

The Heavens 241

Chapter 241: Violet Qi from the East

Outside of the Violet Fate Sect, several 300 meter long airships shot through the sky. On one of the airships, Dharma Protector Tang Shicang stood with Grandmaster Eternal Mountain, looking off into the distance.

Tang Shicang hesitated for a moment, then finally spoke out the question that was gnawing at his heart. “Grandmaster Eternal Mountain, are you really going to give them that ancient Entrancement Pill so easily?”

Eternal Mountain was silent for a long moment, then gave a very faint smile. “The Entrancement Pill is defective, and I studied it thoroughly long ago. Besides... do you really think that with all the resources the East Pill Division controls, they don’t have an Entrancement Pill already?”

Tang Shicang’s eyes glittered. After a moment, he nodded.

“Besides,” continued Eternal Mountain, “my purpose for visiting the Violet Fate Sect has been accomplished. A trifling Entrancement Pill was well worth it.” His eyes shone with a strange light.

“Oh?” Tang Shicang said, surprised. He still didn’t quite understand. “But Grandmaster Pill Demon didn’t show his face. Grandmaster Eternal Mountain, how exactly did you accomplish your purpose?”

“Who ever said I went to the Violet Fate Sect to pay respects to Master?” he replied, his voice archaic and filled with wisdom. “Master would never agree to see me. My medicinal pill was just an excuse. The true purpose was to get a look at Grandmaster Pill Cauldron!” Eternal Mountain laughed.

Anyone who had Cultivated the Dao of alchemy to the realm he had, would of course possess extreme powers of insight.

Tang Shicang stared in astonishment. “Grandmaster Pill Cauldron? He’s...” He was about to continue speaking, but stopped. His pupils constricted, and suddenly, his eyes filled with disbelief. He looked over at Eternal Mountain. “Don’t tell me....”

“Grandmaster Pill Cauldron is none other than that young man!” said Eternal Mountain in a voice that could chop nails and sever iron. The words hit Tang Shicang like a thunderbolt. He immediately began to breathe heavily.

He had no reason whatsoever to doubt anything Grandmaster Eternal Mountain said about the East Pill Division. However, the matter of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron was just too shocking, and he found it hard to believe.

“An Zaihai obviously knows,” said Eternal Mountain. “Considering his powers of perception, he was surely told by Master. As for Elder Brother Lin, his skill in the Dao of alchemy hasn’t made any progress for hundreds of years now. He will never pass through the door to become a Grandmaster. He naturally was unable to see Fang Mu’s skill in pill concoction, especially the ambiguous final method he used to achieve victory. Fang Mu is clearly brilliant.”

“The boy is so young, and yet he is Grandmaster Pill Cauldron. This matter....” Tang Shicang took a deep breath, and a strange light filled his eyes.

“For now, the title Grandmaster is out of the question for him. However, he is a truly rare seed.... If you want to offend him, go ahead and spread word of his identity. But don’t forget, a true grandmaster of the Dao of alchemy, is also a grandmaster of the Dao of poison. Wiping out an entire Sect would be as easy to him as blowing some dust off of a table. He became famous because of his Bedevilment Pill, and the mad, devilish will within it. Even though I didn’t get to see the pill with my own eyes, the images branded on the jade slip were enough to cause my hair to stand on end.” His words were spoken calmly, but they stabbed like ice into Tang Shicang’s heart.

“He obviously doesn’t want to reveal his identity,” continued Grandmaster Eternal Mountain, “so you would do best not to cause problems. What I am most interested in knowing is... will he become the third forsaker?” He smiled. His words were a question, but in his eyes, he seemed to already know the answer.

At the same time that the people from the Golden Frost Sect were calling upon the Violet Fate Sect, far off in the Southern Domain, near the Rebirth Cave, was the corpse which had fallen from the sky years before. Currently, several dozen Cultivators were shooting toward it at top speed from a very far distance away.

They all wore black clothing. The auras which emanated from their body was sinister and cold. It was as if they could turn the hot summer air into the frostiness of the yellow springs of the underworld.

The Cultivation bases of these Cultivators were unstable. Sometimes they were at the Foundation Establishment stage, sometimes Core Formation, sometimes Nascent Soul. Occasionally, they would even explode with the aura of the Spirit Severing stage.

The so-called Immortal's Corpse had caused many waves to pass through the heart of the Sects of the Southern Domain over the past years. It seemed that the five great Sects and three great Clans still had not given up on their investigations. The scale of activity was not as great as it had been before, but all of the Sects had reaped some benefit throughout the years. Right now, it was possible to get very close to the corpse.

It was easy to predict that in the near future, this corpse would cause an even greater stir, a true commotion within the Southern Domain. Then, vast amounts of Cultivators would come to approach it. The people here now were simply feeling things out.

However, the Cultivators which were now shooting toward the corpse were very bizarre. Black smoke filled the air as they passed, as if their bodies contained, not one soul, but two. Apparently, they weren't even alive, but rather, puppets whose bodies contained discarnate souls.

They moved quickly, and were almost immediately upon the corpse. Suddenly, the smoke emanating out from them twisted and warped, transforming into a sickle of black mist. The sickle seemed capable of slashing through anything. It cut directly toward the neck of the corpse.

It was a few days after the Golden Frost Sect left the Violet Fate Sect when suddenly the so-called corpse emitted a massive roar, the likes of which hadn't been heard since the day it fell from the sky.

This roar actually exceeded that first one. It was like a gale force wind which swept across the entire Southern Domain, rumbling like thunder.

As the roar sounded out, the dozens of Cultivators nearing the corpse coughed up blood. Their bodies became indistinct, and they tumbled backward. A voice sounded out in their minds which they could hear, but no one else could.

"Screw off!"

The roaring words seemed to echo out to the heavens. Half of the group of dozens of Cultivators screamed miserably as their bodies exploded. Blood and flesh flew about in all directions. Discarnate souls appeared from within, but before they could flee, they began to disintegrate.

The ten or so survivors immediately fled at top speed. However, before they could get very far, their bodies began to tremble, as if they couldn't control the discarnate souls within their bodies.

These people were of course from the Black Sieve Sect!

Even as they left, a new piece of news began to spread around the Southern Domain. A mark of blood had appeared on the neck of the Immortal's corpse!

It looked as if someone had tried to cut off its head, but had only succeeded in leaving behind the mark.

As soon as this news reached the various Sects, large amounts of Cultivators emerged and headed toward the Rebirth Cave. They didn't dare to approach too closely, but observed from a distance.

The news caused a stir in all the five great Sects and three great Clans.

The news reached the East Pill Division of the Violet Fate Sect, of course, as did the sound of the roar emitted by the corpse. However, they were located quite a distance away. Furthermore, Fang Mu had just been promoted to Furnace Lord. Therefore, the Sect didn't pay too much attention to it.

Usually, the promotion of a Furnace Lord was a grand occasion for the East Pill Division, second only to the promotion of a Violet Furnace Lord. However, the unorthodox and relatively simplistic nature of Meng Hao's promotion led to a much more muted reception.

Things were simple, but Meng Hao was still quite busy for several days. He got a new Immortal's Cave and a new robe. Some people might be talking down the method by which he was promoted, but he still received the perks of the new position.

For example, his Immortal's Cave. As of now, Meng Hao had an entire valley to himself, deep within the East Pill Division, far away from the master alchemists. It wasn't large, but couldn't be described as small either. And it belonged only to him.

His alchemist's robe was black, interlaced with violet, and was equipped with a special function. It had a magical, short-range teleportation ability, which could be used to teleport anywhere within a 50 kilometer radius. After the ability was used three times, he could exchange the robe for a new one.

As for pill furnaces, like Meng Hao's Blood Crane pill furnace, these would be provided to him by the Sect as needed. Before, if he wanted to concoct some high-value medicinal pills, he would often have to trade with others to acquire the necessary medicinal plants. Now that he was a Furnace Lord, though, such things would be provided by the Sect, free of charge.

Furthermore, there were some very expensive and rare medicinal plants that he was now able to buy on credit. Even more importantly, as a Furnace Lord, he was now allowed to enter the Violet Fate Celestial Land once per month!

There were many benefits, and they are difficult to describe in detail. It could be said that in terms of status and position, in everything, he was now far beyond a master alchemist. One was the Heavens, the other was the Earth.

There are a thousand master alchemists, but only one hundred Furnace Lords. As of now, Meng Hao could look down on all Inner Sect disciples. Even Conclave disciples of the Violet Qi Division would treat a Furnace Lord with utmost respect. In principle, Conclave disciples could request pill concocting from a Furnace Lord, but generally speaking, usually only Sect Elders would do so.

Outside in the Southern Domain, any Sect would attach extreme importance to any Violet Fate Sect Furnace Lord, in such a way that was far, far beyond master alchemists.

It could be said that becoming a Furnace Lord was like becoming a Conclave disciple of the East Pill Division. Unfortunately, becoming a Furnace Lord was predicated on gaining the approval of all the other Furnace Lords. Therefore, Meng Hao's sudden promotion caused the other Furnace Lords to look at him with disfavor.

Meng Hao didn't care, though. Almost the very first thing he did after being promoted was go borrow a copy of Violet Qi from the East. He had been waiting for a very long time to get a chance to do so. As soon as he finished reading it, he went into secluded meditation and began to practice cultivation.

Two months later, he emerged. He still had six Dao Pillars, only now they weren't gold colored, but violet. Finally, he could heave a sigh of relief.

From now on, no one would be able to see the traces of the Sublime Spirit Scripture on his Cultivation base. As of now, the Cultivation he practiced was not from the Qi Condensation manual of the Sublime Spirit Scripture, but from... the Foundation Establishment manual!

Violet Qi from the East!

The manual wasn't complete, but Meng Hao did possess the complete Qi Condensation manual. As such, he actually understood the technique better than the Cultivators of the Violet Qi Division. The benefits he acquired were vast. His Dao Pillars now emanated a threatening violet Qi. The pupils of his eyes glinted with a violet glow, and the aura emanating from his body was very different than from before.

Violet Qi from the East was extremely suited to Meng Hao, almost as if it had been prepared just for him. By continuing to practice this type of Cultivation, he would definitely be able to form a Violet Core.

With a Violet Core, he would have the foundation upon which to build the Perfect Core!

Before going into his two months of secluded meditation, he spread word that he was planning to rise to Foundation Establishment. After emerging, he revealed an early Foundation Establishment Cultivation base, which offered a perfect explanation for the violet hue to his pupils.

Chapter 242: Alchemy Dao Transmutation Incantation

“Violet Qi from the East...” The faint violet aura flickered in his eyes. He lifted his right hand and extended his fingers. They glowed with a violet light.

“This technique is the same as that in the Qi Condensation manual. It's not magic, but rather, a cultivation technique. However, it seems the Violet Fate Sect has created some divine abilities based on the techniques in Violet Qi to the East.” He closed his eyes for a moment, then reopened them. In his mind, the text from the fragment of the manual floated in his eyes. He had memorized two passages which described techniques that could be used by Furnace Lords.

“Violet Pupil Transformation and Violet Qi Guillotine.” He gazed for a moment at the five fingers of his outstretched hand. Suddenly, he waved his hand, and violet smoke drifted out from his fingers. It congealed in the air into a violet, crescent moon. With a thought, Meng Hao sent it crashing into the wall of the Immortal's Cave.

The cave shook, as did the entire mountain peak, and a massive curved impression appeared on the wall of the cave.

“That was only ten percent power.” Meng Hao’s eyes filled with a thoughtful look. After some time passed, the violet glow in his pupils flickered, then spread to completely cover his pupils, and then his eyes. Then, lines of violet streaked out onto the skin surrounding his eyes. These were the veins that, in an instant, had turned from bluish to bright violet in color.

At the moment, Meng Hao looked like some sort of evil spirit. A suppressive aura roiled off of him. His expression was the same as ever as he lifted his right hand and cut his left arm with his fingernail. A wound opened up, but even as the blood began to well up, the wound started to heal. In a moment, it was gone. Meng Hao wiped away the blood that remained behind. There was no mark on his skin at all.

He sat there quietly for the time it takes half an incense stick to burn. Finally, his body began to return to normal.

“Violet Pupil Transformation: what an amazing art! It doesn’t increase the battle prowess of my Cultivation base, but my recovery is far beyond normal.” To employ the full potential of these two techniques would require a bit more practice.

There were other restricted techniques of the Violet Qi Division that could only be practiced by Conclave disciples. The East Pill Division occupied a very high place within the Violet Fate Sect, but as for their restricted techniques, it was impossible to even look at them.

Unless... he became a Violet Furnace Lord. That rank was not just illustrious in the East Pill Division. It was the pinnacle of the entire Violet Fate Sect. They were qualified to read the greater part of all the ancient records in the Violet Fate Sect, with no restrictions whatsoever. After all, in all of the Southern Domain, there was only one Sect who could ever hope to have Violet Furnace Lords, and as such, they were given special treatment.

Meng Hao took a deep breath. Putting the magical techniques out of his mind, he sank into thought. Equipped with his superior Furnace Lord resources, he began to concoct medicinal pills. He didn’t just need to create pills for his own usage. He would use his status as a Furnace Lord to acquire more ingredients, and more formulas, to ensure that his skill in alchemy continued to grow.

