

Refining the Mountains and Rivers

Chapter 10 – Grandmaster

The outer court disciple finally cried out. He stammered, saying, “It was Xu Jian! I saw him myself. He poisoned Lang Tu’s food and then brought people to kill him at night, finally tossing him over a 100,000 foot cliff. I have already spoken everything I know, senior, please forgive me!”

Qin Yu gripped harder and the outer court disciple’s eyes rolled into the back of his head as he fainted. He turned and left. In the deep of night, his robe seemed to absorb the moonlight, making it appear even darker.

“Xu Jian...” Qin Yu’s entire body was wrapped in a cold aura like a ghastly ghost. A cruel anger blazed in his eyes, but he hadn’t lost his reasoning.

It was more than Xu Jian who was responsible for killing Lang Tu. If he wanted to take revenge, then he couldn’t let any of the culprits live. And, although he was at the Foundation Establishment realm, he had never learned any offensive magic arts. He only had the demonic Corpse Sealing Needle at his disposal, and he might not be able to win in a direct confrontation.

Qin Yu lifted his right hand, looking at his white and pale fingers. He whispered. “Then how about poison?”

The night faded away and light once again covered the earth. The quiet peace surrounding the Eastern Mountain Sect was broken up by the morning chaos as outer court disciples started to leave their residences and begin their daily chores. No one knew that there was a disciple who woke up early in the morning filled with horror and hesitation. But, as this disciple discovered that everything seemed normal and tranquil, he finally chose to stay silent.

Qin Yu easily entered Xu Jian’s courtyard. As one of the leading figures of the outer court disciples, not only was his residence large but the buildings were crafted with much more quality. One could see this from the fact that the courtyard had an underground wine cellar.

Blue bricks formed the vault and the ground was swept clean. The wine racks were the color of wood and emitted a light fragrance that mixed with the aroma of the wine, making it even more enchanting.

Qin Yu glanced around and saw an opened wine pot. There was still a bit of wine within, and this should be leftovers. Once this sort of wine was opened up it had to be finished in a short period of time, otherwise it would sour if left in contact with the air for too long.

He carefully unsealed the wine and dipped his finger within. Afterwards, he wiped away the liquid and resealed the wine pot to its original state. Then, he turned and left.

Xu Jian was a connoisseur of wine, and this was a fact that many people were aware of. He always had many lackeys around him, and this was in large part due to the massive number of good wines that the Xu Family sent up every year. He was able to share his wine with his lackeys, winning over their hearts like this.

And tonight was no exception.

Lang Tu had died and Xu Jian had personally thrown him off a 100,000 foot high cliff. The cliff was so high that one couldn't see the bottom. And, there was a raging river beneath, so anyone that fell in would be unlikely to survive, no matter how good their luck was. But that brat had been troublesome. Even after being poisoned he still seemed to possess a supernatural strength. As Xu Jian thought of this, he felt a stabbing pain in his chest once more.

Luckily, everything had ended. There was still Qin Yu who might be alive. But after staying in that place filled with pill toxins for an entire year, even if he were barely managing to stay alive he was likely dying a slow and excruciating death.

Humph, all those who dared oppose him would suffer miserable ends!

Xu Jian was happy as he thought this. He raised his cup to drink wine. But then, doubt flashed in his eyes. How come there was an additional fragrance in the wine? Could it be because of the contact with the air?

As someone who loved wine, he was prepared to study this new turn of events. Just as he was about to bid others to drink the wine, there was a sudden stabbing pain in his stomach. This sort of feeling was as if someone had stabbed a saber in his stomach and was ruthlessly stirring it around, turning his insides to mush.

Xi Jian's face turned pale white, without the least bit of red. He fell to the ground and opened his mouth wide, trying to call for help, but he couldn't make the tiniest sound. His body bent like a dried shrimp and he crazily scratched at the ground until his nails began to break and his skin cracked. Soon, the rank smell of blood filled the air. His eyes filled with horror as he struggled with pain. Finally, he stiffened in despair.

Qin Yu stood atop a tree, coldly watching everything occur in the courtyard. When Xu Jian's struggling form finally completely stiffened, he turned his head and departed. The world of cultivators was filled with innumerable mysteries. He didn't reveal his presence because he didn't want to leave behind the slightest clue that it was him.

Without delay, Qin Yu returned to the disposal department and made his way to the underground medicine field. He set up a tombstone near the medicine field, one without a body in it. He sat on the ground, without wine, without food, and with hands stained with dirt.

"Potato, do you see how easy it is to kill people? Even without leaving behind any clues, you can make them taste excruciating pain until the moment they die. So, you must admit that this young master here is far more intelligent than you are. But, I still have to scold you. You studied beneath me all these years and called me young master, so how come you weren't able to take in just a little bit of my intelligence? I can't believe that you died so easily. Do you even know what you've missed out on? This young master here was already prepared to share and enjoy the effects of this little blue lamp with you!"

