The Gate 1041

Chapter 1041: Sheng Huotian's Awakening

Ning Cheng made his move to attract Sichen Qiutian. Since Sichen Qiutian came over and spoke up, Ning Cheng naturally wouldn't continue.

Seeing Ning Cheng stop, Ba Meng promptly put away the Sun and Moon Pagoda. The Dao Essence Holy Emperor, who blocked Ning Cheng, also had to put away his artefact.

"Ning Cheng greets the Union Master." Ning Cheng hurriedly went forward to greet him.

Not only was Sichen Qiutian a strong alchemic powerhouse, but his cultivation was also the highest within the Pill Union. At least Ning Cheng couldn't tell Sichen Qiutian's current cultivation level. Moreover, Sichen Qiutian was an upright person, which made Ning Cheng respect him very much.

"Pill Sage Ning must have had a hard time returning, but I wonder what made you get into a conflict Elder Daopeng?" Seeing Ning Cheng stop in time, Sichen Qiutian spoke up in a friendly tone.

When he said that Ning Cheng had difficulty returning, it indicated that he naturally knew why Sheng Huotian had been poisoned. The person who poisoned Sheng Huotian had done so mainly to attract Ning Cheng, which also meant that Ning Cheng wouldn't have had a peaceful time.

The middle-stage Dao Essence cultivator, Daopeng, whose full name was Cai Daopeng, was the first elder of the Pill Union. His position in the Pill Union was second only to Sichen Qiutian and Sheng Huotian, the third-in-command. Yet, at this moment, when he saw Sichen Qiutian talking to Ning Cheng with such a friendly tone, he couldn't help but feel uncomfortable in his heart.

If someone else had dared to make a move in the Pill Union, Union Master Sichen Qiutian wouldn't have even said anything before crushing that person to death. At the very least, Sichen Qiutian wouldn't have stopped him. But facing Ning Cheng, the Union Master not only asked for a reason but also did in such a pleasant tone, which felt too eccentric even for someone like Sichen Qiutian.

Ning Cheng clasped his fists and replied, "Replying to the Union Master, I brought my friend back to help heal Brother Huotian, but this Elder Cai Daopeng forcibly stopped us and didn't allow me and my friend to go in to heal Union Master Sheng."

"You...." Cai Daopeng turned furious but could only say to Sichen Qiutian, "Replying to Union Master, when Pill Sage Ning returned, he didn't say that he brought someone to help care for Union Master Sheng."

Sichen Qiutian laughed, "Since this is just a misunderstanding and since we're all members of the Pill Union, then let's forget it. Go in. Let's go in together and see Union Master Huotian. I have been deducing the recipe for the antidote to the Ripple Bone Poison, but unfortunately, I haven't been able to find a solution other than the Renewing Heaven Ripple Bone Pill. I heard that Pill Sage Ning had previously refined the Renewing Heaven Ripple Bone Pill for the Void Star Sect; I wonder if this is true?"

Ning Cheng responded, "Yes, it indeed is......"

"Then, do you have any more Renewing Heaven Ripple Bone Pills in your hand?" Cai Daopeng eagerly asked.

Ning Cheng swept a glance at Cai Daopeng, "No."

Cai Daopeng didn't ask any more questions but inadvertently breathed a sigh of relief. He didn't know that Ning Cheng did indeed not have any in his hand, but he did have half a bottleful inside his ring.

With the restrictions on Sheng Huotian's residence fully opened, Ning Cheng didn't expect to find another person inside. A woman Ning Cheng had never seen before.

However, Sheng Huotian's current state utterly shocked and distracted him from everything else. The current Sheng Huotian looked even more ghastly than when he had first met Qi Shisanxing, almost a skeleton, but a purple-black skeleton.

Moreover, he couldn't sense even the tiniest shred of a dao rhythm from Sheng Huotian, just a thick aura of death.

"Why is Union Master Sheng like this?" Ning Cheng asked in horror. Since Ancestor Kang could resist this poison for countless years, why would Sheng Huotian fall into such a miserable state in just two years?

Sichen Qiutian sighed and said, "The Ripple Bone Poison is too powerful. Huotian hasn't reached Dao Confirming's Dao Fusion Realm, so he can't fully restrain the Ripple Bone Poison's spread. If it goes on like this, I'm afraid......"

Sichen Qiutian didn't continue; everyone understood the meaning of his words. Sheng Huotian can't last much longer and has little time left. Any more delays would most likely result in his death.

Ning Cheng didn't ask any more questions but didn't take out the Renewing Heaven Ripple Bone Pill for Sheng Huotian. Instead, he sighed but didn't say anything.

Thinking of a few things, his gaze finally moved to the woman in Sheng Huotian's room, "Who are you? Why are you here?"

Cai Daopeng immediately said, "Union Master Sheng's poisoning is too strong, so I brought her here to take care of Union Master Sheng."

Ning Cheng asked no more questions but said to Sichen Qiutian, "Union Master, I want to take Brother Huotian away to cure the poison. I will try my best even if there is only one in a billion chance."

Before Sichen Qiutian could say anything, Cai Daopeng's expression turned gloomy, and he said, "Union Master Sheng is the Second Head of my Pill Union. His identity is too precious. How can you take him away just because you want to? In case something happens, can you bear the consequences?"

Ning Cheng's gaze shifted to Cai Daopeng, and he sneered, "Are you a Dao Essence Pill Sage, or am I a Dao Essence Pill Sage here? If I can't afford the consequences, then can you? Just now, Union Master said that the way Union Master Sheng looked, he wouldn't last while you and the people you invited have been caring for Union Master Huotian. Yet, you couldn't even begin to comprehend the actual situation?"

Hearing Ning Cheng seemingly comparing alchemy level with himself, Cai Daopeng became even more furious, and his expression twisted out of anger. However, he found it impossible to refute Ning Cheng, as his level in alchemy truthfully couldn't compare to Ning Cheng.

"Union Master....." Cao Daopeng couldn't refute this but could only look at Sichen Qiutian.

Sichen Qiutian waved his hand and said to Ning Cheng, "Ning Cheng, you can take Huotian away. You and Huotian are friends and a Dao Essence Pill Sage, so I trust you. I've collected all the auxiliary herbs to refine the Renewing Heaven Ripple Bone Pill, but unfortunately, I could only obtain one of the main ingredients, the Ayala Silver Phoenix Grass. If you need them, you can come get them from me anytime. No matter the result, I think as long as you try your best, Huotian will not blame you. However, after this matter, you should focus on the Five Grand Realms' Alchemy Competition."

"Yes, many thanks, Union Master. Once I gather the rest of the dao fruits, I will come and trouble the Union Master." Ning Cheng said gratefully.

In any case, Sichen Qiutian was genuinely helping Sheng Huotian. It's just that the ingredients for the Renewing Heaven Ripple Bone Pill were a little too difficult to get.

Since the Union Master agreed, Cai Daopeng could only look at Ning Cheng with a blank face as he left with Sheng Huotian. Ning Cheng had a Dao Essence powerhouse by his side, so even if he was a middle-stage Dao Essence cultivator, he couldn't dare to do anything to Ning Cheng.

"Brother Ning Cheng, I think something is wrong with that Pill Union elder." After leaving the Pill Union's headquarters, Ba Meng finally spoke up.

Ning Cheng sneered, "He has a few problems. Not only does he have problems, but the woman who cared for Brother Huotian also has some problems. Moreover, there are no healing arrays in Brother Huotian's room; rather, it only has monitoring arrays. Did they think they could deceive me for not knowing the Dao of Arrays?"

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"Brother Ning, you're back?" Jian Sanshan saw Ning Cheng come to his residence and immediately came out to greet him with joy.

"Senior Apprentice Brother...." Wu Qihong's surprised voice emerged, and a moment later, Xin Xiu followed him out.

Ning Cheng asked in doubt, "Since you two are here, what happened to the Pill House in Heaven Essence Sacred City? Did you hire someone to look after it?"

Xin Xiu and Wu Qihong lowered their heads with guilty looks.

Jian Sanshan sighed and said, "It's because my strength is too low to keep the Pill House. After I heard about Union Master Sheng's poisoning by Ripple Bone Poison, I immediately understood that it was aimed at you. Therefore, I asked Junior Apprentice Suster Xin and Junior Apprentice Brother Qihong to not tell you about it lest it makes you worry even more."

Ning Cheng understood; he nodded but didn't ask about this matter. Instead, he introduced Ba Meng to everyone, pointed to a covered chair above his head and said, "This is Union Master Sheng. Let's go in; I want to heal Union Master Sheng's wounds."

There were too many eyes and ears around and inside the inns in this sacred city, so Ning Cheng had deliberately chosen to come to Jian Sanshan's residence. Besides, he had helped rearrange the

protective arrays of Jian Sanshan's residence in the past, so this place felt much safer than many of the inns.

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Ning Cheng finally took out a Renewing Heaven Ripple Bone Pill in a room surrounded by powerful restrictions and sent it into Sheng Huotian's mouth. When Ancestor Kang had detoxified the poison with the help of the Renewing Heaven Ripple Bone Pill, it had taken him several hours to expel it. But now, in just one incense stick's worth of time, black mist poured out of the top of Sheng Huotian's head, followed by a drop of black-coloured Ripple Bone Poison dripping down from his body and falling into the jade bottle prepared by Ning Cheng.

Fortunately, the powerful restrictions set up by Ning Cheng blocked the overflowing poisonous mist, not allowing even a strand of it to leak.

As an hour passed, the black and purple on Sheng Huotian's body slowly disappeared, and flesh grew on his skeletal frame. Sheng Huotian finally opened his eyes, nodded to Ning Cheng, and then closed his eyes again.

A moment later, the aura of dao rhythms started to surround and coalesce around Sheng Huotian. Seeing this, Ning Cheng understood that Sheng Huotian had finally escaped danger. He, Ba Meng, and the others left the room, leaving Sheng Huotian alone inside to complete the detoxification.

"Junior Apprentice Sister Xin Xiu, can you tell me what happened with our pill house?" Ning Cheng finally felt free enough to ask Xin Xiu about this matter.

The fact that both Xin Xiu and Wu Qihong were fine made Ning Cheng sigh in relief. Everything else felt secondary so long as his people were fine.

Without waiting for Xin Xiu to speak, Jian Sanshan said, "I'm afraid this matter has nothing to do with them. After Union Master Sheng got poisoned, someone came to our pill house to sell a Falling Scar Fruit......"

"Wait, you said someone came to our pill house to sell a Falling Scar Fruit?" Ning Cheng asked in disbelief. Something like the Falling Scar Fruit would be coveted by almost everyone everywhere. Why would anyone bring it to a pill house to sell?

"That's right." Jian Sanshan nodded and said, "After that person took out the Falling Scar Fruit, the people in the pill house immediately turned red-eyed and grabbed at the Falling Scar Fruit...."

Ning Cheng spoke up with a gloomy face, "I understand. While snatching the Falling Scar Fruit, the others snatched the rest of the pills in the pill house and then messed up the pill house. Is that right? Then, I'm guessing, all those people simply disappeared?"

Jian Sanshan sighed, "That's pretty much it. At that time, Xin Xiu, managing the pill house, also got seriously injured. Fortunately, I managed to come just in time and saved Xin Xiu. I reckon that this incident and the poisoning of Union Master Sheng was all about luring you back."

"That's right, it was aimed at you this time." Sheng Huotian's voice emerged from the room, followed by him. Although his body still looked shrivelled, it no longer had any trace of Ripple Bone Poison's aura.

"Elder Brother Huotian, you're all right." Ning Cheng stood up and said happily.

Sheng Huotian nodded and said, "Brother Ning Cheng, many thanks for your help this time. Fortunately, you said you had no Renewing Heaven Ripple Bone Pill on you back in the Pill Union. If you had answered Cai Daopeng's question with a yes, I'm afraid I wouldn't have had the chance to come here."

"You mean...." Ning Cheng's eyes instantly revealed a murderous intent. When Cai Daopeng blocked him, he only thought it was due to a grudge against Sheng Huotian. But if the Ripple Bone Poison was placed by Cai Daopeng, then he shouldn't blame him for being ungracious. A mere Cai Daopeng wasn't qualified to even covet his things.

Sheng Huotian said with a grave face, "It shouldn't only be Cai Daopeng. Cai Daopeng and I have some conflicts, but not so deep that he would use poison against me. However, I'm sure that he must have been involved in this. I, Sheng Huotian, remained in Dao Confirmation's Dao Essence Realm for so many years; what storms have I not witnessed. Hmph! If someone wants my life, they should trade it with theirs."

Chapter 1042: Help with Alchemy

Ning Cheng introduced Ba Meng to Sheng Huotian. Ba Meng had admired Sheng Huotian for a long time; therefore, hearing Ning Cheng introduce him, he quickly stood up and bowed with the utmost respect, "Ba Meng greets Elder Brother Huotian."

Ba Meng was friends with Ning Cheng, but Sheng Huotian had risen to fame thousands of years earlier and was a living legend in his eyes. Moreover, although both were in the Dao Essence Realm, Ba Meng was only in the early-stage Dao Essence Realm, while Sheng Huotian had long since reached the full circle of the Dao Essence Realm. Thus, appropriate respect needed to be shown.

Sheng Huotian hurriedly waved his hand and said, "Ning Cheng and I have been friends for a long time, so let's skip all this formality and just call each other by our names from now. Just call me Huotian; the same also applies to Ning Cheng. Besides, I estimate Ning Cheng's cultivation will surpass us in a few years."

Sheng Huotian wasn't speaking nonsense. What cultivation level was Ning Cheng at when he first met him, and what cultivation level is he at now? It might have been a few years, but the progress has been explosive, to say the least.

"Huotian, what are you going to do in the future?" Ning Cheng no longer remained polite and asked him by name.

Sheng Huotian sighed, "The Pill Union has been my home for as long as I remember. I just did what I liked to do in the Pill Union, researching some pill recipes. But now, I'm a little disappointed. I decided to leave the Pill Union and look for an opportunity to reach the Dao Fusion Realm."

Ning Cheng remained silent. He understood what Sheng Huotian meant. That is, Sichen Qiutian no longer stood by his, Sheng Huotian's, side and was slightly biased in handling things.

Sheng Huotian didn't guess wrong; even Ning Cheng could see the impropriety in the room. Based on Sichen Qiutian's cultivation and experience, it would be impossible for someone like him to know anything about Cai Daopeng's involvement. Yet, he didn't step in to stop it. One reason could be that he didn't want to get involved in the strife between the two, but the other could be that he had written off Sheng Huotian's case as hopeless, while Cai Daopeng would still be the mainstay of the Pill Union.

"Union Master is dedicated to the Dao of Alchemy and rarely gets involved in other things. I also concentrate on the Dao of Alchemy, but I'd rather not spend the rest of my life amidst this kind of rivalry." Seeing Ning Cheng's silence, Sheng Huotian still explained.

Ning Cheng suddenly thought of the Five Grand Realms' Alchemy Competition, "Then, can't you come with us to the Five Grand Realms' Alchemy Competition?"

