

Chapter 71: Frightening Cultivation Speed

The cave abode was extremely spacious and after some quiet meditation, Su Zimo contained his excitement of joining the sect. Placing the sect badge around his waist like Xue Yi, he took out the two manuals.

Spirit Peering Art was a fundamental skill in the cultivation world where almost every cultivator had to learn it. Through lining their eyes with spirit qi, one could determine the cultivation realm of other cultivators.

But of course, there are rare cultivation techniques as well that could help one hide their cultivation realm from Spirit Peering Art's detection.

The Qi Condensation manual could be considered as an entry skill for Ethereal Sect.

Everything from opening storage bags, cultivating the Spirit Peering Art, sword kinesis flight, refining elixirs and weapons required one to have spirit qi.

Because Su Zimo had a Fire spirit root, the spirit qi he could manifest from Qi Condensation would naturally carry the fire element.

Before he left, Xue Yi had informed Su Zimo that there would be a welcome ceremony held 10 days later at Ethereal Palace which was situated at the main peak of Ethereal Sect. Along with many seniors, the sect master would be present as well and all the new disciples were required to attend it.

Su Zimo was determined to reach Level 1 Qi Condensation before the welcome ceremony!

The very thought that he would be able to obtain Sword Kinesis Flight once he achieved Qi Condensation had Su Zimo's blood boiling with excitement – he would no longer have to be in the wretched state of being chased by other cultivators!

Opening the Qi Condensation manual slowly, Su Zimo was gradually immersed in the lines of tiny words.

The first step of Qi Condensation was to obtain a sense of qi.

Spirit Qi was everywhere and it was akin to breathing air. However, one would not be able to sense spirit qi without a spirit root.

Following the instructions of the Qi Condensation manual, it took an hour before Su Zimo felt a warm sensation channeling in the air around him.

It was a fresh, unique sensation unlike anything he had ever felt before.

“So, this is spirit qi!”

As his thoughts wavered, the sensation disappeared and he could no longer sense that warm energy.

“This...”

A flicker shot through Su Zimo's eyes as he pondered about it before coming to a realization.

There were three words written on the first page of the Qi Condensation manual – Mindful Qi Condensation.

Only if one was at peace and mindful would they be able to sense the existence of spirit qi. The moment they were distracted, the sensation would dissipate.

But no matter what, Su Zimo was slightly relieved that he had managed to achieve the first step of sensing spirit qi.

After all, there was something odd about the Fire spirit root within him; not only could it destroy spirit testing stones, it even caused the sect's spirit testing gate to explode.

Previously, Su Zimo was still worried whether an implanted spirit root would achieve the same effects as an innate one. Now, it seemed as though those worries were unwarranted.

The second step of Qi Condensation was to absorb the qi internally.

It wasn't enough to just sense the spirit qi – one had to control and absorb it.

The third step was to channel the qi to the dantian.

After absorbing it into the body, one would have to control and channel it to the dantian. That was the only way to ensure that the spirit qi would be fully his instead of being dispersed through the body.

With that, he would have achieved Level 1 Qi Condensation.

Casting aside all distractions, Su Zimo emptied his mind and felt at the warm aura around him before absorbing it into his body slowly.

All of a sudden!

Su Zimo felt a warm sensation appearing in his right hand as a stream of spirit qi entered it.

"Interesting."

The Qi Condensation manual did not mention which part of the body will be used to absorb the spirit qi. However, it was a new experience for Su Zimo to have the spirit qi enter through his right hand.

The stream of spirit qi that entered his body was rampant and wild.

Frantically, Su Zimo worked to control and channel it to his dantian.

The dantian was like the treasure trove of one's body. The moment the spirit qi was channeled in, everything became calm once more.

Level 1 Qi Condensation!

Su Zimo opened his eyes which were filled with excitement and a hint of incredibility.

Night had just descended which meant to say that he had only spent less than two hours.

The fact that he had managed to reach Level 1 Qi Condensation within such a short time felt surreal to Su Zimo.

“Seems like that’s the power of a heaven spirit root.”

Su Zimo smiled.

Now that he had achieved Qi Condensation, he was in a good mood and decided to continue absorbing spirit qi, working towards Level 2 without resting.

His right hand was still the first to feel warm as the spirit qi gushed in endlessly, controlled and channeled by Su Zimo to his dantian.

Su Zimo was immersed in his cultivation and just like that, an entire night had passed.

Level 2 Qi Condensation!

Within a single night, Su Zimo had achieved Level 2 Qi Condensation!

“Isn’t this a little too soon? Is that how fast things move with a heaven spirit root?”

He was a little stunned.

Su Zimo did not know the speed in which others cultivated at. However, he merely felt that it was unusual for him to cultivate that quickly.

After all, he had not even made use of spirit stones and elixirs yet for the previous night.

If he had used them, wouldn’t his cultivation speed be even faster?

He decided to cast aside all his queries first and to ask his other seniors when he had the chance.

The thought of spirit stones gave Su Zimo an idea.

Before he left Ping Yang Town, he killed Zhou Dingyun and had managed to obtain a storage bag.

Now that he was at Level 2 Qi Condensation, he could finally use it.

Taking out Zhou Dingyun’s storage bag, a stream of spirit qi flowed out of Su Zimo’s fingertips as he touched the storage bag gently.

It opened up and a space floated out from within with more than 1,300 inferior-grade spirit stones lined together. Other than another jade bottle, there was nothing else.

He opened the jade bottle – it contained three elixirs as a gentle fragrance wafted out.

Su Zimo whiffed at the fragrance and the calm spirit qi that was contained in his dantian began to rumble.

He instantly understood that those three elixirs would benefit him in absorbing spirit qi.

For someone like him who had just achieved Qi Condensation, this was quite a small fortune.

Su Zimo kept the spirit stones, elixirs, Sanguine Crystal Bow, Cold Moon Saber and the quiver on his back into the storage bag given to him by the sect.

Right away, his entire body felt lighter with one ton worth of weight removed.

The amazing thing about storage bags was that no matter the weight of the items kept in them, the user would not feel it at all.

Opening the manual for the Spirit Peering Art, Spirit Peering Art began cultivating it.

He spent the rest of his time cultivating the Qi Condensation manual in the daytime and The Mystic Classic of the Twelve Demon Kings of the Great Wilderness in the nighttime. Just like that, 10 days had passed.

The welcome ceremony for the seven new disciples of the sect had finally arrived.

Su Zimo tidied his attire before leaping off his stone bed.

Even though 10 days had passed, Su Zimo's Qi Condensation was still at Level 1 and had not increased!

In reality, he was already at Level 4 Qi Condensation by the seventh day and his dantian had amassed a large amount of spirit qi.

However, Su Zimo recalled Die Yue's advice – some of the truly talented cultivators would choose to use the spirit qi to refine their physical body while cultivating.

For the next three days thereafter, he used all the spirit qi he had amassed to refine his body, leaving only a portion left in his dantian.

Even though he made no progress for his Marrow Cleansing section, Su Zimo's body was now much stronger than it was 10 days ago.

