

Doctor 1411

Chapter 1411: A Winding Path Leads to Seclusion

"Fang Bai, this is Senior Brother Ye Renjie."

Zheng Hong led Fang Bai to a male disciple from the External Courtyard. He clasped his hands politely in a respectful salute, then warmly introduced, "Senior Brother Ye is the number one on our External Courtyard Combat Rankings and is about to advance to the Foundation Establishment realm. At the year's end advancement assembly, Senior Brother Ye is very likely to enter the Inner Court."

Fang Bai scrutinized Senior Brother Ye for a moment. He saw that Ye Renjie was tall and upright, with strikingly handsome features—a refined and graceful young man. However, the look in his eyes toward Fang Bai carried a hint of hostility, as though he bore some grudge against him.

"Senior Brother Ye."

Fang Bai thought to himself, "I've never even met this Senior Brother Ye Renjie before. Why does he seem so hostile towards me?" But he still managed a smile and clasped his hands in deference.

The goodwill Fang Bai extended was met with no response. Ye Renjie gave him a disdainful glance, let out a soft snort, then turned and walked away, leaving only his retreating figure behind.

"Senior Brother Ye... This..."

Zheng Hong's expression turned somewhat awkward. He took a couple of steps forward and waved, seemingly trying to call after Ye Renjie but hesitating as if somewhat intimidated by him. He could only let out a dry laugh before turning back to Fang Bai and saying, "Junior Brother Fang, Senior Brother Ye has a rather difficult temperament... um... don't take it to heart..."

Fang Bai truly wouldn't let something so trivial bother him. He smiled faintly and said, "Understood. Since he's the number one on the External Courtyard Combat Rankings, a bit of pride is only natural."

Hearing this, Zheng Hong's face finally returned to its usual color. He signaled to Fang Bai with a glance, and, under the watchful gazes of the other External Courtyard disciples, the two left together.

"Junior Brother Fang, Senior Brother Ye is the kind of person who holds grudges and retaliates for even the smallest offenses. You'd better be careful and try not to provoke him."

Once they were out of sight of others, Zheng Hong lowered his voice and spoke to Fang Bai.

Fang Bai chuckled, waved a hand, and said, "As long as he doesn't come looking for trouble with me, I certainly won't go looking for trouble with him."

Zheng Hong nodded, thought for a moment, and added, "Senior Brother Ye's hostility toward you is probably because you're more popular among the female disciples in the External Courtyard. He might feel like you've stolen his spotlight! Before you joined, Senior Brother Ye was known as the most handsome man in the External Courtyard, and many female disciples admired him!"

Fang Bai couldn't help but feel both amused and exasperated. He said, "If that's really the case, how petty must this Senior Brother Ye be? Forget it, let's not talk about him anymore!"

As they passed through a bamboo grove in front of a small hill, Fang Bai glanced around and noticed a small bamboo hut built within the grove. A young woman was reclining on a bamboo chair outside the hut, staring blankly at the sky in a daze.

The woman appeared to be in her early twenties, with phoenix-shaped eyes and a delicate nose. Her beauty was gentle and elegant, but her complexion was unnaturally pale, carrying an unhealthy pallor. Her fine brows were furrowed tightly, and she occasionally let out soft sighs, evoking a sense of pity in anyone who saw her.

"That's Elder Sun's granddaughter, Junior Sister Sun Lin."

Noticing Fang Bai looking at the young woman by the bamboo hut, Zheng Hong lightly cleared his throat and transmitted a message to Fang Bai.

"Oh, I know of her."

Fang Bai nodded.

Previously, Fang Bai had overheard a conversation between Elder Wu and Elder Sun and learned some things about Sun Lin.

Sun Lin had outstanding innate talent and potential, with great prospects for advancing to the Foundation Establishment realm and entering the Inner Court for further cultivation. However, during a training expedition, she suffered a severe injury, severing her connection to the Martial Dao and rendering her talent useless.

For a Martial Artist, such a blow was tremendous, even more heartbreaking than death.

No wonder Sun Lin now appeared listless, like a withered tree, devoid of the vitality and exuberance one would expect from someone her age.

The two of them, afraid of disturbing Sun Lin, didn't linger and continued walking past.

After another hundred breaths or so, Fang Bai was led to a small hill.

In front of the hill stood two small bamboo huts, with a medicinal herb garden behind them. Beside the huts was an enormous tree so large it would take several adults stretching their arms to encircle its trunk. Its dense foliage blocked out nearly all sunlight.

"So this will be my home from now on? Hmm, not bad. I like it."

Fang Bai walked up to the bamboo huts, surveyed the surroundings, and looked satisfied.

Although these bamboo huts couldn't compare to grand halls, they were serene and secluded, offering peace and quiet.

What pleased him most was the medicinal herb garden behind the huts. Fang Bai couldn't help but feel thrilled as he considered the possibility of secretly picking herbs to refine elixirs.

While Lingxu Palace prohibited disciples from harvesting spiritual medicine without permission, he thought to himself, "East pick one, west steal another—who would ever notice?"

"That's right, Junior Brother Fang. This will be your temporary residence. But it's only temporary. Considering you're a Martial Dao Genius, you'll surely enter the Inner Court in the future, and your accommodations will be far better than this."

Zheng Hong said this with a face full of envy.

From Zheng Hong's envious expression, Fang Bai sensed a trace of bitterness. He patted Zheng Hong's shoulder and said, "Senior Brother Zheng, whenever you have time, feel free to visit me here. The Martial Arts Techniques and the Martial Dao Arcane insights Elder Wu has taught me—I can share them with you."

Zheng Hong's heart was filled with joy, and he expressed his gratitude repeatedly.

Elder Wu, a high-ranking Foundation Establishment expert, seldom provided lectures on the Martial Dao Arcane. For an External Courtyard disciple like Zheng Hong, being able to occasionally hear even one lesson was a rare privilege.

But with Elder Wu personally mentoring Fang Bai, he would have far more opportunities to learn, coupled with his Innate Spiritual Root and exceptional comprehension. Under Elder Wu's guidance, Fang Bai's progress in the Martial Dao would undoubtedly be rapid.

For Zheng Hong, Fang Bai sharing these insights would be an invaluable boon, significantly benefiting his cultivation journey.

In the past, some disciples from the External Courtyard, who were on friendly terms with Zheng Hong and shared a camaraderie like brothers, had entered the Inner Court. After gaining access to the teachings of Inner Court experts and making breakthroughs, they hoarded their insights like treasures, unwilling to share them with Zheng Hong, leaving him disheartened about the cold realities of human nature.

As such, Fang Bai's considerate gesture deeply resonated with Zheng Hong, making him feel truly fortunate to have such a friend.

After chatting with Fang Bai for a short while, Zheng Hong left, beaming with joy as he went off to handle other matters.

Fang Bai watched Zheng Hong's figure disappear into the distance before turning back to continue surveying the scenery around him. He strolled leisurely through the small "world" that was now temporarily his.

Not long after, Fang Bai suddenly detected a familiar Martial Artist Aura. He raised his gaze toward the mountain path in the distance and saw a figure striding briskly towards him.

"Brother Shi, don't tell me you live nearby?"

As the figure approached, Fang Bai stepped forward to greet him with a smile and a question.

"Haha... You guessed right! We're neighbors from now on—what a coincidence!"

The man was tall and broad-shouldered, nearly a zhang in height, and none other than Shi Ming, who had joined Lingxu Palace alongside Fang Bai.

The two of them sat down at the stone table in front of the bamboo hut and exchanged a few words. They soon discovered that their residences were separated by only a small hill, making it easy for them to visit each other frequently in the future.

After a while, a sixteen or seventeen-year-old menial servant disciple arrived, carrying a large wooden box. He walked up to Fang Bai with great respect and said he had brought the day's meal.

Chapter 1412: A Poor Cultivation Career

Shi Ming was tall and had a hearty appetite. Ever since traveling through the spatial passage of his Minor World to arrive in the vast Spirit Martial Realm, he hadn't eaten once, and his stomach had long been growling. When he heard there was food inside the wooden box, his eyes lit up, and he nearly began drooling.

"With the spiritual energy so abundant here, the food must taste better than anything from the Minor World... Hmm, let's see what delicacies they've got..."

Before the menial servant disciple could even leave, Shi Ming couldn't help himself. He stood excitedly, happily opening the wooden box on the table before him.

Inside the box, neatly arranged were Solomon's Seal, Poria, Fo-ti, Snow Lotus Fruit, and other Spiritual Medicines. Yet, the feast of meat and fish Shi Ming had imagined was utterly absent.

"This... this is our food? You're telling me we're supposed to eat these?"

Shi Ming's left hand shot out, grabbing the menial disciple by his collar, while his right hand pointed at the Spiritual Medicines in the wooden box. His tiger-like eyes glared as he asked, filled with dissatisfaction.

"Y-yes..."

The menial disciple, just sixteen or seventeen years old, was thin and timid by nature. Caught by the towering Shi Ming, he trembled uncontrollably and stammered, head bowed and voice barely audible.

In every sect, menial disciples were the weakest in strength and the lowest in status. Lingxu Palace was no exception.

The menial disciple delivering food before him usually spent only a small amount of his time cultivating; most of his days were spent on laborious tasks like cleaning palaces, serving food, or tending to flower beds.