Sheng Huotian shook his head and said, "That's absolutely impossible. It's already extremely difficult to bring one more person to the Five Grand Realms' Alchemy Competition, let alone two. The Union Master already has to take a heavy responsibility for bringing you along, and if you add me, it will definitely not be allowed."

Ning Cheng once again fell silent. He couldn't help in this matter at all. Even if he chose not to go to the Five Grand Realms' Alchemy Competition, Sheng Huotian wouldn't be able to attend the Grand Change Realm.

"Brother Huotian, who is plotting against Ning Cheng?" Ba Meng broke the silence and asked.

Sheng Huotian's face turned solemn, "I suspect the Star Stepping Tower's master is involved in it. When she first arrived in the Heaven Essence Sacred City, the Star Stepping Tower Master showed immense strength. I have also seen her taking action a few times in the past. That woman in my room; her cultivation method's flow is somewhat similar to the Star Stepping Tower Master."

Ning Cheng's mind instantly recalled the woman in black robes with a veil on her face from the Star Stepping Tower. He still suspected that she might have come from Earth. If she came from Earth, it would be a case of old folks meeting old folks, only to stab each other in the back.

"No matter what, you must be careful with that Star Stepping Tower Master. That woman not only has a high cultivation level but also has a top-class scheming mind. Otherwise, she couldn't have taken over the best spot in Heaven Essence Sacred City." Seeing Ning Cheng pondering, Sheng Huotian once again informed him.

"I understand." Ning Cheng nodded. He never once underestimated this Star Stepping Tower Master.

Just then, the restriction on the residence's entrance rang, and Ning Cheng saw Profound Aquatic Palace's Cen Ruxuan standing near the entrance. Noticing her, he immediately said, "She's here to find me to refine pills. Xin Xiu, you bring her to the pill house next door."

It was very important to help the Profound Aquatic Palace and the Silver Dragon Clan refine pills. After all, whether Ning Cheng became a true Dao Essence Pill Sage depended on the materials they provided. A Dao Essence Pill Sage had to have a thorough understanding of the Dao of Alchemy and a profound understanding of the laws of the Grand Daos of heaven and earth. In other words, if you didn't even

understand what the words "Dao Essence" meant, it would be nothing more than a joke if you went to refine a Dao Essence Dao Pill.

Ning Cheng was only a Dao Sculpting Holy Emperor, but the reason he could refine the Six Yin Soul Pills, besides his higher level of perception of the Returning-to-one Dao at the Alchemy Discourse, was only because of the Bestowing Lawless Fruit.

Without the Bestowing Lawless Fruit, Ning Cheng was sure he couldn't have refined even an ordinary Dao Essence Dao Pill back then, even if he gained a higher understanding of the Returning-to-one Dao.

Now that Cen Ruxuan was here, Ning Cheng wanted to see what kinds of pills she wanted him to refine. However, he would refuse if it was one of those few but extremely difficult to refine Dao Essence Dao Pills. It wasn't that he didn't want to keep his promise but that he simply couldn't refine it.

He would take up the request only if it were 'ordinary' Dao Essence Dao Pills.

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Cen Ruxuan felt quite happy learning that Ning Cheng wanted to meet her alone in the pill house. It meant he would definitely help her refine the pills she needed.

"I hope Union Master Sheng's health has improved." Even though Cen Ruxuan wanted to immediately get to the point, she still had to ask Ning Cheng about Sheng Huotian's situation.

Ning Cheng had taken Sheng Huotian out of the Pill Union, which she naturally learned about right after it happened.

Ning Cheng smiled, "Union Master Sheng is still recuperation. I believe he will recover in time. I wonder what kinds of pills Senior Apprentice Sister Ruxuan wants me to refine this time. The Profound Aquatic Palace has greatly helped me, so Senior Apprentice Sister, just ask."

What I want are just those words. Cen Ruxuan thought with a smile on her face before speaking up, "I want some Extreme Profound Heavenly Ice Pills along with some Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills."

Ning Cheng felt slightly relieved; those two pills were both Dao Essence Dao Pills, but not the kind that was too difficult to refine. It's just that the primary dao fruit for the Celestial Origin Heavenly Pill was an ingredient almost impossible to find. Because of this, although the Celestial Origin Heavenly Pill wasn't the most difficult to refine, it was one of the most valuable Dao Essence Dao Pills.

Celestial Origin Heavenly Pill was a dao pill that could help a Dao Transformation Holy Emperor sense the dao rhythms of the Dao Essence Realm. Its value was precious enough to make any Dao Transformation Holy Emperor crazy. Even if a Celestial Origin Heavenly Pill only gave the Dao Transformation Holy Emperor a small chance to become a Dao Essence Holy Emperor, it was still an opportunity they would put their life on the line to obtain.

As for the Extreme Profound Heavenly Ice Pill, it was much simpler to refine. It aided in enhancing one's perception of ice-attributed spirit techniques. What's more, although classified as a Dao Essence Dao Pill, it could even be used by early-stage Dao Transformation cultivators. As such, this pill was the best practice for Ning Cheng.

"I wonder how many furnaces Senior Apprentice Sister Ruxuan has?" Ning Cheng asked.

Cen Ruxuan spoke solemnly, "In the countless years of our existence, my Profound Aquatic Palace has only found enough ingredients for five furnaces of Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills and just over a dozen furnaces of Extreme Profound Heavenly Ice Pills. Also, when it comes to Extreme Profound Heavenly Ice Pills, it wouldn't matter if Pill Sage Ning fails more times in refining it."

Ning Cheng understood Cen Ruxuan's meaning. The Profound Aquatic Palace only had five furnaces of Celestial Origin Heavenly Pill's ingredients, which meant they couldn't afford many failures, something Cen Ruxuan didn't mention specifically. As for the Extreme Profound Heavenly Ice Pill, it didn't matter if Pill Sage Ning failed to refine a few furnaces.

The Profound Aquatic Palace was one of the top ten sects. Yet, even for such a large sect, they could only gather enough ingredients for five Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills furnaces. From this, he could clearly understand that the dao fruits required for the Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills were too precious.

Ning Cheng calmly replied, "It is never possible to refine a furnace without some degree of failure, and I can't guarantee that I won't fail. Of course, I will not count these failures on Profound Aquatic Palace's tab."

Cen Ruxuan sighed; how could she not hear Ning Cheng's meaning. You, Profound Aquatic Palace, escorted me to the Celestial Origin Sacred City before I offered to help you refine pills. But refining pills requires payment just the same. In case I fail, it should still be taken as a reward instead.

It's not that Cen Ruxuan hadn't thought of Ning Cheng not wanting to be paid, but rather it was just a matter of putting it out in words. A Dao Essence Pill Sage refining pills without pay, even she wouldn't believe it.

"I can give Pill Sage Ning some of the Extreme Profound Heavenly Ice Pills, but the Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills, there are only five furnaces in total......" Cen Ruxuan said with some lack of confidence.

Ning Cheng said softly, "The remuneration for an ordinary alchemist to help someone refine pills are half the pills formed, while a Pill Sage usually asks for 60% of the pills formed as remuneration. However, I feel very grateful to Senior Apprentice Sister Ruxuan and the Profound Aquatic Palace for the help, so I will only ask for 40%, regardless of the pills."

To help Profound Aquatic Palace for free, he absolutely wouldn't do it. Even if they had helped him more, Ning Cheng would never dare to agree. He counted on the materials from Profound Aquatic Palace to practice, so how could he do it for free? Who would compensate for the failed pills if he agreed to it for free?

Cen Ruxuan understood that Ning Cheng's offer was a price of conscience. After all, even ordinary pill sages would ask for 60% of the pills formed, but this was only for pill sages under the Dao Essence level. Ning Cheng was a Dao Essence Pill Sage, meaning it wouldn't be considered excessive even if he demanded 70%. In fact, Ning Cheng only asked for 40%, which couldn't even be considered a price of conscience. How could it be a price of conscience?

Cen Ruxuan sighed internally at the richness of a pill sage while taking out a ring and handing it to Ning Cheng. "Let's go with Pill Sage Ning's proposal; the ring contains enough materials for twenty batches. Five of Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills and fifteen of Extreme Profound Heavenly Ice Pills."

Ning Cheng took the ring and said, "Good; in that case, I will ask Senior Apprentice Ruxuan to pick up the pills after a month."

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After sending off Cen Ruxuan, Ning Cheng didn't immediately go into seclusion to refine pills. Instead, he waited for Gong Ximao.

Fortunately, Silver Dragon Clan's Gong Ximao didn't make Ning Cheng wait long. Almost an hour after Cen Ruxuan left, he arrived at Jian Sanshan's residence.

"What kinds of pills Brother Gong wants me to refine?" Ning Cheng couldn't wait for Gong Ximao to ask him to refine several Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills. That would be the most beneficial thing for him.

Gong Ximao didn't even bargain and directly handed a ring to Ning Cheng and said, "Pill Sage Ning, because our patriarch is currently in seclusion, I can't get the top-grade ingredients. As such, I request you to help me refine some Nine Lives Fire Dragon Pills this time."

Ning Cheng didn't care about Gong Ximao wanting to refine pills; what puzzled him was why Gong Ximao wanted the Nine Lives Fire Dragon Pills. The Nine Lives Fire Dragon Pill was indeed a Dao Essence Dao Pill but a healing pill. Only Dao Essence Holy Emperor with a primary fire attribute who had problems with their cultivation would use Nine Lives Fire Dragon Pills to repair their foundation.

Seeing Ning Cheng's puzzled gaze, Gong Ximao could only speak up helplessly, "My main spiritual root is fire attributed; it's just that there is a problem with my cultivation. If I don't repair my spiritual root, I will only be able to reach this point in my life. Meeting Pill Sage Ning is this Gong Ximao's greatest fortune."

Facing Ning Cheng, he had nothing to hide. Ning Cheng was a Dao Essence Pill Sage. Since he asked Ning Cheng to refine the Nine Lives Fire Dragon Pull, and if Ning Cheng still didn't know that there was a problem with his foundation, then Ning Cheng being a Dao Essence Pill Sage was a bit too questionable.

Ning Cheng collected the ring and nodded, "Okay, Brother Gong can come to me after a month to get the pills. I will also keep 40% for myself."

Chapter 1043: The Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan

The first pill from the requests that Ning Cheng refined was the Extreme Profound Heavenly Ice Pill. Relatively speaking, the Extreme Profound Heavenly Ice Pill was a Dao Essence Dao Pill; however, it was one of the easiest to refine. Plus, he had fifteen furnaces worth of ingredients for practice.

Refining the Six Yin Spirit Pills gave Ning Cheng a more thorough understanding of the Dao of Alchemy. It had even helped him integrate his Dao of Alchemy into his Returning-to-one Grand Dao.

Therefore, the first half of refining the Extreme Profound Heavenly Ice Pills progressed smoothly for Ning Cheng. He also didn't waste too much time extracting the medicinal essences of the divine grasses and the dao fruits before purifying their respective dao rhythms and impurities.

Next, Ning Cheng began to condense and coalesce the dao rhythm laws in just half an hour.

It was also the critical step in the refining process of Dao Essence Dao Pills, integrating and harmonising the various dao rhythms. But it also depended on the alchemist's cultivation. The higher the alchemist's cultivation, the easier it was to refine a dao pill. After all, higher cultivation meant they would better understand the laws of heaven and earth, making integrating them easier.

Suppose the alchemist's cultivation was low, like Ning Cheng, a Pill Sage with a Dao Sculpting cultivation. If he wanted to condense a Dao Essence Dao Fruit's dao rhythm laws, he would have to rely purely on understanding the Dao of Alchemy and controlling the dao fruit's dao rhythm.

Back then, when Ning Cheng refined the Six Yin Spirit Pill, he had caught onto the dao rhythm law of the Six Yin Fruit. However, he couldn't control it, which caused him to face trouble in the pill-forming step.

Fortunately, he had a Bestowing Lawless Fruit, which he used to control the Six Yin Fruit's dao rhythm laws forcibly. It allowed him to successfully refine the Six Yin Soul Pill and elevated his Dao of Alchemy to the next level.

But now Ning Cheng fell into the same dilemma again. The primary ingredients for the Extreme Profound Heavenly Ice Pill were the Extreme Profound Dao Fruit and the Heavenly Ice Flower. Ning Cheng had caught on to the dao rhythm laws of the Extreme Profound Dao Fruit and the Heavenly Ice Flower; however, he faced the same difficulty in integrating the two ingredients' dao rhythm laws.

After examining the situation carefully, he understood that he could not integrate these two ingredients' dao rhythm laws. Plus, he no longer had a Bestowing Lawless Fruit. However, even if Ning Cheng had a Bestowing Lawless Fruit, he wouldn't use it to refine the Extreme Profound Heavenly Ice Pills.

Ning Cheng seldom used pill art in alchemy, but because of this particular situation, he had no choice but to use it. As the dao rhythms of various pill arts poured into the pill furnace, the dao rhythm laws of the Extreme Profound Dao Fruits started to forcibly integrate.....

"Kacha....." However, when the dao fruit's laws merged into the dao pill, a 'katcha' sound reverberated from the pill furnace, and the pills started disintegrating. Ning Cheng found himself powerless to recondense the dissipating laws, no matter how capable he was.

The first furnace of Extreme Profound Heavenly Ice Pills. Failure.

Ning Cheng took a deep breath, closed his eyes and meditated for over an hour. He then cleaned the pill furnace and took out a second set of ingredients for another Extreme Profound Heavenly Ice Pills batch.

Two hours later, Ning Cheng tried merging the dao fruit laws but failed again. The second batch of Extreme Profound Heavenly Ice Pills. Another failure.

Ning Cheng stood up and didn't continue refining the third furnace. He felt sure the final result would still be another failure even if he tried refining the third furnace.

His insight into the Dao of Alchemy wasn't the issue, and his understanding of the dao rhythm laws of the various ingredients of the Dao Essence Dao Pill was also sufficient. He could even capture the dao fruit's laws and manipulate them. It's just that the only shortcoming was that his cultivation was too low and his understanding of the Heavenly Dao too weak.

He could easily refine Dao Transformation Dao Pills with all these factors, but the level of heaven and earth laws required for refining Dao Essence Dao Pills was far higher than for Dao Transformation Dao Pills. I must become a Dao Raising Holy Emperor to refine Dao Essence Dao Pills.

There were still roughly five months before they departed for the Five Grand Realms' Alchemy Competition. So, Ning Cheng decided to return to the Grand Essence Sea's Dragon Washing Pool to advance to the Dao Raising Realm. He had mistakenly looked at Dao Essence Dao Pills as simple pills. With his current cultivation level, it would be difficult to refine a Dao Essence Dao Pill even with a better understanding of the Dao of Alchemy.

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After greeting Ba Meng and the others, Ning Cheng went directly to where Cen Ruxuan and Gong Ximao resided. Without beating around the bush, he confessed that he had been too hasty by asking them to collect their pills in a month. He hoped to push back the delivery time by a few months, preferably just before departing for the Five Grand Realms' Alchemy Competition.