Time flashed by. Soon half a year had passed. Meng Hao spent most of this time in seclusion, submerged in Cultivation and pill concocting. Every month he would visit the Celestial Land, where he would acquire a good collection of medicinal plants. He concocted various medicinal pills according to his previous arrangement of three batches per day for Inner Sect disciples. Of course, the prices were now significantly higher. Despite that, his pills were as popular as ever throughout the Sect.

By this time, he had begun to collect quite a few of the medicinal plants he would need to concoct the Perfect Core Pill. Currently, he was only missing a few. As for his own pills, when he created good ones which had a medicinal strength of eighty percent or higher, he would not put them up for sale, but would brand them with the cauldron seal and store them away.

Every time he marked a pill with the cauldron image, an image would appear in his mind of a vast amount of Spirit Stones. He was very passionate about that aspect; whenever he looked at the large collection of cauldron-marked medicinal pills in his bag of holding, he could only imagine the vast amount of Spirit Stones he would acquire if he sold them.

It was impossible for anyone but Meng Hao to know how many medicinal pills he concocted in total during the more than half a year's worth of time. He grounded himself completely in the world of alchemy. The amount of time, coupled with the deep stores of information available within the East Pill Division, caused his skill in the Dao of alchemy to grow significantly.

Now, he didn't need to waste much. It was much easier for him to extract sixty percent of the medicinal strength of the plant ingredients into his pill. He was even able to concoct quite a few at eighty percent strength. After having been raised to Furnace Lord, Meng Hao was nothing like the other normal alchemists, especially considering how he had access to such precious medicinal plants.

Even more importantly, after becoming a Furnace Lord, he acquired the second level catalysis technique. Actually, it wasn't really a technique for catalyzing plants, but a pill concocting method.

It was called Alchemy Dao Transmutation Incantation!

It allowed him to refine a pill that he had previously concocted. Meng Hao instantly fell in love with the technique. After thinking about it for a long time, he tested it out a few times, and gradually became quite proficient.

Because of the gradual amalgamation of his nature talent of plants and vegetation, as well as the Alchemy Dao Transmutation Incantation, Meng Hao advanced by leaps and bounds.

Using this technique to transmute an ordinary medicinal pill enabled him to produce even more powerful pills. This was definitely one of the most advanced techniques in the East Pill Division.

It was also one of the reasons there was such a vast difference between Furnace Lords and master alchemists. It was also why Furnace Lords received such a warm welcome whenever they traveled outside of the Sect in the Southern Domain.

In addition to the Alchemy Dao Transmutation Incantation, Meng Hao also learned a few dozen methods for creating plant and vegetation interactions which would make it very difficult for anyone to ascertain what methods he had used to concoct any given pill.

This was something Meng Hao very much needed. Combined with this nature talent of plants and vegetation, he was able to combine all the various methods together to produce the most straightforward, and also most difficult, method to commingle the plant and vegetation ingredients together.

It was simple, but it involved adding extra ingredients into the mix. Therefore, it was both simple and complicated. The fundamental skill wasn't difficult, but the more complex of a result he wanted, the more ingredients he needed to add. And of course, because of the variations encountered in different medicinal pills, it required careful work to prevent such interactions from affecting the basic function of the medicinal pill in question. There was little room for error.

If the process wasn't performed perfectly, it might be possible to make a mistake and not even notice!

But to Meng Hao, this was the best technique to hide the secrets of his pill concocting. His skill in plants and vegetation was already firmly within the third realm of ten million variations!

Meng Hao was very happy throughout these days. Both his Cultivation base and his skill in alchemy gradually grew higher. His seventh Dao Pillar was now more than half formed. Based on his calculations, he would need to spend at least ten years as a Furnace Lord. He would work hard to improve his skill in the Dao of alchemy, and completely master the Alchemy Dao Transmutation Technique. By the time he became a Violet Furnace Lord, his Cultivation base would be at the great circle of Foundation Establishment, with nine Dao Pillars. The next step would be Core Formation.

Chu Yuyan never came looking for Meng Hao. When he did venture out, he heard that recently she was obsessed with her search for the mysterious Grandmaster Pill Cauldron. She spent all her days trying to figure out who he was.

After hearing this bit of news, a strange look appeared on his face. During the past five years, he had gotten used to this new identity of his.

Just now, Meng Hao had finished concocting a batch of medicinal pills. He rubbed the bridge of his nose, then walked out of his Immortal's Cave. It was midday, and the sun burned hot overhead. There was a slight breeze, but all it did was blow hot wind against his face. He looked out at the valley, the entirety of which belonged to him.

Over the past half year or so, he had planted quite a few varieties of medicinal plants. The current heat wave caused them to emit a faint medicinal aroma which filled the valley. Being in an environment like this, it was little wonder that alchemists always smelled like medicinal pills.

He walked down into the valley and began to tend to some of the medicinal plants. As a Furnace Lord, he could call apprentice alchemists to come plant and care for his gardens. He could also summon master alchemists to assist him in pill concocting.

However, Meng Hao liked the quiet, so therefore hadn't called for any help. As for Bai Yunlai, every time he met Meng Hao, he would treat him with the ultimate level of respect. Meng Hao had thought of asking him to come live in the valley. If he did, though, the man would never be able to rest, and would be extremely out of sorts.

There was nothing Meng Hao could do about it. It was exacerbated by the fact that while no one on the outside knew anything about Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, Bai Yunlai did. Whenever he looked at Meng Hao, his eyes would fill with fervent ardor and respect. Meng Hao could only laugh bitterly at this.

He was there in his garden tending to medicinal plants when suddenly his expression flickered. Behind him, two apprentice alchemists, each about thirty years of age, hurried into the valley.

As soon as they entered, they saw him, and their eyes filled with respect. Clasp hands, they bowed and said, "Greetings, Grandmaster Fang."

Meng Hao thought for a moment as he reached down to pluck some withered leaves off of a medicinal plant. After becoming a Furnace Lord, he had given one lecture about plants and

vegetation. After calculating for a moment in his mind, he realized that it was about time for him to give another. "Time for another lecture?" he asked indifferently.

This was one of the responsibilities of Furnace Lords. They were like Masters to the master alchemists and Patriarchs to the apprentice alchemists. By means of their lectures, it was ensured that the junior generation of the Sect would continue to advance and grow.

These two apprentice alchemists had been assigned to Meng Hao as servants to handle various trivial matters for him. "Grandmaster Fang, it was actually two days ago.... However you never came out, and we didn't want to disturb you."

Meng Hao nodded. He finished tending to the medicinal plants, then followed the two apprentice alchemists out of the valley. As they walked through the East Pill Division, each and every apprentice alchemist he ran into was extremely respectful. They saw his long black robe, interlaced with violet trim, and immediately knew his rank.

There were only around one hundred Furnace Lords in the entire Violet Fate Sect, as opposed to the over one hundred thousand disciples in the East Pill Division alone. It was impossible for one hundred people to remember one hundred thousand people, but for one hundred thousand people to remember one hundred people was very easy.

As soon as Meng Hao appeared, everyone recognized him. This was Fang Mu, who had risen to Furnace Lord just half a year ago. It didn't matter how he had been promoted, his black and violet robe clearly announced his status. In the East Pill Division, he might not have supreme power, but his illustriousness was incredible.

Even the master alchemists who caught sight of Meng Hao treated him with utmost respect.

He walked the entire way, and was saluted the whole time.

Chapter 243: I Dare You To Say That Again!

One of the valleys in the East Pill Division was called Alchemy Day Valley. Twenty thousand people were gathered, seated in a semi-circle around a high platform.

This was one of three locations where Furnace Lords would give lectures about alchemy. Back when Meng Hao had been an apprentice alchemist, he would often go to those three places to hear

the Furnace Lords speak about medicinal pills, plants and vegetation. The benefits he had received were significant.

In addition to these three valleys, there were ten other valleys where master alchemists would lecture. It was for this reason that Meng Hao felt as if the East Pill Division was not a Sect, but rather an institute of higher learning. Thirteen valleys existed in which either master alchemists or Furnace Lords would come to lecture, not because they were required to, but because they wanted to.

Furthermore, the content of the lectures of the various master alchemists and Furnace Lords was always different. The Cultivators of the East Pill Division could choose which lectures they wished to attend.

Some lectures would be attended by only a few hundred or thousand. Others would be packed. Of course, the lectures by the Furnace Lords were usually different from those of the master alchemists. The Furnace Lord lectures were always extremely popular.

Except... Meng Hao's first lecture after becoming a Furnace Lord had only been attended by a few thousand. It was by no means packed. Meng Hao hadn't really cared, though. He had spoken for about four hours, then flicked his sleeve and left.

Accompanied by the two apprentice alchemists, Meng Hao arrived at Alchemy Day Valley. He hadn't minded when his first lecture was sparsely attended. However, he was shocked to see how many people were currently in the valley.

As he approached, he could see apprentice alchemists sitting cross-legged everywhere, as well as some master alchemists. All of them were looking up at the high platform. There stood a white-haired old man who emanated the aura of a transcendent being.

The old man was a Furnace Lord, and a very senior ranking one at that. He spoke in a cool voice which rang out in all directions. Everyone could hear very clearly. Some people's eyes glowed brightly, apparently in the midst of enlightenment.

Meng Hao's lecture slot was actually a few days earlier; unfortunately, he had been delayed because of his pill concocting. Now, he would have to wait for this senior Furnace Lord to finish his lecture before he could take his turn.

He would have to wait, but as a Furnace Lord, he wouldn't have to wait outside the valley. As soon as he entered, he was noticed by the nearby apprentice alchemists. One head after another turned to look at him, whereupon they would stand and salute him respectfully. He smiled and nodded in return. They parted, making a path for him, which he walked down, feeling a bit embarrassed.

It didn't take long before everyone in the entire valley had caught sight of him, including attendees far off in the distance. Even they stood to salute him in greeting.

In short, his entrance to the valley caused a small-scale commotion. The old man on the stage frowned and stopped talking, eyeing Meng Hao with a look of displeasure.

"Alchemist Fang, don't tell me you're unaware of the rules?" he said coolly, his voice sounding out clearly throughout the valley. "I'm giving a lecture on alchemy at the moment. Why, pray tell, are you here? This ruckus is really ruining my mood!"

Meng Hao glanced at the old man with a slight frown. He knew the other Furnace Lords weren't too happy with him. Were the situation different, Meng Hao wouldn't let the man's words slide. However, his presence here really did cause a commotion, and he had interrupted the man's lecture.

"Forgive my inconsiderateness," said Meng Hao with a slight smile, and then sat down off to the side. He was here, so he might as well wait for the lecture to finish.

Hearing this, the old man snorted coldly, then ignored Meng Hao and continued with the lecture.

Time passed by slowly. The old Furnace Lord prattled on, occasionally holding up some medicinal plants to analyze. The surrounding apprentice alchemists listened thoughtfully. Many appeared to have looks of enlightenment on their faces. It seemed as if they were really benefiting from the lecture.

Meng Hao, however, was feeling a bit drowsy. Strangely, it seemed he was the only one. Perhaps it was because he was tired from his pill concocting; plus, the old man lectured in a very wordy way. Generally, after only one sentence, Meng Hao would understand the point he was trying to make. But then the man would go on to explain with ten or more additional sentences. Furthermore, Meng Hao was already familiar with the aspects of plant and vegetation variations about which he lectured. Among the Furnace Lords, if Meng Hao placed second in terms of plants and vegetation knowledge, then there was no first.

Whatever reasons Meng Hao had for being bored, the man was giving a lecture about alchemy. He may be long-winded, but Meng Hao would not do anything to supplant him. Do not do to others what you would not wish them to do to you.

After some time passed, though, he couldn't hold back from letting out a yawn. He wasn't located very far away from the lecture platform, so the long-winded old man noticed, and was clearly displeased. His mood seemed to sink even lower than before. Seeing Meng Hao's indolent attitude, he suddenly got angry.

He stopped lecturing and looked at Meng Hao; his eyes burned and his words were ear-piercing: "Furnace Lord Fang Mu, don't tell me you have some doubts regarding my lecture!?"

As soon as the words left his mouth, the surrounding apprentice alchemists no longer had entranced looks on their faces. Instead, they looked excitedly toward Meng Hao.

From the look of things, it seemed the entranced looks on their faces just now had been there out of force of habit. Some may have been real, but the majority were apparently fake.

Silence reigned among the apprentice alchemists, but a variety of thoughts ran through their heads.

"Two Furnace Lords are arguing. I've been to lots of lectures, but I've never seen anything like this before!"

"Furnace Lord Zhou sure can talk. If he's not happy during his lecture then he'll really flip out. That's why we all have to pretend to be so interested. If we don't, bad luck will surely strike...."

"Ah, that's the new guy who's on the rise. All the Violet Qi Division Inner Sect disciples are crazy over Furnace Lord Fang. Furnace Lord Zhou, on the other hand, is one of the most qualified of all the Furnace Lords. I wonder which one will come out on top...?"