On top of that, menial disciples had to endure the ridicule and disdain of their sect's senior brothers and sisters. If they displeased them, they were often beaten, forced to swallow their grievances.

With Shi Ming's towering physique and commanding aura, this menial disciple felt an immense pressure weighing down on him, fear gripping his heart.

When the disciple came to deliver food to Fang Bai and Shi Ming, he had already heard that these two new disciples possessed Innate Spiritual Roots and were fiercely contested over by two palace Elders as Personal Transmission disciples. Their bright futures as pillars of Lingxu Palace were practically guaranteed.

Faced with two disciples of such immense potential, the menial disciple dared not show the slightest disrespect, treating them with extreme caution.

He had intended to wait until Fang Bai and Shi Ming finished their meals before taking the box and leaving, but he didn't expect Shi Ming to be dissatisfied and grip him angrily, looking ready to throw a punch.

Staring at Shi Ming, who glared with puffed cheeks and flared nostrils as if he'd attack at the slightest misstep, the menial disciple felt like crying. Internally, he lamented, "Big Brother, your food, clothing, and housing are all arranged by the sect. Why are you venting your anger on me? I'm just the delivery guy!"

Though he thought this in his heart, he dared not say it aloud, fearing that if he annoyed Shi Ming, he might be beaten to a pulp, with no place to cry about it afterward.

Shi Ming wasn't an unreasonable person. Seeing the menial disciple trembling in fear, he let go of the boy's collar and impatiently said, "Take this food away and bring us some meat instead!"

"Huh?"

The menial disciple froze for a moment, then stammered nervously, "Senior Brother Shi... um... in the palace... disciples all eat this. There's no... no meat..."

Shi Ming sneered, "Don't give me that! The mountains here are teeming with flying beasts and Spirit Beasts. Just catch one and roast it! Hmph! I just saw a fat rabbit scurry past a moment ago. Stop wasting time and bring me two fat geese. We'll roast them ourselves!"

The menial disciple nearly burst into tears. "Senior Brother Shi, I can't! The Spirit Beasts here are all tamed and raised by the palace disciples. Hunting them is strictly forbidden. If I do, I'll be expelled from Lingxu Palace!"

"Alright, Shi Brother, don't make things difficult for him!"

Fang Bai calmly took the Solomon's Seal, Poria, Fo-ti, and Snow Lotus Fruit out of the wooden box and laid them on the stone table in front of him. Then he waved his hand to indicate that the menial disciple could leave.

Relieved, as though pardoned from a death sentence, the menial disciple shot Fang Bai a grateful glance. He fetched two bowls of spring water from nearby, placed them alongside the Spiritual Medicines, and quickly tidied up the box before scurrying away.

"This is no Minor World. We should adapt to the local customs... Besides, these are treasures. Eating them is immensely beneficial to us Martial Artists' cultivation!"

Fang Bai picked up a piece of Solomon's Seal, popped it into his mouth, chewed a bit, and swallowed. He savored the taste. "A Holy Grade Spirit Medicine aged several thousand years is actually quite delicious..."

"Really that good? Let me try..."

Seeing Fang Bai devour several servings of Spiritual Medicine with a look of bliss, Shi Ming hesitated but eventually picked up a piece of Solomon's Seal and popped it into his mouth.

Upon tasting it, the initial bitterness turned into a sweet and fragrant flavor. As he chewed, the juices filled his mouth and trickled into his stomach, transforming into strands of Spiritual Energy that flowed into his Qi Sea.

Soon enough, the Spiritual Medicines on the stone table had been devoured by the two of them. Though the portions weren't large, their hunger completely disappeared. Shi Ming couldn't help but marvel at the sensation.

After consuming the Spiritual Medicines and drinking a bowl of spring water, each patted their stomach contentedly, feeling about 80% full.

"This place is great and all, but not having meat or wine is a shame! Looks like the cultivation life ahead is destined to be austere!"

Shi Ming bemoaned toward the heavens.

Fang Bai, on the other hand, found such an "austere" cultivation life familiar and even comforting, having lived this way in his previous life.

In the days that followed, perhaps due to being preoccupied, Elder Wu Zhihua, tasked with guiding Fang Bai, never came to see him once.

Shi Ming's situation was the same, and the two of them spent their days idly chatting together.

The menial disciple responsible for delivering their food, however, grew increasingly familiar with them through his frequent visits and no longer feared them.

The boy's name was Huang Zhong, a seventeen-year-old orphan who had been taken in as an infant by a high-ranking Lingxu Palace member.

Huang Zhong had decent aptitude and was once hopeful of reaching the Foundation Establishment Realm. But two years ago, during cultivation, his impatience caused Spiritual Energy to become chaotic, leading to deviation. His meridians became blocked, and even after consuming numerous Spirit Pills and Spiritual Liquids, his condition did not improve.

Deemed a lost cause in Martial Dao by Lingxu Palace's leaders, Huang Zhong was completely cast aside.

Unwilling to accept fate, Huang Zhong had secretly gone to nearby cities multiple times, seeking pills to heal his injuries from Pill Masters. However, the prices they asked for were too steep; he couldn't afford them and had to let go of that hope, resigning himself to life as a menial disciple.

After befriending Fang Bai and Shi Ming, Huang Zhong gradually opened up. Each time he delivered food, he would spill his grievances to them without reserve.

Young at heart, he would grow emotional and, at his saddest moments, break into uncontrollable sobs. Fang Bai and Shi Ming often found themselves consoling him for ages.

Chapter 1413: A Rare Opportunity

"Senior Brothers, do you think I still have hope of successfully establishing my foundation in this lifetime? Could I still become an External Courtyard disciple?"

Each time after crying, the young Huang Zhong would look at Fang Bai and Shi Ming with tear-filled eyes, pitifully asking this question.

In truth, Huang Zhong had already lost hope regarding his ability to establish his foundation. The reason he asked this question was merely to seek a bit of self-deceiving comfort from Fang Bai and Shi Ming.

Shi Ming, not being skilled at words, simply scratched his head each time he faced Huang Zhong's inquiries, unsure how to respond.

Fang Bai, however, said, "Junior Brother Huang, don't lose heart, nor give up. Your injury is not entirely untreatable; it's just that the required Marrow Cleansing Pill is difficult to refine, and its ingredients are hard to find. I believe someday your injuries will heal, and you will surely succeed in establishing your foundation!"

With a smile, he added, "Your aptitude is quite good. Is your goal merely to become an External Courtyard disciple? Don't you want to enter the Inner Court?"

To Huang Zhong, Fang Bai's words were merely comforting banter.

Half a month later, Elder Wu Zhihua finally visited.

Wu Zhihua's face was somewhat pale, his energy and blood clearly unstable. Fang Bai instantly knew he had been wounded, and not lightly, as he still hadn't recovered.

"Elder Wu, what happened to you?"

Fang Bai had a good impression of Wu Zhihua. Seeing him injured this way, he frowned and asked.

Wu Zhihua sighed, "Recently, some Lingxu Palace disciples discovered a Spirit Stone Vein. Just as we were preparing to mine it, disciples of the Soul Summoning Hall suddenly appeared, claiming the Spirit Stone Vein was theirs. A conflict ensued, and I fought with one of their elders, sustaining some injuries. It's nothing serious now."

"The Soul Summoning Hall..."

In Fang Bai's mind flashed the image of Zu Hanjiao, the person he had slain in the Minor World. He knew that this sect, adept at refining elixirs from Martial Artists' blood essence, was undoubtedly part of the heretical path.

When Fang Bai first arrived in the Spirit Martial Realm, one of the elders from the Soul Summoning Hall had attempted to recruit him, but Fang Bai had resolutely ignored the offer.

Seated at a stone table in front of the bamboo house, Elder Wu shared some cultivation insights with Fang Bai, then passed on a set of Holy Grade Fire-based Martial Arts techniques, instructing him briefly before leaving gracefully. They agreed to meet again in half a month to examine Fang Bai's cultivation progress.

Wu Zhihua's shared insights and the Holy Grade Fire-based Martial Arts techniques he left behind were naturally of little use to Fang Bai.

What Fang Bai currently lacked wasn't insights or techniques, but rather an abundance of cultivation resources.

"Without cultivation resources, how can I cultivate? Relying solely on absorbing nature's spiritual energy here will result in an extremely slow advancement in cultivation level..."

After sending off Elder Wu, Fang Bai sighed and placed the Holy Grade Martial Arts techniques on the stone table casually.

A few days later, Shi Ming came looking for Fang Bai with an excited expression, reporting that he had received guidance from Enforcement Hall Elder Yun Feng and had obtained a set of Holy Grade Earth Element Techniques. These past days, he'd gained quite a bit of insight.

"As long as I have enough cultivation resources, I'm sure I can establish my foundation successfully within a year and become an Inner Court disciple."

Shi Ming waved his fists excitedly as he spoke.

When the menial servant disciple Huang Zhong arrived to deliver meals, Shi Ming repeated this statement, which filled Huang Zhong with envy.

"Huang Zhong, take a look at this... Yes, right here! If there's anything you don't understand, you can ask me."

Fang Bai pushed the set of Martial Arts techniques left by Wu Zhihua toward Huang Zhong.

Huang Zhong also cultivated Fire-based Martial Arts techniques. His cultivation level was currently at Innate Perfection realm, so this set of techniques was something he could comprehend.