Cen Ruxuan and Gong Ximao had almost begged Ning Cheng to refine those pills, so they naturally couldn't get angry with Ning Cheng for asking for a few more months. Therefore, both expressed their agreement on the new timeline.

After settling these down, Ning Cheng then immediately headed out to the residence of Pill Union's PIll Master Sichen Qiutian.

"Pill Sage Ning, how is Master Houtian doing?" When Sichen Qiutian saw Ning Cheng coming, he first asked about Sheng Houtian's situation.

Ning Cheng quickly returned an alchemist's salute before replying, "Brother Houtian is no longer seriously injured and is currently recovering."

Facing Sichen Qiutian, Ning Cheng decided not to tell any lies.

Sichen Qiutian sighed and said, "Please give my regards to Houtian." With that, he no longer asked Sheng Houtian.

"Union Master Sichen, I came here to inform you about something." Ning Cheng also didn't say anything more about Sheng Houtian's matter.

Sichen Qiutian nodded his head. Restoring his subdued aura of calmness, he spoke up, "I naturally know that Pill Sage Ning has a lot of things going on. Even I wouldn't come to look for me to discuss alchemy under such circumstances. However, it would be a lie if I said that I didn't want to discuss alchemy with Pill Sage Ning."

"In the future, once I'm free, I will definitely come to explore the mysteries of the Dao of Alchemy with Union Master. However, I must leave Heaven Essence Sacred City for a few months to gain more experience." Ning Cheng replied.

"You want to gain more experience?" Sichen Qiutian couldn't help but look at Ning Cheng with some confusion. If Sheng Houtian's poisoning had nothing to do with Ning Cheng, he would not believe it.

Ning Cheng should also know about this, so why did he still want to go out for more experience? Wasn't this a deliberate attempt to send himself to his death?

Without waiting for Ning Cheng to answer, Sichen Qiutian spoke up, "Pill Sage Ning, the Five Grand Realms' Alchemy Competition will begin in a few months. If you go out for experience now, I'm afraid it might delay your preparation for the Alchemy Competition."

Ning Cheng answered honestly, "It was just pure luck that I could refine the Six Yin Soul Pill that time. In fact, my success rate in refining Dao Essence Dao Pills is still too low to even think of replicating that feat. I suspect that is because of my low cultivation level. Therefore, I want to use these few months to advance to the Dao Raising Realm. If I can advance to the Dao Raising Realm, I'm confident that my success rate with Dao Essence Dao Pills will also improve significantly. Otherwise, even if I go to the Five Grand Realms' Alchemy Competition, I would lose more than I would win."

This was Ning Cheng gilding his face with gold. What's with his success rate being a bit too low? It was essentially zero. However, Ning Cheng didn't lie in the latter sentence. After all, if he couldn't even refine a single Dao Essence Dao Pill in the Five Grand Realms' Alchemy Competition, it would be impossible to get a ranking.

Sichen Qiutian fell silent. He could see that Ning Cheng still hadn't reached the grand completion of the Dao Sculpting Realm. Just reaching the grand completion Dao Sculpting Realm from his peak Dao Sculpting level in a few months would be an almost impossible matter, let alone advancing to the Dao Raising Realm in such a short time. In fact, it would be even more difficult than refining Dao Essence Dao Pills. As for Ning Cheng's comment about low success in refining Dao Essence Dao Pills and it's the implication of not being able to secure a ranking in the Five Grand Realms' Alchemy Competition, Sichen Qiutian knew in his heart that it was the truth.

But it was also because of this that he asked Ning Cheng to come to the Five Grand Realm's Alchemy Competition. After all, only Ning Cheng had refined a Dao Essence Dao Pill among the six people participating in the Alchemy Competition. If Ning Cheng didn't have confidence in himself, the rest would be going there for nothing.

After hesitating for a long time, Sichen Qiutian finally spoke up, "Ning Cheng, you should already know that with your current cultivation level, the chances of you advancing to the Dao Raising Realm before going to the Five Grand Realms' Alchemy Competition are quite low."

Sichen Qiutian tried to put it in a favourable light. In reality, advancing from the grand completion of the Dao Sculpting Realm and stepping into the Dao Raising Realm would require thousands of years. Some might fail to do so even after spending their whole life; even heaven-sent geniuses would need a few decades, if not centuries, to achieve this. Yet, Ning Cheng wanted to go through it in a few months. It would be strange if it was even remotely possible.

"I know, but I don't want to give up without trying." Ning Cheng bowed once again and said.

Ning Cheng had to find an opportunity to reach Dao Raising Realm before leaving. After all, apart from refining pills for Cen Ruxuan and Gong Ximao, the reward for being ranked first in the Five Grand Realms' Alchemy Competition was also crucial. Moreover, he also understood that if he couldn't reach

the Dao Raising Realm and couldn't refine a Dao Essence Dao Pills, it would be an utter waste to even think about going. It would be much better to stay back.

Sichen Qiutian stared at Ning Cheng for a while, then stood up and walked around his room for a full incense stick worth of time without speaking.

Ning Cheng still held a lot of respect for Sichen Qiutian. After all, when he was about to fail to refine the Six Yin Soul Pills while condensing the Dao Fruits' laws, Sichen Qiutian gave him some pointers and brought him back from the edge of breaking his dao heart. Therefore, seeing Sichen Qiutian wandering around the room, Ning Cheng didn't say anything and patiently waited.

After another half an hour, Sichen Qiutian seemed to have come to a decision and said, "Ning Cheng, I will take you to a place. We'll leave immediately."

Although Sichen Qiutian didn't say what place he was talking about, Ning Cheng didn't ask half a word about it.

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Half a month later, Sichen Qiutian brought Ning Cheng to a barren patch in the Grand Essence Sea.

If Sichen Qiutian had taken him elsewhere, Ning Cheng might have raised an objection as it might delay his plans. However, Ning Cheng had planned to come to the Dragon Washing Pool in the Grand Essence Sea. Therefore, when Sichen Qiutian brought him here, Ning Cheng didn't say much.

"Ning Cheng, do you know which force is the most mysterious among the ten major forces?" Standing on the sea's surface, Sichen Qiutian suddenly asked an irrelevant question.

Ning Cheng replied, "It should be the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan, right? I heard that the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan never comes out and that their clan is located in the Grand Essence Sea....."

Speaking of this, Ning Cheng suddenly thought of something and confusedly looked at Sichen Qiutian.

Sichen Qiutian nodded, "Ning Cheng, you guessed it right. The place I'm taking you to is the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan. In the past, the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan owed my teacher a favour and vowed to help him three times. My master already used up two chances, leaving the last to me, which I haven't used till now."

"Union Master, you mean?" Ning Cheng suddenly understood why Sichen Qiutian had changed from calling him Pill Sage Ning to Ning Cheng. It was like he was treating him as one of his own.

Sichen Qiutian smiled slightly, "That's right, I intend to use that last chance on you. The Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan can help you achieve what you're seeking. And in the entire Grand Essence Realm, perhaps only the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan can help you achieve it."

Ning Cheng quickly rejected it, "Union Master Sichen, I can't afford this. Advancing to the Dao Raising Realm in the short term isn't that important. At most, I wouldn't participate in the Five Grand Realms' Alchemy Competition."

Sichen Qiutian shook his head, "It's true that it wouldn't have a big impact on you, but it does have a massive impact on everyone else. In this Five Grand Realms' Alchemy Competition, you are the only Pill

Sage with a chance of reaching the rankings. If you don't go, me going there with the others would only bring the same result as before. Truthfully, I'm helping myself more than helping you."

Ning Cheng wasn't a fool. How could he not understand the implications of such a matter after hearing Sichen Qiutian's words? Therefore, after hearing Sichen Qiutian's words, he no longer refused this gesture and bowed, "Okay. If there is anything Union Master needs from me, Ning Cheng, I will do my best to achieve it."

Sichen Qiutian nodded satisfactorily and said, "Let's go in now."

What he wanted was these exact words from Ning Cheng. After all, he was much more optimistic about Ning Cheng than the others. Moreover, Ning Cheng's promise might be a little heavier than the one favour from the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan.

Chapter 1044: Blooming Rings

Sichuan Qiutian took out an extremely ancient-looking teleportation jade token and activated it. An instant later, weak lights, the same colour as the surrounding seawater, appeared from the token, covering Ning Cheng and Sichen Qiutian and teleporting them away instantly.

Ning Cheng sighed internally. The Dao of Arrays was no different from cultivation, without an end. The teleportation formation they had just passed through was much more sophisticated than the one he had gone through to enter the Secret City. At least he could still see some traces of that formation, even if he couldn't set it up himself. It also made him realise the meaning behind the phrase, "the higher one's strength climbed, the weaker one would feel".

A few moments later, he and Sichuan Qiutian landed on a round stone platform.

Sichen Qiutian looked at the teleportation jade token that had now lost its dao rhythm and smiled to himself in a slightly deprecating manner. "This token can only activate the teleportation formation three times. It's useless now."

"Where did you two come from?" A harsh but steady voice came, and Ning Cheng saw a man with pitchblack tattoo markings on his head appear next to the stone platform.

Sichen Qiutian handed this man the used-up teleportation jade token and said, "Pill Union Sichen Qiutian has come all the way to Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan for a special visit."

The man looked at the two for a long while before finally nodding, "The two of you, please follow me."

Ning Cheng and Sichen Qiutian followed behind this man, but he did not sweep out with his spiritual consciousness. With Ning Cheng's experience, he could tell that even a mortal could easily perceive many dangerous things. Besides, he was a guest here, so surveying the surroundings in such a manner might actually be detrimental to them.

Besides, Ning Cheng wasn't even sure if he was still in the Grand Essence Sea.

After walking for a full incense stick worth of time, the man leading them finally stopped in front of a stone door. He bowed to it and said, "Pill Union's Sichen Qiutian has come for a visit using our Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan's teleportation token."

Only after a long time did a voice come from inside the stone door, "An actual heir from the Pill Union? Let them come in."

"Yes." The man returned the jade token to Sichen Qiutian and said, "The two of you, please come inside"

The stone door suddenly opened just as Sichen Qiutian received the jade token. Ning Cheng followed Sichen Qiutian through the open door and suddenly felt dazed. This wasn't a 'room', but a chamber albeit empty. The chamber was simply too large, so large that Ning Cheng's gaze couldn't find where it started or ended.

Ning Cheng secretly muttered, 'This place should most likely be the inside of an artefact'. Otherwise, it would not have such an effect.

A black-haired man sat not far from them in the middle of the chamber. This black-haired man's exposed chest made him look somewhat like a Shaolin monk from Earth. However, the main attraction of this black-haired man wasn't his bare chest but the golden tattoo markings on his forehead. The man who led him also had similar tattoo markings on his forehead, but it wasn't gold but pitch-black. From the looks of it, the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan had some sort of a hierarchy based on the colour of their forehead's tattoo.

As for the man's cultivation, Ning Cheng couldn't sense it at all. However, he felt sure it wasn't lower than Sichen Qiutian's cultivation.

"Are you Chan Chenxing's disciple?" The man with the golden forehead tattoo opened his eyes and gazed at Sichen Qiutian. As for Ning Cheng, next to Sichen Qiutian, he simply ignored him.

Sichuan Qiutian bowed and gave a cultivator's salute, "Yes, my teacher is none other than Chang Chenxing."

The man remained silent for a full minute before asking another question, "I heard your teacher is dead. Is that correct?"

Ning Cheng shook his head internally. This fellow was just too direct with his words.

"My teacher left the Grand Essence Realm a long time ago to pursue the limits of his grand dao. As for the specific details of where he went, I do not know. However, when my teacher was about to leave, he once told me that if I faced a difficult problem, I could take this jade token to the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan to look for Senior Jin Molong." Sichen Qiutian gave a deep bow and again handed over the jade token at the end of the sentence.

The man nodded. He took the jade token and looked at it for a long time before saying, "I am Jin Molong. Your cultivation is no worse than mine, so there is no need to call me senior. What is the matter you are here for?"

Sichen Qiutian was, at the very least, the head of the entire Pill Union. The reason why he respected Jin Molong this much wasn't because of Jin Molong's status or identity but because Jin Molong and his teacher were close friends. Therefore, he naturally had to show the proper respect as a senior. But now that Jin Molong said he didn't need to address him as 'senior', Sichen Qiutian naturally wouldn't be pretentious with it. He spoke up directly, "Many thanks, fellow Daoist Jin. Today, I came here to borrow the power of your clan's Blooming Rings for three months."

"You want to cultivate in the Blooming Rings?" As Jin Molong listened to Sichen Qiutian's words, a flash of brilliant light erupted from his eyes as he glued his gaze to Sichen Qiutian. Even his tone turned somewhat cold.

Sichen Qiutian's expression didn't fluctuate even half a bit. Instead, he pointed at Ning Cheng and spoke calmly, "I'm not the one who will be using the Blooming Rings. Rather, he's the one who would be using the Blooming Rings to cultivate for three months."

Only then did Jin Molong's gaze fall on Ning Cheng. After scrutinising Ning Cheng briefly, he frowned and said, "He's only at the Dao Sculpting Realm and wants to use the Blooming Rings? Do you know the consequences of entering the Blooming Rings and being unable to control the flow of dao rhythm?"

"I know. I would still like to ask Dao Friend Jin if he can enter the Blooming Rings? If not, we will leave at once and not make things difficult." Sichen Qiutian said without being overbearing or humble.

The jade token was personally given by the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan. If Sichen Qiutian couldn't do anything even if he came here with the token, then the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan didn't deserve its reputation.

Jin Molong also understood what Sichen Qiutian meant. He smiled slightly before speaking up, "The matter of entering the Blooming Rings is not something I can decide alone. You will need to wait for some time. I will have to consult with my peers before giving you an answer."

After saying that, Jin Molong stood up, turned around, and left. Ning Cheng noticed that his entire figure had disappeared without a trace just as he turned around.

Despite understanding that this fellow was only pretending to be a ghost, Ning Cheng could only look on in envy as he couldn't arrange such an array formation.

"Union Master, what are these Blooming Rings?" Ning Cheng asked.

Sichen Qiutian looked in the direction where Jin Molong disappeared and said, "The Blooming Rings is the number one treasure of the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan. But unlike its name, it's a tree with several growth rings, no different from regular trees. However, what's unique about it is that each growth ring holds a world of its own, and as one moves from the outer growth ring to the inner ones, the flow of time would double compared to the flow of time outside...."

Ning Cheng asked in amazement, "Does that mean that if I can enter the tenth growth ring and cultivate in it for ten years, only one year would have passed outside?"

Sichen Qiutian nodded but continued solemnly, "That's right, if you want to advance to the Dao Raising Realm in a few months, I can't think of a better place other than the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan's Blooming Rings."

Ning Cheng suddenly remembered what Cang Wei had said about law worlds in the void and asked suspiciously, "I once heard that there are many law worlds in the void, and among them, one could also find the law worlds of time. It any force can obtain such a law world, they could easily transform it into a cultivation holy land. In other words, they could cultivate inside for many years while only a few years would pass on the outside. The specific time difference would be calculated according to the time laws of that world. Could this Blooming Rings be one of those time law worlds?"