Meng Hao frowned and looked up at the old man named Zhou.

"I don't doubt anything you've said, Furnace Lord Zhou," he said coolly. "I'm just a bit exhausted from concocting pills and need a short rest."

Seeing Meng Hao back down twice in a row caused contempt to flicker in old man Zhou's eyes. "Lies! You're clearly being disrespectful on purpose! Please, I would very much like for you to explain in detail what various doubts you have. If you're unable to, then please leave immediately. I'm really fed up with your 'resting' here!"

A cold glow appeared in Meng Hao's eyes. He had already backed down twice in a row. He knew that it truly was improper for him to have interrupted the man's lecture, but the man was really going overboard. Although Meng Hao had a relatively good temper, the cold light in his eyes showed the level of his displeasure.

"Originally, I, Fang Mu, did not want to cause any embarrassment because of the black Furnace Lord's robe which you wear." Meng Hao's indifferent voice suddenly turned sharp. "But since Furnace Lord Zhou is so insistent, then I guess I will express a few doubts!"

Instantly, all of the surrounding apprentice alchemists perked up. Something interesting was about to happen! Even the master alchemists' eyes began to glow. These expressions were far more genuinely enthusiastic than those from moments ago.

The man named Zhou gave a cold harrumph, and was about to say something, when Meng Hao interrupted him without the slightest trace of politeness.

"According to your understanding of the Dao of alchemy, one must first embrace into one's heart all of the variations of plants and vegetation, and then craft out a thorough plan. Afterwards pills may be concocted. This concept is nothing more than a load of dog crap!"

"Fang Mu, you've really got guts!" roared the man, glaring furiously. "I dare you to say that again!"

When Meng Hao replied, his voice was calm, but his words were aggressive and menacing. "What pills do you intend to concoct with such a method? The Dao of alchemy was created by the Heavens, and requires personal enlightenment. Success can only come after constant defeat and subsequent improvement. It is the result of the concoction process itself! When concocting, one must identify what is true from what is false, select the proper time and location, adjust the flame to the proper temperature, and modify the interactions between the medicinal plants! Was I mistaken to say your words are dog crap? You want me to say it again? You're the senior, so in accord with your demand, I'll say it again. Your words are a load of dog crap!"

The words blew over Zhou, making him so angry that his body trembled. He lifted a finger and pointed at Meng Hao, a ferocious look filling his eyes. "Treason! Heresy!" he shrieked. "There are rules on the path of medicinal pills! You ignorant child! The fact that you finagled your way into a

Furnace Lord promotion is a humiliation to all other Furnace Lords. We're ashamed to even be associated with you. Apparently, you aren't familiar with the word 'rule,' or the term 'pill formula.' Pill formulas themselves are rules. The pill concocting to which I refer is one in which a pill formula is followed!"

"Pill formulas are merely a simplified way of recording the process of pill concoction," replied Meng Hao calmly. "They are there for alchemists to refer to, like a roadmap, or a light to use on a dark night."

"You..."

Meng Hao's words were growing more relentless. "If you follow a pill formula, then of course you can concoct a pill. But if you concoct pills in such a way, doesn't that make you a mere master alchemist? Do you really deserve the title of Furnace Lord? It seems to me that you're nothing more than a boring old pill-concocting puppet!"

"Y-you.... Pill formulas are rules! You...." The old man sputtered in his anger, and was about to continue to explain when Meng Hao held his head high and interrupted again.

"You can't even speak clearly! Pill formulas are rules? Examine all of the pills that exist under heaven. How many of those pills have a variety of formulas which have been handed down throughout the generations? In fact, for some pills, more than a hundred formulas exist, all with different interactions. And yet, each one produces the same pill. You speak of rules. Are you trying to say that multiple sets of different rules exist for each pill?!"

"Very well, assuming there really are rules, then after the first pill formula appeared, who was it that created the second pill formula? What about the third? Or the fourth? By the time you reach the hundredth pill formula, can you explain who exactly created that pill?" Meng Hao's indignant words filled the entire valley. All of the apprentice alchemists who were listening had looks of excitement on their faces, as well as the glow of enlightenment. The master alchemists were panting as they pondered Meng Hao's words. The looks on their faces were much similar to the looks on their faces as they had been listening to Zhou's lecture just now. However, the difference between the words of the two different Furnace Lords was incredible.

Zhou's fury rose to the heavens. His entire body shook as he howled: "Treason! Heresy! Rebellion against the Dao of alchemy...!"

"Do you dare to proclaim that the creator of the next pill formula, the one hundred and first, isn't among the East Pill Division disciples present today?" Hearing this caused a wave of excitement to

pass through the apprentice alchemists. Ignoring old man Zhou, they immediately spoke out their agreement.

Meng Hao's words smashed down onto old man Zhou like an iron hammer. He couldn't help but walk back a few steps, staring back at Meng Hao with bloodshot eyes.

Chapter 244: Debate in the Alchemy Valley

“Can you say anything other than the words ‘treason,’ ‘heresy’ and ‘rebellion against the Dao of alchemy?’” Meng Hao sat there cross-legged, as calm as a spring breeze. His expression hadn't changed; he still had a smile on his face. But his words were incredibly sharp. The surrounding apprentice alchemists watched on, their faces shining with admiration.

Zhou burned with wrath, and his mind was reeling. His words began to grow more venomous. “You ignorant youth!” he said. “You don't even know what it means to concoct pills. I suggest you get the hell out of the Sect and go back to suck your mother's teat! Wait until...”

His words only caused Meng Hao's smile to disappear. The cold look in his eye grew icy. “You don't even deserve to utter the words ‘concoct pills.’ Medicinal pills are concocted, and concocting requires intelligence. That's why it's called concocting. Your Dao of alchemy is nothing more than copying. Concocting pills and copying pills. That's a difference of only one word. The crux of the difference, however, is that your Dao of alchemy reached the end of its road years ago!”

“Lies! Lies!” howled Zhou, his hair in disarray as he glared at Meng Hao. He had always thought his own words to be sharp, but today he found out that Fang Mu's words were beyond sharp; they were diabolical. He took a deep breath to clear his mind, and then made his counterattack. “How could you blaspheme the rules of the Dao of alchemy? They have been passed down amongst alchemists for tens of thousands of years. If you don't respect the rules, then you are concocting not pills, but abominations!”

“Abominations?” said Meng Hao with a cold smile. He stretched out his right hand. “Apprentice alchemists, does anyone present happen to have a medicinal pill on hand? Give it to me!”

As soon as his words rang out, one of the cleverest of the nearby apprentice alchemists quickly produced a medicinal pill and handed it to Meng Hao. Everyone else looked on.

Meng Hao took the pill, glanced at it for a moment, then looked back at Zhou.

“This is a Qi Condensation Pill of twenty percent medicinal strength. Currently, there are ninety seven formulas for this pill. Now, I will help you to understand what rules are! The first formula for this pill requires three leaves of Blood Cinnabar grass, root of Blue Residual, Gyrfalcon leaf vein.... The second formula requires.... The third formula....” Without stopping, Meng Hao slowly recited all ninety seven different formulas. All present were disciples of the East Pill Division, including master alchemists, some of whom were recording the information as Meng Hao spoke it. When he finished reciting all ninety seven formulas, there was a deathly silence.

All the formulas he had recited were correct; each one could be used to concoct a Qi Condensation Pill.

“The ninety eighth formula requires three pistils from Eastern Dust Flower, three Spicewood seedlings, a flaming leaf from a Luan Phoenix plant.... The ninety ninth pill formula requires East Path sap; three years, seven month, nine day old Ink leaf, as well as.... The one hundred and third formula.... The one hundred and seventeenth formula....”

Everything was completely silent. The old man named Zhou stared with mute astonishment at Meng Hao. It wasn't just him. All of the apprentice alchemists and master alchemists were staring blankly at him as if he weren't even human.

No one had ever heard of the final twenty formulas he had recited. Based on the thoughtful look on his face, it was obvious Meng Hao was not reciting them from memory, but rather, had spontaneously created them himself after looking at the pill.

Such actions were exponentially more incisive than any of Meng Hao's previous words. After he finished reciting all one hundred and seventeen pill formulas, the space of ten breaths passed in which no one said anything. Then, everyone exploded into a huge hubbub.

“He created pill formulas!! What realm is this? No wonder he's a Furnace Lord! This is just astonishing!”

“He didn't just create one pill formula, but twenty! I was listening carefully, and I can say with ninety percent confidence that all of them could be used to concoct a Qi Condensation Pill!”

“That's Instantaneous Formula Scrying! According to legend, only Violet Furnace Lords with incredible skill in the Dao of alchemy can do such a thing!”

Up on the stage, old man Zhou's face was pale white. His breathing was ragged, his expression lifeless as he stared dully at Meng Hao. His mind roared as if with thunder.

“Could I be mistaken...? Is my Dao of alchemy flawed...? Impossible, I couldn't be mistaken. If I were, how could I have become a Furnace Lord? But.... but if I'm not mistaken, how come my skill in the Dao of alchemy hasn't improved for an entire sixty year cycle....?”

“I just created twenty pill formulas. According to Furnace Lord Zhou's logic, I, Fang Mu, am the maker of rules!” Meng Hao flicked his sleeve, sending the medicinal pill in his hand flying back to the apprentice alchemist who had given it to him. The apprentice alchemist clutched it excitedly. He had already decided to save this pill as a keepsake for the rest of his life.

Meng Hao's words slammed like a thunderclap into old man Zhou's ears. His face drained of blood, and his body trembled. His eyes were filled with veins of blood.

“Cease your ravings! Everything you've said is a contradiction of the East Pill Division's Dao of alchemy! You're simply trying to sow seeds of doubt in my heart. Such actions are worthy of execution!! My unfamiliarity with those pill formulas proves only that I'm unaware of where you acquired them! You're just trying to put on a show!”

In Meng Hao's mind, this old man was tenaciously annoying. A cold smile spread on his face as he retorted: “Oh? I'm just trying to put on a show? Furnace Lord Zhou, let me ask you this. What medicinal plant were you just holding in your hand?”

“Medicinal plant?” Old man Zhou was so furious that he could only stare blankly for a moment. He slapped his bag of holding to produce the medicinal plant he had been lecturing about earlier. “This is Seven Leaf clove....”

He was about to continue talking when Meng Hao let out an uproarious laugh. “Seven Leaf clove thrives on light which contains opposing Yin and Yang properties. It only grows during the evening, when the sun and moon shine together. Furthermore, at dusk, it will shine with a glow that contains seven colors. It looks almost exactly the same as Confusion Apex leaf and Blue Dawn leaf. The only way to tell the difference is by examining the stems, leaves and branches. The sky conditions can also be used as a determining factor.” Meng Hao's gaze was as cold as ice. “Obviously, the plant you are holding in your hand is not Seven Leaf clove, but Blue Dawn leaf!”

His words sent the valley into an uproar. All of the apprentice alchemists turned their heads to look at old man Zhou, whose face instantly tightened. To misidentify a medicinal plant would lead to an incredible loss of face within the Sect.

More importantly if Zhou, as a Furnace Lord, had misidentified a medicinal plant, it could have a destructive effect on his reputation.

“Dusk is about to fall,” said Meng Hao in a voice that could sever nails and chop iron. “Soon the sun and the moon will shine together in the sky. If that plant you’re holding is really Seven Leaf clove, then it will glow with seven colors, and prove that I am wrong. In that case, I will humbly apologize to you in front of all the Sect disciples here today. Furthermore, in the future, I will never dare to place myself in your presence.” He flicked his sleeve.

The debate with old man Zhou had long since gone past the appointed time to end the lecture. Dusk was about to fall, and the moon was just becoming visible.

The debate had gone on for a long time, but the apprentice and master alchemists present could barely hold back their enthusiasm. They were virtually entranced with the proceedings.

“Nonsense!” fumed old man Zhou. “I’m one hundred and thirty seven years old! How old are you? How could I possibly misidentify... huh?” Before he could finish, the sky grew dark as dusk arrived. The sun and moon were both shining in the sky!

However, as the light of dusk fell onto the medicinal plant in his hand, no trace of a seven-colored glow could be seen. Meng Hao didn’t need to say another word. The buzz of conversation lifted up from the apprentice alchemists in the valley.

“That’s not Seven Leaf clove!!”

“I can’t believe... Furnace Lord Zhou actually pulled out the wrong medicinal plant!”

“If he can’t even produce the right medicinal plant, who could possibly listen to him speak of the Dao of alchemy!”

When Zhou heard all of the things people were saying, his face paled. He felt so ashamed that he wanted to hide. However, fury rose within his heart as he stared angrily at Meng Hao. It seemed he still had some fight left.

“You ignorant youth. You’re spouting nonsense! I became a Furnace lord sixty years ago. You....”

“You became a Furnace Lord sixty years ago, and sixty years from now, you will still be a Furnace Lord. As for me, perhaps I’m ignorant, and perhaps I’m young, but I am a Furnace Lord, just like you. In sixty years, you will be forced to prostrate yourself in worship to me! The reason for that is... your Dao of alchemy is flawed!” Meng Hao stood. Without so much as looking at Zhou, he walked out of the valley.

