

Doctor 1421

Chapter 1421: Waves Are Rising

With a Holy Grade medium Marrow Cleansing Pill, there is hope for Sun Lin's recovery from her injuries, and Sun Jing was in an indescribably good mood, increasingly finding Fang Bai pleasing to the eye.

Watching her granddaughter swallow the Marrow Cleansing Pill and letting her enter seclusion in the bamboo house for deep cultivation, Sun Jing then signaled to Fang Bai with a glance, and the two of them walked out of the bamboo house together.

"Fang Bai, this..."

Walking ten or so zhang away from the bamboo house, Sun Jing finally stopped, turned around to look at Fang Bai, as if she wanted to say something but found it difficult to speak.

"Elder Sun wants to ask me about the Pill Condensation Technique, right?"

Fang Bai asked with a smile.

Sun Jing blurted out, "How did you know?"

Being caught by Fang Bai in her thoughts, she couldn't help but feel a bit embarrassed.

Fang Bai said, "I guessed. But it turns out my guess was correct!"

Sun Jing smiled wryly and said, "That's right, you guessed correctly... I really want to know, how did you modify the Pill Condensation Technique to successfully refine the Marrow Cleansing Pill? Of course, this is your privacy, it's fine if you don't want to say."

Even though Sun Jing said that, she naturally hoped very much that Fang Bai would tell her the revised Pill Condensation Technique.

Fang Bai successfully refining the Holy Grade medium elixir proved that his revised Pill Condensation Technique was more perfect. Sun Jing thought that if she could learn it, maybe she too could have the opportunity to refine a Holy Grade medium Spirit Pill.

Even if she couldn't refine a Holy Grade medium Spirit Pill, greatly increasing the success rate of refining Holy Grade low-tier Spirit Pills was also a very good thing.

But Fang Bai also knew how important a perfect Pill Condensation Technique was to an Alchemist. In the hands of other Alchemists, it would definitely be a top-secret skill. If Fang Bai really refused to pass it on, Sun Jing would have no choice.

With Sun Jing's character, she couldn't bring herself to use her power to forcefully suppress Fang Bai, making him disclose the Pill Condensation Technique.

Fang Bai had learned the Pill Condensation Technique from Sun Jing in the past, intending to perfect it and then return it to her. So even if Sun Jing didn't ask, he would have mentioned it voluntarily.

Without wasting words, Fang Bai explained his perfected version of the Pill Condensation Technique to Sun Jing.

Fang Bai's perfected Pill Condensation Technique transformed complexity into simplicity, changing difficulty to ease. Sun Jing understood immediately as she listened, and given her prior deep understanding of the technique, she completely comprehended it after just one hearing.

"Fang Bai, I'll leave things here to you. I'm heading to the Alchemy Room to try it out..."

After listening to Fang Bai's description of the Pill Condensation Technique, Sun Jing was filled with "alchemy," and unable to contain her excitement, she hastily instructed Fang Bai before rushing away without waiting for her granddaughter's healing to conclude.

The Holy Grade medium Marrow Cleansing Pill indeed proved extraordinarily effective. After half a day, Sun Lin emerged from the bamboo house, her injuries mostly healed. With some more rest, she would fully recover and could return to the Martial Dao path, resuming her cultivation.

Sun Lin, emerging from the bamboo house, wept tears that fell like rain, yet her face bore a brilliant smile.

Having spent years wasted, finally returning to the Martial Dao path was nothing short of a rebirth for Sun Lin.

Thus, Sun Lin's gratitude toward Fang Bai was beyond words.

Fang Bai smiled as he watched Sun Lin approach, cupping his hands in salute, "Congratulations, Senior Sister Sun!"

Sun Lin took a deep breath, wiped away her tears, and bowed deeply to Fang Bai, "Thank you, Junior Brother Fang!"

Fang Bai responded, "We are all fellow disciples, no need to be so formal! Rest well, Senior Sister Sun, I'm taking my leave now."

Although Sun Lin's injuries were almost healed, she would still need to enter seclusion for several days to fully consolidate her somewhat fragile meridians and blood vessels from these years before restarting her cultivation path.

Understanding her condition, Sun Lin didn't try to keep him, insisting on accompanying Fang Bai to the mountain path ahead and watching him leave before returning to her small bamboo house.

On the way back, as she passed the Practice Battle Arena of the External Courtyard Department, she noticed a bustling crowd, with hundreds of disciples gathered in a large circle, watching something intently.

Fang Bai initially intended to skirt around the edge of the Practice Battle to return to his residence, but after walking a few steps, he heard several cries of anguish and sensed several familiar Martial Artist Auras.

Frowning, Fang Bai turned around and strode toward the crowd gathered in the Practice Battle Arena.

He parted the crowd and quickly squeezed into the innermost layer, seeing Huang Zhong, a menial servant who often brought him meals, lying on the ground, his face bruised and swollen. Another Martial Artist, with his back to Fang Bai, had him pinned down with a foot on his back, rendering Huang Zhong immobile.

Not far from Huang Zhong, a wooden box lay askew on the ground, its contents of Solomon's Seal, Polygonum multiflorum, Poria, and other Spiritual Medicines scattered all over, dirty with dust.

Fang Bai knew the Solomon's Seal and other Spiritual Medicines in that box were meant for him and Shi Ming, but somehow Huang Zhong had a conflict with someone here, resulting in a clearly one-sided and brutal outcome.

The Martial Artist stepping on Huang Zhong's back was much stronger than Huang Zhong. Even though he had his back to Fang Bai, Fang Bai could tell at a glance that this Martial Artist was Ye Renjie, who once held titles like "first handsome man of the External Courtyard" and "number one in the Combat Power Ranking of the External Courtyard."

However, since Fang Bai joined the Lingxu Palace, the title of "first handsome man of the External Courtyard" fell to Fang Bai.

This displeased Ye Renjie, who had always been arrogant and dismissive, every time he saw Fang Bai, he would either give him cold looks or ignore him entirely.

For such trivial matters, Fang Bai naturally couldn't be bothered to bicker with Ye Renjie.

Ye Renjie, with a foot on Huang Zhong's back, kept insulting him with demeaning words, occasionally twisting his foot viciously on Huang Zhong's back, eliciting cries of pain from him.

"As a dignified External Courtyard disciple, bullying a menial servant who delivers meals, and doing so in front of so many fellow disciples, aren't you ashamed?"

Fang Bai stepped forward, speaking coldly with his eyes on Ye Renjie's back.

The External Courtyard disciples present showed expressions eager to watch the drama unfold, seeing Fang Bai defending Huang Zhong.

"Senior Brother Ye has been at the top of the Combat Power Ranking for many years, whereas Junior Brother Fang is a rising star of the External Courtyards, highly esteemed by Elder Wu of the External Affairs Hall and Elder Sun of the Elixir Hall. How will this confrontation turn out?"

"Senior Brother Ye has always been strong, with great prowess. I guess Junior Brother Fang will ultimately be the one to retreat!"

"Not necessarily! Junior Brother Fang has never fought since entering Lingxu Palace. Maybe he'll surprise everyone and defeat Senior Brother Ye?"

"That's highly unlikely!"

"Let's wait and see!"

...

Some of the onlooking disciples murmured in low voices, their faces showing excitement.

Ye Renjie and Fang Bai, both External Courtyard disciples, each had their strengths, and any conflict between them would inevitably be a rare intense battle in recent years within the External Courtyard Department.

The long-calm External Courtyard was about to be stirred up by this commotion.

Chapter 1422: The Calmer, The More Dangerous

Ye Renjie had been feeling quite irritated lately.

Originally, among the nearly ten thousand disciples of the External Courtyard Department, Ye Renjie was the center of attention. Normally, when disciples from the External Courtyard Department—especially

the female disciples—chatted, aside from topics about cultivation techniques and martial arts, their conversations almost always revolved around him.

Ye Renjie greatly enjoyed the feeling of being admired and worshipped by others.

Especially when he overheard female disciples say things like "Senior Brother Ye is so handsome" or "Senior Brother Ye is amazing," he would feel elated, as if intoxicated.

However, ever since Fang Bai entered the External Courtyard Department, Ye Renjie realized he was no longer the "centerpiece." Gradually, topics concerning Fang Bai began to dominate the conversations among the disciples.

What Ye Renjie found most intolerable was that Fang Bai's arrival not only stole his title as the "most handsome man in the External Courtyard," but even his reputation as the "strongest in the External Courtyard power rankings" was being called into question.

This made Ye Renjie extremely irritated and furious. He kept thinking of ways to teach Fang Bai a lesson to reestablish his authority in the department.

Yet Fang Bai, after entering the Lingxu Palace, remained low-key, and Ye Renjie had yet to find a suitable opportunity or excuse to act against him.

Ye Renjie discovered that External Courtyard disciples Shi Ming and Zheng Hong, as well as the menial servant disciple Huang Zhong, maintained good relations with Fang Bai. He then decided to use these three as a starting point to manufacture a chance to punish Fang Bai.

Among the three, Shi Ming and Zheng Hong were both External Courtyard disciples of comparable strength to Ye Renjie. In particular, Shi Ming, who had an Innate Earth Spirit Root and was a personal transmission disciple of Elder Gong from the Classics Hall, was someone Ye Renjie didn't want to offend.

Only Huang Zhong, as a menial servant disciple, was weak in cultivation and lacked any backing in the Lingxu Palace, making him an easy target for bullying.