Although Huang Zhong's meridians were blocked, making cultivation advancement akin to climbing the heavens, reading this Holy Grade Martial Arts technique suitable for Foundation Establishment experts could provide insights. Once he cleared his blocked meridians in the future, establishing his foundation would be a natural progression.

"This... this is... a Holy Grade Fire-based Martial Arts technique?"

When Huang Zhong's gaze fell on the Martial Arts techniques on the stone table, his face lit up with joy.

Huang Zhong was merely a menial servant disciple, and Holy Grade Martial Arts techniques were typically used by Foundation Establishment experts. Such resources were beyond Huang Zhong's usual reach. When he saw Fang Bai offering the Holy Grade techniques for him to study, how could he not rejoice?

"Is this appropriate? What if someone else finds out..."

Thinking about the consequences of such an act, Huang Zhong's elation quickly turned to unease.

Fang Bai said, "This matter is known only to heaven, earth, and the three of us. As long as we don't speak of it, who would know?"

Fang Bai's decision to let a menial servant disciple study Martial Arts techniques bestowed by a sect elder was a violation of Lingxu Palace's rules. However, as the involved parties, Fang Bai and Huang Zhong naturally wouldn't publicize the matter.

As for Shi Ming, the "third party," Fang Bai, with his millennia of experience, could see through people clearly. He knew this honest and loyal big man valued friendship and wouldn't betray them, and would keep the secret.

"Just study it! Don't hesitate like an old woman! This is a rare opportunity!"

Shi Ming grinned, viewing this as a stroke of fortune for Huang Zhong.

Huang Zhong nodded firmly, sat across from Fang Bai, picked up the Martial Arts techniques, and began studying them in earnest, quickly becoming immersed.

Huang Zhong was not a fool. His Martial Dao foundation was solid. If not for his problems in cultivation, he would already be a Half-Step Foundation Establishment External Courtyard disciple.

Thus, as he studied the Martial Arts techniques, he did not find them challenging. Instead, he found them surprisingly manageable, as if a completely new Martial Dao World was unfolding before him.

Fang Bai and Shi Ming remained quiet nearby, seated with closed eyes.

Several hours passed. Fang Bai opened his eyes to see Huang Zhong scratching his head and looking at him, full of unanswered questions. Smiling, he asked, "Finished?"

Huang Zhong nodded and said, "Mm, finished."

Fang Bai queried, "How do you feel?"

Huang Zhong thought for a moment before responding, "I feel... it's quite wondrous..."

Fang Bai smiled lightly and asked again, "How much have you gained from it?"

Huang Zhong, brimming with excitement, replied, "A lot... Many things that I previously didn't understand or couldn't grasp suddenly became clear after reading these techniques. But there are also many aspects I don't understand... I would like Senior Brother Fang's guidance."

Fang Bai said, "Alright. Ask away, and I'll answer."

Huang Zhong began raising his questions, and Fang Bai explained them one by one, word by word.

Fang Bai's explanations were far superior to those given by the Lingxu Palace elders. Even the most complex and abstract Martial Dao Arcane principles became easier to understand when spoken by him.

The more Huang Zhong listened, the brighter his eyes grew. He felt like every word Fang Bai uttered was a precious gem, sparking moments of sudden enlightenment and making him so excited he nearly danced with joy.

Despite being at the same cultivation level as Fang Bai, Shi Ming knew that Fang Bai's millennia of cultivation experience rendered him incomparable. Initially ignoring Fang Bai's explanations, Shi Ming eventually tuned in and found himself utterly captivated, unable to pull away. Even when Fang Bai finished, Shi Ming still felt unsatisfied, eager for more.

Chapter 1414: Sun Lin

Fang Bai's explanation didn't last long, but both Huang Zhong and Gu Ming gained significant insights.

During their prior cultivation, both had encountered numerous problems, often choosing to avoid or bypass them temporarily, leaving them for future study and exploration.

Fang Bai's explanation was enlightening, akin to a thunderclap amidst deafness, giving both of them a sense of an Ambrosia Baptism. The problems that had troubled them before were resolved effortlessly.

"Brother Fang, you're truly hiding your talents!"

When Fang Bai finished speaking, Shi Ming looked at him with newfound respect and said, "My former master's explanations of the Martial Dao Arcane were dry and incomprehensible, like deciphering ancient scrolls—it left me utterly perplexed. Yet your explanation, I understood completely after hearing it just once! I believe that upon returning, if I seclude myself and reflect for three to five days, my strength will significantly improve. I might even advance to the Foundation Establishment Realm ahead of schedule!"

As he spoke, he stood up from the stone table, cupped his fists, and bowed deeply toward Fang Bai, his expression solemn. "In the realm of the Martial Dao, the accomplished must come first. Brother Fang, your teachings today have cleared my confusion, akin to the grace of a mentor. Please accept this bow as a token of my respect!"

Fang Bai and Gu Ming had similar cultivation levels, and they had entered Lingxu Palace at the same time. According to age, Gu Ming should have been regarded as Senior Brother, but Shi Ming had resolutely declined, so they addressed each other as equals.

"I must also thank Senior Brother Fang."

Standing nearby, Huang Zhong quickly stood up as well and bowed deeply to Fang Bai.

Compared to Gu Ming, Huang Zhong benefited even more from Fang Bai's explanation and came to numerous realizations. He felt like a volcano ready to erupt: as long as he could break through his blocked meridians, his cultivation would see a significant improvement. Although it might not

immediately propel him into the Foundation Establishment Realm, it would at least raise him to the Half-Step Foundation Establishment Realm like Senior Brother Shi and Senior Brother Fang.

In Lingxu Palace, achieving the Half-Step Foundation Establishment Realm meant shedding the identity of a menial servant and earning a place in the External Courtyard, freeing oneself from the ridicule and bullying of fellow disciples.

Although Huang Zhong understood that breaking through his blocked meridians wouldn't be easy, Fang Bai had shown him hope, and his gratitude toward Fang Bai ran deep.

Though young in age, Huang Zhong was exceptionally intelligent. During his time spent with Fang Bai, he came to perceive this Senior Brother, only a few years older than himself, as immensely knowledgeable and nearly omniscient. Huang Zhong speculated that Fang Bai would achieve even greater heights in his Martial Dao journey than Senior Brother Shi.

Huang Zhong could even foresee a day when Fang Bai entered the upper echelons of Lingxu Palace. If that day came, Fang Bai would control vast cultivation resources, and there was a chance he might help Huang Zhong open his blocked meridians.

The thought left Huang Zhong flushed with excitement, and his respect for Fang Bai grew even deeper.

Soon after, Shi Ming and Huang Zhong, brimming with enthusiasm, left to return to their residences to ponder and reflect on the Martial Dao Arcane they had learned from Fang Bai.

Watching them depart, Fang Bai closed his bamboo house's door and wandered alone to a nearby herb garden, intending to scout for any noteworthy spiritual medicines and perhaps seize an opportunity to discreetly harvest some.

"Hmm? Could it be her?"

While pacing through the herb garden, Fang Bai suddenly sensed a faint Martial Artist Aura. Fixing his gaze on the source, he saw a slender figure dressed in a red blouse and skirt standing amidst a sea of flowers in the distance.

The young lady was slender, her long hair cascading to her waist, with a seemingly frail disposition. Though facing away from Fang Bai, he instantly recognized who she was.

Fang Bai hesitated briefly, then stepped forward to stand beside the young woman and greeted her with a smile, "Senior Sister Sun, what brings you to such a serene place today?"

The young woman, of similar age to Fang Bai, had almond-shaped eyes, a delicate nose, and a fair yet sickly complexion. Her eyebrows were furrowed in evident distress, exuding an air of deep sorrow.

The young woman was none other than Sun Lin, granddaughter of Elder Sun Jing who presided over the Elixir Hall and an External Courtyard disciple of Lingxu Palace.

Fang Bai had caught a fleeting glimpse of Sun Lin during his first days in Lingxu Palace and had heard of her tragic past from External Courtyard disciple Zheng Hong, though he hadn't paid much mind to it.

Initially, Fang Bai assumed he would have little interaction with Sun Lin, yet here they were meeting again.

This frail and sorrowful beauty, standing amidst the sea of flowers, appeared harmoniously integrated with the surrounding Baihua blossoms in a way that was utterly enchanting.

"And you are..."

Turning to look at Fang Bai, Sun Lin furrowed her brows even tighter, her eyes showing traces of confusion.

Fang Bai smiled warmly, "My name is Fang Bai. I recently joined Lingxu Palace as a disciple. It's understandable that Senior Sister wouldn't recognize me."

Sun Lin, who was once a cheerful and lively girl, had turned inward and melancholic ever since sustaining grave injuries that left her nearly crippled. She avoided interaction with anyone, isolating herself in gloomy solitude.

This garden of flowers was Sun Lin's favorite place. Each day she came here to spend some time before returning to her residence.

"Oh."

Perhaps Fang Bai's harmless smile warmed her spirit; Sun Lin's mood improved slightly. She nodded to him and scrutinized him before remarking, "So young and already part of the External Courtyard... Truly impressive!"

Fang Bai replied, "Senior Sister Sun entered the External Courtyard at merely ten-something years old; you're far more impressive!"

