

Chapter 121: Cultivating Magic Pills like Cooking Dishes

Mu Zixi recalled what Elder Sang had secretly told her that morning after the master-disciple ceremony: “By the way, you have a secret senior brother.”

Secret?

Her master actually had a disciple? She had a senior brother?

“Since my master is so powerful, this senior brother must also be very powerful!” she thought.

“Is the secret senior brother the kind of man who hides in the shadows, who’s secretive, calm, and cool and says few words but will come up and touch my head after I’ve done something wrong and tell me with a magnetic voice, ‘Don’t worry, I’m here for you?’

“Wow, this is great!”

She’d had rather high expectations for this secret senior brother, but after seeing Xu Xiaoshou, her dreams were shattered.

“Xu Xiaoshou, how could it be you?!”

To her, this guy only fit the “strange man” description in her fantasy, and the rest of the other adjectives could be removed.

“Don’t call him Xu Xiaoshou, called him Senior Brother!” Elder Sang suddenly appeared in front of her and struck his knuckles down. The little girl could do nothing but cradle her head in her arms.

“Hi, Senior Brother.”

“Cursed, passive point, 1.”

Xu Xiaoshou was amused. “What?” he asked while cupping a hand behind his ear.

Mu Zixi glared at him and exclaimed, her face white with fury, “Xu Xiaoshou, watch yourself!”

Bang!

Elder Sang struck his knuckles down again, and Mu Zixi said with tears in her eyes, “Hi, Senior Brother!”

“Very good.”

Xu Xiaoshou burst into laughter.

He was still surprised that his junior sister was Mu Zixi.

He’d first met this girl on the competition platform, where this violent girl had almost blown him up. She was pretty good with fighting control. If it wasn’t for that bad habit of hers, she would have expelled him from the platform.

However, it didn’t look like she had an Innate Level physique, so why did Elder Sang take her as a disciple?

Xu Xiaoshou was very curious.

Yet, Elder Sang didn't care so much. He waved his hand and said, "All sit down."

Having said that, Elder Sang took out his large tripod bathtub. Seeing this, Mu Zixi was shocked.

Xu Xiaoshou was amused and came closer to the bathtub and asked, "What does it look like?"

Elder Sang paused for a second but didn't turn his head around, as he was obviously focused on the task at hand for the time being, and he still held a grudge against Xu Xiaoshou for the comment he'd made last time about his Magic Pill Tripod looking like a bathtub!

"This thing," Mu Zixi paused, looking hesitant. "It looks like a Magic Pill Tripod."

Elder Sang was pleased and glared at Xu Xiaoshou. But before he could say anything, the little girl went on to say, a cautious look in her eyes, "But aren't we supposed to cultivate magic pills? What's the point of taking this bathtub out?"

"Poo!" Xu Xiaoshou immediately burst out laughing. "Look, I told you this thing looked like a bathtub, but you didn't believe me, old man.

"If it didn't have three feet..." He trailed off mid-sentence, as the old man was glaring at him with a murderous look in his eyes.

Xu Xiaoshou wryly rubbed the back of his head and turned toward Mu Zixi. "Magic Pill Tripod!" he lectured her. "This is the Magic Pill Tripod! Don't you have any sense?"

Mu Zixi rolled her eyes. "You think I'm stupid?"

Elder Sang's eyelids twitched, and he said crossly, "This is indeed a Magic Pill Tripod!"

"Uh."

The young girl's pretty face seemed full of questions, and she glared back at Xu Xiaoshou.

Cursed, Passive Points +2.

"Okay, enough of this nonsense!" Elder Sang rolled up the sleeves of his robe. "I'll make a load of magic pills first so you can see what you can learn."

The large bathtub was placed underneath a large red bead. No sooner had Elder Sang's hands reached out then the milky white exterior immediately started to warm up, giving off a reddish glow.

"It's turning red?" Mu Zixi said while curiously reaching out her hand.

Xu Xiaoshou glanced at Elder Sang, who was cultivating the magic pills, and found that the old man obviously had no intentions of explaining this. As the senior brother, he had no choice but to take on this responsibility.

He pointed to a void below the tripod. "See that?"

"What?" Mu Zixi inclined her head and rubbed her eyes, but failed to see anything.

"Air?"

Xu Xiaoshou: "..."

"It's the Infernal Heavens. The old man should have talked to you about it!"

But he suddenly realized something. He had the passive technique Sense, but this little girl did not!

"Try to see it with your spiritual thoughts."

After one's cultivation level broke through to the Origin Court level of the three innate levels, an origin court would be opened up in the brain, giving birth to spiritual thoughts.

Its role was similar to Sense, but one had to actively use it. Any passive effect was probably nothing but a danger warning.

Mu Zixi swept over the area with her spiritual thoughts and saw the invisible Infernal Heavens under the tripod. She was stunned!

"Puff, puff!"

The sudden rise in temperature startled Mu Zixi, and she lowered her head only to see an invisible flame on Xu Xiaoshou's hand as he placed his palm under her face.

He knew how to do it?

She was about to compliment him to ease the tension between the two of them, but then she heard a mocking voice in her ear say:

"Haha, you can't!"

Xu Xiaoshou cheerfully withdrew his hand and said, "Don't worry. Your senior brother will teach you how later!"

Mu Zixi was so angry that she ground her teeth. "D*mn you, Xu Xiaoshou," she swore inwardly.

Cursed, Passive Points +1.

Xu Xiaoshou was pleased. In the past, he'd been scared while facing Elder Sang alone and didn't dare to joke around, resulting in no increase in his Passive Points.

Now that he had a junior sister, it would be much more fun around here.

Any Passive Point was a point, much like meat was meat, even if it was a mosquito. Though one point wasn't a big deal, they would add up over time!

Elder Sang was very focused while he cultivated the magic pills. He didn't speak, even though he was merely raising the temperature of the tripod.

Xu Xiaoshou had seen him cultivate the magic pills once before and naturally knew this.

Based on the knowledge in his head, he explained with a sense of responsibility as he pointed to the big bathtub, "Look, this process is called heating up.

"The process of cultivating magic pills can't be hurried. It's similar to the principle of cooking. Even if we're not going to add oil, we have to warm the pot up first."

The corners of Elder Sang's mouth twitched. He thought this analogy was rather fit, but it felt a little cheap since he was cultivating none other than magic pills!

Mu Zixi looked suspicious, but seeing that Elder Sang unexpectedly didn't refute this, her expression became one of understanding.

"Suspected, passive point, 1."

"Respected, passive point, 1."

"Cursed, passive point, 1."

"Hmm? A curse?" he thought. "That must've come from the old man!"

Xu Xiaoshou nodded satisfactorily. He noticed that Elder Sang had started making other movements. He was throwing a handful of herbs into the tripod after pulling them out from his ring over and over again.

The little girl was surprised by the operation. How could her master cultivate so much with all those herbs?

Xu Xiaoshou, of course, knew what she was thinking. He'd been amazed too when he'd witnessed it the first time.

"No need to doubt; this is the cultivation of magic pills.

"Of course, a novice couldn't do it this way, but the old man is very powerful, and he can multi-task.

"This isn't important!"

Xu Xiaoshou searched his mind for relevant knowledge and named the ingredients as Elder Sang threw them into the bathtub. "Look, that's the silver frost flower. It's cold and bitter but very sweet to eat; and that's the green tree fruit, which is very fragrant and delicious.

"And that's the strange apple seed. In ancient times it was used to feed...

"Ahem!"

"D*mn," he thought. "I almost revealed the secret."

"Anyway," he went on. "Adding up all of these ingredients, it's not difficult to guess what pill this is going to be." There was a peculiar expression on Xu Xiaoshou's face. What pill was it going to be?

"The Origin Court Pill?" He looked at Elder Sang and saw the old man nod in the affirmative.

Xu Xiaoshou was so baffled by his own actions that he didn't notice the line from Mu Zixi change from "Suspected" to "Admired" in the information bar.

"This Mastery of Cooking is rather wonderful," he thought. "I can postulate what magic pill will be cultivated based on the combination of the ingredients and their properties.

"However, my Mastery of Cooking is only at Acquired Level 6, so how could I postulate the magic pill of seventh-grade? Seventh grade is an Innate Magic Pill!

"Perhaps..."

“Perhaps the innate magic pills aren’t all made up of innate spiritual medicines but a mixture of innate and acquired herbs, which are then cultivated with special techniques and finally condensed into pills?” Xu Xiaoshou ventured.

Elder Sang couldn’t help but peek at him and was surprised at how much he’d been able to figure out.

This was a far cry from the first time they met when he’d remarked, “You’re making magic pills,” and “This is the Magic Pill Tripod!”

Xu Xiaoshou excitedly clenched his fists from being approved. He turned to his junior sister and said, “I told you so!

“Cultivating magic pills is like cooking dishes. One has no need for good ingredients as long as one has good technique and the right supplements. If you have those two things, you can achieve your goal.”

He pointed at the large bathtub. “Look at this. A messy stew can also produce a delicious hotpot!”

Elder Sang’s hands shook once, and the tripod almost exploded.

“Xu Xiaoshou, shut up!”

Requested, Passive Points +1.

Chapter 122: Chapter 122 Stewing the Ham?

It was impossible for Xu Xiaoshou to shut up.

He lowered his voice as he watched Elder Sang cultivate the magic pills and explained the process to Mu Zixi.

As the “Mastery of Cooking” had been developed, wood, rice, oil, and salt appeared in his mind whenever he saw the magic pill tripod and the flame.

To explain the cultivation of the magic pills with the principle of cooking seemed to be justified.

Xu Xiaoshou was shocked to discover that many things could be swapped out for food as long as a flame was involved. It seemed that many things could be included in the “Mastery of Cooking.”

Xu Xiaozhu had somewhat of an epiphany when he remembered the illusionary realm he’d developed the skill in, and wondered if he could use heaven and earth as a furnace to cultivate everything with this passive skill after it was fully developed.

“Look, cultivating the herb is exactly like cooking vegetable dishes,” he thought to himself.

“Treating other creatures the same way would be the same as cooking meat dishes.

“Things are, after all, just animals and plants if we think of heaven and earth from the perspective of ‘Mastery of Cooking.’

“A fire, a pot, plus meat and vegetables means everything can be eaten.

“Hiss!”

Xu Xiaoshou was startled. He'd previously thought that Master of Cooking was only useful for controlling flames, but, after thinking it over, he wondered if such a technique was actually just as useful as Master of Swordsmanship.

"I've gone down one line of thought, which has limited my thinking," he thought. "What if I could use it as a combat skill? It would probably have some kind of special effects.

"Moreover, the technique might be more effective when unexpected!

"However...

"Using Mastery of Cooking for combat sounds like a weird idea."

Xu Xiaoshou felt troubled. In fact, he thought his current combat technique was a bit off. If he added this technique...

"Well, being off won't matter as long as the technique is effective in combat!" he thought. "I have to go back and carefully think it over!"

By this point, Elder Sang had almost finished the process of extracting the medicinal liquid and Xu Xiaoshou had several hundreds of Passive Points in his mind.

