

The Heavens 231

Chapter 231: Pill Auction

In all of the Southern Domain, there was only one person who could appear so domineering, who would use a flying sword to grind his teeth!

Li Fugui...

... Also known as Fatty. Other than him, there was no Cultivator in the Southern Domain who dared to grind his teeth in such a fashion. Clustered around Fatty were a group of Golden Frost Sect disciples with vigilant and protective looks on their faces. Their presence actually served only to draw more attention to him.

Fatty was... even fatter.

The other Cultivators who sat nearby eyed him with strange looks, and engaged in furtive conversations. How could Fatty pay attention to such things though? He complacently pulled out a Spirit Stone, popped it into his mouth and crunched it into bits.

This caused the eyes of the surrounding onlookers to fill with shock, and their hearts with envy.

Meng Hao hadn't seen him in four years. However, he would think of him often, as well as Elder Sister Xu and Chen Fan. Seeing him here, Meng Hao couldn't help but smile and sigh emotionally.

Being Fang Mu for the past four years, taking root in the Violet Fate Sect and rising to prominence, had given him the means to send out some inquiries about his friends. He knew that all of them had made progress in their various Sects. For example, Elder Sister Xu had long since reached Foundation Establishment. She had taken Han Bei as her Master, and was in a much better position in the Black Sieve Sect than she had been all those years before.

As for Chen Fan, after four years' time, he was now a Chosen in the Solitary Sword Sect.

Fatty, of course, was the least given to studying and learning techniques. However, he was still in the same position as he had been within the Golden Frost Sect. If he wanted wind, there was wind, and thanks to his value to the Sect, he also had reached Foundation Establishment.

The name of Meng Hao was now nearly forgotten in the Southern Domain.

Meng Hao smiled happily. To be able to see his old friend really lifted his mood.

Seeing Meng Hao looking at Fatty, Bai Yunlai leaned over and, in a low voice, said, “That’s Li Fugui from the Golden Frost Sect. I remember hearing that last year, he married his third beloved.... According to the rumors, the Golden Frost Sect will go to any lengths to find appropriate female Cultivators to become his beloved, all with hopes of continuing his bloodline....”

Hearing this, Meng Hao gaped for a moment, then laughed and shook his head wordlessly.

Sighing, he thought, “I never thought that from the group of us from the Reliance Sect in the State of Zhao, Fatty would end up in the most comfortable position.” Even he couldn’t help but feel a bit of envy at Fatty’s special position on the path of Cultivation.

He suddenly thought back to when they had first joined the Reliance Sect. Fatty had constantly wept and wailed about wanting to go home and get married. Meng Hao couldn’t help but smile at the memory. A gentle light filled his eyes.

The auction was continuously underway, of course. Each pill that came up for auction would have a bit of powder shaved off and given to one of the Cultivators who had practiced Violet Qi to the West. After consuming the powder, the Cultivator’s body would become translucent, so that all the onlookers could see the effect of the medicine.

This was a tradition of the Violet Fate Sect Pill Auction that had existed for countless years, a method to guarantee the quality of the products.

Time passed, and soon it was noon.

“This lot is for a Barrier Breaking Pill. Fellow Daoists, Ladies and Gentlemen, I’m sure you’re all very well aware of the properties of this pill....” As he spoke, a Violet Qi to the West disciple consumed some of the powder, giving everyone a clear view of the results.

“20,000 Spirit Stones!” cried Fatty, his voice filled with a domineering tone that well matched his stocky frame.

“30,000 Spirit Stones!”

“Your granny!” shouted Fatty gruffly. He stood up. “Fine, you punk, 50,000 Spirit Stones!”

“60,000 Spirit Stones!”

“70,000 Spirit Stones....” someone else said.

Actually, the value of a Barrier Breaking Pill was dependent on individual circumstances. With a hundred thousand Cultivators present, the number who were currently stuck in a bottleneck, or who soon would be, was hard to determine. A high price was always required to break through a bottleneck.

“100,000 Spirit Stones,” roared Fatty. “I have Spirit Stones to spare, punks! They’re not even mine! Do you really dare to compete with me!” He pulled out a Spirit Stone which he then placed between his teeth and crushed. The surrounding Golden Frost Sect disciples could only make wry smiles.

Fatty’s words seemed to have the desired effect. Besides, Barrier Breaking Pills were good, but not necessarily guaranteed to be completely effective. 100,000 Spirit Stones was an incredible price that apparently no one was willing to exceed.

A strange look had appeared on Meng Hao’s face. The Barrier Breaking Pill hadn’t been concocted by him. From this distance, he could clearly see the pill’s effect on the translucent body of the Violet Qi to the West disciple, as well as its medicinal strength. Based on his skill in the Dao of alchemy, it was obvious that whoever had concocted the pill had only been able to extract thirty percent medicinal strength from the plants and vegetation which had been used as ingredients.

“It seems the price I charged Ding Yong for the same pill... was a little low....” he thought. Of course, it wasn’t really possible to compare the prices within the Sect with those outside. This was especially true when one was sold to a fellow Sect member, whereas the other was sold at auction.

The auction continued on. As more pills appeared, the atmosphere in the auction stadium climbed. This was especially true when a pill concocted by a Furnace Lord appeared. The price for that particular pill had already reached hundreds of thousands of Spirit Stones. This caused Meng Hao to pant. It was the first time he had seen how much profits master alchemists could make. It was really shocking.

It was especially astounding because Meng Hao knew the base cost of the pill, which was just a few tens of thousands of Spirit Stones. Furthermore, the so-called medicinal strength was only at fifty percent. Meng Hao could produce a similar pill without barely even concentrating.

Fatty made bids on just about all of the pills, and acquired quite a few. He was becoming one of the most recognized figures in the auction stadium. This was especially true considering how he continuously made furtive glances at nearby female Cultivators. When he caught the eye of one, he would put on the most casual, cool look he could.

The others from the Golden Frost Sect could only sigh. They did nothing to stop him. After all, he was engaged in a “righteous cause.” That “righteous cause,” was of course, finding wives. It was an order passed down by the Sect Leader himself.

The middle-aged auctioneer smiled and flicked his sleeve. “This next lot contains medicinal pills concocted by Alchemist Li Tao,” he called out. “The name of the pill is Foundation Establishment Day. It can be used by the mid Foundation Establishment stage and sometimes even the late Foundation Establishment stage. In total, there are three bottles, and each bottle contains six pills. All the bottles will be sold together.” Three pill bottles appeared. When the Violet Qi to the West disciple sampled the powder from one of the pills, the entire auction stadium immediately went silent. The silence lasted for only a moment, whereupon a buzz of conversation filled the air.

“That pill...”

“It has forty-five percent medicinal strength!!”

“This is not an ordinary Foundation Establishment Day! Who is this Alchemist Li Tao? This pill is second only to the type concocted by Furnace Lords!”

“The interactions of the plants and vegetation in this pill are extraordinary!!”

Of course, most of the hundred thousand Cultivators in the auction stadium understood little about the Dao of alchemy. However, the interactions happening within the translucent body of the Violet Qi to the West disciple gave some clues as to the astonishing nature of the pill.

The auctioneer also stared in amazement, then looked back down at the three pill bottles he held.

Meng Hao's gaze fell upon the bottles as well. After a while, he smiled. He was friends with Li Tao, and as such, the man had come to him before concocting this batch of Foundation Establishment Day. During their discussion of the Dao of alchemy, Meng Hao had pointed out some variations in the plant and vegetation interactions. You could actually say that it was with Meng Hao's help that Li Tao gained enlightenment that day, and was able to concoct this batch of pills, which was the pinnacle of his current achievements in pill concoction.

"I won't ask him about this batch of Foundation Establishment Day," thought Meng Hao. "However, the variations I talked about that day could only have extracted forty percent medicinal strength from the plants. The final five percent was an achievement based on Li Tao's personal enlightenment and skill." Seeing the fervent reaction of the crowds around him, Meng Hao smiled.

Within his bag of holding, he still had several Foundation Establishment Day pills that he himself had concocted. Those pills had ninety percent medicinal strength. If he put those up for auction, it would certainly cause some waves.

"I wonder what the auction of my Bedevilment pill will be like...." he thought, his heart filling with anticipation. The energy he had expended concocting the Bedevilment pills exceeded that he had spent on Foundation Establishment Day by double, triple or perhaps more.

The concoction of the Bedevilment Pills was the true expression of his will, and the pinnacle of his Dao of alchemy.

With a smile, the auctioneer said, "Again, these three pill bottles will not be auctioned separately, but together. The opening bid for the three bottles is 250,000 Spirit Stones." In his estimation, the price for these bottles would surely reach an incredible height.

In fact, it might be the crux of the entire auction, and would likely cause Li Tao's name to rise to prominence in the Southern Domain.

This was because, although he wasn't a Furnace Lord, he had concocted pills of almost exactly the same quality as a Furnace Lord's. As such, the pills must have plant and vegetation interactions of his own creation, which was the hallmark difference between master alchemists and Furnace Lords.

Any master alchemist who wished to become a Furnace Lord must be able to produce plant and vegetation interactions that were uniquely his own. By rising above other master alchemists in such a way, he could then advance to being a Furnace Lord.

Because of those interactions, the value of such a medicinal pill was far beyond the value of an ordinary pill. Their appearance in the auction would immediately cause a huge scene. Many people would be willing to pay an exorbitant price to acquire the pills for research.

After all, once a master alchemist was raised to Furnace Lord, he would be able to use alchemic concealing techniques to hide the plant interactions. In that way, it would be much more difficult for others to unlock his secrets.

However, a pill concocted by a master alchemist would contain no such alchemic concealing, and would be much easier to unlock and research. The East Pill Division was aware of this, of course, and really had no way to control it. Skill manifest in the path of medicinal pills, was innately researchable.

Leaks like this didn't occur in all Pill Auctions, but rather, perhaps one in ten. As such, one can only imagine the frenzy caused because of the appearance of this batch of pills.

The East Pill Division naturally had a degree of forbearance. Since the pills had been put up for auction, the East Pill Division would not attempt to cover up their true nature, nor try to prevent people from researching them.

Immediately, people began calling out bids.

"300,000 Spirit Stones!"

"500,000 Spirit Stones. I must acquire these three bottles of Foundation Establishment Day!"

Meng Hao's eyes glittered. For a Foundation Establishment Day pill of forty-five percent medicinal strength to be so explosively popular caused him to wonder what kind of reaction his own pill would provoke.

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“600,000!” cried Fatty, leaping to his feet. “Who dares to contend with his superiors?! These three pill bottles are mine!” His voice reverberated like thunder throughout the auction stadium.

However, these three bottles of Foundation Establishment Day were not like the Barrier Breaking Pills from before, in which Fatty’s bids caused others to give up. These three bottles represented a chance that might come only once in ten years, perhaps even one in a hundred!

Considering the East Pill Division’s lofty status, they could afford to not care about such a thing. But other Sects lacked the East Pill Division’s deep stores of knowledge. Clearly, there were many Sects present who were determined to win this chance to study the interactions contained within the pills.

Regardless of great Sect or small Sect, the eyes of all the Cultivators in the stadium were red. These medicinal pills were just too important, not just to the Cultivators, but to their Sects as a whole.

By fully researching the plant and vegetation interactions within the pills, a Sect could gain significant advancements in their Dao of alchemy. As such, the bids in the stadium continued to flow out, even from the three great Clans and the other great Sects.

Meng Hao watched on from within the pavilion, his eyes wide, almost as if he couldn’t comprehend the scene. His eyes began to shine as the price for the pills climbed higher and higher. After this Pill Auction, Li Tao’s name would definitely become known throughout the Southern Domain. Soon, all Cultivators would wish to make his acquaintance. Considering he was able to produce such pills while still just a master alchemist, it meant that... he definitely was qualified to become a Furnace Lord in the future!

There were only around one hundred Furnace Lords in the East Pill Division. Any one of them could cause a huge sensation in the Southern Domain, and would be sought after by countless Cultivators. Their position and status invoked solemn respect of the highest order.

Fatty continued to make bids in the auction for the Foundation Establishment Day. However, eventually he had to give up as the price eventually reached the incredible height of 4,000,000 Spirit Stones!

This was the highest price offered for a lot in the Violet Fate Sect’s Pill Auction in the past one hundred years!

It was hard to use words to even talk about such a price. Every participant in the auction was panting heavily, and deathly still filled the air.

The winner of the auction was one of the great Clans, the Li Clan!

Only three people had come from the Li Clan. One was Clan Elder, and the other two were Chosen. Of course, each of the great Clans had their own Dao of alchemy. Although theirs were different from the East Pill Division's, comparatively speaking, they were also similarities. These three bottles of Foundation Establishment Day would give them an incredible opportunity to discover new plant and vegetation interactions.

