

Doctor 1461

Chapter 1461: Preparing to Go to Flaming Sun City

"Fang Bai, your willingness to offer up these cultivation resources truly demonstrates your sincerity and selflessness. If the Palace Master learns of this, he will surely be greatly comforted. However, rest assured that at Lingxu Palace, we never shortchange disciples who make contributions. These cultivation resources will be placed here for now, and once the Palace Master returns, we will redistribute them. You will certainly not be left out!"

With the recent massive assault by the Soul Summoning Hall repelled and Fang Bai surviving a great calamity to present treasures, Yun Feng was in high spirits and did not hold back his praise for Fang Bai.

Fang Bai merely smiled at Elder Yun's praise.

"By the way, why do I not see the Palace Master, Elder Sun, and Elder Wu?"

Fang Bai looked around and asked.

In fact, Fang Bai arrived near Lingxu Palace ahead of the tens of thousands of disciples from the Soul Summoning Hall. When Yin Lengyue led the disciples from the Soul Summoning Hall in a major attack on Lingxu Palace, Fang Bai hid in the shadows and used the Beast Taming Scripture to control tens of thousands of Fire Fierce Bees to attack the disciples of the Soul Summoning Hall. It was only after the disciples of the Soul Summoning Hall retreated that he appeared at Lingxu Palace.

As for the matter of Li Sanfu and Wu Zhihua, Sun Jing taking the "Golden Crow Meteor" to the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion in Flaming Sun City to ask for help in refining a spirit pill, Fang Bai was already aware of it.

At this moment, Fang Bai was inquiring about the whereabouts of Li Sanfu and others, actually intending to use it as an excuse to make a trip to Flaming Sun City.

Inside Fang Bai's Space Ring was the corpse of a Green Tail Wolf. Although the flesh, muscles, and bones of a Golden Core Realm Green Tail Wolf were coveted treasures in the eyes of many martial artists, they were of no use to Fang Bai, who had already absorbed and refined the Golden Core of the Green Tail Wolf.

Moreover, the fresher the corpse of the Green Tail Wolf, the more it aids martial artists in cultivation. If stored for too long, its value would greatly diminish.

Fang Bai planned to use the corpse of the Green Tail Wolf to exchange for some cultivation resources he needed in Flaming Sun City.

As for the Spirit Core of the Green Tail Wolf, although it couldn't compare to the Golden Core, it was also an essence of the Green Tail Wolf. Fang Bai planned to keep it for his own cultivation use.

"The Palace Master and Elder Sun, Elder Wu have gone to Flaming Sun City..."

Yun Feng recounted to Fang Bai the matter of Li Sanfu and others going to the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion in Flaming Sun City to seek spirit pills, and finally asked, "Do you have business with them?"

Fang Bai replied, "I heard there are quite a few alchemists in Flaming Sun City; I want to go and have a look. Firstly, to broaden my knowledge and make some friends; secondly, to seek some advice from those alchemists to improve my alchemy technique."

"This..."

Yun Feng frowned slightly, thinking that it was fine for him to go broaden his knowledge and make friends, but he would likely be disappointed seeking alchemists for alchemy advice.

Alchemists rely on their alchemy techniques to acquire abundant cultivation resources and build extensive networks. They are among the richest in the world but also the most stingy and miserly, with few willing to impart their alchemy techniques to others.

Other stewards within the Palace Master Hall also felt Fang Bai was a bit naive.

However, Yun Feng and others wouldn't prevent Fang Bai from going to Flaming Sun City. After all, Fang Bai had previously refined Holy Grade Elixirs, and letting him visit a place filled with alchemists like Flaming Sun City to expand his horizons would be beneficial without harm.

"Well, it's good to go and see... When do you plan to depart? I will choose a few people to accompany you so that you can travel together and look after each other if something happens!"

Yun Feng thought for a moment and said to Fang Bai.

Although the thousands of disciples from the Soul Summoning Hall who came in an attacking wave had retreated, Yun Feng was worried they might bear a grudge and secretly attack Lingxu Palace disciples in revenge, something that couldn't be ignored.

Fang Bai smiled and asked, "Elder Yun, can I choose the people who accompany me to Flaming Sun City?"

Yun Feng was taken aback but quickly understood and laughed, "You sly boy, you still want to team up with Sun Lin, Shi Ming, Zheng Hong, and Huang Zhong, don't you?"

Fang Bai complimented, "You truly understand me, Elder Yun!"

Once more, praise showed in Yun Feng's eyes, as he said, "Doing so shows you are a very loyal person, which is commendable! However... your group's strength is a bit lacking, which worries me for the journey. So, I will assign two stewards to accompany you! How about departing tomorrow?"

"Couldn't be better! Thank you, Elder Yun, for your care!"

Fang Bai naturally would not refuse Elder Yun's kind intentions.

At that moment, familiar martial artist auras came from the foot of the mountain, stirring Fang Bai's heart and bringing a smile to his lips.

"Elder Yun, Sun Lin, Shi Ming, Zheng Hong, Huang Zhong, the four disciples, seek an audience at the foot of the mountain!"

A disciple responsible for guarding the mountain base entered the hall and reported.

"Haha, we just mentioned them, and now they are here! No need to say, they must be looking for you! Go on! Go on!"

Yun Feng waved Fang Bai away, saying, "We have matters to discuss; go down the mountain and talk to them."

Fang Bai had this intention, so he clasped his fists and exited the Palace Master Hall, heading to the foot of the mountain with the guarding disciple.

When meeting Sun Lin, Shi Ming, Zheng Hong, and Huang Zhong at the foot of the mountain, the five were overjoyed, naturally leading to some small talk.

After hearing about Fang Bai's experiences in White Bone Gully and the rare cultivation resources he brought back, Sun Lin was both surprised and delighted, exclaiming, "They say 'having escaped calamity, blessings will follow!' Junior Brother Fang, you can say you turned misfortune into a blessing!"

Fang Bai humbly replied with a few words, and then mentioned the matter of traveling to Flaming Sun City the next day, finally asking, "If any of you do not wish to go, speak up now."

"Only a fool wouldn't go!"

"Exactly! Flaming Sun City is a bustling metropolis with millions of martial artists gathered—it'd be a waste not to go!"

"The last time I went to Flaming Sun City was two years ago! I saw a spiritual artifact at the Martial Artists Trading Market, but unfortunately, I didn't have enough cultivation resources to exchange for it! I'll try my luck again this time!"

"I've never been to Flaming Sun City! I hear there are alchemists, artifact refiners, beast tamers, array masters, and even Golden Core Realm experts! I just want to see for myself!"

...

Sun Lin and the others eagerly responded, insisting that they would go with Fang Bai to Flaming Sun City no matter what.

The journey to Flaming Sun City was tens of thousands of miles away, and since Lingxu Palace disciples were usually restricted to traveling within ten thousand miles for training, only Sun Lin and Zheng Hong among the five had the opportunity to visit before.

Huang Zhong, a menial servant disciple, and Shi Ming, a newly admitted disciple, had never been to Flaming Sun City, but they often heard fellow disciples talk about the city's prosperity and the gathering of powerful people, which piqued their interest.

This opportunity that Fang Bai secured for them, they certainly would not miss.

Thus, the five went back to their respective residences to rest and recover, preparing to set off early the next morning.

That night, Fang Bai drank a few sips of Spiritual Spring in his bamboo house and refined the Spirit Core of the Green Tail Wolf.

Both the Spiritual Spring and the Green Tail Wolf Spirit Core were excellent items. Although they couldn't help Fang Bai break through to the next realm, they were extremely useful in consolidating his current cultivation level.

After a night of cultivation, Fang Bai felt refreshed, and his realm was thoroughly solidified, slightly enhancing his combat power.

Chapter 1462: Junior Brother Fang, you need to work harder!

Accompanying Fang Bai to Flaming Sun City, along with Sun Lin, Shi Ming, Zheng Hong, and Huang Zhong, were also two stewards from Lingxu Palace appointed by Elder Yun Feng.

The two stewards were named Ren Tianfu and Ren Tianlu, a pair of brothers who had been in Lingxu Palace for forty years. Ten years ago, both brothers advanced their cultivation level to the mid Foundation Establishment Realm, becoming stewards of Lingxu Palace.

The Ren brothers were thin and slightly dark-skinned, with eyes that shone brightly. They appeared to be around forty years old, but Fang Bai, judging from their vitality, estimated they were at least over sixty.

According to Yun Feng, the Ren brothers were formidable in strength, thoughtful, and utterly loyal to Lingxu Palace. With them accompanying, the five of Fang Bai could feel at ease.

At dawn when the sun was just rising, under the watchful eyes of a dozen high-ranking members of Lingxu Palace, the Ren brothers, one in front and one behind, escorted Fang Bai and the others in the middle as they rode on some of the best Wind-Chaser Steeds of Lingxu Palace, galloping toward Flaming Sun City.

