

Little Girl 401

Chapter 401: The Big Shop Bullies the Customer

Xin Lin stood to the side, watching Master Chen's smug face, then glanced at Master Ji, who was trembling with anger, feeling a sense of injustice in his heart.

"Vice Hall Master Wang, you must make a fair decision about this matter. Taoyao Pavilion has always placed orders here, and this time you arbitrarily sold the herbs to others. Is this not an example of the shop bullying the customer, looking down upon our Taoyao Pavilion?"

Master Ji also knew that it was useless to argue with someone as petty as Master Zhao and could only turn to Vice Hall Master Wang.

Vice Hall Master Wang held the second highest position in the Purple Cloud Alchemy Hall, just below Jiang Qing.

On normal days when Jiang Qing was not present, Vice Hall Master Wang was responsible for transactions involving significant sums of money.

"Master Ji, your words are rather unpleasant. The sale of herbs is a transaction where money changes hands. Purple Cloud Alchemy Hall's dealings have always been fair. If you feel that our alchemy trades are unfair, then you might as well not come to Purple Cloud Alchemy Hall in the future."

Vice Hall Master Wang had certainly received his share of benefits from Master Chen's hands.

He chuckled noncommittally, responding neither too softly nor too harshly.

Master Ji turned pale.

Everyone knew that the herb quality at Purple Cloud Alchemy Hall was complete and of superior material.

If things were to truly fall out with Purple Cloud Alchemy Hall because of today's events, Taoyao Pavilion's future procurement of spiritual materials would definitely be affected, perhaps even unable to gain a foothold in the Spirit Food World.

Although Master Ji was furious to the extreme, he was also aware of the seriousness and urgency of the situation.

"So, what will it be, Brother Ji, do you want these herbs or not?"

Master Chen appeared increasingly arrogant.

Master Ji heaved a sigh, his tall figure stooping slightly, seemingly having aged several years in an instant. He shut his eyes and his lips quivered, about to reluctantly agree.

"Young man, I wish to see your Hall Master."

Just as Master Ji was humbly compromising and gritting his teeth in agreement, he heard Xin Lin, standing aside, crisply speak up.

"Kid, don't cause trouble."

Master Ji was startled and frightened by Xin Lin's words.

This young fella, looking so astute, how could he be so thoughtless?

The Hall Master of Purple Cloud Alchemy Hall was not someone who could be seen so casually.

He did not want to offend Purple Cloud Alchemy Hall and lose his standing in the Spirit Food World.

"Oh, Brother Ji, it looks like Taoyao Pavilion is really struggling, now even resorting to employing children as workers."

"Kid, don't meddle in this. Our Hall Master is not someone whom a lowly general worker like you can simply demand to see."

Master Chen and Vice Hall Master Wang jeered, contributing their mockery in turn.

Master Chen had long heard that Taoyao Pavilion was lacking general workers, and those high-quality workers at De Yue Building were surely targeted at Taoyao Pavilion.

Old Man Ji was really desperate, to actually take in such a baby-faced youngster as a general worker. Did he even know how to wash dishes?

Yet Xin Lin seemed to be utterly deaf to their mockery.

"Young man, just tell your Hall Master that it is Xin Lin looking for him; I have business with him."

A smile adorned Xin Lin's youthful face, his adorable appearance making it difficult for others to refuse.

Upon hearing this, and then looking at Xin Lin, the clerk immediately remembered the hall master's earlier instructions and, not caring for Vice Hall Master Ma's murderous gaze, hurried into the inner hall.

"Kid, let's drop it. Spend a bit more money and consider it a lesson learned. I was planning to teach you about procurement today, but it's a pity."

Master Ji treated Xin Lin's words as childish naivety, affectionately patting his head.

Who knew that soon thereafter, a series of footsteps could be heard from the inner hall.

"Xin, are you looking for me?"

The handsome-faced Jiang Qing, upon seeing Xin Lin, first paused, and then glanced at Master Ji standing next to Xin Lin.

PS: The picture of Murong Ziyue is here(◡̈▽̈)◡̈

Xin Lin's beautiful and kind-hearted sister~~

Everyone quickly search for "MS Fu Zi" on vx and follow my vx public account. Reply with "Murong Ziyue" and you can view it! (Make sure you type the characters correctly~)

Chapter 402: Made the Decision for You

Jiang Qing, being a person of great stature and shrewdness, took one look at Xin Lin and then at Master Ji and understood what was going on.

He made a symbolic gesture of clasping fists towards Master Ji, which counted as having given his respects.

Master Ji wore an expression of delighted surprise.

Having patronized the Purple Cloud Alchemy Hall for so many years, he had never even seen the face of Jiang Qing, not to mention having been treated with such friendliness by him.

Was it not said that this person from the Purple Cloud Alchemy Hall was known for his "Ghost Abacus," showing no mercy in his dealings?

