

There were no rats or mice on Fragrant Cloud Peak. Such things could not exist in a cultivation location such as this, not unless they were actually spirit creatures. However, ants were a common thing on the mountain.

Ants were an ordinary part of nature, and usually lived in the cracks and crevices of the boulders which could be all over the mountain. They didn't cause problems for the cultivators, and were essentially just an ordinary part of mountain life. As such, few people paid them much attention. Today, however, the disciples on duty around the Medicine Concocting Pavilion were shocked to find that innumerable ants were filing across the ground toward the pavilion itself. The disciples on duty gasped; there were so many ants it was impossible to determine how many they were. The sight itself was enough to make their scalps go numb. "What's... what's going on!?" At the same time, many of the disciples in the various pill-concocting workshops cried out in alarm, and the sound of explosions caused by failed batches of pills could be heard. Although the pill-concocting workshops were protected by spell formations, they were also built into the mountainside, which meant that the ants could easily get into them through the various tiny crevices that riddled the mountain. All of them were heading toward one particular workshop. That was of course the workshop occupied by Bai Xiaochun, who wore an expression of curiosity as he looked at a black medicinal pill. It was at about this time that he noticed the clamor outside, and suddenly realized that the workshop he was in happened to be filled with ants. The ants almost seemed to have gone insane, and all of them were heading directly toward him. "An ant apocalypse has struck Fragrant Cloud Peak!" Bai Xiaochun shrieked, leaping to his feet. Unexpectedly, even as Bai Xiaochun leaped to his feet, so did the ants, heading directly toward the black medicinal pill he held. Bai Xiaochun's scalp was completely numb, and the first thing he could think of to do was throw the medicinal pill away. Almost as soon as it left his hand, the ants changed directions, pouncing onto it. The pill was instantly engulfed, transforming into a ball of ants, the sight of which caused the blood to drain from Bai Xiaochun's face. A moment later, the ant ball suddenly collapsed, and the ants scurried back into the cracks and crevices. No trace remained of the medicinal pill. In fact, not an ant remained in the entire Medicine Concocting Pavilion. The ants had come quickly, and vanished just as quickly. Of course, many of the disciples who had lost the spirit medicines they were working on felt a bit depressed at what had happened, but there was nothing they could do about it. Furthermore, the disciples on duty, having determined that no major losses had occurred, decided not to report the strange incident. Bai Xiaochun knew exactly why the ants had gone crazy, but as for everyone else, the only thing they saw was a mass of ants passing through. Bai Xiaochun's heart was still thumping in fear. There hadn't seemed to be anything unusual with the pill he had just concocted. However, he had been very focused on doing a perfect job, a job even better than the previous attempt. Now that he thought about it, he realized that he had actually made some adjustments to the ratios in the last Spirit Replenishing Pill batch. "Could it be that the final Spirit Replenishing Pill was something extremely beneficial to ants?" Bai Xiaochun shook his head as he thought about how incredible he was. Not only could he concoct shocking medicinal pills, he could concoct pills drove ants crazy. Upon leaving the workshop, he heard the depressed mutterings of the other disciples, and felt a bit guilty. Ducking his head down, he quickly hurried away. A few days passed, during which Bai Xiaochun confirmed that the incident in the Medicine Concocting Pavilion didn't cause any waves in the sect. Finally, he went back, paid his merit points, then selected a different workshop within which to concoct medicine. This time, he started working on the Longevity Incense. Concocting incense and concocting pills were two different things, and required the use of different techniques. Pills were consumed, whereas incense was inhaled. Of course, the final form was different too, one being a pill, the other