Thus, Ye Renjie set his sights on Huang Zhong.

Ye Renjie tracked Huang Zhong's routine of delivering meals to Fang Bai and Shi Ming and waited at the Practice Battle Arena today. When Huang Zhong passed through the arena, Ye Renjie raised his voice and made sarcastic remarks targeting Fang Bai.

In the past, Huang Zhong would have never dared to offend Ye Renjie. But after receiving Fang Bai's guidance, Huang Zhong had made substantial progress in understanding the Martial Dao and improved significantly in strength. Deeply grateful to Fang Bai, he regarded Fang Bai as a figure akin to a mentor.

Upon hearing Ye Renjie speak ill of Fang Bai, Huang Zhong, overcome with righteous indignation, couldn't help but step forward to defend Fang Bai, only to find himself attacked by Ye Renjie. Ye Renjie knocked him down, stomped on his back, and humiliated him to the extreme.

Ye Renjie's initial plan was that after punishing Huang Zhong, Fang Bai would hear about it and step forward to defend him, giving Ye Renjie the opportunity to severely teach Fang Bai a lesson. But he hadn't expected Fang Bai to stumble upon the scene directly.

Upon hearing Fang Bai's voice behind him, Ye Renjie felt a moment of joy, thinking, "I've gone to great lengths to lure you out, and now you've delivered yourself to me—it saves me the trouble!"

"So what if I bully him?"

Ye Renjie kept one foot firmly planted on Huang Zhong's back, turned his head to look at Fang Bai, and asked provocatively.

"Huang Zhong, what's going on?"

Fang Bai ignored Ye Renjie, his gaze fixed on Huang Zhong's face.

Huang Zhong's originally fair and delicate face was now bruised and swollen to the point where his features were barely distinguishable. Fortunately, his injuries were only superficial and would heal after three to five days of rest.

Since Lingxu Palace did not permit disciples to harm each other heavily, Ye Renjie hadn't dared to use excessive force when punishing Huang Zhong, focusing more on psychological humiliation.

"Senior Brother Fang, I was bringing meals to you and Senior Brother Shi Ming earlier when I heard Ye Renjie speaking ill of you. Unable to tolerate his words, I spoke up to defend you, and then he attacked me..."

Huang Zhong was, after all, only a sixteen or seventeen-year-old boy. Humiliated in front of so many External Courtyard disciples, he felt both angry and aggrieved but tried to show strength, refusing to display any weakness in front of his peers.

Upon seeing Fang Bai, a sense of reliance seemed to wash over Huang Zhong. His eyes reddened instantly, and a trace of sobbing entered his voice as he spoke.

"Haha... Huang Zhong, weren't you the tough guy earlier? What's this—crying now?"

"A sixteen or seventeen-year-old man crying? How shameful!"

"Men bleed but don't tear up! As Martial Artists, we would rather die than cry. You, boy, are destined to always be a menial servant disciple in this lifetime!"

...

A few External Courtyard disciples close to Ye Renjie laughed unruly, pointing at Huang Zhong as they ridiculed him.

Among the crowd of watching External Courtyard disciples, some showed sympathy and pity, others reveled in the misfortune, but most turned their eyes toward Fang Bai.

In the group of External Courtyard disciples, there were no shortage of sharp minds. They realized that this incident, on the surface, looked like Ye Renjie punishing Huang Zhong but was actually aimed at provoking Fang Bai.

With Fang Bai's appearance, the conflict between Ye Renjie and Huang Zhong seemed likely to escalate into a confrontation between Ye Renjie and Fang Bai.

"I didn't cry!"

Amid the laughter and ridicule of those External Courtyard disciples, Huang Zhong frantically raised his arm, wiped his face vigorously, and refuted loudly.

He struggled with all his might, attempting to free himself from Ye Renjie's foot on his back.

"Stay put!"

Ye Renjie pressed down hard with his foot, fiercely stomping on Huang Zhong. Huang Zhong let out an "Ah!" as his body was forced flat against the ground, unable to move an inch.

"When I first entered Lingxu Palace, I heard tales of Ye Renjie, Senior Brother Ye, being narrow-minded, petty, and vengeful. I didn't believe it at first, but today I see you live up to the reputation!"

Fang Bai glanced at Huang Zhong, who was pinned to the ground, then shifted his gaze back to Ye Renjie's face, his emotions strangely calm.

Those who knew Fang Bai well understood that the calmer he appeared, the more dangerous he became.

"A mere new disciple dares disrespect me, his Senior Brother? Very well. Today, I shall teach you a lesson to make you remember this! Even if Elder Wu learns about this, he will have nothing to say!"

Ye Renjie, having struggled to find a reason to act against Fang Bai, grinned sinisterly. With a vicious kick, he sent Huang Zhong flying several meters away, then strode forward toward Fang Bai.

As Ye Renjie approached, an overwhelming oppressive aura of a Half-Step Foundation Establishment expert pulsed out from him.

"Senior Brother Ye's pressure is so strong—looks like he's improved again!"

"No wonder he's ranked first on the Inner Courtyard strength board—his reputation is well-deserved!"

"Junior Brother Fang Bai's Martial Artist aura is clearly much weaker. He's bound to suffer greatly in this fight!"

"Standing up for a menial servant disciple? He's digging his own grave!"

...

The External Courtyard disciples watching this scene felt the intense killing intent and pulsing battle spirit emanating from Ye Renjie. Fearing they might be caught in the conflict, they quickly retreated, clearing a spacious area several tens of meters across.

"Ye Renjie, your opponent is me!"

Huang Zhong struggled to his feet, his eyes filled with fury, and with a roar charged madly toward Ye Renjie.

Chapter 1423: Is This All You've Got?

In Huang Zhong's mind, today's matter was caused by himself, and should be resolved between him and Ye Renjie. There was no reason for Fang Bai to suffer because of it.

Huang Zhong knew Fang Bai was very powerful. This had been evident ever since Fang Bai guided him on cultivation techniques and martial arts.

However, Huang Zhong was uncertain if Fang Bai could truly defeat Ye Renjie.

Given Ye Renjie's character, if Fang Bai were to win, there would be no problem. But if Fang Bai lost, he would certainly be humiliated ruthlessly. In Lingxu Palace from then on, Fang Bai might never be able to hold his head up high again.

Therefore, Huang Zhong decided that even if he had to sustain grave injuries, he would do all he could to exhaust Ye Renjie's spiritual energy, making it impossible for Ye Renjie to face Fang Bai in battle.

"Huang Zhong, stand back!"

Fang Bai's voice reverberated like a spring thunder, issuing an imposing shout toward Huang Zhong.

His voice transformed into sound waves, making Huang Zhong's ears buzz incessantly and causing a brief dizziness in his head.

Huang Zhong's body swayed, instinctively halting his forward momentum.

"Leave this matter to me! However Ye Renjie humiliated you, I shall humiliate him in turn and seek justice for you!"

Fang Bai spoke with assurance, casting a calming look at Huang Zhong.

Huang Zhong opened his mouth, wanting to say something, but ultimately nodded forcefully, retreating quietly to his original position.

"Humiliate me? Hahaha..."

Ye Renjie, hearing Fang Bai's words, laughed instead of becoming angry and said, "You brazen, ignorant brat! Do you even understand your own worth? Let's see how exactly you plan to humiliate me! How will you stand up for that menial disciple?!"

Before his voice had even fully fallen, Ye Renjie had charged forward and, raising his hand, unleashed a powerful punch toward Fang Bai.

Ye Renjie cultivated golden system techniques. As his fist struck forward, a spear made of pure white golden spirit energy materialized, dragging an intense, dazzling white radiance. With a shrill sonic boom, it shot toward Fang Bai's right shoulder like a bolt of white lightning.

The attack was overwhelming, seemingly unstoppable. It gave off the impression that even a wall of solid bronze would be penetrated by this single strike.

"As expected from the top-ranked combatant in the External Courtyard! Senior Brother Ye's offensive power is truly remarkable! This strike seems to have reached the peak of a Half-Step Foundation Establishment expert. Junior Brother Fang might not be able to withstand it!"

The disciples of the External Courtyard who were observing couldn't help but have such thoughts.

Even Huang Zhong's face displayed a look of shock, and he secretly clenched his fists anxiously for Fang Bai.

If Ye Renjie's strike landed, it might not take Fang Bai's life, but it would leave him significantly injured and immediately reduce his combat effectiveness by more than half.

As both were External Courtyard disciples and Half-Step Foundation Establishment experts, losing more than half of one's combat ability meant inevitable defeat.

At that moment, Ye Renjie could revel in the pleasure of humiliating Fang Bai.

Evidently, Ye Renjie had also envisioned this outcome. As he imagined Fang Bai in the same humiliating state as Huang Zhong—trampled underfoot by his own hand—a trace of smugness curled at the corner of his lips.

Seeking justice for Huang Zhong? Keep dreaming!

Humiliate me? You're far from worthy!

Not far away, some of Ye Renjie's followers wore expressions of excitement, some even preparing to cheer in anticipation of the outcome.

Everyone in Lingxu Palace knew that Fang Bai possessed an innate Fire Spirit Root. Therefore, when Fang Bai faced his opponents, he predominantly employed fire-based techniques and martial arts.