Sichen Qiutian shook his head, "These cultivation worlds you're speaking about can also be found in the Grand Essence Realm. The Nine Revolutions Sacred Dao Pond and the River Luo Sacred Sect also have time law worlds within their grounds, where a passage of ten years inside would only be equivalent to one year outside. However, those law worlds are fundamentally different from the Blooming Rings. Those law worlds lack the heaven and earth dao rhythm rules. If there is no need for dao enlightenment, these kinds of law worlds can save cultivation time. But once you step into Dao Confirmation, the effect of such a time law world on cultivation would be very weak due to its lack of natural dao rhythms."

"The Blooming Rings is different as it is an ancient treasure. Even if a Dao Confirming Holy Emperor cultivates within it, their perception would not be hindered. In fact, it would be enhanced much more than the outside. This is also why the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan is considered the leader of the top ten forces. What's more, this kind of time law cultivation world also has its own heaven and earth dao rhythm, which makes it vastly superior to an ordinary time law world. Because of this, the Blooming Rings can even be considered a supreme treasure."

"Are the Blooming Rings really that powerful? If that's the case, why doesn't the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan come out instead of staying reclusive?" Ning Cheng suddenly thought of something. If there was a treasure like Blooming Rings in his Mysterious Yellow Bead, wouldn't he become invincible once he cultivated with it?

Sichen Qiutian sighed, "Everything has advantages and disadvantages. The Blooming Rings is indeed an incredible treasure. But if a person with a weak perception of their grand dao entered the Blooming Rings and crosses into a growth ring where they lose control of their grand dao, they would eventually die of old age due to the accelerated passing of time and turn into a shovelful of yellow earth to nourish the tree. I heard that the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan sends in many geniuses to train every year. Unfortunately, many die inside the Blooming Rings; sometimes, no one can come out alive."

Ning Cheng finally understood the consequences that Jin Molong spoke about, especially the part about losing control of one's dao rhythm in the Blooming Rings. The consequence that he spoke about was none other than death.

Sichen Qiutian looked at Ning Cheng with grave concern and said, "Ning Cheng, the fact that you can refine Dao Essence Dao Pills shows that your control and understanding of your grand dao is far stronger than that of an ordinary Dao Sculpting Holy Emperor. Moreover, I have felt your grand dao back then and understood that your grand dao stands much above mine."

"It's because of this that I decided to bring you here. I believe that you can reach all the way to the eighth growth ring. Three months on the outside equals exactly two years in the eighth ring. In two years, I believe you should be able to advance to the Dao Raising Realm. But even if you can't, we'll continue as is."

"Many thanks, Union Master." Ning Cheng once again thanked him. He felt sure that Sichen Qiutian wasn't trying to harm him but was genuinely trying to help him. Moreover, when refining his pills, his Alchemic Dao had integrated into his Returning-to-one Dao, which Sichen Qiutian must have sensed, giving Sichen Qiutian enough confidence that Ning Cheng could enter the eighth growth ring.

Sichen Qiutian smiled, "After reaching the eighth growth ring, you shouldn't go further, no matter what. Remember, even if you are sure that you can go further, do not advance. Every person who died in the Blooming Rings was sure nothing would go wrong, but it all went wrong. A cultivator who cannot control their greed will find all their achievements coming to a hard stop because of the said greed."

Ning Cheng smiled but didn't reply. In truth, Sichen Qiutian's words weren't wrong. If he couldn't control his greed, he might die because of his greed. However, the step he wouldn't cross wasn't something that could be set by Sichen Qiutian but rather by himself. If he thought he could enter the ninth growth ring, he naturally wouldn't stay in the eighth ring. If he thought he could only go up to the seventh ring, he wouldn't enter the eighth ring even if Sichen Qiutian encouraged him.

Before the conversation progressed, Jin Molong suddenly appeared again and said to Sichen Qiutian, "You can wait here. This Dao Friend who wants to enter the Blooming Rings can accompany me."

"Ning Cheng, you must remember my words. Your footsteps must stop at your dao heart." Sichen Qiutian once again reminded Ning Cheng.

Ning Cheng bowed and said, "Please rest assured, Union Master, my heart will guide my footsteps."

When Jin Molong heard Ning Cheng's words, he revealed a hint of appreciation before turning around to leave again.

Ning Cheng followed Jin Molong and stepped forward, and his entire body disappeared from the chamber.

Chapter 1045: Cultivating in the Blooming Rings

As Ning Cheng followed Jin Molong, it felt like he only took a few steps before Jin Molong stopped. As Ning Cheng looked around again, the enormous public square had disappeared, replaced by an expansive verdant turf. A few meters ahead, however, was a huge tree that blotted the sky.

Ning Cheng looked at the enormous heaven-connecting tree before him and felt a weird feeling rising in his heart.

Since becoming a starry sky cultivator, Ning Cheng has witnessed many strange things. However, this was his first time seeing a 'transparent' tree.

Ning Cheng couldn't guess the thickness of this tree. He only knew that he couldn't see the opposite side of this tree, nor could he look at the left-most and the right-most edge. He could only see a slight arc before him, but it was just a tiny portion of the transparent tree.

Saying this tree was 'transparent' wouldn't be an accurate representation. Ning Cheng considered it 'transparent' because he could see the inside of the tree. What Ning Cheng saw were outwardly expanding ring-shaped areas.

Ning Cheng couldn't help but think back to what he had read about a tree's growth rings back on Earth. That's because these outward-expanding circles in this transparent tree were almost the same as an ordinary tree's growth rings. However, he could only see a few outer growth rings and nothing further inside.

Looking up, one could see similar 'transparent' branches extended outwards, but it was impossible to look at the top, no matter how high you looked.

Blooming Rings; an apt name for this tree. But what puzzled Ning Cheng was that he couldn't feel the slightest hint of dao rhythm when his gaze fell on the tree. As for spiritual consciousness, it simply disappeared after sweeping onto this transparent tree. It showed no effect at all.

"That's the Blooming Rings. You can go in and cultivate; remember to come out when three months pass outside. As for the time you will get inside, you can calculate it yourself." Jin Molong spoke very dryly. After saying this, he turned around and left, not giving Ning Cheng a chance to speak.

Ning Cheng didn't think too much about it and walked towards the edge of one of the outmost rings of the Blooming Rings. Although his Mysterious Yellow Bead had not reached perfection, it could still mobilise the Origin Aura to cultivate. Now that he could use the Blooming Rings and the Origin Aura to cultivate, just how far could he go in three months?

Ning Cheng wouldn't miss this opportunity regardless of how far he could go. Therefore, he lifted his foot and stepped into the first ring of the Blooming Rings.

A powerful force suddenly washed over him, but although Ning Cheng could feel this force clearly, it had no substance. Yet, this same substanceless force almost dissolved his Grand Dao's dao rhythm, as if it forcibly wanted to meld it into the Blooming Rings' substanceless aura.

However, as this substanceless aura washed through his body, Ning Cheng suddenly shook, and he stopped. A glimpse of enlightenment suddenly emerged in his mind. It wasn't an enlightenment regarding his Grand Dao, but an enlightenment regarding the Laws of Time.

At the same time, he also finally understood some of the dangers within the Blooming Rings. Once he lost control of his Grand Dao's dao rhythm, his Grand Dao's dao rhythm would flow into the Blooming Rings and fuse with the Blooming Rings' dao rhythm. If that happened, his body and soul would also dissipate into nothingness.

Fortunately, his Mysterious Yellow Formless Cultivation Method quickly adapted to the changes in the surrounding dao rhythm and laws, allowing Ning Cheng's dao rhythm to stabilise and no longer show signs of merging with the Blooming Rings' dao rhythm.

As Ning Cheng stabilised his Grand Dao's dao rhythm, he also started to feel a rich life force and the dao rhythms of a flawless heavenly law. Not only were these dao rhythms and the law perfect, but even the surrounding life force was rich to the point of being overbearing.

Sure enough, it was a tree. If it wasn't a tree, how could it have such a rich dao rhythm filled with dense life force?

Ning Cheng stood within the first ring of Blooming Ring for a full hour before slowly turning back. However, all the scenery behind him had vanished. From where he had come from, even the grass outside had disappeared, replaced by a blank expanse.

An hour later, Ning Cheng slowly walked across the first ring and entered Blooming Rings' second ring.

The spirit essence grew denser, the life force turned more intense, the dao rhythms flowed furiously, and the laws of heaven and Earth felt more perfect.

Except for the momentary discomfort, Ning Cheng's Mysterious Yellow Formless Cultivation Method quickly adapted to the surrounding dao rhythms and laws while entering. Even the substanceless aura that almost destabilised the roots of Ning Cheng's dao rhythm also fused with Ning Cheng.

An indescribable surprise flashed in Ning Cheng's eyes as he felt the same cultivation euphoria as when he cultivated in the Dragon Washing Pool. However, unlike the Dragon Washing Pool, which was mainly meant for tempering one's physical body, this place was to perfect one's perception of the dao.

The size of heaven and Earth truly went beyond one's imagination. He had thought that obtaining the Mysterious Yellow Bead was already the pinnacle of luck. But who could have known that there were still many worldly treasures in this universe that weren't as precious as the Mysterious Yellow Bead yet equally wondrous?

He knew about the Dragon Washing Pool, he was currently in the Blooming Rings, and he had also heard about the 9-Revolutions Sacred Dao Pond's Reincarnation Pond. But how much more did he not know about?

As time continued to pass, Ning Cheng felt his perception of the Laws of Tile turning clearer and clearer. Although he felt reluctant to leave the Blooming Rings' second ring, he still forced himself to walk out of the second ring and cross into the third ring.

He only had three months, but every time he advanced to the next ring, his stay would extend by another three months because of the accelerating effects of the laws of time. Moreover, the dao rhythms of the Laws of Time in the consequent rings would also grow clearer. Because of this, unknowingly, Ning Cheng cast aside Sichen Qiutian's words about his footsteps stopping at the limit of his dao heart. After all, crossing over to another ring would extend his stay inside for another three months.

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In a humble room within the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan's Ancient Shrine, a white-haired old man sat cross-legged over an ancient-looking prayer mat, his upper body fully exposed and naked. However, the exposed half of his body looked utterly emancipated, with dried brown skin stretched tight across the bones.

"Has he entered the Blooming Rings?" The old man suddenly asked.

Jin Molong's voice arrived first before his figure materialised in the room. "Yes, he is currently inside the Blooming Rings. I estimate that he should barely reach the threshold of entering the sixth ring in three months."

Like Ning Cheng, Sichen Qiutian also didn't know about the internal workings of the Blooming Rings. Sichen Qiutian thought that since Ning Cheng had the strength necessary to cultivate in the eighth ring, he could enter the eighth ring directly and cultivate peacefully inside.

Unfortunately, crossing each ring in the Blooming Rings took a long time. One couldn't cross through to the next ring just because one wanted to, not even if one's strength had reached the threshold. Entering any ring required one to stay in it for some time to harmonise their dao rhythm with the aura and flow of that ring's dao rhythm. One could only enter the next ring if one could reach a perfect harmonisation with the previous one. If they couldn't reach this, the sudden change in the flow of time and the dao rhythm of the Blooming Rings would grind them into nothingness.

The old man nodded, "Dao Sculpting Realm; being able to enter the sixth ring in three months can be considered good enough, but...."

The old man didn't finish the sentence; instead, he sighed.

Jin Molong naturally understood the patriarch's meaning. Since the great calamity, the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan had secluded itself from the world. They didn't choose seclusion because they feared trouble knocking at their doors but chose it to build their strength. After all, the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan had suffered a substantial loss of strength since their peak.

Unfortunately, even after so many years passed, the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan still couldn't grow strong enough despite the seclusion. That's because they lost many promising geniuses within the Blooming Rings. Most died, while some got themselves trapped inside. Upon investigation, they found out that it was mainly due to the collapse of their grand dao.

And now Sichen Qiutian brought a Dao Sculpting Holy Emperor to their Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan and requested to use the Blooming Rings to cultivate. One should know that although the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan had gone into seclusion, they still had a few disciples outside under disguise. However, none of them had a Dao Sculpting cultivation. The Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan never allowed their Dao Sculpting or below disciples to come out.

The Mysterious Ancient Clan did not allow their Dao Sculpting or below disciples to go out, but these disciples could still ask the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan to enter the Blooming Rings to cultivate, which they did allow. However, most of them end up dying.

Jin Molong had no idea how to comfort the patriarch, so he remained silent.

Time passed slowly. After an unknown amount of time, the white-haired patriarch suddenly asked, "Molong, do you think it's still appropriate to keep the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan secluded from the world?"

Jin Molong hesitated momentarily, saying, "To leave our Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan's seclusion, one must be at least at the Dao Essence Realm. In other words, only a few meet the qualifications to go out. On the contrary, many excellent disciples have fallen in the Blooming Rings. The Blooming Rings is our Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan's greatest treasure and our Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan's foundation. However, I'm starting to feel it has become a shackle for our Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan. From an objective point of view, it's simply devouring our Mysterious Ancient Clan's promising disciples, causing our clan to wither day by day."

Jin Molong truly wasn't in favour of continuing with the seclusion.

The white-haired patriarch turned silent again. But after half an incense stick's worth of time, he suddenly raised his head and looked outside his room with a shocked look. A moment later, he suddenly stood up.

"Patriarch, what's going on?" Seeing the shocked look on the patriarch's face, Jin Molong asked with worry.

"What's that person's name? That Dao Sculpting brat you sent into the Blooming Rings." The white-haired patriarch's voice even trembled a little.

Jin Molong hurriedly asked, "I didn't ask. But I heard Sichen Qiutian call him Ning Cheng."

"Ning Cheng, Ning Cheng...." The white-haired patriarch muttered the name twice before saying, "Hurry up and call in Sichen Qiutian, the one who brought Ning Cheng here. No, I'll go over there myself...."

"Patriarch?" Jin Molong felt even more confused.

The white-haired patriarch pointed tremblingly outside the cave, "How much time has passed since he entered; that Ning Cheng is about to cross out of the range I can see."

"Ah...." This time it was Jin Molong's turn to feel horrified. He knew the range that the patriarch could see. The patriarch had cultivated in the Blooming Rings for years and could easily see up to the first eight rings of the Blooming Rings. Once someone crossed into the ninth ring, even the patriarch couldn't keep track of them from the outside. Only by entering the Blooming Rings could he know more about the situation.

The white-haired patriarch's tone finally calmed down a bit, "From the time that Ning Cheng entered the Blooming Rings until now, not even two hours should have passed. Even if Ning Cheng spent a little more time inside the Blooming Rings, it wouldn't be more than a day. Only at the Dao Sculpting Realm, yet taking only a day to reach the eighth ring from entering the first ring, do we have anyone in our Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan's history that could match him?"

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Ning Cheng had indeed reached the eighth ring. Every time he entered a deeper layer of the Blooming Ring, Ning Cheng felt more and more that he had gained something indescribable. Because of this, he couldn't wait to enter a deeper level of the Blooming Rings.