being a stick of incense. Considering what happened last time, Bai Xiaochun was very careful in the way he went about working on the Longevity Incense. Two months passed, and after using ten batches of ingredients, he ended up with seven portions. He left feeling quite satisfied, seven portions of Longevity Incense in hand. Back in his log cabin, he performed a threefold spirit enhancement, after which the Longevity Incense changed to a deep violet color. Although the threefold spirit designs were somewhat faint, they were still visible. Furthermore, the feeling he got when looking at the incense was completely different than before. Bai Xiaochun looked thoughtfully at the Longevity Incense, and realized that he himself was also very different than he had been. Before, he didn't understand much at all about spirit medicine, but after concocting some on his own, he was much more knowledgeable. For example, he knew that any type of spirit medicine would have impurities, impurities that shouldn't be absorbed into the body, and yet were difficult to separate out. Such impurities could build up inside the body and eventually become so-called medicinal toxins. That was why many experienced members of the Inner Sect were hesitant to recommend that less experienced disciples consume medicinal pills. Theoretically speaking, much of the medicinal toxins could be expelled out of the body. However, if someone consumed too many medicinal pills and accumulated too much medicinal toxin, it could influence their future cultivation. Therefore, depending on how many impurities existed within a given spirit medicine, it would be classified as one of six different levels. "Low, mid, high, superior, premium, supreme...." he murmured, looking down at the Longevity Incense. If the medicine was more than ninety percent impure, it would be considered a toxic medicine, and wouldn't be classified in the hierarchy. Furthermore, such medicines would never be consumed unless absolutely necessary. If the medicine was around eighty percent impure, it would be considered low-grade, which was the most common type of spirit medicine. Sixty percent impurity was considered mid-grade, and such medicines were not common. In fact, only true master apothecaries were known to produce such medicines. Medicines which were only forty percent impure were high-grade, and were rare. As for medicines that were twenty percent impure, they were considered superior-grade, and if they were only ten percent impure, they were premium-grade. Those were medicines that usually only appeared in large auctions. Then there were the spirit medicines that had no impurities whatsoever, the legendary supreme-grade medicines. Before, he hadn't really understood what he was doing when he performed spirit enhancements on the spirit medicines. But after closely examining the Longevity Incense, he realized that it didn't make it more powerful, the way it did with magical items. Instead... it actually improved the quality of the spirit medicine! The Longevity Incense he held was now only forty percent impure, meaning that it was a high-grade medicine! As soon as he realized this, Bai Xiaochun got very excited. Then he considered the matter a bit more, and decided to make a trip to Violet Cauldron Peak. His purpose was not to visit Big Fatty Zhang, but rather, to visit the only Spirit Enhancement Hall that existed on the south bank of the Spirit Stream Sect. There, Outer Sect disciples could spend merit points to get help from the elders in the Spirit Enhancement Hall to perform spirit enhancements. Although there was still a chance of failure, many disciples frequented the place. After looking around the Spirit Enhancement Hall, and also making some discreet inquiries, Bai Xiaochun was able to confirm that performing spirit enhancements on spirit medicine did indeed reduce the impurities and make them more effective. After returning to Fragrant Cloud Peak, Bai Xiaochun looked excitedly at the incense he had made, then finally lit one stick and took a deep breath. Almost immediately, he felt as full as if he had eaten a big meal. Furthermore, as the aura of the incense spread out within him, he felt warm and comfortable. It was as if the flame of his life force had been fueled, and was now burning a bit hotter. Continuing to inhale the incense, he went on to cultivate the Undying Live Forever Technique. As soon as the feeling of hunger hit him, he took a deep breath, and the feeling quickly faded. The seven sticks of Longevity Incense enabled Bai Xiaochun to cultivate the Undying Live Forever Technique for half a month. During that time, he could sense his Undying Iron Skin growing tougher and stronger. Feeling in very high spirits, he organized his bag of holding, then went down to the market and sold some of the things he had acquired from Chen Fei and his friends. Using the profits, he purchased ten more sets of ingredients for Longevity Incense, and then once again began to concoct medicine. Thanks to his constant caution and attention to detail, his success rate in concocting the Longevity Incense increased, rising from seventy percent to eighty, and eventually reaching one hundred percent. However, he still wasn't satisfied. Although his success rate had reached one

hundred percent, the quality of the resulting spirit medicine was merely low-grade. His skill was not something that could be changed in a short period of time, leaving him with only one option: use spirit enhancement to remove the impurities. When he used the Longevity Incense in cultivation, he would breathe in deeply and feel the true happiness that could be attained in Heaven and Earth. His Undying Live Forever Technique improved with each day, as did his cultivation base, which was now nearing the great circle of the sixth level of Qi Condensation. His greatest progress was with this Undying Live Forever Technique. With only a bit more work, he would be able to achieve a major success with his Undying Iron Skin. Bai Xiaochun's body was far tougher and more durable than before, and when he used the Throat Crushing Grasp, his fingers were an even deeper black color than before. By that time, though, the Longevity Incense was beginning to slowly lose its effectiveness. In the end, it did virtually nothing, causing Bai Xiaochun to sigh. He was aware that if you consumed enough of any given spirit medicine, the body would eventually adapt to it, and it would lose effectiveness. If he wanted to continue his cultivation, he would need a spirit medicine that was even better than the Longevity Incense. Unfortunately, the formulas for spirit medicines like that were strictly controlled. It was impossible to purchase them at the market; they could only be acquired with merit points after being promoted to journeyman apothecary. The only other option would be to go to a larger market, but places like that were some distance away from the sect. After considering the matter, Bai Xiaochun lit up with determination. "I'm going to get promoted to journeyman apothecary!" Considering his experience concocting medicines, as well as his skill with plants and vegetation, it shouldn't be too much of a problem to qualify for promotion. However, just to be safe, he spent the following several days buying a few more random medicine formulas. After concocting each one a few times, then analyzing his failures, he felt much more confident, and went to sign up for the journeyman apothecary promotion test. Of course, the promotion test wasn't something held for a single individual. Only when enough people had signed up would the test be held. After waiting for another month, even as he was pondering some matters regarding spirit medicines, his identity medallion inside of his bag of holding began to vibrate. When he pulled it out, an ancient voice filled his mind. "Tomorrow at dawn, come to the Journeyman Apothecary Hall, where the test for journeyman apothecary promotion will be held."