

Author's Note:

Thank you for being the best readers on Patreon! Here is the link to the [Google Docs](#) for those who prefer it.

Part 10

Little Spring's brow furrowed.

I waited.

He pressed his hand to his cheek in contemplation and smiled while looking into the distance.

I crossed my arms and narrowed my eyes at him.

Before I could chastise him for taking too long, he said, "I don't have something I want right now so, you'll just have to listen to a future request of mine when I succeed." Cheeky. Assuming he'll beat me. "And if you win..." He paused.

I flicked his glabella and he scowled.

"Bets only work if you have something the other party wants." And what did this brat have that I wanted? Nothing.

Besides, I didn't like the look on that kid's face. He was up to something, like planning to get out of some inevitable hell training.

"Then since I'll get a future request, how about I agree to give you any natural treasure I come across in the future, no questions asked?"

Oh, snap... Normally I wouldn't be tempted, but Little Spring was the universe's protagonist. There was no telling what heaven-defying shit he'd come across. Just the random brick of metal some protagonists stumbled upon by accident could cause all the weapon and tool smiths of the world to weep with envy.

I'd seen it happen with that reprehensibly lucky motherfucker, Bloodsword.

Of course, if I lost, it meant we could put a stop to this constant cooking and testing that was draining my resources and patience.

I was a little worried about what he wanted... but the way he phrased it made it sound like I only had to listen and not approve of it. Muahahaha! I would show this brat what the term 'rules lawyer' meant if he asked for something unreasonable.

Besides, I knew this kid, he would never go too far. As the only other disciple of Immortal Zhenren, the master of logical alchemy, he was very rational, so what he ended up wanting would definitely make sense.

No matter what happened, I would win! This shouldn't be like the last bet where I took a loss.

Also, if I agreed, it would be a good chance to run an experiment I'd wanted to run for a while. My goal was to find out if I could use the 'Xianxia protagonists' always win' trope for my own benefit. My hypothesis: If a protagonist makes a bet, regardless of winning or losing, they will always come out on top.

"Deal."

He rubbed his hands together like he'd already succeeded.

"So, what's your winning idea?"

"Well, your pill is perfect as is."

"Obviously. I'm just that good."

He pointed to several chopped-up edible alchemical plants. "But I noticed these ingredients taste best together. They have an extreme, I think you called it 'buttery' flavor."

I nodded.

"But alchemically, they have to be paired with these leafy greens that have an overpowering cilantro taste."

I pointed to the Deviant Sharpness Garlic and five other plants. “You also have an idea for these?”

“Yes! I realized that using all of these all at once tastes terrible.”

“So you’ll spread them across multiple meals or something?”

“Let me cook! I’m not done explaining yet.”

I held up my hands while regretting teaching him that phrase.

“You see, we’ve been cooking the wrong protein!”

I held up a finger for each one I named. “You’ve tried eagle, venison, chicken, goat, fish, and even tiger for some reason. What other meat is left?”

”Crab!”

Right, the crabmeat from two years ago. We still had a bunch unused since the kid couldn’t work out how to remove the horrible astringent flavor.

”Did you figure something out?”

He nodded happily. “After communicating with Master Chef Garlic. But there’s also something else that’s important for a full meal that we’ve overlooked.”

“What? Are you talking about side dishes?”

“That’s right! Not multiple courses, but side dishes! We need to separate it into many flavorful sides where we don’t use each herb all at once.”

“You mean you’ll do it since you don’t want me to even touch your ingredients anymore?”

He gave me a look as if I was the one being childish. Ha! “Just watch!”

I sat down at the table, crossed my ankles, and waited as the little chef took out a sizable chunk of white crab meat. He eyed it with determination and

used his sword Qi to slice it into ten beautiful steaks. With a wave of his hand, he sent the other nine portions back into the time-freezing area.

With a flick of his wrist, he brought out several bowls, including a tiny one, in which he portioned a small part of the pseudo-cilantro with the butter herbs. He then poured in a combination of spiritual truffle oil and the Three Knocks Coconut Oil I had painstakingly pressed for the brat. He set that aside.

Ha! He called me cursed in the kitchen, yet used my tools and had *me* help prepare raw ingredients. I should make him regret using the word cursed in the same sentence as my name. Next time he asked for a new raw ingredient, I'd make him do the hard part!

Wait. He wasn't doing anything with the bowl. Did this kid just invent a butter cilantro sauce by incorporating edible alchemical plants on the fly?! Impressive.