Vice Hall Master Wang standing beside was also taken aback; he was the only one aware of Jiang Qing's true identity.

Jiang Qing actually being at the beck and call of a young child—wasn't this little fellow just a general worker?

The reaction of Master Zhao was even more subtle.

Hall Master Jiang was being so polite towards Master Ji, yet he left Master Zhao of the number one Spiritual Food Restaurant in Zixiao hanging, not giving him as much as a glance.

All of this, because of that little general worker!

"Brother Jiang, it's not that I'm looking for you, but our family's Master Ji is. He had a reservation for some medicine here, but your Vice Hall Master sold it to someone else by mistake. Right now, they are even demanding ten times the price in a coercive sale. Please, have a look at this situation."

Xin Lin curled his lips, snitching with an air of discontent.

Master Ji wasn't sloppy either; he quickly handed over the contract that had been agreed upon a few days before.

Jiang Qing took it, glanced over it a few times, and then his eyes turned to Vice Hall Master Wang with a starkly different disposition than when he looked at Xin Lin—a chill that was frightening to witness.

"Vice Hall Master Wang, what kind of work is this? The contract is clear in black and white; you were negligent in your duties and have not made timely amends. This month, your salary is halved."

Vice Hall Master Wang, who had been arrogant just moments ago, was now shrinking his neck, not daring to utter a single word.

"As for Master Zhao, this batch of medicine was never meant for De Yue Building. If you still wish to purchase, in three days' time, the same quality of herbs will be available for you to pick up from the Purple Cloud Alchemy Hall."

"Hall Master Jiang, doing this is not right—I paid with real gold and silver!"

Master Zhao tried to argue his case.

With the price inflated to tenfold, he had hoped to take this opportunity to strike at the Taoyao Pavilion while at the same time swindle a good sum from Master Ji.

Master Zhao only knew Jiang Qing as the Hall Master who arrived just last year; seeing his smooth chin, free of whiskers, and his young age, he had begun to carry himself with unbridled arrogance.

"Oh? Is Master Zhao suggesting that our Purple Cloud Alchemy Hall is bullying customers with our influence?"

Jiang Qing smiled slightly, with no hint of anger between his brows, appearing very amiable.

But the next moment, the smile on his face vanished as if it was the snow in spring, dissolving instantaneously. The swift change in expression was startling.

"Even if we bullied customers, so what! Let it be known, Vice Hall Master Wang and Master Zhao colluded, lining their own pockets, and for the next three months, all transactions with De Yue Building are to be refused."

Master Zhao was startled, and Vice Hall Master Wang alongside shuddered, now realizing that Jiang Qing was simply seizing the opportunity to assert his stance.

With but a few dismissive words, Jiang Qing resolved the matter.

Master Ji stood there dumbfounded, not returning to his senses until he had the wrapped Dust Extinguishing Grass and Fire Dragon Ginseng in his hands.

"Master Ji, I need to speak with Brother Jiang for a moment, please wait for me,"

Xin Lin grinned, unable to conceal his elation.

No wonder there's a saying that having connections makes everything easier.

It seems if one wants to get by in Purple Cloud City, it really pays to stick by Jiang Qing's side!

Jiang Qing led Xin Lin aside, and his eyes narrowed as he took in Xin Lin's worn clothing.

It seems the situation at Chu Mansion is even worse than he imagined.

Chapter 403: Holding Tight to a Thick Thigh

"Xin, how come you would go to Taoyao Pavilion? That place is not suitable for you."

Jiang Qing looked quite concerned.

He is a businessman, so his words didn't carry any discrimination.

But Taoyao Pavilion is a place where all sorts of people mingle, and Xin Lin, after all, is a young lady who also went there to work as a general worker. Jiang Qing feared that she would be taken advantage of, and he was even more worried that if word got out, it would spoil her reputation.

Now Jiang Qing was also full of regret, having carelessly written down the name of Taoyao Pavilion, never expecting that Xin Lin would really go to Taoyao Pavilion.

However, upon reflection, aside from Taoyao Pavilion, there were no other places that Xin Lin could enter.

"It's just me in my family. If I don't go, who will?"

Xin Lin smiled faintly, without a hint of grievance on her young face.

Such a simple sentence, yet filled with such helplessness and bitterness.

Like Xin Lin, Chu Miaoyun, a lady from the Chu Mansion, just yesterday had people purchase a plethora of beauty elixirs from the Purple Cloud Alchemy Hall, spending lavishly.

But here was Xin Lin, who had to toil outside all day.

When compared side by side, it made Xin Lin appear all the more sensible and pitiable.

"I'll take care of you."

A lump formed in Jiang Qing's throat, almost blurring out the words.

But in the end, Jiang Qing remained a calm person. The impulsive thought flickered by and he suppressed that thought.

