

The Heavens 221

Chapter 221: A Newcomer to the Dao of Alchemy

Time flashed by. Soon two months had passed. Meng Hao still resided in District One Valley One. However, he was no longer located next to the stream. On one of the mountains that formed the valley, a narrow path wound up to the peak, where there was an Immortal's Cave.

Clouds drifted past its green, stone door. Standing there, one could see the entirety of the valley below. The spiritual energy was much thicker, and within the mountain itself was a vein of fire.

This was the Immortal's Cave that had been bestowed upon Meng Hao after he was raised to master alchemist.

Only master alchemists could live in the upper reaches of the mountains. There, separated from the apprentice alchemists, they could enjoy the special privileges they had earned as master alchemists. For example, they could seek apprentice alchemists to serve as assistants. Furthermore, for slight compensation, they could acquire various pill formulas and even medicinal plants from the Sect.

The only demand placed upon master alchemists was that they meet the monthly quota of medicinal pills.

In order to receive less common medicinal plants and pill formulas, they would have to turn over a greater quantity of medicinal pills. The more they provided, the more they were rewarded.

After becoming a master alchemist, it was also possible to engage in trade with other master alchemists. All of this was designed to improve knowledge and familiarity with alchemy, and to increase the quality of the medicinal pills produced.

On this particular day, a roaring sound filled Meng Hao's Immortal's Cave. Despite the door being sealed, the sound still echoed out far and wide. Down in the valley, the apprentice alchemists held their tongues. They looked up toward Meng Hao's Immortal's Cave, unable to contain their admiration and envy.

During the two months since Meng Hao became a master alchemist, this type of roaring sound could be heard frequently.

Inside, Meng Hao was covered with filth and grime. It was with a bitter laugh that he watched the pill furnace in front of him explode. He sighed, flicking his sleeve to collect up the bits of the broken pill furnace, and the remnants of the medicinal pill he had been concocting. He frowned as he sat there on the stone platform.

“Concocting pills is not easy,” he said. “The slightest lack of control of the earthly fire can ruin the pill and stress the pill furnace to the point of destruction. In the past two months, I’ve already blown up forty seven pill furnaces...” The sleeve of his long, black gown was embroidered with a tiny pill furnace. This set of clothing representing his status as a master alchemist.

“I’ve improved quite a bit, though. In the past two or three days I’ve only exploded one.” He looked at the seven or eight pill bottles lined up next to him, and his eyes shined contentedly. The pills inside these bottles were the accumulation of his two months of practice. They were only useful for the Qi Condensation stage, but the feeling of making something with his own hands left Meng Hao feeling very happy.

“Concocting pills is definitely not easy, and is clearly connected to latent talent. What’s even more important though is... concocting pills is expensive! No wonder there aren’t very many master alchemists...” Meng Hao sighed emotionally. He hadn’t felt this way back when he was an apprentice alchemist. When he had worked with Li Tao, he had only seen the respect given by outsiders, as well as Li Tao’s profits when he concocted pills for Inner Sect disciples.

After becoming a master alchemist, though, he realized that behind every truly successful alchemist existed a mountain of spent Spirit Stones. That was the only way to achieve true success. Of course, latent talent was also necessary; with only ordinary latent talent, the Spirit Stones necessary to succeed as a master alchemist could fund a small Sect.

“A pill furnace costs twenty thousand spirit stones... and that’s for the lowest level pill furnace provided by the Sect. And I’ve destroyed forty seven...” When Meng Hao thought of this, and the fact that he had to pay for all the pill furnaces, his heart ached.

“Pill furnaces are only one aspect,” he thought. “Concocting pills requires medicinal herbs, which are even more costly. Sometimes a single pill requires a combination of dozens of medicinal herbs. When you add them all together, it’s not cheap. That’s not the worst, though... What’s really killing me is... my success rate is only one in ten...” He took a deep breath as he thought of the whole situation. “The more expensive the medicinal plants, the more ancient the pill formula, the higher quality the pill... the more likely I am to fail.” He sighed emotionally.

“However, now that I’m a master alchemist, there are also a lot of perks. For example, this medallion.” He slapped his bag of holding to produce a white medallion.

It felt cold in his hands, and seemed to be made of jade... and yet not. A pill furnace was carved on one side, along with calligraphy that read “Blacklist.”

“Pill Blacklist!” Meng Hao looked at the command medallion, and his eyes filled with a strange light. This wasn’t the first time he had taken out the medallion to look at. Every time he did, his heart filled with a feeling of veneration for the position of master alchemist.

The Pill Blacklist medallion was a right given to all master alchemists by the Sect. Only one was distributed per alchemist, and could be used twice. It was the ultimate expression of the respect demanded by master alchemists, and was enough to strike fear into the heart of any member of the Violet Qi Division.

One of the main reasons that master alchemists had such a high position compared to the Violet Qi Division was because of the Pill Blacklist. The thought of being added to the Pill Blacklist would cause most Cultivators to feel an intense terror.

There was only one purpose to the Pill Blacklist. Any Violet Qi Division disciple whose name was added to the list, would be refused service by all master alchemists for a time period of one hundred years.

This had been a Sect rule for countless ages, and a power possessed solely by the East Pill Division. This arrangement caused master alchemists to command incredible respect within the Violet Fate Sect.

Because of this, few would dare to offend a master alchemist. To offend one master alchemist was equivalent to offending them all.

The rule had existed since ancient times, and in the past one thousand years, had not been exercised by very many master alchemists. During that time, the list had never exceeded a few hundred people. Considering there were nearly ten thousand disciples within the Inner Sect, that wasn’t a very large number.

To master alchemists, NOT using the Pill Blacklist made it that much more of a deterrence. After all, after the second usage, its effectiveness vanished.

The names of everyone on the one hundred years Pill Blacklist were branded onto the medallion. After becoming a master alchemist, Meng Hao earned the right to use the power of the medallion, but of course, was also required to respect the arrangement. Currently, there were thirteen people who had been Pill Blacklisted; for one hundred years, no master alchemist, Meng Hao included, would concoct pills for these thirteen people.

He looked at the Pill Blacklist medallion for a moment longer, then put it away. After a moment's thought, he retrieved a jade slip and branded it with some information. Then he ignited it; in the blink of an eye, it disappeared.

Not much time passed before he heard a voice from outside the Immortal's cave. He lifted a finger, and the door to the Immortal's Cave opened. A pretty girl entered who appeared to be about eighteen or nineteen years old. As soon as she entered the Immortal's Cave, her nose wrinkled as if she were gagging on the odor of the exploded pill furnace.

"Alchemist Fang," she said, smiling, "I was feeling a bit confused yesterday. I was wondering why so many days had passed since you asked me for a replacement furnace...." She produced a brand new pill furnace from her bag of holding and handed it over to Meng Hao with a smile.

The girl's name was Lin Rui, and she was in charge of daily affairs for master alchemists. Her Cultivation base was not very high, but according to the rumors, one of her Clan members was a Violet Furnace Lord. Furthermore, she had a pleasing personality. Therefore, many of the master alchemists had taken a liking to her. Over time, she came to take care of whatever the various master alchemists needed.

For example, during the past two months, she had delivered pill furnaces to Meng Hao on forty six different occasions. Today would be the forty seventh.

Feeling slightly embarrassed, Meng Hao cleared his throat. He accepted the pill furnace, along with a jade slip that she handed over. Now that he was a master alchemist, he didn't actually have to pay up front for pill furnaces, medicinal pills, pill formulas. The Sect would provide them willingly. However, that didn't mean that they were free. They could be acquired on credit. But eventually, he had to provide compensation in the form of medicinal pills.

"How much do I owe?" he asked, looking at the jade slip with a frown.

“Including today, you owe 6,757 Qi Condensation Pills to the Sect.” She winked at him, and covered her mouth as she laughed. Then she continued on in a conciliatory tone: “It’s not a big deal. You actually don’t owe very much. The most I’ve seen someone owe is 1,730,000. That much... would probably require a lifetime of pill concocting to pay back....”

Hearing the enormous number caused Meng Hao to stare in shock. Then he smiled wryly, shook his head, and sighed. He took out his own jade slip and inscribed the information on it, then handed the original back to the girl.

“Alchemist Fang, just keep working hard. Um... the most recent Pill Delivery Day has already passed. Do you think you could provide a bit more than the quota? If you do, it will make it easier to make an explanation.” Lin Rui’s smile was like a flower. It was little wonder the master alchemists all liked her. Of course, Meng Hao was the youngest master alchemist by far, so every time she came here she would find opportunities to make fun of him a little. She seemed to love it when Fang Mu blushed with embarrassment.

Meng Hao sighed, then picked up one of the pill bottles. Inside were five Qi Condensation Pills. He handed them to the girl. It was his first time turning over pills toward his quota.

The girl covered her mouth as she giggled. She took the pills and left. Meng Hao watched her depart, after which he sealed the cave door. He held the pill furnace up in his hand and sighed.

“If things keep going like this, considering the level of my pill concocting, there won’t be any Inner Sect disciples from the Violet Qi Division who come looking for me. I’m not going to make any profits whatsoever, and I won’t be able to get any new pill formulas.”

The most important thing was to get invitations from Violet Qi Division Inner Sect disciples to concoct pills. Doing so would provide more chances to encounter new pill formulas. The more invitations, the more pill formulas. Over time, his skill in alchemy would grow increasingly high. Not only would he be using medicinal pills that weren’t essentially on loan from the Sect, but also, he would make a handsome profit.

As far as the embezzlement factor, well that had basically become a rule. What could the Violet Qi Division do about that?

Meng Hao took a deep breath as he put the pill furnace down and picked up one of the pill bottles. He opened it up and looked at the medicinal pills inside. They were smooth and round, and spiritual energy wafted up from them. Meng Hao slowly began to frown.

“Perhaps there are some mistakes with my concoction techniques. If there aren’t, then how come it takes so much effort to concoct pills? When Li Tao does it, it seems so much easier.” Lost in thought and muttering to himself, Meng Hao stood up and began to pace around the Immortal’s Cave. Suddenly, he stopped, and his eyes began to glitter.

He lifted his right hand, and the pill furnace floated over. Eyes shining brightly, he slapped his bag of holding, and ten medicinal plants emerged. His hands flew as he catalyzed them and then extracted the sap from them. In the space of about ten breaths, he prepared all the ingredients and then placed them in the furnace.

He stamped his foot lightly on the ground, after which an area just in front of him began to glow red. An intense heat emanated out. He suspended the pill furnace about three inches above the bright red spot and began to gesture incantation symbols. The pill furnace then floated up a bit higher, and then lower, going back and forth at various intervals. Soon, a medicinal aroma filled the Immortal’s Cave.

As it did, Meng Hao sat down cross-legged. His right hand then reached out and pushed down onto the pill furnace. He closed his eyes and began to pour spiritual energy into it, beginning another catalyzing process.

This catalyzing technique he had learned from Li Tao. Not only did it increase the medicinal age, it... was actually required for the pill concocting process.

Soon, Meng Hao’s eyes glittered even more brightly. According to the changes occurring within the pill furnace, he adjusted things here and there. He occasionally added some medicinal plants, or removed sediment from the pill furnace. Previously, he had required ten or twelve hours to finish concocting, but this time, after only six hours, he flicked his sleeve and removed the pill furnace from the heat. He opened the lid, and as the medicinal aroma brushed across his face, he removed four Qi Condensation Pills from inside.

The pills were still soft, but as he removed them, they quickly began to harden, dried by the air.

“I was wrong...” He looked carefully at the relatively crude pills he had just produced, and picked up one of the pill bottles which contained another set of pills, ones he had painstakingly made to be as perfect as possible. After comparing the two types of Qi Condensation Pills, his eyes suddenly filled with enlightenment.

“These exquisitely produced pills wore me out. The medicinal strength is clearly much higher, perhaps seventy or eighty percent. The crude pills, on the other hand, only have a medicinal strength of about thirty or forty percent.

“My previous refining technique was too strenuous. If I had known that I could make pills like I did today, then I wouldn’t have wasted so many pill furnaces.” He was lost in thought for a moment as he put away the Qi Condensation Pills.

“Such a large difference in quality, about double.... Perhaps it has something to do with the time spent refining the pills. However, it shouldn’t have that much of an effect. After all, I’ve seen Li Tao concoct pills both for himself and others, and there is never much of a difference.”

Meng Hao frowned and muttered to himself for a moment, before his eyes finally glittered again.

“Could it be that it has something to do with my Perfect Foundation? My spiritual power belongs to me and does not circulate back into Heaven and Earth. It’s branded as being mine alone. My five Dao Pillars can trample upon the Foundation Establishment stage. When I use it to concoct pills, it’s infected with my aura.... Maybe that’s why the pill furnaces kept blowing up, because the medicinal pills I was refining could be classified as Perfect?” His eyes continued to shine as he pondered the matter, eventually coming to the conclusion that his theory was correct.

He continued to think about the matter for some time, when suddenly, his expression flickered. He looked down at the bag of the Cosmos. From within the blood mask, the voice of the meat jelly transmitted into his mind. It sounded weak.

“I can’t hold on any longer! I can’t continue to support your transformation! Damn me, I knew I shouldn’t have lent my transformation power to others. Meng Hao, I need to shed. I’m finished! Finished! Ah, one month. I need one month. You need to ... make sure to ... be careful....”

The meat jelly’s voice grew weaker and weaker and then finally faded into nothing. As it did, Meng Hao’s features flickered, and his real face returned.

As luck would have it, it was at this exact moment that the voice of Chu Yuyan could be heard outside his Immortal’s Cave.

“Fang Mu! Open up your Immortal’s Cave, I want to talk with you about something!”