Qin Yu pulled the little blue lamp from his chest and a foot of sea-blue light bloomed with it. "Look, this is the little blue lamp. The name I gave it is appropriate and easy to remember. Aren't you curious how Wei Wei rose so rapidly? Then, let me tell you. This is the reason, and with it, this young master here has also managed to step into the Foundation Establishment realm!"

He rambled on for a long, long time. He even took out a number of pills and placed them in front of the grave.

Qin Yu's mouth felt dry. He wiped his face and began to pick up the pills again. "You died so you don't have any use for these pills. I'll keep them for myself, but from today onwards, I will give you the title of young master. You can rest well here; no one will come to bother you."

He turned and left, crawling up from the tunnel and then falling onto the dirty bed. This was the first time that he hadn't cultivated for a day in the last eight years. Like this, he fell into a deep sleep.

This sleep continued for three days and three nights, as if he was releasing all the exhaustion within his body. When Qin Yu's eyes opened once more, his mind had returned to tranquility. At least, he appeared so on the surface. He began to cultivate once more, and his actions were even more earnest and serious than they were in the past. He even neglected to eat and sleep.

This was because Qin Yu had personally experienced just how frail life could be. Lang Tu's death had made him realize that only with sufficient strength could one continue living on in peace.

But after several days, Qin Yu paused his cultivation. This was because he discovered that after breaking into the Foundation Establishment realm, the effects of Minor Spirit Pills and Essence Augmenting Pills had precipitously fallen; they could no longer quickly increase his cultivation.

The reason behind this was simple. The pills of the Energy Refining realm were certainly limited in use for a Foundation Establishment cultivator. If he wanted to solve this problem then what he needed were pills of a higher rank.

After a day of thought, Qin Yu left the disposal department in the deep of night once more. He glanced up to discern which direction he needed to go in and then quietly left.

After an entire year, the waste pills that had accumulated at the furnace below had nearly been completely used up. If he wanted to continue using pills to cultivate then he could only find them from the outside. But this decision also carried its own risks. Even so, Qin Yu still decided to attempt it. If he could smoothly carry out his plan, his harvests would surely be amazing!

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East Stream Town was not particularly large. It was around seven or eight main streets in size, but in the surrounding 1000 miles it was known as the most famous trading town square. The Zeng Family's Pill Treasure Pavilion was the most renowned shop in town, and their business model was focused on trading in pills and materials. Because of their reliable quality and reasonable prices, they had an excellent reputation in the outside world.

Beneath the light that filtered through the colored glass windows, the shopkeeper's eyebrows were tightly wrinkled together. He was currently calculating the recent sales of the shop, and the more he calculated the uglier his complexion became.

In the last half month they had sold 421 portions of pill materials, over twice that of usual times. However, the amount they took in was less than a hundred portions, and the volume of pill sales had also fallen by almost 40%.

The shopkeeper had managed the counter for 50 years and had long since developed an instinctual feeling. He could smell something strange about this matter.

"Go and check for me, investigate what is going on here." The shopkeeper waved his hand and a shadowy figure quietly departed from the corners of his eyes. The Zeng Family had dominated East Stream Town for the last several hundred years, and the main reason for this was the powerhouses they were able to produce from their family. And, it was also related to the powerful subordinates that they were able to nurture.

The shopkeeper was confident that as long as the Zeng Family moved, no matter where this undercurrent came from, it would be impossible for them to hide.

Two hours later, several light pieces of paper were delivered to the shopkeeper. As he glanced through them, the carelessness on his face immediately disappeared and beads of sweat began to form on his forehead. He didn't dare to delay further. He grabbed these papers and roared out for his men to prepare his carriage as he quickly rushed over to the Zeng Family residence.

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The vast and boundless mountains were like titanic beasts lying low on the ground. They extended to the end of the horizon, stretching out for tens of thousands of miles. The mountains were covered in poisonous miasma and had monster beasts and demonic creatures wandering the lands. Because these places were rarely visited by outsiders, they were able to maintain a massive amount of spirit grasses and spirit herbs. A great part of the reason East Stream Town had obtained its current status was because of its

proximity to these mountains. Countless monster hunters and gatherers would set out from this place.

Cao Hua was one of these monster hunters.

His origins were unknown, but he had slaughtered his way through these vast mountain ranges for the last seven or eight years without dying; this was sufficient proof as to how fierce he was. He gradually rose to fame over the years, and even gained some respect. When others saw him, they would even call him Brother Cao.

“Brother Cao, you’ve been so leisurely recently. It seems that you haven’t entered the mountains for the past several days.” On a nearby street, a man with a barrel-like chest loudly greeted as he opened the front of his wine shop.

Cao Hua laughed. “Is it bad for me to rest? If I always go into the mountains I might suffer some accident and lose my life!”