He had his family to consider, and making a rash promise would not only fail to help Xin Lin but might also bring her disastrous trouble.

"If you encounter difficulties, you can come to me. If you don't mind, you can learn from the Spiritual Food Master under my command."

Jiang Qing pleaded earnestly.

"Brother Jiang, you've already helped me a great deal just now. I can't keep troubling you. Besides, although Master Ji looks rather fierce, he's actually a good-hearted man. He treats me well, and after learning under him for a while, I can restart Chu's Restaurant. Don't worry about me; I know how to handle things and will definitely not get into trouble."

Xin Lin could also see that Jiang Qing was worried about her.

Having no siblings of her own, Jiang Qing's brotherly concern for her made Xin Lin very grateful.

"Since you've already made your decision, focus on learning well. However, you must remember not to let anyone recognize your identity."

Jiang Qing knew Xin Lin's stubborn temperament; he could not force her, so after repeating his advice a few more times, he finally saw Xin Lin out.

After leaving the Ping'an Alchemy Hall, Master Ji could not help but ask.

"Kid, is your family really running the Spiritual Food Restaurant? And how did you get to know Master Jiang?"

Master Ji had already inquired; indeed, there was a Spiritual Food Restaurant owned by Xin Lin's family, but it was no longer in business. There was no one else in her family except for a father who was not in his right mind.

With such a background, how could she be so familiar with Jiang Qing?

"Brother Jiang once bought medicine from my father. Before his accident, my father was a very famous Divine Doctor. It's a pity that later..."

Xin Lin paused and her eyes reddened, looking like a little white rabbit.

Hearing this, Master Ji also felt somewhat embarrassed.

If she really came from a reputable family, why would she be willing to work as a general worker? The child, struggling to support her family, had it tough.

Master Ji sighed inwardly, becoming more determined to properly teach the child Xin Lin.

But speaking of Xin Lin, after handling Master Ji's questions, she returned to Chu Mansion.

Upon her return, she was greeted by Ma Jingtian, who was beside himself with joy, coming to share the good news.

"Little Boss, it's all set! We've harvested the half-acre of Purple Cloud Cabbage in the backyard. What do you think we should do with them?"

In one day and one night, the Purple Cloud Cabbage that would normally take a couple of months to grow was ready for harvest.

Hearing this, Xin Lin also became interested, waved her little hand, and went off to see the Purple Cloud Cabbage.

Chapter 404: Chinese Cabbage Tastier Than Meat

In the backyard, stacks of verdant Purple Cloud Cabbages were piled up, amounting to roughly a hundred heads.

From a batch of seeds, each and every one had sprouted, and they were harvested within a day and night.

The vigor of their growth, the quantity produced, one could only say that the feng shui of the Chu Mansion's backyard was genuinely impressive.

These Purple Cloud Cabbages were plumper than those found in the market, their leaves a shade of green that seemed to drip with freshness, their vitality striking.

The stems of the cabbage were as white and pure as jade, juicy and full. With a gentle pinch, juice would splatter all over one's hand.

"These are the most beautiful Purple Cloud Cabbages I've ever seen, they look just like jade carvings."

Ma Jingtian held two Purple Cloud Cabbages in his arms as if hugging two chubby boys, unable to close his mouth in amazement.

Xin Lin casually grabbed three or four cabbages, tossing them to Ma Jingtian.

"Have someone cook up a few dishes of stir-fried cabbage with vinegar, add some chili peppers."

Ma Jingtian immediately ordered someone to cook the dishes.

By this hour, it was about time for dinner.

On the dining table of the Chu Mansion, there was now an extra dish of stir-fried cabbage with vinegar for today's menu.

The brothers of the Water Wraith Gang took one look and were not pleased.

They were all local ruffians, accustomed to eating spicy and savory foods, and now that they had given up their hooligan ways, were they supposed to switch to a vegetarian diet?

The gang members all pulled long faces, showing no interest in the stir-fried cabbage with vinegar in front of them.

"Buck up, all of you. It's not like you're getting less to eat or wear. This is a vegetable personally grown by yours truly."

Ma Jingtian said sternly, lecturing them.

Xin Lin and Silly Chu sat at a table to the side.

Silly Chu picked up a piece of stir-fried cabbage with his chopsticks, hesitated for a moment, then casually shoved it into his mouth.

After chewing a few times, a look of perplexity appeared on Silly Chu's handsome face.

At the surrounding tables, the gang members of the Water Wraith Gang, under the oppression of Ma Jingtian, reluctantly started to eat the stir-fried cabbage.

Upon tasting it, dozens of local ruffians were immediately stunned.

Holy mother.

Is this really cabbage?

As soon as it entered the mouth, the cabbage was both juicy and fresh; the leaves brimming with a natural fragrance, sending the whole tongue into rapturous delight, almost overwhelmed by the beauty of taste.