Expressionless, Fang Bai stared at the white spear of golden spirit energy aimed toward his right shoulder. It wasn't until the tip was merely a fraction of a foot away from him that his lips curved slightly into an almost imperceptible smirk. At the speed of thought, fire spirit energy rapidly accumulated before him, forming a three-foot-tall flame shield, directly blocking the incoming spear's path.

"Thud!"

The spear struck the flame shield with a dull sound, resembling the sensation of sinking into soft, deep soil.

Immediately, the spear and the flame shield trembled violently before simultaneously fading into nothingness.

The dispersing golden and fire spirit energies caused subtle ripples to spread through the surrounding space for several meters.

"How is this possible?!"

Seeing his supposedly unstoppable golden spear dissipated by Fang Bai's fire shield, Ye Renjie froze, disbelief etched across his face.

"Senior Brother Ye is invincible!"

Those who had assumed the spear was about to secure the win and began cheering for Ye Renjie found their cries abruptly cut short, as though their throats were seized mid-sentence.

Huang Zhong let out a long sigh of relief and then realized that his robes were soaked through with sweat from nervousness and anxiety.

In their offense and defense, initially, no one expected Fang Bai to stand a chance. However, once the fire shield successfully blocked Ye Renjie's overwhelming assault, many of the External Courtyard disciples began reassessing the outcome. They pondered if the title of the number one combatant in the External Courtyard would soon change hands.

"Is this all you've got?"

Looking at Ye Renjie, who appeared momentarily stunned, Fang Bai sneered with a faint smile. "So this is the so-called top fighter of the External Courtyard? I expected more from you. Senior Brother Ye, you've truly let me down!"

Ye Renjie, like a cat whose tail had been stepped on, immediately bristled and snapped angrily, "That was just a casual strike! If you couldn't handle that, you wouldn't even deserve to remain in the External Courtyard! Now, I'll show you my real strength!"

As he spoke, his left hand raised, and the space ring on his finger flickered with light. Immediately, a buzzing sound reminiscent of a dragon's roar emanated, and a three-foot-long sword glowing with a dazzling rainbow hue flew out from the space ring.

"Senior Brother Ye has unleashed the Rainbow Sword!"

"He's treating Junior Brother Fang as a serious opponent now!"

"With the Rainbow Sword in play, Senior Brother Ye's combat power has increased by at least thirty percent! Junior Brother Fang may have blocked the first strike, but he might not withstand the second!"

"Not necessarily! Senior Brother Ye has a spiritual artifact, but doesn't Junior Brother Fang as well?"

"Exactly! I'm betting on Junior Brother Fang!"

"Senior Brother Ye will definitely win!"

"Junior Brother Fang will prevail!"

...

Ye Renjie summoning the spiritual artifact Rainbow Sword to battle Fang Bai stirred up a lively buzz among the martial artists in the audience.

Some believed Fang Bai couldn't possibly withstand the power of the Rainbow Sword, and Ye Renjie's victory was certain.

Others argued Fang Bai likely had his own arsenal of spiritual artifacts to counter Ye Renjie.

Supporters of Ye Renjie were predominantly male disciples.

Meanwhile, Fang Bai's admirers were largely female disciples.

"Rainbow Sword... attack!"

Ye Renjie directed the Rainbow Sword with his Divine Sense, pointing it toward where Fang Bai stood.

The Rainbow Sword, being a holy-grade spiritual artifact, carried a faint trace of sentience. Under Ye Renjie's control, it moved effortlessly, as naturally as if it were an extension of his own hand.

Under Ye Renjie's mental command, the sharp and unstoppable Rainbow Sword tore through the air with a fierce aura, aiming once more for Fang Bai's right shoulder.

Although Ye Renjie was overcome with seething rage, he dared not critically injure Fang Bai. If the upper echelons of the palace pursued the incident, Ye Renjie would assuredly face severe punishment.

Particularly with Elder Wu Zhihua, who was notoriously protective, should he find out that his chosen Direct Disciple had been gravely injured, Ye Renjie would undoubtedly pay a hefty price.

Fang Bai possessed a furnace cauldron known as the Five Elements Origin Qi Cauldron, which he serendipitously obtained in a worldly Heavenly Pit. Elder Sun Lin was aware of this.

Thus, to counter Ye Renjie's Rainbow Sword, Fang Bai decided to utilize the Five Elements Origin Qi Cauldron, ensuring it didn't seem out of place.

Chapter 1424: Shattered Rock Leg

Fang Bai's mind stirred slightly, and the Five Elements Origin Qi Cauldron, exuding an ancient aura, floated before him.

The Five Elements Origin Qi Cauldron appeared simplistic and worn, with patches of rust on its surface, yet it was imbued with an overwhelming presence, as if a peerless powerhouse had descended, enveloping the surroundings in oppressive might.

"That furnace cauldron... is Junior Brother Fang's spiritual artifact?"

"Martial artists who use furnace cauldrons as spiritual artifacts are quite rare!"

"That cauldron looks heavy and cumbersome, but the pressure it emits is immensely strong!"

"Compared to Senior Brother Ye's Rainbow Sword, Junior Brother Fang's furnace cauldron seems like a tiger overshadowing a sparrow!"

"Even though Junior Brother Fang's cultivation level is lower than Senior Brother Ye's, with the assistance of that cauldron, he stands in an undefeatable position!"

"Not necessarily! That cauldron doesn't appear to be an ordinary spiritual artifact. If Junior Brother Fang's cultivation level isn't high enough, he might not be able to unleash its true power!"

"Let's wait and see!"

...

The moment Fang Bai introduced the Five Elements Origin Qi Cauldron, the external courtyard disciples of Lingxu Palace who were observing the fight were immediately awestruck and began discussing in whispers.

Inside Fang Bai's spatial ring at this moment were the Blood-Drinking Mad Blade, Houyi Bow, and the Five Elements Origin Qi Cauldron—each an exceptional divine artifact.

However, Fang Bai currently had no way of fully comprehending the true grades of these artifacts, let alone the external courtyard disciples merely watching the spectacle.

To them, the furnace cauldron Fang Bai displayed was evidently extraordinary, but none could have imagined that it was an artifact capable of effortlessly subduing a Great Emperor of the Immortal Realm.

Even Elder Sun Jing of Lingxu Palace, when she saw Fang Bai summon the Five Elements Origin Qi Cauldron some time ago, believed it to be on par with her own Pill Furnace, merely a holy-grade spiritual artifact.

This misunderstanding was unsurprising. After all, Elder Sun was only a Foundation Establishment Expert, and her cultivation level determined the limits of her perspective, making it impossible for her to sense the vast spiritual energy contained within the cauldron.

Naturally, given Fang Bai's current cultivation level, he lacked the ability to securely protect himself in the Spirit Martial Realm, and thus he decided to reveal only the Five Elements Origin Qi Cauldron.

As for the other artifacts, unless the situation grew desperate, Fang Bai would never expose them easily to avoid catching the attention of powerhouses and inviting calamity.

Fang Bai's cultivation level was but Half-Step Foundation Establishment, placing him at the lower ranks among Spirit Martial Realm martial artists. That he possessed an artifact such as the Five Elements Origin Qi Cauldron was already seen by many as an extraordinary stroke of fortune.

If Fang Bai were to display multiple artifacts on par with the Five Elements Origin Qi Cauldron, he would undoubtedly incur widespread envy and hostility.

In truth, defeating someone of Ye Renjie's cultivation could be easily accomplished with just one hand, but doing so would undoubtedly attract excessive attention, causing uproar among the disciples of Lingxu Palace and making Fang Bai a focus of public scrutiny, robbing him of peace.

This ran counter to Fang Bai's original intention when he joined Lingxu Palace.

Fang Bai's initial goal in entering Lingxu Palace was merely to find a temporary sanctuary, to quietly cultivate for a period using its resources.

Once he gained sufficient strength to protect himself, Fang Bai planned to leave Lingxu Palace under some pretext and journey throughout the Three Thousand Worlds.

By using spiritual artifacts rather than his physical skills, Fang Bai aimed to defeat Ye Renjie. If victorious, people would attribute it to the artifact's power rather than Fang Bai's own strength, reducing attention and scrutiny on him.

Thus, facing Ye Renjie's attack, Fang Bai immediately utilized the Five Elements Origin Qi Cauldron.

He planned to suppress Ye Renjie with the cauldron, forcing him to kneel beneath his feet and utterly extinguishing his arrogance.

Though Fang Bai was low-key, that did not mean he lacked temper.

This battle wasn't just about seeking justice for Huang Zhong. Fang Bai also intended to use it to send a message to the external courtyard disciples of Lingxu Palace: Fang Bai is not someone to be trifled with!

The moment Fang Bai unveiled the Five Elements Origin Qi Cauldron, Ye Renjie, standing opposite him, immediately felt an immense oppressive force, as if facing a thousand-foot mountain looming overhead.

Though he sensed danger, Ye Renjie's control over the Rainbow Sword wasn't yet perfect. He could only watch as the sword ripped through the air and continued its forward strike.

Ye Renjie never anticipated Fang Bai would summon such a formidable artifact, and he was acutely aware that this battle might no longer bode well for him.

The thought of his potential defeat sent a chill down Ye Renjie's spine.

"I have no choice but to go all out!"

Ye Renjie's eyes flashed fiercely, and he stomped hard on the ground, propelling himself forward. He followed the Rainbow Sword, hurtling toward Fang Bai.

"Clang!"