Most of the points were from "suspected," probably because of those "slightly spicy" and "very bitter" remarks.

A few "admired" points were most likely from the fact that his broad knowledge had impressed the two of them.

And he couldn't be selective and ignore the curses. Xu Xiaoshou told himself that his dictionary didn't have these pejorative words in it.

Mu Zixi didn't believe what Xu Xiaoshou said at first. She thought that this guy's descriptions were too odd. It sounded like he'd tasted all of them himself from him describing them as "sweet, sour, bitter and spicy."

Yet, judging by the fact that Elder Sang didn't refute him, she wasn't so sure now.

In the end, the series of nonstop explanations offered by him seemed to have brainwashed her, as she felt what Xu Xiaoshou said made sense.

She wondered if he had been a disciple of Elder Sang for a long time and learned a lot of knowledge from him.

Wiping the saliva from the corners of her mouth, Mu Zixi pointed at the nearly congealed medicinal liquid in the large bathtub and asked, "What is this?"

"The collected essence!"

Xu Xiaoshou's confidence in his own words made Elder Sang feel dizzy, and he almost lost his temper. However, after so many explanations and descriptions from Xu Xiaoshou, even the old man felt a little numb, and, surprisingly enough, he didn't refute what he said.

Xu Xiaoshou drew a circle with his hand in the air. "Have you eaten the ham before? After putting the wine in the pot, stew it over a small fire until it looks dark red. The most important part is the juice. If you don't collect it, the stewed ham will be soulless."

After a pause, he continued, "Cultivating the magic pills is the same."

Mu Zixi kept on nodding her head, her twin ponytails swinging side to side, and she swallowed a few mouthfuls of saliva.

A large black ball cracked in the bathtub, and the magic pill finally took shape and rolled down from it.

Elder Sang packed up the magic pill, then tossed a jade scroll to Xu Xiaoshou, saying with a grim expression, "This is the method for condensing the magic pills. You go elsewhere to study it. I'll teach your junior sister to collect the liquid first."

Xu Xiaoshou was startled. Was his master biased?

He had to study on his own while he taught his junior sister?

"I'm not going anywhere. I'll stay here for three days and nights to study hard!"

Elder Sang felt sick to his stomach. "You stayed here for three days and nights before, and I was afraid you'd blow up the Spiritual Library Division," he thought. Now you want to stay here for three days and nights again? You're going to make me starve to death!"

"No, you can't stay here for one more minute," he said. "Get the h*ll out of here!"

Xu Xiaoshou scowled. "The problem is that I have many enemies outside. I'll stay here for three days as long as I think the spirit site isn't safe!"

"If you can't solve these trivial issues, how can you accomplish anything great in the future?"

Elder Sang put up three of his fingers. "I'll give you three seconds!"

Xu Xiaoshou looked at Mu Zixi and saw the girl's gloating smile.

"Heh," he thought. "I told this junior sister all those things for nothing!"

Xu Xiaoshou walked out without looking back.

Elder Sang looked at Mu Zixi. After giving her a meeting gift, he proficiently pulled out a ring.

"Hehe, you are quite familiar with the process. Your senior brother also explained quite a bit to you. Although he didn't get everything right, he did correctly describe the basic medicinal properties."

He remembered that he hadn't taught Xu Xiaoshou that much, but the lad had nonetheless learned a lot. It was obvious he must've studied hard on his own.

"As expected, my teaching method is very effective!" he thought.

"You don't have an Innate Level Physique, so this old man will teach you the techniques of a regular magic pill cultivator rather than the method of cultivating pills from the Infernal Lineage. The detailed method is described in the jade scroll contained inside the ring."

“You’ll practice the step of refining the medicinal liquid yourself. Your senior brother has done the same.”

“This step can only be done with practice. Work on it!”

Having said that, he disappeared, leaving the little girl alone.

“What’s going on?” she thought.

“It was dandy earlier, but now I’m alone?”

“There’s something wrong with that master and disciple!”

At the Spiritual Affairs Division.

The old man wearing a conical hat landed in front of the office of the first affair and took away the array plate from Qiao Qianzhi’s hand. Elder Qiao’s heart skipped a beat.

“What for?” he asked.

“Giggle, giggle.”

Elder Sang covered his stomach with his hands while licking his lips. “Go! Let’s go stew a ham!”

Xu Xiaoshou returned to his new spirit site in the inner courtyard.

Since Elder Sang wouldn’t allow him to stay in the Spiritual Library Division, he’d had no choice but to come here. There was nothing else he could do but follow the old saying: the soldiers will stop the incoming generals and the dirt will stop the flowing water.

Judging by Zhang Xinxiong’s two recent actions, Xu Xiaoshou thought that the possibility of Zhang striking personally very low, as many pairs of eyes would be watching when someone of his level made a move.

Yet, if the veteran thirty-three didn’t come in person, the others of lower levels, no matter how many of them came, would be inconsequential.

Moreover...

Xu Xiaoshou thought of his neighbors. Though there were only two of them, they should be counted as among the strongest fighters in the inner courtyard!

It be on him if he was discovered when he went out wandering the streets. However, if someone dared to make trouble for him here, they would face serious consequences.

Well, provided that the two neighbors were at home.

“It shouldn’t be a problem,” Xu Xiaoshou thought inwardly.

“What Elder Sang said makes sense,” he thought. “If I keep on hiding to avoid troubles, I won’t achieve anything great in the future, as I’ll encounter even more dangerous and more trying situations in comparison.”

Xu Xiaoshou took out the magic pill tripod, which still had bloodstains on it from the person he'd smashed.

"Well, I wonder if it will affect the taste of the pills."

Having cleaned it meticulously, he walked out of the main house after some pondering to arrive at a large open space in the courtyard.

There was a little bit of sunshine.

Xu Xiaoshou silently carried the magic pill tripod to the guest room.

A bed, a table, and a bench, and a large open space were found in the room. This place was completely different from the small house in the outer courtyard.

Feeling pleased, he put everything in a corner and set down the magic pill tripod. Then, he nodded in satisfaction.

"Very good. From now on I'll cultivate the magic pills in the guest room!"

Chapter 123: Boiling Soup and Cultivating Magic Pills!

It had to be said that the passive techniques of the proficient class were really like a wonder, and knowledge that was forcibly instilled could save a lot of practice time.

It was the same with the "Mastery of Cooking" fire control, the proficiency of which should've been achieved by practice and sweat, but he already had it as if he'd been at it for many years.

Xiaoshou put a compressed fire under the tripod. The invisible flame started to burn, making the herbs in the tripod give out a sizzling sound and turn into ash.

However, a drop of condensed medicinal liquid was successfully left behind!

He was overjoyed. He'd succeeded after only the first trial.

"According to Elder Sang's experience, just extracting a drop of medicinal liquid after refining the several small mountains of herbs inside the ring would be a success."

"How many resources have I... saved?!" he thought.

Xu Xiaoshou was excited.

He tried several more times with various fire temperatures and didn't fail even once!

"A perfect result!"

Xu Xiaoshou wrapped the medicinal liquid with the spiritual source and dragged it into the tripod. Then, he took out the "Method of Magic Pill Condensation" that Elder Sang had given him.

In it, the crude "Infernal Method of Magic Pill Condensation" was recorded. It instructed one to condense the medicinal liquid and then bake it into a pill, like what Xu Xiaoshou had seen Elder Sang do twice before.

No seal, spiritual array, or other accessory techniques of the regular magic pill cultivators were needed, and there was no special skill involved. All one had to do was just one word: baking!

“This is really impressive. This flame...”

In addition to the “Infernal Method of Magic Pill Condensation,” there were two other magic pill cultivation recipes inside the scroll for cultivating the Red Gold Pill and the Spiritual Magic Pill, both of which Xu Xiaoshou had taken before.

One of them was the tenth grade, and the other the ninth grade.

Xu Xiaoshou skimmed the instructions on how to cultivate the tenth-grade Red Gold Pills and found that he had the spiritual medicine in his ring that he could use to practice his magic pill cultivation skills.

Refining medicinal liquid was merely a matter of time, so he tried to carry out two tasks at the same time and found it worked.

But when he tried to refine three spiritual medicines at the same time, he found it was a bit overwhelming.

Having barely managed to do three at a time, he decided that there was no need to try to refine four spiritual medicines at a time. Thus, he went on with three medicines at a time.

By now, he’d realized how strong Elder Sang was. He could blend hundreds of pills together and refine them all and separate them into different categories without mistake.

“Well, there’s no rush. I’ll take my time. I’ve only just begun...”

He made up his mind. As time went by, all sixty-four types of acquired spiritual medicines needed for the Red Gold Pill were refined.

In total, the medicinal liquid he’d refined collected together was about the size of a fist, which was no match for the medicinal liquid the size of a human head Elder Sang had refined the other day.

Moreover, Elder Sang had refined several magic pills at the same time.

The key to the “Method of Magic Pill Condensation” was to make it in one trial. The magic pills were manufactured with instantly raised temperatures, scorching the surface and condensing the inside!

But it wasn’t quite...

“Hiss...”

Xu Xiaoshou looked at the empty tripod and found that the medicinal liquid he’d refined with a great deal of effort had all evaporated...

“D*mn it. It’s not working. I thought it would be easy to succeed!”

Yet, he didn’t feel dejected. He figured it was a process where practice makes perfect, and he felt that he’d already made some sort of shortcut.

“Carry on!”

...

After the sun set and more than ten attempts, Xu Xiaoshou was able to condense a magic pill the size of a bean.

"I can be considered a half tenth-grade magic pill cultivator now!"

He'd made unexpectedly swift progress, but Xu Xiaoshou was still unsatisfied to some degree.

"Though this thing can be consumed and is somewhat useful, the condensation process wastes too much medicinal liquid," he mused, unable to help falling into deep thought.

"Try a different approach?"

"Instead of using the 'Method of Magic Pill Condensation,' I should use... the method 'Mastery of Cooking?'"

Xu Xiaoshou's expression turned peculiar, but not because he thought this approach wouldn't work; on the contrary, his brain felt like it was being poked by a needle as this great lot of ideas suddenly poured out.

Yet, he felt it was a bit odd.

He had a mild toothache at the moment. However, he would regret it if he didn't give the idea a try. Maybe something amazing might happen.

"Just give it a try then," he decided.

The steps to refine the medicinal liquid remained the same. After the process was completed after a great deal of effort, Xu Xiaoshou didn't use the "Method of Magic Pill Condensation." Instead, he chose to use the most reliable approach, which was, according to his thoughts, to maintain the flame at "simmering."

The method of boiling soup used to cultivate magic pills!

"But I don't know if my idea will work..." he thought to himself.

Xu Xiaoshou was somewhat excited. If this approach succeeded, he would make history and could set a new trend of cultivating magic pills in the future.

"Goo, Goo, Goo!"

The medicinal liquid rolled up and down, the thick spiritual mist steamed, and the gas circled around the surface of the tripod.

Though it looked empty above the tripod, it was covered by an array to ensure that the medicinal properties wouldn't be lost, which was why Xu Xiaoshou had dared to adopt the "boiling soup" approach.