The Ren brothers were taciturn and spoke little during the journey.

However, the five of Fang Bai, protected by the Ren brothers, spoke and laughed freely on the road, feeling quite carefree and delightfully at ease.

On this day, as the seven of them passed through a small town, they encountered some acquaintances from Medicine King Mountain.

These acquaintances were precisely Chang Shan, Tong Yaoyao, and others with whom they once collaborated in White Bone Gully.

"Haha, Brother Chang, it's only been a few days since we parted at White Bone Gully, and here we are meeting again. We really are destined to meet!"

Shi Ming laughed heartily as he stepped forward, greeting Chang Shan and the others warmly.

Chang Shan did not expect to meet Fang Bai and the others here either, especially seeing Fang Bai still safe and sound, filled him with genuine joy.

"Brother Fang, we thought you had fallen under the attack of the Green Tail Wolf! We were sad for quite a while back then..."

Tong Yaoyao sized up Fang Bai, smiling as she spoke.

Tong Yaoyao, also possessing an Innate Spiritual Root, had keen perception. She sensed at first glance that Fang Bai seemed to have undergone significant changes compared to a few days ago, much like a Martial Artist who had reached a very high realm and returned to simplicity.

"I have a hardy life, fortunately not dead!"

Fang Bai smiled and briefly recounted his experiences after parting ways with Chang Shan and the others at White Bone Gully, naturally omitting the matter of slaying the Green Tail Wolf.

"You actually got so many spiritual medicines? And even discovered a spiritual spring? Brother Fang, your luck is unbelievably good!"

Chang Shan and the others were both amazed and envious of Fang Bai's fortune, lamenting why such an opportunity did not befall them.

"Where are you all headed?"

Fang Bai didn't want to dwell too much on the subject and changed the topic.

Chang Shan pointed at Tong Yaoyao and said, "Junior Sister Tong recently shows signs of a breakthrough. To ensure her successful foundation establishment, the Sect Master sent us to Flaming Sun City to ask Alchemists from the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion to help refine some Creation Pills."

Fang Bai and Sun Lin exchanged glances and then laughed in unison.

Shi Ming grinned and said, "Ha, I told you we were destined, didn't I? We're also going to the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion in Flaming Sun City, so we're on the same road!"

Chang Shan said, "Are you going to the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion... also to ask the Alchemists there for help with alchemy?"

Sun Lin interjected, "Not us, it's our Palace Master personally going to request a Spirit Pill from the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion. We're going to Flaming Sun City to broaden our horizons and gain some insight!"

After pausing, she turned her gaze to Tong Yaoyao and praised, "Sister Tong is about to establish her foundation? Congratulations!"

She then turned back to Fang Bai and sighed, "Junior Brother Fang, I recall you mentioned that you and Sister Tong came from the Spirit Martial Realm together, didn't you? See, Sister Tong is about to establish her foundation, and you... you need to work harder! Don't fall too far behind!"

Fang Bai found her slightly exasperated look amusing but remained earnest in appearance, saying, "Senior Sister Sun's criticism is spot on. I'll work hard from now on!"

Sun Lin nodded and said, "When we get to Flaming Sun City, you should ask the Palace Master to also request the Alchemists from the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion to refine some Creation Pills and other Spirit Pills for you to speed up your foundation establishment! You have an Innate Spiritual Root and are a key disciple of Lingxu Palace; maybe the Palace Master will agree?"

Fang Bai scratched his head and said, "Um... I'll try!"

Accompanying Chang Shan, Tong Yaoyao, and other Medicine King Mountain disciples to Flaming Sun City were also two stewards, who were the complete opposite of the Ren brothers from Lingxu Palace in temperament. Seeing the younger disciples chatting enthusiastically with those from Lingxu Palace, the stewards, having nothing better to do, initiated conversations with the Ren brothers, even though the Ren brothers barely responded, they weren't bothered by it.

The groups had a delightful meal of spirit beast roast and spirit fruit wine at a martial artist-owned tavern in the town. After a brief rest, they prepared to set off, heading together toward Flaming Sun City.

Just as everyone mounted their Wind-Chaser Steeds, the sound of hooves filled the air. Looking up, they saw a group of Lightning Leopards galloping down the street, each ridden by a martial artist.

Like the Swiftwind Horse and Wind-Chaser Steed, Lightning Leopards are spirit beasts tamed by humans for riding.

However, Lightning Leopards are faster, more enduring, more difficult to tame, and much more expensive than Swiftwind Horses or Wind-Chaser Steeds.

One Lightning Leopard could easily be exchanged for two or three Swiftwind Horses or Wind-Chaser Steeds.

Each martial artist having their own Lightning Leopard was a luxury, demonstrating the wealth of their sect.

"It's people from Nine Heavens Palace!"

Seeing the martial artists riding Lightning Leopards, the Medicine King Mountain disciples, including Chang Shan, all had slightly unpleasant expressions, with a hint of resentment in their eyes.

"Brother Chang, do you have a grudge with the Nine Heavens Palace disciples?"

Observant and curious, Shi Ming couldn't help but ask.

Chang Shan snorted, "The former Palace Master of Nine Heavens Palace snatched a Nine-Dragon Alchemy Cauldron we obtained from Medicine King Mountain. Several great battles ensued, with heavy casualties on each side, creating a deep-seated grudge! Now, whenever disciples from both sides meet, it's common to exchange harsh words or even engage in conflict!"

Shi Ming curled his lips and said, "It seems that both Nine Heavens Palace and Soul Summoning Hall are no good! They see treasure from other sects and try to seize it forcefully and unreasonably."

As they spoke, the group of Nine Heavens Palace disciples across the street noticed Chang Shan and the others. After whispering among themselves, they rode up with provocative smiles on their faces, urging their Lightning Leopards forward.

There were ten disciples from Nine Heavens Palace, all at the Foundation Establishment Realm, along with an elder and two stewards. Such a formation made the Medicine King Mountain disciples secretly wary, increasing their vigilance as if facing a great enemy.

"Steward Mo, Steward Yue, long time no see. You both still look as dashing as ever!"

When the two groups were still several feet apart, they stopped. The elder leading the Medicine King Mountain team stepped forward, wearing a fake smile.

As his gaze swept over Tong Yaoyao, it was like a martial artist discovering a treasure, his eyes suddenly brightened.

Chapter 1463: Disgusting Old Man

"I heard that Medicine King Mountain recently accepted a new disciple with an Innate Spiritual Root, named Tong Yaoyao. That must be this young lady, right? Hmm, delicate features, full of spiritual energy, not bad! Not bad!"

Before the two stewards from Medicine King Mountain could reply, the elder from Nine Heavens Palace smiled and continued, his gaze constantly shifting across Tong Yaoyao's face and body.

Tong Yaoyao sensed the malice in the elder's gaze from Nine Heavens Palace and furrowed her brows, showing a look of disgust.

Tong Yaoyao was praised as the number one beauty among the younger generation of disciples at Medicine King Mountain, revered like the moon amongst stars. Thousands of male disciples admired her, including Chang Shan and several fellow male disciples from Medicine King Mountain.

Seeing the evil-filled gaze from the elder towards Tong Yaoyao, Chang Shan and several male disciples from Medicine King Mountain were subtly angered and tacitly positioned themselves in front of Tong Yaoyao.

Having his gaze blocked, the elder from Nine Heavens Palace felt greatly displeased and flashed a sharp look, then laughed heartily and said, "Steward Mo, Steward Yue, where are you planning to go?"

Steward Mo and Steward Yue were able to converse happily with the two stewards from Lingxu Palace but showed no friendliness towards the rival Nine Heavens Palace elder and coldly snorted in unison, ignoring him.

Surprisingly, the elder from Nine Heavens Palace didn't get angry, chuckled, and said, "Such high airs from you two! Forget it, forget it. If you don't want to talk to me, I won't bother with you either. Until we meet again!"

He spurred on the Lightning Leopard beneath him, leading the disciples from Nine Heavens Palace forward, passing through the path between the disciples of Medicine King Mountain and Lingxu Palace.

As he passed by Tong Yaoyao, the elder turned and glanced deeply at her, a playful smile lingering on his lips.

Even though Tong Yaoyao didn't meet his gaze, just being looked at made her feel a chill all over, and she couldn't help but shiver.

"Ugh! That old dog is no good!"

After the disciples from Nine Heavens Palace had gone a distance, Steward Mo from Medicine King Mountain spat on the ground.

"Yaoyao, in the future, when you see that man, stay as far away from him as possible!"

Steward Yue earnestly advised Tong Yaoyao.

Steward Mo was named Mo Xinghuo, and Steward Yue was named Yue Zhiyuan. They were ordered to protect Tong Yaoyao and others on their way to Flaming Sun City, but unexpectedly encountered the disciples from Nine Heavens Palace along the way.