The moment the cabbage hit the palate, the taste buds exploded with flavor, transmitting a kind of refreshing lightness as if drinking a sweet mountain spring.

The eyes of the ruffians beamed green, their chopsticks moving swiftly all together towards the dish of cabbage, each trying to be faster than the other, afraid that a half-beat delay would mean one less leaf to enjoy.

"You, youngster, move aside, I'm your blood brother!"

"What does being a brother have to do with it? You don't even eat vegetables; that cabbage is mine!"

"All of you back off, I grew that cabbage! I've barely had a bite."

After tasting it, even Ma Jingtian was astonished, feeling as if he had ascended to the heavens. Mother of god, this wasn't just any cabbage; it was even tastier than meat, a cabbage comparable to Spiritual Food!

Xin Lin picked up a piece with his chopsticks and after a few bites, was also struck by the fresh and crisp taste of the Purple Cloud Cabbage.

Although it wasn't as exceptional as the One-star Spiritual Delicacy of Wind Breath Roast Pork, this was just an ordinary plate of stir-fried cabbage with vinegar made by the kitchen staff of the Water Wraith Gang, and yet it had reached a level comparable to the One-star Spiritual Delicacies found in ordinary Spiritual Food Restaurants.

It seemed that using Jade Pure Spring water for cultivation had great potential.

Three to four cabbages, each weighing four to five jin, were more sought after than meat, and were promptly wiped out by the hungry gang members of the Water Wraith Gang like a gust of wind sweeping through leaves.

"Little Boss, these cabbages are really something special; how about we plant another batch? From now on, just eating cabbages will suffice for the brothers."

Ma Jingtian chuckled and said, drooling as he earnestly pleaded.

Chapter 405: Selling Purple Cloud Cabbage

Purple Cloud Cabbages are too delicious, Ma Jingtian came to plead on behalf of a bunch of brothers.

"Keep dreaming, those things are meant to be sold. Don't forget that Chu Mansion has hardly any income right now, and the Water Wraith Gang has turned over a new leaf, with so many mouths to feed, surviving on cabbages alone would bankrupt me."

In Xin Lin's heart, Little Xin Lin held an abacus in his left hand and a calculator in his right, calculating vigorously on how to make the most out of these Purple Cloud Cabbages and carve out a financial path for Chu Mansion.

"Little Boss, no matter how tasty these cabbages are, how much could they actually be worth? If they could be made into Spiritual Delicacies, they'd surely increase in value; but if we're just selling them raw, at most they'd bring a few copper coins. I think we might as well eat them ourselves. They even have some medicinal benefits; after I ate some, my chronic constipation was cured!"

Ma Jingtian pleaded with a downturned face.

Xin Lin wasn't entirely dismissive of what Ma Jingtian said.

Cabbages aren't worth much; even selling them for ten or eight copper coins each would be undercutting their actual value.

As for turning them into Spiritual Food, it would be fine if Chu's Restaurant were still in operation, but since it cannot do business right now, this makes selling the cabbages difficult.

"I'll think about it, you go and buy some new seeds now, not too many, about the same as last time."

For now, Xin Lin couldn't provide any more Purple Cloud Cabbages; after all, they needed to "drink" from the Jade Pure Spring.

Xin Lin herself also needs to use the Jade Pure Spring, so being able to harvest a batch of Purple Cloud Cabbages every other day is already quite good. After calculations, a hundred cabbages per harvest and fifteen hundred in half a month is not an insignificant number.

Aside from what the mansion requires for daily consumption, the rest must be sold off.

Although Purple Cloud Cabbages taste better than regular cabbages, they still rot ultimately; without a cold storage, Chu Mansion could not keep them for long.

Xin Lin decided to take two Purple Cloud Cabbages to Taoyao Pavilion today to see if she could get them to purchase a batch.

Xin Lin said and did; that evening, she took two Purple Cloud Cabbages to the pantry.

She arrived early today, Master Ji was still prepping ingredients in the back.

"Uncle Ji, here are two cabbages I grew myself. What do you think, does Taoyao Pavilion still purchase cabbages?"

Xin Lin caught a glimpse of Master Ji's assistant, Uncle Ji.

He was Master Ji's nephew and had always been working under Master Ji, a One-star Spirit Cuisine Master.

Master Ji usually only handled the procurement of spiritual materials; the procurement of ordinary fruits, vegetables, and meats was usually managed by Master Ji.

This Master Ji was known for being somewhat acidic in speech and often bullied the general workers, his reputation in the pantry was not great.

But since procurement was his responsibility, Xin Lin had to ask him first.

"Cabbages, what do you think Taoyao Pavilion is, a place where just any old cabbages can be dumped?"

Master Ji replied unhappily.

Yet Xin Lin was not annoyed, her little face still had a cheerful smile.