He estimated that by now, even a full forced attack by a Level 10 Perfected Qi Refinement Warrior using an inferior-grade spirit weapon would not be able to pierce his skin!

Chapter 72: Mystical Guardian Beast

“Junior Brother Su, I'm Xue Yi. Are you around?”

Suddenly, a voice rang out from outside the cave abode. It was Senior Brother Xue Yi – the person who had brought Su Zimo around initially.

Su Zimo opened the door hurriedly.

Now that they were meeting again, Su Zimo subconsciously activated his Spirit Peering Art and discovered that Xue Yi was a Qi Refinement Warrior with Level 9 Qi Condensation.

“Eh?”

Xue Yi looked at Su Zimo with shock and incredulity, asking, “Junior Brother Su, you're already at Level 1 Qi Condensation?”

Su Zimo could not figure out what Xue Yi meant by that and merely nodded his head, afraid that he might make a mistake by speaking.

“Wow, that’s incredible!” Xue Yi could not help but gasp.

Su Zimo froze for a moment.

It was incredible for someone to reach Level 1 Qi Condensation in 10 days?

If he had not used the spirit qi to refine his body, he would already be at Level 5 Qi Condensation!

Coughing gently, Su Zimo asked, “Su Zimo, how long does it normally take for someone to reach Level 1 Qi Condensation?”

“That would have to depend on their spirit root. For example, I have an earth spirit root and it took me close to an entire month to reach Level 1 Qi Condensation! You have to understand that out of the three steps, sensing and absorbing spirit qi is the most difficult for beginners to grasp. They either fail to sense the existence of spirit qi or they’re unable to absorb it. All of that will require time to cultivate, test, grasp and discover,” Xue Yi explained.

Even though Su Zimo’s expression was indifferent, he was even more curious in his heart now.

Sensing and absorbing spirit qi posed no challenge to him at all unlike what Xue Yi had explained.

Could that be the benefit of having a heaven spirit root?

The moment he thought of that, Su Zimo smiled. “It might be because I’ve got a heaven spirit root and that’s why I cultivated faster.”

“That must be it.”

Suddenly enlightened, Xue Yi nodded his head. “It’s indeed much easier for those with a heaven spirit root to attain Qi Condensation. I heard that some geniuses take a single day to reach Level 1 Qi Condensation! But don’t feel bad, junior brother. It’s already extremely fast for you to reach Level 1 within 10 days.”

Su Zimo smiled and nodded.

In reality, he had only taken less than two hours to reach Level 1 Qi Condensation!

But according to Xue Yi, even the fastest geniuses require a single day.

How could this be?

He then thought about the explosion of the spirit testing gate, the ashing of the spirit testing stone, his frightening cultivation speed and all the other weird phenomenons...

The only explanation was that the heaven spirit root given to him by Die Yue was much stronger than real heaven spirit roots!

“I can’t teach you anymore. Hence, I have planted a spirit root in you. The quality won’t be any lesser than the heaven spirit root. Next, join a clan and cultivate for immortality.”

That was what Die Yue said to him. It sounded casual and in fact even nonchalant.

But it was only now that Su Zimo realized how horrifying the spirit root she had planted for him was.

Suddenly, Xue Yi frowned and asked oddly, "Wait, that's weird. Junior brother, you've got a heaven spirit root. How come you're in our Weapon Peak instead of Spirit Peak?"

"What's the difference?" Su Zimo asked.

"A huge one."

Laughing, Xue Yi replied, "It's almost time for the welcome ceremony. I'll take you there and explain along the way."

Summoning a flying sword, Xue Yi beckoned for Su Zimo to join him before they sped off to Ethereal Peak.

Along the way, Su Zimo found out from Xue Yi that even though each of the five peaks had their own specialties, Spirit Peak was the strongest with the most disciples followed by Talisman Peak and Array Peak. The weakest ones were Elixir Peak and Weapon Peak.

Spirit Peak's forte was in killing and battle skills. That was why by logic, all those with heaven spirit roots would be sent to Spirit Peak.

A strong mastery of fire is required for both refinement of elixirs and weapons. Yet, Ethereal Peak was not well-versed in fire techniques. Out of the five sects, True Fire Sect was the most knowledgeable towards fire.

In the Great Zhou Dynasty, there would be a competition between the sects once every 10 years where all major and minor sects would participate. There would then be four ranking lists of Spirit, Weapon, Elixir and Talisman for the top 10 of each.

That was a mere 40 people out of hundreds of sects and thousands of their most talented cultivators!

Anyone who could have their names listed on the rankings would not only receive immense prestige, there would be tremendous rewards as well and it was proof that they were the true talents of the Great Zhou Dynasty!

Out of every sect competition, Ethereal Sect would gain the most spots on the Spirit Ranking followed by the Talisman Ranking. However, they've never managed to get any spots on both the Weapon and Elixir Rankings.

That was the reason why Xue Yi could not understand how someone like Su Zimo who possessed a heaven spirit root was sent to Weapon Peak instead of Spirit Peak.

Su Zimo could guess at the reasons why it was so. Firstly, he had destroyed the sect's spirit testing gate. Secondly, he struck out at Array Peak's master, Xuan Yi.

This arrangement might have been a punishment for him. However, Su Zimo was not bothered by it at all.

From what Xue Yi had said, all the Qi Refinement Warriors in Ethereal Sect were all trial disciples and none of them could enter Ethereal Peak, which was surrounded by all five peaks, freely.

Only Foundation Establishment Cultivators were considered as inner sect disciples and would have a chance of obtaining middle-grade spirit weapons and better cultivation techniques.

With Su Zimo's cultivation speed, it would take a mere couple of years for him to become an inner sect disciple.

Before long, the both of them arrived at Ethereal Peak where a majestic palace stood erected not too far away, barely visible through the clouds.

There was a sign on top of the palace with the words Ethereal Palace etched in it.

Xue Yi brought Su Zimo towards Ethereal Palace. Along the way, a statue of a crane stood erect. It was gigantic at 100 feet tall with its eyes shut and exuding an authoritative aura with golden and shimmering, life-like feathers.

Compared to the gigantic statue, Su Zimo and Xue Yi were like tiny ants.

Even though Su Zimo felt that the statue looked familiar, he did not think too much about it and merely commented in praise, "I wonder who created this statue. It's so life-like that it's almost like a real crane!"

"Shh!"

Suddenly, Xue Yi's expression changed as he shushed at Su Zimo right away.

"What's wrong?" Su Zimo whispered uneasily.

Wiping away his sweat, Xue Yi replied, "That's not a statue. That's Ethereal Sect's Mystical Guardian Beast! It's alive!"

"Alive?"

Su Zimo coughed gently and raised his head to look at it again awkwardly.

Because the crane stood there motionlessly, Su Zimo's first thought was that it was a statue.

"What's it perched here for then?" Su Zimo asked again.

Shaking his head, Xue Yi replied, "I've got no idea either. Senior crane usually stays within the Ethereal Palace and it's rare for normal disciples to catch a glimpse of it. I guess we're really lucky today."

Pausing for a moment, Xue Yi looked around with a mysterious expression, whispered gently, "Though, I heard that senior crane's child was bullied to tears by a new disciple recently. Perhaps it's here to settle things with that disciple! I wonder who's the unlucky one, hehe!"