At Fang Bai's words, Sun Lin's eyes dimmed. Looking down at the flowers blooming at her feet, she sighed faintly after a long pause and said sorrowfully, "That was my past. Now... I'm nothing but a useless cripple!"

Remembering her sorrowful past, her lips trembled slightly, tears streaming down her tender cheeks.

Seeing this, Fang Bai let out a wry smile, silently lamenting how his conversational choice had inadvertently touched a nerve.

Just as he was about to offer words of consolation, he suddenly detected a high-rank Foundation Establishment cultivator's presence closing in. Turning his gaze, he saw Elder Sun Jing, who presided over the Elixir Hall, striding swiftly toward them.

"Fang Bai, what are you doing here? What have you done to Lin'er?"

Arriving near them, Elder Sun Jing's gaze fell on her teary-eyed granddaughter, mistaking Fang Bai for the cause and demanding with a stern tone tinged with anger.

Sun Lin understood that a mere External Courtyard disciple like Fang Bai could never withstand the wrath of her grandmother and hurriedly wiped her tears, saying, "Grandmother, it's not his fault. I just... suddenly thought of my own past..."

Only then did Elder Sun Jing's expression soften slightly. She whispered tenderly, "Lin'er, don't dwell on those thoughts. I have good news for you: I recently gathered new ingredients to refine a Marrow Cleansing Pill and plan to open my furnace and refine an elixir for you."

Sun Lin knew that over the years, her grandmother had exhausted countless cultivation resources and endured countless worries in the pursuit of healing her injuries. While failures were constant, she had never given up.

However, Sun Lin also understood that her grandmother, an alchemist who had learned the craft later in life, produced elixirs with an extremely low success rate. On the rare occasion of success, the pills were only low-grade Holy Grade products, which were essentially ineffective for curing her injuries.

"Thank you, Grandmother! But there's no need to worry so much. After so many years... I've gotten used to it... It's not urgent..."

Sun Lin forced a smile as she spoke.

Chapter 1415: You Have a Cauldron, I Have a Cauldron Too!

Sun Jing gently comforted her granddaughter with a few soft words. Then, turning to Fang Bai, she said, "I am about to open the furnace to refine elixirs. You will follow me to the Elixir Hall and assist me in guarding the pill furnace. Hmm, I've already spoken to Elder Wu about this. Let's go."

After speaking, she didn't wait for Fang Bai's response, supporting her granddaughter Sun Lin as she walked ahead.

Fang Bai opened his mouth, intending to say something, but upon seeing Sun Lin's frail figure from behind, he shook his head with a smile and followed after them.

Sun Jing escorted her granddaughter back to the small bamboo hut where she resided. After ensuring she was lying down to rest, she gave her a few careful instructions before heading towards the Elixir Hall with Fang Bai.

On the way, Sun Jing casually inquired about Fang Bai's progress in cultivation. Fang Bai responded evasively with a few vague words.

"You have an Innate Fire Spirit Root and are highly sensitive to Fire Spirit Energy. When I open the furnace to refine elixirs, you must observe the subtle changes in the intensity of the flames for me. If anything unusual arises, just notify me..."

Sun Jing explained the key details of guarding the pill furnace while walking, and then added, "If the elixir refinement succeeds this time, you'll be rewarded. Besides receiving a few spirit pills as a bonus, is there anything else you want?"

"Elder Sun, can I pick some of the spiritual medicines we grow in Lingxu Palace?"

Fang Bai asked cheekily, taking advantage of the conversation.

Sun Jing paused briefly, then said, "What do you want spiritual medicines for? If you want more spirit pills or spiritual liquids, you can tell me, and I'll give you more without hesitation!"

Fang Bai replied, "I want to learn alchemy. Just like... Elder Sun, like you..."

"Learn from me?"

Sun Jing couldn't help but laugh and shook her head. "You can't learn from me. By sheer luck, I got my hands on a spiritual artifact—a pill furnace that can produce its own fire—which allowed me to fumble my way into refining a few elixirs. But as for you..."

"I also happened upon a furnace cauldron by sheer luck..."

Fang Bai grinned and said, "And my cauldron can produce its own Wood Spirit Energy..."

"You..."

Sun Jing was both annoyed and amused, thinking Fang Bai was joking.

The pill furnace Sun Jing possessed was a spiritual artifact forged from a special fire-attribute material. It could produce its own flames during alchemy, complementing her Wood Spirit Energy. The interplay between fire and wood allowed her to successfully refine elixirs.

Now, however, this brat Fang Bai claimed he also had a furnace cauldron, which conveniently produced Wood Spirit Energy. If this were true, Fang Bai would indeed possess both Wood and Fire elements, making it possible for him to attempt refining spirit pills.

But where could there be so many fortuitous coincidences in the world?

"Where is your furnace cauldron?"

Sun Jing asked irritably.

She thought that if Fang Bai couldn't produce the cauldron, she could seize the chance to give him a scolding so he'd learn to mind his words better around an elder.

But the next moment, Sun Jing was stunned.

With a sudden flash of black light, a three-foot-high small furnace cauldron appeared in front of Fang Bai.

The furnace cauldron was pitch black, its material unidentifiable. It exuded an ancient aura, and the surface of the cauldron was covered in arcane and intricate runes, their designs incomprehensible.

"This furnace cauldron..."

Sun Jing furrowed her brows and circled around the furnace cauldron Fang Bai had unveiled, feeling that aside from the extraordinary runes inscribed on its surface, there was nothing particularly special about it.

How could she have known that Fang Bai's "Five Elements Origin Qi Cauldron" was actually a supreme divine artifact? Even Fang Bai, who in his past life had ascended to the pinnacle as the Immortal Emperor, could not fully unravel its mysteries, let alone her, a mere high-rank Foundation Establishment cultivator.

"Elder Sun, watch closely..."

Fang Bai smiled faintly, placing his left hand on the body of the Five Elements Origin Qi Cauldron. With a slight movement of his mind, an immense quantity of Fire Spirit Energy condensed in his palm, instantly enveloping it in flames.

Although Fang Bai's current cultivation level was still far from being able to control the Five Elements Origin Qi Cauldron fully, he had managed to activate some of its functions, such as utilizing it to refine various spirit pills.

The Five Elements Origin Qi Cauldron, as its name suggests, could generate the five purest elemental energies in existence: Metal, Wood, Water, Fire, and Earth. At this moment, Fang Bai had activated only the Wood Spirit Energy within the cauldron.

By using Fire Primordial Qi, Fang Bai triggered the cauldron's Wood Element Qi. In an instant, streams of exceptionally pure and dense Wood Element Qi emanated from the furnace cauldron.

"Oh? It really does..."

Feeling the Wood Element Qi released from the Five Elements Origin Qi Cauldron, Sun Jing found it even purer than the Wood Spirit Energy she herself could condense as a high-rank Foundation Establishment cultivator. She was startled and delighted.

She thought to herself: if Fang Bai indeed had an Innate Fire Spirit Root and this cauldron capable of producing Wood Spirit Qi, the combination might truly allow him to refine spirit pills.

If so, wouldn't Lingxu Palace, including herself, end up with two alchemists in their ranks?

Although both she and Fang Bai could be considered "alchemists by chance" and lacked the credentials of true mastery, being able to refine spirit pills was still a boon.

"Once this refinement session is over, I'll share with you all the insights I've accumulated over the years in alchemy. I hope that someday, your achievements in alchemy will far surpass mine."

Sun Jing said excitedly.

With Fang Bai's Innate Spiritual Root, Sun Jing firmly believed his future path in Martial Dao would extend far beyond her own. As a result, his accomplishments in alchemy would likely eclipse hers as well.

Sun Jing silently resolved that if her next attempt at refining a Marrow Cleansing Pill for her granddaughter failed, she would devote all her efforts to nurturing Fang Bai. Perhaps one day, Fang Bai might successfully refine a Marrow Cleansing Pill capable of healing her granddaughter's injuries.

"Then... I must thank Elder Sun for her guidance,"

Fang Bai said with a deeply grateful expression, though inwardly dismissing the so-called "insights" of Sun Jing, an unqualified alchemist. Still, he made a show of being sincerely moved.

Having managed the Elixir Hall of Lingxu Palace for many years, Sun Jing was responsible for purchasing, guarding, and distributing cultivation resources to the disciples. She had always been conscientious in her duties, never making a mistake.

But ever since Sun Jing had begun to explore alchemy on her own, she handed off some of the hall's responsibilities to two stewards. She then built a dedicated alchemy chamber and focused solely on refining a Marrow Cleansing Pill for her granddaughter.

If Lingxu Palace ever needed it, Sun Jing would also refine other spiritual medicines and spiritual liquids. Though the grade of her refined spirit pills and liquids was always the lowest within the Holy Grade, it was still far more cost-effective than venturing into nearby cities to seek genuine alchemists for elixirs.

When Fang Bai followed Sun Jing into the alchemy chamber, he saw a slightly older, chubby martial artist standing there with an unpleasant expression. The martial artist's gaze, full of hostility, was directed straight at him.

"Sun Li, you may take a rest for the next few days. When I call for you, you can come back. Go on now."

Sun Jing casually said to the chubby martial artist before gesturing for Fang Bai to stand before the pill furnace inside the chamber.