The spiritual mist flowed back and then was constantly collected back to the original medicinal liquid. As time passed, the medicinal liquid grew less and less.

"Collect the juice..."

Xu Xiaoshou felt hungry when he saw the gold and red sticky medicinal liquid. Looking out the window, he found that night had arrived, but this pot of soup...

Ahem, this pot of medicinal liquid had been boiling for several hours.

When all the medicinal properties were recovered, the tripod showed a drop of red-golden liquid... No, this could no longer be considered a liquid. It was something in-between a solid and a liquid. Very Q-bomb.

The exciting instant condensation hadn't happened. What had happened was the natural process of "boiling soup."

Xu Xiaoshou pulled out this drop of "red gold liquid" and held it in his palm, thinking that its medicinal properties were much stronger than those of ordinary Red Gold Pills!

Feeling excited, he took out Hiding Pain and stabbed his sword into his palm.

The blood oozed out. Eternal Vitality was acting up. Yet, Xu Xiaoshou waited until after he'd drunk all of the "red gold liquid" before pulling out the black sword.

One breath later.

The lad collapsed to the ground with his elbows by his ribs, his knees touching each other, and his shoulders pushed high while he tilted his head to one side.

"Giggle, giggle..."

The medicinal properties of the red gold liquid turned out to be many times more terrifying than those of the Red Gold pills.

He'd thought his immunity to the medicine was strong, but he couldn't stand this wave of pleasure attacks.

Xu Xiaoshou slowly recovered after several breaths, and he found that the wound on his palm had disappeared and that there was still a large amount of medicinal residual left in his body.

He stabbed his palm with the sword again. The medicine swarmed to the wound, and the wound was repaired instantly without a scar.

"So amazing. A drop of red gold liquid is probably as good as ten Red Gold Pills!"

He had eaten Red Gold Pills, so he well knew the value of red gold liquid more than others.

He seemed to have succeeded after having tried the new approach, and, moreover, he seemed to have exceeded the upper limit of Red Gold Pills!

"This is only the Red Gold Pill. If I can use the 'boiling soup' method to cultivate the spiritual pills and the Origin Court Pill..."

Xu Xiaoshou's mouth opened wide, and his eyes flashed with greed.

"I'm rich. I'm rich!"

He suddenly realized that the “boiling soup” method didn’t have the last step of condensing the pills and that the efficacy after the formation of drops was dependent on the amount of the spiritual medicine boiled.

“Thinking about it, it seems that I can cause a qualitative change through a quantitative change.

“For example, if I put in more of the herbs and merely condense a drop of liquid, then the efficacy of this drop must be better than the one I swallowed earlier!

“It’s quite possible!

“However, the cultivation of magic pills has developed for so long, as such, someone must have thought of the ‘boiling soup’ method. Or maybe nobody carried it through?”

Xu Xiaoshou pondered this, doubting that he was the only one who had thought of this method. There must be geniuses out there who’ve thought similar ideas.

“Could it be that it’s not easy to preserve?”

Many thoughts flashed through his mind. In the end, he decided to wait for the completion of the method of “Infernal Pill Condensation” and then ask Elder Sang all of these questions.

“If I try to figure all of this out on my own, I might make mistakes and go astray, which would be a worse result.

“The method of ‘Infernal Pill Condensation’ is the only one left...”

This was something he must learn. He figured that he had no choice but to learn it no matter what.

“Though I should continue the study of the method of “boiling soup”, I can’t lose sight of the essence of the magic pill cultivation technique. After all, the outside world only recognizes the magic pills so far.

“If I took a drop of liquid to the outside world, I don’t think anyone would want it!”

A look of determination appeared on Xu Xiaoshou’s face.

“I’ll learn it in three days!”

Chapter 124: The Tianxuan Gate, Here I Come!

Three days passed like this.

The Tiansang Spirit Palace was crowded with people again. Though the excitement of the “Windcloud Competition” had faded away, the Spirit Palace had started recruiting new disciples from the major cities of Tianshan Prefecture in the past few days.

The introduction of fresh blood made the Outer Yard look more vibrant again.

The only exception was a certain place where it was still rather stale.

This was a private courtyard with potholes all over it. Zhou Tiansen curled up on the wooden bed in the guest room, large black circles around his eyes.

He couldn't understand why Xu Xiaoshou hadn't returned in three days and three nights. This would've been easy to ignore if Xu Xiaoshou had come back for at least one night.

"Where did he go to fool around!"

Looking at the sky, Zhou Tiansen got up from bed. He couldn't sleep well once he had something on his mind, and he wouldn't rest until he finished the task.

But, the Tianxuan Gate was going to open.

"Forget it. Let Xu Xiaoshou take care of himself!" Zhou Tiansen feebly got out of the room by holding onto the door.

The Spiritual Library Division.

Mu Zixi had dust all over her head and face. She hadn't bathed for three days. This would've been unbearable under any other circumstances, but...

"Master said I have to stay here for three days and try my hardest to refine the medicinal liquid.

"But..."

She looked at the vat full of medicinal liquid and pouted her small mouth.

It was obvious that the task wouldn't take three days to complete!

Why couldn't her master have opened the door and let her go out?

"Ah, I need to take a bath."

She propped her chin on her hands while leaning against the windowsill. Suddenly, she seemed to see a figure wearing a conical hat, and she felt extremely excited.

Elder Sang landed on the third floor and looked at the large filled-up bathtub in shock. "You did this?"

Mu Zixi nodded, and, pointing to the medicine bottles on the ground, she said unhappily, "They have also been filled. Master, you should've come over earlier to let me out!"

Elder Sang was amazed at what she'd achieved. This disciple of his had an extraordinary natural talent!

He rubbed the little girl's head and comforted her, saying, "Cultivating magic pills is like creating a work of art. You have to be patient if you want to succeed. But this time you didn't do a bad job. Go now!"

"Not a bad job," muttered Mu Zixi. Yet, she wasn't in a hurry to leave. "Just 'didn't do a bad job?' Is Xu Xiaoshou any better than me?" she asked.

She could tell from the experiences recorded in the jade scroll from Elder Sang that her speed was absolutely unparalleled, so how could it just be "not a bad job"?

Ever since Xu Xiaoshou threw her off the competition platform, she'd dreamed of beating him.

She'd sworn that if she had the chance to do it, she would never be bewildered by his fragrant scent again!

Hearing this, Elder Sang's smile froze. "I was just trying to be nice," he thought. "But this is only the first step to completing the cultivation of magic pills, so how could I praise her more than that?"

"Moreover, compared to Xu Xiaozhou..."

"Now that you mention it," he said, "This old man just remembered that he drove him away three days ago and didn't have time to check on his progress yet!"

"But..." Elder Sang looked at the large filled-up three-legged bathtub and nodded confidently. "You seem to be doing much better than him!"

The little girl's twin ponytails seemed to perk up with delight, and her mood seemed to brighten.

"Well, this is only in the way of cultivating magic pills," Elder Sang added.

Mu Zixi looked up. "Is he better than me in any other way?" she asked curiously.

Elder Sang shook his head and didn't reply, his expression a bit gloomy.

"As far as the ability to demolish a house is concerned, your senior brother is a few hundred times better than you!" he thought. "Of course, this isn't a good thing. But, at the same time, it's also one of the reasons why you're here."

"Go on! The Tianxuan Gate is about to open, so do your best!" Elder Sang threw a jade scroll at her.

"What is it?"

"The specific location of each secretive realm inside. Don't show it to anybody else. Use it with your senior brother only!"

The little girl's big eyes lit up. "Thank you, Master!"

Elder Sang looked out the window and saw the young girl bound away. He couldn't help the corners of his mouth from curling upward, and his mood became calmer.

Looking toward the sky, a rare look of bafflement appeared in his eyes, and the old man pressed his conical hat down on his head.

"Time is running out!"

"Xu Xiaoshou, how should this old man use you?"

At the Inner courtyard and the entrance to Lan Xinzi's spirit site.

Yuan Tou, dressed in black and holding the Mysterious Overlord Spear, seemed to be waiting for something.

With a creaking noise, the door was pushed open, and Lan Xinzi walked inside, carrying a small blood-colored vial in her hands.

"Are you sure you want this thing? There's no turning back after you take it!"

Yuan Tou took the vial from her, his eyes full of disdain.

“Xu Xiaoshou is very strong, but everyone’s fooled by his sheepish appearance. Even if I am currently in my best state, I don’t think I’ll be able to beat him without the help of this thing.”

Lan Xinzi laughed lightly. She didn’t think so.

“Good luck.”

Yuan Tou nodded and quickly disappeared.

Xu Xiaoshou’s new spirit site.

“Boom!”

A gust of air rushed to the sky, and the guest room trembled violently. The wooden window panel that opened to the outside finally gave in and fell to the ground after having managed to hold up for three days.

“I’ve succeeded!”

Xu Xiaoshou was immensely excited. Seeing one and a half magic pills lying in the small bathtub, he could hardly suppress his joy and laughed out loud.

“Hahaha, I can’t believe I’ve actually done it!”

He picked up the pills and took one. With a slight shudder, he withstood the pill’s strong effects, and the process was so familiar it was almost heartbreaking.

A burst of spiritual energy surged in his energy reserve. The medicinal power of the Spiritual Pill would be absorbed in just one week and become part of his body.

The cultivation of the ninth level had continued absorbing the spiritual liquid the past three days and seemed like it was so full that it would soon break through.

“It really works.”

Xu Xiaoshou couldn’t mull over his cultivation at the moment. He looked at the half spiritual pill left in his hand and almost burst into tears.

For three days, in order to improve the method of “Infernal Magic Pill Condensation” and combine it with his own “boiling soup” method, he’d even used his spiritual source!

In the final step of condensation, he’d added an extra step of physical compression and finally turned the “spiritual liquid” into a solid form!

Xu Xiaoshou laughed loudly and kept stroking the small and seemingly malnourished Spiritual Pill in his hand.

“Though it looks small, this thing means that I’m a ninth-grade pill cultivator already!” he thought.

“That’s right. Not a tenth-grade, but a ninth-grade pill cultivator!”

As for the study of the tenth-grade Red Gold Pill, he’d nailed it on the first day!

“The ‘Mastery of Cooking’ is an amazing skill!”

Xu Xiaoshou was overcome with emotion. The “Red Gold Liquid” and “Spiritual Liquid” had actually been developed long ago, and their medicinal properties were several times stronger than the solid form pills.

If not for the need to satisfy the market and solidify the magic pills...

“Forget it. Though the pills condensed into a solid form will lose some medicinal power, the products are, after all, recognized by the public and can be sold.

“Those droplets with stronger medicinal properties will be kept for my own consumption!”

Xu Xiaoshou mused that he’d be able to promote the medicinal soup when he became famous.

“Well, let everyone in the world drink the wonderful medicinal soup, which is my dream!”

He tilted his head up and found the hot sunlight shining on his face through the “skylight,” so he hastened to move away.