Meng Hao’s words reverberated in the man’s ears like thunder. He raised his hand to point at Meng Hao, but then a tremor ran through his body, and he coughed up a mouthful of blood. “Flawed...? Flawed.....?” Meng Hao’s words echoed about in his mind, causing him to forget to even offer a retort.

As Meng Hao departed, the eyes of the tens of thousands of apprentice alchemists glowed brightly. They watched him leave, absolutely certain that in the days to come, his name would continue to send shockwaves throughout the East Pill Division. Furthermore, his future lectures would certainly be explosively popular.

Unfortunately, the ways of the world are impossible to fathom. Meng Hao’s days of comfort within the Violet Fate Sect were soon to come to an end.

A month after his debate with old man Zhou, Meng Hao sat in his Immortal’s Cave. He had just finished with a batch of medicinal pills, and was fantasizing about how he would take advantage of the resources of the Sect to concoct more pills and then accumulate a vast amount of Spirit Stones. It was at this time that a command jade slip arrived. Based on the recommendation of all the Furnace Lords of the East Pill Division, he was to be sent out of the Sect to gain experience.

After being promoted, all Furnace Lords were required to leave the Sect for a period of time to get experience. It was actually a rule, although a flexible one. Generally speaking, alchemists prefer to concoct pills in solitude, and don’t like to travel on the outside.

However, the Black Sieve Sect had offered vast compensation in exchange for the Violet Fate Sect to dispatch two Furnace Lords, one to give lectures on the Dao of alchemy, one to concoct special medicinal pills. Such an arrangement was common within the great Sects and Clans.

Even Li Tao, who wasn’t a Furnace Lord, had been invited a month before to visit the Li Clan. This was of course because they had purchased his Foundation Establishment Day.

As for Meng Hao, the reason he had been recommended to the Black Sieve Sect in the first place was because of the unorthodox nature of his promotion to Furnace Lord.

Of course, there were quite a few people who were just waiting for Meng Hao to make a fool of himself. The pills to be concocted outside for a great Sect were not ordinary, and every one would require the full skill of a Furnace Lord.

Considering that Meng Hao had bypassed some of the requirements for becoming a Furnace Lord, there really was no way for him to refuse the order.

“The Black Sieve Sect....” Meng Hao’s brow furrowed.

Chapter 245: Back To the Black Sieve Sect

Meng Hao didn’t really want to go, but the command jade slip had been issued, and he had no good reason to refuse. Furthermore... he owed a lot of medicinal pills to the Sect. All of his debts were in the official records, and although he didn’t have to pay up immediately, sooner or later, he would.

If he didn’t, then his access to medicinal plants would be restricted. Therefore, this trip outside the Sect would serve more than one purpose. Not only would he be able to gain experience, but he would could reduce some of his debt to the Sect.

“For Fang Mu, a trip to the Black Sieve Sect... is a great opportunity!” Determination glittered in Meng Hao’s eyes. His decision to go to the Black Sieve Sect having been made, the image of Elder Sister Xu appeared in his mind.

He also thought of Han Bei, as well as Zhou Jie, and all of the events which had occurred that year connected to the Black Sieve Sect.

“This time, I will be traveling in the Southern Domain as a Furnace Lord of the Violet Fate Sect.” Chuckling, Meng Hao flicked his sleeve to gather together the various items he would take with him. Then, jade slip in hand, he left his Immortal’s Cave.

Several days later.

“Grandmaster Zhou, Grandmaster Fang, this is a Black Sieve Fruit, which we grow here in the Black Sieve Sect. The flavor is as delectable as fine wine, and they are usually only given to Sect Elders.”

Somewhere outside of the Violet Fate Sect, a massive black airship shot through the air at top speed. It was crewed by several hundred Black Sieve Sect disciples, all of whom had extraordinary Cultivation bases within the Foundation Establishment stage.

There was one disciple of the Core Formation stage, the Alchemy Protector dispatched by the Black Sieve Sect to guard over the Violet Fate Sect disciples. He sat with them in the center of the airship, smiling, concealing the thoughtfulness which exist in his mind. In front of him was a white-haired old man in a black and purple robe; he seemed to emanate the Dao, and pure transcendence. Next to the old man was a handsome, fair-skinned young man.

The old man’s expression was that of indifference mixed with austerity. His Cultivation base was at the late Foundation Establishment stage. This was none other than Furnace Lord Zhou, whom Meng Hao had debated in the valley one month before.

The young man next to him emanated the faint scent of medicinal plants. He looked less like a Cultivator than a scholar. Naturally, this was none other than Meng Hao.

In addition to the Core Formation Cultivator, the Black Sieve Sect had also dispatched a young man who appeared to be a bit over thirty years of age. He wore a long bluish-black robe and seemed to abound in profundity and knowledge. He sat wordlessly off to the side, looking somewhat taciturn. When Meng Hao had caught sight of him for the first time several days ago, he had felt shock in his heart.

This was Zhou Jie!

Dao Child of the Black Sieve Sect!

This was the same person Meng Hao had battled years ago, a battle of the peak of Foundation Establishment! In that battle, Zhou Jie had lost. His open and upright actions had earned Meng Hao’s respect, and he had spared his life.

Meng Hao hadn’t seen him for five years, and now, something about him seemed different. Meng Hao couldn’t quite tell what it was, but it left him with a very bizarre feeling.

Such thoughts swirled in his heart, but were not revealed on his face. After hearing the words of the Core Formation Cultivator, Meng Hao was still considering how to respond, when old man Zhou reached out to take one of the Black Sieve Fruits.

“What an extraordinary fruit,” he said coolly. “It would be best used as a medicinal ingredient. I won’t waste it by eating it.” He glanced at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao didn’t say anything. With a smile, he accepted the Black Sieve Fruit and then placed it in his bag of holding. Inwardly, he sighed. How could he possibly have imagined that the Violet Fate Sect would send him out with old man Zhou? Zhou was responsible for giving lectures regarding the Dao of alchemy, whereas he would be in charge of pill concocting.

For the entire time they had been on the airship, Zhou hadn’t given Meng Hao anything but dirty looks. Of course, the people from Black Sieve Sect had picked up on this.

The Core Formation Cultivator had a wide smile on his face, but inwardly had some doubts. “This Furnace Lord Zhou Dekun is famous and deeply qualified. He’s one of the top Furnace Lords, and his frequent visits to the Black Sieve Sect show how much the Violet Fate Sect respects us. However, this Fang Mu.... After asking around, I found that he finagled his way to Furnace Lord half a year ago. He’s really nothing more than a master alchemist.” Of course, the man would never allow any expression onto his face which would indicate he was looking down on Fang Mu. However, he did treat old man Zhou with a higher level of respect.

He laughed loudly. “If you’d like, Grandmaster Zhou,” he said, his voice kind, “I can entreat the Sect Leader to provide both of you with even more Black Sieve Fruits.”

Off to the side, Zhou Jie sat taciturnly. He hadn’t said a single word the entire time. In this respect, he was somewhat like Meng Hao, who wasn’t in the mood for conversation. Furthermore, it seemed to please old man Zhou that he was left to handle all the formalities.

The four people sat there, only two engaging in conversation, their expressions cheerful. Old man Zhou seemed very proud of himself. “This time,” he told himself, “I’ll show this pup how formidable I truly am.”

Time passed. The airship traveled quickly, and even made use of several teleportation portals. A few days later, the Hundred Thousand Mountains of the Black Sieve Sect appeared off in the distance.

Meng Hao had spent most of the time in secluded meditation. No one had dared to interrupt him; the Black Sieve Sect disciples all gave him looks filled with utmost respect.

As for Zhou, his actions were quite the opposite of Meng Hao's. He engaged in bombastic discussions with the Core Formation Cultivator, flagrantly displaying his profound and awe-inspiring understanding of the Dao of alchemy.

Meng Hao didn't mind, nor did he care about the way old man Zhou seemed to loathe him. Despite his loathing, he didn't dare to ridicule Meng Hao like he had before. In fact, his debate with Meng Hao had left him fearful at heart.

This was Meng Hao's first time to appear in front of outsiders as an alchemist. Observing the respect with which others treated him because of his position, he was even more reassured that he had made the right decision in joining the Violet Fate Sect.

Of course, if the people here found out that he was actually Meng Hao, then their killing intent would billow to the heavens. Whenever he heard the stories people told about Meng Hao, he would sigh inwardly.

"As of now, I'm truly a part of the Southern Domain. Five years ago, I was just an outsider." He stood at the bow of the airship, lost in thought, staring off at the Black Sieve Sect, which was slowly growing closer and closer.

The Hundred Thousand Mountains stretched out seemingly without end. Black smoke from the gigantic incense burner rose up into the sky. The Black Sieve Sect seemed to be filled with a mysterious, incredible power.

The Black Sieve Sect disciple's faces emanated a pride that seemed to stem from their bones, birthed by their endless mountains and the smoke which rose to the heavens.

Zhou and the Core Formation Cultivator strolled up, chatting. When Zhou saw Meng Hao, he snorted. They were fellow Sect members, and whatever ill feelings they had toward each other shouldn't be overtly revealed to outsiders. Therefore, he only snorted, but didn't say anything else, joining Meng Hao to look out at the Black Sieve Sect.

Of course, this wasn't the first time Meng Hao had come to help the Black Sieve Sect. However, the circumstances this time were vastly different. As soon as the airship approached the Hundred Thousand Mountains, the sound of bells filled the air.

Six peals rang out, attracting the attention of hundreds of thousands of Black Sieve Sect disciples. Actually, none of them knew what was happening, but soon, inquiries were made and news began to spread.

The Black Sieve Sect had invited Furnace Lords from the Violet Fate Sect for a visit.

Soon, Meng Hao caught sight of dozens of beams of light flying out from the Black Sieve Sect, followed by hundreds of Conclave disciples.

Among the Conclave disciples was Han Bei. She had a strange expression on her face when she looked at Meng Hao. Meng Hao had made inquiries earlier about Elder Sister Xu, and had discovered that she had already become a Conclave disciple. However, she was not among the group that approached now.

Laughter rang out, followed by a clear, powerful voice from the group of Cultivators in the lead, who were all of the Core Formation stage. One was even of the Nascent Soul stage! “Greetings Grandmaster Zhou and Grandmaster Fang! Welcome to the Black Sieve Sect!”

The Nascent Soul Cultivator was no stranger to Meng Hao. He was none other than... Patriarch Violet Sieve!

He was also the person who has just spoken!

When enemies meet, eyes will usually turn red, and killing intent will explode out. Instead, Patriarch Violet Sieve’s face was filled with a smile. He expressed no arrogance because of his Nascent Soul Cultivation base, but rather utmost respect for the two alchemists.

Meng Hao’s expression was solemn. He quickly stepped forward, a respectful look on his face. Almost at the same time, old man Zhou also walked forward. Together, they clasped hands and greeted Patriarch Violet Sieve.

For the Black Sieve Sect to dispatch a Nascent Soul Cultivator to receive them was an extreme honor. As representatives of the Violet Fate Sect, Meng Hao and old man Zhou could certainly not commit a breach of etiquette.

“Grandmaster Zhou,” said Patriarch Violet Sieve, “you are one of the highest ranked Furnace Lords. Your rise to Violet Furnace Lord is surely just around the corner. Your esteemed presence in the Black Sieve Sect has added glitter to our humble abode.” He laughed heartily, smiling at Zhou, and then turned his attention to Meng Hao. “Grandmaster Fang, you are the youngest of the Furnace Lords of the Violet Fate Sect. Your fame is spreading throughout the Southern Domain, and I’ve long since heard your name. Seeing you today, I am now assured that you are a hero amongst commoners.”

Patriarch Violet Sieve’s words were spoken well. Although he inwardly cared more about old man Zhou, he did not show any disregard for Meng Hao. The Core Formation Cultivators who surrounded him clasped hands and saluted Meng Hao and old man Zhou. None of them showed even the slightest trace of arrogance, only utmost courtesy.

After some pleasantries were exchanged, one of the Core Formation Cultivators called over the Conclave disciples and introduced them to Meng Hao and old man Zhou. A slight smile appeared on Meng Hao’s face as he nodded to the various disciples one after another.

“My respects, Grandmaster Zhou, Grandmaster Fang!”

“Greetings, Grandmaster Zhou, Grandmaster Fang.” Normally, these Conclave disciples would have lofty and proud demeanors in front of outside Cultivators. But today, their expressions were filled with respect. The fame of Furnace Lords was enough to awe anyone.

The title of Grandmaster by which they were called was simply honorary, of course, as neither of them were true Grandmasters.

Old man Zhou smiled toward the Black Sieve Sect’s Conclave disciples. Considering his age, all that was required of him was a slight nod. However, when he noticed that Meng Hao was doing the same, an irritated feeling arose in his heart.

When Han Bei was introduced, Meng Hao looked at her with a smile. He hadn’t seen her for five years. If anything, she was more beautiful. Her figure was curvaceous her face alluring, and as she stood there, it seemed as if rainbows would lose their color if they neared her. She was uniquely gorgeous.