Su Zimo suddenly stopped in his tracks and turned around. Blinking his eyes slowly, he asked, "Say, is the child of this senior crane a crane too?"

"Isn't that just nonsense? Obviously it is!" Xue Yi laughed.

"..." Su Zimo did not find it funny in the slightest bit.

Chapter 73: Tianhuang Mainland

When Xue Yi saw Su Zimo stopping in his tracks with a weird expression, he asked softly, “What’s wrong, junior brother? Why do you look so pale?”

Su Zimo did not reply.

As though he had recalled something, Xue Yi gasped and pointed at Su Zimo with a stutter. “Y-Y-You’re not that... u-unlucky soul, right?!”

Right then, Su Zimo felt a cold wind and goosebumps rising all over his body – it was as though he was being targeted by an incomparably strong being!

Su Zimo’s body froze and his hands and feet turned cold as he turned around and raised his head slowly.

Unknowingly, the gigantic crane behind the both of them had its eyes opened, glaring at them with an icy gaze.

Before the crane, Su Zimo felt that he was incomparably small and that comparison wasn’t merely for their size – it was in terms of power.

If the crane wanted him dead, it did not even have to make a move! A single thought was more than enough!

The air around them seemed to have gone stale as a killing intent spread slowly, making it seem as though the heavens could collapse at any moment.

All of a sudden!

The crane spread its wings and soared through the skies, passing by the both of them and headed towards Ethereal Palace. Its gigantic wings covered almost half of the skies as the wind howled with billowing sand.

In the blink of an eye, the crane entered Ethereal Palace and disappeared from sight.

Within that short moment of a few breaths, Xue Yi’s face had turned pale as a sheet and he was covered in sweat.

He could not help but turn to look at Su Zimo.

Standing where he was, Su Zimo’s expression was unchanged. Other than a slightly pale look on his face, his eyes held no fear.

“Junior brother, aren’t you afraid?” Xue Yi could not help but ask.

Su Zimo shook his head. “If senior crane wanted me dead, he would have struck long ago. Why wait till now and even wait for me before Ethereal Palace?”

“That’s true,” Xue Yi breathed out heavily and nodded.

Suddenly, Su Zimo asked, “What’s the cultivation realm of senior crane?”

“No idea. However, its child has an extraordinary bloodline and is a spirit demon that’s equivalent to an early-stage Foundation Establishment. Imagine, it’s just in its infancy stage and hasn’t cultivated at all. How strong would it be when it grows up in the future?” Xue Yi was clearly reminding Su Zimo to be careful in the future as well.

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Not long later, the haughty man, white bloused woman, little fatty and everyone else arrived at Ethereal Palace too.

When little fatty caught sight of Su Zimo, his eyes shone brightly as he greeted and stumbled over.

“Bro, amazing! You’re already at Level 1 Qi Condensation!” Little fatty snickered.

The haughty man and white bloused woman swept their gazes past Su Zimo indifferently. To them, there was nothing special about reaching Level 1 Qi Condensation in 10 days.

Su Zimo checked out the rest using the Spirit Peering Art.

Within 10 days, both the haughty man and white bloused woman had already broken through to Level 6 Qi Condensation while little fatty was still at Level 5. The other three trial disciples had not managed to attain Qi Condensation yet.

“Say, I don’t know your name yet?” Since the welcome ceremony had not started yet, Su Zimo began to chat with the little fatty idly.

That caused the little fatty to give off a rare look of embarrassment as he chuckled dryly. “My surname’s Pang and my name’s Zi.”

Frozen for a long time, Su Zimo repressed his amusement and praised, “What a great name. How befitting¹.”

“Heh!”

Pointing at the haughty man, little fatty whispered, “That cocky fella’s name is Feng Haoyu and that ice cold beauty is Leng Rou. Bro, have you realized something?”

“What?”

“That guy’s surname is Feng and so he has a Wind spirit root! The ice cold beauty’s surname is Leng and so she has an Ice spirit root. I’ve decided. I’ll definitely not have my son’s surname be Pang. He’ll be called Lei, Guang, An¹ or whatnot. That way, he’ll definitely have a variant spirit root! Man, the thought of it is awesome!”

Su Zimo: “... ”

As they conversed, many cultivators gathered before Ethereal Palace. Most of them were Foundation Establishment Cultivators – Ethereal Peak’s inner sect disciples.

There were also some cultivators that had flown over; they were clearly Perfected Golden Cores.

The five peak masters were present as well, standing before Ethereal Palace with an emptied space in the middle for them.

Before long, a bell rang out from within Ethereal Palace and reverberated through the five peaks and into the valleys.

Accompanying the ring, an elderly figure in his fifties clad in golden robes came forth slowly from Ethereal Palace. Standing before the entrance, he swept his gaze across Su Zimo and the other disciples.

For some reason, Su Zimo sensed that the golden robed elder's gaze seemed to have lingered slightly longer on him.

"I'm Ethereal Peak's master, Ling Yun."

"Ethereal Peak is one of the five major sects within the Great Zhou Dynasty. However, all of you have to understand that the land we're on is part of Tianhuang Mainland which consists of four regions, three oceans and one continent. Even the Great Zhou Dynasty is merely one of the dynasties in the Northern region of Tianhuang Mainland and there are three other dynasties with similar strength to it."

Su Zimo's mouth gaped apart slightly in shock.

The Great Zhou Dynasty was enough for him to look up to back in Ping Yang Town.

It was at this moment that Su Zimo realized how insignificant the Great Zhou Dynasty and even Ethereal Sect was compared to Tianhuang Mainland.

If he had continued staying within Ping Yang Town, he would be like a frog in a well, merely only able to see a pitiable portion of the skies.

But of course, given Su Zimo's current strength, notwithstanding the four regions, three oceans and one continent, it wasn't even enough for him to move about unhindered within the Great Zhou Dynasty.

After taking note of the shock within the eyes of Su Zimo and the rest, Sect Master Ling Yun nodded his head and continued, "Of the seven of you, some have already managed to reach Level 6 Qi Condensation while some have yet to break through to Level 1. Those who are slower need not feel discouraged. The path of cultivation is long and arduous. All of you are just at the beginning of things. Being slow at the start does not mean that you'll always be slow."

"Foundation Establishment comes after Qi Condensation. From there on, you will start on a major milestone of cultivation – core formation!"

"Once you've formed a core, your lifespan would extend to 500 years as you cast away your mortal self and be known as a Perfected being. After that, you will reach the Nascent Soul realm and your lifespan will further expand to a thousand years as you become known as a Perfected lord. There, your sea of wisdom is unlocked as you cultivate your spirit consciousness. Even if you are blinded, you will be able to sense everything around you as your spirit consciousness permeates through the world unobstructed!"

"Post Nascent Soul comes Void Reversion realm where you commit your heart to the Dao and refine your spirit to the void, casting away all impurities from the Nascent Soul. It will then evolve to an Essence Spirit, transparent and fearless of the world. That is when you have truly broken free of the

shackles of a physical body. Other than being able to travel with merely your consciousness, it is also equivalent to having another life as it can assimilate and cultivate a body other than your physical self! Your lifespan will be 5,000 years at that stage and at Void Reversion realm, you will be known as a Dao being.”