Well, the guest room didn’t originally have a skylight. It’d been created after a great deal of magic pill cultivation.

“Based on the time I’ve spent here, the Tianxuan Gate will probably be opening soon.”

Practitioners could easily lose track of time while cultivating. Xu Xiaoshou had spent three days doing the study. Surprisingly, he didn’t encounter any assassination attempts during this period, which made him feel astonished.

“Haha. It’s impossible for them to come to the Tianxuan Gate to kill me!”

Xu Xiaoshou soon dismissed the idea as a ridiculous one.

After he washed his face and cleaned his teeth, Xu Xiaoshou put on several layers of clothes, even though a hot sun was hanging in the sky.

“Tianxuan Gate, here I come!”

“I heard that the concentration of spiritual energy there is a hundred times more than that in the Outer Yard, right? This little master is ready. I won’t be defeated by you!”

He thought about it and wrapped himself in three more layers of coats.

“Come and fight me!”

Chapter 125: Grand Master Qiao

Inner Yard, the entrance to the assembly hall.

Ye Xiaotian floated in the air, trying to make himself a head taller than the people in front of him so that he could speak with more authority.

“The Tianxuan Gate will open in the time it takes to burn one incense stick. It will open for three days. When the time is up, everybody has to get out immediately. Otherwise, nobody will be able to save you if you get lost inside.

“The interdimensional space is full of unknowns and temptations, and it’s unstable, after all. Exploring it isn’t something you should try to do, and you won’t receive any rewards for doing so.

“Cultivate well and don’t cause any trouble. Got it?” He looked at Xu Xiaoshou.

Xu Xiaoshou immediately felt dejected, thinking that he wasn’t very familiar with the dean and didn’t deserve such attention...

He wondered if the dean had been possessed by the spirit of Xiao Qixiu.

Mu Zixi came up beside him. She lifted her head to identify the big fat man and found that it really was her senior brother.

“You don’t feel hot?” She pulled on Xu Xiaoshou’s clothes. It looked like he was wearing seven layers of clothes, but judging by the feel of them in her hand, he was wearing even more layers than that.

“You don’t understand...” Xu Xiaoshou shook his head and sighed. After wiping the sweat off his forehead he continued, “You’ll feel cold later.”

Mu Zixi backed away a few steps. She was afraid that she might be scorched to death if she stayed too close to him.

Despised, Passive Points +1.

“What?” he thought. “How dare you despise your senior brother?”

Xu Xiaoshou was displeased. He curled a finger and said, “Come here.”

“What for?”

The little girl was quite obedient. She came over.

Xu Xiaoshou brought his nose close to her and sniffed. He immediately scrunched up his face and covered his nose in disgust. “You smell so bad! Didn’t you take a bath?”

Mu Zixi: ? ? ?

“I was locked up by our master!” she thought. “I would’ve been late if I’d gone back to the spirit site and then came over! And... I washed my face, okay?”

Cursed, Passive Points +1, +1, +1, +1.

Xu Xiaoshou was amused. Among the people he’d met so far, only two of them, Rao Yinyin and Mu Zixi, were able to continuously contribute to his Passive Points.

The former was from “flirtation” and “seduction,” and the latter was due to a series of curses.

Whenever he offended the girl a certain way, Passive Points would flow his way nonstop like a flood. He’d since figured out that the way to push this girl’s buttons to get Passive Points was to tell her that she smelled bad!

Xu Xiaoshou pushed Mu Zixi away. “Stay away, you dirty vampire.”

Mu Zixi almost exploded with anger, but she was unable to speak with her bulging red cheeks.

“There’s nothing I can do,” she thought. “I didn’t take a bath!”

Cursed, Passive Points, +1, +1, +1, +1.

Zhou Tiansen approached them from behind and cautiously tapped Xu Xiaoshou’s shoulder.

Xu Xiaoshou turned his head around, startled. If the guy had any more wrinkles on his face and the two dark circles around his eyes were a little darker, he could’ve changed his name to Elder Sang.

“What?”

Zhou Tianshen stealthily pointed at Yuan Tou, who was standing with his spear. “Look at him!”

“Yuan Tou? What’s wrong?”

“He wants to kill you!”

Seeing the shock on Xu Xiaoshou’s face, Zhou Tianshen figured that he hadn’t wasted the last three days in vain and that the information was worthwhile.

“For sure, this guy still doesn’t know he has another enemy,” he thought. “What a silly guy!”

Xu Xiaoshou was truly stunned. This big and tall...

“Did the double g pass?”

Baffled, Zhou Tiansen rubbed the back of his head.

Xu Xiaoshou shook his head, speechless. “I’ve already killed a person,” he thought, “And this guy came to make such a play? Why the delay...”

He didn’t pay any more mind to the matter and turned his attention to the new information in his head:

Watched, Passive Points +1.

With his Sense, he noticed that the black-clad Yuan Tou was watching him and had been for quite a while. Was this guy planning to do something inside Tianxuan Gate?

“Well, I have to be on my guard and be careful, then!” he thought.

...

The stick of incense was almost out. Those present were not only the ten people who’d gotten slots to enter the Tianxuan Gate, but also many spectators, including those Inner Yard disciples who’d failed to qualify for the event.

Under the crowd’s expectant gaze, Ye Xiaotian looked into the sky and saw a figure fly over from distance.

“Elder Qiao?” Xu Xiaoshou eyes immediately widened.

Wasn’t this guy an elder of the Spiritual Affairs Division and a chef of roast goose? Why had such a key figure come to make such a grand appearance?

Qiao Qianzhi greeted the crowd with a smile. Without a word, he pulled out a purple array plate and tapped on the empty space.

“Buzz...”

Endless spiritual energy rolled in, making the old acacia tree outside the assembly hall give off a rustling sound. The Origin Source gathered around, making the place look like a fairyland.

A complicated arcane array pattern spread out from the empty space, and the sky-blue fog dissipated, revealing a huge black gate dozens of meters high inside the array.

The huge gate was engraved with red patterns and looked majestic. Two horns served as the door buckles. They looked like hideous beasts, and each had a golden circle in its open mouth.

The Tianxuan Gate!

Xu Xiaoshou only marveled at it for a moment before coming back to his senses. In comparison, Elder Qiao, who was able to conjure up this huge gate, obviously aroused his interest more.

He patted Mu Zixi’s shoulders, but his eyes were still on Elder Qiao. “Spirit array master?”

“Wow!” The little girl grabbed her twin ponytails, a look of awe on her face. “Really? Is Elder Qiao so powerful?”

Xu Xiaoshou: “....”

“That’s my questioning tone, junior sister!” he thought. “What the h*ll!”

Seeing the looks of astonishment on the two’s faces, Zhou Tiansen wondered, “You don’t know? Doesn’t Elder Qiao often tinker with the array plate when he scolds people?”

“Hmm? Cursing?”

Speechless, the two turned their heads around at the same time, and six pairs of eyes met.

“I...” Zhou Tiansen reached out a hand. He seemed to have realized something. He lowered his head, clutching his forehead in shame.

“It turns out that... you cursed me only!” he thought. “It’s insulting...”

Xu Xiaoshou was a little surprised. He’d known Elder Qiao for such a long time and had only just now found out that the old man was also a spiritual array master.

He’d kept this secret deeply hidden. The saying must be true: people can’t be judged based on their appearances.

“Hehehe!”

The Tianxuan Gate’s array was stabilized. Elder Qiao grinned and pushed the ancient, huge heavy gate open, revealing a rippling barrier.

“You can go in now!”

Everyone was eager to enter the gate. Xu Xiaoshou walked at the rear of the group. He was still feeling a little incredulous as he looked at Elder Qiao and asked, “Are you really a spiritual array master?”

Qiao Qianzhi raised an eyebrow, but he clasped Xiaoshou’s shoulder and said seriously, “Don’t think too much of it. This gate can be opened by anyone who has a little strength. And also, I’m not a spiritual array master...”

Xu Xiaoshou was baffled for a moment, wondering if what he said was true.

Elder Qiao sighed and continued, “Spiritual Array Masters are very weak. Are you deliberately trying to insult me?”

“I’m a Grand Master!”

“???”

Xu Xiaoshou felt his entire body go numb, but before he could figure out what was happening, he found himself thrown into the air.

“D*mn it! Let me do it myself!”

The crowd of onlookers watched with envy as the group entered the land of their dreams.

“So it turns out the Tianxuan Gate looks like this. It’s not that great. I thought it would grow out of the earth and shoot straight into the clouds. To be honest... I think it looks rather ugly!”

“Yes, it’s true. The palace gate in front of my house is much better looking.”

“Go. Get out of here...”

Elder Qiao felt helpless while looking at these envious faces. They looked like the early summer unripe fruits: astringent and numb.

Forget it, no more scolding!

He looked at Ye Xiaotian. “Should we go?”

“Let’s go!”

The duo flashed, then disappeared. A few moments later, they arrived in front of a small thatched hut.

“Creak!”

The wooden door was pushed open, and out came the sound of arguing.

“What? You didn’t warn Xu Xiaozhou? Didn’t I tell you a thousand times?” It was Xiao Qixiu’s exasperated voice.

“Hehe, I’m sorry. This old man forgot...”

The two walked into the cramped room with their heads lowered and closed the door behind them. The interior immediately became dim.

Elder Sang stuck his tongue out to lick the sauce on the dark-red ham and casually waved his chopsticks.

“Don’t worry. That’s the Tianxuan Gate, not the Spiritual Library Division. That rascal won’t be able to blow the place up.

“Don’t panic. It’s not a big deal!”

Chapter 126: An Instant Breakthrough

It was a white and foggy world with spiritual mist so heavy that one couldn’t discern human from beast ten meters in front of them.

Soft snow was drifting down from the heavens, and, upon a closer look, one discovered that the snow had also been formed from spiritual energy.

Whoosh.

The inscription of an array unfurled suddenly while a gust of strong wind swept the spiritual mist away. From the heavens descended a group of men and women.

These people were clearly prepared for this. They were all at the Innate Level and looked fearless as they hovered in midair, but their eyes were full of shock.

“This...”

The spiritual energy here was so rich here that taking just a single breath of it was the same as training diligently and tirelessly for several days!

Mu Zixi’s twin ponytails hung weightlessly in the air as she savored the rich spiritual energy.

There were two things that she couldn’t resist at all. The first was creatures with an incredibly resilient lifeforce, and the second, an environment that was rich in spiritual energy.

She stretched her arms out and whirled around, the hem of her pale green dress fluttering in the air. She seemed to be on the verge of a breakthrough.

“What the h*ll! Why is the array in the middle of the sky?”

The sound of someone cursing shattered everyone’s reverie. Everyone looked down and heard the sound of a loud thud, followed by a yowl of pain.

Clang!

That was the sound of someone’s spiritual sword landing on the ground. Someone had obviously tried their best to fly.

He had obviously failed.

Everyone’s face twitched. “This must be the first time someone at Spiritual Cultivation Level Nine managed to enter the Tianxuan Gate!” they thought. “He couldn’t even fly...”

Ridiculed, Passive Points +8.

Received Concern, Passive Points +2.