As he stepped into the eighth ring, he felt the surrounding dao rhythm absorbing him. He could even clearly feel the passing of time, feel his life being absorbed by the ring. The change from the seventh to the eighth ring seemed to want to crush him into nothingness. The extreme change in the dao rhythm made him feel extremely uncomfortable.

Fortunately, his Mysterious Yellow Formless Cultivation Method had no form and was traceless, allowing him to cultivate anywhere. The Mysterious Yellow Formless Cultivation Method could adapt to the changes in the surrounding atmosphere, the laws of heaven and Earth, and the changes over time at any time and place. The problem that was incredibly difficult for others did not exist in Ning Cheng's case.

Therefore, regardless of which ring he entered, he could stabilise his dao rhythm quickly and even reach harmonisation with the surroundings.

Ning Cheng had never entered the Blooming Rings before. Now that he stabilised his dao rhythm in the eighth ring, he didn't feel the limit of his dao rhythm fading away. Therefore, without any hesitation, he stepped directly into the ninth ring.

Chapter 1046: All Causes and Effects Return to One

Ning Cheng almost couldn't hold back his dao rhythm from gushing into the flow of time. Luckily, he managed to stabilise his mind in time and let the flow of time within the Blooming Rings pass through without moving.

Time flies like an arrow, and years pass like a shuttle, but they are merely traces in the laws of time. His Sunset's Twilight was also a trace of that same law, but this 'trace' had depth, showing that laws had their highs and lows.

The ninth ring of the Blooming Rings was only so, so why not go further?

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In the middle of the boundless public square, Sichen Qiutian sat alone on the ground. His body seemed to meld into the surrounding space without giving off the slightest fluctuation.

"Fellow Daoist Sichen...." Jin Molong's greeting interrupted the sitting Sichen Qiutian, who suddenly stood up while two bright lights shot out of his eyes.

He came to the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan and knew the rules there. The Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan had secluded itself from the outside world in the Grand Essence Sea; as such, these people never showed any sentiment to people from the outside. He had brought Ning Cheng here to request him to cultivate in the Blooming Rings. The moment Jin Molong took Ning Cheng away, the deal ended, and they would have nothing to do with him.

At the very least, until the promised three months were up, he and Ning Cheng left the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan; Jin Molong should not have come to say anything to him. At least, that's how the clansmen behaved with outsiders till now.

Since Jin Molong came personally, the only possible reason was that something must have happened to Ning Cheng in the Blooming Rings. But Ning Cheng hadn't been in the Blooming Rings for over a day, so how could something happen so early? It shouldn't be the case with what he knew about Ning Cheng.

"Fellow Daoist Jin, is it about Ning Cheng?" For the first time since he entered the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan, Sichen Qiutian found his heart in disarray. Only then did he realise that he held Ning Cheng in quite a high regard.

"That's both true and also not true." A white-haired old man with a smile suddenly spoke up, standing beside Jin Molong. When Sichen Qiutian's gaze moved to him, he gave a cultivators' salute and continued, "Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan's Li Feng greets Dao Friend Sichen."

Sichen Qiutian couldn't help but feel surprised. Only now did he realise that Jin Molong had not come alone. Previously, before the white-haired old man, Li Feng, greeted him, it was as if he had completely blended in with everything around him. His figure suddenly became clear when he spoke, as if he had just come into existence.

"Fellow Daoist Sichen, this is the Patriarch of my Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan." Jin Molong saw that Sichen Qiutian seemed a little shaken and hurriedly explained from the side.

Sichen Qiutian quickly paid his respects and said, "Sichen Qiutian pays his respects to Patriarch Li. Patriarch Li's achievements in cultivation and understanding of the natural laws must have already reached a state of harmony. I was observing the sky from the bottom of a well and failed to notice your arrival. Please forgive me."

"Haha....." Li Feng laughed and sat down on the ground at once. "Fellow Daoist Sichen, please have a seat."

For Li Feng to invite him to sit on the ground, Sichen Qiutian didn't care. After all, he had been sitting on the ground all this time.

After Sichen Qiutian and Jin Molong sat down, Li Feng sighed and said, "It's difficult to attain harmony with the dao. I'm afraid I won't be able to attain it in this lifetime."

When Sichen Qiutian heard that Li Feng was not yet a Dao Perfection Holy Emperor, he couldn't help but feel surprised. He had met many Dao Fusion Holy Emperors but had never seen any Dao Fusion Holy Emperor with such immense power as Li Feng. Turns out, even among Dao Fusion Holy Emperors, the difference in strength could be quite huge.

Since Li Feng admitted that he hadn't reached harmony with the Dao, Sichen Qiutian didn't know what to say either.

But when he wanted to ask about Ning Cheng, Li Feng suddenly asked, "That Ning Cheng who came with you, is he your disciple?"

Sichen Qiutian quickly replied, "For Patriarch Li to ask about such a thing, did something happen to Ning Cheng?"

Li Feng smiled faintly, "Fellow Daoist Sichen, there is no need to panic. Ning Cheng is cultivating in the Blooming Rings. There is nothing wrong with him. I just came to ask if Ning Cheng has anything to do with you."

Sichen Qiutian couldn't figure out what Li Feng meant, so he had to speak honestly, "Dao Friend Ning Cheng's talent is amazing. I, Sichen Qiutian, do not have the virtue or ability to cultivate such a disciple."

"In that case, is he a rogue cultivator?" Even Li Feng couldn't hide the surprise from his tone.

As an old fox like Sichen Qiutian, who had cultivated for thousands of years, he vaguely started to understand a few things, especially what Li Feng meant. From the looks of it, Ning Cheng's performance in the Blooming Ring had moved the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan's Patriarch. In other words, he wanted to recruit Ning Cheng as a disciple of his Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan.

Understanding this, Sichen Qiutian easily replied, "Ning Cheng is the Number One Pill Sage of our Grand Essence Realm and has even refined the Six Yin Soul Pill. He will represent our Grand Essence Ream this time in the Five Grand Realms' Alchemy Competition. However, I thought of bringing him to your clan's Blooming Rings to cultivate because he is not strong enough."

"Refined the Six Yin Soul Pill!?" Li Feng and Jin Molong simultaneously exclaimed in shock.

They weren't ordinary ignorant people. What was the Six Yin Soul Pill? How could they not know? It was a Dao Essence Dao Pill. Moreover, it wasn't an ordinary Dao Essence Dao Pill either.

Li Feng secretly sighed. Ning Cheng's achievements were truly high enough that he badly wanted Ning Cheng to become a disciple of his Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan. No wonder Ning Cheng and Sichen Qiutian didn't have even half a relationship, yet Sichen Qiutian still willingly used his opportunity to bring him to the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan's Blooming Rings to cultivate.

In a place like the Grand Essence Realm, where the laws were incomplete, the Dao of Alchemy played a crucial part in perceiving a higher realm. Ning Cheng was a Dao Essence Pill Sage, which meant he didn't even need the support of his Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan, let alone become a disciple of the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan. Li Feng couldn't help but feel embarrassed by his previous words.

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As he stepped into the tenth ring of the Blooming Rings, Ning Cheng had long since prepared for the sudden onslaught of the flow of time and the dao rhythm that accompanied it. Having experienced similar situations while passing through the previous rings, Ning Cheng had also grown accustomed to the madness of this dao rhythm. The Mysterious Yellow Formless also kept circulating within him, enveloping him in his Returning-to-one Dao Rhythm.

However, what amazed Ning Cheng was that the dao rhythm of the tenth ring felt incredibly gentle. Ever since he entered the Blooming Rings, Ning Cheng had never felt so integrated with the dao rhythm of the Blooming Rings.

It was as if he had completed a reincarnation cycle. He had come from the first ring of the Blooming Rings to the tenth ring, seemingly completing a cycle. Reaching here, he felt a new beginning and an inexplicable joy of integration.

Ning Cheng was certain that he could enter the eleventh ring of the Blooming Rings or even higher levels. However, Ning Cheng didn't take another step forward. Instead, he sat down in the same place. This was where he wanted to cultivate.

While Ning Cheng sat down and ran the Mysterious Yellow Formless Cultivation Method, the spirit qi in the Blooming Ring's tenth ring rushed frantically towards him. It gathered around Ning Cheng, just like all things returning to their origin.

Everything, including the surrounding spirit qi, perfectly merged with him and each other, constantly improving Ning Cheng's perception of the Returning-to-one Dao.

As time passed, Ning Cheng fully immersed himself in the passage of time within the Blooming Rings.

He saw countless strong people fighting before a gate, and he even saw Cang Wei. Everyone in that battle felt no weaker than him; some were even stronger. Even if he possessed the Mysterious Yellow Bead and cultivated to his peak, he could only watch himself fall in front of that massive door. Then his eyes slowly blurred, and he saw himself reincarnated again. This time in a broken world where he could not cultivate.

The first person he saw when he reincarnated and opened his eyes was not his sister Ruolan, Luofei, Qionghua or Yan Ji. Rather, he was shocked to see Yu Qing.

"It's you?" Ning Cheng suddenly sat up.

"You know me?" Yu Qing frowned slightly and asked without waiting for Ning Cheng to speak. "This feels familiar....."

"How come I'm here?" Ning Cheng asked in a hurry.

Yu Qing shook her head and was about to say something when his body blurred out of existence.

When Ning Cheng opened his eyes again, he had reincarnated once again. This time, he saw himself killing someone on a boundless battlefield. He saw countless 'familiar' friends and brothers fall. Finally, a lance pierced his chest, and his body blurred out of existence again.

Another reincarnation.....

From a commoner to a monarch....

He struggled as an outer disciple in a small sect, struggling hard on edge, but in the end, he ultimately died during a fight for spiritual grasses......

He toiled in the field, yet the harvest after a year was not enough to feed his family......

Finally, he became an emperor of his generation but didn't get to enjoy it for long before being dethroned by a rebel army....

An endless cycle of reincarnation, filled with endless pain!

No, I don't want this kind of pain-filled reincarnation!

He was the only one shouting in the whole world but with no response or ending.

A thousand cycles of reincarnation, with no beginning or an end! Trapped in a cycle without a beginning or an end.

He wanted to find the answer and stop this cycle of pain, but he couldn't do it. He could only think about it.

"Give me the reason. Let me stop this cycle of reincarnation!" Ning Cheng shouted in rage. He had had enough. Unfortunately, he could only show his rage as the powerful dao rhythm around him had grown beyond his control.

Seemingly alarmed by Ning Cheng's will, the ring on his hand exploded, and everything within the ring turned into nothingness. Only a black crystal of some unknown material remained suspended before his eyes.

It was none other than the Cause-and-Effect Dao Crystal that Jiang Mann had lent him. This Cause-and-Effect Crystal was the cultivation method of the Dao of Karma. Could this be an opportunity for him to integrate the Grand Dao of Karma?

This thought had just popped into Ning Cheng's mind when a roaring intent swept through the sky above his head.

Heaven and earth have reincarnation; all things have causality!

Sure enough, it was to make him cultivate the Grand Dao of Karma. In an instant, Ning Cheng's mind cleared. This Karmic Dao Crystal could destroy his ring and appear by itself, showing that its origin wasn't simple.

Ning Cheng suddenly felt a sense of fear, and his back broke out with cold sweats. If his Mysterious Yellow Bead had not transformed into a miniature world because of the Five-elements Primal Chaos Qi, he couldn't have put the True Spirit World into the Mysterious Yellow Bead. Similarly, Yan Ji could also not enter the Mysterious Yellow Bead.

If this Karmic Dao Crystal were to affect his dao foundation and modify his grand dao, what would have exploded wouldn't just be an ordinary ring and a pile of spirit crystals, but his True Spirit World. If the True Spirit World were to explode, what would happen to Yan Ji?

Ning Cheng's back seeped out in cold sweat. The Karmic Dao Crystal was choosing its successor, and it had set its sights on him. However, he had always been cultivating with the Mysterious Yellow Formless. How could he suddenly abandon it and cultivate the Dao of Karma?

The dao rhythm of reincarnation washed over him again, indicating that if he did not change his cultivation method to that of the Dao of Karma, he would remain trapped in an endless cycle of reincarnation.

I must cultivate the Dao of Karma, but not the Dao of Karma. Instead, I will focus on the Grand Karmic Spirit Technique within it. My dao is the Returning-to-on Dao, and my cultivation method is the Mysterious Yellow Formless.

Myriad paths of reincarnation have no beginning or end, but all causality returns to one!

In an instant, Ning Cheng's mind turned clear, and his dao rhythm roared around him, suppressing the dao rhythm of reincarnation. Your reincarnation has no beginning or end, and your causality is infinite, but you will return to one!

Chapter 1047: Dao Raising

"Boom" At this moment, Ning Cheng felt his body reverberate as a clear yet powerful surge of grand dao's power surged into him. The world turned clear, and the rolling dao rhythm coalesced.

Only at this moment did the embryonic form of the Returning-to-one Dao truly appear. Ning Cheng slowly stood up, and calmness returned to his eyes. Three months were about to pass, but under the influence of the Karmic Dao Crystal, his spirituality erupted, and he experienced sudden enlightenment, finally succeeding in reaching Dao Raising.

An instant after reaching Dao Raising, his dao rhythm also condensed solidly without any signs of instability. Although he had just reached the early stage of Dao Raising Realm, the smooth flow of his dao rhythm felt like that of someone who had been nurturing their dao for several thousand years. It fully merged with his body without any sense of abruptness.

During the two or three years in the Blooming Rings, he seemed to have done only one thing: to reincarnate again and again. It was only at the last moment that he suddenly had an epiphany and advanced to the Dao Raising Realm. During this period, he didn't use any dao pills, didn't use any external objects, relying solely on his comprehension.

Ning Cheng didn't look deeper into the Blooming Rings. While cultivating in the Blooming Rings' tenth ring, he understood that continuing in the Blooming Ring might be more detrimental to him at this point. However, it could still bring many benefits for him in the future. In other words, going deeper right now wasn't the best option.

Going deeper didn't mean he could cultivate more steadily or integrate with the Blooming Rings' dao rhythm in the deeper areas.

No matter what, the Blooming Rings wasn't as simple as he thought. Perhaps, it was all due to luck that he decided to stay in the tenth ring and didn't enter the eleventh. But whatever the case, whether it was because of luck or something else, it let him keep his little life.

Ning Cheng originally didn't cultivate the Dao of Karma, but now, because of the enlightenment, he wanted to cultivate its innate Grand Karmic Divine Ability. However, his understanding of the underlying dao rhythms was still far from enough to begin.

Therefore, he removed another ring and put the Karmic Dao Crystal inside it. Although Ning Cheng knew that the Karmic Dao Crystal was an immensely powerful object and couldn't shatter the Mysterious Yellow Bead, he dared not put it inside. He had borrowed this Dao Crystal from someone, and it would eventually escape from his ring and find Jiang Mann.

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"Union Master?" Ning Cheng walked out of the Blooming Rings. When he stood on the verdant grass again, he found Sichen Qiutian had also come here.

Not only was Sichen Qiutian here, but Jin Molong, who had brought him into the Blooming Rings, was also here. Beside Sichen Qiutian and Jin Molong, there was also a white-haired old man.