What surprised Steward Mo and Steward Yue even more was that despite Nine Heavens Palace holding a clear advantage in strength, they didn't initiate any provocation and instead left briskly, which was a significant departure from their usual conduct.

"Such unusual occurrences must be suspicious! Those from Nine Heavens Palace are possibly also heading to Flaming Sun City; we need to be cautious during the journey!"

Steward Mo thought of the gaze the elder from Nine Heavens Palace had given Tong Yaoyao before leaving, remembered the character of that elder, and felt somewhat heavy-hearted.

"Steward Mo, who was that disgusting old man just now? He seemed quite formidable..."

Tong Yaoyao noticed that both Steward Mo and Steward Yue seemed apprehensive of the elder from Medicine King Mountain and couldn't help but ask.

Knowing that Tong Yaoyao had entered the Spirit Martial Realm not long ago and was unfamiliar with various factions, Steward Yue explained in a low voice, "That man is Shen Zhenhai, possessing mid-tier Foundation Establishment cultivation, and is one of the four elders of Nine Heavens Palace. This person..."

He hesitated for a moment here, as if contemplating whether to broach certain topics.

Steward Mo, more forthright, interjected, "That old dog Shen Zhenhai has no respect for his age and has a great lust for women. Over the decades, he has harmed countless female disciples from various sects, all hating him to the core. Yet, because he is cunning, powerful, and backed by Nine Heavens Palace, other sects can do nothing about him!"

Tong Yaoyao was very astute; upon hearing Elder Yue's words, she understood something and recalled the gaze Shen Zhenhai gave her before he left, causing her face to flush slightly with disgust and a bit of fear.

She thought that, after all, Shen Zhenhai was a powerful elder of a sect, and if he specifically targeted her, they might expect some trouble on their way to Flaming Sun Town.

And her side was far inferior in strength to Nine Heavens Palace's, with no means to cope with any disturbance.

Tong Yaoyao could only hope that Shen Zhenhai would be deterred by Medicine King Mountain behind her and not dare to perpetrate any excessive acts.

"Sister Tong, don't worry. If Shen Zhenhai dares to be disrespectful to you, we won't stand by and do nothing!"

Sun Lin, seeing Tong Yaoyao filled with panic, grabbed her hand and said firmly.

Throughout the journey, Sun Lin and Tong Yaoyao had become very close friends and Sun Lin, who valued friendship greatly, saw Tong Yaoyao's worried face, and knowing what was troubling her, spoke out without hesitation.

The two stewards from Lingxu Palace, Ren Tianfu, and Ren Tianlu, exchanged wry smiles upon hearing Sun Lin's words, thinking, "Oh my dear, how can you promise that? Do you realize we already have the strong enemy Soul Hall to contend with, how can we provoke Nine Heavens Palace as well? Remember, Nine Heavens Palace's overall power is slightly stronger than Soul Hall's!"

However, despite the jolting fear from Sun Lin's words for Ren Tianfu and Ren Tianlu, the disciples from Medicine King Mountain were deeply moved, beating their chests and vowing that if Lingxu Palace ever faced difficulty, they would certainly offer their utmost assistance.

Among martial artists, loyalty to promises was paramount; although both parties only spoke these words superficially, they expressed an attitude of mutual aid and standing together throughout their journey to Flaming Sun City, effectively forming a temporary alliance.

The overall strength of Medicine King Mountain was not inferior to Nine Heavens Palace, and having a true Pill Master in their ranks made the alliance favorable, resulting in secret delight for the Ren brothers.

Along the way, to prevent any harassment from Nine Heavens Palace disciples, the dozen disciples from Medicine King Mountain and Lingxu Palace remained vigilant, arranging themselves in the most advantageous defensive positions, with two stewards from Medicine King Mountain at the front and two stewards from Lingxu Palace at the rear, shielding Tong Yaoyao and Sun Lin, the two female disciples, securely in the center.

Fortunately, throughout the long thousand-miles journey, though they passed many dangerous regions, they encountered no trouble, with no trace of Nine Heavens Palace disciples.

Instead, they met several small bandit groups formed by individual cultivation martial artists at the Foundation Establishment Realm along the way, demanding "road tolls," and eying Sun Lin and Tong Yaoyao's beauty, attempted to keep them as "village ladies," only to be defeated by the two stewards from Medicine King Mountain with spiritual artifacts, yielding quite a few cultivation resources from them.

Within two short weeks, they traversed tens of thousands of miles and were now less than ten thousand miles away from Flaming Sun City, allowing them to relax their guard.

But Fang Bai, occasionally scanning the surrounding woods, displayed a fleeting sharpness and killing intent that went unnoticed by others.

Chapter 1464: Elder Shen's Ambition

This night, the group rested by the banks of a river called "Nine Bends River," ready to gather their strength and make a full push to Flaming Sun City the next day.

As night fell, Fang Bai found an excuse to slip away from the resting spot and darted into the dense forest on the left side of the riverbank.

At the same time, a figure thousands of meters away was also rapidly approaching them under the moonlight, concealing its presence.

In the moonlight, the features of the figure could be discerned. Wasn't it Elder Shen Zhenhai of the Nine Heavens Palace?

"That girl from Medicine King Mountain is not only an Innate Spiritual Root but also a virgin, truly a gift from the heavens! If I can capture her and cultivate with her for a time, my advancement to the perfection of the Foundation Establishment realm is just around the corner," Shen Zhenhai thought.

Thinking of Tong Yaoyao's delicate face and petite figure, Shen Zhenhai's eyes shone with excitement and greed like a Hungry Wolf seeing delicious prey, eager to indulge.

Ever since meeting Tong Yaoyao, who possessed an Innate Spiritual Root, in that previous town, Shen Zhenhai had been unable to forget her and wanted to make her his Martial Dao companion. However, at that time, disciples from Lingxu Palace were present, appearing very close with the disciples from Medicine King Mountain, so Shen Zhenhai forcibly suppressed his impulse to snatch her directly.

Though Shen Zhenhai's side was strong, the combined strength of disciples from Lingxu Palace and Medicine King Mountain was not to be underestimated. Moreover, he did not wish to create another formidable enemy for the Nine Heavens Palace by conflicting with Lingxu Palace disciples.

After Tong Yaoyao and the others had left the town, Shen Zhenhai arranged to meet the disciples from Nine Heavens Palace in Flaming Sun City and then pursued alone, waiting for an opportunity to strike. However, he did not expect Tong Yaoyao and the others to be highly vigilant along the way, making it impossible for him to find a suitable chance to act.

Seeing that Tong Yaoyao and the others were about to enter Flaming Sun City the next day, with their vigilance significantly lowered, Shen Zhenhai was overjoyed and decided to make his move that night.

Shen Zhenhai was confident in his abilities, believing he could effortlessly abduct Tong Yaoyao while the vigilance of disciples from Medicine King Mountain and Lingxu Palace was lax.

However, Shen Zhenhai had no idea that his entire so-called stealth pursuit was under the control of Fang Bai.

Noticing Shen Zhenhai's signs of making a move, Fang Bai had broken away from the group to confront Shen Zhenhai, ready to quietly eliminate this vile old man.

Fang Bai had another reason to kill Shen Zhenhai—he had heard that the Nine Heavens Palace had a legacy spanning nearly ten thousand years, with immense depth, and Shen Zhenhai had a terrible character, often abducting martial artists from other sects and taking their Cultivation Resources.

From this, Fang Bai deduced that Shen Zhenhai likely carried a significant amount of Cultivation Resources, and his actions against him could be seen as "robbing the rich to help the poor."

Of course, the "poor" referred to Fang Bai himself.

Although he had obtained tens of thousands of Spiritual Medicines and some Spiritual Springs from the Green Tail Wolf's den, it was merely a drop in the bucket for Fang Bai, who required vast Cultivation Resources for even a single closed-door cultivation.

Fang Bai was a Chaos True Body, containing seven types of Spiritual Energy within him, thus requiring several times more Cultivation Resources than martial artists of the same level for each breakthrough.

Of course, Fang Bai would never stoop to Shen Zhenhai's level, wantonly killing and plundering others' Cultivation Resources. But when dealing with villains like Shen Zhenhai, he had no qualms about taking the treasures from them.

Shen Zhenhai moved like lightning, swiftly and silently moving through the dense forest, drawing closer to where the disciples of Medicine King Mountain and Lingxu Palace rested.

Once he leapt over the ridge ahead, he could soar through the air and, like an eagle swooping on a rabbit, seize Tong Yaoyao and whisk her away.

Shen Zhenhai had already envisioned the entire process in his mind, confident that with his speed, he could capture them before the few Stewards from Medicine King Mountain and Lingxu Palace could react, leaving them no opportunity to intervene.

"Hmm?"

At about a kilometer from the ridge, Shen Zhenhai seemed to see something terrifying, causing his pupils to suddenly contract, and his swift figure came to an abrupt halt.

"Who are you?"