Zhou Tianshen, who thought himself one of the few friends that Xu Xiaoshou had, hurried over to take a look at Xu Xiaoshou. He was shocked by the sight that greeted him as soon as he landed on the ground.

Xu Xiaoshou, who had wrapped himself up in his clothes like a dumpling, was lying on the ground, spasming violently.

Endless energies of heaven and earth were surging into his body frenziedly and soon transformed into a spiritual cocoon.

Within the cocoon was Xu Xiaoshou...

His legs barely escaped the fate of being snapped in two. His body would curl inward like a prawn one moment, then straighten, taut as a rod, the next. He looked like an electrocuted maggot as he seized violently on the ground.

“What... the... h*ll...”

Something that was either foam or spiritual energy unceasingly bubbled out of his mouth.

Xu Xiaoshou was in great pain, a pain that one experienced at the height of bliss.

He had activated his Breathing Technique three days prior to entering the Tianxuan Gate and had tried his utmost to acclimatize to the rich spiritual energy in the Inner Yard.

But as soon as he entered the Tianxuan Gate, he'd realized that the Tianxuan Gate was worlds apart from the Inner Yard.

This wasn't a place for humans at all!

He'd piled on thirteen layers of clothes, but that had been utterly useless.

Somebody, save him...

Mu Zixi descended from the sky and landed. She hadn't yet shown Xu Xiaoshou the jade scroll. He was still her senior, and her master had told her to take care of him.

“What's wrong?” The young woman stared curiously at the man spasming violently in the spiritual cocoon.

Zhou Tianshen's look was one of bafflement. He shrugged. “I have no idea. He was like this when I came down. I didn't do anything...”

“I'm... I'm fine!” Xu Xiaoshou stabbed his sharpened fingers into his palm and tried to fight pain with pain. The distraction finally allowed him to speak.

“I have a medical condition. I get seizures when I inhale spiritual energy. But I recover quickly from my seizures...don't worry about me. You guys go ahead!”

He gasped, and the sudden inhalation sent him spasming more violently. Left with no choice, he could only hold his breath and feign composure.

“Are you sure you're alright?” Mu Zixi stepped forward and pulled out a jade scroll. “Master told me to give this to you.”

Xu Xiaoshou breathed lightly. "Sure, leave that on the ground and go ahead first!"

He was in a sensitive state right now. No one must touch him. This exact same thing had happened when he'd taken the Red Gold Pill during the Windcloud Competition.

It always hurt the first time, but the pain would pass after some time. He simply had to bear with it.

Mu Zixi didn't do as she was told, though. She grabbed her ponytails, her lips curling upward.

"What's going on?" she thought. "What kind of physiology is this? It's incredible. No wonder the young man caught my master's eye!"

But to become this way whenever he came into contact with spiritual energy? To be made utterly paralyzed?

This didn't seem like Xu Xiaoshou at all. Didn't he enjoy throwing snide remarks at her all the time?

She squatted next to Xu Xiaoshou and pursed her lips. "That won't do. Master said that this is a very important jade scroll and that I must make sure you get it."

"Why don't I stuff it into your clothes?" she asked, reaching out her hand.

"No, it's alright! Stay away!" Her gesture instantly alarmed Xu Xiaoshou. "Hand it to Zhou Tianshen. He can hold onto it for me."

"Hehe!" Mu Zixi giggled cutely, showing her dimples. "You must be joking..."

She pinched his clothes with two fingers. Then, after some thought, released her hold on the topmost layer and touched the innermost layer, which was the same as touching his underwear, and her fingers naturally brushed against Xu Xiaoshou's chest.

Xu Xiaoshou almost exploded on the spot!

He tried his best to hold himself back, gritting his teeth and wrestling control over himself as she touched the topmost layer of his clothes. But when she touched his skin...that was when things spiraled out of control.

"Ah!"

A husky, melodic voice sent Zhou Tianshen and Mu Zixi's hair instantly standing on end. Xu Xiaoshou, who had pushed himself up from the ground with a great deal of effort, collapsed to the ground with a loud thud again, and violent tremors coursed through his body.

His teeth chattered loudly.

Mu Zixi stumbled back in alarm, her cheeks brightly flushed. She'd barely touched him. It was just a light touch, and he...

She whipped her head around and stared at Zhou Tianshen, desperation in her voice as she tried to explain herself. "I didn't do that!"

Zhou Tianshen grunted hoarsely. "I know what you mean."

“Ah...”

Another cry resounded in the air, making their skin crawl. If Xu Xiaoshou had shown restraint before with his earlier cry, he was clearly showing none if it now as he moaned out loud.

The two glanced at Xu Xiaoshou and noticed that he'd stopped shaking and was so still he looked like he was frozen.

A wave of spiritual energy surged from his energy reserve, sending the spiritual mist in the air roiling.

“A breakthrough?” They silently looked at each other.

Mu Zixi was frozen to the spot. Had a single touch caused his breakthrough?

Xu Xiaoshou remained sprawled on the ground.

He really couldn't take it anymore. In order to refine his pills, he'd taken vast quantities of Spirit Cultivation Juice the past three days and had been on the verge of a breakthrough. No one could have withstood that touch.

The spiritual mist that had been swept aside by the force of his breakthrough came flooding back in again. Xu Xiaoshou began spasming again. After his breakthrough, he could clearly discern droplets of spiritual source inside his energy reserve slowly assuming form.

The efficiency of it all...

...was simply incredible!

He bet he would be able to attain a breakthrough to the Innate Stage within half a day!

The Breathing Technique was an incredible skill!

If he could find a way to get rid of the waves of pleasure that came alongside it, it would be the perfect skill!

Another shadow descended from the heavens, then.

“Do you need any help?” Mo Mo strode towards Xu Xiaoshou, her right hand cradling her cauldron.

She'd noticed the symptoms Xu Xiaoshou was exhibiting and believed her sealing power might be of some assistance.

This was the man who had complimented her beauty to her person, after all. She should try to save him if she could.

She'd escaped Xu Xiaoshou's notice while they were outside, but now that they were inside the Tianxuan Gate, he was completely shocked at seeing Mo Mo a second time.

The Voidness Level!

Her cultivation level had reached the Voidness Level!

Xu Xiaoshou had killed a Voidness-level cultivator and attacked an Upper Spiritual Level cultivator. In fact, he suspected he'd been held by someone at the Master Level.

Sense had clearly recorded down the aura exuded by cultivators of varying cultivation levels. Even though the young woman was hiding her true strength incredibly well, Xu Xiaoshou could Sense her true cultivation level with just a single glance.

He remembered that Mo Mo had only just attained the early-stage Origin Court Level during their final match in the Windcloud Competition!

It hadn't taken her much time to jump from the early-stage, through mid-stage, late-stage, and final-stage of the Origin Court Level to the Voidness Level at all!

Was this some kind of joke?

"It's alright. I'm feeling fine now." Xu Xiaoshou stabbed four fingers into his palm, and his eyebrows twitched violently as he snatched the jade scroll from Mu Zixi's fingers.

"Is that so..."

"Well, I'll be off, then!"

Mo Mo gave a gentle smile before turning away and leaving.

Xu Xiaoshou watched her retreating figure and fell into deep contemplation. His Sense was completely drawn to the cauldron cradled against her right arm.

The uneasy energy that resided in her arm had grown more terrifying.

Xu Xiaoshou was seized by panic. He had no idea if his intuition or something else was trying to tell him something, but he could somehow tell that the energy residing in Mo Mo's arm was as powerful as the energy that the masked intruder had exuded.

"What has she got sealed inside that arm..."

Chapter 127: Why Don't We Have a Fight?

Mo Mo left.

The other folks hovering above his head also left. Few of them were acquainted with Xu Xiaoshou, which meant few were concerned for his wellbeing.

The only person who lingered around was Yuan Tou, who seemed nonchalant, but Xu Xiaoshou had a watchful eye on him.

Watched, Passive Points +1.

This was one of the many notifications that he received, and he was certain that that fellow was the source of these Passive Points.

He had no idea what the man wanted. Hence, he didn't pay him much attention. Instead, Xu Xiaoshou turned to Zhou Tianshen and asked, "Where are you heading?"

Zhou Tianshen brushed his fingers against his Golden Domineering Blade before saying hesitantly, "Anywhere will do. The spiritual energy in the Tianxuan Gate is so rich I can cultivate anywhere. I guess if I'm lucky enough, I'll find the secret realm..."

Xu Xiaoshou knew that Zhou Tianshen's Innate Elemental Power was extremely unique. It was an art form in its own right. Focusing solely on the cultivation of his spiritual energy wasn't the best way to strengthen himself.

Cultivators like him typically had to undergo years of grueling training before they were suddenly struck by an epiphany. They might even break through to the Master Stage with that sudden revelation!

He didn't say a word and instead touched his jade scroll to his forehead, and the information contained inside it immediately appeared inside his head.

It was an extremely detailed map that was marked with the locations of various secret training realms. It must have cost a fortune.

Xu Xiaoshou was a little taken aback. He stared at Mu Zixi. "Is this from Elder Sang?"

"Yup!"

"He's trying to force me to head for the Black Cliff, isn't he..." Xu Xiaoshou muttered to himself.

He knew that the Spirit Palace didn't recommend new Inner Yard disciples who were entering the Tianxuan Gate the first time to seek out secret training realms. Just managing to remain in the Tianxuan Gate for the full three days was considered a good enough job.

The secret training realms had been set up for the new cohort of the Inner Yard Thirty-Three. Training in those secret realms was incredibly tough and was accompanied by the risk of death.

He looked at Zhou Tianshen again. "Hundred Soldiers Field and Slaughter Cape. Pick one."

Zhou Tianshen froze momentarily. Both were names of secret training realms in the Tianxuan Gate. "You know their exact locations?"

Xu Xiaoshou waved the jade scroll in his hand. Zhou Tianshen had a good heart, so Xu Xiaoshou didn't mind sharing the information he had with him. Zhou Tianshen would have to make up his mind and decide for himself, though, if he wanted it or not.

"That star is pointing north." He pointed at the sky. In the Tianxuan Gate, the skies were pure white and had only one lone star.

"Head for northwest to the Hundred Soldiers Field and south for the Slaughter Cape. You can decide for yourself if you want to head for either of those places!"

These were the two locations that best suited Zhou Tianshen's training needs. There was no point in heading elsewhere.

Zhou Tianshen was a little startled, not expecting Xu Xiaoshou to share this information with him so freely.

Such information could've fetched a pretty price outside the Tianxuan Gate.

The Tiansang Spirit Palace coddled their disciples in the Outer Yard, but once they entered the Inner Yard, it was akin to entering a microcosm of the real world.

The Spirit Palace would provide you with resources, but if you wanted information, then you would have to make a fair trade for it.

Alternatively, you could seek out persons who knew such information. For example, you could seek out the last cohort of the Inner Yard Thirty-Three and trade resources for information on the locations of the secret training realms.

“I’ll head south, then!” Zhou Tianshen paused for a moment. “Thank you!”

Received Gratitude, Passive Points +1.