"Elder Sun, that attendant of yours seems to harbor some hostility toward me. Strange, since I don't recall provoking him since entering Lingxu Palace... You all share the Sun surname—are you perhaps related?"

Fang Bai asked with a puzzled look as he watched the chubby martial artist named Sun Li leave.

Chapter 1416: Borrowing Your Auspicious Words

(PS: I went to line up for buying a house late last night, leaving me physically and mentally exhausted, so there was no update! Normal updates resume today!)

— — — —

"Nonsense!"

Watching Fang Bai suspect she was related to Sun Li, Sun Jing raised her eyebrows and said with annoyance, "There are countless people with the surname Sun in this world, do you think they're all related to me?"

As she spoke, she remembered Sun Li's unfriendly attitude towards Fang Bai earlier and couldn't help but laugh. She asked, "Do you know why Sun Li is so hostile toward you?"

Fang Bai thought for a moment and uncertainly said, "Could it be... he's worried I'm here to take his job?"

Sun Jing said, "You actually guessed it right!"

It has been said since ancient times that those in the same trade are rivals.

According to Sun Jing, the pill room's attendant had always been Sun Li. Fang Bai's sudden appearance made Sun Li feel threatened, thinking that Fang Bai was here to replace him and steal his job.

Although attendants in Lingxu Palace are of similar status to menial servants, being an attendant has one unique advantage: they can obtain the discarded spirit pills and spiritual medicines from Sun Jing's pill refining process.

After all, Sun Jing was a high-rank Foundation Establishment Expert, and her discarded spirit pills and medicines were priceless treasures in the eyes of someone like Sun Li, a menial servant disciple.

Sun Li had relied on collecting the discarded pills and medicines from Sun Jing's pill refining over the years, which significantly improved his cultivation level.

He originally planned to spend another two or three years advancing his cultivation to the Half-Step Foundation Establishment Realm before challenging an external courtyard disciple to shed his menial servant status and achieve a "rise from the ashes."

However, Fang Bai's arrival created a strong sense of crisis within Sun Li.

Although Elder Sun had stated that Fang Bai was only temporarily assigned, Sun Li was well aware of the small mistakes he'd made previously, which had earned him some dissatisfaction from Elder Sun. If this temporary "attendant" managed to gain a foothold, where would that leave him?

Thus, it was no surprise Sun Li showed no friendliness toward Fang Bai.

"Sun Li doesn't know you're an external courtyard disciple. Otherwise, he wouldn't harbor such hostility toward you. After all, under normal circumstances, no external courtyard disciple would willingly work in a pill room as an attendant."

Sun Jing said with a smile.

Fang Bai chuckled bitterly, "So, I'm abnormal in this case?"

Sun Jing held back her laughter, put on a stern expression, and said, "Why? Do you feel wronged working here as my attendant?"

Having already figured out Sun Jing's personality, Fang Bai knew she wasn't the rigid, inflexible type. He laughed and said, "Not at all! I feel incredibly honored!"

Sun Jing tapped Fang Bai on the forehead and said, "You little brat, full of insincerity!"

Fang Bai laughed nervously and then turned to look at the pill furnace placed at the center of the alchemy room.

The pill furnace stood about the height of a person, emanating an aura of ancient and heavy simplicity, clearly showing its many years of history.

With just one glance, Fang Bai could tell that the pill furnace was forged from several unique materials, including Fine Gold and Fiery Meteorite Stone, making it a Holy Grade high-rank Spiritual Artifact.

What surprised Fang Bai was that the furnace contained a wisp of Spiritual Fire, though it was so weak that ordinary Martial Artists couldn't sense it.

When refining pills with this furnace, that faint Spiritual Fire could generate flames a hundred or even a thousand times stronger, instantly melting the spiritual herbs placed inside the furnace.

However, since Sun Jing didn't possess the Innate Wood Spirit Root and her cultivation level was only at the Foundation Establishment Realm, she couldn't harmonize with the fire's energy. Thus, she could only refine Holy Grade low-rank elixirs.

In Fang Bai's eyes, the pill furnace in Sun Jing's possession was wholly underutilized—almost a waste of such an extraordinary artifact.

But Fang Bai didn't covet the furnace. After all, his Five Elements Origin Qi Cauldron outclassed this pill furnace in every possible way.

"Well? My pill furnace isn't inferior to yours, is it?"

Seeing Fang Bai's bright gaze fixed on her furnace, Sun Jing smiled, somewhat showing off.

Fang Bai curled his lips but didn't comment.

Sun Jing raised her left hand, and with a flash of light from the spatial ring on her finger, four sets of medicinal herbs appeared on the ground in front of her. Each set contained dozens of specimens of Holy Grade medium-rank spiritual herbs that were about 7,000 years old.

These four sets of herbs were prepared for refining the Marrow Cleansing Pills to heal her granddaughter, Sun Lin.

The herbs were incredibly valuable. Except for one set that Sun Jing had fortuitously picked during an adventure, the other three were exchanged for her lifetime accumulation of various cultivation resources.

"I consulted several Pill Masters in the nearby major cities, and they all said that to heal Lin'er's injury, a bottle of Holy Grade medium-rank Marrow Cleansing Pills must be refined using 7,000-year-old Holy Grade medium-level herbs. But..."

Sun Jing showed an embarrassed expression and added with a bitter smile, "I'm not a true Pill Master. I occasionally manage to refine low-rank Holy Grade elixirs, but even that depends largely on luck. As for higher-grade elixirs, it's as difficult as climbing the heavens for me—nearly impossible."

She paused, gazed solemnly at the four sets of herbs in front of her, and continued, "I previously approached several renowned Pill Masters in the Spirit Martial Realm and begged them to help refine

the Marrow Cleansing Pills, but the price they asked was far beyond what I could afford. My only option now is to try refining them myself. There are four sets of herbs here. If I can succeed with even one set and produce a bottle of medium-rank Marrow Cleansing Pills, it'll be a blessing from the heavens."

Thinking of the frail, pale-complexioned girl, Fang Bai felt a bit of pity in his heart. He nodded and said, "Elder Sun, I will give you my full support. I also believe you will succeed in refining the medium-rank Marrow Cleansing Pills and cure Senior Sister Sun's affliction."

Although Sun Lin was now unable to cultivate the Martial Dao and considered crippled, as an external courtyard disciple, she was still addressed as "Senior Sister" by those who entered Lingxu Palace later than she did, out of respect for Elder Sun.

"I'll take your good wishes!"

Sun Jing's spirits lifted, and a smile returned to her face. She said, "You have the Innate Fire Spirit Root and are highly attuned to Fire Spirit Energy. With you assisting me and this pill furnace, the two of us working together might actually succeed in refining the Marrow Cleansing Pills that Lin'er needs!"

She stepped up to the pill furnace, pressing her left palm onto a rune etched on the furnace body. With a roaring sound, flames ignited inside the furnace, filling it completely in an instant.

While the furnace walls ensured that the flames didn't spill outward, the flickering yellowish-red firelight hinted at its unfathomable searing heat.

After letting the fire burn for a while, Sun Jing picked up one set of herbs, slicing them neatly with her palm as though it were a blade. Then she lifted the furnace's lid and threw the herbs inside.

Fang Bai also approached the furnace, sitting cross-legged beside it. He directed his Divine Sense into the furnace to monitor the interaction between the flames and herbs inside.

Seeing this, Sun Jing smiled approvingly, thinking that although this young man sometimes lacked proper respect and dared to joke around with her, he was serious and focused when it came to doing his work.

In this regard, he was far superior to Sun Li.

Chapter 1417: Pill Condensation Technique

For someone like Sun Jing, an "Alchemist," the difficulty of refining elixirs far exceeded that of cultivating martial arts techniques.

Over the next two days, Sun Jing stayed by the pill furnace, hardly taking a single step away. Her eyes remained fixed on the furnace as she continuously injected strands of pure Wood Element Qi into it. Her Divine Sense also entered the furnace periodically for monitoring.

However, no matter how powerful a martial artist was, such frequent use of Spiritual Energy and Divine Sense would be hard to sustain for long periods.

So, after two days, Sun Jing felt her Qi Sea had been emptied of Spiritual Energy. Her Divine Sense was significantly depleted, leaving her exhausted both physically and mentally. She had no choice but to entrust the task of watching and monitoring the furnace to Fang Bai and retreat to the side for recovery, aiming to quickly replenish her depleted Divine Sense.

Previously, when Sun Jing needed to rest during alchemy, the responsibility of watching the furnace would fall on Sun Li.

However, Sun Li could not sense the changes in the furnace's flames promptly, and combined with Sun Jing's own deficiencies in skill, many attempts at alchemy ended in failure, leaving Sun Jing incredibly exasperated.

Although Fang Bai had an innate Fire Spirit Root and was extremely sensitive to changes in flame, Sun Jing still couldn't fully trust him. Thus, before recuperating, she repeatedly reminded Fang Bai not to let his guard down and to immediately inform her of any unusual occurrences.

"Elder Sun... Elder Sun... The spiritual medicine in the pill furnace melted into a liquid late last night. Now the liquid is solidifying; could it be that it's about to become elixirs?"

Early the next morning, while meditating and recuperating in the adjacent room, Sun Jing suddenly heard Fang Bai's soft call.

"What?"