The loud, deafening sound of metal collision reverberated as the Rainbow Sword struck Fang Bai's Five Elements Origin Qi Cauldron. Sparks flew, and spiritual energy surged outward.

"Broken! Senior Brother Ye's Rainbow Sword is broken!"

Sharp-eyed external courtyard disciples cried out in shock.

All eyes focused, and they saw the Rainbow Sword, after colliding with the cauldron at high speed, shatter into several fragments mid-air and fall to the ground, like a fragile twig snapped under pressure.

The disparity in power between the artifacts was abundantly clear.

"Fang Bai, die!"

The Rainbow Sword had been Ye Renjie's prized spiritual artifact, obtained through great effort. It was this weapon's might that had allowed Ye Renjie to maintain his dominance atop Lingxu Palace's "External Courtyard Power Rankings" for years.

With the destruction of the Rainbow Sword, Ye Renjie was overwhelmed with anguish and hate, directing his wrath completely toward Fang Bai.

"Shattered Rock Leg!"

With a furious roar, Ye Renjie launched himself into the air like an erupting cannon and descended sharply, his right leg resembling an iron bar weighing thousands of pounds. It carried relentless golden spiritual energy, tearing through the sky as it aimed mercilessly at Fang Bai standing below.

This technique, "Shattered Rock Leg," was Ye Renjie's most formidable martial skill. Combined with his high-speed aerial strike, its power multiplied significantly.

Almost simultaneously with the shattering of the Rainbow Sword, Ye Renjie's attack followed close behind.

In the eyes of many observing external courtyard disciples, Fang Bai had focused his energy on controlling the Five Elements Origin Qi Cauldron and defending against the Rainbow Sword's attack. Ye Renjie's "Shattered Rock Leg" seemed poised to strike Fang Bai defenseless, without respite.

Ye Renjie held the same expectation.

Enraged by the destruction of the Rainbow Sword, Ye Renjie thought to himself that if Fang Bai destroyed his artifact, then he would take Fang Bai's in turn. As long as he could coerce Fang Bai into revealing the method to control the cauldron, Ye Renjie could reclaim his supremacy in the external courtyard.

"Whoosh..."

The "Shattered Rock Leg" descended upon Fang Bai, stirring fierce gusts of wind that disheveled his hair and caused his clothes to billow loudly.

The ground beneath Fang Bai's feet, under the intense pressure of Ye Renjie's strike, spiderwebbed with countless fine cracks extending outward in all directions.

The only object unaffected was the Five Elements Origin Qi Cauldron hovering steadfastly before Fang Bai, unmoving like an unshakable mountain.

"If Ye Renjie's target was me, I would likely perish on the spot. I wonder if Senior Brother Fang can withstand it?"

Huang Zhong clenched his fists tightly, his heart racing once again.

The other watching external courtyard disciples stared with wide eyes, their expressions fervent, eager to see how Fang Bai would counter Ye Renjie's ferocious and rapid strike.

Chapter 1425: Salted Fish Turns Over

Fang Bai slightly raised his head, watching Ye Renjie descend from the sky, a foot imbued with thunderbolts, his lips curling into a slight, contemptuous smile.

Ye Renjie's foot arrived in an instant, just three feet above Fang Bai's head.

Huang Zhong's heart was about to leap out of his throat, seeing Fang Bai standing there motionless, seemingly petrified with fear, he couldn't help but shout a reminder: "Senior Brother Fang, why aren't you dodging!"

Just as the reminder echoed, Fang Bai suddenly moved.

"Scram!"

Fang Bai bellowed, his right hand instantly reaching out like lightning, grabbing Ye Renjie's ankle at a speed beyond everyone's imagination before hurling him towards the south side of the Practice Battle Arena.

Under the stunned gaze of the onlookers, Ye Renjie, whose ankle Fang Bai had grasped, seemed like a snake seized at its vital point, powerless to resist as his body flew out like a kite with a broken string, flung by Fang Bai.

More than ten feet on the south side of the arena was a small lake, a few miles in circumference. The water was not shallow, but the silt at the bottom could submerge an average person's body.

"Splash!"

With a water splash, Ye Renjie, thrown by Fang Bai, traced a long arc in the air and then plunged head-first into the silt at the bottom of the lake.

He struggled hard, but his body felt limp, as if all strength was drained, sinking deeper. In the blink of an eye, only his calves remained above the lake surface.

"Senior Brother Fang, someone dying would be disastrous!"

Huang Zhong's face flushed with excitement seeing Fang Bai fling Ye Renjie into the lake, jumping high, but in the next moment worry gripped him — if Ye Renjie died, both he and Fang Bai would be severely punished.

Especially himself, being just a menial servant disciple, nowhere near Fang Bai's status, he could potentially be expelled from Lingxu Palace.

Thus, Huang Zhong shouted a reminder, hoping to prevent Fang Bai from impulsively letting Ye Renjie die.

Fang Bai smiled at him, put away the Five Elements Origin Qi Cauldron, then strode to the lakeside, grabbed Ye Renjie's left ankle, and gently pulled him out of the silt, tossing him beside the lake.

At this moment, Ye Renjie was covered in black silt all over, his features indistinguishable, appearing extremely weak and pitiful.

Confirming that Ye Renjie was not in mortal danger, Huang Zhong breathed a sigh of relief, gave Fang Bai a thumbs up, exclaiming excitedly: "Senior Brother Fang, you're amazing!"

Huang Zhong never dreamt that the situation would end with Ye Renjie's humiliating defeat, admiration and reverence for Fang Bai surging like an endless river.

Fang Bai glanced at Ye Renjie and said to Huang Zhong: "He humiliated you like that earlier; aren't you going to take this opportunity for revenge?"

Huang Zhong looked at Ye Renjie, lying like a dead dog on the ground, knowing he could humiliate him at will without fear of retaliation, feeling quite tempted.

But soon, Huang Zhong thought that if he really did so, it would mean antagonizing Ye Renjie to the death, very disadvantageous for his future.

Thus Huang Zhong gave up the idea, sighing, "Forget it. After all, we are in the same sect..."

"Did he consider you a sect peer when he beat, cursed, and humiliated you earlier?"

Fang Bai knew Huang Zhong's character was somewhat weak and irresolute, and with a frustrated tone, said: "Against this kind of person, you either don't strike, or you strike to hurt him, so he'll never dare to provoke you again. That is the true path!"

Huang Zhong's expression fluctuated, struggling for a moment before ultimately not stepping forward.

Fang Bai shook his head, walked to Ye Renjie's side, lifted his right foot, and stepped on Ye Renjie's back, just as Ye Renjie had done to Huang Zhong before.

"Senior Brother Ye, karma is inescapable. I said earlier, how you humiliated Huang Zhong is how I will humiliate you, seeking justice for him! Now, do you believe it?"

Fang Bai said to the slightly conscious Ye Renjie who was struggling hard.

Ye Renjie turned his face to the ground, breathing heavily, angrily saying: "Fang Bai, if you have the guts, kill me now, or someday I'll certainly kill you!"

These words were extremely severe, but Fang Bai remained unfazed, though Huang Zhong was scared pale.

"Kill me? Ha..."

To Ye Renjie's threat, Fang Bai let out a disdainful laugh.

Fang Bai's temperament is "show respect, and you'll get respect in return," but should someone annoy him, he would repay them ten or a hundred times worse.

Ye Renjie said he would definitely kill Fang Bai someday, with venom evident in his tone. Fang Bai had no doubt, that given the chance, he would do so.

Though Ye Renjie's cultivation level was not a threat in Fang Bai's eyes, he wouldn't leave trouble-makers like him around to cause future issues.

So in the next moment, a fierce light flashed in Fang Bai's eyes, pinpointing Ye Renjie's right calf, he stomped hard.

"Crack..."

"Ah..."

A slight cracking sound accompanied by a piercing scream, Ye Renjie's right calf bone shattered to fragments under Fang Bai's stomp.

"My leg... Ah... Fang Bai, you... you crippled my right leg... you despicable person, if you have the guts, kill me... Ah... I will never stand with you again..."

Amidst intense pain, Ye Renjie realized Fang Bai's stomp not only crushed his right calf bone but also destroyed the meridians and blood vessels there.

For a Martial Artist, breaking a leg bone was a minor issue, healing soon with some Spirit Pill or Spiritual Liquid.

However, with meridians and veins destroyed, recovery wouldn't be easy, only a middle-grade Holy Grade Marrow Cleansing Pill offers hope.

But, looking at Sun Lin's case before, acquiring a middle-grade Marrow Cleansing Pill wasn't easy; without Fang Bai crafting one for her, she might never resume the path of the Martial Dao.

"Pack up your wooden box, and bring me and Shi Ming a new one next time!"

Without caring for Ye Renjie wailing on the ground, Fang Bai said this to the bewildered Huang Zhong before turning away, heading back to his dwelling.

"Alright, Senior Brother Fang, I'll deliver the meals soon!"

Watching Fang Bai's departing figure, Huang Zhong fiercely clenched his fist, revitalized, feeling reborn.

No wonder Huang Zhong felt so exhilarated.

After this battle, Fang Bai was bound to make his name known and snatch the title of the "External Courtyard Department's top fighter" from Ye Renjie.

And as Fang Bai stood up for Huang Zhong in this battle, to the other disciples of Lingxu Palace's External Courtyard, Huang Zhong was like Fang Bai's "little brother."

With Fang Bai as his backing, no one in the External Courtyard Department would dare to belittle the menial servant disciple Huang Zhong again, nor dare to beat and humiliate him.