“Why are you thanking me? Treat it as repayment for the information that you shared with me outside the Tianxuan Gate!” Xu Xiaoshou said nonchalantly.

Zhou Tianshen wasn’t very smart or tactful, but he was a nice guy to hang around with. Xu Xiaoshou didn’t have many friends. On account of the information that Zhou Tianshen had delivered to him, albeit a few days late, Xu Xiaoshou was happy to call Zhou Tianshen his friend.

The giant grinned when he heard that. His grandfather was right. A good deed was always rewarded.

“Where are you headed?” he asked Xu Xiaoshou.

“Me?” Xu Xiaoshou glanced at Yuan Tou, who had his legs crossed and was cultivating in midair. He seemed eager to make use of every second that he had. But as a newly appointed member of the Inner Yard Thirty-Three...

Shouldn’t he be heading for the secret training realm instead of setting up shop here?

“I think I’ll head west!”

The Black Cliff was located in the east. Since Elder Sang had talked so much about it, he should really head there and have a look.

“Alright!”

Zhou Tianshen’s eyes shone brightly as he pulled out his sword and declared loudly and proudly, “When you’ve reached a respectable level in your cultivation, I’ll issue a challenge to you again. I’ll defeat you!”

His loud booming voice nearly gave Mu Zixi a fright. Her wide eyes flickered between the two young men and almost seemed to sense the slightest ripple of passion course through the air.

Xu Xiaoshou pushed Zhou Tianshen’s blade aside with two fingers and patted the young man on the shoulder.

“You’re extremely childish, but I like it!”

“Onward, Pikachu!”

He turned to Mu Zixi. “Are you headed for the Senluo Woods?”

The Senluo Woods was the second location that had been specially marked out on the map. From the looks of it, it was a wood element treasure trove. The young lady definitely had her sights set on that place.

Mu Zixi nodded. "That's right. Why do you ask?"

Xu Xiaoshou glared at her. "Well, what are you waiting for, then? Make a move!"

Mu Zixi was silent.

She'd just given him a jade scroll and this was what she got in return?

Cursed, Passive Points +1.

"Fine, I'm going! Why are you yelling at me?" The young woman pouted before whipping her head away from him and marching off in fury. "You think I want to hang out here with you?"

He couldn't believe it. Was she mad because of what he'd just said?

Xu Xiaoshou was tickled. He yelled at her, "Can't you tell I'm worried that you're going to treat me like some amazing blood bag and be overcome by the urge to suck my blood?"

Mu Zixi halted in her tracks. Then, she flew off.

Cursed, Passive Points +1, +1, +1, +1...

"Great. She's gone. Now for the next step..." he mused.

Xu Xiaoshou looked up at the sky. "Hey guys, there's no one here now. Why don't we have a fight?"

Yuan Tou froze when he heard what Xu Xiaoshou said. "A fight right now?" he thought. "Is he joking? The rest haven't gone that far yet. If Xu Xiaoshou dies, I'll be the primary and sole suspect for his murder.

"Three days later, lost in the secret realm, is how he's going to die!

Yuan Tou sniggered and ended his cultivation. All of a sudden, his hairs stood on end, and the heavy shadow of death enveloped him.

His spiritual senses flooded the area. There were two strange objects on the ground. They drew two black lines that intersected with each other.

Boom!

A deafening thunder shook the ground under Yuan Tou's feet, and waves of terrifying heat surged outward. Caught off guard, Yuan Tou was flung into the distance by the force of the explosion. His whole body was blackened like soot and his face as dark as thunder.

Blood came up from his chest and spilled from his lips.

"Are you nuts?" Yuan Tou was dumbstruck. He couldn't believe Xu Xiaoshou was serious and actually dared to attack him here.

"This is the Tianxuan Gate. Fighting isn't allowed here!"

Insulted, Passive Points +1.

Warned, Passive Points +1.

“Fighting isn’t allowed?” Two Refined Fire Seeds appeared between his fingers. “If you really believe in those rules, why are you still hanging around instead of searching for a secret training realm?” he scoffed.

He paused for a moment. “Do you think I’m a swan or something? Are you going to eat me?”

“You’re crazy!” Yuan Tou’s face turned green underneath the layer of soot on his face.

Was Xu Xiaoshou calling him a toad lusting after a swan’s flesh?

“Hold on a minute,” he thought. “That isn’t what’s important right now... This guy has to be crazy to get into a fight with me after the rest just left.”

Had his breakthrough turned him fearless?

But he was still only at Spiritual Cultivation Level Ten, even after his breakthrough. Why was he so full of himself?

“Control yourself. Control yourself!”

Through his spiritual senses, Yuan Tou could sense someone approaching. He knew that this wasn’t the time for him to make a move. He had to take a step back... and not allow this to escalate.

Three days. He only needed to wait three days.

When everyone was gone, he would make sure this punk ended up lost in the secret realm.

Xu Xiaoshou watched as Yuan Tou flew higher into the heavens before leaping onto Hiding Pain. Unfortunately, the speed of his Reverse Sword Subduing left something to be desired. There was no way he could catch up with an Innate Stage cultivator.

“If you’re a man, get down here and fight me!”

“Hahah! Look at that stupid idiot who can’t fly!” Yuan Tou didn’t look back as he flew away.

Xu Xiaoshou landed on the ground and secretly breathed a sigh of relief. He’d finally managed to chase that annoying fellow off. After everyone left, his Sense had informed him of the man’s intention to attack him.

Xu Xiaoshou wasn’t at all confident of his chances, and there was no way he was going to let Yuan Tou make the first move. Wouldn’t it be fantastic if he could have more time to breakthrough to the Innate Stage before fighting the man?

That was the reason why he’d feigned wanting to fight the man when he actually wanted the opposite. The idiot had fallen for his trick, and he’d earned himself more time.

“He’s probably going to try and kill me again three days later,” he thought. “Well, after three days go by... it’ll be too late by that point!”

“What an idiot!”

Xu Xiaoshou caught the figure of Mu Zixi approaching from the distance and was tickled. The young woman still cared for her senior. She was a decent girl, unlike the ingrate Zhou Tianshen, who'd left and hadn't returned.

"Why did you come back?"

Mu Zixi froze momentarily. "Weren't you in a fight?"

"What fight?" With a jerk of his arm, he sent the two Fire Seeds flying into the air. "I was setting off fireworks! Look..."

Boom!

A loud explosion erupted in the sky, and waves of hot air surged outward.

"Isn't that pretty?"

Mu Zixi was silent.

She left without giving him another look. She knew it. She shouldn't have worried about him. Nothing was going to happen to this guy.

Cursed, Passive Points +1, +1, +1, +1...

Chapter 128: Sword Energy and Sword Will

Xu Xiaoshou headed east.

Because Yuan Tou was listening, he said he was heading westward. The fellow was probably going to hunt him down again. But, with the misinformation he'd just fed him, he might not be able to find him at all in three days.

Tianxuan Gate was a big place, after all.

He hummed a quiet tune, and, as he occasionally pulled his fingertip out of his palm, he could feel himself growing used to the pleasure rippling through his body.

In an attempt to stop relying on pain to distract himself from the pleasure, he yanked his fingertip completely out of his palm.

"Nngh!"

It still felt a little unbearable. Something strange was happening to his body again.

He steeled himself, bore the discomfort, and continued marching forward, no longer inflicting pain on himself.

The Breathing Technique was a passive skill, and, sooner or later, he was going to activate it by entering someplace that was rich with spiritual energy.

This was only the Tianxuan Gate. He was going to leave the Spirit Palace and enter secret realms that were even more powerful than the Tianxuan Gate. Was he going to stop cultivating and becoming stronger because he couldn't overcome the intense pleasure?

No way!

Resistance was futile. You couldn't fight life all the time. Sometimes, you had to learn how to enjoy it.

"Oh, man...this feels great..."

Alone, Xu Xiaoshou started to let loose.

As time passed, he gradually regained the ability to walk normally.

When other people entered the Tianxuan Gate, they would seize the day and either rush to cultivate or rush to locate a secret realm so they could cultivate there.

Xu Xiaoshou was different.

He'd always relied on his passive skills for his cultivation. He could've been lying down on the ground right now in the Tianxuan Gate and still would've been cultivating. In fact, the results he would've achieved from doing so could've surpassed that of those who diligently cultivated without wasting a single second.

He wasn't a complete sloth, though. He pulled out the jade scroll containing 10 Sections of the Finger Sword as he headed toward the Black Cliff.

This was the technique that the legendary prodigy of the five regions and Eighth Sword Deity, Bazhun'an, had created.

Now that he knew its origins, the jade scroll in his hands seemed the more valuable now.

He had no idea how Elder Sang had managed to acquire the complete version of the technique, but he was certain that he must've paid a heavy price for it.

"I didn't get a chance to look at it earlier, but now I can finally take a look!" he thought.

He placed the jade scroll to his forehead and allowed his mind to scan through its contents. Vast volumes of information flooded his mind.

It was as he'd expected. This was a special spiritual technique whose training focused solely on the practitioner's ten fingers. It didn't need a spiritual source. In fact, inherent in the technique were traces of combat strategies that relied heavily on Sword Will.

"What's going on? So the Sword Will doesn't possess the swordsman, then?"

Xu Xiaoshou was slightly baffled. Was this a fusion of Pure Sword Will Combat and Sword Will Possession?

"That isn't completely outside the realm of impossibility..." he thought.

Xu Xiaoshou felt as if he'd just been struck by an epiphany.

There was only one other person besides himself whom he could think of when it came to Pure Sword Will Combat, and that was the masked intruder.

And now that the jade scroll he had also seemed to touch upon Pure Sword Will Combat...he couldn't help but be reminded of what the masked intruder had told him. He'd said that the road that Xu Xiaoshou had chosen led to a dead end.

Had the Eighth Sword Deity chosen this path as well?

Without further thought, Xu Xiaoshou studied the contents of the jade scroll again.

In order to practice 10 Sections of the Finger Sword, one needed extremely strong fingers. He should be able to fulfill that criteria on account of his Innate Level Physique. Should that fail to suffice, he still had Sharpness to make up for it!

This wasn't going to be a problem at all.

The obstacle that had hindered nine out of ten cultivators from learning the technique was easily circumvented, and Xu Xiaoshou moved on to the second step.

The Sword Will was to materialize and take possession.

"What does that mean?"

"The Sword Will materializes easily enough, doesn't it? I mean, all those sword energies..."

Xu Xiaoshou grew increasingly alarmed as he continued reading. From the contents of the jade scroll, it was obvious that there was a clear distinction between the Sword Will and sword energy.

After reading the full contents of the jade scroll, Xu Xiaoshou finally realized that he'd been mistaken all along.

His techniques like All Things are Swords, the Blade-draw Technique, and various techniques in which he used the force of his sword energy to overwhelm his foe... were all classified as basic ways of employing sword energy in the jade scroll.

He hadn't been using his Sword Will at all!

This meant that, strictly speaking, that all along he'd been using Pure Sword Energy Combat instead of Pure Sword Will Combat!