Chapter 222: Signs of Rocking the Violet Fate Sect

Meng Hao's face tightened. All of a sudden, his features looked exactly the same as they used to. He was his old self, skin a bit dark, cultured and refined, with the air of a scholar. Within the scholar's air existed a touch of something demonic, and a hint of callousness.

Meng Hao frowned, neither lifting his head up nor paying any attention to Chu Yuyan's voice, which drifted in from outside the Immortal's Cave.

"Fang Mu!" she said again, her delicate brow furrowed. She had come with the specific purpose of thoroughly examining Fang Mu to find out why he irritated her so much.

However, the door to the Immortal's Cave was sealed shut. No sound emerged to indicate Fang Mu was inside. Looking far from pleased, Chu Yuyan gave a cold harrumph. Before coming she had asked around and determined that Fang Mu hadn't left his Immortal's Cave for days. Along the way, she had also encountered Lin Rui, who said she had just come from Meng Hao's after delivering a pill furnace.

"You close the door, don't come out, and won't even talk?" she said coldly, her eyes narrowing. "Don't tell me there's something you don't want me to know about, is there Fang Mu?"

Within the Immortal's Cave, Meng Hao frowned, continuing to ignore Chu Yuyan. He slapped his bag of holding to produce the blood-colored mask. He looked at it for a moment, then entered it with Spiritual Sense.

Within the world of the mask, he could see that the meat jelly seemed to have lost its shape-changing ability. It was no longer a parrot, but a simple rectangular slab of a meat jelly. It seemed completely lifeless, and a death aura even rose up from it.

It was extremely hard to the touch. After examining it for a moment, Meng Hao extracted his Spiritual Sense and sat there thoughtfully.

"According to the meat jelly, because it lent me some of its transformation ability, it now has to shed. It said one month...." He felt somewhat relieved. He could most likely last for a month, as long as he didn't let anyone see him, and didn't venture outside.

"Having Chu Yuyan outside is really annoying, though," he thought, looking up at the large door of the Immortal's Cave.

“Fang Mu, get out here right now!”

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever. He simply closed his eyes.

After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, Chu Yuyan’s eyes began to burn with rage. Something seemed off, and yet she couldn’t think of any reason why Fang Mu would do this.

“Not going to say anything, huh?” she said. “Fine. If I have to, I’ll go get a door-opening medallion and then use it to open this door. I’m going to ask one last time. Fang Mu, are you home?” She slowly began to walk away.

“I’m not home,” he said coldly, an irritated look on his face.

Hearing this, Chu Yuyan stared back in shock. She had never imagined she would get such a response. She then took a deep breath. Taking one last hateful glance at the door, she turned and transformed into a beam of light that shot off into the distance.

Having dismissed Chu Yuyan, Meng Hao pulled out the lifeless, shedding meat jelly and placed it down in front of him. He looked at it for a long moment, then sighed and closed his eyes to meditate.

After leaving Meng Hao, Lin Rui returned to the Pill Pavilion, where she made a record of the medicinal pills Meng Hao had handed over. She wrote the character “Fang” onto the pill bottle, then placed it in a pile with the bottles she had collected from other master alchemists.

After that, she paid the matter no more heed. She left the Pill Pavilion. The Pills she had collected would be organized and then delivered to the Violet Qi Division’s Honor Guard to be distributed amongst Outer Sect disciples who were in the Qi Condensation stage.

Of course, before being delivered, they would be thoroughly inspected by someone from the Violet Qi Division to ensure that all the medicinal pills were safe.

Time passed by slowly. Soon half a month was gone. Meng Hao was no longer so wasteful in his pill concocting, and actually saved quite a bit of material. No longer did his pill furnace explode, and he managed to concoct increasingly greater numbers of Qi Condensation Pills.

It was about this time that the Qi Condensation pills were taken from the Pill Pavilion and delivered to the Violet Qi division for their bi-weekly Pill Distribution.

Su Zhonglun did not have a very high Cultivation base. He was in the mid Foundation Establishment stage. Originally, he had not been a member of the Violet Qi Division, but rather an apprentice alchemist in the East Pill Division. However, in the end, he was unable to become a master alchemist. Furthermore, his Clan occupied a relatively low position within the Violet Fate Sect. Therefore, he finally decided to switch from the East Pill Division to the Violet Qi Division, and focus his Cultivation on magical techniques.

Because he had once been an apprentice alchemist, he had eventually been assigned to inspect the pills sent over for distribution. Only pills approved by him would be distributed to Outer Sect disciples.

He had been doing this for quite a long time. Furthermore, considering the pills he tested were merely Qi Condensation Pills, all Su Zhonglun needed to do was pick one up, and he would instantly be able to tell whether it was genuine, or a fake. In addition, he could very easily tell the medicinal strength of the pill.

On this particular day, the East Pill Division had just delivered a batch of pills. He sat, sipping some fragrant tea with one hand, and unsealing pill bottles with the other. One after another, he would open the bottles then place in front of his nose and sniff. It was a very leisurely task.

Behind him was a young servant who was responsible for keeping records and straightening things up.

“These Qi Condensation Pills are all pretty much the same,” said Su Zhonglun with a sigh. “There’s virtually no difference between them all. Well, they are master alchemists after all....” He picked up another bottle and unsealed the wax. Before inhaling the aroma, he drank a mouthful of tea. Then he slowly placed the bottle beneath his nose and breathed in.

As soon as he did, he suddenly stared in shock. He lowered his head and sniffed again. His eyes narrowed as he turned the bottle over and dumped the pills out into his hand. There were five of them, all Qi Condensation Pills. After examining them closely and smelling them again, a look of shock appeared on his face.

“These....” He suddenly stood up, overturning his cup of tea. He didn’t even notice that, however. His attention was completely focused on the medicinal pills.

Behind him, the young servant looked on, dumbstruck. He had never seen Su Zhonglun act like this. This was especially true of what had just happened to the tea. Tea was one of Su Zhonglun’s greatest loves, and if he himself knocked over a cup, would be punished. However, just now, Su Zhonglun didn’t seem to even notice the spilled tea.

“The medicinal strength... how could it be of this level? Who concocted this pill?” Taking a deep breath, he picked up the bottle and looked at the character “Fang” inscribed on the side.

“Fang.... There are a thousand master alchemists, and I can think of three or four surnamed Fang. Which one is it?” As he muttered to himself, he carefully placed the five Qi Condensation pills back into the pill bottle. His eyes were shining.

“I can tell that these Qi Condensation Pills have a medicinal strength far beyond ordinary,” he said, panting. “Too bad they’re only Qi Condensation Pills. If they were medicinal pills appropriate for Foundation Establishment....” His eyes glittered as he shot toward the Inner Sect.

Naturally, there was no way for Meng Hao to know how much of a stir his handful of Qi Condensation Pills had caused. At the moment, he sat in his Immortal’s Cave, frowning as he looked down at the meat jelly.

The meat jelly’s body was now completely dry and lifeless, which made Meng Hao a bit nervous. If it was still like this after the month had passed, then all the gains he had made in the Violet Fate Sect up to now would be completely for naught.

The days passed, and Meng Hao’s anxiety grew deeper. Several people had come looking for him in recent days, including Lin Rui and Li Tao. Chu Yuyan had come twice. Meng Hao had utilized various methods to stall them, but he couldn’t keep it up for too much longer.

Thankfully, about twenty days in, cracks could be seen on the surface of the meat jelly. Every day, more appeared. Faint signs of life soon became apparent. Meng Hao finally started to feel a bit relieved.

After a few more days passed, there was only one more day until the month-long period was up. The meat jelly was now almost completely covered with cracks, and life force seemed to throb within it. Meng Hao could tell that the meat jelly was still inside, struggling to break out.

Meng Hao sat there quietly, waiting for the moment when the meat jelly would burst out from within the dried husk.

The night passed silently. The next day at dawn, dense cracks completely covered the surface of the meat jelly. Splintering sounds filled the air, and it seemed as if the re-born meat jelly would burst out at any moment.

Meng Hao couldn't do anything to help, he could only watch. It was at this moment that Bai Yunlai's excited voice could suddenly be heard from outside the Immortal's Cave.

"Fang Mu, quick, open the door! I have some good news. Really good news!"

"Sir," replied Meng Hao immediately, "I'm in the middle of concocting some pills. I can't really come out. Brother Bai, please wait just a moment. Once this batch is finished, I'll come out."

"Aiya! What pills are you concocting?" replied Bai Yunlai, his voice urgent. "Hurry up and finish. I managed to get some business for you from an Inner Sect disciple. He needs some medicinal pills, and I recommended you. If you concoct the pills for him, word will get around, and then more Inner Sect disciples will come to you looking for business." Bai Yunlai and Meng Hao had developed a very good relationship during the better part of the last year. Now that Meng Hao was a master alchemist, Bai Yunlai had been attempting over and over again to get some Inner Sect disciples to accept a recommendation for him to concoct pills. However, it had been difficult to get anyone to agree. As soon as he had, he'd rushed over to find Meng Hao.

Meng Hao laughed bitterly. Before, he would have jumped eagerly at such an opportunity. This was a very important step in his growth as a master alchemist within the Sect. Having just been promoted, he had to struggle to distinguish himself from the other thousand master alchemists. In the entire past three months, not a single person had come to him looking for pill concocting.

If he didn't take advantage of the first opportunity, then there would never be a second....

Unfortunately, today....

Meng Hao was just about to open his mouth, when suddenly, his expression flickered. He looked at the meat jelly for the space of a few breaths. Outside, Bai Yunlai suddenly heard a thunderous boom from inside the Immortal's Cave.

It filled the entire valley, causing the mountains to tremble. Anyone inside the valley would have been able to hear it, and it attracted quite a bit of attention. Bai Yunlai stared in shock. His ears rang, and it took a long moment for him to regain his composure.

He took a deep breath, and stepped back a pace, his heart trembling in fear. He had no idea what pill Meng Hao was concocting to have produced such an uproar. However, not much time passed before the door of the Immortal's Cave opened. Fang Mu appeared from within, smiling.

“In my haste, I exploded the pill furnace,” he said. “But, that doesn't matter. I have more. Brother Bai, let's go!”

Chapter 223: How Alchemist Fang Carries Himself

Bai Yunlai looked at Meng Hao and said, “Should I find you an apprentice alchemist?” At the moment, Meng Hao's status was different than before. He was a master alchemist; regardless of whether he walked about in the East Pill Division or the Violet Qi Division, his position was much the same as an Inner Sect disciple. He was extremely important.

According to some of the long-standing rules of the Violet Fate Sect, master alchemists were equal to Inner Sect disciples of the Violet Qi Division. In reality, however, their position was a bit higher.

“There's no need,” said Meng Hao with a slight smile. He descended the mountain with Bai Yunlai, then headed toward the Violet Qi Division. On the way, Bai Yunlai explained the situation. The person who had requested a pill to be concocted occupied a high position in the Inner Sect. However, despite being Chosen, he wasn't able to ask for help from a Furnace Lord. Furthermore, his reputation was not very good, so most master alchemists weren't willing to help him.

The East Pill Division occupied a relatively aloof position; any master alchemist had the right to refuse a request. If they did, the Inner Sect disciples of the Violet Qi Division would be helpless to do anything about it. This particular Chosen had very few other options. Of the master alchemists who were willing to concoct pills for him, none met up to his standards.

Bai Yunlai was aware of this, and figured that it was a good opportunity for Fang Mu. Even if it ended in failure, this Chosen couldn't do anything whatsoever against the East Pill Division. Therefore, Bai Yunlai had hurried over to find Meng Hao.

After hearing the explanation, Meng Hao thought for a moment and then asked, “What pill does he want concocted?”

“He didn’t say. You can ask when we get there. My status doesn’t afford me the right to ask. In any case, Ding Yong [1] is a Chosen of the Violet Qi Division. He wouldn’t answer me even if I did ask.” Bai Yunlai sighed.

Meng Hao nodded. As they passed through the various valleys, the scene from moments ago played out in his head. The incredible noise had been caused by the meat jelly breaking out. As soon as it appeared in its reborn state, it surprisingly didn’t seem interested in talking. It quickly changed Meng Hao’s appearance back to that of Fang Mu’s, and then flew back into the blood-colored mask to sleep.

Now, it slumbered just as the Blood Mastiff did. After a quick inspection, Meng Hao came to the conclusion that it would wake up in a few months. With that, he paid it no more attention. Then, it was with great excitement that he quickly gathered up the shed skin which had exploded moments before.

The shed skin was extremely tough. Even with Meng Hao’s Cultivation base, he had no way of breaking even a single piece. Since it had come from the meat jelly, Meng Hao considered it to be a magical item. Not having time to examine it in detail, he had put it away and then walked out of the Immortal’s Cave.

It didn’t take long for Meng Hao and Bai Yunlai to reach the valley which connected the East Pill Division and the Violet Qi Division. Waiting for them there was an arrogant looking young man, who currently had his hands clasped behind his back and was looking up into the sky.

This was Ding Yong. He wore a red-colored robe, which flashed in the sunlight, and actually emitted a violet aura. The year Meng Hao had joined the Violet Fate Sect, he had learned that regardless of East Pill Division or Violet Qi Division, violet-colored Qi was to be treated with respect. Therefore, even though this young man didn’t wear the violet robes of a Conclave disciple, the fact that his clothes emitted a violet aura indicated that he had a very high position within the sect. He was Chosen of the Violet Fate Sect.

His Cultivation base was at the peak of mid Foundation Establishment, just a hair from the next level.

When Ding Yong saw Meng Hao, he frowned and said, “So you’re Fang Mu?” In his opinion, the older a master alchemist, the better. To him, Meng Hao was obviously much too young.