Shen Zhenhai looked at the figure blocking his path, shocked and horrified, and after taking a deep breath, asked in a low voice.

The figure seemed to have been waiting for Shen Zhenhai all along, and Shen Zhenhai hadn't sensed his presence at all, which made him feel a bit wary.

"Elder Shen, you don't recognize me?"

The figure slowly turned around to face Shen Zhenhai.

Shen Zhenhai focused his eyes, discovering that the other party was a martial artist in his early twenties. Judging by the sensed aura, his Cultivation Level was only at Half-Step Foundation Establishment, and his attire indicated he was just an External Courtyard disciple of Lingxu Palace.

"Lingxu Palace disciple?"

Shen Zhenhai was stunned, feeling he had seen this person somewhere but couldn't remember.

Fang Bai chuckled and said, "It seems Elder Shen has no interest in anyone but women!"

"I remember now..."

Shen Zhenhai pointed at Fang Bai, eyes gleaming fiercely, and said in a hostile tone, "You were one of those Lingxu Palace disciples in Qingyang Town, mingling with the Medicine King Mountain disciples!"

Qingyang Town was the small town where Shen Zhenhai encountered the disciples from Medicine King Mountain and Lingxu Palace. Shen Zhenhai remembered that this young martial artist was there among the Lingxu Palace disciples, but he had only glanced at him casually and didn't pay much attention.

"Indeed, I am Fang Bai, an External Courtyard disciple of Lingxu Palace."

Fang Bai did not hide his identity and said with a smile.

For a martial artist about to fall, there was nothing to conceal.

Hearing Fang Bai reveal his identity, Shen Zhenhai secretly relaxed, the apprehension in his heart vanished.

Just a mere Half-Step Foundation Establishment disciple from Lingxu Palace's External Courtyard, what was there to be afraid of? The fact that he couldn't sense Fang Bai's aura must be due to some fortuitous encounter allowing him to temporarily hide his presence.

Yes, that must be it!

Shen Zhenhai reassured himself.

"Elder Shen, sneaking around like this, where are you headed?"

Fang Bai ignored Shen Zhenhai's murderous gaze and squinted his eyes as he asked.

"Where to? I've taken a liking to that girl from Medicine King Mountain, naturally, I'm going for her! Heh heh, I originally planned to grab her and leave without killing anyone. But since you've run into me, you're just unlucky!"

Shen Zhenhai gave a sinister laugh, his figure shifted, suddenly charging forward. In an instant, he stood before Fang Bai, swinging his right fist to strike Fang Bai's chest.

This punch carried the force of tens of thousands of pounds, enough to smash even a human-shaped piece of steel into pieces. Shen Zhenhai thought that a mere Half-Step Foundation Establishment martial artist like Fang Bai was an ant-like existence, that he could smash into dust with a single punch.

Chapter 1465: Killing with One Punch

Shen Zhenhai didn't know that, in Fang Bai's eyes, he was also an ant, easily crushed to death.

Fang Bai's true cultivation is equivalent to Shen Zhenhai's; both are at the high rank Foundation Establishment realm, but Fang Bai possesses the rare ability to challenge across realms, with combat power far surpassing Shen Zhenhai.

Seeing Shen Zhenhai's punch coming, Fang Bai smirked and casually delivered a punch in return.

The same punch, Shen Zhenhai's had the intensity of a raging wave, unparalleled and shocking in its momentum, while Fang Bai's was utterly calm and unremarkable.

"Courting death!"

Shen Zhenhai sneered inwardly when he saw Fang Bai actually confront him head-on, adding more force and increasing the speed of his punch.

The power of his punch enveloped a radius of a dozen feet, causing the space within to subtly oscillate under the force, the high-speed punch creating friction with the surrounding air, emitting a slight "whizzing" sound.

"Bang!"

The collision of fists produced a terrifying sound, and the shockwave of spiritual energy scattered everything within a ten-foot radius, leaving a flat open space.

Unexpectedly, both stood motionless after the punch, making it hard to tell who had the upper hand.

Yet their facial expressions and demeanor revealed everything.

Fang Bai still bore a smile, full of disdain and contempt.

Shen Zhenhai's eyes bulged, his face ashen, his gaze filled with indescribable pain and boundless fear of death.

"You..."

Shen Zhenhai's lips moved with difficulty, uttering a sentence: "Your cultivation... is Foundation Establishment perfection?"

Fang Bai chuckled, clearly dismissing Shen Zhenhai's words, saying, "What does Foundation Establishment perfection count for? Even against a Golden Core realm expert, I can still battle!"

He said as he slowly withdrew his fist, watching the blood overflow more and more from Shen Zhenhai's mouth, laughingly said, "Therefore, to die at my hands, you should feel honored!"

"I..."

At that moment, a deep sense of regret suddenly emerged in Shen Zhenhai's heart. He thought if he hadn't encountered Tong Yaoyao in Qingyang Town, or if he hadn't chased all the way, perhaps he could still live happily for the rest of his life, possibly reaching a higher realm in Martial Dao, thereby enjoying a longer life.

But now, it was all too late.

Just as the fists collided, a mysterious and powerful force surged from Fang Bai's fist, directly shattering his body's meridians and blood vessels, destroying his Qi Sea, and taking away all his vitality; even a Great Luo Immortal here couldn't save him.

"Alas..."

Shen Zhenhai seemed resigned to fate, gave a mournful smile, sighed, and fell back heavily.

This battle marked the first confrontation for Fang Bai after stepping into the high rank Foundation Establishment realm.

Being able to take Shen Zhenhai's life with a single punch was partly due to Shen Zhenhai's careless underestimation, but primarily because of Fang Bai's formidable strength.

Fang Bai was satisfied with this battle but not conceited.

Killing merely a Foundation Establishment realm fighter, what's there to be proud of?

The Martial Dao is perilous, and the path of immortality is long; when will he return to the Immortal Realm, surpass his former peak strength, and seek vengeance against the eight Immortal Emperors who nearly killed him? Only then can he afford to be proud.

Fang Bai reached out and grabbed the air, Shen Zhenhai's Space Ring had already flown into his palm.

"This old guy is surprisingly wealthy!"

As Fang Bai injected a wisp of Divine Sense into Shen Zhenhai's Space Ring and saw the Cultivation Resources stored within, he couldn't help but feel slightly surprised.

It's unclear where Shen Zhenhai obtained this Spatial Ring; it's a high-grade Holy Grade Spiritual Artifact, its space area comparable to the lair of the Green Tail Wolf Fang Bai slew earlier, storing a variety of Cultivation Resources and countless high-grade items, including Spirit Pills, Spiritual Medicine, Spirit Stones, Spirit Cores of Spirit Beasts, and some special materials for crafting Spiritual Artifacts.

The disciples of Medicine King Mountain all say Shen Zhenhai is of poor character, employing any means necessary to seize others' Cultivation Resources, whether through deception, robbery, or theft, it's clear many of the items in this Spatial Ring were acquired from others.

What truly shocked Fang Bai was the Furnace Cauldron standing quietly in a corner of the Spatial Ring.

The cauldron, entirely emerald green, exquisite and compact, could be held up by a palm, emanating a faint green glow.

With Divine Sense probing inside, one could see nine intricately carved little dragons on the inner wall, each with a wide-open mouth as if about to breathe fire.

"Could this cauldron be the Nine Dragons Cauldron, the treasure Medicine King Mountain took from Nine Heavens Palace?"

Fang Bai scrutinized the cauldron with Divine Sense, associated with the disciples' description of the Nine Dragons Cauldron, and felt more and more assured.

The cauldron is indeed a fine one; its grade surpasses even Holy Grade Spirit Artifacts, being a King Grade Spiritual Artifact. An Alchemist hearing of it would go mad, willing to pay any price to acquire it.

Unfortunately, neither Medicine King Mountain nor Nine Heavens Palace could discern the true grade and value of this cauldron, only knowing it's rare and a treasure.

The Nine Dragons Cauldron was Medicine King Mountain's treasure, but after Nine Heavens Palace took it, it somehow ended up in Shen Zhenhai's possession, carelessly tossed into the corner of his Spatial Ring, seemingly neglected.

"I'll hold onto this Nine Dragons Cauldron for now, later returning it to Medicine King Mountain; that would forge a benevolent connection!"

Although the King Grade Spiritual Artifact is excellent, to Fang Bai, who already possesses the Five Elements Origin Qi Cauldron, it appears redundant, and if he acquires suitable materials in the future, he can craft an even better cauldron.

"Boom!"

Fang Bai casually punched the ground, creating a deep pit a dozen feet long, burying Shen Zhenhai's body within, then floated away, returning to the resting place of Medicine King Mountain and Lingxu Palace disciples.

His visit was quick, as was his departure, all accomplished within a hundred breaths' time, and with several kilometers distancing him from the disciples on the ridge, he wasn't noticed during the altercation.

Fang Bai had left under the pretense of "strolling along the riverbank," and when he returned, Sun Lin and the others casually asked, "Why return so quickly?" without delving deeper.

