it paid off when you refined a peak third-tier medicinal pill. Take your time to study the process again, perhaps you will make a breakthrough soon.”

Sun Zhengzong smiled wryly. “It will not be so easy for me to break through, but I did learn something new during the refinement.” He turned and stared coldly at Yunxiao. Although his opponent’s skillful techniques surprised him, he felt completely relieved. Unless Yunxiao could step into the fourth-tier, he had lost the match.

Zhang Qingfan and Xu Han exchanged a glance in silence; their faces looked worried. Even fresh fourth-tier alchemists like them might not be able to refine an eight-spins Bodhi pill so smoothly.

But, Yunxiao still wore the same calm expression as he continued to refine the medicinal pill in mid-air with his Primordial Qi. Soon, it was at the stage of the seventh spin, and his face began to turn pale. Clearly, the consumption of his soul power had grown greater as well.

A deep look of sympathy appeared on Yuan Hao's face as he sighed and said, "I can't believe he managed to refine the Bodhi pill to the seventh spin without using a cauldron, and his age... He is such a freakish genius! What a pity..."

Upon hearing that comment, Sun Zhengzong's face flickered, and there was a killing intent in his eyes that could not be concealed. Yunxiao's innate talent did strike fear deep into his heart. 'He is still very young... Although I can defeat him now, what about five years later? Ten years?' At the thought that he had offended such a terrifying existence, Sun Zhengzong began to feel nervous.

"Master Yuan Hao, do you think his pill can enter the eighth spin?" asked Wang Chen lightly.

Yuan Hao carefully observed for a moment, and only then did he answer, "The flames in the formation beneath have begun to gradually weaken, showing signs of dying off completely. Moreover, his soul power needs to shape the pill and control the flames at the same time. I don't think there's much hope. If he had accepted Master Zhang Qingfan's third-tier purple cauldron, I think he would have no problem in making the pill spin eight times. Unfortunately, this young man is just too arrogant."

Wang Chen fell silent; it was plain that he agreed with that view.

As the few men were talking, Yunxiao's pupils suddenly grew larger, and then a stream of soul power ejected out of them, sweeping up the flames of Primordial Qi that were about to die off from the ground and pouring them into the Bodhi pill.

"What! Is he trying to forcibly increase the Bodhi pill's tier with the flames of Primordial Qi?"

Shocked, Yuan Hao cried out in terror, "In that case, it is possible for him to make the pill spin the eighth time. But, with the flames dying off completely, how is he going to condense the pill in the end? All his hard work will be in vain if he fails to condense the pill. And even if he manages to do it, without powerful elemental energy, it will still be extremely difficult for him to maintain the pill in its eight-spins form!"

Wang Chen's eyes flickered. "He must have sensed Master Sun's eight-spins Bodhi pill. Therefore, he is making a desperate attempt! By doing this, the worst result he can get is the explosion of the pill, and since he is losing anyway, perhaps he can fight himself a slim chance of success."

"A slim chance of success?" Sun Zhengzong scoffed. "Can a desperate attempt make one break through the fourth-tier?"

That gave Wang Chen a pause, and then his beaming face dimmed. He felt what he said was indeed somewhat far-fetched. But, he was puzzled at the same time, 'What is he thinking in the face of this inevitable defeat? Is it all about doing meaningless things?'

"Eight spins!"

A burst of violent aura exuded from Yunxiao's Bodhi pill. Sure enough, it had entered the state of the eighth spin, becoming more unstable and harder to control.

"I can't believe he just forcibly made the pill enter the state of the eighth spin with bare hands! This kid is indeed a monster!" Yuan Hao was utterly stunned, and his eyelids twitched violently. "What is he doing now? Refining the pill with his Primordial Qi instead of Primordial flame? Isn't he going to condense the pill yet? Is he really making a desperate attempt?"

There was a serious tone in his voice as he said deeply, "Su Xiang, get ready to act!"

If an eight-spins Bodhi pill exploded, its power would be far beyond that of a seven-spins one. He had attached great importance to Yunxiao because of his outstanding talent, so he did not want the other to get hurt. As for the others on the platform, he did not care if they were all killed.

"Yes, Master Yuan Hao!" Su Xiang narrowed his eyes slightly, his heart filled with towering waves as well. He had been following Yuan Hao for a long time, and he knew very well about some techniques used by alchemists. From what he saw, 'monster' was indeed the only word that could be used to describe Yunxiao!

Yunxiao breathed a long breath as he felt half of the Primordial Qi in him disappear in an instant. 'The Primordial Qi of a three-stars Martial Master can only bring me to this stage,' he thought to himself. 'The

only step left now is pill condensation. If I have to defeat that eight-spins Bodhi pill, I'll have to try that thing.'

He did not expect Sun Zhengzong to have a Primordial Thunder Talisman. Initially, he was confident that he could push his medicinal pill directly to the peak of eight-spins, but that would only end up in a draw now.

'A draw? Hmph! How dare a mere third-tier alchemist act so arrogantly in front of me! I'll teach you a hard lesson today!'

He flicked open his eyes, and a mark of a flaming cloud gradually emerged on his forehead. It looked like a birthmark, but also seemed to be burning slowly as if it were alive.

Sun Zhengzong and Yuan Hao were startled at the same time. Both of them owned demon flames, and just when Yunxiao's mark of a flaming cloud appeared, they found that the demon flames in their bodies suddenly began to twitch and jump while giving off a sense of fear, as if they were trying to escape.

"What is that flame!" Both of them stared in terror at the dot of almost invisible flame in front of Yunxiao.

Yunxiao's expression was extremely serious. This was the first time he was using the Phoenix True Flame. With his current strength, there was no way he could control it, and he could only slightly touch the thread of the flame's apparition, which was the projection of the divine flame that fell on the void now.

But, the temperature of the whole platform soared instantly just because of the projection. Everyone was drenched in sweat, their faces pale with fright as they watched the tiny, almost invisible flame fall lightly on the Bodhi pill.

"Condense now!"

Yunxiao's hands flashed with incantation gestures. It was so fast that all eyes were dazzled, and the void was filled with numerous afterimages. Many of the incantation gestures were so strange that even Yuan Hao had not seen them before, so he stared at them with wide eyes, unblinking.

“Condense!”

When he had done all that, Yunxiao finally gave a shout. With that, the scorching heat suddenly dropped as all the true flames were sucked into the pill while a dark cloud began to gather in the sky, in which thunderbolts were flashing and flickering, as if it were about to rain.

Yuan Hao looked up abruptly at the sky and cried out in shock, “A natural phenomenon! A third-tier medicinal pill has triggered a natural phenomenon!”

At this moment, not only he, but all the alchemists present felt their common sense just crumble into pieces!

Rumble!

A thunderbolt as thick as a thumb fell from the sky, striking directly at the Bodhi pill. A great amount of thunder force immediately spread out of the pill while crackling. The dark cloud in the sky vanished immediately after the thunderbolt fell while the Bodhi pill in the air had finally condensed and taken its shape, falling into Yunxiao’s palm.

In fact, Yunxiao was also extremely surprised. Supposedly, it was impossible for a medicinal pill of this tier to trigger the force of nature. Although the thunderbolt was countless times weaker than the normal thunder tribulation, it was really caused by the condensation of the pill. ‘Could the thunderbolt be attracted by the Phoenix True Flame?’ he thought to himself.