Huang Zhong knew that from today onward, his chance for a "comeback" had arrived.

Chapter 1426: Huang Zhong's Sigh

The disciples from the External Courtyard Department at the Practice Battle Arena were all shocked to witness Fang Bai's swift and decisive defeat of Ye Renjie.

None of them ever expected that Fang Bai, who had kept a low profile since joining Lingxu Palace, could completely crush the "number one on the External Courtyard Combat Strength Ranking" Ye Renjie within just a dozen breaths, delivering a stunning counterattack.

It is foreseeable that, after this battle, Fang Bai's name will reverberate throughout the External Courtyard.

Previously, Ye Renjie's title as the "number one handsome man of the External Courtyard" had already been taken by Fang Bai, and now the position of "number one on the External Courtyard Combat Strength Ranking" has also been claimed by Fang Bai.

This Fang Bai is practically Ye Renjie's nemesis!

"Junior Brother Huang, are your injuries okay?"

"Ye Renjie is truly despicable. Even though we're from the same sect, he actually inflicted such heavy blows on you!"

"Hmph, I've always disliked Ye Renjie! Petty-minded, narrow-hearted, vengeful... he's nothing but a scoundrel!"

"I've also suffered at Ye Renjie's hands before, but lacking skills, I could only endure humiliation... Junior Brother Fang taught him a good lesson, and it feels like he avenged us all!"

"By the way, Junior Brother Huang, I have a bottle of Spirit Pills here for treating external injuries. It's quite effective; you should use it!"

"I have a bottle of Spiritual Liquid that works even better than Spirit Pills for healing wounds! Take it as a backup!"

...

Many disciples in the crowd, realizing Fang Bai had already walked away, gathered around Huang Zhong to express concern over his injuries while harshly criticizing Ye Renjie's "misdeeds" and sparing no effort to disparage his character.

Some disciples from the External Courtyard even "selflessly" handed over their Spirit Pills and Spiritual Liquids to Huang Zhong.

A few disciples who were close to Ye Renjie, and had previously ridiculed Huang Zhong, looked at Ye Renjie writhing in pain on the ground, then at Fang Bai's slowly disappearing figure several dozen meters away, and exchanged uneasy glances, their faces pale.

After hesitating for a moment, they shamelessly joined the others, flattering and sucking up to Huang Zhong like a group of pitiful lapdogs wagging their tails.

They had no other choice but to act this way.

Fang Bai, after this battle, was destined to establish his leadership position in the External Courtyard. Many disciples would likely become his followers, and these few individuals who had previously mocked Huang Zhong knew that if they didn't earn his forgiveness, their future among the External Courtyard disciples would be bleak.

Huang Zhong looked at the smiling, fawning faces in front of him, his heart filled with mixed emotions.

Before Fang Bai's duel with Ye Renjie, the owners of these faces had looked down on him, the menial servant disciple, and even subjected him to various mockery and ridicule.

Yet after Fang Bai defeated Ye Renjie, their attitude toward him had completely changed.

Huang Zhong understood that all of these changes stemmed from Fang Bai's display of overwhelming strength.

Such is the way of this world—only strength earns respect, and only then can one reclaim their dignity.

"From now on, I must dedicate myself even more to learning from Senior Brother Fang. One day, I, Huang Zhong, will also make these people look at me differently!"

Under the watchful gaze of the crowd around him, Huang Zhong tightened his clenched fists and stood straighter than ever.

.....

That evening, in front of the bamboo house where Fang Bai lived, Fang Bai, Shi Ming, Zheng Hong, and Huang Zhong sat around a stone table, chatting.

"Haha, well done!"

Upon hearing that Fang Bai had taught Ye Renjie a lesson, Shi Ming couldn't help but slam the table and laugh heartily. "That Ye Renjie seems impeccable on the surface, but deep down, he's full of malicious schemes! When I first joined the External Courtyard, I almost had a conflict with him!"

"Many disciples in the External Courtyard pretend to follow Ye Renjie, but deep down, they despise him. This time, Fang Bai gave him a taste of his own medicine, which pleases everyone!"

Zheng Hong, a gatekeeping disciple of the External Courtyard Department and part of its lowest ranks among the nearly ten thousand disciples, had also suffered under Ye Renjie's hand before. Thus, Fang Bai teaching Ye Renjie a lesson brought great relief to his heart as well.

"Senior Brother Fang, thank you for standing up for me! From now on, no matter what you ask, even if it's crossing blades or walking through fire, I, Huang Zhong, will do it for you!"

With that, Huang Zhong stood up, clasped his hands in salute, and bowed deeply toward Fang Bai.

Huang Zhong now admired Fang Bai so deeply that this declaration came straight from the heart.

At only sixteen or seventeen years old, Huang Zhong was intelligent enough to understand that without Fang Bai's guidance, he might never escape his Martial Dao predicament or achieve Foundation Establishment; he'd remain overshadowed within Lingxu Palace forever.

Having listened to Fang Bai's teachings, Huang Zhong felt as though he'd discovered a light in the darkness, like a lost ship finding its direction. Martial Dao Arcane insights that had previously been incomprehensible to him now seemed to unravel with ease.

Huang Zhong believed that if he kept studying diligently with Fang Bai, he might soon overcome his obstacles and succeed in Foundation Establishment.

In the past, Huang Zhong wouldn't have dared to even dream of such a possibility.

Therefore, in Huang Zhong's heart, Fang Bai's significance now surpassed even that of the Palace Master of Lingxu Palace.

"Junior Brother Fang, your lesson to Ye Renjie was surely satisfying, but Ye Renjie has supporters in the Inner Court. You need to watch out for him and be wary of revenge."

After laughing and joking for a while, Zheng Hong suddenly turned serious.

At his words, both Shi Ming and Huang Zhong's expressions grew grim.

Inner Court disciples were true Foundation Establishment Realm cultivators whose strength far surpassed that of External Courtyard disciples. If they really came to avenge Ye Renjie, Fang Bai could face significant trouble.

Shi Ming gritted his teeth, his eyes flashing with determination, and said in a low voice, "If Inner Court disciples do come and try to trouble Brother Fang, I'll fight alongside him! To hell with them!"

Zheng Hong and Huang Zhong, having been inspired by Fang Bai's teachings over the past few days, now saw him as both a friend and a mentor.

Neither of them were ungrateful people, and with Shi Ming's lead, they also declared their intent to stand with Fang Bai.

Fang Bai chuckled lightly and said, "Elder Wu from the External Affairs Hall teaches me Cultivation Techniques, and Elder Sun from the Elixir Hall treats me kindly. Any disciple in Lingxu Palace who wishes to trouble me will have to reconsider carefully."

In truth, though Fang Bai's cultivation level was still at the Half-Step Foundation Establishment Realm, with the Five Elements Origin Qi Cauldron, he wouldn't necessarily lose even to a genuine Foundation Establishment Realm expert.

Fang Bai wasn't particularly concerned about Inner Court disciples stepping in to avenge Ye Renjie. However, he didn't want to waste time in fruitless conflicts and considered using the names of Elder Wu and Elder Sun to "borrow their authority." If it deterred the opposition, all the better; if it didn't, then battle would be inevitable.

Zheng Hong sighed, "Our current strength is simply too weak! I think we should work on improving our cultivation levels quickly and stick together so we can face future challenges more effectively."

Though Zheng Hong was only a gatekeeping disciple from the External Courtyard Department and held the lowest position among the four, he was the most senior and naturally entitled to express his opinion.

Chapter 1427: Team Training

"However, if we want to increase our strength quickly, we not only need deeper comprehension and insight into the Martial Dao Arcane, but we also require a large amount of cultivation resources as support!"

Shi Ming scratched the back of his head, his face full of worry, and said, "In terms of the Martial Dao Arcane, Brother Fang can guide us, but cultivation resources are a big problem..."

The cultivation resources used by the disciples of Lingxu Palace are partly distributed regularly by the Elixir Hall, and partly earned through their expeditions outside the palace.

Fang Bai, Shi Ming, and Zheng Hong are External Courtyard disciples, while Huang Zhong is a menial servant disciple. Their status and position within Lingxu Palace are low, and the amount of cultivation resources distributed to them is very limited, far from enough to sustain their cultivation.

This is especially true for Fang Bai; the amount of cultivation resources he consumes during a single closed-door cultivation session is several times—if not exponentially more—than what Shi Ming and the others use.

"Relying solely on the cultivation resources distributed by the Elixir Hall is definitely not enough."

Zheng Hong pondered for a moment and said, "Why don't the four of us join forces and find some time to go on an expedition? What do you think?"

Shi Ming clapped his hands and said, "I agree! Going on an expedition not only broadens our horizons and increases our knowledge, but also boosts our combat experience. If luck favors us, we might even encounter some great opportunities that could elevate our cultivation level rapidly! It's a win-win scenario, so why not do it?"

Huang Zhong's eyes lit up, and he said enthusiastically, "I've heard that quite a few senior brothers and sisters from Lingxu Palace rose to prominence during their expeditions. It's truly enviable. I've also considered going on expeditions before, but lacking the ability to protect myself, I didn't dare to leave Lingxu Palace easily. If the three senior brothers are going on an expedition, could you take me along?"

Disciples like Huang Zhong, who are menial servants, usually have many chores to do and little time for cultivation. Their cultivation resources are severely lacking, and they hardly have any opportunities to listen to the palace's upper-level lectures on the Martial Dao Arcane.