As such, the auctioneer hesitated a moment. However, the East Pill Division was filled with deep reservoirs of knowledge, and as such, they could afford to disregard a leakage of information about plant and vegetation interactions. For these medicinal pills to end up in the hands of the Li Clan showed how incredible they were.

In the past thousand years during which the Violet Fate Sect Pill Auction had been held, the Violet Fate Sect itself had never purchased one of its own auction items. The Eastern Pill Division never withheld items from auction, or prevented them from being sold. Such a matter was unheard of throughout the thousand year history of the auction.

In fact, Violet Fate Sect disciples were prohibited from purchasing items from the auction. It didn't matter how rare a given item was, bids were not permitted.

It was a thousand-year-old rule that had never changed!

After the three bottles of Foundation Establishment Day were sold to the Li Clan, the Li Clan Elder immediately extended an invitation for Li Tao to come for a visit to the Li Clan [1]. This in turn caused Li Tao to gain even more prestige.

Discussions regarding Li Tao spread throughout the auction stadium. The master alchemists sitting around Meng Hao in the pavilion were all amazed, and began to talk about Li Tao with admiration and envy.

By now, the auction had already been underway for two days. The auctioneer pulled out another medicinal pill, but considering what had just happened, it was impossible for him to arouse the passion of the crowd.

Few people were paying attention, and the bidding was no longer intense. The next few hundred pills all sold within the space of ten or so breaths. Things were selling so quickly that it hardly seemed an auction anymore....

It reached the point that some people began to leave.

After the wonderment of the Foundation Establishment Day, the hundred thousand or so Cultivators participating in the auction seemed to have come to the conclusion that even though there might be some amazing items yet to appear, none of them would be able to match the astonishing Foundation Establishment Day pills.

To many people a bid of 4,000,000 Spirit Stones was something that wouldn't be seen again in the next hundred years. The three bottles of Foundation Establishment Day were nothing less than a miracle.

Therefore, interest in the remainder of the auction was waning. The auctioneer was well aware of this. He was still a bit excited. To have officiated over the sale of an item at such an astounding price was something he had never experienced before in his life.

Even he didn't think that the remainder of the auction would feature anything that could possibly outmatch the Foundation Establishment Day. As such, he could understand the feelings of the rest of the hundred thousand Cultivators, and was willing to let the rest of the hundreds of medicinal pills be auctioned off at a relatively rapid rate.

It was in such a fashion that Meng Hao's Bedevilment Pill finally came up for auction, on the evening of the third day. Few of the Cultivators present were very interested. Most of them were still wrapped up in regretfully recalling the events surrounding the Foundation Establishment Day and sending messages about it back to their various Sects.

The voice of the auctioneer sounded out, "This pill was concocted by an anonymous master alchemist of the East Pill Division. Even I don't know who this person is. The name of the pill is... Bedevilment Pill, a poison pill." He placed the pill bottle in front of him.

Meng Hao's spirits instantly lifted, and he took a deep breath. He stared at the pill bottle, which of course contained the pill he had concocted.

When the pill bottle appeared, most of the surrounding Cultivators were still discussing the Foundation Establishment Day matter in hushed tones. Only a few people looked down, mostly because of the words "poison pill," which managed to arouse a bit of interest.

The auctioneer spoke quickly. In his opinion, even though this pill was a poison pill, it wasn't likely to attract much attention. Other than a Foundation Establishment Day pill, nothing else would be able to cause much of an excited bidding. Despite the pill in front of him having obviously been created by paying a Heaven-defying price, he still doubted that it would sell for much more than ten thousand or so Spirit Stones.

Therefore, he didn't spend much time introducing the pill. Looking out, he saw that the vast majority of the hundred thousand Cultivators weren't paying attention at all. He cleared his throat, and decided that the time was coming to wrap up the auction. It didn't seem that this auction would last seven days, but rather four at the most. There was really no other alternative. After the shock of the Foundation Establishment day, all other auction items would really pale into insignificance.

Having come to the decision to end things quickly, the middle-aged auctioneer called over one of the Violet Qi to the West disciples. He poured the black pill out of the bottle and, not seeing anything strange about it, quickly scraped off some powder and gave it to the Violet Qi to the West disciple.

Few of the Cultivators were paying attention to all of this, and in fact, only a handful of people seemed interested in purchasing the pill. After all, it could really only attract the attention of the few Cultivators who studied the Dao of poison.

Meng Hao noticed all of this, and kept his expression calm.

Only Bai Yunlai seemed to be nervous. He sighed; clearly he felt the whole situation was unfair. In his opinion, Meng Hao's Dao of alchemy was far above that of Li Tao's. They weren't even on the same level!

That much was evident from the fervor with which the Inner Sect disciples of the Violet Qi Sect contended for his pill concocting services.

As for the Violet Qi to the West disciple, he was a young man of about thirty years of age with an expressionless face. Despite the lack of interest on the part of the surrounding Cultivators, he earnestly accepted the powder from the pill and then consumed it without hesitation. His Cultivation base rotated, causing the powder to dissolve into his body. He became translucent, allowing everyone to see the results inside of him.

Despite the fact that this was a poison pill, the man didn't hesitate in the slightest.

As soon as he consumed the powder, his body began to transform.

As he did, Meng Hao quietly looked at him and murmured, "Pierce the Qi passageways 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!" With every sentence Meng Hao uttered, the Cultivator's body changed, almost as if it were under Meng Hao's control.

His expressionless face immediately changed. Sweat began to pour down his forehead, and his whole body shook. Veins popped out on his forehead.

He could clearly sense that the powder which he had swallowed had been immediately absorbed by his body and then transformed into an indescribable stimulating force. His body filled with pain, and spiritual energy exploded out. It felt as if his Qi passageways were being slashed to pieces by countless swords!

As this happened, a roaring sound emanated inside of him, as if the unrestrained power of his very life force were shooting out. The intensity of this power exploded out of his chest, transforming into a frenzied desire for murder, which completely shattered his three Dao Pillars!

As his Dao Pillars fell to pieces, his Core Sea evaporated, and his Cultivation base was smashed. The power flooded into his mind, pulverizing his soul, erasing his mind, filling it with a devilish will which would end his life!!

It seemed all of his consciousness had disappeared and he had gone completely mad. He lifted his head to the sky and let out a shocking howl. The howl echoed out, containing indescribable desire to murder, which then transformed into killing intent that emanated out from him in booming waves.

A shapeless Flame Sea enveloped his body, burning it, burning his soul, filling him with a frenzied, devilish insanity. His breathing became ragged, and his Cultivation base.... suddenly exploded upward. He had no Dao Pillars, and yet his aura was so powerful that it rivaled the late Foundation Establishment stage!!

His roar, filled with killing intent, slammed down onto the hundred thousand Cultivators who were discussing Foundation Establishment Day. Instantly, all of their eyes fell upon the Violet Qi to the West Cultivator.

Meng Hao stood there, his expression calm, his eyes calm. He seemed like... an alchemist devil!

Just a quick note to remind you that Li Tao's surname a different surname from that of the Li Clan, both in terms of the character and the pronunciation

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It was impossible to describe how the killing intent imbued the howl which rose up to the Heavens. Its intensity spread about, causing a pulsating black aura to emanate from the body of the young Cultivator.

The black aura swirled around him, making him look like someone who had risen up from the yellow springs of the underworld. His closed eyes suddenly snapped open, and all of the hundred thousand Cultivators gasped. What they saw were two eyes that appeared as if they belonged to wild animal, filled only with frenzied death.

The eyes were crimson, and they glowed with insanity. From this moment onward, this was no longer a Cultivator, but a devil!!

He emanated the power of the late Foundation Establishment stage; moments ago, he had only been at the early Foundation Establishment stage. Such an explosive transformation caused the hearts of the surrounding Cultivators to echo with thunderous shock.

Because of the roaring in their hearts, the surroundings grew completely silent. All eyes were focused on the Cultivator, who looked like some sort of devilish deity. The auctioneer stared in shock. He breathed heavily, his face covered in astonishment.

This was because even though the Violet Qi to the West disciple looked like an insane devil, with billowing killing intent and mad, crimson eyes, actually, there was also a calmness within those eyes.

This calmness was even more terrifying than the insanity. It showed that even though he was inundated with frenzied killing intent, he actually had not lost his mind!

Furthermore, all of the hundred thousand Cultivators could clearly see the changes within his body caused by the medicinal powder. If the tiny amount of powder that had been used could cause such an incredible transformation, what could the entire pill do...?

All of the Cultivators present were breathing heavily; the answer to such a question floated in their hearts. Their eyes shone with amazement.

The auction stadium instantly exploded with conversations.

“What... what pill is this!?!? It’s astonishing!!”

“That was... that was just a bit of powder, and yet it caused such an incredible transformation. If just a bit of powder could do that, imagine if the entire pill were consumed! What would that be like....”

“It can cause someone to go insane, and unleash all of the potential contained within the body. It fuses the Core Sea and the Dao Pillars, and emits a consummate killing aura. This pill.... is no poison pill! It could be used at a critical moment to save one’s life!!”

“Poison pill, poison pill.... All alchemists will eventually dabble in poison pills at one point or another. But there are usually no formulas for poison pills. The pill... this pill....”

“What’s most important is the medicinal strength of the pill. I was watching closely, and I think I know. It’s only a powder shaving, but in my estimation, this pill displayed at least fifty percent medicinal strength!!”

“Fifty percent.... Don’t tell me this is a poison pill concocted by a Furnace Lord...?”

Discussions raged, just as they had upon the appearance of Foundation Establishment Day! All eyes were on the black medicinal pill, and especially the mark which was branded onto its side.

“Look, it has a mark on it!”

“That’s... a cauldron! The pill is branded with a cauldron!”

“That’s the mark of the alchemist who concocted the pill! They only brand pills with a personal mark when they are completely satisfied with results. A cauldron.... I’ve never heard of any alchemist using a cauldron as a personal mark!”

“I demand that the auction house perform a test to determine the medicinal strength of this pill!!”

“Yes! We demand a test!”

The demand for a test caused the atmosphere in the auction stadium to grow even more intense. How could the auctioneer have ever imagined that another pill would appear after Foundation Day that could cause such a commotion?

Looking at all the Cultivators demanding a test, their voices growing louder and louder, the auctioneer didn’t hesitate. He waved his hand, and two old men walked out from the portal behind him.

Both had hair long and white. These were veteran master alchemists of the Sect, responsible for performing tests of the medicinal strength of pills in the auction. As they walked out, the auctioneer immediately grew very courteous.

The old men had proud looks in their eyes, and completely ignored the surrounding hundred thousand Cultivators. One of them reached out to take hold of the pill. He eyed the cauldron mark, and didn’t look very pleased. In his opinion, alchemists who hadn’t reached the rank of Furnace Lord weren’t qualified to leave a mark on a pill. The crowd could tell that if the man could, he would wipe the mark away.

Looking annoyed, the old man sniffed the pill, whereupon his body suddenly trembled. His eyes filled with disbelief, and he tilted his head forward to examine the pill more closely. As he did, he seemed to grow more agitated. His body trembled even harder, and his eyes grew wide with even more disbelief.

“Impossible...” he said, his voice hoarse. “This pill is an impossibility. It’s impossible...” When his voice floated up to the surrounding Cultivators, they all began to pant anxiously. At the moment, they couldn’t imagine what medicinal strength the pill must have to cause a veteran master alchemist to turn pale from astonishment.

The other old master alchemist strode forward. He examined the pill, smelled it, and then his eyes gradually began to shine with a strange light. Having seen through the pill, his face began to grow pale, and a look of disbelief and astonishment filled his face.

“This... this is...” The two old men looked at each other, and could clearly see the astonishment in each other’s eyes. Their bodies trembled and they breathed heavily.

“Master alchemists, this pill...”

“This pill cannot be sold!!” said one of the two master alchemists. His voice echoed out, filling the auction stadium. A buzz rose up.

“What do you mean it can’t be sold! We asked for a test. Is the Violet Fate Sect Pill Auction really going to break their one thousand year tradition by not selling something?!”

“According to the rules of the Pill Auction, we have the right to ask for a test. You haven’t even revealed the results and are already saying you won’t sell it?”

“We want the test results! Tell us... what is the medicinal strength of this pill!”

The voices of the hundred thousand Cultivators rose up, including that of Fatty, who roared at the top of his lungs. The auctioneer’s expression tightened. He had never encountered a situation like this before, and was starting to get nervous. Suddenly, a new portal appeared on the stage.

Seven people emerged.

Seeing these seven people, the auctioneer's face flickered with shock. He immediately clasped hands and bowed deeply. The two master alchemists' faces filled with veneration, and they, too, clasped hands in salute.

The hundred thousand Cultivators in the auction stadium fell silent. However, their eyes went wide with shock. The seven people who had just emerged were all Furnace Lords of the East Pill Division!