At the moment, everyone was stupefied and their eyes were all fixed on the medicinal pill in Yunxiao’s palm. The round pill was giving off a pleasant, refreshing aroma.

Wang Chen swallowed hard, and he felt he could not think properly. “What is the tier of that medicinal pill? Even if it is a fourth-tier medicinal pill, there is no way it can attract a thunderbolt.”

For a moment, Sun Zhengzong was petrified, but then he shuddered and recovered from his shock. Meanwhile, he felt extremely nervous.

Yuan Hao had a serious look on his face and his body trembled slightly. He knew even he could not refine and condense a pill like this. Moreover, all he needed to become a fifth-tier alchemist now was to condense a pill with a thunderbolt, but he had explored for years to no avail. And yet, it was accomplished by a young man today.

His eyes were full of enthusiasm as he began to show the same reverence as Zhang Qingfan and Xu Han. With a very polite tone, he said, "Master Yunxiao, can I have a look at your Bodhi pill?"

Chapter 116: Pseudo-Fourth-tier

Yunxiao smiled as he wiped the sweat off his forehead with a hand, and then held out the pill. "Master Yuan Hao is the judge, so I naturally have to let you have a look."

The round medicinal pill rolled into Yuan Hao's hand, and he placed both pills side by side and carefully studied them. Their size and color were almost the same, but there was one significant difference: there was a faint blue line on Sun Zhengzong's pill while Yunxiao's had two, one blue and one red.

After comparing them, Yuan Hao could not help but ask, "Master Yunxiao, why are there two lines on your pill? And what happened to that thunder tribulation? Normal thunder tribulation would not be so weak!"

Unknowing to himself, he had begun to address Yunxiao as 'Master', which sounded extremely unpleasant in Sun Zhengzong's ear.

"Oh, I've no idea about that thunderbolt. If truth be told, this is the first time I have refined a third-tier medicinal pill."

"What! First time!"

Everyone was shocked, their faces incredulous. Yuan Hao turned to look at Zhang Qingfan, and when he saw the latter nod slightly to confirm that, he felt his head reel at such an incredible fact.

Sun Zhengzong felt that his heart was getting more and more overwhelmed by these blows. He did not want to suffer anymore, so he urged, “Master Yuan Hao, what is the result? Who is the winner?”

Yuan Hao carefully compared the pills once again, then pondered in silence. At last, he said, “Master Yunxiao is the winner!””read comics on our webnovel.live”

“What!” Sun Zhengzong was taken aback, and he flew into a rage in the next instant. “How’s that even possible! Mine is a peak eight-spins pill, the strongest medicinal pill below the fourth-tier! Look carefully again, Master Yuan Hao! Even if his is a peak eight-spins pill as well, the match is a draw!”

All the alchemists present could feel that Yunxiao’s pill was not a fourth-tier pill and should be a peak third-tier pill.

In the face of Sun Zhengzong’s questioning, Yuan Hao was not angry, but patiently explained, “Yes, your Bodhi pill is a peak third-tier medicinal pill, but Master Yunxiao’s is a pseudo-fourth-tier medicinal pill. I presume you know how a pseudo-fourth-tier pill is produced?”

Sun Zhengzong paused for a moment before he screamed, “Impossible! A pseudo-fourth-tier medicinal pill is the result of a mistake during the refinement of a fourth-tier pill! It is not a fourth-tier pill, and only a fourth-tier alchemist can refine it! This boy is clearly just a third-tier alchemist!” His eyes burned with rage. “Master Yuan Hao, are you an accomplice of this boy?”

Yuan Hao’s face grew dark as he bellowed, “What nonsense are you talking about, Sun Zhengzong?”

“Hah,” Yunxiao chuckled, “I’ve told you, Master Yuan Hao, he will definitely refuse to admit defeat.”

After slightly calming down, Yuan Hao threw both storage rings to Yunxiao and said, “These are Master Yunxiao’s things and prizes.” Then, he fixed his eyes on Sun Zhengzong and said in a cold voice, “Honor your words, kneel and kowtow to Master Yunxiao!”

He had been polite to Sun Zhengzong, but he was like an erupting volcano now. All alchemists were proud and noble, and they could never suffer such slander, much less in front of hundreds of thousands of people!

Yuan Hao had thought of interceding for him with Yunxiao. After all, for a noble alchemist, kowtowing to someone was even worse than death. But now, he had given up that idea.

Sun Zhengzong had dug his own grave!

When he saw Yuan Hao throw his storage ring to Yunxiao, Sun Zhengzong screamed in pain. And when he heard the other ask him to kneel and kowtow, he began to shiver violently while his face turned extremely pale.

With all the courtiers on the platform and the eight hundred thousand soldiers beneath looking at him, how was he going to face the world for the rest of his life if he were to kneel and kowtow now?

“Drop to your knees now! Everyone is waiting!” Yuan Hao cried out coldly. “We’ve wasted so much time because of you. If you still don’t want to kneel, I’ll ask Su Xiang to help you.”

Sun Zhengzong turned pale and bit his lip, shivering all over. At that moment, Su Xiang lightly pointed out a finger. Two objects flew whistling across the air and hit Sun Zhengzong’s knees, causing blood to spray out of them.

The pain took the strength out of his legs, and he fell to his knees. Then, his head suddenly smashed to the ground, as though it was being pushed by a force.

With his fingers curled slightly like claws, Yunxiao was holding his head from across the void. “The first kowtow is for being arrogant in front of me!”

Thud!

A splash of blood spilled across the ground. Sun Zhengzong was pushed down on all four, and he was horrified to find that he could not break free from the invisible force in any way.

Even Su Xiang’s pupils were constricted, his heart filled with shock. ‘This young man’s cultivation of martial arts is not as simple as a three-stars Martial Master!’

“The second kowtow is for all the wealth you’ve robbed from the Li Family’s treasury!”

Thud!

The kowtow shook the platform. Sun Zhengzong had blood all over his face, but it was strange that he had not fainted yet.

“The third kowtow is for...”

“Yunxiao!”

Li Chunyang could not stand it anymore, and he could faintly sense the killing intent emanating from Yunxiao. The last kowtow would most probably kill Sun Zhengzong, so he quickly stopped it with a cry. “Spare him! Had it not been because of him, your Uncle Chen would have long died.”

Yunxiao hesitated, but when he thought that this guy would no longer be a threat to him in the future, he kicked him to a corner like a bag of rubbish. “Those who humiliate others will always be humiliated by others. For the sake of my grandfather, I’ll spare your life today. Behave yourself from now on!”

Sun Zhengzong curled up in the corner, unmoving like a puddle of mud, and his forehead was a mess with blood tricking down his face. But, the pain from his flesh was nothing compared to the pain in his heart. His spirits were gone, and he looked as if his soul was gone as well. After today, he would never be able to raise his head again.

Yuan Hao snorted coldly and said, “Master Yunxiao, you don’t have to waste your breath with a low guy like this. First he slandered you, then deliberately came out with a tricky topic, and finally refused to admit defeat when he had clearly lost the match. He is a disgrace to all alchemists!”

When a man was down, everyone would kick him; this was the way of the world. No one gave Sun Zhengzong another look, as if he were just a dog laying in the corner.