Su Zimo was shocked to hear this.

There were nine sections to The Mystic Classic of the Twelve Demon Kings of the Great Wilderness. The seventh section was about core formation, the eight was about turning into an Yin Spirit and the ninth, Yang Spirit.

The Yin Spirit section mentioned that one would be able to perceive their own spirit after breaking through the void. Was the sea of wisdom that Ling Yun mentioned referring to that void?

Did that mean that the so-called Yin Spirit was the immortal equivalent of Nascent Soul?

The Yang Spirit section mentioned that one would be able to obtain a pure Yang Spirit uncontaminated from Yin after refining the impurities of the Yin Spirit. At later stages, one would be able to assimilate with the Heaven and Earth powers and gather their energy!

Did that mean that the so-called Yang Spirit was the immortality equivalent of Essence Spirit?

Lowering his head, Su Zimo tried his best to contain the shock in his eyes.

If he were to cultivate both as a demon and immortal, there was a high chance he would be able to obtain two Golden Cores in the future... two Essence Spirits!

Chapter 74: Level 3 Spirit Fire!

“There are even higher realms above Void Reversion where one would be able to form rain and clouds with every flip of their hands; any thought could cause rivers to reverse, bring about enough heat to burn the oceans and shift stars from their rotations. Every single step would of theirs would cross thousands of meters!”

Those words rattled Su Zimo and the other disciples. It was as though they were already envisioning themselves ruling over the desolates while looking down at the world with disdain.

Who would not look forward to power as such?

Even though many of the inner sect disciples had heard those descriptions many times, it still sent ardor and zeal coursing through their blood.

Sect Master Ling Yun continued with a deep voice, “Head back and work hard on your cultivation. Every end of the year, our sect will organize a face-off between the five peaks and the rewards will be generous. Even though the seven of you have just joined the sect, be it in terms of spirit root or potential, you are exceptional. I hope that there can be some amongst you that will obtain good results in our five peaks face-off.”

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On the way back to Weapon Peak, Su Zimo asked Xue Yi, “What’s with this five peaks face-off?”

Xue Yi chuckled. “Simply put, it’s to choose the best out of the five peaks. For example, for the Weapon Peak face-off, the disciples of Weapon Peak would have a competition with their skills of refining weapons. The disciple that comes out top will get to choose an inferior-grade spirit weapon of his desire from the Spirit Weapon Chamber. As for Elixir Peak, they would compete in refining elixirs. The first disciple would be able to get a Grade 1 elixir such as the Spirit Gathering Pill.”

Frowning, Su Zimo asked, “What if there are multiple disciples who can craft an inferior-grade spirit weapon? How would they differentiate between the best then?”

“Haha!”

Xue Yi burst out laughing. “If any disciple could craft an inferior-grade spirit weapon, they would definitely be the best of Weapon Peak! Junior brother, you’ve yet to experience any weapon refinement techniques yet and so you do not know how difficult it is to craft an inferior-grade spirit weapon. There has never been any disciples who could craft an inferior-grade spirit weapon during the annual Weapon Peak face-off. Everyone could only manage to create pseudo spirit weapons and our master will then judge who has the best quality.”

Su Zimo nodded.

Xue Yi continued, “Actually, for the five peaks face-off, all the other peaks are merely there for show. Everyone’s actually more focused on Spirit Peak’s face-off. After all, the disciples would be competing in terms of battling techniques and pure strength – that’s way more exciting. The rewards are even better as well. Not only do they get an inferior-grade spirit weapon, a Grade 1 elixir, there would also be a Grade 1 talisman as well as a number of spirit stones.”

“Junior brother, don’t fixate yourself on it. After all, both refining of elixirs and weapons would require a large amount of energy and time. Rather than dreaming of other things, the most important task on hand is to steady yourself and focus on your cultivation.”

Even though Su Zimo did not rebut Xue Yi, he did not agree with it in his heart.

As an Elixir Refinement Master, one could create elixirs which would be helpful for boosting their cultivations.

As a Weapon Refinement Master, one could create weapons and that was a clear benefit for raising one’s strength as well.

Most importantly, Su Zimo possessed a Fire spirit root and that would enhance his cultivation speed, saving time.

Within the five peaks, there would be inner sect disciples arriving daily to help the disciples with their queries and doubts.

Upon returning to Weapon Peak, Su Zimo listened carefully to an inner sect disciple’s explanation of the techniques of refining weapons before returning to his cave abode.

The fundamental of refining weapons was to first be able to cultivate a spirit fire.

Spirit fire was created by igniting spirit qi into flames.

There were three levels to spirit fires with their difference shown through their colors – faint red, dark red and scarlet. The deeper the shade, the higher the temperature of the flame and the more the impurities that could be purged.

Above spirit fires came true fires which were faint, dark and pure gold in color.

The first step of creating weapons was material selection.

Be it for refinement of elixirs or weapons, the materials used were spirit items of the universe that contained spirit qi within them.

The second step was the smelting process.

For elixirs, special Elixir Furnaces were required while for weapons, it was Weapon Tripods.

Be it Elixir Furnaces or Weapon Tripods, they were all created using special materials that could endure through heat and not melt.

By placing the spirit materials they chose into the Weapon Tripod and using a spirit fire to smelt it, the materials would be melted into liquid form with initial impurities preliminary purged so that it is suitable for refinement.

Third step, forging.

This step would require controlling the temperature to dip while forging out the shape one wanted for the spirit weapon before the liquid solidified.

Of course, one would require much more effort at this step if they wanted to create something special. However, if it was just a normal flying sword, things would be much simpler.

Fourth step, tempering.

By increasing the temperature within the Weapon Tripod once more, one would then use spirit qi and the flames to strike at the weapon, conducting a secondary round of impurities elimination to ensure that the spirit weapon turns sturdier.

Five step, spirit gathering.

Spirit gathering was the crux and most difficult step of the entire weapon refinement process.

Within the Weapon Tripod, a large amount of spirit qi would be released by the melted materials and they would turn extremely pure under the repeated scorching of the spirit fire.

By gathering the spirit qi and fusing it into the spirit weapon, lines of spirit patterns would form on it.

And that was exactly the history of spirit weapon grades as well.

If a single spirit pattern was created, it would be an inferior-grade spirit weapon.

If four spirit patterns could be created, it would be a supreme-grade spirit weapon!

The reason why the spirit gathering stage was difficult was because if it failed, the spirit weapon would explode within the tripod, causing all their previous efforts to go to waste.

At the same time, there was a high rate of failure for spirit gathering; the more the patterns being tempered, the higher the rate of failure.

Sixth step, quenching.

This was a simple step – simply placing the highly heated spirit weapon into cold water would finish the forging process.

Extending his left hand, Su Zimo activated the stream of spirit qi from his dantian as a weak flame formed in the middle of his palm.

It was a faint red color and emanated a scorching heat. However, his palm did not feel the heat at all.

Level 1 Spirit Fire!

Su Zimo let out a smile.