Meng Hao frowned coldly, stopping in place. During his time with Li Tao, he had grown accustomed to how the man handled himself in front of the Inner Sect disciples. The position of master alchemist was one that inherently demanded respect. However, it also required a bit of personal effort to earn that respect. If you set the bar too low, then others would assume your skill was lacking.

Therefore, he stood in place, then flicked his sleeve and let out a cold snort.

“Bai Yunlai,” he said coolly, “from now on, there’s no need to seek me out for such pill concocting matters as this.” Without another look at Ding Yong, he turned and began to walk off.

Bai Yunlai often worked with master alchemists, and he was also very familiar with Meng Hao. How could he not understand what was happening? Feeling secretly pleased, he allowed horror to cover his face. Then he stared accusatorially at the target of Meng Hao’s little tactic, Ding Yong, who stood there gaping.

“He’s a master alchemist of the East Pill Division, it doesn’t matter if he’s young. He placed number one in the last promotion examination! Think about it! Out of one hundred thousand apprentice alchemists, only one was selected. You... Ai, you don’t know how long I begged Alchemist Fang to come before he agreed. And here you...” Shaking his head, he turned to chase after Meng Hao.

Ding Yong laughed bitterly, then sighed. He was not like Qian Shuihen and Lu Song, who had been able to leave the Sect to gain experience. But how could he not see the way Meng Hao carried himself? When he thought about Bai Yunlai’s words, he realized that this Fang Mu’s skill in alchemy must be significant. After a moment’s thought, a smile appeared on his face, and he walked forward a few steps.

“The grand name of Alchemist Fang has long since reverberated like thunder within my ears,” he said. “Just now when I saw how young Alchemist Fang is, I was so shocked that I made a slip of the tongue. Alchemist Fang, please don’t take offense.”

Meng Hao stopped again, then turned to looked Ding Yong in the eye coldly. “What pill do you need?”

Ding Yong’s eyes glittered. Seeing Meng Hao speak in such a manner led him to believe that he must be a person with a relatively short temper. He quickly said, “Barrier Breaking Pill!”

Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever, without the slightest bit of change. Seeing this, Ding Yong came the conclusion that he was obviously very worldly wise and eccentric. Actually, Meng Hao was currently frantically searching through his memory. Unfortunately, he had no information regarding Barrier Breaking Pills.

"There are at least seventeen pill formulas for that type of pill," he said coolly. "Furthermore, there are hundreds of types of medicinal herbs that can be used, along with many complicated variations, three hundred ninety seven to be precise. The refinement process requires delicate adjustments, which further adds seventy percent to the total possible variations. Which particular version do you want concocted?" In truth, his words were a complete fabrication. Next to him Bai Yunlai gasped; actually, he too had been wondering what a Barrier Breaking Pill was. Hearing Meng Hao's words caused a look of admiration to appear in his eyes.

The way it looked to him, the words seemed to come from a perspective of extreme comprehension. At least, that was the feeling he got.

It seemed even Bai Yunlai had been duped. Naturally, Ding Yong stared in shock for a moment before a bright glow appeared in his eyes. Meng Hao's words struck him as being profoundly enigmatic. He took a deep breath, then clasped hands and bowed. Avoiding any careless words, he said, "Alchemist Fang, to be honest, I'm not really sure which type. I just have one pill formula, perhaps... you could take a look, sir?" He quickly retrieved a jade slip from his bag of holding which he offered to Meng Hao.

Were Ding Yong not within the Sect, he might not be so easily bluffed. However, they were inside the Violet Fate Sect, and Meng Hao was a fellow Sect member. Furthermore, he knew that Meng Hao was a master alchemist who had the upper hand. Therefore, Meng Hao's words truly had the desired effect.

Meng Hao accepted the jade slip expressionlessly, and then scanned it with Spiritual Sense. His face was the same as always, but inwardly, he was shocked.

"So, there really is such a medicinal pill. The Barrier Breaking Pill can actually only be consumed twice in a lifetime. If consumed a third time, instant death will result!

"The interactions of various medicinal plants, as well as the addition of various toxic vegetation, will create an explosive mixture that will stimulate the Qi passageways and give the Cultivation base the ability to break through a bottleneck!" Meng Hao was silent for a moment as he thought.

Next to him, Ding Yong watched on nervously. He had previously consumed one Barrier Breaking Pill. Unfortunately, at the very last critical moment, he had failed to break through. Now he only had one chance left. The worst of it all was that over the past years he had somehow managed to offend all the Furnace Lords and master alchemists. Even if one of them agreed, he wouldn't feel at ease with the results. He was still hesitant. To Fang Mu, this was a simple pill concoction. But to him, it represented his very, very last chance.

If he succeeded, he would be able to enter late Foundation Establishment. Therefore, he couldn't help but be cautious.

In reality, even after choosing to seek out Fang Mu, he still hadn't completely made up his mind about the matter. He still wanted to feel the situation out, then make a decision based on his feeling at the time. He desired a reliable master alchemist to concoct this crucially important pill. Ding Yong was no Outer Sect disciple. He knew very clearly that the medicinal strength of any given pill would be different depending on who concocted it. Some people produced pills with high strength, others low. As far as Ding Yong was concerned, the medicinal strength of this Barrier Breaking Pill was crucially important.

The pill he had consumed previously had been of ordinary medicinal strength. Had it not, he wouldn't be here today, sighing as he was.

A long moment passed, before Meng Hao returned the jade slip. He muttered to himself for a moment before walking up to Ding Yong.

“Raise your hand.”

Ding Yong gaped for a moment, and his eyes narrowed. However, he didn't refuse. He lifted his hand up, whereupon Meng Hao clasped his wrist and began to send a bit of spiritual power into him.

“Don't resist,” he said coolly. He poured the spiritual power of Qi Condensation into Ding Yong, who looked hesitant as he stared at Meng Hao. However, he allowed the spiritual power to circulate fully through his body.

Meng Hao quickly became certain which level of medicinal strength was required of the pill that Ding Yong needed to break through his bottleneck. Meng Hao had also detected some other complex medicinal powers within Ding Yong's body. Those medicinal powers seemed to contain remnants of the Qi of the medicinal plants from the first Barrier Breaking Pill he had consumed.

“You’ve already consumed one Barrier Breaking Pill,” said Meng Hao, retracting his spiritual power.

Hearing Meng Hao’s words caused Ding Yong to take a deep breath. His eyes shined brightly as he looked at Meng Hao, shocked. He had never told anybody that he had previously consumed a Barrier Breaking Pill.

“I will help you concoct this pill,” said Meng Hao calmly. “Prepare six sets of the medicinal plants required to make the Barrier Breaking Pill. In addition, I require thirty thousand Spirit Stones.”

“I already found a few master alchemists who can make this pill...” said Ding Yong slowly. “The most they asked for was three sets of ingredients and ten thousand Spirit Stones.”

“I guarantee that my pill will enable you to break through,” Meng Hao replied coolly. His tone was calm, but there also existed potent air within it.

“Are you serious?!” gasped Ding Yong, his eyes flashing brightly. He had long since come to the conclusion that this Alchemist Fang Mu was very different from the other master alchemists.

“If you don’t believe me, then never mind,” said Meng Hao, turning to leave.

Ding Yong’s heart twisted. It only took a moment for a determined look to break out on his face. Seeing how different Fang Mu was from the others, and how he had been able to detect his previous consumption of the Barrier Breaking Pill, caused him to make up his mind. Without any further hesitation, he produced a bag of holding and quickly put the required medicinal plants and Spirit Stones inside. He handed it to Meng Hao.

“In two weeks, at twilight, you may come collect your pill,” said Meng Hao. With the flick of a sleeve, he left with Bai Yunlai, his black gown fluttering in the breeze. A scholarly aura swirled around him, as did the faint scent of medicinal pills. He seemed otherworldly.

Chapter 224: Medicinal Pills Can Foster Life, Poison Can Exterminate It!

Bai Yunlai held his tongue for the entire way back. Finally, when they reached the door of the Immortal’s cave, he couldn’t keep his mouth closed any longer. “Fang Mu, your plan....”

“I need Spirit Stones,” he said with a laugh. “I asked for six sets of medicinal plants because I plan to give a Barrier Breaking Pill to you. I can see that you’ve been stuck at the bottleneck of the eighth level of Qi Condensation for years now.” He clasped Bai Yunlai on the shoulder, turned, and entered his Immortal’s Cave.

As the door closed shut, Bai Yunlai stood there alone for some time. Finally, he clasped hands and bowed deeply, then left. His words of thanks were not spoken aloud, but imprinted on his heart.

Time passed. Soon seven days had gone by. Meng Hao sat cross-legged in his Immortal’s Cave, looking at the three Barrier Breaking Pills in front of him. He picked one up and looked at it closely.

“The difference between medicinal pills and poison pills is a matter of will. If murder were on my mind, I could simply adjust the poisonous elements of this Barrier Breaking Pill, and then whoever consumed it would be exterminated. Even if that person was extremely prudent and had someone else test the pill first, I could figure out a way to cause the pill to initiate a self-change. Undetectable killing....”

Meng Hao sat there silently, thinking about all of the medicinal pills he had consumed over the years. At that time, he had no understanding of the Dao of alchemy. Thinking about it caused all the hairs on his body to stand up on end. Now that he knew more about alchemy, a sense of fear slowly filled him.

“From now on, I must only consume pills that I have concocted myself,” he murmured. “As for pills from outsiders, I must employ my full knowledge of the Dao of alchemy to identify them before consuming them. The difference between Dao of alchemy and the Dao of poison is a matter of will. Medicinal pills can foster life, poison can exterminate it. A true grandmaster of the Dao of alchemy is in actuality also a grandmaster of the Dao of poison.” Meng Hao closed his eyes, and within his mind appeared images of medicinal plants. There were endless varieties of plants that had poisonous elements. By combining certain ones together, lethal poisons could be created.

Based on the level of the Cultivation base, poisonous powders for pills could be made with different potencies. After thinking about it for a very long moment, Meng Hao slowly opened his eyes. They glowed with enlightenment. To Meng Hao, concocting this Barrier Breaking Pill had been a sort of baptism. He now had a much more profound understanding of the Dao of alchemy.

“Maybe one day when my skill in the Dao of alchemy reaches the level of Grandmaster Pill Demon, then I can dispel the poison of the Resurrection Lily myself!” His eyes shined brightly.

Slowly the glow faded. Meng Hao's state of mind gradually grew calm. He had the feeling that even though he was still in the Foundation Establishment stage, with five Dao Pillars, when you added in his understanding of the Dao of alchemy, his battle prowess was now far beyond what it had been before.

In fact, if he created some poison pills now, then next time he encountered Zhou Jie, it would be easy to kill him, regardless of how many techniques his opponent used.

After more thought, Meng Hao took out the broken pieces of the meat jelly's shed skin. He studied them carefully for a while. His time in recent days had not just been spent in pill concocting. He had also thought a lot about various methods of using the meat jelly skin.

It was exceptionally hard. He had used a variety of methods to attempt to damage it, none of which had been successful. He had even tried to refine it in the pill furnace, to no avail. Thankfully, although most of the skin had broken into pieces, some had exploded into dust, which Meng Hao had also collected.

Meng Hao closed his eyes to think. "I have to think of a way to use this stuff in the future. Also, I can't just focus on improving my skill in the Dao of Alchemy. I also have to improve my Dao Pillars. I need to gradually increase the level of the Cultivation base I reveal when I'm out in the Violet Fate Sect." He frowned. "I need some formulas for medicinal pills useful in the mid Foundation Establishment stage."

With that, he stood up and left the Immortal's Cave to visit Li Tao. It was dusk when he returned. In exchange for the formula for the Barrier Breaking Pill, he had acquired the formula for a Spirit Platform Pill, which was appropriate for the mid Foundation Establishment stage.

Now that he had the formula, Meng Hao began to consider concocting it himself. He would only need one; there was no need to concoct more than that. As for the required medicinal plants, he was a master alchemist of the East Pill Division, so they could easily be acquired on credit.

Time flashed as seven days passed. On this particular day, Meng Hao's eyes suddenly snapped open. He had just finished absorbing the Spirit Platform Pill that he had concocted a few days before. Unfortunately, refining the pill had used up several sets of ingredients, and in the end, the medicinal strength wasn't ideal.

"I guess I have no other options for now, unless there are different formulas for the Spirit Platform Pill," he murmured. "The rare medicinal plants for this formula can't be acquired on credit, I have to pay for them up front. My only option now is to grow my reputation. That way, more Inner Sect

disciples will come to me to concoct pills. My profits will increase, and of course my pill concocting skill will too. Then I can acquire more medicinal plants to use to concoct medicinal pills for myself.” With that, he waved his right hand to collect together the medicinal pills in front of him, then walked out of the Immortal’s Cave. By this time, it was dusk.

As soon as he left District One Valley One, he ran into Bai Yunlai. Today was the appointed day to meet with Ding Yong. The two of them chatted as they walked to the designated meeting place.

Ding Yong had arrived early. He was nervous, but didn’t show it on his face. He stood waiting; when he caught sight of Meng Hao approaching, his eyes glittered.

Meng Hao was as calm as ever. As he approached, he slapped his bag of holding to produce a pill bottle, which flew toward Ding Yong.

“You must not take this pill under the moonlight,” said Meng Hao indifferently. “It should only be consumed at high noon, when the sun burns brightly. That is when the medicinal strength will be highest.” With that, he turned and walked away, paying no further attention to Ding Yong.

Ding Yong took the pill bottle and stared deeply at Meng Hao for a moment. Without a word, he also turned and left.