Yuan Hao took out a small box from his ring, then walked over and handed it to Yunxiao. “Today’s match has proven that Master Yunxiao does have the strength of a third-tier alchemist. Since I am in charge of

assessment in the Firecrow Empire's alchemist association, I'll now award you the third-tier badge. Please accept it, Master Yunxiao!"

Inside the box lay a badge that was neither gold nor jade. Yunxiao put it away and said with a smile, "Thank you, Master Yuan Hao!"

Yuan Hao's eyes flashed with a trace of joy as he said in awe, "You are the most gifted person I've ever seen in my life, Master Yunxiao, and I'm sure that you will have great achievements in the future. It is a great honor for me to be here today to present you with this badge of a third-tier alchemist."

He spoke with great sincerity, because he firmly believed that Yunxiao's future achievements would definitely reach a height they would need to look up to. And what he did today was somewhat of an attempt to establish a friendship between them.

Yunxiao laughed. "You are flattering me, Master Yuan Hao! By the way, I am not quite used to you calling me 'Master'. You can just call me Young Master Yun."

Wang Chen, too, could not help but walk up and speak, "Yun...Young Master Yun, although you are younger than me, I really wish I can stay in Tianshui and learn from you."

Yunxiao studied him as he smiled and said, "So, you are Yang Di's disciple? How is he now?"

Wang Chen paused, then a puzzled look appeared in his eyes. He had guessed that Yunxiao must be Jun Ruyun's disciple. If that were true, then Yunxiao should be addressing Yang Di as Uncle-Master, and not his name. Moreover, his tone sounded like he was asking about an old friend. 'Could he be a good friend of Master? But his age...'

His head was full of questions, so he just cupped his fist and said, "I am! My Master has already gone to the Sea of Soul Formation a few months ago."

"Oh?" Yunxiao paused for a moment, then laughed happily. "So, he already has the confidence to break through to the seventh-tier?"

“Exactly! My Master was from Tianshui, and over the years, I’ve been wanting to pay a visit to his hometown. It is not until today my wish was fulfilled.” Wang Chen glanced around and suddenly said, “I heard that when my Master left Tianshui, he left behind a scroll of a painting, saying that if anyone could crack the meaning of the painting, that person could ask him to do anything. I wonder if this painting is still in Tianshui? I’ve always wanted to have a look at it and see if I have the luck to crack it.”

Yunxiao was a little surprised. “Oh, there is such a painting?”

“You don’t know about this?” Yuan Hao asked incredulously.

Yunxiao shook his head and glanced around. Meanwhile, Zhang Qingfan quickly said, “It is true, Master Yunxiao. The painting is being stored in the imperial palace even now, and it is a national treasure of Tianshui!”

“When did Yang Di learn to paint?” asked Yunxiao in surprise.

Zhang Qingfan smiled. “That painting is not Lord Yang Di’s work, but his Master, Lord Gu Feiyang’s. Lord Yang Di had said on the day he left that he used to be very slow in learning, and in a fit of anger, Lord Gu Feiyang had painted the scroll and thrown it at him. For decades after that, he tried very hard to understand the meaning of the painting, but he failed. So, he said that if anyone could crack the meaning, he would do anything within his ability for that person.”

Yunxiao tapped himself on the head as he frowned and thought deep and hard. ‘Did I paint that scroll? Why can’t I remember it?’

Qin Zheng, who had never said a word, suddenly said, “I actually carry this painting with me all the time. Whenever I’m free, I would take it out, hoping to find the meaning. But unfortunately...” He took out an old scroll from his ring and asked someone to unroll it.

Two eunuchs carefully unrolled the painting across the platform, and everyone immediately rested their eyes on it. As soon as Yunxiao saw it, he felt a moment of blankness, and then he burst into laughter. He laughed so hard that he almost got out of breath!

It was a painting of mountains and rivers. In the center was the main peak, with peaks of different heights to its left and right. The mountainsides were dotted with white clouds, layer upon layer, which seemed to be moving slowly. There were also two waterfalls, one on the left and the other right, pouring down through rocks. The painter was extremely skillful. And at the blank space above and below the painting, there were two poems.

“Lord Gu Feiyang is indeed an extraordinary genius,” Yuan Hao exclaimed. “Not only had he reached the peak of martial arts, invented various alchemy techniques, but he also had high accomplishments in music, chess, calligraphy, and painting. Judging from the workmanship alone, this painting is already a masterpiece.”

Wang Chen nodded repeatedly. Then, he looked at Yunxiao in surprise and asked curiously, “Young Master Yun, what are you doing? Do you know the meaning of this painting?”

Everyone’s heart skipped a beat as they turned to look at Yunxiao. If he knew the meaning of the painting, he could ask Yang Di to do anything for him, which was a tremendous favor. It was for this reason that Qin Zheng had always carried it with him and studied it whenever he was free, but for decades, he found nothing.

Yunxiao tried hard not to laugh, but he could not stop. In the end, he had to point at several acupoints on his body, only then did he slowly stop laughing. “So... haha... so... haha... sorry... hahaha... I forget myself... hahaha...”

With a wry smile, Yuan Hao asked, “Is this painting really so funny, Young Master Yun?” He had studied it for some time, but he could not find anything that seemed to be funny.

After laughing wildly for a few more moments, only then did Yunxiao point at the poems and said, “Read them carefully a few times. Haha! Yang Di is really not ashamed of himself. Haha!”

Wang Chen’s face flickered, and there was a hint of anger in his eyes as he cried out, “Don’t you insult my Master, Young Master Yun!”

Meanwhile, Yuan Hao looked at the poems carefully and read them in a soft voice,

“The green willow branches drop down almost to the ground,

the plaintive sound of the flute is accompanied by the willows and late return clouds.

The beacons on the battlefield throwing their beams in answer to the moon,

the golden bells ring as the hats spin and the dancers jump.”

When he had finished, he thought for a while, but found nothing to laugh about. So he turned his eyes to the poem below.

“So now people have endowed Chang Yang,

and the angry Xirong returned to Beidi.

Where is native land beyond the setting sun,

there are golden pearls in the waves.”

“What’s wrong with the poems?”

Many of the courtiers present were also pondering, trying to find out the secret hiding in the poems, but soon all looked confused. Luo Yunshang recited the poems under her breath as well, but she, too, could not understand the meaning. Yunxiao, on the other hand, squinted at the crowd and did not say a word.

“Fu*k! What exactly is the meaning of the poems? Tell us quickly!” Li Chunyang could no longer stand it. “If you don’t tell us now, I’ll chop you to death!”

With a smile, Yunxiao asked, “In what mood do you think Gu Feiyang wrote these two poems?”

It was only after a moment of silence that Wang Chen said, "He should be in a bad mood, because his disciple was a slow learner."

Yunxiao clapped his hands and laughed. "Not only was he in a bad mood, but he was about to scold someone! However, Gu Feiyang is too good a writer to swear like a shrew. Look at the first word of each sentence in the first poem and the last word of each sentence in the second poem." [1] 1

The crowd quickly turned to look at the poems again, while Wang Chen read it out lightly, "Yang... Di... a... fool? Yang... Di... a... pig?"

"Haha!"

Yunxiao roared with laughter. "That's correct, Master Wang! The true meaning of the two poems is 'Yang Di is a fool' and 'Yang Di is a pig'! Haha!"