He filled in the various dishes with other portions of the ingredients.

In one bowl, he placed the crab meat, then poured in a large amount of spiritual vinegar and soy sauce before letting it sit.

Of course, while he was doing that, he simultaneously used his spiritual energy to prepare a few other side dishes that each had a portion of the ingredients in some way.

For one, he used his sword Qi to mince the Sweet Carrots and threw them into a dish with chopped-up spiritual walnuts, sugar, rice flour, and a Golden Goose Egg. Then he beat the mixture with a long pair of chopsticks before shaping them into little buns and putting them on the stove to steam.

Was this brat making cakes or a weird mochi?! What the hell was this?

What confused me was that after soaking the crab meat, he took it out and separated it into two sections. One he minced and threw into a bowl with some flour. For the other portion, he cut it into small cubes and put it back into the vinegar and soy sauce mixture.

Next, he started boiling spring water in a wok. When he threw the rest of the butter and cilantro herbs inside and let it simmer, the scent of both filled the kitchen and made me salivate.

With a flick, he pulled the cubes of crab meat out of the bowl they were soaking in and gently placed them in the boiling water. He tossed in various spices and dried red peppers and put the bamboo lid on top.

While that boiled, he went back to the other crab bowl. He added salt, an egg, oil, a bit of sugar, green onions, garlic, and a mixture of sodium bicarbonate. All spiritual in nature.

The baking powder was something I'd ground up for the brat after he mentioned wanting to make me the cookies I had in my past life.

Frankly, the only reason I knew the recipe for that was because I'd read one or two of those highly addictive villainess stories in my past life. Those authors had a penchant for bringing baking soda and cookies into fantasy worlds for profit.

Sadly, that brat still had yet to bake me cookies, since I ground that shit up for him. His excuse was that creating recipes with spiritual ingredients was harder than regular ones. He refused to let me even see his work until he figured out the perfect proportions that matched the snickerdoodles I had described. Whatever. He'd get around to it, eventually.

He made three little biscuits out of the dough and threw them into the clay oven.

Okay. Now I was jealous. The brat was making fucking crab biscuits. I'd mentioned them in passing when he asked me to describe the food I'd enjoyed from my original world. He must have been experimenting with the crab meat to get those perfect.

He also made a vegetable dish using the rest of the carrot, green onions, salt, pepper, chili oil, and the last pinch of the butter and cilantro herb combination.

By the time everything was plated and sitting in front of me, my stomach tightened. The meal seemed to shimmer with spiritual energy. It was a good thing I'd practiced grain liberation or I would be pissed that I couldn't try anything there. Especially since it smelled so delectable. Better than the nostalgic memories I had of the food from my past-past life.

[\[Image Link\]](#)

I had to remember that this was Little Spring's medicinal meal, not dinner. Damn it! I had gotten too used to eating and enjoying good-tasting spiritual meals regularly.

Since I'd watched where he placed each of the ingredients, I did a few quick calculations, then separated out a small bite from each dish onto a plate, and filed off a proportionate amount of the pill I'd made. I handed him the test portion.

"I hope this is it because you'll regret it if you went through all this trouble to make this beautiful meal only for you to not eat it."

He scowled. "Sister Lin, don't curse me!"

I grinned. He was torturing me with food that reminded me of my past-past life. Ones I couldn't taste. Me cursing him should be the least of his worries. No, what he should be worrying about was how I would torture him back.

He brought the plate I handed him towards his face. It must have smelled amazing because he briefly smiled down at his hard work before taking each bite in a specific order. He started with the vegetable dish, then the crab biscuit. He added a bit of spiritual rice and placed the small portion of pale cubed crab meat on top after dipping it in the butter cilantro sauce he made. When he stuffed it into his mouth, he closed his eyes as if it was the best thing he'd ever tasted.

Goddamn it. I wanted to try it too!

No, I had to remember my training before this kid ruined my ascetic ass; those empty-stomach years I had lived on spiritual energy alone. Food was unnecessary. It was a weakness.

It smelled so good. Fuck.

He finished by consuming the tiny bite of the weird carrot mochi cake thing he'd made.

I quickly used my divine sense to see if there were any changes in his body. To my shock, the energy that entered his system appeared more effective than the terrible-tasting soup we made together. Hell, it might have even worked better than the bath I'd made!

Shit! This would really piss off those golden core elders who had already suffered through the baths. We absolutely couldn't tell anyone about this or I would become their number one enemy!