As soon as he looked at this white-haired old man, Ning Cheng could tell that this person was a powerhouse. Moreover, his senses screamed that this old man was far stronger than Sichen Qiutian and Jin Molong.

"Ning Cheng, you actually did it." As soon as Sichen Qiutian looked at Ning Cheng, he knew Ning Cheng had reached the Dao Raising Realm. Not only did he succeed in reaching Dao Raising, but Ning Cheng's dao rhythm also felt solid.

"Congratulations to Fellow Daoist Ning for reaching Dao Raising." Jin Molong followed up with congratulations.

Sichen Qiutian suddenly remembered something and quickly said, "Ning Cheng, this is Patriarch Li Feng of the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan. He has been waiting for you here for the past two days."

No wonder he felt so powerful. Turns out, he was the Patriarch of the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan. It's just that Ning Cheng couldn't determine if this person reached harmony with the Dao. Ning Cheng had met a Dao Perfection powerhouse before, but unfortunately, Ancestor Kang's cultivation had not fully recovered. Therefore, he had no idea about the actual strength of a Dao Perfection cultivator.

"Greetings to Patriarch Li and Dao Friend Jin. Indeed, I have successfully reached Dao Raising. It's all thanks to the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan's Blooming Rings. This Ning Cheng feels truly grateful for it." Even though Ning Cheng knew this opportunity had come due to Sichen Qiutian's favour exchange, he still needed to show his gratitude. This time, apart from reaching the Dao Raising Realm, he had also gained a tremendous harvest within the Blooming Rings.

Moreover, Ning Cheng vowed that if he could return to cultivate in the Blooming Rings, he wouldn't give up on it. With so many powerful opponents now, he urgently needed to raise his cultivation level quickly, and the Blooming Rings was simply a treasure tailor-made for him.

Unfortunately, the Blooming Rings didn't belong to him, and the conditions for entering the Blooming Rings for cultivation also seemed to be a bit high. What made him feel even more helpless was that he didn't even have a shred of connection with the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan.

"Fellow Daoist Ning is too humble. It's purely because of natural talent and qualifications that Fellow Daoist Ning reached Dao Raising quickly. Even without the Blooming Rings, Fellow Daoist Ning would have eventually reached this level. If Dao Friend Ning doesn't mind, you can visit my Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan as an esteemed guest anytime." Le Feng showed an inconsiderate amount of politeness toward Ning Cheng. His tone even had hints of warmth and admiration toward Ning Cheng.

Once Li Feng finished speaking, Jin Molong quickly took a jade token and handed it to Ning Cheng. "Dao Friend Ning, this is my Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan's teleportation jade token. As the Patriarch said, you can visit my Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan as an esteemed guest anytime."

He was worrying about his relationship with the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan, and now the same Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan gave him a jade token. Ning Cheng couldn't help but look at Sichen Qiutian in confusion. He had nothing to do with the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan, so why were they so polite? After all, he understood how difficult it was for outsiders to receive an invitation to the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan, let alone be treated as esteemed guests.

Seeing Ning Cheng look at him, Sichen Qiutian smiled and said, "Patriarch Li Feng has shown great hospitality towards us, Ning Cheng. It would be best if you didn't decline this offer. If you can, help the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan refine a few dao pills in the future."

So that's why. Ning Cheng finally understood. Sichen Qiutian must have told them about his identity as a Dao Essence Pill Sage, and the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan wanted to draw him in, so they gave him the jade token.

After understanding this, Ning Cheng quickly received the jade token and said, "Many thanks to Patriarch Li and Dao Friend Jin."

In his heart, however, he couldn't help but think about how many times he could use this jade token to enter the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan. However, it was just a thought that he couldn't speak aloud.

Besides, even though Ning Cheng had reached the threshold of being a Dao Essence Pill Sage, he didn't truly depend on dao pills to improve his strength. After all, he didn't use dao pills to reach the Dao Raising Realm in the Blooming Rings. He felt that advancing solely based on one's understanding of the Dao and the perception of worldly laws would produce a much better result than relying on dao pills to advance.

Ning Cheng also knew that not everyone could enjoy such heavenly encounters. After all, most cultivators had no choice but to sense the worldly laws from the dao rhythm of dao pills to advance.

It's just that both Ning Cheng and Sichen Qiutian guessed wrongly about Li Feng's intentions this time. Although the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan wanted to befriend Ning Cheng, being a Dao Essence Pill Sage wasn't the main reason. It's not because the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan didn't value the Dao of Alchemy: rather, they valued talents who could advance without relying on dao pills, relying just on comprehending the worldly laws on their own.

Li Feng didn't try to elaborate or provide an explanation for Sichen Qiutian's words. But seeing Ning Cheng accept the jade token, he nodded and smiled, "In the future, my Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan might have disciples walking outside. If there are any difficulties, I must ask Dao Friend Ning for a helping hand."

The Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan wants to come out of seclusion? Ning Cheng couldn't help but feel puzzled again. But he quickly replied, "If there is a chance to meet a Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan's disciple, this Ning Cheng will treat them with sincerity."

With Li Feng showing such enthusiasm, the entire Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan treated Ning Cheng and Sichen Qiutian as esteemed guests. As such, they stayed over for another day before the Mysterious Ferry Ancient Clan sent them away with a fairly modest ceremony.

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By the time Ning Cheng and Sichen Qiutian returned to Celestial Origin Sacred City, only a little over a month remained before they needed to leave to participate in the Five Grand Realms' Alchemy Competition.

With Sheng Houtian deciding to stay in Celestial Origin Sacred City, Ba Meng left first as he still needed to help his son Ba Luo heal.

With limited time, Ning Cheng only greeted Sheng Houtian before immediately retreating and refining pills.

This time, he still chose to refine the Extreme Profound Heavenly Ice Pills, which Ning Cheng had already refined twice. Although he failed both times back then, he still accumulated some experience. Moreover, his strength improved greatly after reaching the Dao Raising Realm, and even his control over the dao rhythm became easier.

Therefore, in just half an hour, Ning Cheng began to grasp the strands of laws within the Extreme Profound Dao Fruit and the Heavenly Ice Flower. The strands of laws that collapsed at the first touch during the previous refinements were now successfully retained by Ning Cheng this time and integrated into the dao pill. After another half an hour, Ning Cheng pulled twelve Extreme Profound Heavenly Ice Pills from the pill furnace and placed them into the prepped jade bottles.

Three high-grade pills, four medium-grade pills, and five low-grade pills, but no superior-grade pills.

Ning Cheng felt excited. He refined his first Dao Essence Dao Pill without any external help. The reason why no superior-grade pills had formed was simply a matter of needing more control. If his control increased, with his understanding of alchemy, he could refine twelve superior-grade pills.

Ning Cheng finished refining the Extreme Profound Heavenly Ice Pills batches in four days. And in the last few furnaces, Ning Cheng produced 10 high-grade Extreme Profound Heavenly Ice Pills in each batch. Such an achievement was worthy of bragging about for a Dao Essence Pill Sage.

Unfortunately, the Nine Lives Fire Dragon Pill proved slightly more difficult than the Extreme Profound Heavenly Ice Pill. However, with the experience of refining multiple batches of Extreme Profound Heavenly Ice Pills, Ning Cheng succeeded in refining all five Nine Lives Fire Dragon Pill furnaces without a single failure. Moreover, each furnace maintained an average of 10 high-grade pills.

Celestial Origin Heavenly Pill was the last dao pill that Ning Cheng had to refine. He kept it for the last because it wasn't just the most difficult to refine among the three dao pills, but more importantly, the materials for each batch were a little too precious.

Celestial Origin Heavenly Pill had two primary dao fruits, one was the Celestial Origin Fruit, and the other was the Extreme Yin Sacred Fruit. Celestial Origin Fruit belonged to the extreme 'Yang' category and carried a powerful dao rhythm formed from the laws of the sun. While the Extreme Yin Sacred Fruit, just like its name, belonged to the extreme 'Yin' category and contained an equally powerful extreme yin dao rhythm.

Refining these dao pills required the integration of the two polar opposite dao rhythms from the two opposite dao fruits without losing even a minor part of it. In other words, it would either result in a perfect batch or a complete failure.

However, not counting the two primary ingredients, Ning Cheng only had enough materials for five furnaces. One had to know that the most difficult thing for ordinary dao pills would be finding the primary ingredients, i.e., the dao fruits or the law-infused divine herbs. But for the Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills, the Celestial Origin Fruit and Extreme Yin Sacred Fruit weren't the only ingredients difficult to find. It also needed ten other auxiliary divine herbs that were even rarer.

Therefore, Ning Cheng had to be extra careful when refining the Celestial Origin Heavenly Pill. Even for the auxiliary divine herbs, he handled each one of them with extreme caution.

With Ning Cheng's current understanding of alchemy, he shouldn't face many problems refining the Celestial Origin Heavenly Pill. Yet, Ning Cheng still struggled to extract the strands of laws from the Celestial Origin Fruit and Extreme Yin Sacred Fruit.

But despite the successful extraction, Ning Cheng couldn't integrate the two dao fruits' dao rhythms into the nascent dao pill. The strands of law within the Celestial Origin and Extreme Yin fruits' dao rhythm just collapsed at the first touch with each other.

The first Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills batch: failed. It was outside Ning Cheng's expectations. Before this, Ning Cheng never considered that the Celestial Origin Heavenly Pill would fail this way. Even if he had to refine the Six Yin Soul Pill right now and not use the Bestowing Lawless Fruit, this kind of failure would have never occurred.

The failure of the first batch cast a shadow over Ning Cheng's heart. It wasn't because he failed but because he couldn't find any reason for this particular failure, unlike when he failed while refining other pills.

He only had five furnaces worth of ingredients for the Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills, and if he failed once more, he would have to succeed in the rest three furnaces to account for it.

Chapter 1048: Reason for failure

Ning Cheng didn't dare continue refining the second furnace of Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills. Before figuring out the reason, even if he refined a hundred batches, they would still fail. It was also the first for him to not find a reason for failure after a failed refining.

Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills were precious, but the pill recipe wasn't worth much, as most of the sects in the Grand Essence Domain had a copy of it. As such, Ning Cheng didn't think that the problem lay in the pill recipe.

His Alchemy skills probably had already reached the peak of the entire Grand Essence Realm. Now that he encountered problems he couldn't solve, apart from trying the recipe several times, the only way might be to ask the legendary Sichen Qiutian. After all, he was currently the only known Dao Essence Pill Sage in the Grand Essence Realm.

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Sichen Qiutian felt delighted when Ning Cheng came to look for him again. It showed that Ning Cheng still had a place for him in his heart; otherwise, he wouldn't have come here as soon as he encountered an alchemical problem.

"Ning Cheng, what do I owe the pleasure of you coming to my place? The Five Grand Realms' Alchemy Competition is just a month away. Wait, don't tell me you are here to discuss alchemy with me?" Sichen Qiutian happily led the way for Ning Cheng into his guest room.

Ning Cheng gave him a respectful greeting first and said, "Union Master, I encountered a problem while refining a batch of pills and wanted to seek your advice."

"Oh, tell me about it." Sichen Qiutian's expression turned serious. He had seen Ning Cheng's alchemy skills before. He couldn't refine the Six Yin Soul Pills, but not only could Ning Cheng refine it; he even

produced superior-grade pills in that batch. Thus, whatever problem Ning Cheng faced, it must be a serious one.

After sitting down, Ning Cheng said, "I promised Dao Friend Cen Ruxuan from Profound Aquatic Palace to refine her five batches of Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills. However, after I tried refining the first batch, it resulted in complete failure. But that's not vexing me; the thing is, I can't figure out where I failed."

After listening to Ning Cheng, Sichen Qiutian remained silent for a long time before letting out a long sigh. "Ning Cheng, everyone knows that I'm a Dao Essence Pill Sage, but everyone also knows that I never refine pill for others. Do you know why?"

Ning Cheng shook his head, "I don't know."

Sichen Qiutian sighed again, "I don't refine pills for others because of the Celestial Origin Heavenly Pill."

Seeing Ning Cheng's perplexed expression, Sichen Qiutian continued in a whisper, "I have refined a total of 51 batches of Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills......"

"Ah...." Ning Cheng felt truly shocked this time. How could he not know the value of Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills' primary dao fruits or the auxiliary divine herbs? The Profound Aquatic Palace spent countless years and expended an unknown amount of manpower, yet they could only come up with just enough ingredients for five batches. Of course, this was only what Cen Ruxuan said, and he couldn't be sure if the Profound Aquatic Palace had only enough materials for five batches of Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills. Regardless, the one thing that he was certain of was that the materials for the Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills were extremely precious.

Yet, Sichen Qiutian refined 51 batches alone. The wealth of this pill sage was simply beyond imaginable. Fortunately, Ning Cheng knew Sichen Qiutian was a Dao Essence Pill Sage. If he was not, he couldn't have obtained the heap of ingredients for refining so many batches of Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills.

Sichen Qiutian's tone turned even more despondent, "But. I never achieved success in any of them."

"How's it even possible?" Ning Cheng exclaimed in surprise. "As far as I know, the Celestial Origin Heavenly Pill's recipe is passed down from ancient times. There shouldn't be any mistakes. How could the Union Master refine 51 batches and not succeed in even one?"

There is also a sentence that Ning Cheng didn't say aloud. As a Dao Essence Pill Sage, if you couldn't successfully refine even one batch out of the 51 identical batches, then having the title of a Dao Essence Pill Sage didn't make any sense.

"There is no problem with the recipe, as I have seen the pills a few times. It proves that someone had refined those Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills. Plus, these pills are relatively easy to obtain in the Grand Change Realm." Sichen Qiutian said with certainty.

Without waiting for Ning Cheng to respond, he continued, "When one's Dao of Alchemy reaches our level, failing to refine the same recipe 51 times will make anyone doubt their Dao. From then on, I dared not refine Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills anymore. But also because of this, cracks had started to form in my dao heart. The ingredients for all those batches had been collected painstakingly by the many sects, yet I couldn't give them an answer. Luckily, they didn't blame me or ask for the ingredients they had given to me. But regardless, I felt very guilty about it."

"After losing confidence in my alchemy skills, I put my entire energy and efforts into the Pill Union. You might have already guessed it, but the five Celestial Origin Fruits I used as rewards during the Alchemy Discourse were leftovers from those failed batches. After all, even if the Celestial Origin Fruits couldn't turn into Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills, they can still use them to enhance one's perception of the Dao Essence Realm. I dare not waste such a fruit that's almost impossible to find, so I decided to use them as a prize."

Ning Cheng finally understood why five Celestial Origin Fruits were the reward for the last Alchemy Discourse. It turned out that it had quite a heavy story behind it. Whether martial arts, cultivation, or alchemy, losing confidence in one's ability was terrifying to anyone. No wonder he always felt that Sichen Qiutian was somewhat depressed whenever he saw him. Suppose he failed 51 times while refining something as precious as the Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills. In that case, it might also shake his dao heart.