Everyone was frozen to the spot.

Even then, Wang Chen's face fell. He was about to reproach when he recalled that it was he who read out the two sentences first. Hurriedly, he covered his mouth with both hands.

"Ah?!" Qin Zheng was completely stunned as well. He had studied the painting for years and came out with all kinds of ideas, but he never thought the true meaning would be that simple.

There was an odd look on Yuan Hao's face as he laughed embarrassingly. Although the answer was revealed, nobody dared to read it out. "So that is the answer... Ha... haha..."

Wang Chen was at a loss. "This... this... we don't know whether the answer is right or wrong. I'll inform my Master about it, and if Young Master Yun is right, my Master will naturally do anything within his ability for you."

In fact, he was sure that the answer was correct, but he could not admit it in front of so many people. Therefore, he could only say it in such a tactful way.

That shocked the crowd, and everyone was looking at Yunxiao in envy. It was a great fortune to be able to ask Yang Di to do anything for him!

Qin Yang's face fell in that instant. Rolling his eyes inwardly, he stepped forward and said with a big smile, "You are truly the pride of Tianshui, Young Master Yun! If one day I'm lucky enough to become the monarch of this state, I'll surely marry my sister, Ruxue, to you, and make you a king of the state!"

It was plain to everyone that he was soliciting Yunxiao, and the terms offered were shockingly attractive.

Qin Yue was taken aback. He did not expect Qin Yang to pull that trick out of the blue. Now, all the courtiers knew that Yunxiao could decide who would be the crown prince with just a word, because not only had he won the favor and friendship of three fourth-tier alchemists, a chance to ask Yang Di to do anything for him, but also the support of the eight hundred thousand soldiers beneath the platform. All these were enough to smash every trump card both the princes had prepared.

Fuming, Qin Yue was about to come out with his offer when he suddenly froze. Making Yunxiao a king of the state was already the highest reward, there was nothing better than that. And marrying Ruxue to him was an act to tie him with the imperial family, which was a method second to none.

Qin Ruxue's eyes were wide and her face red with shame as she said angrily, "Qin Yang, you have no right to arrange my marriage!"

Qin Yang laughed. "Ruxue, you can't find any man who is better than Young Master Yun in the whole Tianshui. Do you really want to give up such an excellent husband?"

Qin Yue was so anxious that his palms were sweating. He was really afraid that Yunxiao would give in to the temptation and suddenly go over to his elder brother. "Young Master Yun, if I become the emperor, I will give you more than what he promised!" However, he could not think of how he would give more to Yunxiao, so he just looked pleadingly at him.

Smiling, Yunxiao asked, "In your opinion, Ruxue, which of your brothers is suitable to be the emperor?"

Ruxue said angrily, "None of them!"

Yunxiao frowned. "This is difficult. Do you have any other brothers?"

Upon hearing that, both princes cried out anxiously, "Ruxue!"

That gave Ruxue a pause. Looking at Yunxiao's troubled expression, she felt her heart began to drum. 'Is he really asking for my opinion over such an important matter? Could it be... could it be...' She dared not to think further, and her face blushed.

Qin Yang said hurriedly, "Ruxue, when I ascend the throne, I'll immediately confer you the title of the Princess of Peace 1, a great title that second only to the emperor!"

Qin Ruxue's eyes turned cold. Subconsciously, she stuck out her chest and growled, "Confer yourself the Princess of Peace, I don't want it! Although Qin Yue is a jerk also, at least he is better than you!"

Laughing, Yunxiao walked in front of Qin Zheng and said, "Your Majesty, no one in this world can reign forever. Please abdicate and pass the throne to Prince Qin Yue."

Qin Yang's face turned ashen instantly, while Qin Yue beamed with joy and kept rubbing his palms in excitement.

Qin Zheng's cloudy eyes began to clear. Looking at Yunxiao, he nodded slightly, and in that instant his face glowed with health, as if the problem in his heart was suddenly solved. He said to Yunxiao, "With you by Qin Yue's side, I can now safely hand over Tianshui to him. But you must promise me one thing."

"Please tell me, Your Majesty."

Qin Zheng glanced at Qin Yang, who was standing behind him with a livid face, and sighed. "No matter what, you must keep Yang'er alive. I fear that as soon as I died, you all will make him follow me."

He himself had experienced the cruelty of the imperial family. The reason why he did not ask Qin Yue was that he understood that those who were born in the imperial family never kept their words, and power was the only thing in their eyes. And through a brief contact, his intuition told him that Yunxiao was a reliable person.

Qin Yang trembled slightly, and he stared at Qin Zheng in disbelief. A sudden feeling of guilt welled up in his heart.

Yunxiao nodded and said, "I understand. I promise you."

Qin Zheng breathed a sigh of relief, and then he said in a solemn voice, "I hereby officially declare that..."

A perfect silence fell across the platform and beneath it. Everyone was holding their breath, waiting for the announcement.

Rumble!

Suddenly a rumbling sound came from the distant horizon. Everyone frowned, turned and saw three small black dots in the sky, growing bigger as they flew over.

Yuan Hao narrowed his eyes and said suspiciously, "That is..."

Even then, Qin Yang jumped and laughed wildly. "Haha! They are finally here! You will never be my match, Qin Yue!" The trump card he had been waiting for had finally arrived.

Qin Yue's eyelids twitched violently. He had a bad feeling.

The courtiers felt their heads reel. Was the succession to the throne really so difficult? They had already gone through a series of twists and turns, and they did not expect that there was more to come. Qin Zheng's face grew dark as well, and he stared coldly at the three approaching dots.

When they had come close enough, the crowd saw they were actually three flying chariots!

A huge character of 'Zhou' was painted on each of the chariots, wrapped on both sides by two ears of grain, which seemed to be an emblem of some family.

“Sure enough!” Yuan Hao cried out in a low voice.

Flying chariots were the high-end war machines of the Firecrow Empire. Only fourth-tier alchemists could craft such machines, and they were extremely expensive. Only some important courtiers and nobles of the empire were eligible to own them. But now, three of them were here, and each was painted with the emblem of some family. That took all the courtiers present aback. “Why are they here?”

Qin Yue’s heart sunk, and his face grew serious. The repeated experience of great joy and sorrow had made him weary and on the verge of mental breakdown.

The chariots slowly came to the side of the platform before stopping, hovering in midair. A huge bronze deck gradually stretched out from one of them and fell on the platform with a rumble.

Chapter 118: Young Master Zhou

On the chariot stood two rows of soldiers in shining golden armor, and judging from their aura, they were all Martial Masters.

A group of people slowly walked down the bronze deck. The leading man had a folding fan in his hand, and there was a hint of arrogance on his smiling face, as if he acknowledged no one on the platform.

“You are here at last, Young Master Yushan!” Qin Yang hurriedly went over and greeted the man. He looked so excited as if he had just met his greatest savior. “Lord Yangbiao is not here with you?” the prince glanced up at the chariots.

Zhou Yushan frowned and put away the folding fan in his hand. A hint of unhappy look crept up his face as he said coldly, “Does such a small matter require my father’s personal attention?”

Qin Yang quickly bowed and said, “No, there’s no need. I’m confident that Young Master Yushan alone can settle this matter.”