“Han Bei extends greetings to Grandmaster Zhou and Grandmaster Fang,” she said, her voice soft and velvety. Such a voice seemed capable of making the heart itch.

Meng Hao smiled and nodded, and was just about to glance over to the next person, when suddenly, a voice rang out in his mind. It had been a long time since the Demon Sealing Jade had spoken to him.

“Discarnate souls possess the body, desiring to return from the afterlife, a technique of quickening. Demons under the vault of the Heavens shall be incinerated; ashes shall fly. Seal them, and the sun of the seventh month shall be concealed; help them, and the blood of the Demon Sealer can fuse with its will!”

Chapter 246: World Pill Division

“Fellow Daoist Han,” said Meng Hao suddenly, looking Han Bei up and down, “you look somewhat familiar. Have we met before?” Such presumptuous words were actually part of Meng Hao’s plan.

As soon as the words came out of his mouth, all of the Black Sieve Sect Conclave disciples looked at the two of them. Even the Core Formation experts glanced over, their eyes sparkling with interest.

Patriarch Violet Sieve’s interest was also piqued.

Old man Zhou was astonished.

Han Bei’s eyes focused on Meng Hao. “Grandmaster Fang, please forgive me, but, I really don’t remember...” She looked thoughtful, and seemed to have something flickering deep within her eyes. Meng Hao was sure that she was hiding something.

Had he not experienced her craftiness personally in the Black Sieve Sect’s Blessed Land, then he would never have been able to detect it.

“My mistake,” he said with a laugh. “Perhaps it’s just that I wished I had met you before.” Hearing this, the Black Sieve Sect Conclave disciples all smiled.

The Core Formation experts also smiled and shook their heads. Considering their age, they had long since abandoned the pursuit of beautiful women.

Old man Zhou frowned. In his opinion, it didn’t matter if Fang Mu was young, such behavior was really embarrassing for the Sect.

Patriarch Violet Sieve laughed. “Grandmaster Fang Mu, there will be plenty of time later for you youngsters to get to know each other. For now, why don’t you follow me as we enter the Sect?”

His face red, Meng Hao clasped hands and bowed to Patriarch Violet Sieve, “I’ve embarrassed myself in front of Senior,” he said.

Han Bei covered her mouth with her hand and blinked.

Meng Hao and old man Zhou entered the Sect, surrounded by the various members of the Black Sieve Sect. It was at this exact moment that suddenly, Patriarch Violet Sieve’s expression flickered. He turned to look off into the distance. Everyone else stopped moving and followed suit.

Patriarch Violet Sieve chuckled. “It seems Grandmasters Li and Chen from the Golden Frost Sect’s World Pill Division arrived half a day early.” He waved his arm, and immediately bells tolled another six times within the Black Sieve Sect.

Meng Hao looked off into the distance, and before long, caught sight of a massive airship approaching at top speed. As it neared, a group of people flew off of the deck and down toward them. Two of their number wore long crimson robes, the sleeves of which were embroidered with pill furnaces. They seemed powerful and extraordinary, and both emanated a medicinal aroma.

“Hmph!” snorted Zhou Dekun, who stood next to Meng Hao. “I never imagined the Black Sieve Sect would also invite Grandmaster Eternal Mountain’s World Pill Division.”

Meng Hao looked at the two middle-aged master alchemists from Eternal Mountain’s World Pill Division. They smiled as they approached.

Meng Hao turned to Zhou Dekun and asked, “When other Sects extend invitations to alchemists, do disciples of the other Grandmasters of the Dao of alchemy always show up?”

“Sometimes, but not often,” replied Zhou Dekun. He had the mind to ignore Meng Hao. However, they were two fellow Sect members on the outside. Now that there were two people from Eternal Mountain’s World Pill Division present, it would be difficult to avoid friction regarding the Dao of alchemy.

Not wanting to make the following days in the Black Sieve Sect unstable, Zhou Dekun added, “It seems the Black Sieve Sect really wants to improve their Dao of alchemy, and as such, has also invited the World Pill Division.” Zhou Dekun frowned. By the time he finished speaking, Patriarch Violet Sieve and the others had already clustered politely around the two World Pill Division master alchemists to lead them into the Sect.

Almost as soon as they neared, one of the scarlet-robed alchemists from the World Pill Division, a tall, sturdy man with a powerful, extraordinary air, began to speak. “Fellow Daoist Zhou is also here? I seem to remember his mighty words from years ago, when he spoke of becoming a Violet Furnace Lord. Sixty years have passed already, Fellow Daoist Zhou, have you achieved your goal yet?” His gaze fell like lightning upon Zhou Dekun and Meng Hao.

“So, it’s Fellow Daoist Li,” said Zhou Dekun with a snort. The man’s words had touched directly on a painful matter in his heart, and he couldn’t help but snidely remark, “I haven’t seen you for years, and yet somehow your breath has gotten worse.”

The second of the two alchemists was somewhat skinny, and had a mustache shaped like the character 八. He looked at Meng Hao and gave a false smile. “This must be Grandmaster Fang Mu, the East Pill Division alchemist who people say finagled his way to becoming a Furnace Lord. Haha! Sir, I’ve been looking forward to meeting the famous Brother Fang for some time! Your name resounds like thunder in the ears of those who cultivate the Dao of alchemy. They say you’re a master alchemist who wears the clothing of a Furnace Lord!”

The instant these two alchemists from Eternal Mountain’s World Pill Division appeared, they spoke words filled with ill intentions. Their diametrical opposition to the East Pill Division alchemists was obvious.

The people from the Black Sieve Sect seemed to take all of this in stride. The Dao of alchemy of the East Pill Division was the most recognized throughout the Southern Domain, and their reputation was the most illustrious. The World Pill Division had been created by Grandmaster Eternal Mountain of the Golden Frost Sect. Although Eternal Mountain showed respect for Grandmaster Pill Demon, his disciples and followers grew more aggressive by the day. They refused to acknowledge the glory of the East Pill Division, and whenever the two sides met, regardless of the occasion, sparks would fly.

Meng Hao looked at the man named Chen, who had just spoken in such a sarcastic tone. “Who might you be?” he asked, his brow furrowed.

“Sir, I am Chen Jiaxi scarlet-robed master alchemist of the World Pill Division!” He smiled broadly as he looked at Meng Hao, his heart filled with envy because of Meng Hao’s status as a Furnace Lord. In his opinion, his own skill in the Dao of alchemy might not earn him the rank of Violet Furnace Lord were he in the East Pill Division, but he would definitely rank among the highest of the Furnace Lords.

Actually, many people in the World Pill Division entertained similar thoughts. After all... the alchemists of the World Pill Division were famous in the Southern Domain, but did not receive the same level of acknowledgement that the East Pill Division did. They were just a little bit lower, which of course fueled their disdain.

“You mean, you’ve heard of me?” asked Meng Hao, sounding astonished. No onlooker would find anything about his expression to be out of the ordinary. However, Zhou Dekun was well aware of the vicious language Meng Hao was capable of, and his heart began to thump. He knew that Meng Hao’s words were by no means a retreat.

Chen Jiaxi laughed at Meng Hao’s stunned expression, and his eyes filled with scorn. “How could any Cultivator of the Dao of alchemy not have heard of Alchemist Fang’s rise to Furnace Lord? In fact, I’d like to ask, how does it feel to wear the clothing of a Furnace Lord?”

It was as if a lightbulb went off over Meng Hao’s head. He laughed, and said, “Oh, I get it. You know me because I’m a Furnace Lord of the East Pill Division. My words and deeds are common knowledge among all Cultivators of the Dao of alchemy. Therefore, my name reverberates like thunder in your ears. However, you are a simple scarlet-robed disciple of the World Pill Division who I’ve never even heard of. I guess you must have come today because you wanted to get to know me!”

“You!!” cried Chen Jiaxi, his eyes exploding with a cold glow. In his opinion, such words were a direct insult. Not only did they proclaim that his reputation was so unremarkable that his opponent had never heard of him, they also implied that the reputation of someone who had finagled his way to Furnace Lord rang like thunder in his ears.

Not only were the flames of Chen Jiaxi’s anger stoked by Meng Hao’s words, the man next to him, Li Yiming, glared at Meng Hao icily. “How sharp-tongued!” he said.

Seeing that the altercation was about to intensify, Patriarch Violet Sieve cleared his throat and stepped between the two parties, followed by other Core Formation experts. With smiles on their faces, they led the way into the Hundred Thousand Mountains.

The arguing ceased immediately. Now that they were in the Black Sieve Sect, both the East Pill Division and the World Pill Division must give face. After all, they had been invited here, and the Black Sieve Sect wouldn't want a violent conflict to erupt the moment their guests entered the Sect.

Zhou Dekun surreptitiously glanced at Meng Hao. Although he had a low opinion of him, he was secretly pleased. Meng Hao's words just now had left him feeling quite satisfied.

They flew along, eventually reaching the Hundred Mountains, and a large temple which spread out beneath a green mountain peak. Here, the Black Sieve Sect had arranged a banquet to welcome the East Pill Division and World Pill Division.

Patriarch Violet Sieve made no more appearances. The mere fact that he had arrived to escort the master alchemists from the two Divisions was evidence of the respect offered by the Black Sieve Sect.

Most of the Sect's Conclave disciples attended the banquet. Meng Hao saw Zhou Jie and Han Bei. However, he didn't see Elder Sister Xu, which made him a bit worried, although he didn't show it on his face.

Zhou Dekun engaged in lively conversation with the crowds of people. Li and Chen, the scarlet-robed master alchemists of the World Pill Division seemed very comfortable in such a setting, and quickly became a center of attention.

Also in attendance were six Core Formation Cultivators, who all sat together but interacted courteously with everyone present. The Black Sieve Sect really seemed to have gone all out in their attempts to welcome the alchemists from the two Sects.

The banquet wound to an end as night fell. As everyone began to depart, Meng Hao was escorted to an area of the Hundred Mountains called the Black Welcoming Mountains. On the peak of one of the mountains was a luxurious residence which was surrounded by various restrictive spells that made it extremely safe.

Considering Meng Hao came as a representative of the Violet Fate Sect, the Black Sieve Sect could not possibly allow any harm to come to him. This of course was a matter of face and relationship between two great Sects.

Late in the night, Meng Hao sat cross-legged within the building, breathing deeply. After meditating for some time, his body began to emanate a white Qi as he dissolved the alcohol from the beverages

he had consumed during the banquet. Before consuming them, he had examined the alcohol using his skill with plants and vegetation, and knew that it was safe.

Some time passed, and then Meng Hao's eyes opened. They glowed with a brilliant light.

"Han Bei is incredibly intelligent. Perhaps I shouldn't have openly addressed her earlier. What is she hiding?" He thought about the matter for some time, but couldn't come up with any theories. "I didn't see Elder Sister Xu today, I wonder how she is...? And what about Zhou Jie? Something seems very off about him. He seems different than before...." After more thought, his eyes began to flicker. "What exactly did the Demon Sealing Jade mean...." He closed his eyes and continued to meditate.

Chapter 247: Kill Me!

Early the next morning, the dawn sun peeked out and sunlight fell upon Black Welcoming Peak. The mountain was verdant and green, and while there were no singing birds or fragrant flowers, Meng Hao's spirits were lifted as he gazed out of the second story balcony at the lush vegetation of the surrounding mountain range.

The undulating mountains, covered with emerald green vegetation, were illuminated by brilliant sunlight. The glow fell upon Meng Hao's black robe, causing its violet aura to grow stronger. Anyone who looked at it would have a hard time deciding if it were black or violet.

The mountain breeze lifted up his long hair, making it seem as if Meng Hao himself wished to float away with the wind. As he stared off into the distance, a violet light gleamed within his eye.

This was the manifestation of Violet Qi from the East, which had also turned his six Dao Pillars a violet hue.

After a long moment passed, Meng Hao took in a deep breath, then left the residence. As he began to walk down the mountain path which threaded through the Black Welcoming Mountains, he encountered Black Sieve Sect disciples who immediately saluted with clasped hands, their faces filled with politeness, yet maintaining some of the pride they felt as members of the Black Sieve Sect. Obviously, word had been spread throughout the Sect regarding how to treat the visitors.

Meng Hao smiled, returning the salute, and continuing on his way.

He soon emerged from the Black Welcoming Mountains and found himself in the middle of the Hundred Mountains. This was an area restricted to Conclave disciples.

Looking around at all the Black Sieve Sect disciples and buildings, and the enormous incense burner up above, Meng Hao sighed inwardly. Before joining the Violet Fate Sect, he could never have imagined that one day he would be able to stroll about the Black Sieve Sect in such a leisurely fashion.

“It’s a good thing the meat jelly shed its skin a long time ago. If that happened now, my identity would be revealed immediately.” He walked among the buildings, eventually coming to a halt at the edge of a public square. There, he could see dozens Black Sieve Sect disciples sitting cross-legged, Han Bei included.

An old man was in the midst of giving a sermon, explaining various scriptures regarding Black Sieve Sect magical techniques. Meng Hao had seen this man before; he was one of the Core Formation Cultivators who had received him yesterday along with Patriarch Violet Sieve.