The next day at noon, when the hot sun filled the sky, Ding Yong sat cross-legged on a wide stone platform in his Immortal’s Cave. Various restrictive spells were set up around him. He breathed deeply as he produced the medicinal pill Meng Hao had concocted for such an exorbitant price. Ding Yong looked at, and a bit of hesitation flickered in his eyes. However, the hesitation quickly turned to determination.

“Fang Mu, if you pulled a fast one on me, then matters between us are not concluded!” He clenched his jaw, then quickly placed the pill into his mouth. Instantly, a roaring sound filled his mind, and his entire body began to quiver. Furious waves of spiritual energy exploded within him.

Time slipped by. Soon three days had passed. Ding Yong’s body continued to shake. On the evening of the third day, his eyes opened, and as they did, the power of late Foundation Establishment stage rippled out from his Cultivation base, filling the surrounding area. His eyes shone with excitement, and he trembled as he rose to his feet. As he examined his Cultivation base, his heart surged. He lifted his head up and began to laugh with joy.

The laughter spread out, attracting the attention of quite a few nearby Inner Sect disciples. Soon, expressions of shock appeared on their faces.

“Ding Yong finally broke through!”

“He’s been stuck in mid Foundation Establishment for years. He finally broke through!”

News of Ding Yong’s breakthrough caused quite the uproar in the Inner Sect of the Violet Qi Division. Now that he had reached late Foundation Establishment, he had a chance for promotion to Conclave disciple. Considering how many years he had been stuck in mid Foundation Establishment, his breakthrough also caused him to suddenly be viewed as competition by many other disciples.

If the matter were limited to a simple breakthrough, then all eyes would be fixed on Ding Yong alone. After all, a late breakthrough is still simply a breakthrough. However, Bai Yunlai had been keeping an eye on Ding Yong’s Immortal’s Cave. As soon as he sensed that the breakthrough had been made, he immediately used all his skill and resources to spread word of it, and the fact that it was Fang Mu who concocted the pill.

It was in this fashion that he was able to borrow the momentum of Ding Yong’s breakthrough to rapidly spread word of Fang Mu’s skill in alchemy. Word spread like storm winds through the Inner Sect disciples. Within a few days, all of the Inner Sect disciples in the Violet Qi Division were talking about Ding Yong and Fang Mu.

When Inner Sect disciples went to master alchemists for pill concocting services, what was sometimes more important than alchemic skill, was reputation. The greater the reputation of the master alchemist, the more people would seek him out. Thanks to Bai Yunlai’s promotion, as well as Ding Yong’s breakthrough, the resulting ballyhoo immediately caused Fang Mu’s name to spread throughout the entire Inner Sect.

Ding Yong had no reservations about this. In fact, not only was he happy to allow Fang Mu to use his name to promote himself, but whenever people asked him about his breakthrough, he would directly explain that Fang Mu’s medicinal pill was what had led to his breakthrough in Cultivation base.

The reason for this was quite simple. A few words on his part could verify how astonishing Fang Mu’s medicinal pills were. This would prevent any cause of offense on the part of Fang Mu, and would build up good karma for the next time he needed a pill concocted.

It was in this fashion that Fang Mu's reputation slowly began to build among the Inner Sect Disciples. Soon, everyone knew of Alchemist Fang, one of the thousand master alchemists of the East Pill Division. However, Inner Sect disciples all had master alchemists of whom they personally approved. Mere rumors alone wouldn't cause them to switch to a new master alchemist for pill concocting, not even when combined with Ding Yong's breakthrough. Many were still hesitant.

Soon, the news reached the Violet Qi Division's Outer Sect, and the disciple in charge of pill inspecting, Su Zhonglun. His eyes began to shine. For a month now he had been wondering about the master alchemist surnamed Fang. He had gone to the Pill Affairs Pavilion in the Inner Sect for information but had come up empty-handed. After that, every time medicinal pills arrived in the Outer Sect, he would inspect them very carefully. However, he never saw any more pills marked Fang. This caused him to sigh endlessly.

He had saved the original bottle of pills, and frequently took them out to study. The more he did, the more admiration grew in his heart, and the more curious he grew regarding the identity of this Alchemist Fang. When the news about Fang Mu and Ding Yong reached him, he was immediately eighty percent sure that Fang Mu was the person he had been looking for.

He instantly rushed out of the Outer Sect and headed toward the East Pill Division. He tracked down Bai Yunlai and begged him to recommend him to Fang Mu.

During these days, Meng Hao was well aware of all that Bai Yunlai was doing to spread his name. He sat patiently waiting for requests to come in, yet none did, which caused him to frown.

It was at this moment that Su Zhonglun's request for a pill came in. Meng Hao was immediately enlivened, and sent his response.

A few days later, Su Zhonglun received the medicinal pills he needed. He immediately returned to his room. After doing some breathing exercises, he thoroughly examined the pill. As he did, his eyes began to shine more and more brightly. In the end, he was panting.

"I provided medicinal plants with fifty percent strength, and this pill also has fifty percent strength. Only a Furnace Lord could mix the various medicinal plants together to create a medicinal pill like this. Ordinary master alchemists could never do it. At the most, they could create a pill with thirty percent medicinal strength. This is astonishing! This Fang Mu... he's only a master alchemist, but he can concoct the medicinal pills of a Furnace Lord!" Unable to contain his excitement, he held up the fifty percent strength medicinal pill and then placed it into his mouth. A few hours later, he opened his eyes.

Chapter 225: Rising to the Pinnacle!

“If you consume one type of medicinal pill too often, it will become less and less effective. This is the result of problems with the medicinal plants within the pill. Therefore, a medicinal pill like this with fifty percent medicinal strength, well, its true value can only be imagined!” Now that he had personally confirmed his conjectures regarding Fang Mu, he quickly decided that they needed to become friends.

“It is a foregone conclusion that he will rise to the pinnacle. At the moment, though, his reputation is still growing and lots of people are hesitating. Helping him now will definitely be a way to build up good karma for the future!” Su Zhonglun’s line of thinking was the same as Ding Yong’s. The difference was that he had a much better understanding of Fang Mu’s ability with plants and vegetation, as well as his skill in concocting medicinal pills, and the value thereof.

A new commotion rose up among the Inner Sect disciples of the Violet Qi Division. This was because Su Zhonglun, although he hadn’t made a breakthrough, had made significant progress in his Cultivation base. Furthermore, he repeatedly talked about Fang Mu’s pills within the Inner Sect. In fact, he would even pull out two of the same type of medicinal pill, one concocted by Fang Mu, one concocted by another master alchemist. Then he would compare the two, point by point.

First was Ding Yong, and then Su Zhonglun. Their recommendations, coupled with the waves spread by Bai Yunlai’s promotion, caused all of the discussion within the Inner Sect over the next half month to revolve around Fang Mu.

Finally, more and more Inner Sect disciples began to seek out Fang Mu to concoct pills.

At first, it was just a disciple here and there. They were hesitant, and clearly just wanted to test the waters. They would seek out Bai Yunlai, whereupon he would recommend Fang Mu’s services.

Meng Hao didn’t refuse anyone who came for pill concocting services. When his pill furnace exploded under the strain of such frequent use, he would immediately get a replacement.

The first group of three or four Inner Sect disciples who came to him for pills came back a few days later and took their purchases back to their Immortal’s Caves.

Zhang Shuilai, who was at the early Foundation Establishment stage, was one of them. He wasn’t very prominent among the Inner Sect disciples, and had only sought out a master alchemist once before for pill concoction. After experiencing how impressive they were, he was deeply moved.

Unfortunately, he was embarrassingly short of Spirit Stones, and could only afford to acquire pills during the Sect's Pill Distribution.

The reason he sought out Fang Mu's services was because he could tell that Fang Mu's name was on the rise. This might be his only opportunity, so he decided to take advantage of it while he could.

He sat in his Immortal's cave, holding a pill bottle. Inside were ten medicinal pills useful for the early Foundation Establishment stage. He took a deep breath, and put one of the pills into his mouth. Almost immediately, his eyes grew wide, and filled with the glow of disbelief. He looked down at the rest of the medicinal pills. Just looking at them, they didn't seem any different from any of the other pills he had consumed in the past.

A long while passed. After absorbing the power of all the pills, Zhang Shuilai took a deep breath. He produced yet another pill bottle. Inside were two pills useful for the early Foundation Establishment stage. After examining them closely, he consumed them. A few moments later more disbelief filled his eyes.

"What's going on? The pills the master alchemist concocted for me before didn't do much. They just transformed into spiritual energy. But... but... Fang Mu's medicinal pills are incredibly potent! They created more than fifty percent more spiritual energy than the others!" He panted, and his eyes shone. If at this point he didn't realise what was going on, then he didn't deserve to be an Inner Sect disciple.

Without the slightest hesitation, he leaped up and rushed out of the Immortal's Cave and headed directly to find Fang Mu. He would take advantage of others' hesitation to have more pills concocted.

However, as soon as he neared the East Pill Division, he found that the other Inner Sect disciples who had recently picked up pills from Fang Mu apparently all had the same idea as him. They were all returning, excited expressions on their faces. The group all exchanged glances, then wordlessly shot together to the East Pill Division to find Bai Yunlai.

Before, they had been interested in simply trying out the pills; now, things were clearly different.

They did not possess Su Zhonglun's ability to identify and analyze medicinal pills. However, after consuming them, they immediately realized that Meng Hao's medicinal pills were beyond ordinary. You could say that if other master alchemists could create pills of one hundred percent strength, then Meng Hao's were one hundred and fifty percent strength. They were at least fifty percent stronger, which of course made these Inner Sect disciples incredibly happy.

What they didn't know was that Meng Hao's medicinal pills were not just fifty percent stronger in terms of medicinal strength. In the world of alchemic Cultivation in all of the Southern Domain, the medicinal pills concocted by master alchemists never exceeded roughly thirty percent medicinal strength. The rest of the strength was lost in the concocting process. In the end, the medicinal pills they created were not complete. On the other hand, Meng Hao could concoct pills of fifty percent medicinal strength. It was instantly apparent who was in the superior position and who was not.

Fang Mu's imminent explosive popularity among the Inner Sect disciples was obvious.

The news that the first group of Inner Sect disciples returned for more pills quickly spread. Soon Bai Yunlai didn't need to do any promotion whatsoever. Rumors passed between friends inside the Inner Sect, and soon more and more disciples came looking for pill concocting. It wasn't long before the spreading word caused Meng Hao's name to rise above that of the other master alchemists. His reputation grew and grew.

"Did you hear? The East Pill Division has a master alchemist named Fang Mu. The pills he creates are twice as effective as the pills created by the other master alchemists!"

"How is that possible? I don't cultivate the Dao of Alchemy, but I've dealt with a lot of different master alchemists, so I know what I'm talking about. Unless this Fang Mu is a Furnace Lord, there's no way his pills could be that much more effective in comparison."

"Hahaha! All you have to do is try them out, then you'll know whether you're right or not. Have him make a pill for you, then you'll know." Conversations similar to this could be heard throughout the Inner Sect of the Violet Qi Division.

Eventually, people began to seek out Bai Yunlai every single day.

According to the rules of the East Pill Division, outsiders were not allowed to enter. The only way to seek out master alchemists was to use messaging jade slips. However, Meng Hao did not have any direct contact with anyone, only Bai Yunlai did.

More and more Inner Sect disciples arranged to visit Bai Yunlai. Soon, he was starting to get more work than he could deal with. Meng Hao was surprised by this turn of events. Before long, he was spending almost all his time concocting pills. It was getting to the point where he couldn't keep up. It was a happy sort of pain. Because of the volume of pills he was concocting, his Dao of alchemy advanced by leaps and bounds. Furthermore, he was acquiring a large amount of pill formulas, and

was also building up quite a store of medicinal plants which he acquired from the excess ingredients provided.

Things only continued to grow more and more intense. After two months, every single Inner Sect disciple in the Violet Qi Division knew about Fang Mu. The whole place was abuzz. Anyone who had the mind to try one of Meng Hao's medicinal pills would immediately be astounded, and would return for more.

More than a few acquired sample pills by trading with others. Some relied on the word of others and would without hesitation seek out Bai Yunlai.

Soon Meng Hao had reached the point where he simply had too much work to do. Pumping out so many medicinal pills was driving him to exhaustion. Therefore, he discussed matters with Bai Yunlai and decided to raise prices!

He arranged a pricing system with different values assigned to different types of medicinal pills. The prices were obviously higher than other master alchemists'. This had been Bai Yunlai's idea, which Meng Hao had approved of. What neither of them had expected was that raising the prices actually caused his popularity to rise. Both of them were stupefied.

More and more Inner Sect disciples came, which was now causing complaints among the other master alchemists. However as soon they took time to study Meng Hao's medicinal pills, the complaints disappeared....

The reason Meng Hao was so incredibly popular was because of the fifty percent medicinal strength of his pills. To the Inner Sect disciples, the benefits of consuming such pills went without saying.

Most importantly, in the entire East Pill Division, the only other people whose skill in the Dao of alchemy was enough to produce pills of fifty percent medicinal strength, were Furnace Lords.

However, Furnace Lords would not concoct pills for Inner Sect disciples, only Conclave disciples. With the appearance of Meng Hao, suddenly, all Inner Sect disciples had the chance to get medicinal pills of Furnace Lord quality, but at the price of a master alchemist. After all, they could only make requests of Meng Hao, and not the Furnace Lords.

Therefore, even after raising prices, Meng Hao's medicinal pills were still cheaper than those concocted by Furnace Lords. As such, Inner Sect disciples could accept the higher cost.

Fang Mu was all the rage!