The wine shop owner laughed and several nearby people smirked. Since he was a monster hunter then he had long since stopped caring for his life. If he didn’t place his head on the line, then how would he exchange materials for pills to increase his cultivation?

If he feared death then he shouldn’t be here!

Cao Hua quickened his steps and turned into an alley, leaving the raucous laughter behind him. A trace of a smile appeared on his lips.

What a bunch of idiots!

Right now I have plenty of spirit stones, so many that I can’t even spend them all, so why would I go with you all into the mountains and risk my life to fight for scraps?

Thinking of the little courtyard, Cao Hua’s heart began to heat up. Then, anxiousness appeared on his face. “The more time passes the more people will know of this. I have to seize this time to earn as much as I can.”

With these thoughts in mind, Cao Hua’s steps quickened to the point that he nearly ran out of the alley. He was all smiles as the little secluded courtyard appeared before him.

But soon, the smile froze on his face.

Several carriages were calmly parked on the street. The massive carriages nearly took up the entire street, and the tall and large horses were decorated in luxurious outfits. However, what left Cao Hua shocked the most was the black thorn family emblem that was carved into the side of the carriages.

The Zeng Family!

He still had the materials he had purchased from Pill Treasure Pavilion in the folds of his robes. The back of Cao Hua's robes began to turn wet with a cold sweat. And all of this happened in an instant. After living atop the edge of a blade for so many years, he had long since developed an instinctual feeling for these situations. He lowered his head to express his awe and prepared to pass through the street to the other side.

But at this moment, a voice sounded out from the carriage that caused him to freeze up.

"It's him?"

"Yes, miss."

"Ask him."

"Wait a moment."

The dialog was unhurried and casual. Cao Hua had more than enough time to leave, but it was like his feet had taken root in the ground and he didn't dare to move at all.

The shopkeeper that was standing in front of the carriage stood up straight, his eyes coldly sweeping out around him. "It seems you're smart enough to not run away; at least you don't have to suffer so much. Come with me. Now, tell me, what did you come here for?"

Cao Hua followed him with a pale complexion.

After a moment, the shopkeeper returned to the side of the carriage. He respectfully said, "Miss, I have questioned him. He is the same as the previous three, exchanging for a portion of three to one." As he spoke he

looked towards the nearby courtyard, a deep wariness and cautious in his eyes.

The carriage quieted down. The woman within seemed to be deep in thought. After several breaths of time, the carriage door was pushed open and a flash of blue fluttered down. Her looks weren't amazing and the slant of her eyes made her seem a bit naive, but when all of this was combined together she actually exuded an incredible charm. Every movement, every action she made seemed to captivate the mind.

She looked around before her eyes eventually fell on the tightly closed doors and the courtyard that was oblivious to the outside world. Zeng Mo'er's eyes flashed. "I'm going to take a look."

The shopkeeper's eyes widened. "You can't..."

Zeng Mo'er waved her hand, interrupting him. "I came to ask for a pill, and I'm following their request, so how could they dare to embarrass me?" As she spoke her eyes glanced towards the last carriage at the very back, and her heart calmed down, feeling much safer.

The shopkeeper had no way of stopping her. He could only follow behind with a morose expression, carrying with him the prepared materials. This young miss was the most beloved pearl of the high ancestor. He hoped that nothing happened here, because if something did he would prefer to kill himself earlier so that his family would still be able to live on.

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There was a knock on the door.

The courtyard was quiet. But as the shopkeeper frowned and prepared to knock again, the sound of lazy footsteps rose from within.

The courtyard door opened, revealing a tall youth. He couldn't be called pretty, but he emitted a somewhat dashing aura. However, his eyes were bloodshot and he seemed seriously tired, making him appear a bit stiff.

"Are you here to ask for pills? You know the rules."

Zeng Mo'er smelled the fragrance of medicine and bowed in greeting. "I heard that a Grandmaster arrived at East Stream Town. I am Pill Treasure Pavilion's

Zeng Mo'er, and I have come to request an audience. I didn't think that Grandmaster would actually be so young, it is truly beyond my expectations."

The young man's complexion changed. He waved his hand. "There's no need to talk nonsense. The alchemist is m...the Grandmaster. I'm only responsible for running errands."

"Oh. Then I apologize for my rudeness. May I ask fellow daoist to pass on a message for me, that a junior from Pill Treasure Pavilion's Zeng Family has come to seek an audience?" Zeng Mo'er smiled.

The young man shook his head. "Grandmaster does not receive guests. If you are here to request a pill then offer up the materials. Otherwise, please leave."

Zeng Mo'er's face stiffened. Her complexion began to darken. "Fellow daoist, it would be best if you passed on my message. My Zeng Family could be considered a powerful faction within East Stream Town. Could it be that I don't even have the qualifications to seek an audience with the Grandmaster?"

The young man rolled his eyes. With a loud bang, the door slammed shut and his footsteps soon faded away.