

Bai Xiaochun returned to the sect humming a little tune and feeling secretly delighted. After reaching his courtyard, he sighed.

"I practice immortal cultivation to live forever. People like that who are always fighting and killing are complete lunatics." He sat down in his courtyard, and began to organize the various items he had taken from Chen Fei and his friends. They were by no means rich, which meant that Bai Xiaochun didn't actually make off with very much, although he didn't really care either way. When he was finished, he took out the medicinal plants he had just purchased and examined them carefully for a while. Although he had a profound foundation in plants and vegetation, he actually didn't have much experience dealing with the plants themselves. Now that he was able to examine these plants in person, his observations melded with the information that already existed in his mind. He even scratched the surfaces of some of the plants off to examine their internal structure. After doing some tests, a thoughtful expression appeared on Bai Xiaochun's face, and he pulled out the two random formulas he had acquired. After glancing at the formula for replenishing spiritual energy, he focused on the other formula, designed for mortals who wished to strengthen their physical bodies. "Longevity Incense...." he murmured. This particular medicine formula didn't require the use of very many medicinal plants, only seven. Furthermore, there wasn't anything very special about the way they interacted. However, by using the techniques of mutual augmentation and suppression, it was possible to draw up the power of those seven medicinal plants, crush them into a powder, and then turn that into incense. Two of the plants were even toxic. If a cultivator consumed them, it would merely lead to two weeks of diarrhea. To mortals, however, they would be fatal. "There are many types of spirit plants in heaven and earth. Some can be directly ingested, whereas others need to be concocted into pills to bring out their optimum effects. There are many which, because of their toxicity, can only be used to concoct incense." Muttering to himself, Bai Xiaochun took out the medicinal plants needed for the Longevity Incense, whereupon he began to study them in minute detail. "I'm still not totally confident in this," he thought. "The most important thing to think about in concocting medicine is the success rate. Even the simplest tier-1 spirit medicines still have a high rate of potential failure. "I have ten sets of each medicinal plant. I can't waste them." Bai Xiaochun was a cautious person, and preferred to be confident before doing anything. That was exactly how he had been back when he had absorbed himself in memorizing all the different types of plants and vegetation, and the current situation was the same. Instead of immediately trying to concoct the medicine, he preferred to pore over the medicine formula first. Seven days passed. After fully absorbing the information from the medicine formula, he then closed his eyes and began to analyze the matter further. It was evening when he finally opened his eyes. Then, after a bit more thought, he produced the formula for the spiritual energy replenishing medicine and began to review it. Two more weeks passed. Bai Xiaochun's eyes were bloodshot, but by now, he felt that he completely understood all of the various medicinal plants that were part of these medicine formulas. After more thought, he rose to his feet and walked out of the courtyard. Medicine concocting required a pill furnace, but those were quite expensive, more expensive than Bai Xiaochun could afford. Thankfully, in the Medicine Concocting Pavilion, there were pill furnaces available for use by disciples in their medicine concocting, at the price of a few merit points. The Medicine Concocting Pavilion was on the east side of Fragrant Cloud Peak, not too far from where Bai Xiaochun lived. It wasn't like the 10,000 Medicines Pavilion, which was always teeming with crowds of people. The Medicine Concocting Pavilion was a relatively quiet and peaceful place. After all, even on Fragrant Cloud Peak, people who qualified to concoct medicine were relatively few in number. Of that small number, quite a few already had their own personal pill furnaces, and didn't need to come here to rent one. Bai Xiaochun paid for the right to use the Medicine Concocting Pavilion facilities for an entire month. He was given a personal workshop, complete with a protective spell formation that prevented any interference from outside while he worked. Clutching the wooden key he had been given, Bai Xiaochun quickly found workshop #13