His name wasn't just popular within the Inner Sect of the Violet Qi Division. The apprentice alchemists of the East Pill Division were all talking about his shocking promotion to master alchemist. Eventually, Fang Mu's name reached the ears of some of the Elders of the Violet Fate Sect, causing them to take note of the situation.

Many of the master alchemists in the East Pill Division were still not resigned to the situation. Through various methods, they were able to acquire some of Meng Hao's medicinal pills, which they researched thoroughly. Their research left them astonished. More and more master alchemists participated in the research. In the end, when Meng Hao raised his prices, the orders Bai Yunlai accepted only increased.

Over the course of a few months, Meng Hao had acquired hundreds of pill formulas. The Spirit Stones were rolling in, and his stores of medicinal plants were plentiful. Meng Hao was happy, although now he had almost no personal time. Each day, every day, he concocted pills. When his spiritual power began to dry up, he would consume some medicinal pills to recover. Over the months, his sixth Dao Pillar came to be roughly half complete.

One can only imagine his life during these few months....

Finally, it reached the point that Meng Hao really didn't think it was possible to complete all the orders. Finally, he made a new decision. He had Bai Yunlai make an announcement that only three orders would be processed per day.

He really had no other option than this. The proclamation of this rule brought instant results. Not a few complaints were voiced, and malicious talk spread. Despite that, the rules of three orders per day stood. There were no rest days. The Inner Sect disciples of the Violet Qi Division came up with various methods to secure spots among the three orders per day.

Chapter 226: Liu's Rule!

Fang Mu had risen to prominence within the Violet Fate Sect. There was not a single Inner Sect disciple in the Violet Qi Division who didn't know of him. The name of this newly promoted master alchemist reverberated like thunder in the ears of the other master alchemists of the East Pill Division.

Considering the situation with the Inner Sect disciples and the master alchemists, there is no need to even mention the Outer Sect disciples and the apprentice alchemists. The name of Alchemist Fang Mu swept across the Sect like a raging wind, and his prestige among the Violet Sect Disciples only grew greater.

Speculation began to run wild regarding Fang Mu. The general consensus was that he had an eccentric personality, didn't speak much, didn't like to go out or engage in social activities. In truth, very few people actually knew what he even looked like.

All requests for medicinal pills went through Bai Yunlai. As for Fang Mu, although everyone knew his name, no one ever had the opportunity to meet him. Because of the rules of the East Pill Division prohibiting the intrusion of Violet Qi Division disciples, Fang Mu became an increasingly mysterious figure.

This, in addition to his rule of only three orders per day, the results of which were equivalent to the work of Furnace Lords, only served to increase his reputation.

In fact, the rule of three orders per day had caused the Inner Sect disciples to create a trade system, in which prices continued to increase.

At this particular moment, deep within the East Pill Division, was a violet-colored mountain peak. The peak was not very high, and in fact was somewhat concealed by the surrounding peaks. However, an indescribable aura existed here which made it clear that while the mountain was not tall, it served as the heart of the entire mountain range.

Sitting atop this mountain was an old man. In front of him was a worktable, upon which lay a medicinal pill. He looked at it, his eyes glowing with a strange light. Behind this old man were three other persons.

These people were by no means young. All of them had Cultivation bases at the Nascent Soul stage. However, it seemed as if they didn't dare to breathe too loudly in front of the other old man. Their expressions were filled with respect.

This old man was none other than Chu Yuyan's master, Grandmaster Pill Demon, whose name could rock the entire Southern Domain.

He examined the medicinal pill in front of him for some time. Soon, the sun began to set. Finally, he slowly waved his hand and picked up the pill.

“Interesting,” he said, then began to laugh. He closed his hand over the pill and rubbed it. When he opened his hand again, ash drifted out into the wind.

One of the three men behind Grandmaster Pill demon hesitated for a moment, then quietly said, “Pill Demon, there is discontent within the Violet Qi Division....”

“Discontent?” said Pill Demon coolly. “Let them be patient. If anyone causes problems for the disciples of the East Pill Division, they will be cut off from medicinal pills for ten years.” With that, he flicked his sleeve and disappeared.

The three men exchanged glances. With bitter smiles, they bowed to the position Pill Demon had just occupied, then turned and left.

Beneath the evening sky, behind the short, violet-colored mountain was a towering peak which stretched up to the sky. Half way up the mountain was a pavilion, the greater part of which stretched out of the mountain to hang in mid-air. During the day, you could stand here to look out across the land. At nighttime, when the stars came out, it almost seemed possible to reach up and touch the sky.

This particular evening, the rays of the setting sun fell across everything, creating a languid atmosphere. The golden glow, combined with the rosy clouds on the horizon, led to a scene of incredible beauty.

Within the pavilion, the evening air stirred. The wind did not disperse the clouds, but did send strands of long, black hair drifting into the wind. The hair belonged to none other than Chu Yuyan.

She stood quietly within the pavilion, her hair dancing in the wind. Her brow was furrowed slightly as she lifted her hand up. There in her palm was a medicinal pill.

“How did he concoct it....” she thought. “Could it be that his aptitude with the Dao of alchemy is similar to his latent talent with plants and vegetation...? Is there really someone so gifted in the Dao of alchemy? It’s breathtaking....”

The pill was waxen and yellow, and did not seem to be a complete product.

By expending some Spirit Stones, she had been able to purchase a pill from an Inner Sect disciple. Of course, that medicinal pill had been the handiwork of Meng Hao.

After getting ahold of the pill, Chu Yuyan's first reaction was that of disdain. But then she had studied it fastidiously. As she did, her expression changed. In the end, she stared wide-eyed and disbelieving.

After studying the pill for seven days, she had eventually ground it into powder. After such thorough examination, although she still felt annoyed at the thought of Fang Mu, she couldn't help but admit that as for this medicinal pill... even she could only create it if she devoted her complete mind and spirit to the task.

Finally, she had used Grandmaster Pill Demon's unique method to re-concoct the pill. She had taken the powder of the original pill to form a second pill. After the second refinement, the pill's medicinal strength was actually sixty percent. That was her limit.

"If he learned my master's refinement technique," she murmured softly, "who knows what level of medicinal pills he would be able to concoct...?" She looked off at the rosy clouds in the distance, then back down at the pill in her hand.

"Master said that he might hold the secret to enlightenment regarding the Three Mortalities Pill. But he's so arrogant! Last time I went to visit he locked himself inside and refused to come out!" Thinking of this made her more annoyed. Even the mere name of Fang Mu would cause her temper to boil up with irritation.

"This Fang Mu's detestableness is second only to that damned Meng Hao!" she said, gnashing her teeth. Clearly, the two people she hated most in her heart were Meng Hao, first, and Fang Mu, second.

However, she still didn't know why Fang Mu caused her so much irritation. Of course, if she knew that Fang Mu and Meng Hao were one and the same, then she would immediately understand why.

At the same time that Chu Yuyan was muttering to herself, Meng Hao sat in front of his pill furnace concocting a batch of medicinal pills. A roaring sound could be heard, filling the Immortal's Cave. Meng Hao sighed. The past few months, he had spent every day concocting pills. He was just now finishing with all the pills he owed to various members of the Inner Sect. The pill furnace in front of him was reaching the end of its life; it would definitely crack to pieces soon.

Meng Hao rubbed the bridge of his nose, then opened the door of his Immortal's Cave to look at the sunset. He took a deep breath. The mountain breath carried the chill of autumn. As he breathed it in, the tension slowly eased from his painfully swollen head.

“Once I finish with all the old orders, then all I have to worry about are the three orders per day, as well as the medicinal pills I need for my personal Cultivation. Spirit Platform Pills are already only nominally effective. If I concoct anything, it should be a Foundation Establishment Day!” His eyes glittered. Foundation Establishment Day was a medicinal pill suitable for the late Foundation Establishment stage. It was an incredibly potent pill, one of the most valuable types in all of the Violet Fate Sect for the Foundation Establishment stage.

Recently, Meng Hao had refined over a thousand batches of pills, and had acquired hundreds of formulas. One of them was the formula for Foundation Establishment Day. After some research, he'd come to the conclusion that in order to make any progress, he would have to rest some, then use all his skill to concoct a Foundation Establishment Day with at least ninety percent medicinal strength.

With such a pill, he could complete his sixth Dao Pillar and begin formation of the seventh.

“It's too bad that the Violet Qi from the East manual is only available to Furnace Lords. It's a legendary art, and there's no other way to get a look at it. Careful records are kept of everyone who studies it.” Lost in thought, Meng Hao strolled down the mountain. This was the first time in a long time that he had been outside.

“Even Inner Sect disciples aren't qualified to consult the Violet Qi from the East manual. They are forced to cultivate based on speculations. Only Conclave disciples of the Violet Qi Division or Furnace Lords can personally peruse the real manual to study the technique.” Meng Hao was determined to gain access to it. Only in this way could he prepare to form a Violet Core. With that foundation, he could consume the pill to form the Perfect Gold Core.

“I've searched for some of the medicinal plants required for the Perfect Gold Core, but am still missing quite a few. Once I become a Furnace Lord, it should become a bit easier.” Meng Hao passed through various valleys, lost in thought. Along the way, he ran into quite a few apprentice alchemists. Some of them recognized him, and stared in amazement. Then their faces would fill with excitement.

After all, thirty thousand apprentice alchemists had watched him be promoted to master alchemist. It was no surprise that many would recognize him still. However, now that he was a master alchemist, they didn't dare to stop and chat with him. Instead, they simply saluted respectfully.

Meng Hao wanted to find a quiet place to think. After smiling in response to the apprentice alchemists, he disappeared in a flash. He left the mountains and valleys of the East Pill Division to enter the Violet Qi Division.

Here, very few people would recognize him. He walked happily amidst the mountains, wearing his master alchemist's robe. No one stopped to question him, so he proceeded along quietly.

As he strolled, he looked around at the scenery. He had been in the Violet Fate Sect for roughly three years. Although he was relatively familiar with it, it was actually a very large place. There were many areas he had never been to. As he walked, he suddenly heard the sound of an argument in which his name was being mentioned

“That Fang Mu is definitely fishing for fame and compliments. He thinks his pills are so amazing, so he wants to make trouble for us. We can't accept it! I already reported to the Elders about it and they're going to get in touch with the people from the East Pill Division. Fang Mu will be punished! As for you, you measly apprentice alchemist, you had best apologize for your offense!”

“Elder Brother Liu, please calm your anger. This is my fault. However, it really is true that the next ten days or more worth of orders have already been filled...”

There was a jumble of conversation, then laughter. Meng Hao listened to a few sentences and was certain that one of the voices belonged to Bai Yunlai. He walked around an ornamental rock formation into a wide public square within which could be seen four pagodas.

Within the pagodas sat a handful of young men who were all looking at the square, where could be seen a few dozen Violet Qi Division Inner Sect disciples.

The young men sitting in the pagodas were not ordinary disciples, but Chosen of the Violet Qi Division. There were four pagodas in total, and four Chosen, one in each pagoda.

The handful of people who stood in the square, were scattered about, with Bai Yunlai in the middle. A blue-robed young man was currently pointing at himself and swearing at Bai Yunlai contemptuously.

“My words might not be rules in the Sect, but as far as you're concerned, they are! If I tell you to slap yourself on the face and apologize, then you better well do it!”

Bai Yunlai's face went pale and his body trembled. His Cultivation base was weak. He was a well-informed person, but quite a few people actually viewed him as being in a very low position. This was not the first time something like this had happened recently. However, he never told Meng Hao, as he didn't want to distract him. He was always careful in his interactions, but there was always the possibility that he would end up offending someone.

As for this young man named Liu, he had relied on his relatively high position within the Sect to request medicinal pills of Meng Hao. However, only three orders per day were allowed, and they were first come first serve. Bai Yunlai had done his best not to provoke this Liu youth, but his conciliatory words had only caused him to become hostile.

Even lowly people have their honor. However, Bai Yunlai, trembling, bitter, stared at Liu. He lifted his hand, and seemed just about to slap himself in the face when...

Meng Hao's calm voice echoed out. "Bai Yunlai!"

Chapter 227: Pill Blacklist!

When Meng Hao's voice rang out, Bai Yunlai looked shocked. He suddenly turned his head and saw Meng Hao slowly strolling out from behind the ornamental rock. He walked slowly, and his face was expressionless.

When Bai Yunlai saw him, his heart leapt with excitement, as well as a little bit of shame. In his mind, he had lost face for Fang Mu. He was about to open his mouth to say something, when Meng Hao's gaze fell upon him, and it was filled with admiration.

That gaze made Bai Yunlai take a deep breath, as if he was proud to have someone recognize all the work he had been doing. It was a good feeling to be following along with Meng Hao as he rose to prominence.

Meng Hao's appearance obviously attracted the attention of the others in the square. They looked over, but of course none of them recognized who he was. The Chosen in the four pagodas frowned. Obviously, Meng Hao was a stranger to them as well.

"Who told you to put your hand down?" said the young man named Liu. "Do you want me to help you slap yourself?" His voice was filled with contempt. He, too, had caught sight of Meng Hao. But this was a valley of the Violet Qi Division. He wouldn't let his grandeur be lessened just because

some master alchemist showed up. This was especially true because he knew all of the important master alchemists in the Sect.

Standing directly behind Liu were five others. Their gazes were filled with contempt, and cold smiles broke out onto their faces.

“Bai Yunlai, come here,” said Meng Hao, ignoring Liu. He also ignored the other gazes which fell upon him. Meng Hao had encountered many people like this. It didn’t matter if they were Chosen or Dao Children, considering Meng Hao’s position, they were nothing more than wild dogs that he could afford to simply ignore.

Bai Yunlai quickly turned and took a few steps toward Meng Hao, but then Liu snorted coldly and began to shove his hand out toward him.