"Then, were you able to find the reason for failing 51 times while refining the Celestial Origin Heavenly Pill?" Ning Cheng couldn't help but ask nervously.

He had come here because he couldn't come up with any reason. He understood that, even as an ordinary pill sage, one could always identify a reason for the failure or at least speculate it. Even if they couldn't figure out everything, he would eventually succeed as long as he slowly corrected his mistakes.

Sichen Qiutian's face turned a shade paler. He just shook his head silently without saying a word.

Ning Cheng took a deep breath. Sichen Qiutian was a genuine Dao Essence Pill Sage, so how could his attainments in Alchemy be simple? Even if given a Dao Fusing Dao Pill to refine, a Dao Essence Pill Sage would still find many reasons for failure after failing 51 consecutive times. So how could Sichen Qiutian continuously fail 51 times to refine the Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills but couldn't find a reason?

Someone had refined Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills before, and Sichen Qiutian had also seen these Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills personally and concluded that there wasn't a problem with the recipe or the ingredients. Did it mean that only Dao Fusion Pill Sages could refine this pill? But after coming to the Grand Essence Realm, he had gone through many Alchemy books and even a few legacies. As such, he knew that the complexity of refining the Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills was far behind the Six Yin Soul Pill.

Ning Cheng's heart sank. Although he had only tried to refine one batch of Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills, if he couldn't find a reason for failure, he would likely end up like Sichen Qiutian and lose confidence in his skills one day.

His Dao of Alchemy had already fused and integrated with his Returning-to-one Grand Dao. Therefore, if he lost his confidence in his Dao of Alchemy, his Returning-to-one Grand Dao would also be affected. At the very least, it would no longer be as perfect as before.

After a long silence, Sichen Qiutian finally spoke, "For many years, I have been thinking about the same problem. Why did I fail to refine the Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills? At first, I did doubt the recipe, but no matter how many times I tried to derive this recipe, I couldn't find a single mistake. I have also researched many ancient books on the Dao of Alchemy, but the pill recipes in circulation for the

Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills weren't a secret at all and were pretty much identical. Even the minute differences in the existing recipes wouldn't change anything...."

Ning Cheng knew he couldn't reach Sichen Qiutian's level to deduce the Celestial Origin Heavenly Pill recipe. Not because his understanding of Alchemy was inferior to Sichen Qiutian's but because his cultivation had not reached the Dao Essence Realm. After all, his cultivation must also be at the Dao Essence Realm to deduce a recipe for a pill that helps one advance to the Dao Essence Realm. At the very least, his Grand Dao's dao rhythm should be comparable to that of a Dao Essence cultivator.

"In recent years, however, I've come up with a possible reason....." Sichen Qiutian whispered.

"What's this reason?" Ning Cheng couldn't wait to ask.

Sichen Qiutian said, "I had repeatedly looked through records to find when Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills appeared and found that the pills that did appear were those preserved before the worldly laws of the Grand Essence Realm crumbled. Since the worldly laws shattered, there have been no more Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills. Moreover, even before the worldly laws shattered, among the many sects and cultivators wanting to comprehend the Dao Essence Realm, many would choose to directly use Celestial Origin Fruits rather than Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills."

"Union Master, are you implying that the incompleteness of laws of the Grand Essence Realm is why we can't refine the Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills and not because of an insufficiency in our alchemy level?" Ning Cheng asked in surprise. He subconsciously felt that this statement might be the reason. Otherwise, there was no reason why he or even Sichen Qiutian couldn't come up with a reason for failure.

Sichen Qiutian hesitated before solemnly nodding, "This is what I have speculated, but I haven't tried or confirmed it yet."

"But Union Master, you have been to the Grand Change Realm before; why didn't you try to refine it there?" Ning Cheng asked eagerly.

Sichen Qiutian shook his head, "I may have the title and the reputation of a Dao Essence Pill Sage, but in fact, I can no longer refine any Dao Essence Dao Pills now."

Ning Cheng fell silent. He understood what Sichen Qiutian meant. It was because Sichen Qiutian lost confidence in his Dao of Alchemy. What could be more pathetic for an alchemist than losing confidence in their abilities?

Ning Cheng didn't ask Sichen Qiutian why he didn't bring the ingredients to the Grand Change Realm to let some other Dao Essence Pill Sages refine it for him, as even he wouldn't do that. As the Union Master and the head of the delegation representing the entire Grand Essence Realm in the Five Grand Realms' Alchemy Competition, asking another Dao Essence Pill there to refine pills would be more depressing than losing confidence in one's alchemic abilities.

"Union Master, is this why the Grand Change Realm is always chosen to host the Five Grand Realms' Alchemy Competition? Because the worldly laws there are complete?" Ning Cheng asked.

Sichen Qiutian looked at Ning Cheng and said, "I have thought about this too, and it does seem to be the reason now. I didn't know that a Dao Essence Pill Sage like you would appear at the Alchemy Discourse;

otherwise, I would have left a few furnaces of Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills' ingredients for you to take to the Grand Change Realm to refine."

"Don't worry about it, Union Master. I still have a few furnaces of Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills' ingredients on me. I will find Cen Ruxuan later. If she is willing, I will take them to the Grand Change Realm to try. If not, I believe there will be opportunities to try it in the future." Ning Cheng comforted him. He had to find the real reason and restore Sichen Qiutian's confidence in alchemy.

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After leaving Sichen Qiutian's residence, Ning Cheng didn't immediately go out to search for Cen Ruxuan. Instead, he returned to Jian Sanshan's residence. He decided to refine another furnace of Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills, not for anything else, but because he felt Sichen Qiutian's reasoning was correct. The reason why they couldn't refine Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills was most likely because of the incomplete worldly laws of the Grand Essence Realm.

Besides, there was another reason for him to try refining another batch. He had the Five-elements Primal Chaos Aura, a special type of Primal Chaos Aura that formed after pure Primal Chaos Aura merged with the five elemental auras of the world. Suppose the failure to refine the Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills was truly due to the incomplete laws of this realm. In that case, the Five-elements Primal Chaos Aura should be able to compensate for this deficiency. Or at least shorten the gap.

Chapter 1049: Goodbye, Star Stepping Tower Master

At any other time, Ning Cheng would never use the Five-elements Primal Chaos Aura to refine a Dao Essence Dao Pill. After all, even a strand of Five-elements Primal Chaos Aura is far more valuable than a Dao Essence Dao Pill. It was like using the Bestowing Lawless Fruit to refine the Six Yn Soul Pill, an act not worth the cost.

But now, Ning Cheng needed to confirm if his failure to refine the Celestial Origin Heavenly Pill was due to the incomplete laws of the Grand Essence Realm.

Carefully taking out the materials for the second batch of Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills, Ning Cheng brought out the No Furnace and decided to use the Celestial River Flame this time. Compared to the Nameless Flame, Ning Cheng preferred using the Celestial River Flame.

One by one, Ning Cheng reduced each ingredient into its respective liquid form and burned away the impurities till only the essence of the divine herbs remained in the form of a formless glob of liquid. Once he reduced all the auxiliary herbs to such a state, Ning Cheng carefully introduced the Celestial Origin Fruit and the Extreme Yin Sacred Fruit into the furnace. In the same motion, Ning Cheng grabbed the strands of the fruits' dao rhythms before injecting all five elemental strands of the Five-elements Primal Chaos Aura into the pill furnace.

Fortunately, as soon as the strands of Five-elements Primal Chaos Aura entered the furnace, the laws and dao rhythm of the formless glob and the primary dao fruits within the furnace stabilised and no longer acted as erratic as before.

"Celestial Origin Fruit, merge your dao fruit's laws into the dao pill for me!"

"Extreme Yin Sacred Fruit, merge your dao fruit's laws into the dao pill for me!"

Ning Cheng went all out, using one pill art after another and letting his alchemic dao's dao rhythm pour into the furnace freely.

As the medicinal essences came into contact, the laws and dao rhythm of the two opposite attributed dao fruits suddenly fused and merged with his alchemic dao's dao rhythm!

All laws returned to one, and the nascent form of the Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills emerged. With the pills' dao rhythm fusing with the nascent pill, the dao pill finally started to take shape!

Ning Cheng remained calm and emotionless, as steady as a stone. From the moment he put the first auxiliary herb into the furnace until now, Ning Cheng encountered no obstacles. His failure to refine the first batch of Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills was due to the sudden collapse of the laws and dao rhythm of the two opposite attributed dao fruits during the fusion stage. However, he reached the pill formation stage without facing any major challenges.

Three hours later, a burst of fragrance permeated the air. Ning Cheng immediately understood that the Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills were about to form fully. Looks like Sichen Qiutian's guess wasn't wrong. The laws of this realm were indeed too fragmented to be suitable for refining the Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills.

Just when he thought of this, twelve milky-white pills flew out of the pill furnace and landed in the jade bottles prepared by Ning Cheng. The expected pill tribulation didn't occur, which made Ning Cheng suspect that the previous pill tribulation was not caused by the formation of the Six Yin Soul Pills but by the Bestowing Lawless Fruit.

The twelve Celestial Origin Heavenly Pill contained a powerful pill rhythm and a hint of Five-elements Primal Chaos Aura. In other words, these Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills were much better than the ordinary variety.

Ning Cheng picked up one of the Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills and held it in his hand. The pill's milk-white surface shimmered with numerous pill patterns, making it very pleasing to the eye.

Putting away the Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills, Ning Cheng decided to refine another batch in the Grand Change Realm without adding any Five-elements Primal Chaos Aura. That way, he could prove Sichen Qiutian's theory that Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills couldn't form in the Grand Essence Realm because of incomplete worldly laws.

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Star Stepping Tower; Ning Cheng didn't want to come but had no choice since Cen Ruxuan decided to take up a room here.

He had already broken his promise twice but still needed Cen Ruxuan's Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills' ingredients. So, he had no choice but to take the initiative and visit here.

"I felt that something good would happen today, and sure enough, Pill Sage Ning came." Cen Ruxuan joyfully opened the restriction on her room and welcomed Ning Cheng in.

After entering the room, Ning Cheng found that Palace Master Luan and Yin Yueshu from the Profound Aquatic Palace were also there, so he had to greet them individually. In any case, Palace Master Luan had a higher status than him, and he still owes a favour to Yin Yueshu.

"Since Pill Sage Ning came, presumably, you have already finished refining the dao pills." Unexpectedly, Palace Master Luan, the one person who never liked to talk, suddenly asked Ning Cheng.

Ning Cheng once again cupped his fists and said, "The Extreme Profound Heavenly Ice Pills have been refined. These are your pills."

After saying that, Ning Cheng took out nine jade bottles and put them on the table.

Cen Ruxuan quickly scooped up one of the jade bottles and poured her spiritual consciousness to carefully scan the contents. After a moment, she spoke with extreme satisfaction, "Many thanks, Pill Sage Ning. Pill Sage Ning's reputation is truly well deserved; even a pseudo-supreme grade pill is in it."

When she heard Ning Cheng speak only about the Extreme Profound Heavenly Ice Pills and not mention anything about the Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills, she understood that Ning Cheng must have encountered some problems refining the Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills. She said those flattering words in advance because she didn't want Palace Master Luan to cross paths with Ning Cheng. After all, Ning Cheng was a legitimate Dao Essence Pill Sage, but five furnaces of Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills were also of incredible value. What's more, if Ning Cheng failed to refine them, and they still tried to befriend Ning Cheng, it wouldn't benefit the Profound Aquatic Palace.

Not to mention that the Profound Aquatic Palace had no way to kill Ning Cheng, even if they disregarded everything and killed Ning Cheng; what about it?

Unfortunately, Palace Master Luan didn't take the hint and spoke indifferently, "So does that mean Pill Sage Ning has not refined the Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills?"

Ning Cheng cupped his fists and said, "I would like to ask Palace Master Luan if she knows that the Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills are difficult to refine and hence never asked anyone else to refine them?"

Ning Cheng believed that the Profound Aquatic Palace should already know about the difficulties in refining the Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills. Since they knew that and let him refine the Celestial Origin Heavenly Pill and said nothing about not pursuing the refinement failure, they already had something else in their mind.

Cen Ruxuan quickly said, "Pill Sage Ning, we understand that the Celestial Origin Heavenly Pill is difficult to refine. It's just that we never took out the ingredients because there are only two Dao Essence Pill Sages in the entire Grand Essence Domain. In addition to Pill Sage Ning, there is only Union Master Sichen Qiutian. Pill Sage Ning should know that Union Master Sichen never helps people refine pills, so we could only contact Pill Sage Ning. We didn't intend to mislead you."

Ning Cheng felt a little embarrassed. It's just that after becoming a Dao Essence Pill Sage, he didn't feel anything great about it.

That previous line of questioning was because he was still on that mountain. Now that Cen Ruxuan explicitly put down her reason, he quickly sobered up. It was just as Cen Ruxuan said. He was the only

one in the Grand Essence Realm qualified to refine the Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills. If the Profound Aquatic Palace didn't seek him out, who else could they ask for help?

Catching Ning Cheng's embarrassment, Cen Ruxuan asked, "Is there a problem with refining the Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills?"

Ning Cheng chose not to conceal the facts this time, "Honestly, yes. My first furnace of Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills failed, so I dared not continue refining more. Later, I consulted Union Master Sichen, who told me it was most likely caused by the incomplete laws of the Grand Essence Realm, so I decided not to refine any more batches."

"Because of this, I came here to discuss the next steps with Senior Sister Ruxuan. I want to bring the remaining ingredients to the Grand Change Realm. If you think it might not work, I can compensate you for failing that one batch and return the rest of the ingredients."

Ning Cheng did not hide failing to refine the Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills. That failure and the subsequent success had started to make him feel that the Grand Essence Realm was lacking resources, and if everyone were like Sichen Qiutian, wasting fifty-one batches to find a reason, then the Grand Essence Realm would only grow weaker. By stating the reason, he also intended to let Cen Ruxuan spread the word and tell others that Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills cannot form in the Grand Essence Realm.

As for that one furnace of Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills that he had refined, Ning Cheng didn't want to give it away. That furnace had succeeded because of the Five-elements Primal Chaos Aura, which meant that it was countless times much more valuable than ordinary Celestial Origin Heavenly Pill batches.

So that was the case. After hearing Ning Cheng's explanation, Palace Master Luan's expressions finally eased up.

Cen Ruxuan even said, "Since my Profound Aquatic Palace has chosen to ask Pill Sage Ning to refine the Celestial Origin Heavenly Pills, then we will continue to trust Pill Sage Ning's judgement. Please take the pills into the Grand Change Realm to refine them. Even if they all fail, my Profound Aquatic Palace will not say anything. If Pill Sage Ning can get a ranking in the Five Grand Realms' Alchemy Competition, I only hope you can leave a spot for my Profound Aquatic Palace."

Cen Ruxuan's words made Ning Cheng very comfortable, and he cupped his fists and replied, "Don't worry; if I can get a ranking in the Five Grand Realms' Alchemy Competition, I will leave one for Profound Aquatic Palace. If there is nothing else, I will take my leave first."