The old man’s voice rang out coolly: “The magic of the Black Sieve Sect can be divided into the will of the Black Underworld, and the teaching of the Sieve of Heavens. The Underworld represents the spirits of the nine earths. The Sieve represents the will of the nine heavens. Therefore, in the Black Sieve Sect, Underworld magic is used to kill, and the will of the Heavens is divine. You must bear these sacred teachings in mind as you practice your cultivation. In the future, your path will lead to the Heavens.” It was at this point that he caught sight of Meng Hao.

He nodded slightly, obviously aware of who Meng Hao was. He didn’t say anything, but instead looked over his audience. Eventually his gaze came to rest on Han Bei. He gave her a meaningful look, and she sighed inwardly, then rose and walked over to Meng Hao.

The old man’s expression remained the same as he continued to discuss the Sect scriptures. He would never have allowed any other outsider to hear such discussions of Sect matters, but considering Meng Hao’s status, it wouldn’t be appropriate to drive him away. Therefore, he asked Han Bei to lead him away.

Han Bei actually did not want to accept this assignment, but she really had no way to refuse. Without any trace of her feelings showing, she arrived at Meng Hao’s side. A beautiful smile blossomed onto her face.

“Grandmaster Fang, you’re such an early riser! Why don’t you accompany me? I’ll show you some of the sights around the Sect.” She was as beautiful as a flower, her voice soft and entrancing.

Meng Hao was well aware that it wasn't very appropriate for him to stay and listen to the Sect sermons. He nodded pleasantly at Han Bei and then said, "To be accompanied by such a stunning flower would be my honor."

The two of them strolled off.

When they were some distance away from the square, Han Bei smiled and said, "Grandmaster Fang, you are truly refined and poetic. I don't deserve to be referred to as a flower." Her eyes sparkled, and her flowing, blue silk garment wrapped around her in a way that truly made her look like a flower.

Han Bei was inherently beautiful, her smile dazzling. She might be a flower, but to Meng Hao, she was a rose, covered with poisoned thorns. He would never forget the softness with which she had uttered the words "Xie, dear" in the Black Sieve Sect's Blessed Land.

In response to her words, Meng Hao laughed a bit, but didn't respond. Instead, he just looked her up and down.

"Grandmaster Fang, don't tell me you're still thinking about whatever place it was that you wished you had seen me before?" She laughed lightly, but deep within her eyes, Meng Hao could see that she harbored a measure of anxiety. She didn't think Meng Hao could tell, but considering how well he knew her, he noticed it with a single glance.

Meng Hao's mind instantly spun into action. He knew that Han Bei was not the type of woman to get nervous easily. He thought back to all the times he had seen her before.

"I've embarrassed myself in front of you, Fellow Daoist Han," he said. "It's just that, I really am interested in you." He looked at her, allowing a glow of interest to shine in his eyes.

When Han Bei saw this, her heart instantly seized. From the moment Meng Hao had entered the Sect, an uneasy feeling had overtaken her. Now, her anxiety was growing stronger. However, her skill in scheming ran deep, and she did her best to hide her feelings. She kept her brow smooth, and covered her face with a smile.

Continuing to stroll along, she responded, “Grandmaster Fang, I’m truly honored by your words. However, I truly don’t understand. What exactly about me interests you?” She looked at him, blinking.

“The surname Han is a special one,” said Meng Hao slowly, looking at the rising sun off in the distance.

Hearing this, Han Bei’s expression didn’t change. She smiled and replied, “How is it special?”

“It’s special because it’s one of the Nine Great Families.” His expression was the same as usual, but his words caused Han Bei to frown and sigh. Meng Hao knew that these actions were simply a means to cover up her true reaction.

His heart trembled, and more than ever he got the feeling that something fishy was going on.

“You’re right,” said Han Bei, looking at him. “My ancestors were among the Nine Great Families.”

They came to a stop outside a stretch of emerald-green mountain forest. The wind blew softly, causing the leaves to rustle. Off in the distance, the sound of running water could be heard. The sounds of nature merged together into something similar to music.

Surrounded by the beauty, Meng Hao said nothing. He gazed at Han Bei, and she returned his look.

After a long moment, he laughed, turning his head to look at the green forest. He strolled over to where a mountain stream ambled on toward the east. He looked down into the stream, where fish flitted above the smooth stones of the stream bed. A thoughtful expression appeared in his eyes.

“Something is unusual about Han Bei,” he thought. “How come she’s so nervous around me? It can’t have anything to do with Fang Mu, and she doesn’t know that I’m Meng Hao. In that case... it must have to do with the East Pill Division!”

Han Bei stood next to him, her expression the same as ever. Enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, whereupon she suddenly slapped her bag of holding. A glowing jade slip appeared. After glancing at it for a moment, she gave Meng Hao a slight curtsy.

“This place is secluded and quiet, Grandmaster Fang. If you wish, you can stay here a while. Unfortunately, there are some matters I have to attend to, and I don’t wish to disturb your ruminations. This jade slip contains a map of the Black Sieve Sect, please feel free to use it to go enjoy some of the scenery. I’ll take my leave now.” She handed him the jade slip, then turned lithely and made to leave.

As she did, Meng Hao casually said, “One of your friends in the East Pill Division wished me to pass on greetings to you. As for that matter...” His words seemed to be filled with meaning, and yet were ambiguous and equivocal. Really, any meaning could be derived from them.

However, as soon as Han Bei heard them, her heart began to pound. Her back was turned to Meng Hao, so she allowed her eyes to narrow. However, her posture betrayed no clue regarding her thoughts. She slowly turned her head, and when she did, her face was covered with a look of surprise.

“Grandmaster Fang, I’m not really sure what you mean,” she said, blinking. Her expression filled with confusion, as if she were trying very hard to figure out which friend Meng Hao was referring to.

If she had not manifested such an expression, Meng Hao would have been left guessing. But such a reaction solidified his speculations.

There was definitely something going on with Han Bei.

Based on his understanding of her, he knew that were she not harboring some deep anxiety, she would take advantage of such a topic of conversation to gather more information from him. Instead, she instantly displayed an expression of surprise.

He laughed. “I see. I clearly mistook you for someone else.” He said nothing further. Currently, he wasn’t sure exactly what secret Han Bei was keeping. That would take further deliberation. However, he also knew that speaking too much could lead to slip-ups. Then, Han Bei might come to the conclusion that she was being played, and that could lead to unnecessary complications.

Hearing Meng Hao’s words, Han Bei gave him a vague smile. Saying no more, she gave another curtsey, then turned and left. It wasn’t until she was very far away, that her face grew pale and went tight with anxiety.

“East Pill Division...” she murmured as she sped off into the distance.

Meng Hao watched her disappear, and his eyes glowed with thoughtfulness.

Han Bei had been acting strangely from the moment he had entered the Black Sieve Sect. She didn't want anyone to notice her nervousness, but Meng Hao could tell that he had just managed to charge directly into whatever secret she was harboring deep in her heart.

After much thought, though, he wasn't able to deduce what relationship Han Bei could possibly have with the East Pill Division. He looked down at the jade slip she had given him. He scanned it with Spiritual Sense, and a map of the various mountains of the Black Sieve Sect appeared in his mind.

Some areas were marked with magical symbols indicating that they were prohibited. After a while, Meng Hao lifted his head and walked off.

He strolled alone through the Black Sieve Sect until about midday. Off in the distance, he could see Black Welcoming Peak, and was just about to return when suddenly his eyes narrowed. He turned and looked off into the distance.

In that exact instant, a shrill scream shattered the peace and quiet within the Black Sieve Sect. At the foot of a distant mountain, roaring could be heard. The ground trembled and a crazed Cultivator flew forward, his hair whipping around his head.

"Kill me! Kill me!" he bellowed, his voice shaking the surrounding land. As he flew forward, multiple beams of light flew up into the air and shot toward him.

Meng Hao stared with narrowed eyes, because he recognized this Cultivator. It was none other than Black Sieve Sect Dao Child Zhou Jie!

Chapter 248: The Origin of Time!

The incoming figures flew with incredible speed, but Zhou Jie was even faster. His howls echoed up as he transformed into a beam of light that sped through the air.

He wasn't far from Meng Hao, and soon grew even nearer. Meng Hao could clearly see Zhou Jie's insanity and confusion. His eyes were bloodshot and filled with pain.

It seemed as if he truly wished to die!

“Kill me!!” he screamed. It was at this point that the other Black Sieve Sect people arrived. There were five of them, all Core Formation Cultivators. Their hands flickered in incantation gestures, and suddenly the ground around Zhou Jie sank down. A booming sound rippled out, and Zhou Jie seemed to be suddenly suppressed. His face warped, and the frenzied agony in his eyes reached a pinnacle of intensity.

A massive boom exploded out from Zhou Jie’s body, sending the five Core Formation Cultivators tumbling backward several paces, their faces pale and blood spewing from their mouths.

Seeing all this, Meng Hao’s mind was reeling, and he had trouble believing it all was real. Zhou Jie was of the great circle of Foundation Establishment, halfway to Core Formation. However, his attack just now caused five early Core Formation stage Cultivators to spit up blood. Meng Hao gasped at the sight of it.

Suddenly, Zhou Jie’s Cultivation base started to climb. Explosive power emanated out, and his howls reached up to the heavens.

The voice of the Demon Sealing jade suddenly rose up in Meng Hao’s mind, although it was a bit different from earlier when he had seen Han Bei for the first time. “Discarnate souls possess the body, returned from the afterlife, a quickening. Intentional or not, the soul has already been harmed.”

Suddenly, a person appeared next to the crazed Zhou Jie. He lifted his hand and pressed down onto Zhou Jie’s shoulder. Zhou Jie’s body trembled, and his power began to dissipate. The insanity seeped out of his eyes, and the confusion disappeared. The only thing that remained was a strange pain.

His body trembled. The pain in his eyes seemed to contain immeasurable torment. This was a Dao Child who had won Meng Hao’s respect all those years ago. He seemed clearheaded now, but he still uttered two words. “Kill me...”

Most people are not capable of truly seeking death; the desire to live is ever-present. The only people who will truly seek death are... those whose lives are a living hell!

After speaking, Zhou Jie lost consciousness. The figure who had appeared next to him was none other than Patriarch Violet Sieve. His expression was dignified as he grabbed unconscious Zhou Jie and made to leave. Suddenly, he turned his head to look at Meng Hao.

“Grandmaster Fang Mu, we’ve incurred your ridicule. This kid Zhou Jie became addled while practicing cultivation, and went a bit crazy.” He sighed and shook his head. With that, he carried Zhou Jie away, followed by the five Core Formation Cultivators.

Meng Hao stood there silently. Everything that had just happened had left him shaken. The Dao Child from five years ago and the Zhou Jie from right now were completely different. What had happened to cause such an unfortunate change?

He began to think subconsciously about his battle with Zhou Jie that rainy night.

Late morning had arrived. Meng Hao turned and headed back to the Black Welcoming Peak, and his residence there.

He sat down cross-legged, reviewing everything that had just happened with Zhou Jie, as well as the words of the Demon Sealing jade. The bizarre secrets of the Black Sieve Sect seemed to grow even more numerous. A long time passed, and Meng Hao finally shook his head and put the matter aside. He slapped his bag of holding to produce a pill furnace.

He was outside of his Sect, but he still would maintain his custom of concocting pills every day. He tapped the pill furnace, and a roaring could be heard. He produced some Earthly fire crystals and prepared to concoct a batch of poison pills.

After becoming a Furnace Lord, poison pills were what he concocted the most often. Based on the various interactions of plants and vegetation, powders or poison pills could be created.

There were countless varieties, each with their own unique characteristics.

Based on the requirements, Meng Hao would produce a medicinal plant and catalyze it. At the moment, he held a Treasure Leaf flower in hand, which wasn’t poisonous. Meng Hao catalyzed it until it was almost withered.

By catalyzing it to this point, and then grafting it onto another medicinal plant, he could create traces of undetectable poison.

A purple glow rose up from Meng Hao's palm, the power of catalysis. The Treasure Leaf flower began to sway and grow. It was at this point, that a tremor suddenly ran through Meng Hao; his eyes went wide and began to shine. He began to breathe heavily, and in his mind, thoughts flashed about like lightning. He'd just had an idea.

It was an idea related to Zhou Jie, Han Bei and the East Pill Division!

As soon as the idea flashed into his head, great waves seemed to seethe within his mind. His concentration was broken, and his spiritual power grew unstable. The precious Treasure Leaf flower in his hand suddenly began to collapse.

At the moment, Meng Hao didn't care about how valuable the Treasure Leaf flower was. His breathing was agitated and his eyes glittered. He stood up, forgetting about his pill concocting and focusing fully on the idea, which grew and expanded in his mind.

Meng Hao began to mutter to himself. With each statement, his eyes began to shine more and more brightly. "East Pill Division.... Violet Will Incantation.... The power of catalysis... it causes medicinal plants to grow... speeds up pill concocting.... the Han Clan, one of the Nine Great Families.... Han Bei.... Refining Time.... Forging a treasure of Time... something which can transform Time...." By this point, his eyes seemed to be shining as brightly as the sun. He suddenly lifted his head up and gasped.