“I never said you could leave! Seems you need a beating!” His hand was just about to slam into Bai Yunlai when Meng Hao’s previous expressionless calm changed. A cold light suddenly sprang from his eyes and swept over Liu.

The look was like a clap of thunder, a lightning bolt that split the night sky, or dark clouds of destruction that suddenly appeared in the middle of a sunny day.

It was as if rumbling peals of thunder had filled Liu’s mind. His expression changed. Meng Hao’s gaze was like that of a gargantuan beast that had the power to consume all living things. It caused Liu to unconsciously hold his hand back. By this time, Bai Yunlai had reached Meng Hao.

Meng Hao retracted his gaze, then turned to leave with Bai Yunlai. Considering the level of his Cultivation base, as well as his position within the Sect, these disciples were far beneath him. There was no reason for him to show off in front of these so-called Chosen.

Of course, other than the young man named Liu, none of the other Violet Qi Division Cultivators within the square had been able to sense what just happened, not even the five people who stood behind him. The only thing they saw was Meng Hao’s fierce attitude, and the harsh glint in his eye. However, anyone in the world could give a harsh look to someone; they couldn’t care less about that.

The expression of the Chosen in the four pagodas did change, though. They looked pensive. However, the followers who stood outside the pagodas were obviously much the same as the Cultivators in the middle of the square. They had no clue as to what had just happened.

The five people behind Liu immediately rushed forward to obstruct Meng Hao's path. Their eyes shined with ill will.

"The Violet Qi Division isn't somewhere that you can just run your mouth and then leave at will!"

"Halt! Elder Brother Liu was explaining the rules. Bai Yunlai, you can't leave on two feet! You'll need a beating!"

"Such gall! Even if you are a master alchemist, do you really think that you can look down on Inner Sect disciples of the Violet Qi Division so wantonly?"

Liu took a deep breath and then strode forward. His voice cold, he said, "You can leave if you want to, but this Bai Yunlai disrespected us. To let him go unpunished would be an insult to the entire Violet Qi Division Inner Sect!" He was scared of Meng Hao; however, while his voice was less arrogant than it had been moments ago, it was still arrogant nonetheless.

Bai Yunlai's face grew pale and he forced himself to suppress the fury that arose in his eyes. He knew that Meng Hao was a master alchemist, but they were in the territory of the Inner Sect disciples of the Violet Qi Division, so he still had some misgivings. He didn't mind slapping himself in the face a few times. He didn't want Meng Hao to get caught up in any troubles because of him. So he stopped in his tracks.

Even as he did, Meng Hao also stopped and turned around. "Who are these people?" he asked coolly.

Bai Yunlai's voice was low as he replied, "Violet Qi Division Inner Sect disciple Liu Yanbing... he..."

Meng Hao nodded, then calmly said, "From today on, I will not accept any medicinal pill orders from this Liu Yanbing."

As the words rang out, the Inner Sect disciples all stared in surprise. A few of the more astute among their numbers were already starting to get an idea of what was going on.

The Chosen in the pagodas all stared at Meng Hao with glittering eyes. One of them had already stepped out of the pagoda and walked forward a few paces.

“Not just him,” said Meng Hao unhurriedly. “Those people behind him, too. I won’t accept any orders from them either.” Bai Yunlai’s face filled with shock, but he nodded nonetheless.

Liu Yanbing face tightened as he suddenly looked at Meng Hao. His eyes shined with disbelief. If at this point he didn’t realize who Meng Hao was, then he didn’t deserve to have practiced Cultivation up to the Foundation Establishment stage.

However, there are a lot of stupid people in the world. One of the young men next to Liu Yanbing suddenly laughed.

“Who do you think you are? Seems you think we were begging you to concoct pills or something, so now you’re not afraid of your superiors. What makes you think you’re so amazing that you can talk like that?”

“Because I’m Fang Mu!” said Meng Hao coolly. This single sentence instantly caused the young man’s eyes to bulge and a look of disbelief to cover his face.

“Fang... Fang Mu....”

The faces of the others who stood behind Liu Yanbing all twisted. They looked at Meng Hao, stunned. It wasn’t just them. All of the Violet Qi Division disciples in the square gasped when they heard these words. Their eyes began to shine brightly as they looked toward Meng Hao.

The faces of the Violet Qi Division Chosen flicked through a variety of expressions. Silence instantly filled the square.

The name of Fang Mu had towered over the Violet Fate Sect throughout the past months. He had an illustrious reputation. Few people didn’t know about him and his pill concocting.

Therefore, when Meng Hao spoke the name of Fang Mu, it was like a thunderclap resounding across a plain.

Liu Yanbing's face fell, and the Cultivators behind him suddenly looked worried. Moments ago, they had been happy to teach Bai Yunlai a lesson. After all, he was merely an apprentice alchemist. But now that Alchemist Fang was here in the flesh, they had no desire to offend him. They immediately rushed forward in an attempt to provide explanations.

However, Meng Hao turned. He had no desire to continue speaking with these so-called Inner Sect disciples. Regardless of whether it was because of his status or his position, in all aspects, he and these people were as different as black and white. He turned to leave, Bai Yunlai in tow. Even as he did, though, the four Chosen hurried to catch up, obviously intent on starting a conversation.

Liu Yanbing's heart was filled with bitterness. However, it is difficult to dismount a tiger after you start riding it. He refused to yield so easily. Gritting his teeth, he forced his mouth open to try to regain some face, "So, you're Fang Mu. Well, maybe you won't concoct pills for me, but do you think you're the only master alchemist in the East Pill Division? Besides, the pills you concoct are low quality, not even worth looking at!"

Meng Hao laughed coldly. He stopped in place for a third time. Turning, he looked intently at Liu Yanbing. If this guy hadn't continued to speak, then he would never deign to argue with him, as uninformed as he was. But his strange, contradictory words caused Meng Hao's gaze to grow icy.

"I'm only one among a thousand master alchemists in the East Pill Division. Maybe my pills aren't worth looking at. So from now on, I won't concoct pills for anyone who has any dealings with you." Meng Hao's cold words caused the Cultivators surrounding Liu Yanbin to edge away. It was hard to tell which one went first. None of them wished to cause any further offense.

Liu Yanbin soon stood there alone. All of the people he had been on friendly terms with had moved far away from him.

Fang Mu was now a very popular master alchemist. It was even difficult to get one pill from him; offending him simply wasn't worth it.

Meng Hao continued calmly, "Also, if I hear of anyone selling you one of my pills, then that person will also be cut off from me." When the onlookers heard this, they all gasped.

These words completely showed how powerful Fang Mu was. Some people might think he was being a bit overbearing, but... he was a master alchemist.

Master alchemists are not to be offended!

“Except, you know what? You offended me...” continued Meng Hao, his voice even colder. Actually, he didn’t care if what he was about to do caused others to be dissatisfied. Their dissatisfaction would not come to fall upon him, because he was a master alchemist, a position which demanded respect. They would only blame Liu Yanbing’s inability to open his eyes to reality. “Therefore, for the next one hundred years, not a single master alchemist will concoct pills for you!”

Meng Hao said the words calmly. As he did, he lifted his right hand to reveal a white medallion, upon which he branded Liu Yanbing’s name.

This was the ultimate power wielded by master alchemists in the Violet Fate Sect. The Pill Blacklist!

As soon as he branded Liu Yanbing’s name onto the medallion, all the master alchemists in the East Pill Division could sense it. They pulled out their Pill Blacklist medallions to look at them. Before, there had been thirteen names on the Blacklist. With Liu Yanbing... there were now fourteen!

The entire square was completely silent. All eyes were on the medallion in Meng Hao’s hand. Looks of shock appeared on the four Chosen.

Somebody in the crowd recognized the medallion and said hoarsely, “That’s... a Pill Blacklist Medallion!!” The voice was filled with astonishment.

“A Pill Blacklist Medallion. Alchemist Fang Mu actually used the Pill Blacklist Medallion!!”

“Liu Yanbing is finished. It doesn’t matter what Clan he’s from. He’ll never have the seniority to get his name removed from the East Pill Division Blacklist!!”

“Now that he’s on the blacklist, not a single master alchemist will concoct pills for Liu Yanbing for the next hundred years. He basically can’t practice Cultivation. Alchemist Fang Mu... he really dared to use the medallion....”

Meng Hao stood there as the buzz of conversation filled the air. Next to him Bai Yunlai trembled and stared in amazement. His heart filled with powerful emotions; as of now, he felt as if he would even be willing to die for Fang Mu.

To be treated the way that Fang Mu treated him, caused him to wish to repay the favor with his life!

Liu Yanbing's expression was filled with despair, and he was panting rapidly. His eyes were bright red and his entire body shook. His face was deathly white. As he thought of the fearsomeness of the Pill Blacklist, and the consequences of having his name on it, his eyes filled with hopelessness. The Pill Blacklist Medallion could only be used by a master alchemist twice, and was only to be used out of absolute necessity.

How could he have ever imagined that Fang Mu would actually... would really... would truly use the Pill Blacklist Medallion on him? His body grew cold and his eyes blank. It was like his head had been struck repeatedly by lightning.

His heart trembled. He knew what it meant to be placed on the Pill Blacklist. Regardless of his Clan, there was no way anyone would be able to help him. He suddenly regretted everything. If time could flow backward, he would never have offended Meng Hao. Body trembling, the only thing he could say was, "Alchemist Fang... I...."

Chapter 228: Falling Leaves are Beautiful; They Only Live One Season

Suddenly, laughter rang out. The four Chosen had already pushed their way through the crowd. Ignoring Liu Yanbing, they walked straight for Meng Hao, clasping hands respectfully as they approached him. Their expressions were serious and polite, but they spoke with smiles and laughter.

"Alchemist Fang, sir, I've always wanted to meet you! Now that we've run into each other, allow me to humbly act as host. Let's drink some alcohol and gaze at the moon together. Wouldn't it be wonderful?"

"Hahaha. Elder Brother Xu beat me to the punch. Alchemist Fang, your skill in the Dao of alchemy is the talk of the Sect. Since we happen to meet today, would it be an imposition to allow Junior Brother here to join you? We can all treat you!"

"Alchemist Fang, that pill order I placed recently isn't urgent. Just get to it whenever it's convenient. Please don't leave yet! As Junior Brother Bai Yunlai knows, we sincerely wish to pay you our respects."

As for Liu Yanbing and his friends, they were completely ignored. It didn't matter if Liu Yanbing was related to a Patriarch of the Sect. How could his position possibly compare to that of a master alchemist? Fang Mu was a master alchemist with obviously unlimited potential, and one who didn't shirk from using the Pill Blacklist... it was clear who was superior here.

Among the thousand master alchemists, some wouldn't use the Pill Blacklist medallion even once in their entire life. Some would use it only if absolutely necessary. Generally, they would be hesitant, though. Most people are not decisive enough to do so. But Fang Mu used it without hesitation. The threatening aura this created permeated into the hearts of everyone present.

The four Chosen crowded around Meng Hao, as did the rest of the Inner Sect disciples who were with them. Smiles covered their faces. Even though it appeared as if Fang Mu's Cultivation base were not even in the Foundation Establishment stage yet, they still treated him with utmost courtesy.

Meng Hao smiled slightly, clasped hands and bowed back to them. After a moment, he tried to make some excuses and get away, but couldn't. Eventually, he decided it would be ungracious not to accept their kindness. Nodding, he followed them off into the distance, trailed by Bai Yunlai. The sound of their happy laughter and harmonious chatting echoed out.

Back in the square, Liu Yanbing stood there, his face pale white. His mind spun, and his eyes were blank and filled with despair. The other Cultivators in the square stared with various expressions. However, it was at this moment that off in the distance, Meng Hao suddenly turned to them and clasped hands in a bow. "Fellow Daoists and Sect members. Why don't you join us?"

Hearing this, the eyes of the four Chosen glittered brightly. Giving meaningful looks to Meng Hao they also turned and beckoned for the others to join them.

Seeing this, the faces of the other Inner Sect disciples in the square lifted. They hurried over, clasping hands and bowing. Soon the whole group of dozens or more Cultivators all walked off into the distance.

Meng Hao was at the center of it all, a blazing moon surrounded by glittering stars. The laughter and talking drifted out with the wind.

Now only Liu Yanbing and his friends remained in the large square. Their faces were unsightly, especially the faces of those who stared at Liu Yanbing. Their eyes were filled with fury.

In the following days, Meng Hao didn't spend all day every day concocting pills. He often went to the mountains and valleys of the Violet Qi Division. Slowly, more and more people began to recognize his face. Gradually, his reputation in the Violet Qi Division grew even better.

At the same time, he also spent time with the other master alchemists. He would call on them to visit, exchange pointers about the Dao of alchemy, and share recent experiences. He made sure that each visit was one of mutual gain; it was in this way that he gradually began to build up his social network.

As for Liu Yanbing, it was with great bitterness that he came to realize how truly horrifying the Pill Blacklist was. The master alchemists who used to concoct pills for him would now completely ignore him. It didn't matter how much money he offered, none of them would concoct a single pill.

Furthermore, all the people whom he had used to be close to, gradually began to drift further and further away.

In fact, on one occasion when he went to visit his Clan Patriarch, he was severely berated and then sent on his way. In the Violet Fate Sect, master alchemists are not to be offended. Once the Pill Blacklist Medallion is used, the word would spread throughout the whole Sect. Even Patriarchs know that the most fearsome thing in the East Pill Division was not the Dao of alchemy, but the protection they had set up for themselves.

That protection was evident from the results of the Pill Blacklist.