Each and every one had a name that reverberated like thunder throughout the Southern Domain. All hearts trembled at the sight of these seven. They walked out and approached the Bedevilment Pill. One reached out to take it in hand, then examined it carefully. His hand began to tremble, and his expression filled with shock.

He tried to conceal the shock, but the surrounding Cultivators couldn't help but notice. To see a Furnace Lord looking shocked caused the hearts of the hundred thousand Cultivators to feel as if they were filled with thousands of lightning bolts.

The Furnace Lord's gaze swept across the hundred thousand Cultivators. With an inward sigh, he caused the Bedevilment Pill to float up into the air, then sat down cross-legged. "In previous Pill Auctions," he said, "the East Pill Division has offered one opportunity to test the medicinal strength of a pill. Are all of you certain that this pill is the one you wish to test?" There was no need to wait for an answer.

The six other Furnace Lords joined him, sitting in a circle around the floating Bedevilment Pill. They all performed incantation gestures, after which seven pill furnaces appeared in front of them. Each of these pill furnaces was clearly made from extraordinary materials!

"Each pill furnace that ignites, represents ten percent medicinal strength. This is a fair method, since all of the plant and vegetation ingredients used to concoct pills in this Pill Auction were grown in the East Pill Division. If they were not, we would not be able to so accurately determine their medicinal strength."

Even as the voice rang out, the hundred thousand Cultivators all watched on closely. These seven Furnace Lords had illustrious reputations and commanded utmost respect. They closed their eyes, and a fragrant medicinal aroma filled the air, giving rise to a strange atmosphere within the stadium. Suddenly, one pill furnace began to glow. Next, a second, then a third, and finally a fourth began to grow brightly.

“Four furnaces lit up. That means it employed forty percent of the power of the plant and vegetation ingredients....”

“Ah, so it’s only forty percent. That’s not quite as good as the Foundation Establishment Day. However, it’s really not so simple to compare the medicinal strength of the two, since this poison pill is a completely different type of pill. In fact, I’d say... huh?” A moment after discussions broke out among the Cultivators, a deathly silence filled the air, as if the throats of those speaking had suddenly been clamped shut.

The hundred thousand Cultivators began to pant, and looks of shock filled their faces one by one. They stared as a fifth furnace lit up, then a sixth, and a seventh! In the blink of an eye, seven furnaces had begun to glow brightly!

“Seventy... Seventy percent?”

“It must have been concocted by a Furnace Lord! This... this....”

“Seventy percent! But, what if there were eight pill furnaces...?” As the roar of conversation filled the air, the faces of the seven Furnace Lords flickered, and their hearts trembled. Suddenly, yet another glowing portal appeared, from which emerged three more alchemists, who were also Furnace Lords. Their faces were calm and dignified as they strode forward. They sat down and then produced pill furnaces of their own.

Almost the instant their pill furnaces emerged, they began to glow. Eight pill furnaces, then nine, and finally ten. In the blink of an eye, all the pill furnaces were glowing!

Ten pill furnaces, their glow rising up into the sky. There was no roar of conversation, because the surrounding hundred thousand Cultivators could only stare with blank looks....

As for the ten Furnace Lords who were performing the test, they too stared mutely. Their minds spun, and they panted. An unprecedented look of shock appeared in their eyes.

And then, the reaction came. One hundred thousand Cultivators went crazy. Their minds buzzed, their eyes were crimson, and their breath came in ragged pants. They had obviously... gone mad!

One hundred percent medicinal strength! This was a perfect product! From ancient times until now, such an item had never appeared in the Pill Auction!

The difference between the Foundation Establishment Day and this Bedevilment Pill was clear. One was the Earth, the other was the Heavens!

Chapter 234: Grandmaster Pill Cauldron

Throughout the history of the Violet Fate Sect Pill Auction, a one hundred percent consummate pill had never before appeared. In fact, when it comes to such pills, a pill of eighty percent concocted by a Violet Furnace Lord would be considered a supreme level pill. Even something like that had never been seen before.

A medicinal pill that could employ more than eighty percent of the strength of the plant ingredients was considered supreme! Something ninety percent or higher... such pills were referred to as consummate pills!

A ninety percent pill was considered consummate; a one hundred percent pill, though generally referred to as consummate, could actually be considered sub-celestial!

Throughout the tens of thousands of years that encompassed the history of the Violet Fate Sect's East Pill Division, very few people had ever been able to concoct supreme pills. Every single one was a Violet Furnace Lord, and every single one had a name which could rock the Southern Domain. As for one hundred percent consummate pills....

In the tens of thousands of years of the history of the Violet Fate Sect's East Pill Division, only two people had ever been able to concoct such pills. One was the founder of the Sect itself, Reverend Violet East. The other was Grandmaster Pill Demon.

Only those two people had ever been able to concoct consummate pills. Consummate pills were not only a defiance of the Heavens, but also a watershed mark in the Dao of alchemy. They were the watershed mark for promotion to Grandmaster!

Only people who could concoct consummate pills could be called Grandmasters! In all the Southern Domain, other than Grandmaster Pill Demon, there were only two other Grandmasters who were capable of concocting consummate pills. However, their consummate pills were only ninety percent, not one hundred.

In all the Southern Domain, only Grandmaster Pill Demon... could concoct one hundred percent sub-celestial consummate pills!

It is therefore obvious how valuable a pill like the Bedevilment Pill would be, and why its appearance in the Pill Auction would send everyone into a wild frenzy.

One hundred thousand Cultivators all stared with red eyes. The Foundation Establishment Day had caused a stir, but that was far removed from this development. One hundred thousand people, one hundred thousand pairs of eyes. Their minds swam with the shocking sight of... a one hundred percent consummate pill!

Fatty panted as he stared fixedly at the pill; everyone was the same. In the pavilions on the top level of the auction stadium, the master alchemists from the East Pill Division who had come to observe the proceedings, also were completely shaken, their faces filled with shock and disbelief.

It wasn't just them; the apprentice alchemists who were present were in an uproar. Even the disciples from the Violet Qi Division were filled with massive waves of shock.

The entire Pill Auction seemed as if it might boil into collapse.

The auctioneer stood there trembling, his mind filled with thunderous roaring, his breathing agitated and his eyes bloodshot. He had never imagined that he would ever be able to touch a one hundred percent consummate pill.

When he thought about how he had personally shaved off some powder from the pill, his heart filled with intense regret. In his mind, such an action was essentially blasphemy.

A one hundred percent consummate pill could be considered a sacred object to any alchemist, a truly precious treasure. His reaction, his madness, might be difficult for an outsider to comprehend. But as an alchemist, his greatest dream in life was to one day concoct a consummate pill.

The ten Furnace Lords stared blankly at the Bedevilment Pill floating in front of them. Their eyes shined with religious fervor, and their breath came in ragged bursts. They seemed to have forgotten everything else except for this pill.

As Meng Hao watched all of this happening, his heart began to pound. All of a sudden, he was getting the feeling that maybe this wasn't such a good development after all.... He had never imagined that the Bedevilment Pill would lead to such a frantic uproar.

“That pill... it...” murmured Bai Yunlai. He seemed to almost be in a daze. He slowly looked over at Meng Hao, and he seemed as if his soul had vanished into thin air.

Before the auctioneer could even set a price, the frenzied crowd began roaring out bids. “5,000,000 Spirit Stones!” someone cried. “I’ll get this one hundred percent consummate pill even if it reduces me to poverty!”

“10,000,000 Spirit Stones!! I’m from the Mount Dao Sect, and I’ll spend all the resources of my entire Sect to buy this pill!”

As people began shouting out prices, the atmosphere in the auction stadium grew even more frenzied. Naturally, most of the people participating in the auction knew at least something of the Dao of alchemy. It had been easy to establish the value of the Foundation Establishment Day, a forty-five percent pill with a variety of plant and vegetation interactions. But as for a one hundred percent consummate pill....

The mysterious plant and vegetation interactions made its value hard to determine. The Cultivators here, regardless of which Sect they came from, obviously knew that. Any Sect who could unlock a tiny bit of the secrets of this pill would be able to make unprecedented advancements in their Dao of alchemy.

It was no ordinary pill, but rather a one hundred percent consummate pill, something that no one in the entire Southern Domain except for Grandmaster Pill Demon could concoct.

The Cultivators here knew that anyone who acquired the pill and studied it on a daily basis, were they to achieve complete enlightenment, would be able to found their own alchemic Sect!

This pill was a rarity in the modern world!

Even without complete understanding of the pill, any Sect who possessed it would have a precious treasure!

The explosive atmosphere in the auction stadium continued to rise. It seemed chaos would soon break out; some people seemed to be preparing to fight for the pill. Unfortunately, the appearance of the pill seemed to have incited the potential for frenzied struggle.

The auctioneer was incapable of keeping the situation under control. Were he to dare to say that the pill was not for sale, killing intent would surely fill the auction stadium in an instant.

Nothing like this had ever happened throughout the long history of the Pill Auction. The auctioneer's face was pale as he looked around at the frenzied one hundred thousand Cultivators. He didn't even dare to speak.

"Who made this pill?" somebody suddenly shouted. It seemed many of the Cultivators realized that they had little hope of acquiring the pill, and so began to focus their attention on whoever had concocted it.

The question rang out like thunder, causing the hundred thousand Cultivators to suddenly grow deathly quiet.

The Cultivators were still in a frenzy, but they seemed to have recovered some of their wits. As they did, it seemed everyone was suddenly wondering about the same question.

"If I remember correctly, it was a master alchemist?"

"Master alchemist? What? This pill... was concocted by a master alchemist?"

"It... it surely was concocted by Grandmaster Pill Demon himself. How could it be a master alchemist? The only person in the entire Southern Domain who can concoct one hundred percent consummate pills is Grandmaster Pill Demon!"

The buzz of conversation filled the air, and everyone began to focus once more on the pill. The auctioneer's face was pale, but he hurriedly said, "This pill was concocted by an anonymous master alchemist of the East Pill Division." The man's breathing was ragged, and even he seemed to be shocked by the words he had just uttered.

If he had such a reaction, how much more of a reaction would the surrounding hundred thousand Cultivators have? Upon hearing that the pill had been concocted by a master alchemist, the hundred thousand Cultivators immediately began to pant. They were dumbfounded, and their faces filled with astonishment and surprise.

After a moment of silence, the Cultivators once again exploded with conversations that buzzed even louder than before.

“A master alchemist...it really was concocted by a master alchemist!!!”

“Not a Furnace lord, not a Violet Furnace Lord, and not even Grandmaster Pill Demon. If it was concocted by a mere master alchemist, well, this is a hundred percent consummate pill! This master alchemist... he....”

“Such talent. Such skill in the Dao of alchemy! He concocted a one hundred percent consummate pill! Who is he? Who is this Grandmaster?!?!”

“Such a heaven-defying master alchemist exists in the Violet Fate Sect! Could he... could he be a personal apprentice of Grandmaster Pill Demon?”

A one hundred percent consummate pill was well and good. The plant and vegetation interactions were important. All of it was hard to put a value on. But to compare that to the master alchemist who concocted such a pill, one was the Earth, the other was the Heavens!

It was impossible to describe how valuable such an alchemist would be to a Sect. In fact, few Sects would hesitate to spend any price to acquire such an alchemist. Present in the auction stadium were the three great Clans and the other four great Sects. All of them seemed moved; their disciples' eyes glittered, and they all had produced jade slips to transmit reports back to their various Sects.

“Who is this master alchemist!!”

“If he becomes a Furnace Lord, or a Violet Furnace Lord, then the pills he concocts will surely be a defiance of the Heavens!”

“We want to meet this master alchemist!!”

As the frenzy in the auction stadium built, Meng Hao took a deep breath. He looked at Bai Yunlai, who appeared to be in a panic. Bai Yunlai seemed about to say something, but when Meng Hao's gaze fell upon him, his heart calmed.

Meng Hao's heart, however was racing. He could never have possibly predicted that the pill he had concocted would cause such a violent storm of a reaction. In fact, he felt a bit of regret. Thankfully,

he hadn't attached his name to the pill, but had only left the mark of the cauldron branded on its side.

"Maybe the master alchemist didn't reveal his identity, but look at that cauldron. That's his mark!"

"Cauldron... cauldron.... Don't tell me that's his alchemist name? Pill Cauldron!!"

"Grandmaster Pill Cauldron!" It was impossible to say who said it first. However, it only took an instant for the Cultivators to identify with the name Pill Cauldron. Thus began the rise of this name.

Meng Hao watched on blankly, blinking. He was still feeling unsettled, but at the same time, a proud sense of self-confidence began to fill him. For the pill he had concocted to garner such acclaim was a lofty honor for any alchemist.

It was at this moment that suddenly, a violet glow emanated from the glittering portal in the middle of the auction stadium. It filled the stadium, along with a massive pressure that immediately suppressed the racket.