I tossed him the rest of the pill. "Take this and finish your meal. Let's make sure it's fully successful before I declare you the winner of our bet."

I apparently didn't have to tell him twice because he practically inhaled each dish while I stoically watched. As soon as he finished the last bite, a look of immense satisfaction appeared on his face. Suddenly, his eyes grew wide, and he exited the space.

The hell?

I followed him, winding up in his immortal cave. The kid sat in the lotus position as epiphany energy flowed into him.

It made sense that he leveled up as an immortal chef from his wonderfully innovative meal and pill combination.

He was simultaneously directing the energy from the meal and pill while also cultivating the new energy to make his body even stronger and more attuned to immortal cooking. It must have been an incredibly profound

epiphany because it manifested physically in the form of grass and flowers growing around Little Spring.

I went outside his cave and acted as his protector, as his older martial sister should. Within an hour, heavenly energy ceased. When I went inside to check on him, his husky-like ears had already vanished.

[\[Image Link\]](#)

"Congratulations on your epiphany."

He grinned. "Thank you, Sister Lin! Also, I won the bet. Don't forget!"

This fuckin...

"You still have white hair, but you lost your ears. Let's test to see if you can bring them back?"

He focused, and they sprouted on top of his head in a way that totally would not make sense if I actually looked at the anatomy. But, since when did Manhua or Xianxia ever give a shit about that?

I was glad he could bring them back since they looked too adorable to completely get rid of forever. The important thing was that having them or not was his choice.

"Once we return to the Indomitable Will sect, you'll have to hide those from everyone except Ghosty and me."

"Because they show I learned an unorthodox technique?"

I nodded. "While I know the circumstances behind it and won't judge you for it, others aren't as open-minded as me. I don't want you to have to face their wrongful discrimination."

"I'll keep that in mind, Sister Lin." He touched his hair. "What about the color?"

“Once you get it to return to its natural state, you can decide to keep it or not. There are some orthodox methods that will make your hair color change so it’s not a big deal.”

He nodded. “So, you agree that I won?”

“Fine! You won!” Hah.

My conclusion: While more testing is necessary, the hypothesis seems to be true.

“By the way, I can’t help you with your medicinal meals from now on. I’ll be too busy.”

“It would terrify me if you did help me with them.”

I scowled. “Fortunately, you already have the batch of pills I made.”

“Don’t worry. It will be my responsibility to make my medicinal meal daily. I’ll take care of it and I won’t forget to take my medicine and to prepare a meal for you as well.”

“Include some of those crab cakes.”

He smiled so brightly that he seemed to sparkle. “Yes, Sister Lin. I’ll gladly cook anything you want.”

This brat was way too happy. He was probably ecstatic that he would never have to suffer through one of my medicinal baths again.

“Good.” I smoothed his hair which had messed up when he grew his ears. “By the time the war fully starts in earnest in eleven days, you might be as cured as you’re going to get.”

Two large energy signatures rocked through the sect.

For a second, Little Spring and I stared at each other, and then we left his immortal cave. We, along with almost everyone in the area, used our flying

tools to soar up into the sky. Far in the distance, at the opposite ends of the sect, two massive spiraling tribulation clouds expanded out.

With a wave of my hand, I condensed the water from the air into a telescope using a spell similar to a water mirror. I looked through it and focused on the thinner of the small human-shaped figures. It was Noxious Fangstrike. Then the other must be Resentful Shadow Snake. They both stood in mid-air, wearing gold armor, and stared up at their gathering clouds.

This was the start of their tribulation, and it was a damn race. Which one of these guys was going to finish first? Or at all?

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Author's Note:

Thank you all for reading! You are the best readers a writer could ask for!

I apologize for the late chapter. I ended up needing to write what I thought was the last bit of the AFS special this week... It ended up being 12k words more than I thought and took me till Friday. But getting back into the writing fast habit will be good for the coming two week break where I will write the rest of Story 11.

There won't be a regular chapter next week as I'll be posting the April Fools Story (hopefully by Friday but at least before Royal Road gets it). It's only a few days earlier than Royal Road, but you will have it in full and almost all at once while they'll have to wait for hourly updates. The story (that was supposed to be a short 5k) ended up being around 24k words (14 chapters) before my content editor got his hands on it. That is only 6k shorter than the original one.... This shows that I am a *terrible* estimator for how long a story will be (I've only met a handful of authors who are good at it though tbh).