As the spirit qi dispersed, the spirit fire disappeared as well.

But once he channeled spirit qi, a flame appeared in his palm once more. With that, Su Zimo continued practicing merrily.

Suddenly, he recalled something.

Back in Ping Yang Town, Perfected Cang Lang had shot out a scarlet flame from his fingertips, burning Zhui Feng to nothingness.

Now, Su Zimo finally realized – that flame was a Level 3 Spirit Fire!

The thought of Zhui Feng's death caused Su Zimo's eyes to dim as his mood was damped.

On his immortality cultivation, he had just obtained Level 1 Qi Condensation.

On his demonic cultivation, he was stuck on the progress of the Marrow Cleansing section even after such a long time.

He wondered how long more he would have to wait to take revenge for Zhui Feng.

Die Yue had mentioned that The Mystic Classic of the Twelve Demon Kings of the Great Wilderness would get more difficult towards the end and without her around, Su Zimo would not be able to complete it.

And now, he was already stuck after the Bones Strengthening at the Marrow Cleansing section. What about Organs Refinement and Orifice Clearing later on?

As he fell deep into thought, Su Zimo's right palm gathered a ball of spirit fire subconsciously.

Swoosh!

A ball of flames rose and the scarlet color was rather striking. Shocked, Su Zimo swung his hand and the spirit qi dispersed along with the spirit fire.

“That flame earlier on did not seem like it was faint red?”

Frowning, Su Zimo glared at his right palm before channeling spirit qi to create the spirit fire once more.

Swoosh!

Flames started rising.

A bright light shone across Su Zimo’s shocked face.

Scarlet... Level 3 Spirit Fire!

Chapter 75: Indeed Quite Incredible

“How could this be?”

Glaring at the scarlet flame in his right palm, Su Zimo wondered.

Naturally, he would not assume that he had managed to create a Level 3 Spirit Fire right after learning about it through pure talent.

But, what was the reason for everything before him?

Opening his left palm, he channeled spirit qi and gathered a flame in that palm too.

Swoosh!

A faint red flame appeared.

Level 1 Spirit Fire.

Both balls of flames continued burning in Su Zimo’s palms with strikingly different color and a distinct difference in temperature too.

Dissipating the flames, he tried again a couple more times.

Each time, his left palm would always form a Level 1 Spirit Fire while his right palm could reach Level 3!

Su Zimo thought back to a detail of Qi Condensation.

The second step of Qi Condensation was to absorb the qi internally.

Back then, the spirit qi in the air entered his body from his right hand – what did that imply?

Frowning, he looked at his right hand for a long time but could not find anything unusual about it.

Even after a long time, Su Zimo could not figure out what was going on and decided to let the doubt go for now.

No matter what, it wasn’t a bad thing for him to have a Level 3 Spirit Fire right as he was starting to learn about weapon refinement.

The higher the level of spirit fire, the more efficient the purging of impurities from the materials would be!

Normally, a Level 3 Spirit Weapon could even refine a middle-grade spirit weapon!

But of course, the level of spirit fire was only one of the core factors for a Weapon Refinement Master. They had to be able to control the spirit fire, temperature and the most important process of spirit gathering. If any of the six steps were to go wrong, they would not be able to create any spirit weapons.

For Weapon Refinement Masters, they were divided to elementary, intermediate and advanced depending on the grade of spirit weapons they can refine. Only those that can create superior-grade spirit weapons could be termed as Advanced Weapon Refinement Masters.

For most Perfected Golden Cores, the spirit weapons they use would not be higher than superior-grade.

Therefore, in the cultivation world, if anyone could become an Advanced Weapon Refinement Master, their status would be equivalent to that of a Perfected Golden Core. In fact, in terms of reputation and networking, they would even surpass the average Perfected Golden Core!

However, even Advanced Weapon Refinement Masters would not dare to casually attempt for supreme-grade spirit weapons given the high failure rate.

As a disciple of Weapon Peak, Su Zimo obtained a Weapon Tripod from the elderly guard and spent the rest of his time training on his weapon refinement skills in his cave abode. Occasionally, he would train his Qi Condensation and spend the nights reading into the Marrow Cleansing section.

A month later.

Su Zimo's cultivation realm was at Level 5 Qi Condensation and he was getting better at weapon refinement, having created a couple of pseudo spirit flying swords successfully. However, he still had no progress on the Marrow Cleansing section.

To be accurate, he did not even know how to carry on with it.

The Marrow Cleansing section stated that he would be able to achieve Marrow Cleansing by quivering the marrow with the sounds of tigers and leopards.

Having stayed an entire year in the Cang Lang Mountain Range, he was extremely familiar with the sounds of tigers and leopards. Yet, no matter how hard he tried to imitate it, he could not achieve the desired effect of Marrow Cleansing.

Su Zimo was even almost going hoarse by the end of the month...

He could feel that he was not going in the right direction so he intended to look for an opportunity to capture a tiger and a leopard so that he could slowly work with that sound requirement.

This day, Su Zimo came forth from his cave abode.

Every end of the month, the five peaks would have a simple test held; it was not compulsory and any disciples of the various peaks could take part.

The first place of the test would have a chance to observe the projections of seniors in the sect refining weapons.

One had to understand that every Weapon Refinement Master had a different method of doing things. It was particularly so for the step of tempering in the Weapon Tripod which was extremely secretive and not shown to most people.

Through the entire month, Su Zimo had quite a number of doubts gathered. If he could take a look at those projections, it would be of great help to him.

Before long, Su Zimo arrived at the Weapon Peak's Weapon Refinement Hall on a flying sword.

He took a quick glance and there were more than a hundred people present!

Weapon Peak's trial disciples added up to a few dozens of people – where did the rest come from?

“Eh, you're here, Junior Brother Su.”

Right then, Xue Yi walked over from the side and greeted Su Zimo merrily.

“Not bad, you're already at Level 5 Qi Condensation!”

Xue Yi exclaimed before asking, “Why? Are you here for the month end test too?”

“Yeah, I want to give it a shot,” Su Zimo nodded his head.

“Sure, that's good. You can also learn by looking at the way others go about it,” Xue Yi thought that Su Zimo was merely there to join the crowd since the latter had just gotten started on refining weapons.

“Senior brother, we've only got a couple dozens of disciples in Weapon Peak. Why are there so many people?” Su Zimo asked.

Xue Yi smiled. “Within the sect, any of the disciples from the other four peaks who have an interest towards weapon refinement can come to Weapon Peak to learn and take part in the month end test as well. In fact, even in the year end face-off if they want to. After all, for some of the geniuses, they will want to learn about weapons, elixirs, talismans and array formations even as they cultivate themselves.”

Su Zimo nodded his head – that was the same as what he thought.

Su Zimo swept his gaze casually across the crowd before fixating it on a man clad in purple robes.

The purple robed man looked haughty with his head slightly reared and eyes closed. It was easy to spot him from the crowd.

That man was Feng Haoyu, the person with a variant wind spirit root who had joined the sect at the same time as Su Zimo.

After a month, Feng Haoyu had already gone from Level 6 to Level 7 Qi Condensation!