As the auction stadium grew quiet once again, the violet glow rose up from the portal, and then two figures walked out.

The person in the lead wore a violet robe, the sleeves of which were embroidered with golden pill furnaces. His long, black hair flowed down his back, and his expression was one filled, not with anger, but with power. He looked to be a bit over fifty years of age, and yet, he also emanated an air of ancientness. It was unnecessary to state that this person had clearly had many years of experience.

He walked out slowly, and as he did, all of the hundred thousand Cultivators in the audience looked at him.

His appearance caused the ten Furnace Lords' expressions to instantly change. They rose to their feet, looks of veneration covering their faces as they clasped hands in salute.

"Greetings, Violet Furnace Lord An," they said in unison.

The words rang out, causing the hundred thousand Cultivators to suddenly gasp.

This shock was caused by the words, “Violet Furnace Lord.”

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as his gaze came to rest on the violet-robed man and the incredible medicinal aura which emanated from him.

Chapter 235: Apprentice’s Fee [1]

After the violet-robed man emerged from the portal, the eyes of the onlookers fell upon the person behind him, a hunchbacked Cultivator. His expressionless face was filled with scars that seemed to be self-inflicted.

An indescribable sense of power emanated from him, which seemed to bolster the powerful pressure which maintained silence within the auction stadium.

“Patriarch Hunchback!”

“So it’s Patriarch Hunchback! They say his Cultivation base is at the mid Nascent Soul stage. Three hundred years ago, he gave up everything to become the Alchemy Protector of Violet Furnace Lord An....”

“For Patriarch Hunchback to appear means... the man in the violet robe really must be one of the eight Violet Furnace Lords of the Violet Fate Sect, An Zaihai!”

The eyes of the hundred thousand Cultivators immediately shone with respect. The rank of Violet Furnace Lord was virtually the pinnacle of the Dao of alchemy. Other than Grandmaster, there was no higher position.

An Zaihai’s expression was calm. He nodded to the ten Furnace Lords, then lifted his right hand into the air and made a grasping motion. The Bedevilment Pill flew over and settled onto his palm. He didn’t sniff the pill, but rather let it rest in his palm as he closed his eyes.

Time slowly passed. The surrounding Cultivators watched with rapt attention. Meng Hao maintained his silence, watching thoughtfully as Violet Furnace Lord An Zaihai used his skill in the Dao of alchemy to gain enlightenment regarding Meng Hao’s pill.

After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, Violet Furnace Lord An Zaihai slowly opened his eyes. His face looked moved, and as he stared at the pill in his hand, a strange light filled his eyes.

“What is the name of this pill?” he asked slowly, his voice somewhat husky.

An excited expression filled the face of the auctioneer. He clasped hands and bowed to An Zaihai, then said, “According to the records, the name of this pill is Bedevilment.”

An Zaihai looked at the pill for a long moment, then sighed and said, “What an amazing pill. Bedevilment. Melt the soul and transform it into evil. Rely only on the self to rise to the skies. It is not a burning of the soul, it supersedes that!” This was his attempt to state the essence of the pill. He couldn’t possibly deduce the formula of the pill in such a short time.

Others might not understand his words, but as soon as Meng Hao heard them, his pupils constricted.

“No wonder he’s a Violet Furnace Lord. In one glance, he was able to determine the true essence of the pill.” Meng Hao was lost in thought for a moment. In the future, he would need to add some confusing elements into his medicinal pills, so that they wouldn’t be so easy to analyze. Despite the man being a Violet Furnace Lord, the whole situation made Meng Hao feel a bit uneasy.

“This is not a one hundred percent pill,” said An Zaihai. “Its medicinal strength is actually ninety-five percent. However, even more deserving of praise is the fact that this pill was concocted amidst alchemic enlightenment. There is no formula for it.” The instant the hundred thousand Cultivators heard his words, they began to pant, and their minds reeled, especially because of the words alchemic enlightenment.

“Alchemic enlightenment...”

“This pill was created because of alchemic enlightenment. There’s no formula for it!”

“A pill created during alchemic enlightenment is one of a kind. You’ll never find another pill like it! That means... its value is at least double!” The hundred thousand Cultivators continued to discuss the matter, their burning eyes fixated on the Bedevilment Pill. They seemed to be going mad once again.

An Zaihai looked at the Bedevilment Pill for another long moment, then lowered his hand, allowing the pill to float in the air. Then he stepped back a few paces and closed his eyes.

It seemed he had only appeared to verify whether the Bedevilment Pill had been created during alchemic enlightenment.

“20,000,000 Spirit Stones! The Li Clan must have this pill!”

“20,500,000 Spirit Stones! A consummate pill like this, created in alchemic enlightenment, is unique under the heavens.”

The entire place boiled with excitement as more bids were called out. Meng Hao was breathing heavily, and his eyes were shining. Hearing all the bids filled his heart with excitement. However, a bit of hesitation suddenly appeared. After hearing the explanation from the Violet Furnace Lord, he now knew that the strange state he had been in when concocting the pill that day was known as alchemic enlightenment. However, what he didn't understand was that the Violet Furnace Lord had described the pill as one of a kind, which seemed incongruous with what had actually happened.

“Maybe there are some variations that I don't quite understand....” thought Meng Hao, suppressing his confusion and instead listening to the excitement with which the bids for the pill increased. Before, he had understood that it wasn't difficult for alchemists to make profit from pill concocting, but he had never imagined the Bedevilment Pill would sell for such an incredible price.

He suddenly realized that his choice to join the Violet Fate Sect had definitely been a wise one.

Soon, the price for the Bedevilment pill reached 40,000,000 Spirit Stones. Such a price could bankrupt most Sects. Other than the four great Sects and three great Clans, no one else was even qualified to compete for it now.

“43,000,000 Spirit Stones!!” cried Fatty, leaped up onto the table.

“48,000,000!” yelled someone from the Black Sieve Sect.

“60,000,000!” raved Fatty. “Screw your granny! Do you dare to try to snatch my belongings!?”

The price had reached an unimaginable height. To most of the onlookers, this might be a rare, consummate pill, but it wasn't worth that much, even with the added factor of Alchemic Enlightenment. After all, the pill had incredible medicinal strength, but it wasn't clear what the results would be if it were consumed by the Core Formation stage. Considering it was apparently designed for the Foundation Establishment stage, a price of 60,000,000 Spirit Stones for such a pill was already relatively high.

The value of being able to research the Bedevilment Pill was already hard to determine. However, if after complete research it was found that the pill was effective for the Core Formation stage, then the value would be nearly limitless.

It must be stated that for an alchemist of the Southern Domain to reach the Grandmaster level, he must concoct, not just one ninety percent consummate pill, but one for each of the five stages of Qi Condensation, Foundation Establishment, Core Formation, Nascent Soul, and Spirit Severing. After concocting all of those ninety percent consummate pills, one could truly be considered a Grandmaster of the Dao of alchemy.

In any case, the research value of the Bedevilment Pill was truly hard to imagine. It was incredibly exciting because it was not only a consummate pill, but a supposedly unique pill concocted amidst alchemic enlightenment.

Meng Hao continued to grow more excited. He wanted the price to increase even more. In fact, were it not for his low Cultivation base, despite deep anxiety, he would pull out the second Bedevilment Pill and auction off that one too.

Although, now he was wondering how he would be able to retrieve his profits after the pill was sold. That was a bit of a problem.

It was at this moment that An Zaihai's eyes suddenly opened.

“100,000,000!”

Hearing this caused the surrounding Cultivators to stare, dumbfounded. Fatty and the others looked over at An Zaihai, and their faces slowly filled with anger.

Everyone knew of the unwritten rule of the Violet Fate Sect Pill Auction, that Violet Fate Sect Cultivators do not participate. Earlier, during the auction for the Foundation Establishment Day, the East Pill Division had let it be sold for research without batting an eye.

But this was a consummate pill.... Violet Furnace Lord An Zaihai was participating, creating a situation in which seller was competing along with buyer. Who could truly compete?

How could the bidding continue...?

“110,000,000!” yelled Fatty, his eyes red. He didn’t care about Spirit Stones, but about face. It didn’t matter if he was up against a Violet Furnace Lord. After his previous high bid, he had been trampled upon, which made him extremely unhappy. This wasn’t an actual fight or a battle. As far as Fatty was concerned, crushing Spirit Stones was nothing, and he surely had more.

“200,000,000,” said An Zaihai calmly. All of the one hundred thousand Cultivators gasped. Such a price was inconceivable. Even ten consummate pills, all concocted in alchemic enlightenment, would not be worth such an incredible price.

200,000,000 Spirit Stones could fund a great Sect for ten years.

“200...” Fatty’s anger raged to the heavens. He was just about to increase the bid, when An Zaihai’s cool voice rang out.

“I’m not purchasing this pill for myself. I’m purchasing it at the behest of Grandmaster Pill Demon, as his agent.”

These words caused silence to fill the air. Everyone looked on thoughtfully. Now, they understood. No matter what anyone said, the Violet Fate Sect wouldn’t allow such a pill to be sold. Even if the tradition of the Pill Auction was broken, their mind had been made up. This Pill would not leave the Violet Fate Sect.

Giving no regard to this, Fatty still seemed willing to increase the price. “200...” Suddenly, one of the disciples from his Sect grabbed him and whispered something into his ear. Face filled with an irritated look, Fatty gave an unwilling harrumph, but didn’t say anything more.

No one else said anything either. An Zaihai made a clutching motion with his right hand, and the Bedevilment Pill flew into his hand. Without another word, he turned, followed by the hunchbacked old man, and then disappeared into the glowing portal.

Meng Hao watched with wide eyes as all of this happened. Suddenly, he was feeling a bit nervous.

He hesitated for a moment. “Grandmaster Pill Demon bought it. Considering how prestigious he is, he wouldn’t... he wouldn’t hold back the money, would he...?” Thinking about Grandmaster Pill Demon’s position, he felt a bit more secure.

After An Zaihai left, there was no way to continue with the auction. Meng Hao grabbed Bai Yunlai, who looked somewhat absent-minded, and left.

After returning to the Sect, Meng Hao spent quite a bit of time repeatedly giving various instructions to Bai Yunlai. The entire time, Bai Yunlai looked at him with a strange look. The look of respect in his eyes far exceeded that from before.

Watching Bai Yunlai leave, seemingly in a trance, Meng Hao couldn’t help but laugh bitterly. After thinking about it, he decided that even if someone found out he had concocted the pill, it wouldn’t matter too much. Deciding not to worry about it any more, he headed back into his Immortal’s Cave.

“200,000,000 Spirit Stones! Even if I only get eighty percent, that’s still 160,000,000!” He sat down, thinking about the Spirit Stones, his eyes shining.

Deep in the East Pill Division of the Violet Fate Sect, at the main peak of the mountain range, An Zaihai stood respectfully next to an old man. The old man was, of course, none other than Pill Demon. In his hand was a black pill which was... the Bedevilment Pill.

Pill Demon examined the pill for nearly two hours. Slowly, a smile began to appear on his face. The smile was filled with both kindness and admiration.

An Zaihai looked at Pill Demon, his eyes filled with respect. In his entire life, he had never admired anyone more than Grandmaster Pill Demon. He was a Violet Furnace Lord, but it was actually because of that that he understood the vast gap between himself and his master. This caused his respect to grow even deeper.

Every time he stood in front of Grandmaster Pill Demon, he felt as if he were a tiny fish in the vast sea of the Dao of alchemy.

“Master,” said An Zaihai, “I’ve already looked into who concocted this pill. There are a few problems with his background. He’s....”

“Don’t say it,” the old man said coolly. “I forbid it. There’s no need.” He put the pill away with the wave of a hand.

An Zaihai stared in shock for a moment, then respectfully said, “Yes.”

“Don’t bother him either. Allow this little Grandmaster Pill Cauldron to maintain his mysterious anonymity in the Sect.” Pill Demon smiled, a smile filled with happiness and an indescribable contentment. Even as his voice continued to echo out, he disappeared into the distance. The entire time, he didn’t mention the Spirit Stones.

“Master, what about the Spirit Stones....” said An Zaihai hesitantly.

Pill Demon’s voice could be heard from off in the distance. “What Spirit Stones? Those are his apprentice’s fees!”

An Zaihai watched his master disappear into the distance, and then laughed. As he turned, a name floated in his mind.

“Fang Mu....”

Time passed. Soon half a month had gone by. It was on this particular day that, with great anticipation, Meng Hao asked Bai Yunlai to go check to see if the Spirit Stones could be collected. Bai Yunlai returned in the evening, his face long. His explanation was like a bolt from the blue.

With great care, he said, “I used a variety of methods to ask around, but the answer was always the same.... Aiiii, after the pill was sold, no Spirit Stones were deposited into the account.... I’m not really sure what exactly is going on, but how could we expect the auction house to dare to go and demand Spirit Stones from Grandmaster Pill Demon...?”