"The East Pill Division's Violet Will Incantation is clearly the Time-refining skill of the Han Clan!!" Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding to retrieve the Time-refining jade page that he had acquired with Han Bei in the ancient Blessed Land.

This wasn't the first time he had studied the jade page. It recorded information about how to refine Time and forge the Time treasure. Meng Hao strongly desired to possess such a treasure.

However, this was only one jade page of three. The first remained in the cauldron in the Blessed Land, and another had been swallowed by the meat jelly. Meng Hao had the third page, which did contain information on how to refine the Time treasure. However, to do so would require several hundred years to build up sufficient Time power. After learning this, Meng Hao had given up.

It would simply take too long; it was impossible for him to forge the treasure that way.

Time passed, and soon it was nighttime. Moonlight covered the land. Meng Hao took a deep breath and began to compose himself. His eyes glowed with an unprecedented light.

“I should have thought of this earlier.... Refining Time, Violet Will catalysis.... They are both essentially the same type of divine ability! Basically, they are both magical techniques that were developed from the same magical source! This third page describes a time-sealing technique. The power of one year of Time can be locked in for every ten years. Six hundred years will lock in sixty years of Time. In that case, the power of ten sixty-year cycles could be used to create a lesser version of the Time treasure.” Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding to produce a Spring and Autumn tree.

“Perhaps the page swallowed by the meat jelly, the second page, or even the first page which is still in the Cauldron in the Blessed Land, contains a record of the East Pill Division’s Violet Will catalysis technique! In order to forge the Time treasure, Violet Will catalysis is absolutely necessary!” He looked down at the jade page and the Spring and Autumn tree, his eyes shining.

“There’s only one way to find out for sure!” Without hesitation, Meng Hao caused a violet glow to appear in his hand. A look of concentration filled his face as he employed the full power of the Violet Will Incantation and poured it into the Spring and Autumn tree.

Time passed. Soon two hours had gone by. Meng Hao frowned. The Spring and Autumn tree was like a black hole which relentlessly sucked in all the catalyzing power of the Violet Will Incantation. It didn’t seem to have any effect whatsoever on the Spring and Autumn tree.

Meng Hao muttered to himself and looked around. Finally, he let out a cold harrumph and then produced his Furnace Lord medallion. He pressed it, and a violet shield emerged, surrounding Meng Hao’s residence.

This was a function of the Furnace Lord medallion; it would create a screening shield that could block even Spiritual Sense. In this way, the Furnace Lords couldn’t be spied upon while concocting pills.

It had taken quite a bit of resources for the East Pill Division to develop such an art. To date, no one had ever been able to break it. Furnace Lords didn’t always use it when concocting pills. However, it would last for several hours, during which time it was impenetrable.

If too much time passed, though, it was possible for Spiritual Sense to break through.

With the shield in place, Meng Hao ceased to restrict his Cultivation base. Immediately the full power of his six Perfect Dao Pillars was unleashed.

The shield around him glowed with a gentle warmth, covering everything with its protection. At the same time, the meat jelly's transformative powers dissipated. Meng Hao exploded with the full power of his Cultivation base.

He knew that he couldn't keep this up for a very long time; he didn't want to cause any complications with his current situation. Therefore, he went all out with his power, employing the peak of the power of Violet Will catalysis.

In the blink of an eye, the Spring and Autumn tree slowly began to grow green. Suddenly, a bud appeared!

Seeing the bud caused Meng Hao's eyes to fill with excitement. The power of his Cultivation base instantly dissipated. He lifted his left hand and performed an incantation. Phantom images appeared, ten seals, which he immediately slapped down onto the Spring and Autumn tree.

These ten sealing incantations were none other than the Time sealing magic.

Beneath the power of the sealing, the Spring and Autumn tree trembled, then slowly returned to its normal state. However, Meng Hao could clearly tell that something was different about the tree than from before. It seemed thicker and heavier, and deep inside was just a touch of a sensation that seemed to be the aura of Time.

"It worked!" His eyes glittered brightly as he put the tree away and dissipated the violet shield emanated by the Furnace Lord medallion.

"Unfortunately, its not convenient to employ the full power of my Cultivation base. Once I leave the Black Sieve Sect, I can do some more tests and see how many years of Time I can add to the Spring and Autumn tree." He took a deep breath to calm his racing heart. He had thought a lot about the Time treasure throughout the years. But when it came to the hundreds of years of refinement that were required, he could only sigh. Now, though, he had a method that seemed to be able to allow him to proceed with creating the Time treasure. He was confident that it wouldn't take long for him to do so, and end up with a treasure that contained a full sixty-year cycle of Time.

He wasn't sure exactly what powers such a treasure would have, but he keenly anticipated finding out. He was sure that a treasure forged by either the Han Clan's divine ability or the East Pill Division's Violet Will incantation, would not disappoint!

Chapter 249: Reconciled

"Well, it seems this trip to the Black Sieve Sect was by no means for naught!" Having put away the Spring and Autumn tree, Meng Hao smiled. However, deep in his eyes flickered a bit of doubt.

"There seems to be a deep connection between Han Bei and the East Pill Division. I wonder what secret lies there...." He thought about it for a bit, but then put the matter aside. Early morning light once again filled the sky outside.

"As for Zhou Jie, why did he go crazy? When I reencountered him for the first time earlier, something didn't seem right... Discarnate souls possessing the body, returned from the afterlife...." Meng Hao sat there lost in thought for a while, before raising his head to look outside.

Moments later, he heard a respectful voice from outside. "Grandmaster Fang, the World Pill Division's Grandmaster Chen will deliver an alchemy lecture today. Would you like to attend?"

Meng Hao thought about it for a moment. He was curious as to how these alchemists from the World Pill Division understood the Dao of alchemy. He rose to his feet and joined the disciple from the Black Sieve Sect. Together, they descended Black Welcoming Peak.

The location of the alchemy lecture was the fifty-seventh mountain of the Black Sieve Sect. This mountain had no peak; its top had been shorn off to create a massive public square which was filled with rings of seats that could fit tens of thousands of spectators.

By the time Meng Hao arrived, there were already more than twenty thousand Black Sieve Sect Cultivators present. They represented a variety of stages, including Qi Condensation, Foundation Establishment and Core Formation, all seated around a raised dais.

Chen Jiayi and Li Yiming from the World Pill Division sat cross-legged atop the dais, meditating.

Surprisingly, off in the distance were three tables, seated behind one of which was Patriarch Violet Sieve. Next to him was a beautiful middle-aged woman. Meng Hao recognized her as the same woman who had taken Elder Sister Xu from the Reliance Sect all those years ago.

At the third table was a ruddy-faced old man who sat at his table, his eyes flashing like lightning. It was impossible to fathom the level of his Cultivation base, but it seemed to Meng Hao that he was slightly more powerful than Patriarch Violet Sieve.

To have three Nascent Soul Cultivators present would make this alchemy lecture especially superb.

Seated cross-legged some distance in front of the three tables was Zhou Dekun, who was currently staring grimly at Chen Jiayi and Li Yiming.

Meng Hao strode over and sat down next to him, his expression the same as ever.

Seemingly ignoring his previous distaste for Meng Hao, Zhou Dekun said, “These two are far too arrogant. They came to visit me yesterday on the pretense of paying their respects. In actuality, their words were filled with haughtiness. Apparently they believe that the World Pill Division has already exceeded the East Pill Division!” He really seemed to hate the two alchemists from the World Pill Division. Furthermore, Meng Hao was a fellow Sect member. There had been friction between them, but now they were in the outside world and had to stick together.

Meng Hao had barely seated himself before Zhou Dekun continued to rant: “The Black Sieve Sect invited alchemists from two other Sects to help train their own alchemists. Instead of having us lecture first, they ask the World Pill Division to speak! It’s outrageous!

“The two of us need to be careful. The World Pill Division clearly has ill intentions. They obviously want to humiliate us. If that happens, then we’ll lose a lot of face when we go back to the Sect.” Zhou Dekun clenched his jaw and stared fixedly at Chen and Li. “I probably have it a bit better off than you,” he continued. “You need to be careful in your pill concocting. Ai... Alright, listen. If you have any problems with your pill concocting in the coming days, come find me immediately. I can answer any questions you have. I’ll do my best to help you get up to speed as quickly as possible.”

Meng Hao smiled. There had been friction between the two of them, but the recent days spent together caused him to realize there was no reason to be so irked by the man. He shook his head with a smile. “I don’t think I’ll make any mistakes, don’t worry.”

“You... Ai... Fang Mu, we’ve had our differences. Big or small, it doesn’t really matter. Right now, the World Pill Division is trying to provoke us. We are here to represent the East Pill Division!” He looked over at Meng Hao. With a sigh, he slapped his bag of holding to produce a jade slip which he handed over. “I prepared this for you last night. It’s a collection of information based on my hundred years of cultivation of the Dao of alchemy. All of my knowledge and experience is

collected together here. Take a close look, and we can corroborate and test the information together. I'm sure it will help you improve your skill in the Dao of alchemy."

Meng Hao stared in shock for a moment. He accepted the jade slip and then scanned it with Spiritual Sense. He studied it silently for a long moment. Finally, he looked back up at Zhou Dekun. The information inside was genuine. It contained all the experiences of one of the most senior Furnace Lords of the Violet Fate Sect. The information therein was incredibly valuable.

After examining the jade slip, Meng Hao knew that he had been a bit rash before. Any Furnace Lord deserved respect, and could be learned from. Zhou Dekun's way of thinking was a bit rigid, but his detailed understanding of the Dao of alchemy had reached the pinnacle.

Such attention to detail would affect the success rate of pill concoction. Meng Hao might be somewhat more talented than Zhou Dekun in the Dao of alchemy, and have a more profound understanding. However, his success rate in pill concoction was only around three or four batches out of ten.

From the jade slip, though, Meng Hao could see that Zhou Dekun's success rate was around eight batches out of ten.

"Many thanks, Grandmaster Zhou!" said Meng Hao, his expression serious as he clasped hands and bowed deeply to Zhou Dekun. This jade slip would be of no small help to him.

"There's no need for that," said Zhou Dekun. His expression, however, revealed how pleased he was. In his mind, he thought, "This kid might have finagled his way to being a Furnace Lord, but he doesn't seem that bad. When I get back to the Sect, I'll have to discuss things with the other Furnace Lords and see if I can improve his reputation." He cleared his throat, and then sighed and finally brought up something that had puzzled him endlessly, "For the past few days, I've been thinking about what you said in the valley that day. Actually, some of it does make sense.... Also, I wanted to ask you something. I really was sure that the plant I was holding was a Seven Leaf clove. I really didn't think I could have made a mistake. But, I know that the leaves should glow with seven colors at dusk. I just...."

Meng Hao gave an embarrassed grin. With a slight cough, he changed the subject.

If Meng Hao didn't seem willing to talk about it, then Zhou Dekun wouldn't press the subject. However, given his skill in the Dao of alchemy, he had some theories already. It seemed the relationship between the two of them was on the repair, and he didn't intend to cause any further problems. They began to discuss the Dao of alchemy, and both were benefiting. In fact, when the

alchemy lecture started, they didn't pay hardly any attention to it. As the voices of Chen and Li rang out from the dais, they would frequently be filled with displeasure as the two men glared down at Meng Hao and Zhou Dekun.

Inwardly, Chen and Li laughed coldly at the disregard shown by the East Pill Division. However, they weren't in a position to say anything openly. Meng Hao and Zhou Dekun continued their discussion, and appeared to be benefiting more and more as the time went on.

Zhou Dekun's eyes gradually began to fill with admiration. Being able to calmly state their differences in opinion regarding the Dao of alchemy caused him to gradually reach new enlightenment.

As for Meng Hao, he realized that his own grasp of some of the finer details was simply insufficient. After getting advice from Zhou Dekun on the matter, he could tell that he was making improvements.

One old man, one youth, discussing matters passionately. Eventually, Zhou Dekun slapped his hand down onto the table and gasped in admiration. The action seemed a bit affected, causing Meng Hao to laugh. He decided that it was time for him to make a scene as well, so he also slammed his palm down onto the table and let out a gasp of admiration.

This instantly caused Chen and Li to exchange a cold look. Then, cold smiles broke out on their faces. Actually, they had long since decided to use this visit to the Black Sieve Sect as an opportunity to intimidate and shame the East Pill Division.

They didn't plan to do so by means of the alchemy lectures, but rather the pill concocting. In this way, word would spread throughout the Southern Domain, and the two of them would immediately rise to prominence and gain sterling reputations.

Therefore, they held their tongues. Their alchemy lecture went on for two days, and not a single person left. However, throughout the course of the lecture, the spectators gradually divided into two groups. More and more people began to cluster around Meng Hao and Zhou Dekun to listen in on their discussion. They listened in entranced, understanding the majority, but not all, of the things which were being said.

This had been Zhou Dekun's intention all along, so he was quite pleased.

Chen Jiayi's eyes grew darker. Finally, he finished his lecture, then turned to glare coldly at Zhou Dekun and Meng Hao. His voice grim, he said, "You two have been talking for two days. Well, now it's time for the East Pill Division's lecture. I'm very interested in hearing your understanding of the Dao of alchemy!"