At dawn the next day, the disciples from Medicine King Mountain and Lingxu Palace, comprising a dozen people, pressed their Wind-Chaser Steeds to dash at the fastest speed toward Flaming Sun City, aiming to reach the city by nightfall.

Meanwhile, a furious roar erupted from the Palace Master Hall of Nine Heavens Palace, miles away: "Who? Who killed my brother? When the murderer is found, I swear I'll tear them to pieces with my own hands!"

The roar came from Shentu Cheng, the Palace Master of Nine Heavens Palace.

Shentu Cheng's other identity is the elder Shen Zhenhai's by blood older brother.

Chapter 1466: The Great Sun City

After a Martial Artist successfully establishes their Foundation, they will develop Divine Sense. By integrating a strand of Divine Sense into their blood essence and placing it into a hollow Fire Spirit Stone, then sealing it, a "Soul Lamp" is created.

The Martial Artist and the Soul Lamp are connected by the Heaven and Earth Dao.

As long as the Martial Artist lives, the Soul Lamp remains lit.

If the Martial Artist dies, the Soul Lamp extinguishes on its own.

Every Sect in the Spirit Martial Realm will establish a dedicated Soul Hall to store the Soul Lamps of their Foundation Establishment Realm disciples. The extinguishing of any disciple's Soul Lamp signifies their demise.

Shortly after Shen Zhenhai was blasted to death by Fang Bai, the Soul Lamp belonging to him, stored within the Nine Heavens Palace's Soul Hall, flickered a few times and slowly went out.

The disciple guarding the Soul Hall saw that an Elder had fallen and was greatly alarmed, hastily reporting the matter to Palace Master Shentu Cheng.

Upon learning of his brother's demise, Shentu Cheng was furious and roared in anger, vowing to avenge his brother.

The next day, Shentu Cheng left Nine Heavens Palace, intending to personally go to Flaming Sun City to find the culprit. Before leaving, he gritted his teeth and said to the palace's upper echelon, "Calculating the time, my brother should have been close to Flaming Sun City, so the place where he perished should be near Flaming Sun City. Moreover, an Elder of the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion in Flaming Sun City has deep ties with our Nine Heavens Palace. I will ask him to help find the killer when I arrive there! I can't believe that with the influence of the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion in Flaming Sun City, they won't be able to find the killer!"

.....

Fang Bai naturally didn't know that killing Shen Zhenhai would attract the attention of Nine Heavens Palace Master Shentu Cheng, a Foundation Establishment perfection expert, and could potentially involve the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion, one of the two major Sects in Flaming Sun City.

The group consisting of a dozen or so left early in the morning and arrived outside Flaming Sun City by dusk, covered in dust from their journey without a moment of rest, nearly exhausting their Wind-Chaser Steeds to the point of foaming at the mouth.

Within Flaming Sun City, Sects are in abundance, and factions form a dense network. Yet, the only real authorities are the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion and the Golden Sword Sect.

These two major Sects occupy the eastern and western parts of the city, avoiding conflict, and jointly govern Flaming Sun City, maintaining its safety and stability.

The two major Sects have comparable strength, each with their own fortes.

The Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion is home to several Alchemists who are renowned for their Spirit Pill refinement.

The Golden Sword Sect hosts several Artifact Refiners who are praised for their Spiritual Artifacts.

The largest two Martial Artists Trading Markets in Flaming Sun City are each established by the two major Sects. In these markets, any cultivation resources can be traded, with the two Sects taking a small commission from each transaction.

No one knows exactly when Flaming Sun City was established, but over the years it has grown into the most bustling and lively city within tens of thousands of miles. Martial artists residing in the city number in the millions, with countless more traveling north and south daily.

Flaming Sun City has two gates: east and west. The eastern gate is guarded by disciples of the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion, while the western gate is guarded by disciples of the Golden Sword Sect. Incoming martial artists must pay one Holy Grade Spirit Stone each to be allowed entry.

"As it's already late today, going to the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion will have to wait until tomorrow. Where do you plan to stay tonight, Lingxu Palace?"

Medicine King Mountain's steward, Mo Xinghuo, inquired.

"Guest Arrival!"

Lingxu Palace's steward, Ren Tianfu, replied sullenly.

The Ren brothers had already discussed that, due to the exhausting journey over thousands of miles without rest, the disciples were somewhat fatigued and planned to first stay in an inn. In the morning, they would then seek out Palace Master Li Sanfu, as well as Elders Wu Zhihua and Sun Jing.

Mo Xinghuo laughed heartily and said, "What a coincidence, we're also planning to stay at the 'Guest Arrival' inn!"

"Guest Arrival" is a top-tier luxurious inn established by the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion, capable of accommodating ten thousand martial artists at once. However, due to the high cost, typically only disciples of large Sects and powerful loose cultivators can afford to stay, while smaller Sect disciples and moderately powerful loose cultivators generally cannot.

Though Medicine King Mountain and Lingxu Palace may not be considered major Sects within the Spirit Martial Realm, they have been established for a long time with deep foundations, so even if the inn's fees are high, they can afford it.

Including Fang Bai, more than a dozen martial artists rode their Wind-Chaser Steeds through Flaming Sun City's eastern gate, weaving through streets and alleys, and arrived directly in front of the "Guest Arrival" inn entrance.

"Guest Arrival" is built on Lake Heart Island, a large lake to the east of the city. Surrounded by mountains and water, the inn boasts picturesque scenery and abundant spiritual energy. The architecture is impressive and arranged harmoniously.

The disciples of Medicine King Mountain and Lingxu Palace paid for ten days' accommodation and, led by disciples of the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion, entered Lake Heart Island and were directed to their own rooms.

The disciples of Medicine King Mountain and Lingxu Palace stayed in adjacent areas, each having individual courtyards, with refined and tranquil environments.

In fact, Fang Bai had visited Flaming Sun City during his past life's travels in the Spirit Martial Realm, having some impression of this great city. However, his memories were from tens of thousands of years ago.

At that time, Flaming Sun City seemed to have only a few million people and was far less bustling than it is today. Over tens of thousands of years, with the vicissitudes of time, the battle of the stars, everything in this great city has changed tremendously, making it almost unrecognizable to him.

In his past life, Fang Bai had only hurried through Flaming Sun City. He recalled that at that time, the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion and Golden Sword Sect seemed relatively unknown, but now they've risen to prominence, with Golden Core Realm experts presiding over both as major Sects.

The large lake and Lake Heart Island where "Guest Arrival" is situated likely did not exist tens of thousands of years ago. They may have appeared after significant changes in the world.

The lake surrounding Lake Heart Island is planted with innumerable water attribute Spiritual Medicines, making the water spirit qi in the area more dense and abundant than in other regions.

The courtyard where Fang Bai and others stayed faced the eastern lake. The dense and abundant water spirit qi swirled without dissipating, continuously nourishing those within the courtyard.

After settling in, everyone only needed a moment of breathing exercises to dispel the fatigue from their long journey over thousands of miles, rejuvenating themselves and feeling immeasurably comfortable.

Each small courtyard in "Guest Arrival" is equipped with a spirit stone platform for martial artists to sit cross-legged on for cultivation.

That night, Fang Bai did not enter the room, instead sitting cross-legged on the spirit stone platform in the courtyard to cultivate.

He activated the five-color Lotus Platform within his Qi Sea to move slowly, causing nature's spiritual energy to surge madly into his body from within a radius of several miles around him, resulting in a celestial phenomenon that alarmed many strong practitioners within Flaming Sun City.

These strong practitioners, wielding Spiritual Artifacts, flew to the airspace near "Guest Arrival" to see just who this extraordinary individual might be, causing such a commotion during cultivation.

However, before these strong practitioners could arrive, Fang Bai would promptly conceal his aura so that they couldn't precisely locate his courtyard. Only after they left did he continue his cultivation.

Lingxu Palace Master Li Sanfu, along with Elders Wu Zhihua and Sun Jing, had arrived in Flaming Sun City several days ago. Yet despite Fang Bai's Divine Sense diffusing over almost ten miles, he did not detect their presence, speculating that the three were in other areas of the city.

Flaming Sun City spans nearly a thousand miles. With Fang Bai's current cultivation level, his Divine Sense falls far short of covering the entire city, making it quite difficult to locate a few individuals within.

Chapter 1467: The Palace Master's Axe

Early the next morning, more than a dozen disciples from Lingxu Palace and Medicine King Mountain left the "Guest Arrival" inn together and headed towards the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion.

The "Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion" is located in the east area of Flaming Sun City, approximately eighty li from the "Guest Arrival" inn.

"What a magnificent city within a city!"

When the disciples of Lingxu Palace and Medicine King Mountain arrived at the entrance of the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion, they couldn't help but exclaim in awe at the sight of the towering walls and the majestic buildings inside.

The Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion boasts thousands of buildings of various sizes, most of which are constructed from Wood Spirit Stone, giving it the appearance of a green castle from a distance, vibrant with life.

Among the buildings, rare spiritual medicines are all around, some of which have very ancient medicinal ages and exceedingly high value, emitting a refreshing fragrance that delights the senses.

"Stop! What are you doing?"

At the entrance of the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion, the disciples of Lingxu Palace and Medicine King Mountain were stopped by four gatekeeping disciples.

Although these four gatekeeping disciples are mere external courtyard disciples of the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion, their cultivation level is mid-stage Foundation Establishment, equivalent to the stewards of Lingxu Palace and Medicine King Mountain.

It is said that the higher-ups of the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion are all experts at the Golden Core Realm.

The Pavilion Master Mu Enze, the one with the highest cultivation level, is a high-rank Golden Core expert.

Even the menial servant disciples with the lowest cultivation are also initial-stage Foundation Establishment experts.

The Golden Sword Sect is the same.

The two major sects in Flaming Sun City have mighty overall strength; if they wish to deal with small sects like Lingxu Palace and Medicine King Mountain, they could easily crush them by sending out their internal and external courtyard disciples.

Although the four gatekeeping disciples of the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion have little status within their own sect, they still exude a sense of superiority when facing the disciples from Lingxu Palace and Medicine King Mountain.

Meanwhile, the stewards Ren Tianfu and Ren Tianlu from Lingxu Palace and Mo Xinghuo and Yue Zhiyuan from Medicine King Mountain, though high-ranking leaders within their own sects, must act with humbleness and courtesy face-to-face with the external courtyard disciples of the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion in Flaming Sun City.

Because they know that if they want to inquire about something or enter the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion smoothly, they must go through these four gatekeeping disciples; otherwise, they will not get the answers they want or set foot inside the high walls of the pavilion.

"We're here to find someone!"

Ren Tianfu, normally with a stern face, had to muster a bit of a smile as he politely asked one of the gatekeeping disciples of the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion, "Brother, may I ask whether our Lingxu Palace Master and two elders have visited the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion before?"

The Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion disciple glanced at Ren Tianfu, replied coldly, "We have thousands of martial artists coming in and out of the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion every day; who would know if they've been here?"

Standing aside, Ren Tianlu discreetly slipped two bottles of Holy Grade Elixir into the sleeve of the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion disciple, smiling, "Our Palace Master should have visited in recent days; please think carefully, brother."

Only after receiving the two bottles of Holy Grade Elixir did the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion disciple show a smile, nodding towards Ren Tianlu with a "you are sensible" look, then pretended to ponder before speaking, "Lingxu Palace Master Li Sanfu visited our Elder Yang two days ago, but our Elder Yang was busy with alchemy and did not see them."

"Thank you."

Ren Tianlu got the answer he needed, cupped his fists towards the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion disciple, and joined Ren Tianfu, Sun Lin, and other Lingxu Palace disciples for a quiet discussion.

Mo Xinghuo and other Medicine King Mountain disciples came to Flaming Sun City to request the Alchemist of the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion to help refine spirit pills to assist Tong Yaoyao in advancing, and after Mo Xinghuo discreetly offered a few bottles of spirit pills, they were allowed entry into the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion.

"Two Brother Rens, we're heading in first."

Before entering the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion, Mo Xinghuo greeted the Ren brothers.

The Ren brothers nodded in acknowledgment and temporarily bid farewell to the Medicine King Mountain disciples, then left together.

"The Palace Master and the others haven't met the Alchemist of the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion, so they must still be in Flaming Sun City. However, the city is too large; we need to split up to find the Palace Master and the others quickly. Remember, whether you find them or not, return to the 'Guest Arrival' inn before dark."

The Ren brothers discussed and decided to split the seven people into four teams to search in four different directions.

Among the teams, Ren Tianfu and Fang Bai formed one team, Ren Tianlu and Shi Ming formed another, Sun Lin paired with Huang Zhong, and Zheng Hong went alone.

Fang Bai and Shi Ming, both with outstanding aptitude and Innate Spiritual Roots, would be significant losses to Lingxu Palace if anything happened to them, so for safety's sake, each of the Ren brothers took one.

Sun Lin, being a Foundation Establishment expert with some self-preservation ability, led the weakest menial servant disciple Huang Zhong, which was fitting.

Zheng Hong, having entered the sect earlier, had more experience than Sun Lin and should be able to handle issues alone.

Actually, with the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion and Golden Sword Sect maintaining order in Flaming Sun City, martial artists generally don't dare to cause trouble in the city, or they'll be exiled, so as long as they're within the city, safety is assured.

At a crossroads in the east of Flaming Sun City, the four teams went their separate ways, walked slowly, released their Divine Sense, and began searching for traces of Li Sanfu, Wu Zhihua, and Sun Jing.

Fang Bai followed behind Ren Tianfu heading west, entering every inn or Martial Artists Trading Market along the way, looking for any signs of the three.

In the afternoon, passing a small Martial Artists Trading Market, Fang Bai raised his eyebrows, glanced at the somewhat despondent Ren Tianfu, then pointed to the entrance of the market, asking, "Steward Ren, should we go in and have a look?"

Ren Tianfu glanced at the entrance of the market, scanned it with Divine Sense, but didn't detect any aura of Li Sanfu and the others, shaking his head, "No need to look. Such a small Martial Artists Trading Market won't have anything good, only attracting some weaker loose cultivator martial artists to roam around. Palace Master Li and the others won't be inside."

Fang Bai smiled, "Since we're passing by, let's check it out! Just in case we miss something."

Ren Tianfu thought about it too, nodded, turned back, and entered the small Martial Artists Trading Market by the roadside.

Though it's small, it has all essentials.

This small trading market accommodates only a few hundred martial artists, but in it, all kinds of cultivation resources are traded, though most of them can't compare in grade to those in larger markets.

After thoroughly inspecting the market, Ren Tianfu shook his head, "I told you there's nothing..."

He didn't finish his sentence before noticing Fang Bai standing at a stall displaying Spiritual Artifacts.

Ren Tianfu frowned and approached, immediately spotting an axe at an inconspicuous spot on the stall.

"This axe... this axe belongs to the Palace Master!"

Ren Tianfu pointed to the axe and exclaimed in shock.

Chapter 1468: An Unremarkable Stick

In the corner of the stall was an axe, about three feet long, entirely black, exuding a faint pressure with its dark sheen.

The axe was a medium-grade spiritual artifact among the holy grade, considered ordinary in the Martial Artists Trading Market of Flaming Sun City.

Upon closer inspection, one could see tiny bloodstains on the axe blade, carrying a faint scent of blood.

"Where did you get this axe? What about its owner?"

Ren Tianfu was appalled upon seeing the axe and the bloodstains on it. He stepped forward to seize the axe, scrutinizing it thoroughly before glaring fiercely at the stall owner, questioning sharply.

Ren Tianfu was absolutely certain that this axe belonged to the palace master, Li Sanfu. Now the axe was here, but the palace master wasn't, and coupled with the bloodstains, it was evident that the palace master might have encountered a perilous situation.

It's well known that for a martial artist, a spiritual artifact is like half their life; if it is lost, how could the owner be safe?

Thinking that the palace master might have met with mishap, Ren Tianfu was restless and filled with hostility.

The stall owner, though an intermediate Foundation Establishment cultivator, equal in strength to Ren Tianfu, was a shrewd businessman understanding the merits of amiability. Seeing the situation, he remained composed, smiling and saying, "Dear guest, let's talk nicely, no need to get agitated...ahem! There are Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion disciples patrolling this area, causing a disturbance and drawing them here wouldn't be good!"

Even though he lowered his tone, his words held an implicit warning.

This was the eastern part of Flaming Sun City, within the influence of the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion, where their disciples regularly patrolled. If they found any conflict, Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion disciples would quickly intervene and mediate.

If mediation was successful, all parties would be fine, but any stubbornly disruptive individuals would be forcibly expelled from the city by the disciples.

Previously, several martial artists had resisted Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion's mediation and even attacked the disciples, resulting in being slain on the spot and their bodies disposed of in the wilderness outside the city to feed spirit beasts.

In fact, within Flaming Sun City, not only the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion operates this way; the Golden Sword Sect managing the western side acts similarly.

Both sects understand that only by fostering a fair and safe environment can they attract more martial artists into the city, thereby promoting the prosperity of the marketplace, enabling the sects to reap abundant benefits continuously.

If the city were chaotic and unsafe, how many martial artists would be willing to enter for trade?

Ren Tianfu, having visited Flaming Sun City multiple times, knew that drawing attention from the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion disciples might cause trouble, thus he forced himself to calm his agitated emotions.

Yet, he didn't put down the axe in his hand.