The disparity in strength, status, and position makes it extremely difficult for menial servant disciples like Huang Zhong to break out of their station. If there's an opportunity for an expedition, how could Huang Zhong not be excited?

Fang Bai felt a bit moved when he heard this.

Ever since Fang Bai arrived in the Spirit Martial Realm, he had not stepped out of Lingxu Palace even once. During this time, he had only collected cultivation resources from the Elixir Hall once, and Sun Jing had gifted him some Spirit Pills and Spiritual Liquid. However, Fang Bai, who possessed the Chaos True Body, was akin to a giant beast capable of swallowing the heavens and earth—the resources provided barely made a dent, and were far from sufficient.

"Are there any expedition sites near Lingxu Palace?"

Fang Bai asked.

In his previous life, Fang Bai had traveled extensively across the Spirit Martial Realm, visiting numerous renowned cultivation sanctuaries and perilous locations across the Three Thousand Great Worlds. Yet, he had never paid particular attention to the area surrounding Lingxu Palace.

Zheng Hong said, "The disciples of Lingxu Palace typically go to White Bone Gully for expeditions."

Fang Bai said, "White Bone Gully?"

The name "White Bone Gully" didn't ring any bells for Fang Bai, suggesting it wasn't a famous cultivation sanctuary or perilous location.

Zheng Hong explained, "White Bone Gully is three thousand miles from here, situated within the Myriad Beasts Mountain Range."

"Ah... the Myriad Beasts Mountain Range..."

Fang Bai had heard of the Myriad Beasts Mountain Range—it was one of the top ten mountain ranges in the Spirit Martial Realm, spanning tens of thousands of miles, teeming with dense forests, and hiding countless ferocious beasts and spirit beasts. Ordinary Martial Artists only dared to venture around its edges and avoided going deeper.

The ferocious beasts and spirit beasts in the Myriad Beasts Mountain Range, even the weakest, are comparable to human experts at the peak of the Innate level. The majority of them rival human Foundation Establishment experts.

Deep within the core of the mountain range, there exist spirit beasts whose strength far exceeds that of human Foundation Establishment experts.

According to Zheng Hong, White Bone Gully was initially just an ordinary mountain ravine within the Myriad Beasts Mountain Range. However, ten thousand years ago, a team of Martial Artists discovered that the area was filled with special materials for crafting all kinds of Spiritual Artifacts. Additionally, rare Spiritual Medicines with long medicinal ages also grew there.

Since then, countless Martial Artists have risked their lives to venture to the ravine, seeking the treasures and cultivation resources it offered.

Yet, where rare Spiritual Medicines exist, spirit beasts are bound to guard them. Martial Artists entering the ravine inevitably clash with these spirit beasts when attempting to harvest the medicines.

Martial Artists fight desperately for cultivation resources.

Likewise, spirit beasts also battle fiercely to protect the Spiritual Medicines.

Thus, over ten thousand years, both human Martial Artists and vicious spirit beasts have fallen by the thousands in that ravine, leaving behind piles of stark white bones scattered across the landscape.

"White Bone Gully" was named after this grim sight.

"Some spirit beasts deeper in White Bone Gully are capable of flying, burrowing, spitting fire and water, and attacking using condensed Spiritual Energy. Such spirit beasts are beyond our ability to provoke, so if we go to White Bone Gully, we should only stay near the edges. Prioritize your lives above all else."

Zheng Hong said gravely.

Shi Ming nodded and said, "Good! Then let's go to White Bone Gully!"

Huang Zhong said, "Wherever you go, I shall go!"

With the agreement of the three, Fang Bai naturally did not object.

The disciples of Lingxu Palace are numerous, but cultivation resources are severely deficient. Therefore, the palace's upper-level officials encourage disciples to go on expeditions to explore and gather cultivation resources to supplement the palace's shortage.

However, any disciple who wishes to go on an expedition must first seek permission from the palace's upper-level officials. Furthermore, expeditions require at least five people in a team, including at least one Foundation Establishment expert.

The requirement for a Foundation Establishment expert stems from safety concerns, ensuring the team has some capacity for self-defense when encountering formidable enemies.

"There are only four of us. We need one more fellow disciple to join the team, and that person has to be a Foundation Establishment expert... That's going to be challenging!"

Shi Ming scratched his head incessantly.

Zheng Hong and Huang Zhong exchanged helpless glances, indicating they had no solution either.

Finding a Foundation Establishment expert for the team meant searching among the Inner Court disciples. But among the four, the earliest entrant to the palace, Zheng Hong, had no acquaintances in the Inner Court. Where could they hope to find someone?

Moreover, Inner Court disciples, proud of their status as Foundation Establishment experts, were highly conceited. How could they possibly look kindly upon a team made up of External Courtyard disciples and menial servant disciples?

"I do know someone..."

Fang Bai thought for a moment and said, "Tomorrow, I'll find her and discuss this matter. I hope I can convince her to join our team. You three should head back for now, focus on your cultivation, conserve your energy, and wait patiently for my news. If everything goes well, we'll set out on the expedition in three to five days."

Shi Ming, Zheng Hong, and Huang Zhong were all curious, wondering how Fang Bai, who had only been in Lingxu Palace for a short time, could have connections with an Inner Court disciple. Who could this person be?

Despite their curiosity, they didn't press Fang Bai for answers. They bid him farewell and took their leave.

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Early the next morning, Fang Bai consumed some fresh Solomon's Seal, tuckahoe, and other Spiritual Medicines before heading toward the bamboo hut where Sun Lin resided.

After taking the Marrow Cleansing Pill refined by Fang Bai, Sun Lin's recovery had been unexpectedly impressive. When Fang Bai saw her again, she seemed like an entirely new person—gone was the lifeless and despondent aura. She now radiated a youthful glow, appearing bright and spirited.

Chapter 1428: You've Seen Through It

"Senior Sister Sun, I've come today because I have a favor to ask of you."

Entering Sun Lin's bamboo house and casually inquiring about her injury recovery, Fang Bai got straight to the point.

"Junior Brother Fang, no need to be formal. Whatever you need, just say it. I will definitely do my best to help."

Having received Fang Bai's help, which allowed her to recover and resume her path in the Martial Dao, Sun Lin felt indescribable gratitude towards Fang Bai. Now that he had a request, she naturally agreed without hesitation.

"Here's the deal..."

Fang Bai explained the idea of him, Shi Ming, Zheng Hong, and Huang Zhong wanting to go out and train, concluding, "I've heard that for disciples of Lingxu Palace to venture out, a group of at least five is required, with at least one Foundation Establishment expert among them. So..."

Sun Lin blinked, her eyes showing a hint of amusement, and asked, "So you're here to ask me to join your team?"

Fang Bai nodded and said, "Exactly."

Sun Lin sighed lightly, "But, Junior Brother Fang, like you, I'm just at the Half-Step Foundation Establishment!"

Fang Bai's gaze fell on Sun Lin's face, smiling, "Senior Sister Sun, if I'm not mistaken, your cultivation level will advance to the Foundation Establishment realm in the next three to five days, right?"

"How... how did you see that?"

Sun Lin raised her delicate eyebrows, appearing quite surprised.

Before her injury, Sun Lin's cultivation was already close to breaking through to the Foundation Establishment realm. With the healing effects of Fang Bai's Marrow Cleansing Pill, her meridians reconnected, and the stagnant spiritual energy began to gather again. Her body was like a long-suppressed volcano, ready to erupt.

Additionally, in the past two days, Sun Lin's grandmother, Sun Jing, had sent her plenty of spirit pills and spiritual liquids, helping her accumulate even more spiritual energy and power. This made the conditions for breaking through even more adequate.

Intuition also told Sun Lin that within three to five days, she might break through previous barriers, reaching the Foundation Establishment realm and becoming a Foundation Establishment expert, thus securing a place as an Inner Court disciple.

Sun Lin was very excited about this but decided to wait until she truly stepped into the Foundation Establishment realm to tell her grandmother Sun Jing, giving her a pleasant surprise.

Sun Lin disguised it well, so much so that even Sun Jing, who frequently visited her, hadn't noticed anything different. Yet Fang Bai saw through her with one look.

Fang Bai laughed, "Senior Sister Sun, don't forget that I have an Innate Fire Spirit Root, giving me a much sharper sense of fire spiritual energy than others. Besides, you practice Fire-based Techniques too!"

Sun Lin nodded, admiration in her eyes, "Junior Brother Fang, you're amazing! No wonder grandma says that your future achievements on the Martial Dao path will be limitless! Grandma also said that in Lingxu Palace, apart from the Founding Ancestor, who was a Golden Core realm expert, no one else in the past ten thousand years has reached that realm. Yet you might be the most promising one!"

Fang Bai gave a wry smile, "Elder Sun is not complimenting me but putting me on a pedestal! I haven't even successfully established my Foundation, let alone the Golden Core realm."

Despite his words, Fang Bai thought to himself, "What even is the Golden Core realm? At my peak, I could wipe out thousands of Golden Core experts in one breath!"

Sun Lin thought Fang Bai was being modest and softly chuckled, "Alright then! Since you've seen through it, once I advance to the Foundation Establishment realm, I'll join your team and venture out together. How about that?"

"Then I'll be eagerly awaiting your good news, Senior Sister Sun!"