Meng Hao gaped in astonishment. He felt as if he had just been struck in the head with five lightning bolts. His eyes went wide with fury.

“My Spirit Stones! My 200,000,000 Spirit Stones! Pill Demon, you bought my pill. Give me my Spirit Stones!” Meng Hao gnashed his teeth. However, there was nothing he could do except sit there feeling at a loss.

Chapter 236: More Aftershocks

Meng Hao was at a loss because, as far as he was concerned, 200,000,000 was an impossibly high number. However, throughout the Southern Domain, many others were feeling at a loss as well.

They were at a loss because of the appearance of a consummate pill in the Violet Fate Sect Pill Auction, a pill that had been concocted during alchemic enlightenment, a pill unique under the heavens.

The name of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron immediately began to spread far and wide, shaking the Southern Domain. Countless Sects and Cultivators all heard about it.

Although officially rising to the rank of Grandmaster required successful concoction of several pills of ninety percent medicinal strength or higher, the pills that appeared in the Pill Auction always led to a commotion in the Southern Domain. Add in alchemic enlightenment, and this caused Grandmaster Pill Cauldron’s name to instantly rise to unprecedented heights. It also furthered the mystery surrounding his identity.

Everyone was in a frenzy trying to determine who Grandmaster Pill Cauldron was. Speculations ran wild. Some claimed it was another form of address for Grandmaster Pill Demon. Others believed that it must be one of the Violet Furnace Lords.

No one believed that it could be one of the ordinary master alchemists. After all, other than Violet Furnace Lords, who else could possibly have such skill in the Dao of alchemy?

Wild rumors spread like storm winds across the Southern Domain. The only things that had happened in recent years that could match up to the stir caused by Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, were the repeated search attempts made by various Sects in the area around the Rebirth Cave, and the matter of Meng Hao and the Sublime Spirit Scripture.

As time passed, amongst the various rumors and opinions about Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, a new theory arose that was a complete contrast to the idea that he was a Violet Furnace Lord.

Many people believed that Grandmaster Pill Cauldron really was an ordinary master alchemist. However, he was gifted with an incredible nature talent of the Dao of the alchemy. Otherwise, why would his pill appear in the Pill Auction? Perhaps even the master alchemist himself hadn't been able to predict the outcome.

If it were a Violet Furnace Lord, he would surely state his identity, and use the Pill Auction to gain fame, and perhaps set the stage for promotion to Grandmaster.

Soon, more and more people began to agree with this line of reasoning. And yet, more rumors arose to the contrary. The name of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron filled the entire Southern Domain, like thunderous storms.

Whoever he was, everyone had to admit that since this Grandmaster Pill Cauldron had concocted a consummate pill, even if he wasn't truly a Grandmaster like the other three Grandmasters of the Southern Domain, he most likely would be in the future.

After all, his pill was a ninety-five percent, nearly one hundred percent consummate pill!

If Grandmaster Pill Cauldron concocted more consummate pills in the future, then the Southern Domain would no longer have three Grandmasters of the Dao of alchemy, but four!

In fact, because of the sudden rise of his name, there were many people who believed that Grandmaster Pill Cauldron already had the skill of a Grandmaster, and that there were already four Grandmasters!

The Black Sieve Sect, Golden Frost Sect, Blood Demon Sect, and even the Solitary Sword Sect, as well as the three great Clans all extended solemn public invitations offering to entertain Grandmaster Pill Cauldron.

This in itself caused quite a commotion, and caused Grandmaster Pill Cauldron's name to shine as brightly as the sun itself.

The Violet Fate Sect was in just as much of a stir as the outside world. Regardless of whether it was the Violet Qi Division or East Pill Division, everyone was talking about Grandmaster Pill Cauldron and speculating as to his identity.

It wasn't that nobody suggested Fang Mu might be Grandmaster Pill Cauldron. Rather, Grandmaster Pill Cauldron's name was so inestimably high, that those who suggested it might be Fang Mu became objects of ridicule. Fang Mu was known in the East Pill Division and the Violet Qi Division alike for his skill in pill concocting, but when compared to the mysterious Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, no one believed they could be one and the same.

The general consensus in the East Pill Division was that he was a Violet Furnace Lord, who had concocted the consummate pill, but for some reason did not wish to reveal his identity.

There were even many master alchemists who began to venerate the mysterious Grandmaster Pill Cauldron. Anyone who said anything disrespectful about him, would earn the wrath of these alchemists.

While the rest of the Southern Domain discussed Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, the older generation of the Violet Fate Sect wanted to open an investigation. However, the East Pill Division was in a special position; without the approval of Pill Demon, no one would be able to uncover any information at all. The strangest thing of all was that Pill Demon seemed to be paying no heed whatsoever to the entire thing. He wouldn't talk about it, nor would he permit the Violet Qi Division or the East Pill Division to investigate.

Even his own people in the East Pill Division couldn't investigate the matter; it seemed as if Pill Demon had erased all traces of information.

As more and more rumors spread, as more and more people talked about Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, Meng Hao heaved more and more sighs.

Whenever he heard the name Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, he thought of his 200,000,000 Spirit Stones. And whenever he thought of that, he thought of how Pill Demon hadn't paid him what he owed.

"You owe me 200,000,000 Spirit Stones...." Meng Hao felt twisted. Normally, considering the level of his Cultivation base, he wouldn't worry about a few Spirit Stones. But this was 200,000,000 of them!!

Every time he thought of the matter, it felt like a sword was stabbing into his heart. Long ago when he had joined the Reliance Sect, he had thought that he would be able to get rich by working for Immortals. This entire time, he had drifted along, pushed along by the current, until he reached this point. However, he still retained that stubborn desire deep in his bones.

His methods were now much colder, and many others viewed him as crafty and ruthless. But deep in his heart, he was still the same scholar he had always been, and he still desired to be rich. He hadn't forgotten that wish of his.

If you can imagine how much Meng Hao rejoiced at not having to pay back the silver he owed to Steward Zhou [1] when he joined the Reliance Sect, then you can imagine how he felt to have 200,000,000 Spirit Stones dangled in front of him, only to find that they weren't his.

He took a deep breath, and then continued to concoct pills, a bitter smile on his face. Time passed by, but the name of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron did not fade from the Southern Domain or from the Violet Fate Sect. After the initial waves settled down, the name continued to be mentioned frequently.

Some of this had to do with the mystery surrounding the name, and all the rumors that accompanied it. In fact, more pills marked with a cauldron began to appear in auctions throughout the Southern Domain.

However, the fake pills would always end up being exposed. Furthermore, the counterfeit pills only served to bolster the reputation of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron.

Meng Hao heard about most of these things from Bai Yunlai. Whenever Bai Yunlai talked to him about matters regarding Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, a strange look would appear on his face, and his eyes would fill with glowing veneration. Obviously, he knew that the person who was the subject of such glowing praise throughout the Violet Fate Sect, and even the Southern Domain, was standing right in front of him.

Day and night, both when dreaming, and when walking about, the image would appear in his mind of how he had held the Bedevilment pill in his own hands as he secretly delivered it to the auction house.

When he thought about how he had held a consummate pill, and about the identity of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, he felt like he was in a fantasy.

Someone else in the Violet Fate Sect who was moved by the name of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, was Chu Yuyan. The only thing she heard people talking about was Grandmaster Pill Cauldron. Her own investigations into his identity led nowhere. Furthermore, some people were making vague statements implying that perhaps she was Grandmaster Pill Cauldron.

She could only laugh bitterly about that. She was incredibly curious about who he was, and as she tried to find out more information, her heart began to fill with reverence.

It didn't matter who Grandmaster Pill Cauldron was; as an alchemist, Chu Yuyan knew the skill required in the Dao of alchemy to produce a consummate pill. It demanded the respect of all alchemists. As for Chu Yuyan, her reverence grew, and she couldn't wait to meet this mysterious Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, and discuss alchemy and alchemic enlightenment with him!

To alchemists, alchemic enlightenment was a mysterious realm, where pill formulas didn't exist, and one could only rely on one's understanding of the Dao of alchemy. Using only the materials at one's fingertips, one would create a new medicinal pill. This was the reason that Chu Yuyan so worshiped Grandmaster Pill Cauldron.

Her veneration only grew stronger and stronger as Grandmaster Pill Cauldron's reputation grew. She even begged her master over and over to let her borrow the Bedevilment Pill to study it. When he finally consented, she poured herself into researching it.

She felt the insane, devilish will contained inside. She could sense the frenzied burning which exceeded a burning of the soul. She could sense a profound sharpness inside the pill, a proud will that exceeded Heaven and Earth.

Gradually, an image of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron began to form in her heart. His face was archaic, and his eyes shone with wisdom. He was tall and slender, with an imposing disposition. All of this was based on the feeling she got from within the pill.

And yet, no matter how she searched, no matter what methods she used, she couldn't find anyone within the Sect who matched such an image. This didn't cause her veneration to lessen, but rather the opposite; it continued to deepen.

Once, Meng Hao accidentally ran into Chu Yuyan while walking through the Sect. He was just about to dodge to the side to avoid her when he noticed that she hadn't even noticed him. Instead, she was engaged in a deep conversation about Grandmaster Pill Cauldron with a fellow female disciple. She walked right past him.

Her expression was one of determination, and her eyes shone with a strange light. Every time she said the name of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, her eyes would glitter brightly.

Meng Hao stared in shock, a strange look on his face. He suddenly wondered what Chu Yuyan's face would look like if she ever discovered that Fang Mu was Grandmaster Pill Cauldron. He also wondered what her expression would be like if she found out that Fang Mu was actually Meng Hao....

Another half month passed. On this particular day, Meng Hao had just finished concocting a batch of medicinal pills. Suddenly, his expression flickered as he heard noise from outside his Immortal's Cave, a hubbub of conversation.

The East Pill Division was usually a very peaceful place. A ruckus like this was very rare. Astonished, Meng Hao rose to his feet and walked to the door of the Immortal's Cave. Down below, the apprentice alchemists were all running in the same direction.

“Grandmaster Eternal Mountain from the Golden Frost Sect is here! He's one of the three Grandmasters of the Southern Domain, with a name as famous as Grandmaster Pill Demon's!”

“Don't tell me he's here to issue a challenge!?!?”

“Grandmaster Eternal Mountain used to be just like us! He was an apprentice alchemist who slowly rose up through the ranks. But eventually, he forsook the Sect. Fortunately for him, Grandmaster Pill Demon approved of his long, hard work, and didn't cripple his Dao of alchemy! If he had, a day such as this would never have come!”

“I wonder why Grandmaster Eternal Mountain has come to the Violet Fate Sect today...”

Meng Hao's eyes glittered as he stood outside his Immortal's Cave. A multitude of apprentice alchemists and even master alchemists were all coming out of their dwelling places. All of them began to rush off in the same direction.

Chapter 237: Meeting Grandmaster Pill Cauldron

The Violet Qi Division and the East Pill Division of the Violet Fate Sect were both in shock. A disciple who had forsaken the Sect and then become a Grand Elder of the Dao of alchemy in the Golden Frost Sect, Eternal Mountain, had returned. For the first time in four hundred years... he stepped foot into the Violet Fate Sect!

Along with him had come one of the Golden Frost Sect's two Dharma Protectors, Tang Shicang [1]. The other was a Nascent Soul Elder. Each of these individuals had practiced Cultivation for more

than seven hundred years. Despite being only at the Nascent Soul stage, they were experts in magic, and together could destroy ten thousand enemies.

In addition to this, they were followed by a large group of Golden Frost Sect disciples, including Fatty. He looked very complacent, standing there at the forefront of the group of disciples, right next to Tang Shicang.

The Golden Frost Sect's arrival, especially the presence of Grandmaster Eternal Mountain, provoked the appearance of the Violet Qi Division's Dao Protector Wu Dingqiu as well as several Nascent Soul Cultivators. On the peak of one of the mountains located on the border between the Violet Qi Division and the East Pill Division, was a large public square, where the ceremonies would take place.

Two Violet Furnace Lords from the East Pill Division were also present. One was An Zihai. The other was clearly superior to An Zihai both in position and in age. In fact, he was the most senior of the Violet Furnace Lords of the East Pill Division. His skill in the Dao of alchemy was at the peak level, and he could be considered sub-Grandmaster. This was Lin Hailong.

At the moment, the Violet Qi Division's Outer Sect disciples, as well as the apprentice alchemists of the East Pill Division, were congregating down at the foot of the mountain. They settled their Qi and calmed their minds, looking up toward the square at the peak of the mountain. Their hearts filled with speculation as to the purpose of Grandmaster Eternal Mountain's visit.

Some of the Inner Sect disciples and master alchemists proceeded up toward the top of the mountain. However, not many were qualified to do so. The entire mountain was sealed tightly, and many who attempted to get closer were turned back.