Next to him, Li Yiming's face was filled with displeasure. With a cold laugh, he said, "That's right. The East Pill Division occupies the pinnacle of the Dao of alchemy in the Southern Domain. I'm very curious about your honored Sect's understanding of the Dao of alchemy. What exactly is so amazing about it?"

Meng Hao frowned slightly. At first, he and Zhou Dekun had really been exchanging important knowledge about the Dao of alchemy. The majority of the time, though, they had mostly been putting on a show. As such, he had been able to listen to some of the World Pill Division's understanding of the Dao of alchemy. They had some truly unique perspectives, many of which seemed reasonable.

Zhou Dekun gave a cold snort as he stood and headed up to the dais. As for him, he had also noticed some of the special areas from the World Pill Division's lecture. How could he not have picked up on some of the uniqueness of their understanding? As the assigned lecturer during this trip to the Black Sieve Sect, he would not shrink back. He felt as if his knowledge had been honed by his chat with Meng Hao. Now he would do anything to avoid making any slip-ups.

Chen and Li left the dais, and Zhou Dekun stood there, his heart filled with determination. His current plan was to use his command of all the various explicit details to finagle his way through the first part of the lecture.

"In the great path of the Dao of alchemy, special attention must be focused on the variations of plants and vegetation, which must be committed to the heart. These things form Ultimate Truth! As such, the Dao of alchemy is eternal! Fellow Daoists, today, I, Zhou Dekun, shall elaborate upon the third realm of the plant and vegetation variations." Zhou Dekun clearly wanted to drag things out as much as possible to give himself time to think.

However before he could continue, a cold laugh rang out from Chen Jiayi.

"This is the first time I've heard of such a thing," he said. "Grandmaster Zhou, you claim that the Dao of alchemy means to commit plants and vegetation to heart, which leads to Ultimate Truth. Therefore, I would like to ask you, what is this Ultimate Truth to which you refer?" He slapped his palm down onto the table. The sound echoed out, bolstered by his Cultivation base, to form an overbearing aura. He stared at Zhou Dekun.

Strange looks appeared on the faces of the surrounding Cultivators. Everything was quiet. Patriarch Violet Sieve and the other Nascent Soul Patriarchs did nothing to interfere. The conflicting views of the East Pill Division and the World Pill division had come to a head.

Chapter 250: Giving Birth to the Transformations of the Sun and Moon

Meng Hao frowned. He and Zhou Dekun might not like the World Pill Division very much, but just now, they had merely engaged in a discussion during their lecture. They hadn't done anything particularly aggressive.

Chen Jiayi's words just now were far too direct, almost like the stab of a sword.

The World Pill Division had chosen to openly assault Zhou Dekun, to shame not just him, but the entire East Pill Division. They clearly wanted to improve their prestige by destroying Zhou Dekun and Meng Hao's.

If Meng Hao and Zhou Dekun came out on the bottom today, it was easy to imagine how quickly the news would spread throughout the Southern Domain. The East Pill Division would suffer an incredible loss of face, and Meng Hao and Zhou Dekun would become laughingstocks.

For an alchemist, reputation was of utmost importance.

This was obviously exactly what Zhou Dekun was thinking about. His face was grave as he looked down from the dais at the proud Chen Jiayi.

Chen Jiayi glared right back at him. He had been waiting for this day for a long time. Based on his skill in the Dao of alchemy, he could be considered a Chosen in the World Pill Division. Furthermore, in terms of debating, there were few within the Sect who could outmatch him.

Days before, when he'd learned that the Black Sieve Sect had extended invitations to both the East Pill Division and the World Pill Division, he had immediately realized that it was an excellent opportunity.

At that time, he had decided to go to any length to take advantage of this opportunity to elevate himself.... As an alchemist, there was no better method to rise to prominence than humiliating a Furnace Lord of the East Pill Division.

The mere thought of it made him incredibly excited. As he stared at Zhou Dekun, what he saw was not a Cultivator, but a stepping stone to fame.

“After I crush this old fogey and that punk kid from the East Pill Division,” he thought, “the name of Chen Jiayi will rise to fame both within the Sect and without!”

Standing next to Chen Jiayi was Li Yiming, who harbored exactly the same idea.

Zhou Dekun looked away from them and began to continue his lecture. “There are three realms of plants and vegetation. The first contains one hundred thousand medicinal plants. The second...” Before he could continue, Chen Jiayi laughed uproariously. It echoed out gratingly.

He slammed his palm down onto the table and stood up. “Grandmaster Zhou Dekun, Furnace Lord of the East Pill Division, don’t tell me you deny other Fellow Daoists the right to question or doubt the content of your lecture? Are you scared, or simply spouting nonsense? Or... could it be that you’re trying to hoodwink the Fellow Daoists from the Black Sieve Sect?” His words were filled with sarcasm, and the sneer on his face was impossible to ignore. Complacency filled his heart; in his mind, he had already won!

Zhou Dekun angrily spun to face Chen Jiayi. At this point, there was no way he could pretend to not have heard the words which were blatantly directed, not at him, but at the East Pill Division. Even if the attack was complete nonsense, he had no choice but do address it openly.

Seeing Zhou Dekun’s reaction filled Chen Jiayi with confidence. Before coming to the Black Sieve Sect, his inquiries had revealed that Zhou Dekun would be coming. The man was quite famous, but Chen Jiayi’s thorough investigation left him confident that he could defeat him in terms of understanding of the Dao of alchemy.

The Black Sieve Sect disciples in the square observed silently, but seemed to be getting excited. Many present were Conclave disciples, including Han Bei, who watched on with a smile as the conflict between the East Pill Division and the World Pill division intensified.

The three Nascent Soul Patriarchs sat there with eyes closed, apparently meditating. They did not interfere. Apparently they were more than happy at the scene which was unfolding.

“Grandmaster Zhou, glowering at me is useless,” said Chen Jiayi coolly. “You still haven’t explained exactly what you mean by Ultimate Truth.” His voice seemed completely normal. However, his eyes were filled with ridicule, which made Zhou Dekun even more furious.

“Truth is represented by rules,” he replied, one word at a time. “Regardless of any other countless permutations, rules will always exist in your heart. Utilizing the unchangeableness of rules makes it possible to catalyze the ten thousand medicinal plants. Furthermore, verifying the Truth of the Dao of alchemy makes it possible to beget pill formulas. With enlightenment, one can sense the vast length of that which we call the path of alchemy. Continued exploration is the true goal!”

Chen Jiayi stared in shock at his words. He had never imagined that Zhou Dekun would be able to respond in such a way. Actually, before meeting Meng Hao, Zhou Dekun wouldn’t have been able to. However, their discussion just now had contained both verification of his previous understandings, and also new enlightenment. Chen Jiayi and Li Yiming both frowned. The surrounding Cultivators also seemed to have gained new enlightenment.

“Grandmaster Zhou, I really can’t agree with your explanation,” said Chen Jiayi, his eyes gleaming. As of this moment, he no longer looked down on Zhou Dekun, but actually took him seriously. “If the self is unchangeable,” he said slowly, “then where do transformations come from?! The self is like a river. If the river does not flow, it will die. Moving water ensures the never-ending flow of the river; similarly, a changeable self ensures continued existence!” His words caused Zhou Dekun’s face to flicker. He was about to respond when Chen Jiayi flicked his sleeve and interrupted: “Can a tree remain motionless amidst the wind? The only tree that doesn’t... is the tree that exists in a painting! The movement of the tree is evidence of the blowing wind, and of its own very existence!”

“Grandmaster Zhou, you claim that the self is unchangeable. How laughable! Perhaps this is why you are still not a Violet Furnace Lord. Your understanding of the Dao of alchemy makes it clear that you are like a flower in love with its own fragrance! You’re simply fishing for fame and compliments! The only place you will become a Violet Furnace Lord is in a fairytale!”

The increasingly vicious words caused Zhou Dekun to tremble. He pointed at the man and said, “You... You....”

“I what? Don’t tell me you’re at a loss for words? A motionless river is nothing but dead water. An unmoving tree can exist only in a painting. Grandmaster Zhou, you obviously exist in a world of dead water, belittling the floating clouds. Are you, or are you not... fishing for fame and compliments!? You live in a painting, ignoring Heaven and Earth, blithe to the brilliance of the world outside. I say, you are a flower in love with its own fragrance. Am I wrong?” Chen Jiayi’s voice continued to grow louder. By the time he reached the end of his tirade, Zhou Dekun’s face was pale, and his eyes seemed on the verge of bursting forth with flame. It was obvious to him that

his opponent was twisting his words, and yet, the words somehow also seemed reasonable. His mind filled with words of response, but he just couldn't get them out of his mouth.

"Nonsense!" he cried furiously. Hearing this, Meng Hao sighed inwardly.

"Nonsense?" said Chen Jiayi. "Very well. Let me explain to you what Truth really is! Consider the Yin (阴) and the Yang (阳), the moon (月) and the sun (日). In the great world of alchemy, the boundless sun is the Yang, which encompasses everything that melts and burns. This is the pill furnace! The bright moon is the changeable Yin, which is the pill formula! This is Truth! Grandmaster Zhou, if you really stand at the pinnacle of the Dao of alchemy, do you really dare to claim that the pill furnace, which is represented by the boundless sun, can exist in your heart? Are you bold enough to claim that the moon, which represents endless pill formulas, can be formulated in your heart? To say that you are fishing for fame and compliments, a flower in love with its own fragrance, is really going easy on you!"

There was no response but silence. Chen Jiayi's words echoed back and forth in the square. All of the Black Sieve Sect disciples looked on in shock.

Patriarch Violet Sieve and the beautiful woman had opened their eyes, and were looking at Chen Jiayi, their expressions serious.

Zhou Dekun's body trembled. He wanted to speak, but his mind was in chaos. All eyes were focused on him. To be openly ridiculed in such a way made him so upset that he was speechless.

Just when he was opening his mouth to speak, Meng Hao's cold voice rang out. "I, Fang Mu, have a few questions." He stood, flying up to stand next to Zhou Dekun atop the dais.

Zhou Dekun looked at Meng Hao as if he were a blood relative. He knew Meng Hao's incisive way with words. Breathing deeply, he said no more, instead taking a few steps back, more than happy to let Meng Hao take center stage.

Meng Hao's cold gaze swept about, eventually landing on Chen Jiayi.

"Please, elaborate," Chen Jiayi said, smiling. His expression was one of indifference, but inwardly, he was composed and ready. He didn't know much about this Fang Mu, but considering their first conversation outside of the Black Sieve Sect, he knew that he wasn't someone who could be messed with easily.

However, he had faith in his own Dao of alchemy. Besides, Fang Mu had finagled his way into being a Furnace Lord. Therefore, Chen Jiayi was supremely confident. A snide smile filled his face.

All the surrounding Black Sieve Sect disciples turned to look at Meng Hao. Han Bei's eyes narrowed, hiding the glow which filled them. All attention was focused on Meng Hao, even the gaze of the beautiful woman, who sat there cross-legged, looking at him with a quizzical expression.

After hearing Chen Jiayi's words, most of the Black Sieve Sect disciples felt that they were quite reasonable.

"I have three questions," said Meng Hao, his voice cool. "The first question is regarding Truth. You mentioned the sun and the moon. The boundless sun, you say, is the furnace, and the bright moon births the pill formula. Let me ask you, who invented the pill furnace, and who created the pill formula?"

"Grandmaster Fang, have you really learned so little of the Dao of alchemy?" replied Chen Jiayi with a laugh. "The ancients gazed upon the boundless sun, and were inspired to forge the pill furnace. As for the pill formula, again, the ancients gained enlightenment from the moon and then recorded the countless variations of plants and vegetation. Thus, I say that the boundless sun is the furnace and the bright moon is the formula. The sun and the moon are a forge which bring forth all living things!" A murmur of excitement rippled through the crowd.

Meng Hao responded in a cool voice, speaking neither quickly nor slowly: "The boundless sun is a heavenly body in the sky. Its blinding radiance makes it impossible to see any other star. When the ancients gazed upward, what they looked at was not the sun, but rather, the sky! You claim Grandmaster Zhou is fishing for fame and compliments. Well, Grandmaster Chen, I say that you are a frog in a well, who looks at the blazing sun, but cannot see the sky which contains that very sun!

"The moon is another of the many heavenly bodies, frequently seen in the night sky. Because of the existence of the darkness and the light, people believed that the night sky and the bright daytime moved in rotation. In reality, among all the heavenly bodies, the only thing that does not move, are the Heavens themselves!

"You assert that Grandmaster Zhou is a lone flower in love with its own fragrance. Grandmaster Chen, I say that you are shortsighted. You, a tiny alchemist, dare to claim that the sun and moon are a forge that give birth to all living things! Since you thus reveal how much you overrate yourself, then I, Fang Mu tell you today, if the sun and moon are a forge that gives birth to all living things,

then the forge of the Heavens is what gives birth to the transformations of the sun and moon!" By the time he reached his final sentence, his voice rang out like thunder, stabbing into Chen Jiayi's heart, whose face immediately fell.