"This is fascinating..."

"What happens if my will is unable to materialize and take visible shape? How can it be put to good use then?"

Xu Xiaoshou sank into deep thought, and it didn't take him long to remember his Modified Sword Style.

That was the technique he'd stumbled upon in an epiphany the first time he leveled up his Sword Technique Expertise. He'd been fighting Zhou Tianshen then, and the technique had allowed him to deftly deflect the latter's powerful Deity Mountain-Lifting Technique with little effort, winning him the match.

But that particular technique had proven useless in subsequent fights.

It was restricted by too many limitations and didn't have any set moves. He often forgot that he had it in his arsenal and would oftentimes use Blade-draw Technique instead.

Having read the contents of the jade scroll, he now knew that of all the techniques that he possessed, only one counted as a technique that relied on Sword Will.

Because he'd boxed them into a rigid set of moves, the techniques he'd gained through epiphanies had all ended up as lesser moves.

He might have given these abstract revelations visible form, but if he were to continue doing so in this fashion, he would end up straying down the wrong path in the long run.

"True combat with the Sword Will is one that is without form or essence, with neither move nor technique. Ten thousand blades are but one blade and ten thousand techniques undone without a single blade."

Realization dawned on Xu Xiaoshou as he read these words inscribed in the jade scroll.

The magnitude of what "ten thousand blades are but one blade" meant sent his mind instantly reeling, and the line that followed next, "ten thousand techniques undone without a single blade," opened the doors to a whole new universe.

How incredibly well put!

This was something he'd always dreamed of achieving!

He should've known how easy it'd be to stray down the wrong path when stuck figuring things out on one's own.

Hold on a minute...

Why did those words sound so familiar?

He suddenly remembered that the masked intruder had said something similar after fighting him with something that resembled his own style.

"The true Sword Will is not bound by levels and cares not for form or essence. It mirrors that which its foe tries to inflict upon it."

That was the line!

That was what the masked intruder had said after seizing Xiao Qixiu's sword and stabbing him with it.

Xu Xiaoshou's memory had drastically improved since acquiring Sense. All he needed was a brief moment of contemplation to recall something.

He could remember how after every move, the masked intruder had made a point of emphasizing...

Innate Level!

The Innate Level All Things are Swords and the Innate Level I Am the Sword...

The masked intruder had rambled on and on then, and he'd simply thought the old man was trying to show off. But now that he thought it over again, he couldn't help but be taken aback.

"Was he trying to give me pointers?" Xu Xiaoshou stopped in his tracks as realization dawned on him, and he sank into deep thought.

"Who is the masked intruder?"

"Could he be the Eighth Sword Deity?"

"That's impossible! Elder Sang told me that the Eighth Sword Deity died!"

"Hold on a minute. He did mention the death..."

"...of a prodigy. Maybe he meant the Eighth Sword Deity is no longer a prodigy."

Xu Xiaoshou's pupils shrank, and Xiao Qixiu suddenly popped into his head.

The man had been stabbed that day but had appeared extremely excited after the battle, which was odd!

Who would be so excited after being stabbed in the chest? Now that he thought about it, that look on his face then...

It was the exact look a fan had when seeing his idol!

Xiao Qixiu... a fan...

"Oh, man!" Xu Xiaoshou shivered.

Even if the masked intruder wasn't the Eighth Sword Deity, Xu Xiaoshou had a feeling that he still had something to do with the latter. He might be the Eighth Sword Deity's disciple or grand disciple.

"Woah!"

What a surprise!

Xu Xiaoshou collected his thoughts and carefully stowed the jade scroll away. If he hadn't read its contents, he wouldn't have realized what a treasure it was!

Thankfully, he had the jade scroll to point him in the right direction. Otherwise, he had a feeling he would've continued down the erroneous path of creating his own techniques.

But the Blade-draw Technique was simply too powerful a technique to give up...

If he were to abandon it, he wouldn't have any powerful techniques to employ in battle in the future!

"I'm painting myself into a corner..."

Xu Xiaoshou was at a loss momentarily, but he quickly shook himself out of it.

He was definitely going to choose the way of the Sword Will, but no one said he couldn't work on creating his own techniques at the same time. There was no inherent conflict between the two.

"I'm a genius!"

Xu Xiaoshou stared at the skies with a bright, burning look in his eyes.

Before reading the contents of the jade scroll, he'd thought the 10 Sections of the Finger Sword a technique that he could do without, but its contents had changed his mind.

The Eighth Sword Deity had deemed the 10 Sections of the Finger Sword his pride, so it must have its merits. Besides, he had gained such a powerful revelation from just one line in the text. If he were to master the technique...

He might gain himself a terrifying combat style!

His next destination: Black Cliff!

His calves tensed. The ground caved slightly under his feet, creating a crater, and the impact sent Xu Xiaoshou flying into the sky.

He landed a few hundred meters away.

Boom.

Another huge crater later, he shot into the sky once more...

Leaping around like that was quicker than Innate Level Flight!

"Hmm?"

"Why does this look so familiar?"

Xu Xiaoshou realized that something wasn't quite right as he continued leaping.

If his skin were a little greener and his body slightly bulkier, wouldn't that make him...

"The Hulk?"

Chapter 129: Black Waterfalls

Xu Xiaoshou leaped tirelessly across the sky.

The Tianxuan Gate was a massive place, and only ten people were allowed to enter at a time. Each person could amass a terrifying amount of resources from a single entry.

Since everyone had gone their separate ways, he hadn't come across a single person since he'd started traveling across the Tianxuan Gate via leaps and bounds.

Silence reigned between heaven and earth. Save the spiritual energy that was constantly rushing into his body, nothing seemed amiss.

It was then that he heard a faint sputtering sound.

His expression changed. Was the Black Cliff nearby?

After another few leaps, Xu Xiaoshou came across what he thought to be the light at the end of the tunnel. He landed firmly on his feet and was promptly blown away by the sight before him.

He felt as if he were standing at the bottom of a vast chasm. When he looked up, all he could see was a black waterfall that rose into the clouds. He couldn't tell where the waterfall started, only that it came pouring down from the heavens.

The waterfall was black, with white wisps of sword energy woven into its streaming waters. It rumbled as it poured, a resounding thunder that resembled the sound of boulders crashing into the earth repeatedly and unceasingly.

"Heavens. I'm going to be swept into the waterfall if I try to pass through it. The sheer pressure of the water's going to kill me!"

Xu Xiaoshou was terrified. He'd seen a small waterfall at Rao Yinyin's residence. But comparing the both was like...

...comparing a sandcastle baked in p*ss to the ancient heavenly courts. They were worlds apart.

He knew it. Elder Sang would never recommend him someplace that was comfortable or easy.

The waterfall cascaded into a huge pond, and in the middle of the pond stood numerous huge rocks that formed a path. It seemed to have been built specifically as a spot for cultivation.

In the distance was a slab of stone. Xu Xiaoshou approached it.

At the top of the slab of stone was the character "ba," and below it a list of names. There were a dozen or so names, and he was familiar with the one at the very end of the list.

"Su Qianqian."

So she'd been here before.

That meant...

His eyes shifted to the top of the stele. The character "ba" probably was a name too!

"Bazhun'an?"

He must be going crazy, jumping to conclusions just because of the character "ba."

There was no way the Eighth Sword Deity had ever been here before, as that would mean he'd once been a disciple of the Spirit Palace. If the Spirit Palace had indeed been graced with such a disciple, then the past deans of the Tiansang Spirit Palace would've been eternally rejoicing in heaven.

Besides, weren't Sword Deities supposed to gain enlightenment and mastery over their Sword Will with a single glance?

Xu Xiaoshou stared at the stele for a very long time, but to no avail. He failed to enter the legendary realm of the mysterious and profound. The Epitaph of City Snow would've been more useful than this!

"Hmm..."

After some thought, he decided that he shall mislead those who came after him. He unsheathed Hiding Pain and craved "no Orochi" behind what would now read as "Yamata."

Perfect!

“Next...should I leave my name?”

Xu Xiaoshou was a civilized man. He didn't have the bad habit of leaving comments like “I was here,” but everyone seemed to be doing it...

He left the name “Xu the Beast” at the top of the stele.

“That sounds awesome and fearsome. It fits my character perfectly!” Xu Xiaoshou nodded satisfactorily.

He turned and stared at the black waterfall. The thunderous roar of its waters deafened him and made his eyelids twitch violently.

“So be it. Death is just a step away from the living world anyway. I have to give it a shot!”

His thirteen layers of clothing wouldn't afford him any protection at all, so he stripped himself down to his underpants and stepped on the huge rock in the pond with the awareness that he might not survive the journey.

Through his Sense, he could discern a cultivation platform at the end of the stone path, hidden behind the waterfall. The torrents tirelessly streaming onto the platform had turned the latter smooth and shining.

He steeled himself and plunged through the black waterfall like a leaping salmon.

Smack!

The rushing waters sent him crashing into the cultivation platform as soon as he dove through the waterfall, and he smacked hard into the stone like a dead fish on a hard board.

“What the...” The impact sent blood spewing from his mouth.

Xu Xiaoshou's eyes were full of incredulity. He'd heard Elder Sang speak of the extraordinary heaviness that the water from the black waterfall possessed, but he hadn't expected the force of the black waters to penetrate and harm his Innate Level Physique.

That impact of that last blow nearly broke all the bones in his body.

Boom.

Water gushed downwards while the pressure of the waterfall came rushing in from all sides. It squeezed whatever pleasure Xu Xiaoshou had been feeling out of his body and left him with only overwhelming pain.

He struggled and barely managed to activate a barrier with his spiritual source, giving himself a moment's reprieve.

He sighed with relief.

Looking at his own terrible state, Xu Xiaoshou couldn't imagine the fate that would await someone who heedlessly plunged into the waterfall. Wouldn't that unfortunate soul be instantly torn into shreds?

Probably not...

Someone without an Innate Level Physique probably wouldn't do that without taking precautionary measures. They would set up a spiritual source barrier first before attempting to pass through the waterfall.

No one would try to throw themselves through the waterfall like he just did...

How reckless of him!

His spiritual source barrier was being flattened and was gradually caving in. Xu Xiaoshou decided to deactivate it and brave the crushing weight of the waterfall. It would make for good training. It was then that a sudden white sword energy came slashing down at him.

Rip!

His barrier was effortlessly torn apart, and the sword energy landed squarely on his shoulder and tore through his flesh!

Blood spurted everywhere, and Xu Xiaoshou yowled in pain. He felt terrible. Even though he'd been boosted by a number of passive skills, he'd still managed to sustain such a serious injury...

He knew it! This wasn't a place for Acquired-stage spiritual cultivators at all!

Before he could catch his breath, Xu Xiaoshou's Sense informed him of the significant number of white sword energies outside the waterfall that were charging at him. They'd been drawn to him like iron pins to magnets as soon as he'd entered the waterfall.

The sword energies were akin to countless bolts of silver lightning snaking down the heavens while he was the lightning rod that had drawn them to him.

"You must be kidding me!"