Xue Yi followed Su Zimo's gaze and said, “I heard that man is called the most talented genius our sect has obtained in a thousand years! With his innate variant spirit root and an exceptional talent, many of the seniors think extremely highly of him. I've even heard that he's going to take part in the year end face-off and boasted that he was definitely going to be the top of three peaks!”

“Top of three peaks?” Su Zimo frowned.

Xue Yi explained, “Even though he’s a new disciple, he has a wind spirit root and by the end of the year, he would definitely be a Level 9 or 10 Qi Refinement Warrior. The only person that can compete with him in Spirit Peak is a woman called Leng Rou. I heard that she’s also a new disciple.”

“Even if he gets to be the top of Spirit Peak, what about the other two?” Su Zimo asked.

Xue Yi lamented, “Elixir and Weapon Peak. Our two peaks are the weakest in the sect. Even though it’s good for the sect that we have a Feng Haoyu, it’s still going to feel bad for us as disciples of Weapon Peak if he turns out top for our peak.”

Su Zimo was confused. “Feng Haoyu has a wind spirit root. In terms of fire mastery, can he compete with Weapon Peak disciples with fire spirit roots?”

“Junior brother, you know that anyone can create spirit fire regardless of their spirit root attributes?” Xue Yi asked in reverse.

Su Zimo nodded.

Anyone could create a spirit fire without a fire spirit root. It was just that in terms of sensing, cultivation and mastery of it, those with a fire spirit root would be more astute to it.

Xue Yi continued, “Fire blossoms with the presence of wind. That is Feng Haoyu’s advantage!”

Suddenly, Su Zimo realized.

Under the influence of wind, fire burns ever brighter.

Xue Yi whispered, “I heard that Feng Haoyu’s already able to create a Level 2 Spirit Fire!”

Stunned for a moment, Su Zimo looked at his right hand and nodded. “That’s indeed quite incredible...”

Chapter 76: Test Commencement

“Quite incredible? That’s extremely incredible!”

Xue Yi lamented softly, “I’ve already been in Ethereal Sect for six years now and I’m only edging at the border of Level 2 Spirit Fire.”

“Heh, let’s not talk about these anymore.”

Picking himself up, Xue Yi shrugged his shoulders. “But if Feng Haoyu really does become accomplished in both refining elixirs and weapons and end up making a name for himself in those rankings during the sect competition, that would be quite the honor for our sect too isn’t it.”

Smiling, Su Zimo nodded.

“Everyone, please be silent!”

Right then, a Foundation Establishment Cultivator appeared at the front of the Weapon Refinement Hall and pushed his hands down, causing the chatter in the hall to die down.

“Everyone, please head forth and select your materials before finding an empty spot within the hall on your own to refine your weapons. The test commences now!”

All of the disciples began dispersing after choosing their materials as Su Zimo and Xue Yi waited before choosing a spot at the back of the hall.

With his hands behind his back, Feng Haoyu stood right in front with a haughty expression; no one dared to stand shoulder to shoulder against him.

Before this, Feng Haoyu had already asked around and found out that none of the trial disciples within the five peaks had managed to create a Level 2 Spirit Fire; the best amongst them was nearly bordering on the edge of Level 2.

Thus, Feng Haoyu was extremely confident that he would definitely be able to top this month end test and obtain the rights to view projections of the weapon refinement process left behind by seniors of the sect.

Bam!

Retrieving a Weapon Tripod from his storage bag, Feng Haoyu slammed it heavily on the ground and the entire hall rattled.

Every single one of his actions attracted everyone’s attention.

None of the hundred odd disciples attending the test were in any hurry as they all looked at Feng Haoyu after placing down their Weapon Tripod.

Feng Haoyu’s lips curled.

Even though he did not turn around, he could feel the searing gazes that contained jealousy and envy.

That was the type of feeling he enjoyed.

The adoration of the masses.

Extending his palm out slowly, Feng Haoyu channeled spirit qi.

A ball of flames rose. It was merely a faint red color – Level 1 Spirit Fire.

The entire hall went silent as everyone watched the man right at the front with bated breaths.

Swoosh!

Feng Haoyu extended his other palm as a stream of spirit qi shot out from his fingertips, entering the initial ball of flames.

With a loud rumble, the flame burned brightly as its color deepened. Before long, it was a dark red color.

Level 2 Spirit Fire!

The crowd went into an uproar!

Even though many disciples of the sect had heard about it, they were still shocked seeing a Level 2 Spirit Fire personally.

A Level 2 Spirit Weapon would improve the success rate of creating inferior-grade spirit weapons greatly and was something that many cultivators would not be able to achieve in their lifetimes.

Sensing emotions running high in the crowd, a look of glee flickered through Feng Haoyu's eyes as he pushed the ball of Level 2 Spirit Fire into his Weapon Tripod where it continued to burn.

He was warming his tripod.

First, the area around the Weapon Tripod had to be warmed evenly using spirit fire and after the temperature was balanced, the materials would be inserted.

Because weapon refinement was a long process, many of the cultivators behind Feng Haoyu began to gather their own spirit fires and work on the tripod warming phase as well.

Xue Yi looked at Su Zimo. "Let's start too, Junior Brother Su."

"Okay," Su Zimo nodded.

Xue Yi extended his palm as a ball of flames rose. Even though it was a Level 1 Spirit Fire, its color was darker and showed vague signs of evolving to a Level 2 Spirit Fire.

One did not have to concentrate too much on the tripod warming process.

Xue Yi circled his spirit fire around the Weapon Tripod before letting it burn at the bottom and turning his head over to Su Zimo. He thought that he may be able to provide some advice given that this junior brother of his had just started on the craft of weapon refinement and might not be used to it.

However, that move of Xue Yi rooted him where he stood.

There was a ball of fervent flames burning on Su Zimo's palm and the color of it was somewhat piercing!

Xue Yi was completely stumped as his mind went blank; he did not even notice that the flames beneath his Weapon Tripod had extinguished.

Su Zimo was learning from others around him as well by surrounding his spirit fire around the Weapon Tripod before letting it burn at the bottom.

The process of warming the tripod was something that was not mentioned when the inner sect disciples explained things previously.

Through the entire month, Su Zimo had not practiced warming the tripod in his seclusion.

"Seems like this test wasn't a wasted trip. I got something out of it," Su Zimo was delighted internally.

"J-Junior Brother Su! Y-Your Spirit Fire...!"

Right then, Xue Yi's stammering voice sounded out in Su Zimo's ears.

Turning around, Su Zimo smiled. "I got lucky and somehow managed to cultivate out a Level 3 Spirit Fire by accident."

He was not saying it out of humility – it was cultivated through accident and he did not know the reason for it till this day.

Xue Yi's eyes were widened as his jaws nearly dropped to the ground.

This was the first time that he had heard someone say they created a Level 3 Spirit Fire out of sheer luck by accident!

Even though their voices weren't loud, the surrounding disciples heard everything loud and clear.

Level 3 Spirit Fire?

Dream on!

Some of the disciples in front turned around and were stumped as well.

An odd tension began to spread and permeate through the hall.