Zhou Yushan snorted, as if his arrival alone was already a great honor for Qin Yang. He stepped on the platform and glanced around from the corner of his eye, and when he saw everyone wearing respect and fear on their faces, he smiled triumphantly and felt satisfied.

Suddenly, he sensed several indifferent glances, which made him extremely uncomfortable. 'How could someone look at me like that?' His eyes grew cold as he turned to look at the few people. But, what he saw made his eyelids twitch instantly. "Yuan...Master Yuan Hao! Why are you here?"

In addition to Yuan Hao, he knew Wang Chen as well, who was staring at him with a sneer. Although he did not know the others beside them, he could tell they were alchemists from their demeanor. 'Why are so many alchemists here?'

Yuan Hao smiled and said, "Well met, Young Master Yushan! I'm here on business."

"Business?" Zhou Yushan frowned. Yuan Hao's so-called business should be something related to the alchemist association. Although he had a high status and was usually arrogant, he did not dare to show disrespect to the alchemist association. So, he said in a friendly tone, "I'm also here for some small matter, and I'll leave once I'm done. I will not disturb you and your friends."

He turned and glanced at the courtiers of Tianshui, and then rested his eyes on Qin Zheng. With a hint of a mocking smile on the corner of his lip, he held his head high and said proudly, "Qin Zheng."

The tone in his voice was like a superior calling a lowly servant.

A trace of anger flashed through Qin Zheng's eyes, but he dared not show it on his face. "What is it, Young Master Yushan?" he said in a deep voice.

"What is it?" Zhou Yushan cocked his head and smiled. "No one except His Majesty the Emperor of the Firecrow Empire dares to talk to me like that! However, considering that you are old, I will forgive you. I'm here today for the appointment of Tianshui's crown prince. Qin Yang is a good man, so he will be the crown prince!"

Qin Zheng's chest heaved with fury. He gave Qin Yang a cold look before saying, "Young Master Yushan, the appointment of the crown prince is an internal affair of Tianshui, and I don't think you should intervene. Besides, I've already decided who the crown prince is—my son Qin Yue!"

Under Zhou Yushan's cold gaze, he stood up trembling and cried out in the loudest voice possible, "I hereby announce that Qin Yue is the crown prince of the state of Tianshui, and I am now officially abdicating the throne. The enthronement ceremony will be held in three days!"

"Long live Your Majesty the Emperor! Long live Prince Qin Yue!"

The hundreds of thousands of soldiers cried out at the same time, their voices towering into the clouds and ringing across the world!

Extremely excited, Qin Yue dropped to his knees and wept. "Father! I... I..."

With a smile, Qin Zheng patted him on the head and said, "Stand up! You will be the emperor of the state of Tianshui in three days, so how can you show such a weak look?" After that, he lifted his eyes and shot a fierce look at Qin Yang, who was as pale as a sheet. "I was originally more optimistic about you, but you have disappointed me. I can't believe you colluded with outsiders to interfere in the internal affairs of our state, which I absolutely cannot allow!"

Zhou Yushan felt he was almost turned deaf by the loud cries of the army. He pointed at Qin Zheng and growled, "Old codger, how dare you disobey me!"

Staring at him coldly, Qin Zheng scoffed, "The future of Tianshui will be decided by me! If your father were here, I might show him some respect. But you? Hmph! You may leave now!"

"You...! Old codger!" Zhou Yushan trembled with rage, and his voice was thick with killing intent. "Fine! Since you insist to go on your own way, let's see who will be the new crown prince when your current one is dead!"

It was a blatant threat, and Qin Zheng flew into a rage. He could not believe that someone dared to threaten to kill the crown prince in front of all eight hundred thousand soldiers of the state!

Suddenly a discordant voice rang out, "Who is this guy? He looks like he's quite something."

"Who is it? Who's talking!" Zhou Yushan turned back abruptly and shouted in fury.

"Hah!" Wang Chen laughed. "He's the eldest son of the Zhou Family of the Firecrow Empire. Because of his prominent family background, he usually behaves like this. Don't be offended, Young Master Yun."

"Oh, so he's the son of some official? No wonder his nostrils are pointing at the sky. Is he not afraid that water will fall into them when it rains?"

"Haha!" Wang Chen clapped his hands and burst out laughing. "You do have a good sense of humor, Young Master Yun! But you're right. Every time I see him, his nostrils are always pointing upward, so I don't know if there's any water in them."

Yunxiao smiled and said, "Well, I don't know if there's water in his nostrils, but I'm sure that his head is filled with water 1."

"Hahaha!" Wang Chen roared with laughter and stared mockingly at Zhou Yushan. It seemed that there was resentment between them in the past.

"Wang Chen!" Zhou Yushan's nostrils flared, then he turned his eyes to Yunxiao and growled, "And you, little bast*rd! How dare you laugh at me! You're digging your own grave!"

He made a dash, and he was in front of Yunxiao in the next instant, swinging his folding fan down toward the latter's head. There was a long streak of fire in the air where the fan passed, looking like a flaming dragon descending from the sky.

That gave Li Chunyang, who was standing to the side, a shock. But, he saw a figure bolt over when he was about to strike, and in the blink of an eye, a huge axe appeared in the air, hacking down hard at the folding fan and sending sparks flying in all directions.

The folding fan was clearly not some ordinary item, as it did not break under the great axe's powerful strike. Zhou Yushan's pupils constricted, and he retreated in a hurry, looking at the beautiful figure who fell from the sky and stood before Yunxiao with an axe in hand.

Zhou Yushan was taken aback, and he stared blankly at the face for a moment. Although his attack was blocked, it was the first time he did not get angry. Instead, he said in shock, "You...Who are you? A five-stars Martial Lord!"

Luo Yunshang transformed the axe in her hand into its miniature form and put it away. "I'm a teacher from Jialan Academy," she said coldly.

"Jialan Academy? I've heard of it. What's your name? Why are you protecting this guy? Do you know that to oppose me is to die?"

Luo Yunshang frowned. She felt this guy was especially annoying, so she simply ignored him. She turned to Yunxiao and asked, "Are you all right, Yunxiao?"

"I'm fine!" Yunxiao answered with a smile. "Although this fella is also a Martial Lord, it will not be so easy for him to hurt me." He might be no match for Zhou Yushan, but he would have no problem dodging the attack.

Luo Yunshang nodded and said, "Good!"

The cold shoulder they gave Zhou Yushan instantly made his face turn dark with rage. "Hey boy, if you have the balls, stop hiding behind a lady!" he bellowed. "Step forward and fight me one-on-one!"

"Fight you one-on-one?" A mocking smile brushed Yunxiao's lips as he said, "You, a five-stars Martial Lord, are challenging me, a three-stars Martial Master, for a one-on-one fight? Brother Yushan, your face is so thick that it can be used to build the city wall."

Zhou Yushan blushed a little, then he gave a cold snort and unfolded his fan, putting on the air of a gentleman. "If you don't have the balls, just say it! Well, I can spare your life as long as you kneel in front of me and kowtow until I'm satisfied."

“I’m not afraid of a one-on-one fight,” Yunxiao sneered. “But, I fear that your face is too thick for me to punch. Wouldn’t that make you invincible?”