The stall owner softly said with a smile, unconcerned about Ren Tianfu possibly stealing the axe, "This axe was acquired by a runner under my employ from outside. As for the owner, I don't know...how about this, when the runner returns, I'll ask him for you?"

"Thank you."

Despite concerns for the palace master and two elders' safety, Ren Tianfu knew this matter couldn't be rushed. He thanked the stall owner gravely, choosing to wait on the spot.

Fang Bai, feeling idle, squatted down, examining the cultivation resources laid out on the stall, eventually his gaze landing on a wooden stick about a foot long.

This stick seemed like a piece of deadwood, rugged on the surface, appearing quite ordinary, yet faint wisps of Wood Spirit Qi seemed to emanate from it.

"So, young brother, are you interested in this piece of wood?"

The stall owner noticed Fang Bai's eyes sparkling at the stick and casually asked with a smile.

"Hmm...I feel there's something special about this stick..."

Fang Bai, casually picking up the stick, observed it while commenting.

The stall owner smiled and said, "Young brother indeed has an eye. I too think this item is an extraordinary treasure! How about this, if you wish, I can sell it to you cheaper, how's one ten thousand Holy Grade lower-tier spirit stones or cultivation resources of equivalent value?"

This stick was procured by the stall owner months ago for five thousand high-grade lower-tier spirit stones from an individual cultivation martial artist.

Back then, the stall owner observed spiritual energy leaking from the stick and thought he had stumbled upon a treasure, yet upon careful examination after purchase, found nothing special, feeling a pang of regret.

Since then, he placed the stick on the stall, hoping for a doubled profit, but no one seemed interested.

At this moment, seeing Fang Bai's apparent interest in the stick, the stall owner's mind started turning, enticing him to buy.

For the stall owner, selling for ten thousand Holy Grade lower-tier spirit stones, though a small venture, still meant no small gain!

"Ten thousand? That's too expensive!"

Fang Bai shook his head with a smile, returning the stick to its place.

"Eight thousand! Considering young brother's sincere desire, I'll sell at a loss, only at eight thousand spirit stones!"

The stall owner feigned an agonized expression, claiming.

Fang Bai shook his head again.

The stall owner gritted his teeth and said, "Seven thousand spirit stones! No less! No less and I won't sell!"

Fang Bai chuckled, saying, "At most, four thousand!"

"Impossible!"

The stall owner almost leaped up, blurting, "Selling at four thousand makes me lose a thousand!"

As soon as those words left his mouth, he realized his slip-up, seeing Fang Bai's grinning face, he scratched his head, rueful: "Fooled! Fooled! Young brother, you are indeed cunning!"

Beside them, Ren Tianfu, witnessing this, curled his lip, unimpressed, thinking how a piece of stick could be of worth? In his opinion, it's utterly valueless.

Yet, Ren Tianfu couldn't be bothered with Fang Bai, thinking he lacked experience and awareness of human treachery, perhaps taking a loss would teach him a lesson.

"How about this!"

Fang Bai pointed at the stick and said, "I'll offer you six thousand Essence Stones, giving you some profit. Sell it and I'll take it, refuse and I'll leave it!"

The stall owner was about to speak, but suddenly a slender figure appeared before him, a middle-aged martial artist with a long face and hooked nose, standing at his stall, pointing at the stick, pompously stated, "Ten thousand Holy Grade lower-tier Essence Stones! I want this item!"

Fang Bai furrowed his brow, turning to see the middle-aged martial artist beside him and discovered he was a Foundation Establishment cultivator at the peak, with a conspicuous small furnace cauldron embroidered on his chest.

"So he's a core disciple of the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion, could he have recognized something remarkable about this stick too?"

Fang Bai, seeing a deal about to close, didn't expect this sudden interference from a disciple of the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion, realizing acquiring the stick might not be straightforward.

Chapter 1469: Struggle

Ren Tianfu and the vendor both recognized the identity of the middle-aged martial artist, and their faces showed a bit of awe.

The Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion is filled with powerful figures, and its core disciples possess Foundation Establishment perfection in cultivation, making them on par with sect leaders of places like Lingxu Palace.

Therefore, facing the suddenly appearing middle-aged martial artist, both Ren Tianfu and the vendor felt pressured and wore expressions of respect.

The vendor cautiously asked, "Senior, are you really planning to buy this item?"

The middle-aged martial artist impatiently said, "Of course!"

"Good!"

The vendor immediately brightened up with a smile, saying, "Good! It's a deal! You pay ten thousand Holy Grade low-grade Spirit Stones, and this item is yours!"

The middle-aged martial artist nodded, a smile forming at the corner of his mouth, and reached out to grab the wooden stick on the stall.

Next, he only needed to transfer ten thousand Holy Grade Spirit Stones into the vendor's space ring, and the wooden stick would rightfully be his.

"Hold on!"

Fang Bai reached out, snatching the wooden stick into his hand first, displeased with the vendor, saying, "We already agreed on the price, and you also promised to sell it to me, why the sudden change? Is this how you do business?"

The vendor knew that what he did wasn't quite right, but by selling the stick to Fang Bai, he would only earn a thousand Spirit Stones, whereas selling to the middle-aged martial artist would earn him several times more, and he would also avoid offending the martial artist. So, he smiled apologetically at Fang Bai, saying, "Little brother, please understand! I'm running a small business and need to earn as much as I can. Since this senior offered a higher price, I naturally must sell it to him. Oh, I have other good stuff on my stall. Would you like to take another look? If you find something you like, I can give you a discount. How about it?"

Ren Tianfu also kept signaling to Fang Bai, thinking that Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion's core disciples are not to be offended. Since the other party wanted that worthless wooden stick, it would be best to let him have it to avoid provoking trouble.

Fang Bai acted as if he didn't see Ren Tianfu's signals, stating firmly, "I only have interest in this wooden stick, nothing else!"

The vendor smiled wryly, "Little brother, don't make it difficult for me!"

The middle-aged martial artist turned to look at Fang Bai with apparent displeasure, a cold gleam flashing in his eyes, thinking where such a little bastard came from, daring to compete with him for something, didn't he notice the disciple garb of Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion on his person?

"He's offering ten thousand Holy Grade low-grade Spirit Stones, right? Fine, I'll offer eleven thousand! Now, you have nothing to say, right?"

Fang Bai suddenly said.

"This..."

The vendor wanted to say "Little brother, this isn't about the price, I just don't want to offend a disciple of Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion," but he had already mentioned that the stick would go to the highest bidder. If he went back on his word, he'd surely be laughed at.

After all, now, around his stall, there was quite a crowd of martial artists gathered to watch, all with keen ears!

"Ten thousand Holy Grade medium-grade Spirit Stones!"

Without even looking at Fang Bai, the middle-aged martial artist directly quoted a price that made the surrounding martial artists gasp in astonishment.

The same ten thousand Spirit Stones, but Holy Grade medium-grade Spirit Stones are worth several times more to martial artists than Holy Grade low-grade Spirit Stones.

The vendor was also quite tempted, feeling his throat dry, licking his lips, and subconsciously looking towards Fang Bai.

"Eleven thousand Holy Grade medium-grade Spirit Stones!"

Before the vendor could speak, Fang Bai spoke again.

The middle-aged martial artist beside him raised an eyebrow and when he looked at Fang Bai again, there was a bit of anger in his eyes.

He realized that this young martial artist was determined to get this wooden stick, and if he continued increasing the price, Fang Bai would definitely do the same.

But as a disciple from a small sect with only a Half-Step Foundation Establishment cultivation level, how could he have so many Holy Grade medium-grade Spirit Stones?

He knew that even a powerful sect like Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion would only allow core disciples like himself to access a not-so-large amount of Holy Grade medium-grade Spirit Stones, while those with lower status, like inner and external courtyard disciples, only had access to Holy Grade low-grade Spirit Stones.

If it were elsewhere, the middle-aged martial artist would simply slap Fang Bai away and forcibly take the wooden stick.

But in Flaming Sun City, especially as a disciple of Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion, he had to adhere to the rules of fair trade, and could not forcibly buy the item, otherwise, it would damage the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion's reputation, and the higher-ups wouldn't let him off.

Though filled with rage, he dared not exert even the slightest pressure on Fang Bai, nor compel the vendor to sell the stick to him.

"Fang Bai, what are you doing?"

Ren Tianfu saw anger in the eyes of the middle-aged martial artist, feeling panicked, hurriedly pulled Fang Bai aside, and whispered, "What use do you have for this broken stick? Also, where did you get so many Holy Grade medium-grade Spirit Stones?"

Currently, Palace Master Li Sanfu and Wu Zhihua, Sun Jing's lives are uncertain. If Fang Bai further angers Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion, it would truly be a catastrophe for Lingxu Palace.

Fang Bai grinned, raising the stick in his hand, "Steward Ren, I think this stick is a treasure..."

"Treasure my ass!"

Ren Tianfu exclaimed angrily, "At this moment, you should be concerned about the safety of the Palace Master and the two Elders, not this stick! Return it to the vendor!"