Standing right at the front, Feng Haoyu seemed to have felt something as he frowned. However, he did not turn around out of arrogance.

Within the hall, there was no one worth his attention to turn around!

Suddenly, an ear-piercing shriek broke the odd tension in the hall.

"Level 3 Spirit Fire!"

After that shriek, the entire hall went bonkers.

"Scarlet! It's truly a Level 3 Spirit Fire!"

"Who is this person? He doesn't look familiar! How have we not seen him before?"

"I think he's one of the new disciples who joined this year."

"This is way too incredible. This man is only a Level 5 Qi Refinement Warrior and yet he's able to cultivate a Level 3 Spirit Fire? What sort of talent is that?"

When he heard the discussion going on behind him, Feng Haoyu's expression turned grim.

Standing silently, he composed himself and turned around slowly, looking back indifferently.

The scarlet flame was the first thing that entered his line of sight.

Right after, a face with sharp features and green robes that he had seen before.

"Him again!"

Feng Haoyu narrowed his eyes coldly.

"Mmm?"

Sensing enmity, Su Zimo who was initially still warming his tripod looked over instinctively.

"What keen senses!"

Feng Haoyu remarked internally.

He had already kept his enmity well hidden but he had not expected that Su Zimo would notice it still.

Their gazes met for a brief moment as Feng Haoyu turned back indifferently, haughty as ever.

On the surface, it seemed as though Feng Haoyu did not take it to heart.

However, the Level 2 Spirit Fire beneath his Weapon Tripod had already been extinguished – that was a clear sign of his shock!

Su Zimo smiled and thought nothing more of it. Noticing that his Weapon Tripod was already warm, he was about to insert his materials when a head suddenly popped out beside him.

He was so shocked that he pulled his Cold Moon Saber out of his storage bag and almost slashed forth...

“Greetings, master!”

“Greetings, peak master.”

When the disciples in the hall saw who it was, all of them greeted.

Su Zimo coughed gently, keeping his Cold Moon Saber without a trace.

Chapter 77: Found a Treasure

Unknowingly, the disheveled old peak master of Weapon Peak had made his way to the Weapon Refinement Hall and appeared beside Su Zimo.

The disheveled old man eyed the Cold Moon Saber that Su Zimo kept and asked casually, “Lad, why are you always trying to stab others over every single disagreement?”

When he was joining the sect at the top of the front peak, Su Zimo slashed out at Array Peak’s master right after he came forth from the illusion.

Now, he nearly did the same to Weapon Peak’s master.

With an awkward expression, Su Zimo was ready to disperse his spirit fire and apologize to his master. However, the disheveled old man merely waved it off and shook his head. “It’s fine, continue with what you were doing. I’ll just be watching from the side, no pressure.”

“Alright,” Su Zimo nodded his head.

Pausing for a moment, the disheveled old man patted Su Zimo on the shoulders and commented sincerely, “Lad, you don’t have to be strung up all day all night in Ethereal Sect. Relax, no one is going to hurt you. Don’t brandish your saber for every small reason.”

In reality, Su Zimo’s reaction was trained during his time in Cang Lang Mountain Range and had already become a habit.

Outside the mountain range, every single beast was an enemy to Su Zimo.

Even back in his cave, he had to be alert against the Spirit Monkey’s mischievous attacks; that was why he was so neurotic.

However, it did not mean that Su Zimo would let his guard loose just because of what the disheveled old man said. He would merely pay more attention so that he would not brandish his saber casually.

The disheveled old man continued, “Besides, even if you want to brandish it, you’ve got to see your opponent first. One month into the sect and you’ve already pointed your saber at two peak masters. What’s going to happen the longer you stay?”

“Cough, cough. I’ll take note of it,” Su Zimo chuckled embarrassedly.

Usually, none of the peak masters would appear for a month end test as such, especially not the peak master of Weapon Peak who was known to be lazy by nature.

Yet, everyone present was clear why the disheveled old man was appearing now.

It was definitely not for Feng Haoyu, but Su Zimo.

Right then, Feng Haoyu who was standing right at the front had a burning sensation on his face. However, because he was back facing everyone else, no one could tell of the coldness in his eyes.

Composing his emotions, Feng Haoyu began to warm the tripod once more.

At the back of the hall, Su Zimo had already begun to insert the materials since his Level 3 Spirit Fire was not extinguished.

With all the materials inserted, he channeled a large amount of spirit qi and flames burnt furiously, enveloping the entire Weapon Tripod.

The temperature in the tripod continued to climb!

The process of smelting was to turn all the materials to liquid state using a high temperature before fusing them together once more, removing as much impurities from them as possible.

It was a step that had nothing to do with weapon refinement technique and was a clear indicator of the difference between different levels of spirit fire.

Even if it was an Advanced Weapon Refinement Master wielding a Level 2 Spirit Fire, he would not be able to match an amateur with a Level 3 Spirit Fire during the smelting process.

Before long, the materials in the tripod had begun to melt before turning into a metal liquid that emanated spirit qi.

The Level 3 Spirit Fire continued burning.

The golden liquid burnt within the tripod, bubbling endlessly as the spirit qi inside thickened.

At that, the disheveled old man’s eyes flickered with a hint of satisfaction as he nodded.

The metal liquid glowed bright red as the quantity was condensed through the repeated scorching – that was due to impurities being purged away.

15 minutes later, the metal liquid was no longer condensing.

That did not imply that it was free of impurities – it was merely the smelting limits of a Level 3 Spirit Fire.

The smelting process was over.

Right then, the materials of the other disciples had merely only started to melt. Of them, Feng Haoyu's speed was faster as a metal liquid was formed within his tripod.

Not only was the Level 3 Spirit Fire better in purging impurities, it was faster as well as Su Zimo led the pack far ahead!

The next step, forging.

Su Zimo dispersed his spirit fire and waited for the temperature within the tripod to dip. At the same time, he cultivated and rested at the side, replenishing the spirit qi he had expended.

Forging required channeling of spirit qi to create a pair of spirit hands which would be inserted into the Weapon Tripod. One would then have to forge the shape of the spirit weapon they wanted before the metal liquid solidified.

If one entered too early when the temperature was too high, notwithstanding the fact that the spirit hands may disperse easily, it would be difficult to forge the weapon since the metal liquid would not be completely cooled.

However, if it was too late and the metal liquid was completely solidified, one would not be able to forge as well.

This step was a test of experience.

After five minutes, Su Zimo suddenly bolted up and channeled his spirit qi fervently. A pair of hands appeared in midair that reached into the Weapon Tripod, grabbing hold of the metal liquid.

That was the perfect moment when the metal liquid was malleable without solidifying just yet!

At the side, the disheveled old man was getting more pleased as he watched the focused Su Zimo.

"Bloody hell, I've really found a treasure this time round!"

If not for the fact that so many disciples were present, the disheveled old man could not wish for more than to hug Su Zimo tightly for a kiss right then.

For some reason, Su Zimo felt a gust of cold wind behind his ass and could not help but broke into a shudder.

Before long, a flying sword slowly took shape.

The blade was long without any edge yet – this was merely a rough shape.

By now, many of the disciples had given up on the test and were watching Su Zimo's weapon refinement process instead.