Meng Hao arrived at the mountain with the rest of the crowd. He stood off some distance away, observing. As far as Grandmaster Eternal Mountain, he had heard quite a few stories about the man throughout his years in the Violet Fate Sect.

As he looked over the scene, he suddenly saw several beams of colorful light shooting through the air. His eyes glittered. The beams shot directly toward the public square at the peak of the mountain. Within were Cultivators of the East Pill Division, all of whom were Furnace Lords.

One of them was Chu Yuyan.

After thinking about it for a moment, Meng Hao's body flashed, and he shot forward. Just as he neared the mountain, he caught sight of Li Tao. Their eyes met, and they proceeded together up toward the top of the mountain.

There were some who attempted to block their way, but Li Tao simply flashed his identification jade slip, whereupon they gave way with respectful looks on their faces. After the auctioning of the Foundation Establishment Day in the Pill Auction, Li Tao's name had also risen to prominence. Were it not for the appearance of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, his name would most likely have become even more well known.

Li Tao gave Meng Hao a meaningful look, and then, his voice low, said, "Grandmaster Eternal Mountain forsook master and the Sect. It's said that he hasn't stepped foot back inside for four hundred years. I wonder why he's back.... Brother Fang, do you think it might have something to do with Grandmaster Pill Cauldron?"

Meng Hao smiled slightly, shaking his head and saying nothing. Soon, they reached the mountain peak, where they stood off to the side. Meng Hao looked over at Fatty, and then Chu Yuyan.

All of the Furnace Lords, including Chu Yuyan, stood respectfully behind the Violet Furnace Lords, looking forward at the Cultivators from the Golden Frost Sect.

Chu Yuyan glanced at the Golden Frost Sect Cultivators and yawned. Then her gaze fell upon Fatty, and it seemed as if she wanted to give him a good thrashing. A cold look gleamed in her eye. After all, this Fatty Li Fugui was the cause of the entire scandal with Meng Hao.

The Golden Frost Sect had brought no small amount of Cultivators to this meeting. However, less than ten people actually qualified to sit down at the table. The rest of the Inner Sect disciples, like Fatty, could only stand behind them.

Sitting in the foremost position were two people. One was Dharma Protector Tang Shicang. He appeared to be middle-aged, but his Cultivation base was at the mid Nascent Soul stage, and few people in the Southern Domain would dare to look down at him. If he made a bit more progress, he would reach the late Nascent Soul stage. In the current age, in which only a few Spirit Severing Cultivators appeared in the Cultivation world of the Southern Domain, this would place him at the pinnacle of his generation.

At the moment, he was laughing and chatting with Wu Dingqiu over some trivial matters.

Sitting next to him was a white-haired old man. He had been sitting there the entire time, his eyes closed. He seemed as if he did not belong in Heaven and Earth. In fact, anyone who looked at him for too long would begin to feel as if their eyes were burning, as if his entire body were some type of fearsome furnace.

Even more shocking, as he sat there with his eyes closed, green grass slowly began to sprout up from within the limestones around him. It seemed that this old man's aura was capable of causing living things to spontaneously grow.

This was none other than one of the three Grandmasters of the Dao of alchemy of the Southern Domain, Eternal Mountain.

Compared to him, the rest of the Golden Frost Sect Cultivators seemed to be there for nothing more than a supporting role. Even the Nascent Soul Cultivators were clearly lessened by his presence.

Meng Hao and Li Tao stood off to the side, along with quite a large group of other disciples who encircled the square. Meng Hao looked at Grandmaster Eternal Mountain, and the grass slowly growing up around him. His eyes narrowed.

“What realm of the Dao of alchemy is this?” he thought. “He can cause medicinal plants to grow up from the limestone. That's creating life out of nothing....”

Then, he caught sight of An Zhai, and felt anger welling up in his heart as he suddenly remembered his 200,000,000 Spirit Stones.

On the Violet Fate Sect side, An Zhai smiled as he and Wu Dingqiu chatted courteously with Tang Shicang and the three other Nascent Soul magic experts.

The most senior of the Violet Furnace Lords, Lin Hailong, sat there expressionless, staring icily at Eternal Mountain.

The square seemed to be filled with both fire and ice. On the one hand, harmonious chatting could be heard, on the other hand, an icy wind full of frost seemed to be blowing.

“Hahaha!” laughed Tang Shicang, looking at Wu Dingqiu. “Fellow Daoist Wu, please stop asking. I'm just here out of courtesy to accompany Grandmaster Eternal Mountain. As far as the details of our visit, I'm afraid I can't really say.”

It was at this moment that Grandmaster Eternal Mountain suddenly opened his eyes. When he did, they were staring directly into Lin Hailong's icy glare.

He was quiet for a moment, and then said, "Long time no see, Elder Brother Lin." His voice was archaic, and filled with a strange power. As his words rang out, the green grass around him fluttered. Instantly, the entire square grew quiet. Regardless of who was speaking, Tang Shichang, Wu Dingqiu or An Zaihai, they all instantly closed their mouths. All eyes fell onto Grandmaster Eternal Mountain.

"You flatter me with the words 'Elder Brother,'" Lin Hailong said coolly. "Have some self-respect, Grandmaster Eternal Mountain."

Eternal Mountain was quiet for a long moment. Finally, he said, "The purpose of my visit is to pay respects to Grandmaster Pill Demon. Fellow Daoist Lin, could you please make an introduction for me?"

"Master is busy at the moment," replied Lin Hailong, his voice cold. "Please leave." Although Lin Hailong's Master was not offended by Eternal Mountain's past actions, Lin Hailong would never be able to forget that he himself had recommended him to join the Sect. Furthermore, he had unselfishly provided him with much assistance. He had never imagined that because of his talent in the Dao of alchemy, that he would eventually become a Violet Furnace Lord, and then forsake Master and Sect. To this day, he had never been able to dispel the negative feelings in his heart.

Eternal Mountain was again silent for a long moment. After the space of about ten breaths passed, a glow filled his eyes like that emitted by a pill furnace.

"If Grandmaster Pill Demon has no time, then I would very much like to meet the person the whole Southern Domain is talking about: Grandmaster Pill Cauldron of the East Pill Division!"

Hearing this caused Chu Yuyan's eyes to shine brightly. In fact, the eyes of all the surrounding Violet Fate Sect disciples began to glimmer. After all, Grandmaster Pill Cauldron's illustrious name was what everyone was talking about recently.

Meng Hao's face was expressionless. He had long since become used to his alternate identity. Seeing the reverent look in Chu Yuyan's eyes caused him to suddenly come up with some very wicked ideas.

“You want to meet Grandmaster Pill Cauldron?” said Lin Hailong, a cold smile turning the corners of his mouth. “He’s here in the Sect. If he wants to meet with you, then naturally he will step forward. But I have no way to force him to do so.”

“Why be this way, Elder Brother Lin?” said Eternal Mountain. “You treated me so well all those years ago, as did the entire East Pill Division. When drinking water, one must bear in mind the source. I will never forget your kindness.”

“Kindness?” cried Lin Hailong gruffly. His eyes shined with coldness. “If there was kindness, then why would you forsake the Sect?! Do you know that after your betrayal, Master sat on the East Mountain for three days, looking at the pill you had concocted?!”

Eternal Mountain said nothing. After a long moment, he sighed. “It was because my Dao of alchemy differed from that of Master’s. If I stayed in the Sect, then I would not have my own Dao of alchemy, and therefore, no path to tread. Perhaps after many years, I would become another Pill Demon. However... that is not me. Elder Brother Liu’s decision was the same as mine. Our decision was made three hundred years apart, but we both chose to leave the Sect.” He looked at Lin Hailong. “Elder Brother Lin, I respected Master, and I respected the Sect. After all these years, I haven’t changed. I wish to pursue the Dao of alchemy, not just concoct pills. My Dao is not that of Elder Brother Liu with his poison pills, but rather... magic pills! The pills I concoct are not to be consumed; instead, they fuse magic with the Dao of alchemy! The pills concocted by Eternal Mountain are treasured pills!”

He waved his hand, and immediately a gold-colored medicinal pill flew out. As soon as it appeared, it filled the surroundings with a shocking pressure. A medicinal aroma filled the air, but even stronger was the sense that this was a magical item!

The medicinal aroma was like that of the glow of a magical treasure. Its luster was as blinding as that of the sun.

Meng Hao’s heart trembled. Having heard Eternal Mountain’s explanation, he looked at the pill treasure, and his mind spun. Seeing this pill had opened up a new door in his mind regarding the path of pill concoction.

Meng Hao murmured to himself, seemingly enlightened: “There are millions upon millions of paths in the Dao of alchemy, much the same way that there are countless variations among plants and vegetations....”

“This pill cannot be consumed,” said Eternal Mountain, “because it is indestructible. It is a pill treasure which I personally concocted, the glow of which can absorb spiritual energy. The plant and vegetation interactions within the pill become their own Heaven and Earth. You could also say that this is not a pill, but a magical item that can never be destroyed! Elder Brother Lin, could you please appraise this item?” With the flick of a sleeve, he sent the medicinal pill shooting toward Lin Hailong.

Lin Hailong grabbed it.

Chapter 238: Determined to Prevail!

Lin Hailong eyed the pill. “Heresy! You’re so low, you don’t even deserve to make a fool of yourself here!” He imperceptibly exerted pressure with his fingers in an attempt to crush the pill, but failed. He was in the mid Nascent Soul stage, and had reached a point where he could destroy magical items without the use of magic. And yet, he wasn’t able to harm the medicinal pill in the least bit.

“The path of the Dao of alchemy is focused on creating new pills,” he said coolly. “Anyone in the East Pill Division could practice this heretical art. But no one would deign to do so! This doesn’t even deserve to be called a pill!” He waved his right arm, sending the pill flying back to Eternal Mountain.

“This pill was not created from gold or iron,” said Eternal Mountain calmly, catching the pill. “Nor was it fused with crystal or stone. It was concocted from 37,924 types of medicinal plants together with countless variations, and is perfect in all respects. It contains the full and complete strength of all the five elements, and is matchless in Heaven and Earth. This truly represents the Great Dao of alchemy, and does not count as a mere refining. Years ago, I observed that Heaven is round, while the Earth is square. It was this enlightenment that caused me to found the World Pill Division, and also seeded my desire to forge a great pill of Heaven and Earth. This very pill contains the Heavens, the Earth and the world itself!” He tossed the pill over to Fatty.

“Li Fugui is a Golden Frost Sect disciple who practices the cultivation of Spirit Stone consumption,” he said in a deep voice, his eyes glittering. “He was born with superhuman strength that is concentrated within his teeth. Elder Brother Lin, you call this pill a heresy, and claim that anyone in the East Pill Division could concoct it. Very well. If anyone can concoct a pill that this kid is incapable of crushing with his teeth, then I will give you the pill formula. However, if the East Pill Division cannot do this, then please request Master to reveal himself and provide an assessment of my pill.”

Even as his voice rang out into the silence, Lin Hailong snorted coldly. “The East Pill Division doesn’t want your pill formula.”

Before Lin Hailong even finished speaking, Tang Shicang of the Golden Frost Sect cleared his throat. He pulled out a pill bottle from within his robe. It was gray-colored and covered with blackish marks. It emanated a feeling of ancientness, as if it had been hidden away for countless ages.

Tang Shicang only uttered one sentence: “This is a product of the Dao of alchemy of ancient times, an Entrancement Pill of the tenth level of Qi Condensation.”

His words instantly caused all of the alchemists of the East Pill Division to stare at the pill bottle. An Zaihai’s eyes narrowed.

Even Lin Hailong seemed shocked.

The tenth level of Qi Condensation was a legendary realm. After the change in the Heavens, the path of Qi Condensation was not complete, and thus, Entrancement Pills appeared. They were the ancient Dao of alchemy’s response to the changes in Heaven and Earth, and a way to continue to tread the ancient path. With such a pill, a Cultivator could gain a chance to enter into the tenth level of Qi Condensation.

Unfortunately, pills like this were rare even in ancient times, and were not guaranteed to be completely effective. In any case, the benefits of being able to study an Entrancement Pill were hard to quantify.

It turned out, the Golden Frost Sect had come prepared with just such a pill!

Eternal Mountain spoke, neither quickly nor slowly: “This Entrancement Pill is complete. Elder Brother Lin, I would like to place this pill up as stakes of a wager.... Will you accept, or not?” His words instantly put a great pressure on Lin Hailong.

Accept, or not? It was a good question. If he accepted, but couldn’t produce a pill impervious to Fatty, then he would become a laughingstock. If he didn’t accept, then it would be obvious he was avoiding the challenge. If this were battle magic, it wouldn’t matter, but battling with alchemy was different.... Furthermore, the competition was only a Foundation Establishment pup....

Lin Hailong really had no choice but to accept!