"Master Ji, my cabbages grow fast and are free of pests, quite delicious indeed."

After listening, Master Ji took a reluctant look at the Purple Cloud Cabbages in Xin Lin's hand.

This look took Master Ji by surprise.

These cabbages, they looked quite Water Spirit-like, almost comparable to the fourteen-year-old fresh-faced junior official who'd recently joined Taoyao Pavilion.

Master Ji then pinched the cabbage leaves, and the scent of the cabbage hit his face.

A really good thing.

Master Ji had a discerning eye and immediately recognized the quality of Xin Lin's Purple Cloud Cabbages as exceptional.

"I'm selling them for one silver per cabbage."

Xin Lin gestured.

A price of one silver was already tens of times over the normal price for a Purple Cloud Cabbage.

One hundred silver a day would solve the basic food expenses of Chu Mansion.

But who knew that Master Ji would give a cold laugh.

Chapter 406: Qualification to Enter the Inner Chamber

"One head of cabbage for one silver, you must be crazy for money."

Master Ji grumbled discontentedly.

"Master Ji, you can't put it that way. A simple dish of cabbage in Taoyao Pavilion costs dozens of silver taels. If turned into Spiritual Food, it's easily a hundred. You know this better than I do."

Xin Lin spread her hands.

What can you do when a Spiritual Food Restaurant is such a profitable industry?

Master Ji thought for a moment.

"Fine, your cabbage for one silver, but you have to give me half."

Master Ji looked around and lowered his voice.

In the procurement of food ingredients, taking a kickback is an unspoken rule in the Spirit Food World.

Master Ji, relying on being the nephew of Master Ji, had not missed out on his share of perks.

He was sure Xin Lin would agree.

"Master Ji, what if I don't give it to you?"

Xin Lin chuckled.

What a joke, this isn't just a hundred regular heads of cabbage, it's a bowl of Jade Pure Spring water, already underpriced at a hundred silver.

This fellow dares to demand half by extortion.

No way would Xin Lin agree to such a deal.

Master Ji's face changed.

"Refuse a toast only to drink a forfeit, offend me, and you can forget about establishing yourself in Taoyao Pavilion."

Xin Lin chuckled.

"Master Ji, it seems you have mistaken something. The chief here is Master Ji, not you. You don't have the right to decide whether I stay or leave."

Xin Lin sneered.

"You, a mere general worker, dare to defy me. Wang Lei, go call the boss over. I want to see if the boss would prefer to keep me, a Spiritual Delicacy Master, or you, a pathetic little worker."

Just having walked in, Wang Lei burst into joy at hearing this.

Haha, Xin Lin, you're courting death. Offending anyone but having to offend Master Ji.

He's the actual second-in-command in the kitchen of Taoyao Pavilion, being the real nephew of Master Ji.

This little worker is finally going to get the boot.

Wang Lei agreed promptly, eager to find the boss.

"Xin Lin, you're here. Come in and help with starting the fire."

A voice came from inside, from Master Ji.

Both Master Ji and Wang Lei's faces changed simultaneously.

Were they deaf, or had they gone deaf?

Master Ji was actually asking Xin Lin to come inside.

No, he was inviting a general worker into the "Forbidden Zone"!

Xin Linqing responded crisply and pleasantly, glancing at the sour-faced Master Ji and Wang Lei.

"Wait, Master Ji, didn't we agree on letting me be in charge of starting the fires?"

Wang Lei panicked.

He had taken on too much work for several days and realized he couldn't handle it.

That guy named Xin Lin, not sure what he ate, had endless energy like he was on steroids all night.

He figured competing with Xin Lin for general duties was impossible.

Just yesterday, Wang Lei heard they needed someone to start fires in the inner room, also referred to as the Assistant Chef's helper.

He quickly sought out Master Ji, giving him some money. Finally, Master Ji agreed to let him start fires inside.

Who would have thought this good opportunity would fall into Xin Lin's hands?

"Uncle, Xin Lin just got here and isn't qualified enough for the inner room. I think Wang Lei is a better fit."

Master Ji disagreed.

"Wang Lei is careless, always losing and forgetting things, while Xin Lin is much more cautious. I think she's quite suitable."

Master Ji had intentions of cultivating Xin Lin. If she stayed washing dishes all the time, what cooking skills could she learn? He found an excuse to let Xin Lin observe inside, also as a way to thank her for the significant help she provided at the Alchemy Hall in Zixiao during the day.

Chapter 407: A Spirit Stove

Master Ji was a man of his word who did not brook any objections, and he let Xin Lin enter the inner part of the kitchen.

Xin Lin had been at Taoyao Pavilion for several days but it was her first time entering the inner part of the meal preparation area, and she couldn't help but feel a bit curious.

The inner area was much more spacious than the outer area, roughly the size of two main rooms of Taoyao Pavilion combined.