and walked inside. It wasn't very large, and was completely empty except for the pill furnace and the flame which burned beneath it. After sitting down cross-legged, Bai Xiaochun took a deep breath, then examined the pill furnace closely. When he tried to manipulate the flame with some spiritual energy, he found that he could cause the flame to grow much hotter, filling the entire room with intense heat. At the same time, the pill furnace itself began to glow bright red. Drawing upon his foundation in the Violet Qi Control Art, he performed some tests, and quickly got used to the intense heat. It didn't take long before he became familiar with how to control the level of the flame. Finally, he slapped his bag of holding to produce the various types of plants and vegetation. "The Longevity Incense is too important to put first on the list to concoct. First I'll get familiar with the general concoction process, then I'll try. I'll start out with the Spirit Replenishing Pill. That's a tier-1 pill, useful for the fifth level of Qi Condensation and lower." Bai Xiaochun was now completely determined. Expression very serious, he mentally reviewed the medicine formula for the Spirit Replenishing Pill, then began to concoct. He produced the first medicinal plant, then waved his hand, causing the leaves to fall off. Eyes gleaming with concentration, he sent his internal spiritual energy out, forming a powerful yet gentle force that crushed the leaves together into nine beads of sap, which he then dropped into the pill furnace. A plopping sound could be heard, and a green mist instantly rose up within the pill furnace. Bai Xiaochun's eyes gleamed brightly, and as soon as the mist actually appeared, his hands flew through the air as he extracted the stems and veins of the medicinal plant, which he then tossed into the furnace as well. Occasionally, he adjusted the flame, ensuring that more and more mist built up inside the furnace. None of that mist escaped outside, though. It congealed together, swirling as Bai Xiaochun pulled out the second medicinal plant. After catalyzing it briefly, the medicinal plant bloomed with flowers, the petals of which he plucked and put into the pill furnace. Time passed. Bai Xiaochun was completely focused on what he was doing as he pulled out one medicinal plant after another. Soon he was on the eighth plant, and his eyes were shining brightly as he stared at the pill furnace. As he continuously adjusted the temperature of the flame, sweat dripped down his face. Two hours later, a muffled rumbling could be heard from inside the pill furnace. Black smoke poured out, to be absorbed by the room's spell formation. Bai Xiaochun was choking and coughing, and a frown could be seen on his face as he stared at the charred slag inside of the pill furnace. "Failure...." he murmured. Sitting down and placing his chin on his hand, he began to think. After reviewing everything he had done, he didn't begin another batch immediately. After all, he was a cautious person, and whether it came to memorizing plants and vegetation or concocting medicine, he always wanted to do it in the most prudent way possible. He contemplated the matter for three full days. During that time, he reviewed what he remembered regarding his first attempt at least a thousand times. That helped him to identify at least fifty problematic areas. Finally, he took a deep breath, rested for a moment, and then once again heated up the furnace. The actual time it took to produce the pill wasn't very long. Four hours later, the pill furnace emitted rumbling sounds once again, and when the smoke cleared, the spoiled remnants of the pill once again became visible. At this point, his stubborn determination once again rose up. Removing the slag from the pill furnace, he examined it closely, then compared it to the information he had gleaned so far about medicine concocting. He then spent ten more days further examining the medicine formula, as well as the plants and vegetation involved. Finally, eyes bloodshot, he began to try a third time. The third batch seemed much more stable, but just in the moment when the pills were about to solidify, everything fell apart, accompanied by muffled booms. Bai Xiaochun leapt forward and stared at the slag again. After more thought, he sat down cross-legged and closed his eyes to ponder the matter further. This time, he spent nearly half a month. His time in the Medicine Concocting Pavilion was almost up. Finally, his eyes opened, and he gritted his teeth as he began a fourth batch. Eventually, his time was up, and the most recent batch was a failure. If any journeyman apothecary could observe what was happening, he would find it hard to believe. Almost any other person would have attempted at least dozens of batches of medicine within a month's time, and would have succeeded in at least some of them. Even if they only came up with one pill in the end, it would still count as a success. After all, most people viewed medicine concocting as something extremely difficult. If that weren't the case, then there would be more than a mere two master apothecaries in all of the Eastwood Continent. Even journeyman apothecaries were not very common, and most of them didn't have any hope of ever becoming master apothecaries. Of course, the real reason for that was... most people didn't have access to the resources which were

needed to truly develop as a journeyman apothecary. In the end, though, if anyone worked long enough at it, their chances of eventually becoming a master apothecary would be much greater. Therefore, most people believed that the best way to increase one's success rate in medicine concocting was simply to practice a lot! And that was why most people simply pursued practice. After you got familiar enough with the process, your confidence in success would increase. Of course, simultaneously, journeyman apothecaries came to view failure as an ordinary thing. After a failure, one could just begin again, and thus slowly improve. That was especially true of the more ordinary medicinal pills. Ingredients for pills like that were not very expensive, and could be used as fuel for that hard work and practice. However, Bai Xiaochun walked a different path than others. He went much slower, and after every failure, he would spend more time analyzing why he had failed than he had in the actual concocting process. This had a lot to do with his caution. It would even be appropriate to call him scrupulous. Only a bit of that scrupulousness had come out during his time studying plants and vegetation. Now that he was making his first foray into medicine concocting, his scrupulous nature increased dramatically, becoming the most outstanding aspect. Because of that scrupulousness, he was able to identify even more problem areas than the average person would. In fact, the number of problems that other people might identify couldn't even compare. He thought and pondered the matter in ways that others wouldn't even consider, and thus identified various fishy areas. Because of his caution, even the slightest problem was something he would wish to control before he continued with any concocting. It was because of these reasons that he spent so much time thinking. The month had passed; Bai Xiaochun's hair was disheveled and his face was streaked with ash. Exhausted, he left the Medicine Concocting Pavilion and returned to his courtyard, where he sat there thinking and reviewing. "There are still nine problem areas. Once I solve those problems, I should be able to continue with the medicine concocting." Gritting his teeth, he sat there in his courtyard, eyes closed, analyzing the matter, occasionally taking a medicinal plant out to observe and study. Half a month passed before he suddenly rushed out, spent the merit points, and entered the Medicine Concocting Pavilion again. The fifth batch... was a failure! After analyzing the matter for seven more days, he found more problems, solved them, and then tried again. The sixth batch... was a failure! His eyes were bright red. He spent twenty days contemplating the matter before trying a seventh batch. Two hours into the process, no rumbling sounds could be heard. Instead, a medicinal aroma spread out, and Bai Xiaochun's face lit up. There inside the pill furnace were two green medicinal pills. The seventh batch was a success! He tried again, and the eighth batch... succeeded, producing three pills! The ninth batch... succeed, producing five pills! The tenth batch... also succeeded, However, in the end, only one pill appeared. It was not green, but rather, black. Furthermore, it emanated no medicinal aroma, but rather, different odd scent. Even as Bai Xiaochun pondered the matter curiously, the entire Medicine Concocting Pavilion was thrown into an uproar.