“Haha!” Wang Chen burst into laughter once again. “Young Master Yun, you really got to the point. It seems that I’ll have to be on guard against this when I fight him in the future. I think this guy probably has the strongest facial defense in the entire Firecrow Empire. Haha!”

Zhou Yushan finally exploded, and he screamed while pointing at Yunxiao, “Kill this boy!”

“Understood!”

A faint voice rang out from behind him, and then a man dressed in black stepped out and flew toward Yunxiao like a ghost. Luo Yunshang’s pupils constricted. Suddenly, she struck out her axe, but it shrunk back to its miniature form when the man just lightly slapped it with a hand.

“A Martial King!”

Shocked, Luo Yunshang threw out her palms, but then she saw something flash before her eyes. In the next instant, both her shoulders were slapped by the man. She felt all her strength leave her arms, and they fell feebly down.

“Hmph! You have to step over my dead body before you can hurt my grandson!” Li Chunyang roared as his aura exploded and he took a step forward, shaking the whole platform. Then, he waved his fists, throwing two fireballs toward the black-clad man.

“A mere one-star Martial King! Back off!” The man gave a contemptuous snort and pushed out his palms. Two jets of air pierced through the void and stopped the fireballs, knocking them back.

In consternation Li Chunyang twisted his body and dodged the fireballs, which then smashed straight onto the platform, collapsing half of it instantly. The flames that fell under the platform began to lick and crawl up the supporting structure.

Xiao Qingwang had been watching quietly beneath the platform. Suddenly, he narrowed his eyes and gave the horseback a light slap before jumping up into the air and flying toward the platform. As soon as he landed, he punched out eight jets of air that roared like dragons as they rushed at the black-clad man.

“An eight-stars Martial King? Xiao Qingwang!”

The man was shocked. Not daring to be careless, he quickly drew a circle in front of his chest with both hands, causing beams of golden light to shot out of his fists toward the jets of air.

Bam!

The attacks collided and created an explosion on the platform, throwing many courtiers to the ground. For a moment, the air rang with screams and shrieks. Meanwhile, teams of warriors rushed over and stood before Qin Zheng and others, protecting them from any possible assaults. However, in the face of a battle between two Martial Kings, they all looked horrified, fearing that they would be slain just by random attacks.

Chapter 119: The Curtain Falls

Under the attacks from two Martial Kings, the whole platform began to collapse, its structure breaking and falling apart. Seeing that, Yuan Hao’s face flickered, and he cried out lightly, “Su Xiang!”

“Understood, Master Yuan Hao!” As he said that, Su Xiang’s lazy eyes gleamed, and he took a step forward, treading gently toward the center of the platform. Suddenly, an invisible force burst out of him, stabilizing the collapsing platform.

“A Martial Grandmaster!”

Startled, both Xiao Qingwang and the black-clad man stopped their attacks and retreated to either sides of the platform, staring at each other warily and not daring to move again.

Meanwhile, Zhou Yushan’s face fell, and he said in a dark voice, “Master Yuan Hao, do you also want to intervene in my business?”

Yuan Hao said lightly, "I just don't want to fall down from the platform."

"I know you want to have a one-on-one fight with me, but do you really have to create such a scene?" Yunxiao sneered. "Since you want it so badly, I'll give it to you. But, it will be three months later, and you get to pick the location."

"Yunxiao!" Luo Yunshang stared at him in terror, aghast. Just like her, Zhou Yushan was a five-stars Martial Lord, and she did not believe he could advance so fast in just three months.

Zhou Yushan was boiling with rage when he saw the look in her eyes. "Fine! Three months later, on the Golden Crow Stage of the Firecrow Empire, I will make you kneel and kowtow to me, begging me to spare your pathetic life!"

He gave Luo Yunshang a cold glance, then he said with a sinister smile, "And this woman! If you lose, she will be mine!"

Luo Yunshang's face fell, and she flew into a rage.

Yunxiao was a little confused. "What does it have anything to do with me whether Yunshang is yours or not? Not to mention we still don't know if you can defeat me!"

A frivolous look crept up Zhou Yushan's face as he said, "Stop pretending in front of me! I've seen countless girls, and I know from the way she looked at you and the concern in her eyes that she likes you! Hmph! Only a powerful man like me can enjoy such a beautiful girl! A toad like you can stop dreaming!"

Taken aback, Yunxiao hurriedly turned to look at Yunshang, who was blushing with embarrassment and rage.

No longer able to contain her fury, Luo Yunshang produced her axe and smashed it out with all her might. The weapon shone like a huge sun, making everyone who looked at it feel a stab of pain in the eyes.

Zhou Yushan did not expect her strength to be so great. But, since he was also a five-stars Martial Lord, he had no fear of her attack. However, just as he was about to strike, he saw Su Xiang lightly grab the axe and take it in his grip. Then, the entire light vanished. "If you continue to fight, the platform will collapse," the Martial Grandmaster said in a faint tone.

"Haha!" Staring at Luo Yunshang, Zhou Yushan licked his lips and laughed. "What a hot-tempered girl! I like you! Wait for me, I'll bring you under control three months later! Tsk, tsk... let's go!"

He laughed and turned to leave, but he paused as soon as he stepped on the deck, with his eyes resting on Qin Ruxue, who was standing not too far away. He gave her a few glances and smiled, reaching out a hand and curling his fingers like a claw. Qin Ruxue immediately felt like she was trapped by a great force, which pulled her over to the chariot.

"AHHHH! Save me, Father!" Frightened, Qin Ruxue cried out for help.

Zhou Yushan laughed and pulled her into his arms before turning and walking up toward the chariot. "Since I can't get the woman now, I'll have myself a little girl to quench my thirst. As the princess of a state, you are eligible to be my concubine. When we return, I'll marry you as my twenty-third concubine. Haha!"

"The Song of Blue Lotus Sword!"

While everyone was still in shock, Yunxiao had already drawn the sword of Springwater and bolted over.

"You are looking for death!" The black-clad man snorted coldly and threw out a palm, but he saw something flash, and he was shocked to find in the next instant that his attack hit only on an afterimage, and not the actual target.

"How's that possible!"

Even as the man was stunned, Yunxiao had already rushed in front of Zhou Yushan, making a slash with the sword. A huge blue lotus flower bloomed, smashing down hard at the other.

“You are looking for death!”

Zhou Yushan was both shocked and furious. He could not believe a mere three-stars Martial Master would attack him so desperately. In a fit of rage, he flicked open his folding fan and swung it, sending out waves of force that transformed into powerful winds, piercing the blue lotus flower.

The difference in their cultivation base was, after all, too tremendous. Yunxiao moved quickly in the air and dodged a few attacks, and then slashed out his sword again, ignoring the rest of the force waves. It was clearly an internecine fighting style.

“What? Little bast*rd!”

With his left hand holding Qin Ruxue and his right hand just having swung out the folding fan, Zhou Yushan could not attack again. So, he hurriedly turned and rushed toward the chariot.

Whoosh!

A streak of light flashed through the void, and in the next instant, a long gash was cut across Zhou Yushan’s back, with blood oozing out of it. Meanwhile, Yunxiao was also hit by the force waves, which left several bloody holes on his body.

Only then did everyone respond. The black-clad man rushed over in rage. It was a great shame to him that he had allowed a mere Martial Master to injure his Young Master right in front of him.