Sun Jing's Spiritual Energy and Divine Sense hadn't yet fully recovered from the previous day's exhaustion. However, upon hearing Fang Bai's voice, she immediately broke out of her cultivation state and swiftly dashed into the alchemy room with lightning speed.

"How... how is this possible?"

When Sun Jing inserted her Divine Sense into the furnace and observed that the melted medicinal liquid was gradually solidifying into pills, her eyes widened in disbelief.

In the past, whenever Sun Jing refined Spirit Pills, it would take at least three days for the spiritual medicine to completely melt into a liquid. Then it would take another three days for the liquid to begin solidifying into pills, as was happening now.

Yet this time, from the moment the spiritual medicine was placed into the furnace to the stage of near-solidification, it had taken only a mere three days—half the usual time. This was simply incredible.

"Elder Sun, it's like this..."

Seeing Sun Jing's perplexed expression, Fang Bai explained: "Last night, I noticed the flame inside the furnace was a bit weak, so I took the liberty of adding some Fire Spirit Energy. As a result, the spiritual medicine melted into liquid more quickly, turning into what you see now... Elder Sun, there's not going to be a problem because of this, is there?"

Sun Jing, overwhelmed with emotion, shook her head and said, "No... no... Fang Bai, you've been a tremendous help this time! It seems that, perhaps because of your innate Fire Spirit Root, the Fire Spirit Energy you injected enhanced the potency of the fire inside the furnace. This not only sped up the melting process but also ensured there wasn't a trace of impurity in the liquid... something I've never been able to achieve before!"

"Really?"

Fang Bai chuckled and said, "I was just worried that acting on my own might ruin your batch of Spirit Pills. I'm glad it's all fine... really glad!"

"If this batch of Spirit Pills succeeds, you'll deserve a great deal of credit!"

Sun Jing enthusiastically praised Fang Bai before channeling all her attention back into the pill furnace, closely observing every change within.

During the process of the liquid solidifying into pills, Sun Jing focused intensely on controlling the flames with precision. She worked to avoid even the slightest error, constantly infusing Wood Spirit Qi into the process. Her palms were slick with sweat from the tension.

She became so engrossed in her task that she didn't even notice Fang Bai observing quietly from the side.

Fang Bai refrained from disturbing her, instead stepping back a few paces to quietly sit cross-legged on a meditation cushion, watching to see if Sun Jing could ultimately succeed in condensing the pills.

"Condense!"

Several hours later, Sun Jing let out a light cry and slammed her left palm onto the pill furnace, shaking the lid loose. Her right palm immediately performed a Pill Condensation Technique toward the ten pills flying out of the furnace.

A rich medicinal aroma filled the air as ten equally sized and uniformly shaped Spirit Pills fell into Sun Jing's hands.

"Ah... Just a little short!"

Looking at the ten Spirit Pills in her hands, Sun Jing felt a mix of delight and disappointment.

She was delighted because it was her first time achieving "ten pills in one furnace," with a one hundred percent success rate.

Yet she was disappointed because, although these ten pills were slightly better than low-grade Holy Grade, they still fell short of reaching the mid-grade Holy Level standard.

"What a pity..."

Fang Bai had already predicted this outcome when Sun Jing performed the final Pill Condensation Technique. He knew this batch of Spirit Pills wouldn't meet her expectations.

In this world, martial artists cultivated martial arts techniques.

Meanwhile, alchemists had to master various pill techniques.

The Pill Condensation Technique, in particular, was the final and most critical step in alchemy.

Sun Jing didn't know where she had learned her Pill Condensation Technique from, but it was incomplete and overly simplistic. As a result, the Spirit Pills she produced had drastically reduced potency, making it impossible to reach mid-grade Holy Level quality, thereby wasting a precious batch of ingredients.

"Let's try again!"

Perhaps the unprecedented success of creating ten Spirit Pills in one batch gave Sun Jing newfound confidence. After a brief moment of disappointment, she regained her spirit and began refining with a second set of ingredients.

Fang Bai smiled wryly to himself, knowing that without a proper Pill Condensation Technique, it was impossible for Sun Jing to create mid-grade Holy Level Spirit Pills. He considered teaching her the complete Pill Condensation Technique he knew, but he didn't know how to bring it up.

Several days later, another batch of Spirit Pills came out of the furnace. However, the results were even worse this time: only five pills formed, and they were still low-grade Holy Level.

"What's going on? Why is each batch worse than the last..."

Seeing that only half the medicinal ingredients remained and that the desired Spirit Pills had yet to be produced, Sun Jing couldn't help but feel anxious.

Sun Jing had completely forgotten that alchemy required a calm and tranquil mindset. The more impatient one became, the more likely mistakes were to occur. As a result, the third batch of ingredients was ruined, resulting in a furnace full of waste pills.

Looking at the last set of ingredients before her, Sun Jing was on the verge of tears and didn't dare to try again.

If this final batch failed too, she didn't know how many more years it would take to gather enough cultivation resources to exchange for another set of ingredients. This delay would mean her granddaughter, Sun Lin, might be unable to recover from her injuries for a very long time.

"Elder Sun, how about this? Teach me your pill technique, and let me use my furnace to refine the final batch of ingredients. What do you think?"

Fang Bai suddenly suggested.

"You?"

Sun Jing glanced at him. Thinking of his innate Fire Spirit Root and the furnace he had that could generate its own Wood Spirit Qi, her heart stirred. She asked, "If I teach you my pill technique, how confident are you?"

Fang Bai thought for a moment and replied, "I'd say... I could be about fifty or sixty percent confident at least."

Chapter 1418: Fresh out of the Oven

"Only fifty to sixty percent confidence? But there's only one batch of materials left. If it fails again..."

To Sun Jing, fifty to sixty percent confidence was no small chance, yet the probability of failure remained high. If this last batch of materials was also ruined, her granddaughter Sun Lin might not be able to walk the Martial Dao path again for who knows how many years.

Fang Bai chuckled and said, "You're just saying 'if' it fails. But what if it succeeds? Heh, heh. Besides, you've already failed three times. Why not let me try this final chance?"

Seeing Sun Jing furrow her brow in hesitation, Fang Bai added, "How about this: if I fail to refine the pill, I'll stay here in your alchemy room and serve as your attendant. How does that sound?"

Sun Jing raised her eyebrows and said, "Do you mean that?"

If Fang Bai were really to stay in her alchemy room as an attendant, Sun Jing's success rate in alchemy would undoubtedly improve substantially. This would lead to the refinement of more Spirit Pills, benefiting all the disciples of Lingxu Palace.

However, Sun Jing also knew that with Fang Bai's potential, he would likely become one of Lingxu Palace's leading figures in the future. Even if she wanted to keep Fang Bai in her alchemy room to assist her, the other high-level members of Lingxu Palace would never agree to it.

Having an Innate Spiritual Root Martial Artist serve as an attendant? That would simply be a waste of heaven-given talent!

Nevertheless, now that Fang Bai had said those words, Sun Jing could, with legitimacy, often have Fang Bai lend a hand in her alchemy work.

"Of course, I mean it!"

Fang Bai patted his chest as he spoke.

Sun Jing gritted her teeth and said, "Fine, since you've said so, then this old woman will bet everything on this last batch of materials!"

Fang Bai grinned and said, "Time will prove that Elder Sun made an exceptionally wise decision!"

"Speak, besides teaching you the Alchemy Mantra, what else do you need me to do?"

Although Sun Jing was a woman, she was not indecisive. Since she had decided to hand over the last batch of materials to Fang Bai for refining, she adopted an attitude of complete trust in him.

Fang Bai said, "After all, I'm a beginner, while you have years of alchemy experience. So, as I refine the pill, you can stand nearby and point out anything I might do wrong."

With Fang Bai's alchemy skills, as long as he had the right materials, refining mid-grade Holy Spirit Pills was an effortless task. The reason for his modest attitude was that he didn't want to draw too much attention to himself.

Fang Bai believed in the principle of "respect others, and they will respect you even more." Since entering Lingxu Palace, Sun Jing had treated him fairly well. Helping her refine pills was a way of repaying that kindness.

At the same time, Fang Bai's humility also flattered Sun Jing, who listened with a smile and clearly appreciated his words.

Immediately, the two of them sat cross-legged facing each other, and Sun Jing began teaching Fang Bai the Pill Condensation Technique, which she had stumbled upon by chance.

The Pill Condensation Technique was a foundational skill for an alchemist, rarely shared with others. For Sun Jing to impart it without reservation and teach Fang Bai all she knew was a mark of her remarkable character.

If it weren't for the fact that the Pill Condensation Technique she had learned was incomplete, refining Spirit Pills would have been much easier for Sun Jing, with a far higher success rate. She could have truly become a distinguished Pill Master.

In Fang Bai's mind, the number of complete Pill Condensation Techniques he possessed was countless. Naturally, he wasn't genuinely aiming to learn Sun Jing's incomplete version.

Fang Bai's goal was to fill in the gaps of her incomplete Pill Condensation Technique and then find a way to return it to her, fulfilling her dream of becoming a Pill Master.

After teaching Fang Bai the Pill Condensation Technique, Sun Jing worried that he might not grasp it in such a short time and patiently explained it word by word. Fang Bai had no choice but to appear attentive and receptive.