Fang Bai knew Sun Lin's advancement was a sure thing without needing his guidance. Since she had already agreed to join his team, he felt a sense of relief and bid farewell.

The next morning, when Fang Bai informed Shi Ming, Zheng Hong, and Huang Zhong, they initially found it hard to believe. Once confirmed, they became extremely joyous.

Who is Sun Lin?

The Former number one beauty of the External Courtyard, top three on the battle power ranking among disciples, and one of the External Courtyard's most promising to advance to the Foundation Establishment realm, the cherished granddaughter of Elder Sun Jing of the Elixir Hall...

Sun Lin, with these halos, had caught the attention of all Lingxu Palace disciples, with many male disciples viewing her as the best Martial Dao companion, earnestly pursuing her in droves.

Zheng Hong was once among those admirers, but being a Mountain Guarding Disciple of the External Courtyard Department, he felt inferior and unworthy, thus never dared express his feelings for Sun Lin, only watched as others hovered around her, vying for her favor.

However, after Sun Lin was severely injured during an expedition, becoming akin to a cripple, she rarely appeared in the sights of the Lingxu Palace disciples, and their attention gradually faded.

The news of Sun Lin's injury recovery was known only to Lingxu Palace's high-level members, unknown to other disciples.

If Fang Bai hadn't personally relayed the news, even disciples like Huang Zhong, serving as menial servants, would have heard it last.

"Senior Brother Zheng, I heard that back then, many admired Senior Sister Sun, were you among them?"

Seeing Zheng Hong's intense reaction to hearing "Sun Lin," Huang Zhong couldn't resist asking with a grin.

"Yes. I was quite enamored with Senior Sister Sun back then, but later felt I was completely unworthy of her in every aspect, so I gave up."

Zheng Hong didn't shy away from the question and acknowledged it openly.

Now, guided by Fang Bai, Zheng Hong had newfound confidence in advancing to the Foundation Establishment realm and felt qualified to pursue Sun Lin, rekindling his "spring heart" that had lain dormant.

"This outing is a great chance for you to get close to Senior Sister Sun, don't miss it. Let me congratulate you in advance for winning the beauty's heart!"

Fang Bai jokingly teased.

Though beautiful, Sun Lin was far from comparable to Fang Bai's numerous romantic interests in every way, and Fang Bai had no other feelings for her, only viewing her as an ordinary friend.

Though Zheng Hong was merely an External Courtyard Department guard now, being very loyal and of good character, Fang Bai didn't mind supporting him and was happy to see him and Sun Lin together.

"Thanks for your blessing, Junior Brother Fang. I hope my wishes come true!"

Zheng Hong laughed heartily.

Fang Bai instructed Shi Ming, Zheng Hong, and Huang Zhong to return and prepare, ready to set off as soon as they heard from Sun Lin.

Three days later, Fang Bai keenly sensed an intense energy fluctuation from the direction of Sun Lin's bamboo house, which calmed after a few moments.

Fang Bai knew then that Sun Lin had successfully established her Foundation.

Two more days later, after consolidating her realm, Sun Lin came looking for Fang Bai to discuss team training.

Soon, Shi Ming, Zheng Hong, and Huang Zhong all arrived at Fang Bai's bamboo house.

"Senior Sister Sun, you... you... hello! I'm... my name is Zheng Hong, an External Courtyard disciple..."

When introducing Zheng Hong to Sun Lin, his excitement made him blush and stammer.

Watching this, Sun Lin couldn't help but laugh softly.

Chapter 1429: Leaving the Palace

Among the five, in terms of cultivation level, Sun Lin, who had just advanced to the Foundation Establishment Realm, naturally ranked first.

Although Fang Bai's cultivation level was comparable to Shi Ming and Zheng Hong, his exceptional strength, showcased during the battle with Ye Renjie, earned him fame within the External Courtyard Department, securing him the indisputable second place.

Next came Shi Ming, who possessed an Innate Earth Spirit Root, followed by the External Courtyard gatekeeping disciple Zheng Hong and the menial servant disciple Huang Zhong.

Thus, the five-person team was led by Sun Lin to venture out for training and experience.

Before departure, the five visited the External Affairs Hall to greet Elder Wu Zhihua, who presided over the hall.

Elder Wu merely advised them to stay cautious on the road, to remain calm in the face of challenges, and to avoid causing unnecessary trouble.

During this time, Elder Wu privately pulled Fang Bai aside and surreptitiously handed him a few bottles of Spirit Pills and Spiritual Liquid for use during the journey.

Although the Spirit Pills and Spiritual Liquid were of limited utility to Fang Bai, he appreciated Elder Wu's gesture and kept it in mind.

Fang Bai, always generous, took out the Spirit Pills and Spiritual Liquid Elder Wu had given him after bidding the Elder farewell. Keeping a few for himself, he distributed the remainder to Shi Ming, Zheng Hong, and Huang Zhong as a gesture of goodwill.

Earlier, when Sun Lin bid farewell to her grandmother, Sun Jing—an Elder of the Elixir Hall—Sun Jing naturally gave her no small amount of Spirit Pills and Spiritual Liquid.

Seeing Fang Bai share his Spirit Pills and Spiritual Liquid, Sun Lin imitated him by keeping some for herself and insistently handing the rest to Fang Bai and the other four.

This small act immediately strengthened the bond among the five.

Zheng Hong and the others, who had initially thought Sun Lin to be the cold, aloof, and hard-to-approach type, were pleasantly surprised to find out she was actually easygoing, cheerful, and fond of joking—much like most of the female disciples in Lingxu Palace.

The five arrived at Lingxu Palace's Spirit Beast breeding grounds and each obtained a Wind-Chaser Steed, then set off toward the Myriad Beasts Mountain Range.

In the Three Thousand Great Worlds, martial artists above the Foundation Establishment Realm possessed the ability to utilize Flight Imperial Instruments, but those below the Foundation Establishment Realm had to rely on flying birds or Spirit Beasts for long-distance travel to preserve their spiritual energy and stamina.

The Wind-Chaser Steed was one such Spirit Beast.

In appearance, the Wind-Chaser Steed resembled the Swiftwind Horse found in Minor Worlds, but it was far superior in endurance and speed. Its glossy black coat shimmered under the light, and when it sprinted, it resembled a streak of black lightning cutting through the skies.

Mounted on their Wind-Chaser Steeds, the five rode in single file out of Lingxu Palace's mountain gate. Only after passing the gates did they lash their steeds into a gallop, speeding off like the wind.

As the group disappeared from view, two figures emerged from behind a large boulder to the left of Lingxu Palace's mountain gate.

Judging by their clothing, one was an External Courtyard disciple and the other an Inner Court disciple.

The External Courtyard disciple was tall, handsome, and none other than Ye Renjie, whose right leg's meridians had been crippled by Fang Bai not long ago.

The Inner Court disciple next to him was Ye Renjie's cousin, Ye Xiong, an early Foundation Establishment expert ranked tenth on the Inner Court disciples' battle strength leaderboard.

Ye Renjie and Ye Xiong, with their respective followers, wielded considerable influence within Lingxu Palace's Inner and External Courts, and few dared offend them.

However, in his duel against Fang Bai, Ye Renjie had been defeated, and nearly half of his combat strength had been crippled. Consequently, he'd become a laughingstock in the External Courtyard, causing his followers to scatter like birds and beasts.

This drastic fall from status left Ye Renjie on the verge of a breakdown, prompting him to seek out his cousin Ye Xiong to demand revenge.

Upon hearing Ye Renjie's account, Ye Xiong did not rush to act. Instead, he gathered information on Fang Bai through various channels. Learning that Fang Bai possessed an Innate Spiritual Root, was

personally mentored by Elder Wu Zhihua from the External Affairs Hall, and was highly favored by Elder Sun Jing from the Elixir Hall, Ye Xiong felt a measure of apprehension.

Ye Xiong was far more calculating than his cousin. He understood that someone like Fang Bai—with outstanding talent and qualifications—would inevitably surpass him in strength in the future and ascend to Lingxu Palace's upper echelons effortlessly. The last thing Ye Xiong wanted was to provoke someone like him.

However, almost everyone in Lingxu Palace's Inner and External Courts knew that Ye Renjie was Ye Xiong's cousin. If Ye Xiong failed to avenge him, he risked being mocked as weak and incompetent, which would greatly tarnish his reputation in Lingxu Palace.

As Ye Xiong fretted over this dilemma, he unexpectedly learned that Fang Bai and his group were heading out on a training mission. Delighted, Ye Xiong felt as if divine providence had intervened.

Thus, Ye Xiong informed Lingxu Palace's upper echelons of his intention to venture out simultaneously, planning to trail Fang Bai's group secretly. He intended to seize the opportunity to catch Fang Bai alone and teach him a harsh lesson.

Ye Xiong harbored no life-or-death feud with Fang Bai, so he didn't intend to kill him. He reasoned that since Fang Bai had crippled one of his cousin's legs, he would cripple both of Fang Bai's legs to avenge his cousin.

Although the group included Sun Lin, who had recently advanced to the Foundation Establishment Realm and joined the ranks of Inner Court disciples, Ye Xiong regarded her with disdain.

After all, Sun Lin had only just advanced, her realm was unstable, and she posed no threat to him, a seasoned Foundation Establishment expert.

"Cousin, you must teach that Fang Bai a harsh lesson! I'll wait here in Lingxu Palace for your good news!"