The Golden Frost Sect obviously had foreseen this, which was the very reason they had come today. It was a very serious matter. They clearly wanted to force the issue, and make the East Pill Decision accept their challenge.

An Zaihai's face looked unsightly. He and Lin Hailong exchanged a glance. Both clearly felt themselves to be in an awkward position. Their opponent had chosen a Foundation Establishment pup as champion, and the only stipulation of the challenge was to create a pill he couldn't crush. If a Violet Furnace Lord of the East Pill Division produced such a pill, it might not count as a loss, but certainly wouldn't be a win.

It wouldn't even be fair for a Furnace Lord to participate; the position wasn't compatible. A win would still be a loss, and a loss... would be a complete disgrace.

Wu Dingqiu frowned. As everyone sat there silently, Fatty walked forward to stand next to Eternal Mountain, clearly in very high spirits. He pulled out a Spirit Stone, placed it into his mouth, and crunch, crunch, crunched it into pieces. He looked around at the alchemists of the East Pill Division, grinning. Then he pulled out a flying sword and began to grind his teeth, apparently desiring to sharpen them.

All of this caused the people from the East Pill Division to gasp and stare wide-eyed in shock.

"What are those teeth...?"

"I've heard of this fat guy. They say his teeth can crush flying swords...."

As the discussions broke out, a strange look appeared on Meng Hao's face. The sight of Fatty looking so triumphant, his teeth glittering, caused Meng Hao to sigh emotionally. He remembered all those years ago in the Reliance Sect how he had encouraged Fatty to focus his Cultivation on his teeth.

Lin Hailong and An Zaihai looked even more worried after seeing Fatty crush the Spirit Stone. They frowned, knowing full well they had to accept the challenge. However, if they accepted, it would only be appropriate for challengers from the ranks of the thousand master alchemists to participate. If one of them won, the results would be acceptable. If a Furnace Lord participated, it simply wouldn't be appropriate.

Besides, if a Furnace Lord lost, it would be far too embarrassing for the East Pill Division. If a master alchemist lost, at least it wouldn't be so embarrassing.

“Would the Violet Fate Sect please respond?” said the Golden Frost Sect’s Dharma Protector Tang Shicang, smiling.

An Zaihai, brow furrowed, glanced over at the master alchemists. Suddenly, his gaze fell upon Meng Hao. It was only a glance, but he instantly recognised him.

“It is beneath a Furnace Lord to concoct such a heretical pill,” replied An Zaihai quickly. “However, there is definitely one amongst the thousand master alchemists of the East Pill Division who can concoct such a medicinal pill.”

Lin Hailong had just been thinking about how to avoid the whole situation, but hearing An Zaihai’s words, he nodded slightly. His heart, however, was pounding. He looked over at Li Tao, who was standing next to Meng Hao. “Li Tao, please step forward and concoct a pill,” he said, completely ignoring Meng Hao.

Li Tao’s eyes filled with concentration, and he took a deep breath as he clasped hands and bowed to Lin and An. Considering he was a master alchemist of the East Pill Division, he didn’t need to formally greet Wu Dingqiu and the others from the Violet Qi Division.

Lin Hailong looked at Li Tao with an expression of praise. He had been paying attention to the man for some time. He may have been eclipsed by Pill Cauldron at the Pill Auction, but as far as Lin Hailong was concerned, Pill Cauldron was a mystery. Li Tao, however, had the potential for much future growth. “Take this Earthly fire,” he said “Quickly concoct the pill!” He flicked his sleeve, and a violet-colored crystal flew over to land on the ground. The limestones seemed as if they were about to melt from the intense heat of the Earthly fire.

Li Tao looked thoughtful for a moment, then produced a pill furnace and some medicinal plants and began to concoct.

The Earthly fire given by Lin Hailong made the concocting process go fairly quickly. Li Tao carefully performed his catalyzing and concocting, and after the time it takes two incense sticks to burn, the pill furnace roared, and a white medicinal pill flew out.

Li Tao had condensed hundreds of various hard medicinal plants into the pill. The concoction time had been relatively short, but he had employed all the skill he possessed. He was confident that even a fierce tiger would break its teeth if it bit such a pill!

When the pill emerged, Li Tao didn't even look at it. He simply tossed it over to Fatty, who grabbed it from mid air. He cleared his throat, and then, as everyone watched, placed it into his mouth. With a crunch, the pill shattered.

"I can't even grind my teeth with this crappy thing," said Fatty, his face filled with disdain. He spit out the remnants of the pill, looking quite proud of himself.

Lin Hailong's face was filled with embarrassment. He singled out one master alchemist after another, but the pills they concocted were easily crushed by Fatty, then spit out onto the ground. Fatty's dialogue grew even more arrogant.

"Ai, it seems it really is difficult to find a medicinal pill that my teeth can't destroy. What a lonely life.... Do any of you have any skill? Come, concoct something I can't crush." He looked more and more complacent. The same gall he had shown at the Pill Auction, was now in full force. He seemed very much in his element.

Lin Hailong's face grew more unsightly, and he slapped his palm down onto the table. Looking at Eternal Mountain's expressionless face, his heart filled with fury. Suddenly, he said, "Master alchemists of the East Pill Division! Whoever of you can concoct a pill that this kid can't crush will instantly be promoted to Furnace Lord!" His words echoed out through the mountains, all the way down to the master alchemists who were congregated at the foot of the mountain. Everyone's faces filled with shock, and their eyes began to glow.

Meng Hao's pupils constricted, and he stared at Lin Hailong, his heart pounding.

Being promoted to Furnace Lord was a very important matter. Barring unusual circumstances, before being considered for promotion, one usually needed to be a master alchemist for a full sixty-year cycle, be at the Foundation Establishment stage, and concoct over a thousand different types of medicinal pills with fifty percent medicinal strength. Even more importantly, the Sect required that the candidate master alchemist have concocted ten million medicinal pills for the Sect.

After meeting all those requirements, the approval of all the other Furnace Lords was also required. If there was more than one candidate, then a rigorous pill concocting competition was required, whereupon one person would be selected for promotion.

Meng Hao had previously thought about becoming a Furnace Lord, and had even considered using his identity as Grandmaster Pill Cauldron to attempt to do so. However, he was still hesitating and analyzing the whole matter. Hearing Lin Hailong's words caused him to take a deep breath. His eyes began to glow.

To him, this was a chance that might only come once in a hundred years!

Of course, many other master alchemists were thinking the same thing. All of them began to pant; if they seized this opportunity to be promoted to Furnace Lord, it would be as if the gate of the Dao of alchemy had been opened. Granted, being promoted in such a way would arouse the ire of the other Furnace Lords, and would likely lead to scorn from others. However, it was still an incredible opportunity.

It didn't matter if one was qualified or not. After becoming a Furnace Lord, one would have access to many special techniques, as well as secret formulas regarding various interactions of plants and vegetation. This in itself was enough to enable a master alchemist to advance by leaps and bounds. They would suddenly have access to plant and vegetation combinations that they would never otherwise be able to comprehend. The respect commanded by a Furnace Lord was enough to send almost all of the master alchemists into a frenzy.

Furthermore, the words had come out of the mouth of Lin Hailong himself, the most senior of the Violet Furnace Lords, and a sub-Grandmaster. No one would disbelieve him.

Meng Hao took a deep breath and looked at complacent Fatty. Feeling a bit guilty, he thought, "Fatty, brother, I don't want to cause problems for you, but this is my only chance.... I am determined to prevail!"

Chapter 239: Li Fugui - Give Me Face, or Give Me Death!

Lin Hailong's words instantly caused all of the master alchemists to begin panting. Their eyes glowed at the thought of Furnace Lord promotion. This type of good fortune was incredibly amazing!

If they could seize such good fortune, it might almost amount to destiny!

It was an opportunity, which, if taken advantage of, would allow them to soar to the heavens!

The master alchemists rushed forward, even the ones down below at the foot of the mountain. Eternal Mountain had never predicted that Lin Hailong would say what he did. His eyes narrowed.

Based on his understanding of Lin Hailong, he knew that the man wouldn't make such an offer for no reason. There was definitely some deeper meaning within his words. After thinking for a

moment, Eternal Mountain's eyes suddenly began to gleam. "Don't tell me he's trying to ... flush out Grandmaster Pill Cauldron!?" he thought.

It seemed Chu Yuyan and the ten or so other Furnace Lords present were thinking the same thing. Each and every one watched on with glittering eyes. A faint smile could be seen on the face of An Zihai, and he glanced briefly at Meng Hao. He was well aware of Lin Hailong's intentions.

In the entire East Pill Division, An Zihai was the only person other than Grandmaster Pill Demon who knew the true identity of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron. He wouldn't announce it, of course. He wasn't sure of Grandmaster Pill Demon's intentions, but he had stated three times in a row that An Zihai was not to do anything about Grandmaster Pill Cauldron. An Zihai wouldn't even mention the name to anyone.

One by one, the master alchemists of the East Pill Division arrived. Fatty was growing more and more complacent. He stood there, grinding his teeth with the flying sword. They glinted brightly. His air of complacency began to fill with more and more arrogance.

"Come come," he said haughtily. "My teeth are feeling a bit itchy. If you have the skill, please concoct me a pill that will break them. Anyone who can, I'll call them grandpa!" One of the master alchemists stepped out from among his hundreds of comrades. He clasped hands in salute to Lin Hailong and An Zihai, then began to concoct a pill.

It wasn't just him. Seven other master alchemists stepped forward and began to work. Everyone watched as the master alchemists concentrated on their medicinal plants and concoction. It was a dazzling sight. Time passed, and soon one pill after another flew out toward Fatty.

These pills had been concocted with utmost care by the handful of master alchemists, all of whom had utmost faith in their handiwork. Fatty yawned, and threw all the pills into his mouth. The crunching sounds which emanated out pierced into the hearts of the eight master alchemists. Their faces fell.

"Blech!" said Fatty, spitting the medicinal pills out. "Who else!?" he yelled, looking very pleased. He seemed to feel that his teeth deserved utmost respect in Heaven and Earth.

Seeing the defeat of the eight master alchemists, others who had been planning to participate now hesitated. They eyed Fatty's teeth. In their estimation, it was like he had a mouthful of sharp swords. It seemed any medicinal pill that entered his mouth would be reduced to rubble.

“Who else?!?!”

No one responded to Fatty, nor did anyone step forward to concoct a pill. Fatty arrogantly pulled another Spirit Stone out, popped it into his mouth, and then crunched it into pieces.

The surrounding master alchemists gasped. Moments ago, many of them had found it easy to muster their courage, think of a pill formula, and then attempt to concoct it. Seeing the spectacle in front of their eyes, however, caused them to change their minds.

They looked at Fatty angrily. They sighed inwardly as various thoughts ran through their minds:

“This guy is inhuman! What pill could possibly stand up to teeth like that...?”

“Dammit, this fatso must have been growing these teeth from birth. He’s not a Cultivator, he’s a monster!”

“Isn’t he worried he might accidentally bite his tongue off one day...? He actually eats the Spirit Stones? What kind of a stomach does he have? Can he digest them?”

All of them seemed to think that there would be no good fortune for them on this day.

Fatty swallowed the Spirit Stone and then began loudly grinding his teeth again. From the moment he had joined the Golden Frost Sect, he had been doted upon, and had never been embarrassed. He of course took this opportunity to show off, and was currently glancing around, looking for pretty female alchemists.

He ignored Chu Yuyan, of course. In his opinion, Chu Yuyan clearly belonged to his brother Meng Hao, and he wouldn’t interfere. After all, Fatty completely revered Meng Hao.

Even as Fatty was in the midst of his arrogant complacency, Meng Hao coughed lightly. He wasn’t stupid, and could tell that Lin and An were trying to use this occasion to determine the identity of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron. This was the main reason why he had been hesitating. However, he’d made up his mind. Coughing lightly, he stepped out from the crowd and began to walk over. This of course, drew the attention of all the master alchemists.

Chu Yuyan frowned, then gave a cold harrumph. After a single glance, she ignored him. An imperceptible glimmer appeared in An Zaihai's eyes, and a faint smile touched his mouth.

Lin Hailong's eyes filled with a deep look. He looked Meng Hao over closely.

"Is it him...?" he murmured to himself.

Eternal Mountain also looked at Meng Hao, his expression the same as ever.

No one could determine any clues whatsoever.

Meng Hao clasped hands and bowed to An Zaihai and Lin Hailong. "I am Fang Mu. I would like to take a shot at concocting a pill. Would the two members of the senior generation grant me permission to do so?"

An Zaihai said nothing. Lin Hailong gave a light nod, then tossed over a fire crystal, which came to float in front of Meng Hao.

"Heyo!" cried Fatty, glancing at Meng Hao out of the corner of his eyes. "Another kid steps forward. Don't forget to concoct a really hard pill. My teeth are itchy. I want to bite down on something super tough!" His tone of voice made it sound like his whole life was filled with loneliness, and his annoying expression was one that made you want to thrash him.