"This Pill Condensation Technique is profound and mysterious but also dry and difficult. When I first obtained it, it took me years of painstaking study to fully comprehend. Fang Bai, how much have you understood? If there's anything you don't get, just ask me."

After completing her explanation, Sun Jing smiled and asked.

Fang Bai nodded and said, "I understand most of it."

Sun Jing was stunned. She thought to herself: Back then, it took me years of effort to master this Pill Condensation Technique. Yet you've understood it entirely in just a few hundred breaths?

No matter how clever you are, surely that's impossible?

"Fang Bai, this is the last batch of materials. If the pill refinement fails, my granddaughter's Martial Dao journey might be delayed by many years..."

Sun Jing looked at Fang Bai and sighed softly, "So, I hope you'll treat this task with the utmost seriousness..."

Her meaning was crystal clear: I trust you completely, and that's why I'm letting you try refining this last batch of materials. Do not take it lightly; otherwise, you will betray my trust.

Fang Bai said solemnly, "If I fail in refining the pill, I will search through all three thousand major worlds to find the Spirit Pill or Spiritual Liquid needed to heal Senior Sister Sun's injuries!"

These words were practically a vow. Hearing them, Sun Jing nodded in satisfaction and said, "With your talent, your future achievements in the Martial Dao will undoubtedly far surpass mine. So, even if this attempt at refining pills fails, I believe you will eventually find a way to cure Lin'er."

As the two prepared for the alchemy process, a disciple who served in the Palace Master Hall suddenly arrived to deliver a message. The Palace Master had summoned the senior members of Lingxu Palace for an urgent discussion and requested Sun Jing's immediate presence.

Following the disciple out, Sun Jing left with instructions for Fang Bai to stay in the alchemy room to contemplate. Once she returned, they would refine the pill together.

"Meditate on it? I don't want to waste too much time here..."

Watching Sun Jing walk into the distance, Fang Bai turned around, closed the door to the alchemy room, picked up the batch of materials, and sat cross-legged.

Now that Sun Jing was gone, Fang Bai no longer had to worry about being watched. He began refining the pill on his own.

To refine a mere mid-grade Holy Spirit Pill, Fang Bai didn't even need to use his Five Elements Origin Qi Cauldron. Instead, he utilized the pill furnace Sun Jing had placed in the alchemy room.

"Boom..."

Fang Bai pressed his palm against the furnace's surface, channeling the Fire Spirit Energy within his body into the pill furnace, causing the weak Spiritual Fire inside to blaze furiously.

Fang Bai's Fire Spirit Energy, fused with the Red Silkworm Spirit Fire, was exceptionally pure and potent. Under its influence, the previously weak flame now burned several times more fiercely than when Sun Jing was refining pills.

"Open!"

With a light shake of Fang Bai's palm, the furnace lid flew up several feet into the air, hovering midair.

Taking the opportunity, Fang Bai tossed the last batch of materials into the air. With a swift motion of his right palm, which acted like a blade, he sliced the materials into nearly two hundred pieces in an instant.

As the finely chopped pieces fell into the pill furnace, the lid descended, and Fang Bai sat cross-legged beside the furnace, beginning the alchemy process in earnest.

Encased in the furnace's ferocious flames, the nearly two hundred small pieces of material melted into medicinal liquid within just a few dozen breaths.

Fang Bai then increased the intensity of the flame. The scorching heat effortlessly removed every last trace of impurity from the medicinal liquid, leaving it crystal clear and pure.

After the materials were transformed into liquid form, the pill-condensing phase began.

For an ordinary alchemist, this phase would be lengthy and arduous. But for Fang Bai, it was a matter of around a hundred breaths.

"Condense!"

A hundred breaths later, with Fang Bai's soft command, ten perfectly rounded, emerald-green Marrow Cleansing Pills, radiating a faint misty glow, emerged fresh from the furnace.

Chapter 1419: I'm going to slaughter him!

The last batch of medicinal herbs left by Sun Jing was effortlessly refined by Fang Bai into ten medium Holy Grade Marrow Cleansing Pills.

Fang Bai placed nine of the pills into a jade bottle for his own use, while reserving the last one to give to Sun Lin later.

Fang Bai waited for a while, but seeing that Sun Jing hadn't returned, he left the Alchemy Room to head toward Sun Lin's residence.

"Fang Bai! You... you stop right there!"

Not long after stepping out, Fang Bai heard someone shout at him from behind with a hostile tone.

He turned slowly and saw Sun Li, the attendant, with a face wracked with hate and twisted fury, standing there as though prepared for a life-and-death confrontation.

Sun Li was unsettled and uneasy ever since Sun Jing temporarily borrowed Fang Bai as an attendant, fearing he might lose his precious "job."

He had stationed himself here to warn Fang Bai not to try and take his position, or he'd fight Fang Bai to the death.

As for the consequences of such actions, Sun Li, caught up in the heat of the moment, didn't give them much thought—it was all about dragging Fang Bai down.

"What is it?"

Fang Bai, who didn't hold any favorable impression of the chubby attendant, Sun Li, asked expressionlessly.

"I... you..."

Sun Li's fists alternated between clenching and relaxing, his expression changing constantly as though he were wrestling with some internal conflict.

"If you're not going to say anything, I might as well leave now."

Fang Bai said as he turned and made a motion to depart.

Sun Li shouted loudly, "Stop right there! You're not allowed to leave!"

He gathered his courage, ran up to Fang Bai, spread his arms to block Fang Bai's path, and hysterically shouted, "I've been an attendant in the Alchemy Room for five years! In these five years, I've endured countless mockeries, disdainful looks, and insults, all for the sake of securing this position. But the moment you showed up, Elder Sun started treating me coldly..."

His voice grew louder as he shouted, "The Alchemy Room attendant position is mine! Don't even think of taking it away from me! Otherwise, I'll... I'll... I'll fight you to the death!"

Though Sun Li was merely a menial disciple, five years as an attendant had allowed his cultivation to almost reach the Half-Step Foundation Establishment Realm, making him confident he had a chance against Fang Bai.

Sun Li had already decided: if Fang Bai insisted on taking the attendant position away from him, he would give it his all and fight Fang Bai to a mutual loss. He might suffer, but he wouldn't let Fang Bai get away unscathed either.

"A mere attendant position—I have no interest in it!"

Fang Bai threw these dismissive words to Sun Li and then walked forward.

Sun Li, who was blocking Fang Bai's way, suddenly felt an invisible force crashing down on him like a tidal wave. With a startled cry, his body flew backward like a falling leaf in the wind, crashing onto the ground and rolling several times before he barely managed to sit upright.

Blood dripped from the corners of his mouth, his hair and clothes were disheveled, and he looked utterly pathetic.

"How is this possible... how is this possible..."

Sun Li, pale with fright, stared at Fang Bai's retreating figure, his entire body trembling, his gaze filled with terror.

Just now, Fang Bai hadn't even lifted a finger—he had merely relied on his Martial Artist Aura to send Sun Li flying and injure him. Even Inner Court disciples couldn't do something like that.

"If he had truly struck me earlier, how could I have resisted? My life might've been over..."

Thinking about this, Sun Li shuddered uncontrollably.

.....

An hour later, Sun Jing returned from the Palace Master Hall and found the Alchemy Room empty.

"That brat Fang Bai... where did he run off to?"

Not seeing Fang Bai, Sun Jing frowned slightly, clearly displeased.

The next moment, Sun Jing noticed that her pill furnace still had residual warmth, and her heart skipped a beat as a chilling thought crossed her mind.

The possibility made Sun Jing's heart race with alarm.

"Could that brat have tried refining the Spirit Pills on his own while I was gone?"

Sun Jing muttered to herself and suddenly started scanning the Alchemy Room cautiously.

"Gone... the last batch of medicinal herbs is gone..."

Not finding the herbs, Sun Jing felt as if all the strength had drained from her, collapsing onto a meditation cushion with a vacant look in her eyes.

When she had noticed the residual warmth on the pill furnace earlier, she had already suspected Fang Bai might have attempted to refine pills in her absence. The disappearance of the last batch of herbs further confirmed her suspicions.

If Fang Bai had attempted pill refinement while Sun Jing was present, even if he ultimately failed, Sun Jing wouldn't have gotten mad—she might've merely sighed at the whims of fate and lamented the misfortune of her granddaughter.

What enraged her was that Fang Bai had previously agreed to let her guide him during refinement. Yet the moment she left, he had gone ahead and started the process on his own. Judging from the evidence, it seemed likely that he had failed.

If he had succeeded, Fang Bai would still be in the room, and the last batch of herbs wouldn't have vanished.

Fang Bai leaving before her return likely indicated he feared her wrath upon discovering his actions.

"I originally had high hopes for him, but he's truly disappointed me!"

The more Sun Jing thought about it, the angrier she became. Grinding her teeth, she declared, "That little brat better hope I don't catch him! Otherwise, he'll wish he hadn't been born!"

Sun Jing turned abruptly and sped off toward the External Courtyard Department where Fang Bai lived.

"What's wrong with Elder Sun?"

"She looks so furious... who provoked her?"

"It seems her destination is the External Courtyard Department. Could it be that some External Court disciple angered her?"

"I saw Junior Brother Fang accompanying Elder Sun to the Alchemy Hall earlier..."

"Could it be Junior Brother Fang who upset her?"