Xu Xiaoshou's heart skipped a beat, and his scalp prickled with numbness.

He was going to be cleaved into half if a few of those sword energies struck him right at the top of his head.

He tried to clamber to his feet and leap out of the waterfall, but a few sword energies sneaked up on him and hit him. Pain rippled through his body, and the crushing weight of the waterfall sent him sprawling on the platform once again.

In a blink of an eye...

Rip! Rip! Rip! Rip! Rip!

Xu Xiaoshou barely had enough time to curl into himself and shield his head with his arms before thousands of sword energies charged at him. The downward torrent of black waters colored the black pond red with blood.

"Attacked, Passive Points +1."

"Attacked, Passive Points +1."

“Attacked, Passive Points +1.”

“... ..”

A dozen notifications instantly filled the Information Bar. One could only imagine the pain that Xu Xiaoshou was going through right now.

“Shit!”

The flurry of attacks made Xu Xiaoshou’s face turn pale. He was completely paralyzed and could only rely on Eternal Vitality to heal himself. In spite of that, countless wounds continued to appear on his body.

The wounds weren’t healing quickly enough!

Luckily, the cultivation platform was extremely smooth and reflective. Amidst the relentless onslaught, Xu Xiaoshou exploited the aftershocks of the attacks and very slowly and painfully slid off the platform and into the pond, where he was driven further into its watery depths by the fierce cascading waterfall.

He broke the surface of the pond with a gasp.

The sheer joy he felt from escaping from the jaws of death overwhelmed him as he floated, his unmoving body akin to a dead fish drifting on the surface of the pond.

His body was riddled with bleeding gashes!

“That d*mn old geezer! I shouldn’t have believed his words. This place is worse than eating that Infernal Fire Seed was!”

After five minutes, his injuries began to gradually heal, and Xu Xiaoshou could finally move his limbs again, albeit barely. He stared fearfully at the black waterfall as he struggled to his feet.

If one wanted to be pedantic about it, he wasn’t staring at the waterfall but at the white sword energies that had been able to inflict actual physical injury on him.

What happened?

Why had the sword energies attacked him after he’d entered the waterfall?

Had they been trying to kill him?

Without the sword energies, the crushing weight of the waterfall made this place the perfect place for strengthening his foundations.

But he couldn’t simply ignore the sword energies and go ahead with training. That would be equivalent to a slow suicide.

What if he failed to slip out of the waterfall?

He might be diced up into pieces.

“Hah! I’m not suited for this sort of training!”

Xu Xiaoshou grimaced. He enjoyed training passively. Elder Sang was right. His foundations were strong. He didn't have to endure such suffering.

It was then that he checked the red screen inside his head.

His Passive Points had shot from 2500 to 2800 from the brief onslaught...

300 Passive Points!

It hadn't even taken 300 seconds. In fact, it'd only taken a span of a few breaths, with each breath spanning an average of 1.35 seconds...

"What if I were to do this for a day..."

The young man balled his hands into tight fists, and a look of determination flashed in his eyes.

"Hah! I'm not a masochist at all!"

Chapter 130: The Ordinary Power of Thought

"What great timing!

"Let the storm pour! Bring it on!"

With a look of utter determination on his face, Xu Xiaoshou stood on the smooth surface of the cultivation platform, his hands shielding his head.

His body was covered in bloody gashes. But he remained unmoved. Real men never backed down.

This was already his dozenth attempt. He'd realized that not only did the crushing weight of the waterfall serve as a great way to train his physical body, but every slash from a sword energy also served to bring him a little closer to his next cultivation level. He wasn't going to let such a fine opportunity at cultivation slip through his fingers.

As for the Passive Points that he was accumulating every 1.35 seconds... well, it didn't hurt, but he definitely wasn't doing this for a few miserable Passive Points.

Passive Points: 6666.

Clang.

As he reached the verge of collapse, a tiny bathtub popped out of his chest and violently shook, the force of its vibrations sending him flying from the relentless waterfall. Xu Xiaoshou swiftly shoved the bathtub back into the ring hanging from his neck.

This was the backup plan he'd come up with to save himself, as he couldn't count on the slippery surface of the cultivation platform to slide him back into the pond. That wasn't a bet he was willing to take!

He floated like a dead fish on the surface of the black pond. After a long while, his injuries were finally healed, and he got back on his feet again.

"Well, look at all those Passive Points... Isn't the difficulty level of this training exercise a little overboard?"

He reached into his energy reserve and found that the crushing weight of the black waterfall and the relentless onslaught of sword energies weren't hindering his passive training at all.

His spiritual source sat like a thick heavyweight inside his energy reserve. If it wasn't for him having to expend spiritual energy on his training under the black waterfall, he had a feeling that he would have reached the final stage of Spiritual Cultivation Level Ten by now.

"The Breathing Technique is simply incredible. All you need is an environment with rich spiritual energy. This is like a hack!"

Xu Xiaoshou was speechless. He was reaching near invincibility because of a single Fundamental Passive Skill, and he still had another eight Passive Skills...

His arsenal of Passive Skills was beginning to reveal its true capabilities!

He believed that his increasing strength would only serve to further develop the potential of these Passive Skills instead of weakening them.

After all, Passive Skills were typically skills whose strengths were fully revealed in the later stages.

Xu Xiaoshou's eyes fell on the black waterfall again. He wasn't in a hurry to get back under the waterfall. Instead, he pulled out the jade scroll containing 10 Sections of the Finger Sword and went through its contents again.

Elder Sang had said that the Black Cliff was the perfect place to practice 10 Sections of the Finger Sword. He hadn't realized why then, but he knew now.

Somehow, the white sword energies that descended from the heavens could cleave through his foundational roots. In addition, if he examined them closely, he could catch a glimpse of fleeting profound wisdom hidden in them before said wisdom faded away.

It might be only a glimpse, but he'd already had countless glimpses flash past him.

This was definitely an excellent place to practice one's Sword Will and swordsmanship, and it explained all the numerous names on that stele: they were all the names of swordsmen.

Xu Xiaoshou wasn't going to waste any time on the first step of 10 Sections of the Finger Sword, as he knew that his Innate Level Physique met the requirements. What he needed to do was understand what "the Sword Will was to materialize and take possession" meant.

According to the jade scroll, should one's true Sword Will materialize and assume visible shape, its form wouldn't resemble the plain blade-like appearance of the sword energy. Instead, it would look indistinct and almost indiscernible. It would be there and yet not there.

The jade scroll called it the ordinary power of thought!

That was right. Not psychokinesis, but the ordinary power of thought.

At first, he thought he'd misread the term. But after rereading the line repeatedly, he realized that that was actually what it was called.

He couldn't help but feel puzzled by it all.

Why was it named the ordinary power of thought instead of the normal power of thought?

Secondly, if there existed an ordinary power of thought, did that mean that an extraordinary power of thought existed as well?

Of course, these weren't his primary concerns. At the moment, he couldn't even figure out the concept behind the materialization of this supposed thought that was the Sword Will.

The information in the jade scroll was extremely vague and didn't include a clearly defined and comprehensive definition.

"Perhaps it's ambiguous stuff like this that defies definition that proves to be the most powerful?"

Xu Xiaoshou thoughtfully stroked his chin. He thought of Pure Sword Will Combat and how the jade scroll had explained the form of combat as a mystifying and profound art where the absence of techniques triumphed over the presence of techniques.

That sounded like something that could be done.

"Let's do it then!" he thought.

Xu Xiaoshou pulled on a layer of spiritual source cloak to reduce the damage inflicted by the sword energies and stepped into the waterfall another time.

This time, his aim wasn't to get more Passive Points, but to cultivate.

He had to let the white sword energies hit him so that he could fathom the meaning hidden within them. But he also had to prevent himself from getting severely injured, since that would affect his training.

He needed a protective layer that would weaken the force of the sword energies' attacks.

Xu Xiaoshou didn't possess any defensive spiritual weapons, so he could only fall back on his spiritual source as his protective layer. Fortunately, he had High Spirits. That would keep him going.

After a few attempts, he realized that he could withstand a longer duration under the waterfall.

His Sword Will became infused with the black waterfall and streamed up the dark waters, and the entire Black Cliff seemed to tremble for a brief second.

The next moment, countless white sword energies came slashing downwards in quantities that were tenfold, a dozen-fold more than the previous rounds.

"Shit!"

Xu Xiaoshou reeled back in shock, and he frantically threw himself out of the waterfall.

A loud explosion erupted, and the cultivation platform was turned into dust. Xu Xiaoshou trembled violently with terror.

What just happened?

Did someone have something against him? Why wouldn't anyone let him cultivate in peace?

He stared at the black waterfall that rose into the clouds and began to ponder. "What's up there?"

Why were sword energies and black waters pouring down from the heavens?

They couldn't have appeared out of nowhere. Everything had to come from somewhere...

It struck Xu Xiaoshou then that the sword energies in the black waterfall possessed a wisdom of their own.

"Is it possible that a spirit rests in these grounds?"

Perhaps his wild and thoughtless wielding of his Sword Will had disturbed its rest.

He shook his head violently. He shouldn't be thinking about this right now.

"Again!"

He flew into the black waterfall again. The cultivation platform had been smashed into bits, but there were still a few boulders in the waterfall. He picked one and stood atop it.

He cautiously unleashed his Sword Will, pulling it around his person like a cloak instead of sending it heavenwards.

"I knew it..."

The number of sword energies that fell upon him remained unchanged and didn't increase.

That sparked Xu Xiaoshou's curiosity. Anyone else in his place would have focused their attention on completing their cultivation within three days and getting the h*ll out of this place, but not him. As soon as something caught his interest, he simply had to get to the bottom of it.

Right now, he really wanted to fly up to the top of the Black Cliff and take a good look.

Unfortunately, he couldn't reach those heights...

"I'll focus on 10 Sections of the Finger Sword... and breaking through to the Innate Stage first!" Xu Xiaoshou made up his mind then.

After that, if time allowed for it, he would take a look at what was going on at the top of the Black Cliff. He would possess the ability to do so then.

He pulled his Sword Will in until it became a mere speck on his fingertip. This was so surreal. He couldn't believe that he was attempting to give form to an abstraction that was his will.

Xu Xiaoshou spent a good half of the day attempting to do that to no avail. He had no idea what he was doing at all. He threw himself out of the waterfall so that he could have a break and let his injuries heal at the same time.

"This doesn't seem practical. Will it really work?"

He tried a few more times, but to no avail.

Xu Xiaoshou started to doubt himself. He'd failed even though he'd followed the instructions in the jade scroll exactly. How had the Eighth Sword Deity thought of that step, and how had he succeeded in the first place?

He knew it. There was something wrong with the brains of geniuses...

They didn't think like ordinary men at all!

Xu Xiaoshou didn't charge into the waterfall again. He was a man who thought before he acted. Since the method inscribed in the jade scroll wouldn't work...

He would just have to change the rules!

This wouldn't be his first rodeo.

But something suddenly occurred to him. Why did he have to first release his Sword Will, then resummon it again for the possession to occur?

Wouldn't it be more powerful if it were the other way round?