Fang Bai firmly shook his head.

"You..."

Ren Tianfu laughed angrily, pointing at Fang Bai, hating his iron for not becoming steel, "We've placed great hopes on you, nurturing you intently! With your disregard for the bigger picture, how will you lead Lingxu Palace in the future?"

Initially, Fang Bai didn't want to fall out with Ren Tianfu, but this wooden stick was extremely significant to him. Once he spotted it, he couldn't simply hand it over.

"Little brother, I am Yang Fei, a core disciple of Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion. This wooden stick may be the root of a spiritual medicine, and I'd like to take it back for our pavilion's alchemists to refine a spirit pill. Could you let me have it? Consider it me, Yang Fei, owing you a favor!"

The middle-aged martial artist suppressed his anger and spoke solemnly to Fang Bai.

At this moment, the vendor also had some doubts, secretly wondering, "Could it be I missed something? Is that seemingly ordinary wooden stick an extraordinary treasure? Otherwise, why would this Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion disciple be so eager to obtain it?"

After Yang Fei, the core disciple of Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion, finished speaking, he stared at Fang Bai, thinking that I've been quite polite, and this should suffice. If you still don't get it, don't blame me for being ruthless! Although I cannot act against you openly, there are countless ways to deal with you discreetly!

"I am Fang Bai, an external courtyard disciple of Lingxu Palace. I really like this wooden stick, how about you let me have it? Consider it me, Fang Bai, owing you a favor!"

Fang Bai chuckled, almost repeating Yang Fei's words.

"Crack..."

A crisp sound of knuckles cracking came as Yang Fei clenched his fist.

"Fang Bai, is it? Very well! I'll remember you!"

Yang Fei no longer contested with Fang Bai, gave him a cold look, left those words, and then turned and walked away with large strides.

Chapter 1470: The Origin of the Axe

After Yang Fei left, the martial artists surrounding the stall owner did not disperse, and their eyes invariably fell on Fang Bai.

"Daring to provoke people from the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion in Flaming Sun City, brother, you've got guts!!"

"Hmph, just seeking attention, overestimating yourself! Just wait for trouble to come!"

"You say you offended people from the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion over a piece of rotten wood, was it worth it?"

"Young brother, don't blame me for not warning you, better run, run as far as you can!"

"You can't run away! You're doomed!"

...

Among the surrounding martial artists, some gave Fang Bai a thumbs up, some looked disdainful, some had sympathetic gazes, some advised Fang Bai to run quickly...

Fang Bai ignored the noisy voices around him and looked at the gradually receding figure of Yang Fei, his expression somewhat grave.

Fang Bai did not actually want to offend a local stronghold like the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion, but he would rather offend them than give up the wooden stick in his hand.

Fang Bai didn't know the origin of this wooden stick, but he could sense a vast and majestic wood elemental power and boundless life force contained within it.

In his past life, Fang Bai roamed the nine domains of the Immortal Realm, and had seen countless wood elemental treasures, but never encountered such an extraordinary one.

Fang Bai felt that this seemingly inconspicuous wooden stick was like an unparalleled huge treasure, full of secrets waiting for him to discover and explore. How could he possibly let it go to someone else?

Fang Bai believed that only he in this world understood the extraordinary nature of the stick, and that the Alchemy Cauldron disciple named Yang Fei probably just found it somewhat unusual and aroused some interest in it.

Otherwise, why would he let go so easily?

However, when Yang Fei left, the look he gave Fang Bai contained murderous intent, which made Fang Bai have to guard against it.

After all, this Flaming Sun City is the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion's territory. If Yang Fei wanted to retaliate against him, it would really be troublesome.

Although Fang Bai's current strength could rival a Golden Core Realm expert, it was said that the dozen or so higher-ups in the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion were all Golden Core Realm experts. If they took action, Fang Bai would have no choice but to flee in panic.

However, if the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion wanted to take the wooden stick from Fang Bai's hands, it would absolutely be impossible.

As long as Fang Bai wanted to escape, even if all the Golden Core Realm experts from the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion set up a Heaven's Net in Flaming Sun City, they still couldn't stop Fang Bai.

"Young brother, you... you've caused me misery!"

The stall owner, seeing Yang Fei leave in anger, was worried that this matter would implicate him. He couldn't help but stomp his feet and sigh, saying helplessly, "Take the stick, give me eleven thousand middle-grade Holy Grade Spirit Stones! I'll pack up and leave Flaming Sun City! Alas, you are not afraid of that Alchemy Cauldron disciple causing you trouble, but I am afraid!"

"You can't leave!"

Ren Tianfu, hearing that the stall owner was going to pack up and leave, didn't even bother to get angry with Fang Bai and hurriedly grabbed the stall owner, urgently saying, "You haven't told me the origin of this axe yet!"

"My errand boy hasn't returned, I..."

The stall owner's words were cut off abruptly as he saw a clean-looking young man in his twenties quickly walking towards them, his eyes lighting up. He pointed to the young man, saying, "He's back! You can ask him!"

Ren Tianfu suddenly turned around, his eyes fixed on the young man.

"Master..."

The clean-looking young man approached and was about to greet the stall owner, when suddenly a shadow flashed before him and a middle-aged martial artist with bloodshot eyes appeared in front of him.

The young man was only a Half-Step Foundation Establishment Martial Artist, belonging to the lowest rung in Flaming Sun City. Seeing the middle-aged martial artist in front of him was a mid-stage Foundation Establishment expert, he thought he was in danger, and was shocked, blurting out, "You..."

"Speak, where did you get this axe from?"

Ren Tianfu grabbed the young man with one hand, fearing he might run away, and raised the axe with the other hand, sternly asking.

"I... I..."

The young man glanced at the raised axe above him, afraid it might suddenly chop down. Scared pale and trembling all over, he stuttered, unable to speak properly.

Fang Bai placed the wooden stick into his space ring, casually placed eleven thousand middle-grade Holy Grade Spirit Stones into the stall owner's space ring, completing the transaction, and then leisurely walked to Ren Tianfu's side, clearing his throat to remind, "Steward Ren, you're scaring him!"

Only then did Ren Tianfu realize he was a bit out of line and awkwardly smiled, lowering the axe he had held high.

"Brother, don't be nervous, we mean no harm!"

Fang Bai patted the young man's shoulder, then pointed to the axe in Ren Tianfu's hand, smiling, asking, "I heard that you acquired this axe?"

"Yes... yes, I did..."

The young man nodded instinctively.

Fang Bai continued, "So can you tell us in detail from whom, or what place, you acquired this axe? Oh, this axe is important to us, so please be as detailed as possible!"

While speaking, he had already slipped a bottle of Spirit Pills into the young man's hand.

Although the Spirit Pills were only lower-grade Holy Grade Spirit Pills, for a Half-Step Foundation Establishment cultivator like the young man, they were already very precious.

He knew that for the stall owner, whom he served and who had sold Fang Bai the wooden stick, a month's hard work earned only two bottles of lower-grade Holy Grade Spirit Pills or equivalent cultivation resources.

The bottle of Spirit Pills Fang Bai gave him was worth half a month's hard-earned pay; how could he not be tempted?

The young man quickly put away the bottle of Spirit Pills to avoid his master seeing and seizing it, then smiled obsequiously, speaking to Fang Bai in a low voice, "Brother, to be honest, this axe was sold to me by an external courtyard disciple of the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion..."

Ren Tianfu and Fang Bai exchanged a glance, surprised to find the matter involved the Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion, both feeling a heavy heart.

"Brother, keep talking, the more details, the better!"

Fang Bai casually handed over another bottle of Spirit Pills.

Although Fang Bai's space ring didn't contain many Spirit Pills, he had an abundance of Spiritual Medicine, so if he wanted Spirit Pills, he could produce a bunch anytime and anywhere. Therefore, as long as he could get more information about Li Sanfu and Wu Zhihua, the two elders, he didn't mind giving away an extra bottle or two.

The young man's eyes gleamed even brighter, carefully storing away the Spirit Pills, he continued, "That external courtyard disciple is a distant cousin of mine. She told me this axe was given to her by one of her senior brothers. She found it inconvenient to use, so she sold it to me, and I then passed it on to my master... that's all I know..."

Fang Bai and Ren Tianfu felt even heavier upon hearing this.

The incident involved two Alchemy Cauldron Pavilion disciples, making it evident that if Palace Master Li Sanfu and the two elders' disappearance or uncertain fate wasn't caused by the Alchemy Cauldron disciples, it was undoubtedly related!

"We want to meet your cousin!"

Fang Bai and Ren Tianfu discussed it in a low voice, then Fang Bai said to the young man, "If you can arrange to meet her, I'll give you five bottles of Spirit Pills!"

The young man gulped, then said, "Ten bottles!"

"Deal!"

Fang Bai nodded with a smile.