

Chapter 18: Pill Furnace

Just like how Li Lang planned, his little outing to gather materials had ended successfully without incident. The talisman he had bought at a high price proved to be worth it, as no Qi beast had neared him or his party throughout his time in the forest.

He led the group of kids back into the city before the effect wore off and had them carry all their gains back to his inn.

“Thanks, everyone. Here’s your pay for the day. Remember to come back tomorrow on time for the sodas.”

“Yes!” they shouted as they excitedly counted their earnings for the day.

Having been dismissed, they began to disband. However, before the last of them could leave, Li Lang suddenly thought of something and called out.

“You! Stay with me for a bit. I have another job for you.”

“Umm, S-sure thing B-boss,” Wei Ping replied.

“You wait here for a second while I put the herbs away.”

“U-understood.”

After stowing his harvest, Li Lang then brought his helper with him onto the commercial streets of Xiang Yang. He brought him along to help him carry the things he would be purchasing.

Having gathered the herbs, the next step of Li Lang’s plan was naturally to begin crafting the pills. He had spent so much time doing trial and error to figure out how to do it in the lab, and it was time for his efforts to bear fruit.

However, while he was successful at crafting the pill inside Ruby’s artifact space, it was a different matter when done in the real world. Outside the artifact space, he didn’t have access to any of the technological devices that could precisely control and measure units and temperature.

As someone who had spent his entire life relying on advanced automated machinery to do the heavy lifting for him, Li Lang finally had to get his hands dirty.

The first thing he needed to procure was a pill furnace.

With his soda business supporting him financially, he had a modest war chest. Bringing along Wei Ping, Li Lang headed straight for the pill furnace shops he had previously seen around the Alchemist Guild.

It was no surprise they were all located near the Alchemy Guild, where most of the cultivators who had taken an interest in alchemy had gathered.

Walking into the store that the guild recommended, Li Lang navigated through the crowd to reach where the display furnaces were. The first thing he examined was, of course, the cost. The model that was on display in the best area had a small crowd around it, but upon seeing the price, Li Lang quickly moved on to the others.

The price wasn't only high; it was in a currency Li Lang didn't have access to yet. As a store that catered to cultivators, the currency that they charged wasn't simply the metal coins that were most commonly traded. Instead, it was Qi stones, a type of stone that could aid in cultivation. It was the staple currency in the cultivation world, but was only commonly accessible to true cultivators that were at least in the Foundation Establishment realm.

For everyone else, they were regarded as mortals and continued to trade with the metal coins.

The few furnaces in the store that were priced in coins were entirely out of budget, so Li Lang swiftly moved on to the next store.

Unfortunately for Li Lang, his luck wasn't better in the next store or the next one, or even the one after that.

"...All these are charging way too much for just a furnace. How in the world is a beginner-level furnace with no special function so expensive? It's just supposed to heat things up!" Li Lang couldn't help but hatefully mutter.

He was staring at the cylindrical pill furnace the size of a large vase through the window of the eighth store he visited.

"Umm...If you o-only need it to heat something, then I-I can s-show you the stores that sell n-normal stoves if you would like. T-the ones for c-cooking," Wei Ping answered.

Hmm...I only need the furnace as a heat source, so I guess that can work out... I wonder if they'll be mobile enough for me to carry around, though...

"Yeah, we can go check it out. Lead the way."

Wei Ping nodded with a satisfied expression and brought Li Lang back into the commercial area near the gates. It was the area that dealt with mundane, everyday items. They navigated through the small streets for some time until Wei Ping stopped inside a narrow street.

There was a wooden sign hanging above an old musty door depicting a large cooking pot.

Upon opening the door, stale air gushed out at the duo, forcing Li Lang to scrunch up his nose. He passed by sections with sizable iron cauldrons, heading straight for the kitchen stoves he had spotted from a distance.

There were neatly lined up kitchen stoves that were basically blocks of stone with holes in them, and a space to put pots and pans above. Those weighed heavily and were too stationary for Li Lang to bother with, so he proceeded to the sections with the smaller stoves.

Just as he got there and began examining the different models, an old voice called out to him.

“What are you looking for, you brats?”

“Sir...We’re looking for a stove that is easy to adjust the flames with.”

“You young people always want to look for tools that do it all for you, eh? Manning the stove requires some skill and experience, you know?”

“We understand. We want something lightweight too, that we can move around if necessary.”

“So a camping stove it is, then. Here, this one is probably the best one for children like you.”

The storekeeper pointed toward the smallest stove in the store. Li Lang almost found it perfect except for the fact it only had room for one pot, which wasn’t ideal for pill crafting, where one had to handle at least a dozen different materials.

“...How about this one? It’s small and has room for two pots. I’ll also need tall stockpots, too.”

“Of course. I doubt you’d be able to travel with such a heavy set up though, but it’s your call.”
The shopkeeper shrugged.

I only needed to move it around from place to place in case I moved from the inn, so it shouldn’t be a problem.

Finishing his purchase, he strained himself to carry it back with Wei Ping. The two lifted the pots and stoves together and occasionally took breaks on the side of the road. However, they didn’t head straight back for the inn, as Li Lang stopped by a blacksmith first.

“Wait here, Wei Ping. I’ll be quick.”

Unlike the other stores, which had shelves lined up upon entry, the blacksmith shop had a narrow hallway that led further in. It was hard not to hear the clanging produced by a hammer striking something, but as Li Lang approached, the temperature rose.

He reached the end of the corridor and came upon a forge, where a robust man was hammering away on a small metal piece. There were various tools on the wall behind him, and off to the side was a wide sample of products that ranged from weapons like arrowheads, swords, and spears to everyday essentials like nails and cooking utensils.

The clanging of the hammer soon stopped as the man noticed Li Lang entering.

“What can I do for you, young man?”

“I’m looking to buy a large variety of metals from you, whether they be ingots or products. As long as they’re using a different type of metal, I want a sample of it.”

“...That’s quite an odd request. You’re not looking for a completed product?”

“It shouldn’t matter to you as long as I pay, right?”

The man shook his head as he glanced around his workshop.

“Fine, it won’t be cheap even in small quantities, though.”

Once Li Lang got home with his new haul, he quickly dismissed Wei Ping and went up into the privacy of his room. He immediately took out samples of the metals he bought and had Ruby absorb them into the artifact space.

He then dove into his lab and began experimenting with the new material.

“Ruby, help me record the melting point of each of these materials....And the temperature of the materials when the incandescence reaction starts.”

“Understood!”

Even with the help of Ruby, who acted as the lab’s AI, it still took Li Lang an entire night before he finished recording all the data. It was supposed to be a simple job, but the materials in this world were sometimes imbued with Qi, creating a variable that kept fluctuating the readings.

When he was finished, the sun had already risen, so he rushed to complete his morning cultivation session. Despite having reached a bottleneck, Li Lang didn’t stop trying to explore how to progress.

After cultivating, he went on to prepare the sodas for the day and then cleaned himself up.

“No need to come tomorrow, guys. We’re taking a break day.” He said to the kids as they lifted the boxes of merchandise.

“Oh come on boss, we’ve been making a killing!”

Li Lang directed a commanding glare that cowed the offender. There was no way he would listen to their pleas, as he was anticipating a much more important event. The first official session of pill crafting.

“No means no. Go take a break.”

“...Understood.”

After the kids left, he rushed up to his room and collapsed onto his bed.

I hope everything works out okay tomorrow...

With those final thoughts, he quickly fell asleep.