"That pretty face of his has been annoying me since he joined Lingxu Palace!"

"Exactly! Ever since that pretty-faced junior brother entered, the senior sisters and junior sisters talk about nothing but him... I really hope Elder Sun teaches him a harsh lesson!"

...

Watching Elder Sun storm through like a whirlwind, numerous External Court disciples displayed expressions of schadenfreude and whispered amongst themselves.

However, Fang Bai's immense popularity among female disciples had stirred considerable jealousy and resentment in the male disciples.

The thought of Fang Bai potentially receiving punishment from Elder Sun excited the male disciples, who cheered as if they had been invigorated, arousing disdainful glances from the female disciples.

Sun Jing arrived at Fang Bai's residence but didn't find him. Instead, she came across Shi Ming, who had joined the Lingxu Palace alongside Fang Bai.

"Shi Ming, I ask you—where's that little brat Fang Bai?"

Sun Jing barked sharply.

Shi Ming, watching the enraged and intimidating Sun Jing, shrank his neck and said, "Fang Bai said he... went to see Senior Sister Sun..."

"Why did he go there?"

Sun Jing immediately exploded in rage, thinking that the little brat might've gone to Sun Lin to confess about having ruined all four batches of herbs.

Lin'er's body was already weak due to injuries—how could she bear such news?

Sun Jing trembled with anger, her teeth grinding audibly.

"Uh... Fang Bai went to..."

"Brat! Brat! I'm going to kill him! Kill him!"

Before Shi Ming could finish speaking, Sun Jing turned and departed, instantly vanishing from Shi Ming's sight.

"... deliver pills to Senior Sister Sun."

It was only after Sun Jing had left in a rage, her blood boiling, that Shi Ming completed his sentence.

Unfortunately, caught in the fury of the moment, Sun Jing hadn't heard the latter half of his words.

Chapter 1420: From Little Rascal to Genius

Sun Jing, whose rage had reached its peak, surged towards her granddaughter's bamboo residence, carrying a menacing aura.

Along the way, many disciples of the External Courtyard were terrified by Sun Jing's killing qi and quickly avoided her, fearing they might be implicated.

Sun Jing arrived at the bamboo house within mere dozen breaths, covering the distance of several thousand meters separating it from Fang Bai's residence.

"Fang Bai, get out here!"

In the small bamboo house, Sun Jing simultaneously detected the presence of Fang Bai and her granddaughter. Anxious and furious, she shouted loudly without waiting to enter the house.

Sun Jing feared that Fang Bai might have already told her granddaughter about the complete ruin of the four sets of medicinal ingredients before she arrived. This would bring multiple emotional blows to her granddaughter — an outcome she dared not imagine.

Sun Jing's shout carried a thread of oppressive force, rolling through like distant thunder, alarming small spirit beasts within several kilometers of forest and grassland as they scattered and fled.

Yet, the two people inside the bamboo house appeared completely unfazed.

Sun Jing's heart skipped a beat with growing unease, worried her granddaughter might be in danger. Without hesitation, she rushed to the bamboo house door and blasted it open with a palm strike.

"You little brat, you... you... what are you..."

Charging into the bamboo house, Sun Jing froze in shock. The scene before her was completely different from what she had imagined, leaving her dumbfounded with confusion.

Her granddaughter, Sun Lin, was seated cross-legged on the bamboo bed, holding a crystal-clear elixir and preparing to place it into her mouth.

Meanwhile, Fang Bai sat on a bamboo chair opposite the bamboo bed, his eyes closed, seemingly resting.

The abrupt intrusion startled the two within the bamboo house, but their reactions were very different.

"Grandma? Why have you come here?"

Sun Lin was first startled, but soon joy and excitement lit up her face as she leapt off the bamboo bed and lunged towards Sun Jing.

"Elder Sun, the 'little brat' you're referring to shouldn't be me, right?"

Fang Bai opened his eyes, rose from the bamboo chair, and pointed at his own nose.

Sun Jing snorted coldly, ignoring Fang Bai, and embraced her granddaughter tightly, gently patting her back before taking a step back to scrutinize her.

"Lin'er, that little brat Fang Bai... he didn't say anything to you just now, did he?"

Seeing that her granddaughter showed no trace of sadness, but instead radiated indescribable joy, Sun Jing breathed an audible sigh of relief. She realized Fang Bai hadn't shared the news of the ruined four sets of medicinal ingredients; otherwise, her granddaughter's expression wouldn't be like this.

Sun Lin said, "Are you referring to the matter of the spirit pill? Junior Brother Fang already told me about it earlier!"

"What?"

Sun Jing was momentarily stunned. "He told you? Then why are you not... why aren't you upset?"

"Why would I be upset?"

Sun Lin blinked in confusion. "I'm too happy to be upset!"

"Happy... happy?"

Sun Jing was utterly baffled. She couldn't make sense of the situation. If the four sets of medicinal ingredients had been ruined, it would be impossible to refine the Marrow Cleansing Pill. Even if her granddaughter weren't distressed, how could she be happy?

"Oh my, this child... Could it be that she's so heartbroken she's become mentally unstable?"

Sun Jing grew panicked and pulled Sun Lin back into her arms, trembling as she spoke, "Lin'er, don't scare Grandma... You must stay well!"

Sun Lin let out a bitter smile. "Grandma, I'm really fine... But it's you acting so strange today. What's going on?"

After exchanging a few more words with her granddaughter and confirming she wasn't emotionally devastated or mentally impaired, Sun Jing finally let out another long sigh of relief.

Fang Bai, standing silently nearby, watched the pair with a smile and said nothing.

"Lin'er, what did Fang Bai say about the spirit pill earlier? How did he explain it?"

Most of Sun Jing's anger had dissipated by now. Glancing at Fang Bai, she turned to ask her granddaughter.

Sun Lin, beaming with happiness, brought out the elixir she had been about to consume earlier, holding it in her palm. "He told me about this Marrow Cleansing Pill, of course! Fang Bai said he inadvertently refined a Saint-grade middle-quality Marrow Cleansing Pill in your alchemy room, and then brought it over for me to use..."

"A Saint-grade middle-quality Marrow Cleansing Pill? This... this can't be possible!"

Sun Jing, who had previously been focused entirely on her granddaughter, hadn't noticed the elixir in her hand. Now that she saw it, her gaze froze, and she was utterly astounded.

The elixir, crystal-clear and verdant green, emitted strands of spiritual energy accompanied by a faint medicinal fragrance.

Even though Sun Jing herself couldn't refine a Saint-grade middle-quality Marrow Cleansing Pill, she had seen one before and instantly recognized the elixir in her granddaughter's hand as exactly that — the very spirit pill that she had dreamed of crafting.

"Fang Bai, this elixir... did you truly refine this yourself?"

Sun Jing turned to Fang Bai with a question heavy with disbelief and trembling emotion.

"Yes, I refined it myself!"

Fang Bai nodded in confirmation.

"Quick, tell me — how did you manage to refine this?"

Sun Jing grew impatient and hurriedly pressed Fang Bai for answers.

Sun Jing couldn't fathom how Fang Bai, who had just learned the Pill Condensation Technique from her, could possibly refine an elixir without repeated practice. And even if he had succeeded by sheer luck on his first attempt, how could the result be a Saint-grade middle-quality spirit pill?

Having anticipated Sun Jing's curiosity, Fang Bai calmly replied, "After you left the alchemy room, I carefully contemplated the Pill Condensation Technique you taught me. I felt it was a bit lacking in certain aspects. So, I made some minor adjustments and tried refining the pill according to my own

ideas. In the end, I managed to produce this Marrow Cleansing Pill... Alas, I only managed to create one spirit pill from an entire set of ingredients — such a failure!"

This little brat... I wasted all four sets of medicinal ingredients, yet with just one set, you managed to refine a Saint-grade middle-quality spirit pill — and you call that a failure?

A novice alchemist, on his very first attempt, surpasses countless experienced pill masters from the myriad worlds by refining a Saint-grade spirit pill — and this is failure?

This is obviously a miracle, isn't it?

As she watched Fang Bai sigh and shake his head as though disappointed, Sun Jing couldn't help but feel an urge to berate him and give him a good thrashing.

Yet, such thoughts were fleeting. With Fang Bai having refined a Saint-grade middle-quality spirit pill, there was no way she could bring herself to lift a hand against him.

In the Spirit Martial Realm, alchemists were abundant, but those capable of refining Saint-grade middle-quality spirit pills were exceedingly rare. Even in sects far stronger than Lingxu Palace, alchemists who could accomplish this were few and far between.

And Fang Bai, merely after hearing her explain the refining process and learning the Pill Condensation Technique from her, not only modified it on his own, but also refined a pill of this caliber.

This wasn't just luck — it was an undeniable sign that Fang Bai possessed unparalleled genius in alchemy!

Sun Jing could already foresee Fang Bai's future — he would undoubtedly become the greatest hope for Lingxu Palace's rise!

Such a "treasure" needed to be cherished, not harmed.

Reflecting on her earlier misunderstanding of Fang Bai, and even her intention to harshly punish him, Sun Jing felt her old face flush with shame. She felt fortunate she hadn't acted impulsively and lost control of her reasoning.

Otherwise, Fang Bai might have grown resentful towards her and possibly left Lingxu Palace. Such a loss would have been immeasurable.