But, Xiao Qingwang and Li Chunyang struck out at the same time, throwing attacks at the man and forcing him to save himself first.

Yunxiao landed lightly on the bronze deck, his eyes shining with fierce killing intent. Paying no mind to his injury, he made a dash again. His sword turned into a bolt of lightning as it went straight for Zhou Yushan’s throat.

Frightened by his aggressive look, Zhou Yushan retreated in a hurry. Suddenly, a red figure flashed out of the chariot; a slender hand stretched out of it and pinched the sword with two fingers, and then a force trapped Yunxiao instantly, locking him in place.

“Zhou Yushan, if you dare to touch even a hair of Ruxue, I swear I will make your whole Zhou Family vanish from the Heavenly Martial Continent!”

Yunxiao’s eyes burned with rage, and his towering murderous air condensed into plumes of dark purple smoke in the sky. “I will kill everyone in your family, old and young and newborn!” he screamed at the top of his lungs.

Upon hearing that, Zhou Yushan’s heart skipped a beat, and he bellowed, “Kill him! Hong Ling, kill him right now!”

The owner of the slender arm only revealed half of her face in the chariot. She sighed faintly and let loose of the sword, then flicked it with a finger, which knocked the sword out of Yunxiao’s grip and threw him back to the platform.

The black-clad man was relieved when he saw Yunxiao fail to further injure his Young Master. He ignored Xiao Qingwang and Li Chunyang as he lightly kicked his foot on the ground and flew back into the chariot.

Meanwhile, beams of blue light shot out of all three chariots and wrapped them around. “Why didn’t you kill him? Why didn’t you kill him!” Zhou Yushan’s furious roars could still be faintly heard.

“Are you all right, Yunxiao?”

Several people gathered over. Looking at the few wounds on his body that kept gushing blood, they turned pale with shock.

Yunxiao’s face was dark with rage, and he did not feel any pain. He just gave Su Xiang, who was standing in the middle of the platform, a cold glance. The Martial Grandmaster felt his heart tremble, and his eyes were filled with astonishment. He could not understand why the glance of a mere Martial Master could affect his mood.

He knew Yunxiao was blaming him for not helping. Among all the people present, he was the only person who could save Qin Ruxue just now. But, he did not think a princess of a small state was important enough for him to offend someone from the Zhou Family. However, after Yunxiao glanced at him, he felt a little regret for some reason, as if he had just missed some tremendous opportunity.

“Wang Chen, I have a chance to get Yang Di to do something for me, right?” Yunxiao asked in a deep voice.

Wang Chen paused, and then answered hurriedly, “Yes!”

Yunxiao’s face was extremely pale. “Good. I will transfer the chance to you, but the condition is that you have to ensure Qin Ruxue’s safety for the next three months. Are you willing to accept it?”

Everyone was shocked. He was willing to give up such a tremendous opportunity for something as small as this?

Su Xiang truly regretted it now. Had Yunxiao told him this earlier, he would have taken Qin Ruxue back even if he had to kill Zhou Yushan! Yang Di was a seventh-tier alchemist, and he could use the chance to ask him to refine a few medicinal pills, which could help him make the breakthrough and become a Martial Emperor!

“Yes! I am willing to accept it!” Wang Chen narrowed his eyes and said in a deep voice, “Can I trust your words?”

With a wan smile, Yunxiao said, “Yes, I will honor my words!”

Wang Chen’s eyes flashed with excitement as he said, “Great! I’ll now send a letter to my family and ask them to bring Princess Ruxue back no matter what.” Then, he turned to Yuan Hao and others as he said, “Before it’s too late, Master Yuan Hao, I’m leaving for the Firecrow Empire first.”

Yuan Hao nodded with envy in his eyes and sighed in his heart, thinking why such a fortune never came to him.

After Wang Chen left, the platform was shrouded in a gloomy mood. Although Qin Ruxue had little place in their hearts, Yunxiao's forbidding face depressed everyone.

Qin Zheng smiled and said, "Don't worry, Yunxiao. Since Wang Chen has agreed to help, Ruxue will be fine. Zhou, Wang, Mo, Cheng, the strength of each of the four super families in the Firecrow Empire is greater than a state. The Zhou Family will never fall out with the Wang Family over Ruxue, and the Wang Family will also do their best to save her, so that they can ask Yang Di to do something for them."

Yunxiao made no answer. Jia Rong had already come over and tended the few wounds on his body. He just stood there blankly, with the killing intent in his eyes growing stronger and stronger. All the people around him felt discomfort, as if the door to hell had been opened.

Most of the courtiers had fallen off the platform and were caught by the soldiers, and they were now looking up at them.

"Don't think too much...There will always be a solution," said Qin Zheng. "I've abdicated, and Qin Yue, you are now the crown prince of Tianshui. The enthronement ceremony will be held in three days!" Then, he turned to look at Qin Yang, whose face was bloodless, and growled, "Bring him away and lock him up!"

Qin Yue was extremely excited and he could hardly contain his joy. After all the ups and downs, the dust had finally settled.

All the military officers, soldiers, and courtiers beneath the platform immediately cried out, "Long live Your Majesty! Long live the Crown Prince!"

Chapter 120: Divination

Upon hearing the thunderous cheers, the common people in the capital breathed a sigh of relief. Soon, the shops on the streets opened their doors again, and the martial law ended. However, all kinds of rumors also began to spread in the streets and alleys, and the people were all chatting about what had happened.

Yuan Hao wanted to discuss something about alchemy with Yunxiao, but when he saw the dark look on the latter's face, he gave up the idea. After congratulating Zhang Qingfan and Xu Han, he brought his men and left, reporting back to the Firecrow Empire's alchemist association.

Soon after, the whole capital was bustling with activity. Every house was hanging lanterns and putting up decorations, preparing for the ceremony that would be held in three days.

Some of the courtiers joined the preparation, while others who had chosen the wrong side all looked sad and sorrowful. They had been busy as well, hoping to board Qin Yue's ship by asking help from others, but they were all rejected. Since then, they fidgeted day and night as if a great disaster was imminent.

And the Li Family had undoubtedly become the contributor of the highest prestige. A lot of people wanted to curry favor with them, but they were all stopped by guards at least a hundred meters away from the Li Residence, and no one was allowed to enter.

In the imperial palace, Qin Yue had changed into a five-claw dragon robe, and was pacing back and forth within the throne room, sitting down on the throne and standing up repeatedly while laughing.

Bai Mou had removed the sheet of thin satin that veiled her face. There were only two of them in the throne room, so she could be more relaxed. With a happy smile, she said, "After working for so many years, you have finally fulfilled your dream."

"You get the most credit, Bai Mou," Qin Yue said in a gentle voice. "It's been hard for you all these years."

Her face blushed a little, and she said shyly, "No, it should be Young Master Yun."

Qin Yue's face flickered suddenly, and his eyes flashed with a glimmer of light. "How do you think I should reward Li Yunxiao? Make him a king? Then what land should I give him?"

The smile on Bai Mou's face froze. "Are you worried about him?"

Qin Yue stood up with a worried look on his face and paced down the throne room. "Li Yunxiao's strength is mysterious, he has the support of two fourth-tier alchemists and two Martial Kings, and almost all the generals in the army are his men. If I make him a king, who will own the sovereignty of Tianshui in the future, the Qin Family or Li Family?"