Meng Hao didn't immediately begin the concoction process. He looked at Fatty, and smiled.

Fatty wasn't sure why, but he got a good feeling when he looked at Meng Hao. Patting his stomach, he said, "What are you looking at me like that for? Aiii, I'm such a nice guy. You know what? This time I won't crush it in one bite, I'll take three bites."

Meng Hao sighed, and a guilty look appeared on his face. He clasped hands and bowed toward Fatty. In truth, he didn't want to embarrass Li Fugui, but this opportunity was too rare to pass up.

"Eee? What kind of an expression is that? Aiiii, fine, fine. Five bites. I'll take five bites to crush it. How about that?"

Hearing this, Lin Hailong's face grew even darker, as did the faces of the surrounding master alchemists. Chu Yuyan glared ferociously at Fatty, and then at Meng Hao.

"Ah, Fatty," thought Meng Hao. "Big bro really doesn't want to trick you like this, but I really don't have any other option..." With another cough, he waved his hand and produced the Blood Crane pill furnace, sending it to float above the fire crystal.

Everyone's eyes were fixed upon Meng Hao as he concentrated and stoked the pill furnace to a glowing red color. Then, he began to produce medicinal plants. Some he catalyzed, from others, he extracted sap. The entire process took roughly an hour. Finally, Meng Hao produced some gray-colored powder. There didn't seem to be anything special about. When concocting pills, it isn't always necessary to use fresh ingredients. There are certain medicinal powders which will turn gray over time, as well as other ingredients, such as Flying Ash Leaf, which are gray to begin with.

Only Meng Hao knew that his confidence in being able to produce a pill that Fatty couldn't crush, was largely because of this gray powder. It was no ordinary item. It was... powder created by the explosion of the meat jelly's shedding process.

Some of the skin had directly turned into powder, which was what Meng Hao had just used as one of the ingredients in his medicinal pill.

The meat jelly's skin was extraordinarily tough. In the past, Meng Hao had tested it on multiple occasions. The meat jelly had a mysterious background, and was virtually indestructible. Meng Hao was sure that there was no way Fatty would be able to destroy the shed skin of the meat jelly. However, his true killing move in this little competition wasn't the powder, but something else inside the medicinal pill....

"Fatty, please forgive me...." he thought. Meng Hao's eyes gleamed as a black medicinal pill flew out, which he grabbed. The pill furnace slowly returned to its original color.

The pill was about the size of a fingernail, and looked ordinary in every aspect. However, it was filled with the meat jelly skin powder. The powder couldn't be melted; however, Meng Hao had fused it into the medicinal plant ingredients. It was less a concoction than an amalgamation.

The pill emitted no medicinal fragrance, and was as black as night. He tossed it over to Fatty with an apologetic look.

Fatty grabbed it haughtily. "I've taken a liking to you," he said. "Don't worry, I'll crush it with five bites, no less." Looking pleased, he popped the pill into his mouth, posing heroically as he glanced at a few of the female alchemists he'd noticed.

As soon as the pill entered his mouth, he laughed, then closed his eyes and slowly bit down.

"See! One bite!" The words were a bit garbled, but everyone understood what he was saying.

The alchemists of the East Pill Division all looked embarrassed. Clearly, they found Li Fugui to be completely repulsive.

Continuing to talk, Fatty bit down a second time, secretly using quite a bit of strength. His heart began to tremble. Keeping his expression calm, he laughed a few more times, then continued to blabber incoherently about how he would keep his word and bite down five times.

He was starting to get nervous. The first time he had bit down, he'd only used thirty percent of his strength. The second time, he'd used eighty. However, he hadn't even been able to put a tiny dent in the medicinal pill. It seemed to have some sort of elastic element to it. His teeth actually hurt a bit.

"Fatty seems like he'd rather die than lose face. When did he become like this?" thought Meng Hao, looking both sympathetic and apologetic.

Chapter 240: Screw This

"Third bite! I'm gonna take a third bite!" Filled with determination, Fatty used one hundred percent power to bite down. A roaring filled his head, and his teeth ground down onto the medicinal pill so hard it seemed like sparks would fly off of it.

The medicinal pill's incredible elasticity pushed back against his teeth. The feeling was impossible to describe, and caused Fatty to begin to tremble. His face drained of blood, and sweat began to pour down.

Gritting his teeth against the pain, he called out in a loud voice, "See how I keep my word!? Hahaha! I'm even sweating to add to the illusion... Okay, time for the fourth bite, kid. After this one, I won't be able to hold back any more."

How could the onlookers not pick up any clues as to what was really going on? Strange looks began to appear on their faces; they could see how twisted he was at heart. The Golden Frost Sect disciples had especially strange looks, considering how well they knew Li Fugui.

Eternal Mountain's eyes narrowed. He frowned and began to mutter to himself.

Everyone could see the determination filling Fatty's eyes; he was obviously going all out. He switched the medicinal pill to the other side of his mouth and bit down viciously.

"Your granny! There's no way I can't bite it to pieces!"

A cracking sound rang out as Fatty's teeth pierced deep into the pill. However, as soon as they did, a foul, fishy, incredibly spicy fluid sprayed out from the hole that had been punched into the pill.

Fatty's face suddenly went pale white. His body began to tremble, and his eyes went wide, and filled with veins of blood. Tears began to stream out of his eyes, and a roaring filled his mind. It seemed as if his soul were about to fly out of his body. The feeling in his mouth was impossible to describe.

"You... you...." Body trembling, face pale, he involuntarily leaped back and was just about to spit the pill out when he realized that everyone was looking at him. He quickly closed his mouth shut tight, refusing to spit the pill out.

The situation didn't seem to be very complicated, but to Fatty, it seemed as if he were in a living nightmare. Sweat poured off of his body. He could handle foul odors. He could handle fishy flavors. But what he hated more than anything else, was spicy food.

His mouth felt as if it were on fire, and it seemed about to drive him insane.

Meng Hao felt even more guilty. He had learned of Fatty's hatred of spicy food back in the Reliance Sect. Fatty had accidentally revealed the matter to him personally. During the pill concoction process just now, he had intentionally added some medicinal plants which would create spiciness....

The pill was an amalgamation that included the meat jelly skin powder, which was virtually indestructible. However, Meng Hao was worried that Fatty's teeth would exceed his own powers of prediction, and had therefore included a backup contingency.... spiciness.

Fatty's face was bright red as he glared at Meng Hao. His tongue was numb, and his head was buzzing. "I still have one bite left.... you... you little.... you just wait, this time, I'll crush the pill to pieces!"

Everything was quiet. The surrounding Cultivators looked on with strange expressions.

Li Hailong's eyes were wide. Next to him, An Zaihai gaped for a moment, then began to shake his head with a wry smile.

Fatty was just about to go all out as he took his final fifth bite. Meng Hao could no longer hold back. "It's even more spicy the deeper you go..." he blurted.

When Fatty heard this, it hit him like a bolt from the blue. A tremor ran through his body, and it seemed he was too frightened to take another bite, and perhaps would give up. The people who had been repulsed by Fatty before, now seemed to be feeling a bit bad.

"What do you want...?" said Fatty. He looked like he was about to cry.

"I..." Meng Hao sighed. He really felt guilty at this point.

"Screw this!" Fatty opened his mouth to spit out the medicinal pill. However, the pill was now stuck on one of his teeth, which had punctured the pill but not bitten all the way through it.

Fatty quickly plucked the pill off of his tooth and tossed it back to Meng Hao. Eyes glowing with hatred, he retreated back to his place among the Golden Frost Sect disciples.

Currently, his lips and tongue were completely numb. The words he had spoken just now had been a bit slurred, and his face was bright red. Sweat continued to pour off of him, and the roaring sound continued to fill his head. Tears streamed down his face, and he felt as if his mouth might begin to emit flames at any moment.

Everything was quiet. Who could possibly have imagined or predicted that Li Fugui would hate spicy things so much? Cultivators are not mortals, and should be able to prevent such things from affecting them. Fatty's reaction was therefore a testimony to the pill itself.

“What sinister spiciness does that pill contain to be so effective!?!?”

“So that medicinal pill... was actually vastly more powerful than a poison pill!”

“That pill... was so bizarre!!”

Everyone’s attention was completely focused on the medicinal pill in Meng Hao’s hand. Two lines of teeth marks could be seen on either side, and in one spot was a tiny hole where Fatty’s tooth had punctured the pill. It was no longer round, but flat.

Whichever way you looked at it, though, the pill had not been crushed into pieces!

Soon all eyes moved from the pill, to Meng Hao’s face. The East Pill Division, the Violet Qi Division, and the Golden Frost Sect were all looking at Meng Hao.

There were a variety of expressions: looks of confusion, wry smiles, glares of envy. Everyone who knew him suddenly decided that in the future, they should be very cautious about consuming pills he had concocted.

Meng Hao was used to being stared at. His expression was the same as ever, but his heart began to beat faster. He put his pill away, then looked at Lin Hailong, and An Zaihai, who was still shaking his head and laughing.

Grandmaster Eternal Mountain’s archaic voice broke the silence. “Kid, would you mind giving me that pill to examine for a moment?”

Meng Hao hesitated, then shyly asked, “Um... Elder, didn’t I just win?” With his pale skin and scholarly appearance, he really looked like a defenseless young animal. It was the kind of look that made people instantly sympathetic.

Meng Hao’s question actually didn’t sound like a question. Were it anyone other than him who responded in such a way, Eternal Mountain might take offense.

Seeing Meng Hao’s expression caused Fatty’s hair to stand on end. His eyes went wide, and he stared. His tongue was still numb, his vision was still blurry with tears. But seeing what was happening now caused a face to appear in his mind.

The expression on this master alchemist's face, and his words, were exactly like what he remembered from the Pill Cultivation Workshop Outlet back in the Reliance Sect!

"He's... he's...." The more closely he looked, the more confused he got. This was especially so as he thought to how Meng Hao had disappeared without a trace a few years before. No matter what inquiries Fatty made, he hadn't been able to turn up a single clue. But Fatty just couldn't believe that Meng Hao would have left the Southern Domain.

"Don't tell me... dammit... if that's really him.... Only Meng Hao knows that I hate spicy food!!" Fatty's eyes went wide, and he began to breathe heavily. He felt even more wronged now. If this person wasn't Meng Hao, then he would definitely figure out some way to get revenge on him. If it was Meng Hao, though, he obviously wouldn't.

Grandmaster Eternal Mountain smiled as he looked at Meng Hao. Inwardly, he smiled. He felt as if he were looking at himself all those years ago. He didn't care whether or not spiciness had been added into the medicinal pill. The fact that Li Fugui couldn't crush the pill in four bites was testament to its strength and resilience.

"It appears I've lost the wager," said Grandmaster Eternal Mountain, smiling. With that, he flicked his sleeve, and the pill bottle with the ancient medicinal pill flew over to Lin Hailong. "Kid, are you going to give me that pill to have a look at?"

"I'm afraid not," replied Meng Hao, his expression no longer bashful. "Without the express approval of the senior generation of the East Pill Division, junior doesn't dare to allow others to appraise the pill." Meng Hao couldn't possibly hand the pill over; as soon as Grandmaster Eternal Mountain got his hands on it, he would definitely be able to detect the meat jelly skin powder. Then, Meng Hao's position would be compromised, which would lead to all sorts of trouble.

Eternal Mountain stared in shock at Meng Hao's reply. It had been many years since he had requested to appraise a pill. Never before had any master alchemist refused. Considering his status, each and every one would hand over the pill eagerly. One word from him could cause the name of an alchemist to spread throughout the Southern Domain.

Meng Hao's response caused Lin Hailong's face to soften a bit. He smiled at Meng Hao, and nodded slightly. "What's your name?" he asked.

"Disciple Fang Mu," Meng Hao replied with a start.

“What I said just now was no joke,” he said with a smile. “Fang Mu, from this day forward, you are a Furnace Lord. I will send people for you shortly to complete the Furnace Lord branding process.” With that, he looked over at Eternal Mountain. “What now, Grandmaster Eternal Mountain?”

Eternal Mountain gave Meng Hao a long, deep look. Then, smiled and rose to his feet, shaking his head.

“I’ve lost,” he said, “but I have no regrets. With a kid like this, the East Pill Division could last forever. However, first there was Elder Brother Liu, then me. Who knows when the third person to forsake the Sect will appear?” He gave Meng Hao a final smile, then turned and left.

The rest of the Golden Frost Sect followed him. Tang Shicang gave Wu Dingqiu a smiling bow, then left with his disciples.

Before leaving, Fatty turned back with a pitiful expression to look at Meng Hao. Seeing his wronged expression, Meng Hao felt extremely guilty. He also realized that Fatty most likely knew his true identity.