"Okay, Yueshu, please see Pill Sage Ning off." Cen Ruxuan also didn't want to keep Ning Cheng here. After all, Palace Master Luan almost broke out of character when facing Ning Cheng.

"Yes," Not waiting for Ning Cheng to reject, Yin Yueshu immediately opened the restrictions and walked out of the room.

"Junior Sister Yueshu, please go back inside. I still have to take care of other things." After following Yin Yueshu out, Ning Cheng asked her to return as politely as possible. He was going to deliver Gong Ximao's dao pills. These people treated him politely when speaking to him, but he also didn't want others to think he was amazing.

Yin Yueshu, however, didn't go back inside. Instead, she lowered her head and whispered, "I want to invite Big Brother Ning for a walk around Heaven Essence Sacred City. But I don't know if Big Brother Ning is free?"

As soon as Ning Cheng heard this, he knew what Yin Yueshu had in mind. Yin Yueshu wanted to befriend him, but rather than a normal friendship, she wanted to form a more intimate relationship with him. He had no affection towards Yin Yueshu and knew why she wanted to do this; she wanted to come close to him to take advantage of him. This woman looks up to herself too much to dare use such low-level tactics on him.

"I'm sorry, but I have many things to do today. I can't accompany you for a walk. Don't worry; if you come looking for me for a furnace of pills in the future, I will not refuse."

Ning Cheng put it up as succinctly as possible. The favour I owe you, helping you refine a batch of pills, is enough to return it. As for other ideas, people don't cross the river searching for well water, so don't waste time on such things.

"Hehe. Looks like Pill Sage Ning can't understand the ways of the world. When a beauty invites you to go shopping, she wants to hook up with you. Yet, you refused." A crisp voice rang out, followed by a blackrobed woman with a veil appearing just a short distance away.

Star Stepping Tower Master? Ning Cheng's pupils shrank, and his body immediately jolted alert. Now that he reached the Dao Raising Realm, he could tell that the Star Stepping Tower master's cultivation hadn't reached the Dao Fusion Realm, but it wasn't far off either. Evaluating the situation in a split second, Ning Cheng came up with two choices: one was to rush into Cen Ruxuan's room, and the second was to use the Dao Breaking Bead and rush out of the Star Stepping Tower.

However, Ning Cheng believed the Star Stepping Tower Master wouldn't dare act. Still, just in case, he prepared both options in advance.

"Hook up?" Ning Cheng frowned slightly. He understood the two words, and now he felt more certain that this Star Stepping Tower Master was from Earth.

If Sheng Huotian's poisoning was this woman's work, then this woman was insidious and cunning beyond compare.

The Star Stepping Tower Master stared at Ning Cheng with a smile in her eyes, "You don't know about 'hookups'? Then let me teach you. It's when a woman is in heat and wants sex from you."

How could Yin Yueshu stand such shamelessness? Her face immediately turned cold; however, she also understood that she couldn't do anything to the Star Stepping Tower Master. Therefore, she bowed to Ning Cheng before turning away. If anyone else dared say this, she would have immediately killed them.

Chapter 1050: Heading to Grand Change Realm

The Star Stepping Tower Master didn't even glance at Yin Yueshu, obviously not putting the other person in her eyes. Instead, she fixed her gaze on Ning Cheng and continued smiling, "Pill Sage Ning,

since you've come to my Star Stepping Tower, why not come to my room for some rest? I promise to do my best as the host."

Ning Cheng calmly cupped his fists and said, "Many thanks, Tower Master. Unfortunately, I have urgent matters to deal with today. When I'm free in the future, I will return to pay Tower Master a special visit."

"Oh." The Star Stepping Tower Master let out a mournful sigh. "I always feel that there is a special bond between Pill Sage Ning and me, so I've always thought of Pill Sage Ning as an old friend. Because of this, I went out of my way to offend Man Huishan last time. Now that Man Huishan is a Dao Fusion expert, I don't think my Star Stepping Tower will be able to continue. I feel so miserable; finding a peaceful place is already hard enough, yet I will have to leave after just being here for a few days."

Her voice grew increasingly poignant, making people unable to help but feel sympathetic towards her plight. It was as if she had selflessly helped Ning Cheng but ended up being dragged down by him instead. Unfortunately, Ning Cheng replied indifferently, "The Tower Master seems overly worried about such a trivial thing. As long as Tower Master takes out a few bottles of good pills, I'm sure a few Dao Fusion experts would willingly step up to help stop Man Huishan."

Ning Cheng had intentionally ridiculed this Star Stepping Tower Master. If you weren't looking something like those ten bottles of Empyrean Consciousness Transmutation Pills, would you have even thought of helping me? Besides, you didn't even lift a finger back then. In other words, even if I didn't give those ten bottles of Empyrean Consciousness Transmutation Pills to you, Star Stepping Tower Master, but instead to someone else, they would have also helped him.

Acting like she didn't understand Ning Cheng, she sincerely continued, "Pill Sage Ning, this is where I ask for your help. I want you to help me refine a few pills for emergency use."

This woman really had thick skin. Ning Cheng no longer bothered to speak with her. He made a gesture as if he had received a message and said, "Ah, Lord Sheng is still waiting for me to return quickly and help him heal. I can't talk to you anymore. Goodbye."

As he spoke, Ning Cheng's body flashed, and he landed at the entrance of the Star Stepping Tower in an instant.

"Boom!" However, a powerful blocking force stopped Ning Cheng from stepping out of the entrance.

Ning Cheng's expression turned serious. His domain instantly unfolded, and a spear suddenly appeared in his hand.

"Does the Star Stepping Tower Master want to forcibly keep me here? Have you considered the consequences?" Ning Cheng's tone suddenly turned murderous, and his killing intent started to leak out.

If this Star Stepping Tower Master truly dared to make a move, he would have no choice but to immediately call Cen Ruxuan for help.

Her eyes flashed a few times as if thinking about Ning Cheng's words. But after a few moments, she smiled, "How would it be possible for someone like me to stop someone like you? After all, Pill Sage Ning is the Dao Essence Pill Sage of our Heaven Essence Sacred City. It's just that I want to invite Pill Sage Ning to my place for a small chat. I'm sure we would end up becoming great friends."

Ning Cheng fixed his gaze on the Star Stepping Tower Master and replied in a calm voice, "You're wrong. We were never friends before, we aren't friends right now, and we will never be friends. To be friends with someone like you, I might end up with a knife in my back the next moment. After all, I still like to live for a few more years."

Ning Cheng didn't wait for the Star Stepping Tower Master to speak. With a turn of his body, the formation restriction that stopped him suddenly disintegrated. The next moment, Ning Cheng disappeared without a trace. Since the Star Stepping Tower Master had dared to tear away all outward cordiality to forcefully stop him, she can't blame him for speaking straightforwardly.

With all the things he experienced, after interacting with the Star Stepping Tower Master a few times, he understood that this woman was a powerful expert. But more importantly, she was the kind of woman who wouldn't hesitate to stab people in the back for her benefit. Involving himself with such a woman would be a suicidal endeavour.

Hearing Ning Cheng's words, the Star Stepping Tower Master's body instantly burst with killing intent, causing the entire tower to vibrate. However, she quickly held back her killing intent and didn't dare to make a move against Ning Cheng. Instead, she watched as Ning Cheng tore through the restriction and walked out calmly.

Once Ning Cheng finally disappeared from view, the killing intent in her eyes also disappeared. Replaced by pain and a hard-to-conceal sorrow.

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Seeing the Star Stepping Tower Master not taking any action against him, Ning Cheng felt slightly relieved. Therefore, after leaving the Star Stepping Tower, and only after confirming that the Star Stepping Tower Master didn't pursue him in secret, did he carefully put away a bead.

After giving Gong Ximao his pills, Ning Cheng finally returned to Jian Sanshan's residence. As for the destruction of Xin Xiu's Pill House and the cause of Sheng Huotian's poisoning, Ning Cheng decided not to investigate it for now. It's not that he didn't want to, but because his strength was still too low. Even if he found the person responsible for it, there wouldn't be anything that he could do.

Since Ning Cheng didn't go back into seclusion to refine more pills, the sects who previously couldn't meet Ning Cheng quickly rushed to Jian Sanshan's residence, hoping to meet Ning Cheng. It's just that even though they all offered to support Ning Cheng, Ning Cheng politely declined them individually.

So far, he has not promised anyone anything except granting a spot to the Profound Aquatic Palace. In other words, he would owe them a favour even if he couldn't get a spot. But if he did get the spot, he still had the option of putting it up for auction and gaining an even bigger harvest.

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As ten days passed, many powerful and influential people gathered outside the Pill Union, facing a silver-coloured void ship hovering just above the public square outside the Pill Union.

Everyone knew that today was the day when Union Master Sichen Qiutian of the Grand Essence Realm's Pill Union would take the participants to the Grand Change Realm for the Five Grand Realms' Alchemy Competition.

By this time, Ning Cheng had already sent Sheng Houtian away and had also arrived at the Pill Union's public square, where Union Master Sichen Qiutian was already waiting on the deck of the silver void ship. Ning Cheng also knew the person standing next to Sheng Houtian, Protector Ju, the late-stage Dao Fusion expert.

Behind Sichen Qiutian was the Dao Transformation Pill Sage Dou Jiangshi of the Immortal Corpse Gate, the Dao Transformation Pill Sage Jing Han of the Great Spirit Pill Sect, the Dao Transformation Pill Sage Li Xizhen from Heaven Essence Sacred City's City Master's Mansion, Flaming Feather Spirit Mountain's Dao Transformation Pill Sage Yan Kuaifu and Lost Moon Valley's Dao Raising Pill Sage Mei Xiuwan. These people had arrived long ago and had to wait because of him.

"Pill Sage Ning is quite hard to track down, forcing so many people to wait for you alone." Seeing Ning Cheng finally coming over, Jing Han spoke up indifferently.

Ning Cheng had stolen his thunder several times, which made him lose his reputation and caused great losses. It would be a strange matter if he felt happy about seeing Ning Cheng.

But more importantly, Ning Cheng had caused cracks in his Alchemic Dao, forming a deep hatred between the two. After all, while other people's Dao progressed, his, on the other hand, felt as if it was slowly regressing.

He originally thought that besides Sichen Qiutian in the Grand Essence Realm, he should be the number one Pill Sage and the premier genius in alchemy. But because of Ning Cheng's challenge, he understood that even after removing Sichen Qiutian, he wasn't the number one Pill Sage or the number two. All this shattered his confidence in his Alchemic Dao, all because of Ning Cheng. It became especially apparent when Ning Cheng refined the Six Yin Soul Pill, which drove him to even deeper despair.

Although Ning Cheng felt guilty about wasting time sending off Sheng Houtian, he didn't care about Jing Han's thoughts. Jing Han wasn't worthy of being his opponent; his real opponents would be the experts from the Grand Change Realm.

Seeing Ning Cheng arrive, Sichen Qiutian smiled and nodded, "Since everyone has arrived, let's depart."

As Sichen Qiutian's words fell, the silver void ship suddenly lurched forward and cut through the sky above the Heaven Essence Sacred City like a silver fox through a grass field, quickly disappearing into the void.

The void ship moved through the void with considerable speed and rushed out of the borders of the Grand Essence Realm in a short time, finally entering the vast void. Sichen Qiutian smiled while looking at the crowd, "There are not many people on this void ship, so everyone can find a room they like. It will take us a few years to reach the Void City's Teleportation Array from the Grand Essence Realm."

Mei Xiuwan was the only woman representing the Grand Essence Realm in the Five Grand Realms' Alchemy Competition. Her Alchemic Dao was also the lowest out of the group. After hearing Sichen Qiutian's words, she bowed and asked, "Union Master, may I ask where the Void City's teleportation array is? Is it on the outskirts of the Grand Change Realm?"

Sichen Qiutian smiled warmly, "The Five Realms Void City's teleportation formation is nothing more than a teleportation platform in the void. However, unlike ordinary teleportation formations, it is a

cross-realm teleportation array. This teleportation platform can teleport one directly to a sacred city in the Grand Change Realm. However, from the Five Realms Void City to the Grand Change Realm, there is still a long distance to go. Therefore, the void ships heading to the Grand Change Realm will first go to the Five Realms' Void City and drop us off. After some rest, someone will take us to the Grand Change Realm."

Mei Xiuwan asked the question that everyone wanted to ask. Now that no one had anything else to ask, they all immediately went inside to find a room they liked and settled inside.

As for Ning Cheng, he stayed around for a bit to observe the silver void ship, something he had been doing the moment he came aboard. From what he saw, he concluded that this void ship was a pure speed type, even faster than his Starry Sky Wheel. Of course, he couldn't fully utilise the Starry Sky Wheel's strength because of his still limited cultivation.

Fortunately, each room had more than sufficient spirit energy, and the void ship's internal design isolated each room. Therefore, Ning Cheng chose a random room and immediately set down his personal array formations.

A Holy Emperor-level cultivator could easily get through a few years through secluded cultivation. But Ning Cheng decided not to take that option or chose to discuss things with other pill sages. After all, Jing Han wouldn't care to speak with him; the same would be true with that broken soul who took over Dou Jiangshi's body. But even if Dou Jiangshi was himself, Ning Cheng didn't like the Immortal Corpse Gate to bother to initiate a conversation.

As for Lie Xizhen, he had already lost to him; it would be strange if he still wanted to speak with him after that loss. As for Yan Kuaifu and Mei Xiuwan, he had no interactions with the two at all. Besides, he still had other uses for the few years he needed to stay on this void ship; to refine the Void Cold Iron, whenever not cultivating.

He had bought a large chunk of this Void Cold Light Iron from the hands of Great Bear Seven Peak's Mo Wenshang. Therefore, he had to use this time to refine a Void Cold Light Spear.

All along, Ning Cheng didn't have a reliable artefact. Although he had the Nirvana Spear, it was currently nothing more than a heavy stick, as his spiritual consciousness couldn't control it. It meant that Ning Cheng couldn't exert even a fraction of its power. As for the Good Fortune Divine Spear, let alone that he couldn't refine it right now; even if he could, he can't refine it due to the lack of materials.

Therefore, he immediately snapped up that lump of Void Cold Light Iron to refine it into a spear later. It's just that he had no time to attempt refining it until today.

However, Ning Cheng didn't immediately bring out the lump of Void Cold Light Iron. Instead, he removed many artefact-crafting materials and started refining random artefacts.

After all, his artefact-crafting level was way below his cultivation level. If he wanted to turn that lump of Void Cold Light Iron into a top-grade spear, he must improve his artefact-crafting level first.

Moreover, he wasn't the only person who knew about the value of that lump of metal. Even that broken soul possessing Dou Jiangshi's body also knew about it. After all, it was a top-grade material that contained the dao rhythm of the void. Compared to dao fruits, it was many more times precious. Mo

Wenshang also knew about it but decided to sell that lump of Void Cold Light Iron, not because the material wasn't good but because there was no one capable enough to melt it.

Ning Cheng believed that he could melt this lump of metal. Partly because of his Returning-to-one Dao and his Celestial River Flame, but primarily because of his Law Break Divine Ability.