Bai Mou was taken aback by his cold voice. "Your Highness, are you planning to get rid of Li Yunxiao?" she said in terror.

He gave her a look as a wan smile crossed his lips, "I do have this idea, but I lack the strength and courage!"

Shocked, Bai Mou said in a hurry, "Your Highness, you must not speak so freely. If others know..."

Qin Yue smiled and cut her off, "We are the only two people here, and I have only told you about this. Last time, you had performed divination for me and predicted that I would meet the benefactor of my life who would help me ascend to the throne. That prediction has proven to be true. Can you perform another divination on Li Yunxiao and see if he will pose a threat to me in the future?"

Bai Mou felt a warmth in her heart, knowing that he only told her about such an important thing. She gave him a sweet smile and said, "Sure, I will do it again!"

Divination was a kind of mystic art that hurt Primordial Qi, and some advanced predictions could directly hurt the diviner's lifespan. Bai Mou knew she could not do it too many times, but she did it anyway for the sake of the one she loved.

She took out an ancient turtle shell from her ring and placed it on the floor. Then, she bit her fingertip and used her blood to draw several strange formations around it. Finally, she took out a few gold coins and placed them down. When she was done, she slapped the turtle shell with a palm. In the blink of an eye, shafts of golden light broke out of the formations, and the four golden coins jumped into the air, spinning rapidly around the shell.

Qin Yue narrowed his eyes slightly and watched from the side quietly, his face seemingly flickering with the shifting golden light cast on it.

Bai Mou's pupils began to turn golden, as if she had established some kind of connection with the turtle shell. Soon after, the patterns on the shell seemed to be activated, as they began to reveal ancient, difficult to understand characters that jumped out and hovered in the void.

Just after the third character jumped out, however, the void over the shell seemed to be disturbed by some force and began to quiver. Bai Mou's face turned as pale as a sheet instantly, with beads of sweat rolling down her cheeks.

"Bai Mou, what's the matter?" Qin Yue was startled. He had seen her performing divination before, but he had never seen such a sign.

Puke!

Unable to hold on any longer, Bai Mou coughed out a mouthful of golden blood and fell on her back. The shell's golden light faded away instantly, and the four coins fell back on the floor, losing all their color.

"Bai Mou!" Qin Yue hurried over and helped her up. "What happened?"

Some color had returned to her face, but her eyes were still filled with fear. In a trembling voice, she said, "I can't see it...I can't see anything. And there is a voice that keeps telling me in my heart that...if I continue, I will die!"

Astounded, Qin Yue quickly held Bai Mou in his arms and said, "Don't be afraid! We won't perform any more divination!"

With the look of terror still lingered in her eyes, Bai Mou said, "I've heard my Master say before that some people's souls are the manifestation of the stars in the sky, and unless we have mastered the arts of celestials, we can never predict their future even at the cost of our entire lifespan. Could this Li Yunxiao be a heaven's will?"

That gave Qin Yue a shock. Normally, the so-called heaven's will referred to the sovereignty given by heaven, and only an emperor could address himself as heaven's will. But, it was only a title used to fool and rule over the common people, and even the emperor did not believe it.

Suddenly, a faint voice came from the back of the throne room, "In that case, there is nothing to worry about."

“Who goes there?”

Qin Yue and Bai Mou’s faces fell at the same time. The contents of their conversation were top secret, and they did not expect someone to be eavesdropping! If what they said were learned by Yunxiao, they would have to face serious consequences!

Zhang Qingfan pushed Qin Zheng out in a wheelchair. Qin Zheng’s face was beaming with health, and he seemed to have suddenly become several decades younger.

“Father? You...” Qin Yue froze for a moment, then said in surprise, “You look very healthy!”

Qin Zheng gave him a bitter smile, “Don’t be surprised, I can’t live much longer. I asked Qingfan to give me some stimulating drugs to keep me fresh at the end of my life.”

Shocked, Qin Yue asked, “Why?”

Qin Zheng sighed, “I’ve been in a daze over the years and have gradually forgotten a lot of things. I want to teach you something before I die.” He gave Bai Mou a look as he sighed again and said, “You were too careless in your conversation.”

Qin Yue and Bai Mou’s faces flickered. Looking at Zhang Qingfan’s cold face, they felt their hearts race. Everyone knew the other’s reverence for Yunxiao.

Zhang Qingfan knew at a glance what they were thinking, and he sneered, “Don’t worry, I won’t tell Young Master Yun! Even if I did, he will most likely just laugh it off.” His face grew cold as he went on, “But, I advise you never to plan about plotting against Young Master Yun in the future. Don’t even think about this dangerous idea. Otherwise, you will have to face an endless disaster!”

“Understood!” Qin Yue bowed his head and answered in a low voice.

Qin Zheng gave him a look as he smiled and said, “I know you must be a little dissatisfied, but Qingfan is right. You can plot against or kill anyone in Tianshui, but never offend those from the Li Family! Li Yunxiao is only fifteen years old, but he is already a three-stars Martial Master and a third-tier alchemist.

No one has ever achieved something so incredible! A man like this will not stay in a small place like Tianshui. The wide world out there is where he is supposed to go.”

Qin Yue paused for a moment, then he said, “Thank you for the advice, Father. I will confer him the title of a king in tomorrow’s enthronement ceremony. Which piece of land should I reward him?”

“Just a random piece of land, but try pick the most fertile one.”

“A random one?” Qin Yue did not understand.

Zhang Qingfan could not help but shake his head. “Your Highness, don’t you think the stronger Young Master Yun is, the better it is for you? When he becomes a fourth-tier alchemist or even higher, do you think both he and his family will still be interested in the throne or land? In fact, I believe after Your Highness ascends the throne, the Li Family will gradually withdraw from the political scene of Tianshui.”

Qin Zheng said, “Qingfan is right. Be relaxed, no matter how flowers bloom and wilt, take it naturally no matter how clouds flow high and low. This is the way of life pursued by experts like them, and it has been proven over time. Alas, it’s a pity that I didn’t understand this in the past, which caused Yang Di to leave with resentment and cost Tianshui its greatest opportunity.”

“Your Highness, try to think about Jutian Sect’s position and you will understand,” Zhang Qingfan added. “In the beginning, Jutian Sect was also just an aristocratic family of the Firecrow Empire, but it has now completely withdrawn from politics and become a great power on the Heavenly Martial Continent, a super existence that we normal people need to look up to.”

“I understand now!” Qin Yue saw that in an instant, and the knot in his heart resolved. He quickly bowed and said, “Thank you, Father and Master Zhang!”

“You are still young and have a lot to learn. It’s a pity that I’d been bewitched by the throne over the years, which had led to the conflict between you and your elder brother. And now, I don’t have much time left to teach you... Qingfan, Commander Bai, you may leave us for now. I’d like to talk to Yue’er alone.”

Zhang Qingfan sighed. He took one look at his old friend, who had been with him for many years, and then left the throne room with Bai Mou, leaving the father and the son behind.

Several hours later, Qin Yue walked out of the hall, his face sad and tears in his eyes. There was a lonely look on Zhang Qingfan's face as he sighed under his breath.

Shocked, Bai Mou asked, "His Majesty..."

Qin Yue breathed a long sigh as he looked up at the sky and said, "Father passed away!"