As it was close to opening time, all the ingredients and various furnaces and stoves had been prepared.

Freshly cleaned ingredients and newly acquired medicinal herbs, chopping, garnishing, the capacious inner area was surprisingly staffed by more than a dozen people, most of whom were assistant chefs, primarily one-star and two-star Spiritual Delicacy Masters, all of whom were ready for work.

The other assistant chefs in the inner area also showed looks of surprise as they turned to look at Xin Lin.

For a general worker to enter the inner area was the first step towards becoming an assistant chef.

Such an event was not unprecedented in Taoyao Pavilion, but for a new worker, and one who was abruptly thrust into the meal prep area by the boss at that, to be allowed into the inner area was indeed an unprecedented first.

"Xiao Xin, don't just stand there; go and keep an eye on the furnace."

Compared to others, Master Ji was undoubtedly much more at leisure.

He was holding a brightly polished copper furnace, walking back and forth in the inner area, checking the work of his helpers.

Xin Lin's gaze was immediately drawn to the copper furnace.

It contained Spiritual Energy!

The Dan Wood Furnace kept in Chu Mansion was somewhat similar to the one in Master Ji's hands, but a bit smaller.

This must be Master Ji's Spiritual Food Furnace.

After acquiring the Dan Wood Furnace, Xin Lin had also studied spirit stoves.

Be it a Spiritual Delicacy Master or an Elixir Alchemist, each had their respective Pill Furnace and Spirit Stove.

Ordinary chefs would just use pots and pans.

But upon becoming a Spiritual Delicacy Master, especially when preparing two-star and above Spirit Cuisine, it was necessary to use a Spirit Stove.

Despite appearing as just a small furnace, there were significant particulars to attend to.

Spirit Stoves were classified into several kinds: the most common were wood stoves, followed by iron furnaces, then somewhat finer were copper furnaces, with silver furnaces and golden furnaces being superior, and of course, these furnaces were not crafted from ordinary materials.

By the level of silver furnaces and above, only existences like Spiritual Cuisine Masters, such as those in Longteng Imperial Palace, could afford to use them.

A single Spirit Stove could cost at least a few thousands, or even tens of thousands—it was a tool of the trade for Spiritual Delicacy Masters, not to be lightly displayed in public. Only three-star and above delicacies or special spiritual materials warranted the use of a Spirit Stove.

When not in use, a Spirit Stove had to be carefully stored, even reverently taken care of.

On normal days, Master Ji would not use his Spirit Stove, and if he brought it out today, it was because of the evening's Spiritual Banquet and the freshly bought Fire Dragon Ginseng.

Allowing Xin Lin into the inner area was in part to watch over the fire; moreover, Master Ji wanted Xin Lin to formally witness the process of preparing Spiritual Cuisine.

After all, the preparation of three-star and above Spirit Cuisine was out of the ordinary, and if Xin Lin could learn something from the process, it would be greatly beneficial to her future path as a Spiritual Delicacy Master.

Of course, Xin Lin did not yet know what spectacle she would soon face.

After letting Xin Lin in, Master Ji immediately went to arrange the staff.

"The stoves are over there. For tonight's Spiritual Banquet, besides ten dishes of one-star and below Spirit Cuisine for each table, as well as one three-star Spirit Cuisine, the rest are one-star Spirit Delicacies and some common dishes to be cooked on ordinary stoves. You go and tend to stove number one; you must not let the fire go out during this time. Otherwise, if you spoil the dishes, it's on you."

Following closely behind, Master Ji quietly scoffed to himself, assigning Xin Lin to tend the fire.

Chapter 408: Encyclopedia? Life Book?

Larger Spiritual Food Restaurants all have multiple stoves, used for different cooking methods like frying, boiling, and stir-frying.

Taoyao Pavilion is no exception; there are four stoves in Taoyao Pavilion, not counting the copper furnace used by Master Ji.

On his first day in the inner chamber, Xin Lin was assigned the first stove, which is usually used for making Spiritual Food Soup.

Previously, the first stove was overseen by an old general worker. However, half a month ago, the worker carelessly mishandled the fire and was fired by an infuriated Master Ji.

For the next half a month, since Taoyao Pavilion did not host any grand banquets, the first stove remained unused until today.

The other workers looking at the fire cast unusual glances at Xin Lin, opting to remain silent and went on with their duties.

After assigning Xin Lin, Master Ji sneered secretly.

"You think just because my uncle backs you, you can do whatever you like. You're still too green, wait till you start crying."

Xin Lin approached the first stove and eyed the stack of firewood next to it.

There was already a large pile of wood next to it; Xin Lin examined it and then threw a log into the stove.

The fire in the stove boomed and roared into life.

Xin Lin was slightly startled.

This fire is really fierce.

She looked again at the nearby firewood, noticing several different types of wood.

For a moment, Xin Lin was flustered.