Standing beside Ye Xiong, Ye Renjie gritted his teeth as he gazed in the direction of Fang Bai and his group.

"Relax. Within Lingxu Palace, with Elder Wu and Elder Sun protecting him, I wouldn't dare act. But outside these walls, I have many ways to deal with him!"

Ye Xiong said, turning to glance at Ye Renjie's malicious expression, then snorted coldly and warned, "This matter remains between us. Heaven knows, earth knows, you know, and I know. Never reveal it to a third party. Otherwise... you and I will both face expulsion from Lingxu Palace!"

Ye Renjie nodded solemnly. "Don't worry, cousin. I'll keep my lips sealed!"

A moment later, Ye Xiong summoned a blade-shaped Spiritual Artifact and stepped onto it.

The blade-shaped Spiritual Artifact emitted a soft hum, gleaming with radiant white light as it carried Ye Xiong through the skies, transforming into a streak of white brilliance that chased after Fang Bai and his team.

The Myriad Beasts Mountain Range was only three thousand miles from Lingxu Palace. Riding their Wind-Chaser Steeds, Fang Bai's group traveled leisurely with cheerful conversation, reaching the edge of the mountain range within two days.

"This Myriad Beasts Mountain Range truly lives up to its name!"

For Huang Zhong, who was a menial servant disciple, it was his first time venturing into the Myriad Beasts Mountain Range. Staring at the towering peaks piercing the clouds and the fearsome birds soaring through the skies alongside the fierce beasts prowling the dense forests, he felt both exhilarated and apprehensive.

If not for the presence of Fang Bai and the other four, Huang Zhong, with his relatively weak cultivation level at Innate perfection, would never have dared set foot in the Myriad Beasts Mountain Range. Otherwise, he'd likely be devoured entirely, leaving no trace.

The fearsome birds in flight and the ferocious beasts lurking amidst the trees, even the weakest among them, could rival Huang Zhong in strength.

If Huang Zhong were alone and encountered two or three of these predatory creatures, he would have no choice but to flee. If luck favored him, he might escape; if not, he'd undoubtedly become their feast.

Chapter 1430: Bathing Woman

"There are plenty of spirit beasts in the Myriad Beasts Mountain Range, but quite a number of them are docile. As long as we don't actively provoke them, they won't attack us. Also, once we enter the mountain range, be sure to avoid the territories of the spirit beasts, otherwise we might anger them... Remember this!"

Sun Lin, having undergone numerous training sessions in the Myriad Beasts Mountain Range, spoke from experience and gave specific instructions to Fang Bai and the other three before heading in.

Zheng Hong and the others nodded in understanding.

As the Wind-Chaser Steeds approached the Myriad Beasts Mountain Range, they became visibly agitated and uneasy. Fang Bai and the others understood that the steeds feared the ferocious birds and beasts of the mountain, so they left them in a safe spot outside the range and proceeded on foot.

Walking through the mountain paths of the Myriad Beasts Mountain Range, they were flanked either by towering peaks or dense forests that stretched tens, even hundreds of meters tall, making the Martial Artists traversing within seem as insignificant as ants.

From deep within the mountain wilderness, the chilling sounds of tiger roars, monkey cries, eagle screeches, and hawks' calls would occasionally ring out. The team couldn't help but feel a sense of trepidation, their spines tingling.

In the five-person party, Sun Lin led the way, Fang Bai guarded the rear, Shi Ming and Zheng Hong walked on the sides, and the weakest, Huang Zhong, was placed in the center of the formation.

The team's main purpose for this training session was reaching the "White Bone Gully" within the Myriad Beasts Mountain Range, where they hoped to gather some rare spiritual medicine and collect unique materials for crafting spiritual artifacts.

Sun Lin led the group along a route she was most familiar with from her previous expeditions.

Because disciples of Lingxu Palace commonly traveled this route, they didn't encounter any attacks from ferocious birds or beasts along the way, but they also didn't find any valuable cultivation resources.

"Follow this stream ahead. After traveling about another hundred miles or so, we'll reach 'White Bone Gully.'"

The group arrived at a winding stream and Sun Lin pointed towards the path ahead.

Walking quickly along the stream, they covered thirty miles before reaching a small lake, several miles wide, nestled at the foot of a mountain.

The lake's water was crystal clear, smooth like a mirror. It reflected the green hills, lush trees, white clouds, and azure sky, creating a stunning and idyllic visual feast.

"This place is so beautiful, it looks like the legendary paradise hidden from the world. The spiritual energy here is far denser than that in Lingxu Palace—if we could cultivate here for a while, it would be quite beneficial!"

At the lakeshore, Shi Ming squatted down, scooped up some lake water to wash his face, and gazed across the water while expressing his admiration.

At that very moment, Zheng Hong suddenly extended his hand and pointed towards the lake slightly ahead to the left, stammering, "Th-there's someone there..."

The group turned their heads in unison, looking in the direction Zheng Hong was pointing. Their expressions quickly turned peculiar.

All of them had sharp eyesight and spotted, roughly a kilometer away in the lake, a graceful figure—an enchanting woman with long hair cascading down to her waist—bathing alone.

The water was shallow, barely covering the woman's chest, leaving her elegant and delicate neckline exposed.

The woman appeared leisurely and at ease, humming an indistinct tune as it was carried by the breeze across the lake to Fang Bai's party.

On the lakeshore, her neatly folded clothes were resting.

Even from a side view, the woman's beauty rivaled Sun Lin's—perhaps even outshining it.

The lake wasn't large, but there were still numerous concealed spirit beasts within.

Just as the woman was bathing, a Green Bamboo Snake, over a meter long, skimmed across the lake's surface, lightning-fast, heading straight for her.

"Watch out, there's a Green Bamboo Snake!"

Huang Zhong, knowing the snake's venom was lethally toxic and ordinary spirit pills wouldn't suffice to cure its poison, couldn't help but shout out in concern for the woman's safety.

"Huang Zhong, you..."

"You're ruining everything!"

"Ugh... What trouble we've gotten into now!"

Sun Lin, Shi Ming, and Zheng Hong, upon hearing Huang Zhong's loud warning, instantly realized how bad the situation could get. They wished to cover Huang Zhong's mouth, but it was already too late, making them stomp their feet in frustration.

"Huang Zhong, that woman is a Foundation Establishment Expert!"

Fang Bai looked at the bewildered Huang Zhong and said with a wry smile.

"F-Foundation Establishment Expert?"

Huang Zhong froze upon hearing Fang Bai's words, immediately realizing his mistake. He slapped himself in the face and anxiously looked back at the woman in the lake.

If she truly were a Foundation Establishment Expert, she wouldn't need his warnings to notice the snake.

What if she thought they were spying on her while bathing? There'd be no way they could justify themselves.

Furthermore, if she turned out to be an enemy of Lingxu Palace, she'd have every reason to attack them.

A Foundation Establishment Expert's power was no trivial matter. If she became enraged, their party of five might not escape unscathed.

Almost at the exact moment Huang Zhong's warning left his mouth, the bathing woman abruptly turned towards the Green Bamboo Snake. Lightning surged on her right hand with an audible "bzzt", accompanied by faint thunderclaps.

With a casual wave of her hand, accompanied by a deafening sound, a streak of lightning shot out and enveloped the meter-long, arm-thick Green Bamboo Snake in an electric net, tearing its body to pieces in an instant.

Fang Bai's eyes lit up with interest towards the woman.

In both his past and present lives, it was rare for him to come across Martial Artists adept in Thunder Lightning Martial Arts Techniques. Dongfang Ruhua was one, and now he'd unexpectedly met another.

However, Dongfang Ruhua had an Innate Thunder Lightning Spirit Root, while this woman's natural aptitude fell short. She must have begun cultivating Thunder Lightning Martial Arts Techniques from a very young age to have reached the Foundation Establishment Realm in her twenties.

After killing the Green Bamboo Snake, the woman in the lake immediately leapt out, her figure as ethereal as light gliding over water, landing gracefully on the shore. She swiftly donned the clothes resting there with dazzling speed.

Over her attire, she wore a purple soft armor that accentuated her curvaceous figure, adding a touch of power and majesty to her beauty.

Fang Bai could instantly tell that the woman's purple soft armor was forged with Thunder Stones, making it a spiritual artifact with both offensive and defensive capabilities. Any Martial Artist unfamiliar with its properties who tried to ambush her would be met with a backlash of lightning from the armor.

Equipped with the purple soft armor, the woman's combat strength surged, making her a formidable opponent even among Foundation Establishment experts.

After quickly putting on her clothes, the woman's gaze, as sharp and piercing as electric currents, locked onto the group of five standing nearby.

Huang Zhong met her gaze and immediately felt as though two sharp arrows were being shot at him. He involuntarily shivered, then quickly lowered his head.

"You dare to spy on me bathing... Unforgivable!"

In a flash, the woman's figure appeared directly before Fang Bai and his group. Her teeth clenched, her face darkened with fury as she spoke coldly.

She hadn't used her Divine Sense to scan the area while bathing. Now realizing she had been watched, her anger and embarrassment grew overwhelmingly.

If it weren't for the fact that among these five there was one with cultivation on par with hers, she would have immediately attacked, intending to gouge their eyes out.

"Saw? Uh, no... No, we didn't see anything at all!"

Huang Zhong, overwhelmed by the woman's gaze filled with killing intent, stammered in fear and tried to explain in a panicked manner.