Within the East Pill Division, there can be power struggles, and competition. But if outsiders dared to dishonor it, then the alchemists would stand together united in their fury, and desire for revenge. This is because master alchemists are NOT to be dishonored or offended. That was an ironclad rule of the East Pill Division.

That was how the Pill Blacklist Medallion arrangement began in the first place.

In the outside world, it might not be a big deal to offend a master alchemist who was not from the East Pill Division. Other master alchemists wouldn't get involved. However in the East Pill Division, if you offended one, then you offended all.

In some ways, it might not seem very reasonable. But that unreasonable arrangement ensured that the master alchemists were treated with respect wherever they went, inside the Sect or outside.

Offend one, offend all. Few could afford to do such a thing.

Of course, if someone offended another master alchemist, Meng Hao would not go against the tide. As a master alchemist, the most important thing to him was to defend the position of all master alchemists.

And so, time passed. Meng Hao continued to concoct medicinal pills. Three batches per day. The new arrangement made the other master alchemists much less resentful.

After all, there were tens of thousands of disciples in the Inner Sect of the Violet Qi Division. Seeking out master alchemists involved certain rules, but as long as the alchemists didn't get too greedy, there wouldn't be too much resentment.

When you added in the fact that Meng Hao went out of his way to go visit the other master alchemists, it was like a cool wind blowing through their hair. Their sulkiness dissipated, and gradually, they all came to accept him.

As for Meng Hao, in addition to his three batches of pills per day, he spent a lot of time creating medicinal pills to hand over to the Sect. In addition, he used Foundation Establishment Day to slowly increase his Cultivation base.

Several months later, on one late night, Meng Hao sat cross-legged in his Immortal's Cave. In front of him were three bottles of Foundation Establishment Day. After looking at them closely for a while, his eyes began to shine brightly.

"Today I will create my sixth Dao Pillar!" He took a deep breath. As of now, his sixth Dao Pillar was more than ninety percent complete. Because of the engulfing power he knew would appear, he had waited some time before attempting to complete the final ten percent. The preparations had taken some time, but now that he was certain it was safe, he was ready to start.

His eyes shined with determination. He picked up a Foundation Establishment Day, swallowed it, and closed his eyes. The sixth Dao Pillar began to congeal inside of him. A golden glow began to spread out from his body, within which were streams of magical symbols. All of a sudden, a garrulous chatter drifted out.

"Three bullies, three bullies. Less than three won't do!" The noise, of course, came from the meat jelly, who had just woken up. It spoke the words and then spit out a mouthful of Qi.

The Qi spread out to cover the golden glow that surrounded Meng Hao. It made the Qi coming off of his Perfect Dao Pillars look ordinary. This way, the Violet Fate Sect wouldn't detect anything unusual.

Time passed slowly. By dawn, Meng Hao's body was trembling. His skin was withered, and an intensely violent gravitational force suddenly appeared. It seemed as if it had been thirsty for thousands of years and wanted to swallow up Meng Hao's body and soul to sate its thirst.

Meng Hao was prepared for this, though. As soon as the gravitational force appeared, he immediately crushed the several pill bottles that remained in front of him. These were what he had worked so hard to produce: Foundation Establishment Day pills of ninety percent medicinal strength. He popped them into his mouth.

As soon as they entered his mouth, they exploded, transforming into boundless spiritual power that immediately began to be sucked into the sixth Dao Pillar.

At noontime, Meng Hao's eyes snapped open, and they shined with a bright, glittering light. As he sat there cross-legged, he didn't seem much different than before, except that he looked a little weaker. Inside, however, was a raging storm. The shocking ripples which emanated from his Cultivation base were consumed one by one by the meat jelly.

His sixth perfect Dao Pillar had appeared. Meng Hao took a deep breath and slowly closed his eyes. After a moment, he opened them again. They no longer glowed, but were calm, and filled with a strange light. The light was confidence born of his Cultivation base.

Six Perfect Dao Pillars. Mid Foundation Establishment. With one more Dao Pillar, he would be in late Foundation Establishment! At that point, a Dao Child with a Flawless Foundation wouldn't qualify to even attack him. Their Dao Pillars would be reduced to trembling by the crushing pressure he could emit.

Even now, with his six Dao Pillars, he could easily exterminate any Dao Child.

As for the so-called Chosen, they were like ants or dried weeds that could be crushed on a whim.

"Perfect Foundation. Such incredible potency...." Meng Hao's voice was soft, but his eyes shone with anticipation. This anticipation was for his ninth Dao Pillar, when he completed the great circle of Foundation Establishment.

There was a flickering in front of Meng Hao and the meat jelly appeared. It danced back and forth, its eyes wide. "Three bullies!" it cried.

After shedding, the meat jelly hadn't transformed back into a parrot, but had maintained its meat jelly form.

"Three bullies! No less than three bullies!" it repeated in a voice that could chop nails and slice iron.

It appeared content. With a burp and some muttering, it disappeared into the bag of the Cosmos to find the Li Clan Patriarch and discuss noon-time naps.

Meng Hao stood and opened the door of his Immortal's Cave. Dazzling morning sunlight filtered down. He took a deep breath. Winter was ending and Spring was beginning. There was no snow, like in the State of Zhao. Winter in the Violet Fate Sect had no snow.

He looked quietly up into the sky and suddenly realized that he had been in the Violet Fate Sect for more than three years now. In fact, now that he calculated it carefully, it would soon be four years.

"Time flies so quickly..." he said quietly. Practicing Cultivation on his own, he could truly sense the passage of time. His senses were no longer those of a mortal's.

As he reminisced, he thought of Chen Fan, Elder Sister Xu and Fatty. Various scenes played out in his head. He knew where they were, but they... they had no idea where he was.

By this time, the name of Meng Hao was already a thing of the past. Few people brought it up any more. Soon, everyone would forget it. All the waves from the events four years ago had died down and disappeared.

"Life is like a dream, like a leaf that, no matter how beautiful, can only live for one season..." He looked at the buds sprouting from the great trees off in the distance and a smile broke out on his face. He liked his identity here as Fang Mu. He enjoyed how being in the East Pill Division felt like being in an institute of higher learning. He lifted his hand, and a jade slip appeared on his palm.

This jade slip had been branded by the Li Clan Patriarch at the behest of the meat jelly. It was branded with a Li Clan Conclave technique.

Self Will Incantation.

Chapter 229: Because this Will, Can Only Belong to Devils!

Self Will Incantation.

A Li Clan Conclave technique. In this technique, one's will was the key in which magic can be Cultivated. Furthermore, if cultivated to a consummate level, then during Spirit Severing or Dao enlightenment, Karma could be seized.

The technique actually seemed more like a scripture. Except it wasn't a scripture scroll, but seemingly a fragment of a scroll. Nonetheless, this short passage was enough to become a Conclave technique of the Li Clan.

Meng Hao examined it thoughtfully for a while. Then, his expression flickered and he waved his hand. The jade slip disappeared.

Not much time passed before Bai Yunlai appeared, walking up hastily. He formally greeted Meng Hao in a respectful tone. Ever since the matter with Liu Yanbing, Bai Yunlai carried himself differently in front of Meng Hao. They were still close, but it was now clear that their positions were different. There was a slight tension between them.

Meng Hao tried a few times to get him to act more like he had when Meng Hao first joined the Sect. However, it just made him nervous. So, he allowed Bai Yunlai to greet him formally every time they met, and to speak in a reverent tone.

Meng Hao could only sigh at this change. He understood that it would be impossible to maintain the same relationship they always had. His own Dao of alchemy was growing further and further away from Bai Yunlai's, and as such, the respect the man showed grew deeper and deeper.

"Grandmaster Fang, these are the orders I've accepted recently. Please, take a look." He handed over a bag of holding.

Meng Hao glanced it over and then tried to chat a bit with Bai Yunlai. Bai Yunlai's respectful expression didn't change, which caused Meng Hao to sigh again inwardly. With a slight nod of his head, he tucked the bag of holding away.

Bai Yunlai hesitated for a moment, then looked at Meng Hao and lowered his voice. "Grandmaster Fang, there's only one more month until this year's Pill Auction. Sir, I'm not sure if you plan to participate in the auction or not...?"

"Pill Auction...." Meng Hao thought back to four years ago when he had first joined the Violet Fate Sect. There had been a Pill Auction underway at that time. Now, he had quite a reputation in the East Pill Division. The Pill Auction was a place for master alchemists to manifest their reputation.

Also, it was a place where medicinal pills were directly sold for Spirit Stones in an official capacity. The Pill Auction only happened once per year, and Meng Hao had never attended one before. Suddenly, his heart began to thump. He was a master alchemist who was quite popular within the Sect. But he wanted to know how much a price his pills would fetch in the Southern Domain in general.

Master alchemists could offer their wares with their name attached to it, or anonymously. In the case of the latter, no one, not even members of the Sect, would know whose pill it was that was up for sale.

However, there is no wall in the world which can hold back any wind. It might be difficult for the Elders to figure out which pill was made by whom, but if Grandmaster Pill Demon wanted to know, then he could naturally be able to figure it out.

Meng Hao muttered to himself for a moment, and then nodded. Not only did he want to see how much his pills were worth in the outside world, he also wanted to replenish his supply of Spirit Stones. Copying the Foundation Establishment Day had cost him quite a bit. Even as a master alchemist who was frequently compensated by Inner Sect disciples for pill concocting, he still couldn't afford such expenditures.

As of now, he had quite a collection of medicinal plants, but not a lot of Spirit Stones. This, of course, caused Meng Hao to sigh. When he was young, he had always dreamed of being rich. That dream seemed to be just as far away as ever.

He saw off Bai Yunlai and was standing there in thought, when suddenly a bright beam of light appeared off in the distance. The image of a slim, graceful woman was visible inside. It was none other than Chu Yuyan.

The instant he saw her, Meng Hao sighed at his bad luck, then immediately turned and entered his Immortal's Cave.

“Fang Mu!!”

The instant her voice echoed out, the door of the Immortal's Cave shut and sealed. Then, Meng Hao's voice could be heard:

“Fang Mu isn't home.”

Chu Yuyan's eyes blazed with killing intent. Her veins bulged as she stood outside the Immortal's cave, gnashing her teeth. She had come to call on Meng Hao on multiple occasions during the past year, but he always seemed to be away, and never inside the cave. For him to act like this, as if he had just caught sight of some kind of devilish fiend, caused fury to burn within her.

Teeth clenched, she said, “Fang Mu, are you hiding from me because you have some secret you don't want people to know about!?” Every time she came here and found the door shut, she would say something like this.

She was more and more certain that Fang Mu was harboring some secret. For him to act like this every time she came really set her on fire. Whenever anyone said his name, the irritated feeling would fill her and she would feel like doing something to him.

Meng Hao's voice drifted out of the Immortal's cave: “What you can't see, can't annoy you.”

Chu Yuyan's stared with wide eyes. She banged her fist onto the door. A boom echoed out. The door rattled a bit, but wasn't damaged in any way.

“Get out here!”

“I'm concocting pills.”

“Are you coming out or not?”

“Aiii. Elder Sister Chu, I’m concocting pills, really!”

“Who the hell said I’m your Elder Sister? I’m a Furnace Lord. You’re just a master alchemist. If you don’t come out here right now, we’ll see how long you can stay there in your Immortal’s Cave.”

“Fine, Fellow Daoist Chu. You know, last time, you camped out next to my Immortal’s Cave for seven days. Later, a lot of slanderous rumors spread throughout the Sect. It’s really not a good thing. Don’t you agree?”

“You....”

“I, Fang Mu, am not married to any beloved, and am very concerned with my reputation. Such rumors are really intolerable. Fellow Daoist Chu, please refrain from harming my reputation in this way. Take your leave, quickly.” Meng Hao sighed. Actually, Chu Yuyan’s intuition frightened him. He had been avoiding her for years now, because he had the strong feeling that if he had any interaction with her, she might begin to pick up some clues.

If she somehow realized that he was Meng Hao... well, he didn’t dare to think of how horrific the consequences might be.

Chu Yuyan gnashed her teeth and stamped her foot angrily. Then she turned and left.

Sensing that she’d gone, Meng Hao sighed in relief. A wry smile appeared on his face. Everything about the East Pill Division was good except for Chu Yuyan. With her here, he didn’t feel secure.

“If she keeps causing problems for me, I might have to think of some other method to deal with her....” His eyes shined with a cold light, but his face’s usual calm expression returned. He stopped thinking about Chu Yuyan. With the wave of a hand, the earthly fire within his Immortal’s Cave sprang to life. A pill furnace appeared to hover directly over the fire.

This particular furnace of Meng Hao’s had three cranes carved onto its surface. As the furnace began to glow red from the heat, the three cranes turned the color of blood. They looked like they might fly out from the surface of the furnace at any moment. It was a cowing sight.

Meng Hao had traded a large collection of medicinal pills and plants with a veteran master alchemist to acquire this Blood Crane furnace. Having used it for some time, he was very familiar with it.

The furnace quickly became bright red, but Meng Hao stood off to the side, paying it no attention. A thoughtful look appeared in his eyes.

“What type of pill should I concoct for the Pill Auction...” he thought. Hundreds of pill formulas flashed through his mind, but none of them caught his attention. Enough time passed for an incense stick to burn. The pill furnace was as red as blood, and its glow filled the entire Immortal’s cave, causing everything to look red. Meng Hao’s eyes suddenly flashed.

“I’ll concoct a poison pill!” Based on Meng Hao’s understanding of the Dao of alchemy, poison pills generally did not have recipes that were handed down. They were usually created spontaneously or from memory by the master alchemist. This prevented unauthorized pill formulas from being passed around.