Seeing her inexperienced maneuvers, Master Ji became even more delighted.

"Be quick, the banquet is about to start. Anyone who makes a mistake, get out immediately."

Soon, white mist began to rise all over the dining area.

At Xin Lin's side, the fire in the first stove was fierce.

"Fire watcher, reduce the flame, you're almost burning all the water."

The assistant chef at the first stove chided.

Xin Lin glanced at the other stoves; those looking after the fire were orderly, occasionally adding firewood.

The people around took pleasure in her misfortune, looking at Xin Lin with no intention of helping.

In this small dining area, everyone harbored their own aspirations.

Everyone dreamed of gaining Master Ji's recognition, rising from general worker to the inner chamber, then to assistant chef, and finally to head chef.

Noticing how this little one, Xin Lin, had been here only a few days, moving up from general worker to the inner chamber, reportedly for being agile and sweet-talking.

Master Ji even took her this noon to gather herbs.

Upon hearing this, everyone else was burning with envy and had no goodwill towards Xin Lin.

With everyone being hostile towards her, it wouldn't be easy for Xin Lin to fit in the inner chamber.

It's better to rely on oneself than on others, and if she couldn't rely on herself, then she had no choice but to...

"Life Book, how do I properly tend the fire?"

Xin Lin tried asking the Heaven-defying Book.

Although the Heaven-defying Book was unreliable and often misled her, Xin Lin also realized that it was incredibly powerful.

Up till now, the solutions and treasure boxes it provided often contained unexpected surprises.

Xin Lin decided to test whether the Heaven-defying Book truly knew everything, was it really so heaven-defying?

"Life Book notification, responding to this query will deduct Heaven-defying Value by 10."

To Xin Lin's surprise, the rigid voice of the Heaven-defying Book really responded.

Wow, my book!

It even knows how to tend fire!

Xin Lin chuckled to herself and immediately agreed.

"Life Book notification, to answer how to tend the fire, Heaven-defying Value -10. The image and information are from Daidu Encyclopedia, provided for reference only."

Chapter 409: Problematic Fire Toad Ginseng

Following that, several images appeared in Xin Lin's mind.

"Based on the different origins of the wood, the combustibility varies, and the length and intensity of the flames, from highest to lowest, are Pine Wood, Oak, Birch, and Pear Wood. Moreover, if one is a Spirit Warrior, one can also utilize the Fire Spirit to control the flames."

Holy smokes!

That was Xin Lin's immediate reaction upon hearing and seeing this.

Heaven-defying Book, you're into this too?

After arriving at Longteng, what Xin Lin found hardest to adapt to wasn't the bizarre cultivation system here, but rather the ancient lifestyle without electricity or internet.

Such a reply from the Heaven-defying Book indeed broadened Xin Lin's horizons.

Now, her Heaven-defying Value in the book has become 34.

However, each question costs 10 Heaven-defying Points, so it isn't something she could just ask casually.

Currently, the glow from the fire blushed Xin Lin's little face.

She was sweating profusely, and the fire in the stove was gradually dimming.

Xin Lin glanced at the wood beside her and quickly shoved a piece of Pine Wood into the fire.

Rich in tar, Pine Wood burns well and robustly. Seeing the bright flames leap up, Xin Lin quietly recited the Spirit Control mnemonic to herself.

Under the influence of the Fire Spirit within her, the fire in the stove, flickering bright then dark, gradually stabilized, maintaining a steady and tempered blaze.

An hour later, Master Ji came over.

Master Ji followed behind him, his face full of scorn, just waiting for Master Ji to explode in anger and dismiss Xin Lin.

Who knew that upon reaching Xin Lin's side, when Master Ji observed the woodpile, he paused.

"Newcomer, what kind of trick are you pulling here? I asked you to tend the fire, what mischief are you up to?"

Seeing that Xin Lin had sorted the wood into separate piles like a child playing house, Master Ji couldn't help but scold.

"Masters, I am classifying the wood. Later, when simmering soup, the flames must not be too strong; neither Pine Wood nor Birch are suitable, so I am using Oak for the fire."

Xin Lin looked earnest.

Sorting wood for a fire?

What kind of twisted logic is this? Master Ji was about to chastise her.

"Where did you learn such obscure knowledge?"

Master Ji asked curiously.

"I haphazardly read it in my father's study when I was a child."

Xin Lin wiped the sweat from her forehead with the back of her hand, her innocent smile was as genuine as it could be, flashing a set of small white teeth.

"Oak is the most suitable for simmering soup. Everyone else, listen up, from now on learn some of this from Xiao Xin."

Master Ji chuckled, his old face wrinkling like a blooming chrysanthemum.

Only the most seasoned Spiritual Delicacy Masters would understand the impact of the wood on cooking.

This little kid has potential.

After observing, Master Ji walked away with his hands behind his back, moving on to inspect the other stoves.

"Kid, don't get cocky."

Master Ji bit his teeth in resentment.

Xin Lin appeared indifferent, tossing another firewood into the stove.

Upon discovering that the Fire Spirit could be used to control the intensity of the fire, Xin Lin found that tending the fire actually helped with the consolidation of the Fire Spirit.

She had just started on Spirit Control and her control was weak.

She slowly mobilized Fu Xi's Energy, repeatedly managing the fire in the stove.

In Taoyao Pavilion, clinks of cups and saucers could be heard everywhere. During the day, Master Chen from De Yue Building, who had just clashed with Xin Lin and Master Ji, was surprisingly present as an honored guest.

"Master, why did you come to the banquet at Taoyao Pavilion? This feast was snatched from us."

Another Spiritual Delicacy Master from De Yue Building followed him.

"What do you know, I am here to watch Master Ji tarnish his reputation."

Master Chen let out a cold chuckle, downing the wine in his cup in one go.

Chapter 410: The Fire Spirit Erupts

The banquet was more than halfway through, and for Taoyao Pavilion, this was just the beginning of the busiest day.

Most of the guests had already had three rounds of drinks, and at this time, they were either embracing their female companions or drinking and eating with friends.

"Everyone, liven up."

In the dining area, most of the Spiritual Food had already been served.

However, the kitchen was still bustling.

Master Ji was also beginning to get busy. Earlier, he was just responsible for inspections, but now, it was around the early hours of the morning.

The most expensive dish of the night, and the only Four-star Spiritual Cuisine, was already halfway prepared.

Fire Emperor Auspicious Soup.

A Four-star Spiritual Cuisine, it required as many as fifteen different ingredients, including the Dust Extinguishing Grass and Fire Toad Ginseng that Xin Lin and Master Ji procured at noon for this dish.

Nearly ten kinds of ingredients had already been prepared.

Xin Lin, at stove number one, had also finished serving most of the Spiritual Cuisine.

This gave Xin Lin some extra time to observe Master Ji preparing this Four-star Spiritual Cuisine.

Although she was also a sort of half-baked One-star Spirit Cuisine Master, it was only because of the Dan Wood Furnace. If she were to really handle pots and spatulas, Xin Lin doubted it would take even a quarter of an hour before she turned the kitchen into a disaster scene.

She did not want to rely on the Dan Wood Furnace for her whole life, which is why she put in so much effort to sneak into Taoyao Pavilion.

She had already stolen a few glances at the cooking skills of other Spiritual Delicacy Masters while she was there and got a rough understanding.

However, Master Ji had not yet made a move.

Head chefs usually do not cook.

Only for Four-star Spiritual Cuisine would he take charge himself.

In fact, in the past month, the Spiritual Cuisine personally prepared by Master Ji did not exceed twenty dishes.

Xin Lin was fortunate – just within a few days of her arrival, she had the chance to witness and it was even a Four-star Spiritual Cuisine.

Just this one dish, it was said to have sold for an astronomical thirty thousand silver taels.

"Start the furnace."

Suddenly, Master Ji gave a low shout.

The copper furnace he held in his hand vibrated with a hum, rising up as if controlled by an invisible hand.

The furnace, originally only about the size of Master Ji's palm and roughly twice as large as the Dan Wood, swelled significantly after being activated, becoming even larger than the large pot on the stove.

The copper pot shimmered with a copper-red lustre.

Controlling such a large stove, just the consumption of True Qi alone was substantial.

Therefore, Spiritual Cuisine Masters above three-star, mostly also had notable Martial Arts cultivation, or else after preparing one dish, they wouldn't be able to sustain the furnace control, let alone the preparation of Spiritual Cuisine.

What level Master Ji's Martial Arts cultivation was, Xin Lin did not yet know.

At this moment, her whole attention was fixated on the copper furnace.

While controlling the furnace, Master Ji began adding the precooked ingredients into the copper furnace.

Around the copper furnace, rings of True Qi enveloped it.

Under the influence of the True Qi, the food and spiritual materials inside the furnace slowly absorbed the heat, releasing bursts of fragrance.

Half an hour passed, and most of the Fire Emperor Auspicious procedures had been completed, filling the entire dining area with a delicious aroma.

In the copper furnace, there were bubbling and gurgling sounds of the soup boiling.

"Add the Fire Toad Ginseng."

This Four-star Spiritual Cuisine only needed one last medicinal herb, the most crucial Fire Toad Ginseng, to be completed.

Under everyone's watchful eyes, Xin Lin observed Master Ji adding several Fire Toad Ginsengs into the copper furnace.

But just as the Fire Toad Ginseng was added to the furnace, inside the copper furnace, there was a buzzing sound, followed by a terrifying surge of Fire Spirit, erupting like a volcanic explosion.