Poison pills were somewhat of a taboo. However, most master alchemists would research and concoct them at some point. It was a way to prove not only a master alchemist’s skill in the Dao of alchemy, but rather, his understanding of plants and vegetation. One must have a thorough mastery of the variations of plants and vegetation to be able to concoct a poison pill uniquely classified as belonging to a given master alchemist.

A pill created by one person that ten thousand people couldn’t dispel. All master alchemists thirsted to create something like this.

Meng Hao took a deep breath, then sat down cross legged next to the pill furnace. He allowed the heat from it to fill his body, and then closed his eyes. He sat silently in meditation. Days passed. The fire continued to burn. The Blood Crane furnace showed no signs of degrading; it maintained its bright red appearance the entire time.

Seven days later, Meng Hao’s eyes suddenly opened. His eyes were filled with determination.

“This poison pill will not be a pill to give to enemies, but to oneself. Poison, but not poison. Medicine, but not medicine. This pill...” He thought back to the time in the State of Zhao when he had killed Shangguan Xiu, and of the pearl Little Tiger had given him. The pearl caused one’s Cultivation base to rise by one level. Thanks to the help of the pearl, Meng Hao had been able to open the ancient path which led to the tenth level of Qi Condensation.

The images from that day sprung clearly into his mind. The pearl had fearsome power, and had left a deep impression on Meng Hao.

“Pierce the Qi vessels throughout the body, chop them like mincemeat. Turn the body into a treasure, split open the chest. Crush the mind, consolidate millions upon millions of murderous intentions. Explode the Dao Pillars within the Core Sea; killing intent can exterminate spirits. Use the mortal soul to fuse with spirits. Use the power of killing to subvert consciousness. The mind and the Core Sea, fused into nothing in the blink of an eye. This Devilish Will shall transform into a suicidal heart, which will cause the Cultivation base to climb to the skies!

“It is not a burning of the soul, it supersedes that! This pill... will be called Bedevilment Pill! That is because, this Will, can only belong to devils!” Meng Hao’s bloodshot eyes glittered. His right hand grabbed his bag of holding and then waved it in front of him. Immediately ten thousand varieties of medicinal plants appeared to float in mid-air in front of him. Bathed in the crimson glow, the scene seemed bizarrely demonic.

Meng Hao’s hands blurred, and a flickering shadow appeared beneath them. Meng Hao’s entire mind, all his energy, poured into the pill furnace. He catalyzed and pulverized medicinal plants. He created hybrids to look for one particular root he needed.

From the time Meng Hao had begun to study the Dao of alchemy, during all the various situations in which he had concocted pills, he had never been so possessed. It was his first time to make full and thorough use all of his skill in the Dao of alchemy, all of his nature talent of plants and vegetation.

His hair was wild and disheveled, and he lost awareness of everything. He was immersed in pill concoction. All his desire poured into the Bedevilment Pill. It was like he himself was possessed by a devil!

This Bedevilment Pill was actually... the first true pill ever created by Meng Hao in his time Cultivating the Dao of Alchemy!

There was no formula for this pill. It didn’t need one. This was a pill that contained the true will of a master alchemist, a pill that had been created by the influence of will. Therefore, its true value and price was impossible to describe. Even more important was the fact that, if a Furnace Lord could see Meng Hao in his current state, that person would surely go mad.

In Cultivation, there is enlightenment. The Dao of alchemy also has enlightenment. Pill Demon had experienced such enlightenment. So had the other two Grandmasters in the Southern Domain. Some Violet Furnace Lords might experience it once in their life, although that depended only on luck and fortune. Just now, Meng Hao had experienced alchemic enlightenment!

The pill created as a result of alchemic enlightenment was as miraculous as if it had been created by the Heavens themselves. It was unparalleled and unmatched!

Chapter 230: Bury Devils Beneath the Earth

This pill concoction lasted an entire month. From the time Meng Hao had learned to concoct pills until now, this was by far the longest time he had ever spent doing so. For one month, he didn't rest. All of his energy was focused on the concoction of this pill.

Over ten thousand varieties of medicinal plant variations, all shaped by the will of Meng Hao's mind. Based on endless adjustments and variations, it slowly transformed into a unique pill that was solely of Meng Hao.

On the last day of the month of concocting, late in the moon-filled night, the Blood Crane pill furnace trembled. It was no longer bright red; it was gradually returning to its original color. This process took several hours. When the moonlight was beginning to grow hazy and dim outside, the furnace finally returned to its original state. Meng Hao's hair was in a mess, and his eyes filled with veins of blood. His face was pale white. His Cultivation base had been rotating and emitting power for an entire month straight.

Thankfully, he had six Dao Pillars now. If he only had five, like before, then even replenishing himself with medicinal pills, he would have been forced to suspend pill concoction midway.

If alchemic enlightenment ceases before completion, then it cannot be resumed.

Seeing the completely recovered pill furnace in front of him, Meng Hao took a deep breath. He was exhausted from the month of work. During the most critical part of the concocting, he had experienced what felt like a bitter struggle between life and death. He closed his eyes, and as he did, they burned painfully.

A long time passed before he opened them again. Without hesitation, he lifted his right hand up to press onto the pill furnace. It trembled, and two black colored pills flew out. The instant they did, a black cloud suddenly began to form above the pill furnace.

The black cloud wasn't outside of the Immortal's Cave. No, it was inside; the bizarre sight caused Meng Hao to stare blankly, his eyes filled with confusion. It took only a moment for the cloud to finish forming. Suddenly, lightning shot out from it, directly at the medicinal pills.

At this critical moment, Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding and the meat jelly flew out. As soon as it saw the black cloud, it stared in shock. Then its eyes glowed, and it flew to meet the descending lightning bolt. It opened its mouth and consumed the entire lightning bolt. It smacked its lips as if it had just eaten something delicious.

“Pill Tribulation Lightning,” said the meat jelly, licking its lips. “So, it turns out that’s the tastiest....” Suddenly, its eyes fell upon the two pills Meng Hao held in his hands. It seemed eager to try them.

“Three bullies!” said Meng Hao resolutely. The meat jelly hesitated for a moment, as if it were torn about something. Finally, it returned to the blood-colored mask, muttering to itself, apparently preparing to vent its frustrations on the Li Clan Patriarch.

Having dismissed the meat jelly, Meng Hao took a deep breath and looked down at his palm. The two black pills seemed to be struggling, as if they wanted to fly away. This was the first time he had concocted what were apparently sentient pills, ones that had provoked Tribulation lightning.

Meng Hao’s eyes shone. He may be tired, but couldn’t stop from staring at the two pills.

They were essentially the same size. However, one was pitch black, whereas the other had a violet hue. It only took a moment for Meng Hao to come to the conclusion that the violet-colored pill was the superior of the two. The other could also be considered a consummate product, just slightly inferior.

Despite the struggles of the pills, they were incapable of leaving Meng Hao’s hand. The two black pills did not emit a medicinal fragrance, and seemed to suck in all the light that touched them. If you looked at them for too long, it seemed as if your soul would be sucked inside.

“I concocted these pills with true will....” murmured Meng Hao. Eventually, his eyes flickered. He waved his left hand and a flying sword appeared. Very slowly, he carved a mark onto the side of each pill. It was a simple mark which depicted... a cauldron!

It was the same cauldron he had seen in the Blessed Land of the Black Sieve Sect, the cauldron which had desired to defeat the Heavens.

It wasn't a completely accurate depiction, but very close. Strangely, after inscribing the pills with the mark, they stopped struggling. The cauldron mark flickered, as if it had branded itself onto the hearts of the pills. Now, the cauldron mark suddenly seemed as if it were alive, real.

Meng Hao took a deep breath, and then a smile broke out on his face. At the same time, a wave of exhaustion swept through him. He hadn't rested for an entire month. He was a Foundation Establishment Cultivator, but this was too much even for him; he simply didn't have enough energy.

"This is a pill of bedevilment, the very peak of bedevilment. The brand of the cauldron represents the Earth, and has suppressed it. Bury devils beneath the Earth, in accordance with the name of the pill." Meng Hao retrieved a pill bottle and put the first Bedevilment Pill inside. He sealed it with wax, and then placed the violet-colored Bedevilment Pill into another pill bottle.

After this, he pulled out a jade slip which he used to summon Bai Yunlai. Soon, Bai Yunlai appeared outside the Immortal's Cave. He didn't have to wait long before a pill bottle flew out to land on his hand.

Meng Hao's tired voice echoed out from the Immortal's Cave. "Put this up anonymously in the Pill Auction. It's called Bedevilment Pill. Come for me when the auction is about to begin." He sat cross-legged, his eyes closed, seemingly half asleep, immersed in restoring his energy.

Bai Yunlai clasped hands in salute, then left with the pill bottle.

Three days flashed by. During that time, the entire State of Eastern Emergence bustled with activities as one Sect after another arrived in Violet Moon City. There weren't just Sects from the State of Eastern Emergence, but from other places as well.

In fact, all of the other four great Sects, as well as the three great Clans, all dispatched disciples to the Violet Fate Sect to participate in the yearly Pill Auction. Actually, for an event to take place yearly made it a somewhat frequent event; nonetheless, it still attracted the attention of Cultivators throughout the entire Southern Domain. That was because all of the items in the auction were concocted by master alchemists of the East Pill Division.

Furthermore, Furnace Lords would usually participate as well, and would provide a unique variety of medicinal pills. The medicinal strength of their pills would be considerable, enough to cause a sensation in the Southern Domain. Occasionally, stunning, one-of-a-kind creations would appear.

Every year, different master alchemists' names would rise and then spread throughout the outside world. You could say that the Pill Auction was a platform for master alchemists to gain fame. Of course, the East Pill Division encouraged this, and urged the master alchemists to concoct pills to sell at the auction.

Not only were the master alchemists encouraged to provide medicinal pills so that their fame would grow within the Southern Domain, but also, for material gain. After all, the profits from the sale of the medicinal pills all went back to the master alchemists.

This was a set rule, which caused virtually all of the master alchemists to participate.

Furthermore, the Violet Fate Sect strictly controlled its medicinal pills. The only way for outsiders to acquire them was by participating in the Pill Auction. There would always be a few types of pills that would give rise to frenzied bidding. Usually, this was not because of the medicinal strength of the pill alone, but also the concoction method used.

After all, despite not acquiring the pill formula, research of the pill would reveal much about the methods which had been used to concoct it. The master alchemists of the Violet Fate Sect had no way to prevent this from happening. Anyone with sufficient skill could perform such research on medicinal pills.

In short, it is easy to imagine the stir caused by the yearly Pill Auction.

The location of the Pill Auction was, of course, Violet Moon City. In the southeast corner of the city, was an enormous circular edifice, a stadium which could seat a hundred thousand Cultivators.

Generally speaking, during every Pill Auction, because of the influx of Cultivators from all regions, the seats would be completely filled.

The Pill Auction usually lasted for seven days, and could be rated as a grand occasion hosted by the Violet Fate Sect.

This particular day was the first day of the auction. The auction stadium was already full. The eyes of the Cultivators from all the various Sects and Clans were focused on the stage in the middle of the stadium.

Standing there was a middle-aged man who smiled and clasped hands respectfully to the audience.

“Fellow Daoists of the Southern Domain, Ladies and Gentlemen, you all know the rules of the Violet Fate Sect’s Pill Auction, so I won’t go into all the details. We have a total of 789 types of medicinal pills up for auction, including pills appropriate for Qi Condensation, Foundation Establishment, Core Formation, and even Nascent Soul stage Cultivators! Furthermore, there will be poison pills and magic pills available as well.

“According to the rules of the Violet Fate Sect Pill Auction, before auctioning each pill, a small shaving will be taken to test the medicinal strength of the pill, as well as to clearly demonstrate its effectiveness.” Having said that, the man waved his hand, causing a gigantic curved portal to open up behind him.

Bright ripples spread out, after which everyone could see a group of seven hundred Cultivators standing on the other side, their faces expressionless.

These Cultivators had Cultivation bases of various levels, and their ages were different. There was one similarity between all of them, however. All of their eyes glowed with a violet light. Outsiders might not know what this meant, but Meng Hao would. It would only take one glance for him to determine that these people... had all cultivated the Violet Qi to the West technique! These were puppet disciples of the Sect!

“These Cultivators of the East Pill Division have been selected to sample all the pills which will be auctioned today. Ladies and Gentlemen, most likely this is not your first time to attend our Pill Auction, so you must surely already know, the Violet Fate Sect’s Pill Auction is unmatched in the entire Southern Domain!” The man’s voice echoed throughout the stadium, which subsequently filled with respectful laughter.

“Let the auction begin!” the man cried. “Lot one is a bottle of Yang Toppling Pills concocted by Furnace Lord Liu Yong of the East Pill Division! Transform life force into Death Qi, cause enormous transformation! Use this pill in your Immortal’s cave to collect Yin powers. Consume it to cause an abrupt rise of Death Qi. This pill is suitable for any Fellow Daoist who cultivates Spirit Puppet arts.” Even as the man’s voice rang out, Bai Yunlai and Meng Hao were hurrying toward the stadium.

Being a master alchemist, Meng Hao caught the attention of many apprentice alchemists as he entered. He sat down in the pavilion reserved for master alchemists, and then looked down at the auction proceeding below.

He took a deep breath of anticipation. He keenly anticipated finding out if people would be interested in his Bedevilment Pill, and how high of a price it would fetch. After all, since becoming a master alchemist, he had never been more pleased with a pill. Although he had complete confidence in it, he was a bit worried about whether or not it would be profitable.

He glanced over the crowd, a thoughtful expression on his face. Suddenly, a look of shock appeared, which then transformed into a slight smile. His gaze had fallen onto a group of visitors, amidst whom was a certain fat young man, casually grinding his teeth.