When they noticed the shape of the sword being crafted, a shushing sound spread out from the crowd.

Feng Haoyu was done with his smelting at the moment and was waiting for the temperature in the Weapon Tripod to dip. As he sat where he was to rest, he could not help but turn around to check out the commotion.

The moment he saw the shape of the sword in Su Zimo's Weapon Tripod, he scoffed with a look of mockery and turned back.

After the forging was complete, Su Zimo could naturally sense the strange tension around him.

"Master, have I made a mistake?" he could not help but ask.

The disheveled old man waved it off and replied nonchalantly, "It's not really a huge mistake. You've grasped the forging timing really finely. It's just that you've added an additional hilt to your sword.

"An additional hilt?" Su Zimo froze for a moment, confused.

The disheveled old man asked, "Do you know why most of the flying swords cultivators use do not have a hilt?"

Su Zimo shook his head.

"A flying sword is the most common Dharma treasure for swords in the cultivation world. Its advantage is that its fast, agile, versatile and both ends are bladed. Unlike a normal sword, a flying sword does not have a hilt because the presence of it leads to greater air resistance and in turn, a lower speed and agility."

Suddenly, Su Zimo's eyes lit up.

In the past, he did demonic cultivation and was always engaging in melee combat with others. Now, he was less than a month into immortality cultivation and did not have much practice with swords yet.

At the end of the day, immortal and demonic cultivation were different. Cultivators do not go against others by wielding flying swords with their hands. Instead, they channeled their spirit qi into a stream of energy so as to control flying swords from afar.

During a fight, if a flying sword that struck the enemy has a hilt, the sword would not pass through their bodies.

Without a hilt, the flying sword would pierce their bodies with ease, allowing the cultivators to continue controlling it without being affected.

If the opponent had a body tempering technique which gave them an extremely robust physical body, a flying sword with a hilt may end up in their hands instead.

Without a hilt, the sword would be edged at every point and the opponent would not be able to catch it barehanded.

For a flying sword, a hilt was nothing more than a burden.

Chapter 78: I Don't Care

The disheveled old man consoled him, "It's just a small mistake. Just be more careful in the future. Don't be discouraged."

Su Zimo nodded.

No matter the end result, his trip today was not wasted.

Even though forging looked to be a simple step, there were many factors to consider when shaping a spirit weapon so as to unleash its full potential.

Fourth step, tempering.

The forged flying sword hovered within the Weapon Tripod as Su Zimo reignited a new ball of Level 3 Spirit Fire to heat it up.

Temperature control was crucial for this step.

Too high and the flying sword would melt.

Too low and the desired effect of tempering would not be achieved.

It was crucial to have the spirit weapon burn at a scarlet, transparent color.

Through the past month, Su Zimo had failed countless times at just the tempering step.

After a brief moment, the flying sword in the Weapon Tripod began to turn red. Under the continued burning of the flames, the sword's body gleamed with a bright red.

Su Zimo maintained his control and placed the flying sword at the bottom of the tripod before conjuring a hammer using spirit qi to start the tempering process.

Cling! Clang!

Tempering can not only eliminate even more impurities, it can strengthen the sturdiness of the sword as well.

Out of all six steps, this step was where technique was most important and every Weapon Refinement Master had their own way of doing things.

Su Zimo went about it with pure brute strength as he knocked at the sword.

The disheveled old man who was watching him frowned – Su Zimo was way too rough in his technique and was no different from blacksmiths of the mortal world.

At the same time, Feng Haoyu had begun tempering his flying sword as well.

Unlike Su Zimo, Feng Haoyu was much cleaner in his tempering skills.

Feng Haoyu had a wind spirit root and because of that, the element of wind spirit qi was present in the hammer he conjured to strike at the flying sword. Because of that, the tempered sword would be more agile and swifter.

While hammering, the sharpness of the sword was gradually revealed too.

It was clear that Feng Haoyu was experienced through his technique and faster. Before long, he was almost caught up to Su Zimo.

After five minutes, Su Zimo heaved out a sigh of relief.

He was done with tempering!

For a pseudo spirit weapon, the final step would be to just throw the scarlet flying sword into cold water for the quenching step.

However, Su Zimo had an idea.

Since this flying sword had a hilt and was imperfect to begin with, he could attempt spirit gathering with it!

For the past month, Su Zimo had already destroyed tens of flying swords without a single success on spirit gathering.

Based on what the inner sect disciples mentioned, there was no technique required for spirit gathering and it was more of a luck thing – the luckier one was, the higher the chances of success.

But of course, that was on the pretext that there were no major issues with the four previous steps.

After tempering, Su Zimo did not shift the flying sword out of the Weapon Tripod and instead glared at the spirit qi within it keenly.

“Is he thinking of spirit gathering?”

“If he manages to succeed, that’ll be amazing!”

“Hmph, I think he’s thinking too highly of himself trying to attempt spirit gathering after a single month into weapon refinement!”

A series of discussions filled with shock and ridicule broke out around them.

Casting away all distractions, Su Zimo calmed his mind – this was a step that required absolute focus from the Weapon Refinement Master without any bit of distractions!

Taking in a deep breath of air, he controlled the spirit qi within the tripod and willed it towards the scarlet flying sword.

Through the pressure, a pattern appeared vaguely on the sword. It was faint and barely formed.

“Look, a spirit pattern!”

“It’s really a spirit pattern! But it has yet to take shape.”

“Could he really manage to create an inferior-grade flying sword?”

Right then, Feng Haoyu was just done with his tempering step as well. When he heard the discussions, his heart skipped a beat as he turned towards Su Zimo.

If Su Zimo had managed to create an inferior-grade spirit weapon, he would have to take the gambit and attempt spirit gathering too.

However, Feng Haoyu had no confidence about it. After all, spirit gathering was way too difficult and he had yet to succeed at it too.

The disheveled old man glared at the flying sword within the tripod fixedly, sweat forming on his palms – he was even more nervous than Su Zimo.

Piak!

Right then, a crisp sound rang out from Su Zimo's Weapon Tripod.

It was over!

Su Zimo lamented internally.

What followed was a booming sound as the flying sword exploded with its shards striking at the interiors of the Weapon Tripod.

He had failed!

However, it was to be expected.

Su Zimo shook his head and chuckled in exasperation.

The disheveled old man sighed gently.

At the side, Xue Yi looked on with pity.

At that, Feng Haoyu was finally relieved.

Because Su Zimo's flying sword had exploded, Feng Haoyu had no intention to attempt spirit gathering as well. Instead, he took out the pseudo spirit weapon from his tripod and dipped it in cold water.

Clack!

A thick, white smoke billowed out from the water basin.

The flying sword was successfully created with a sharp gleam and a suffocating aura!

Feng Haoyu placed the flying sword at the front desk and awaited the evaluation results.

Right as Su Zimo kept his Weapon Tripod, a loud voice boomed out in the hall.

"The level of one's spirit fire isn't listed as one of the six steps of weapon refinement. Don't think that you'll become a Weapon Refinement Master just because you can cultivate a Level 3 Spirit Fire."

Su Zimo turned to the voice and met with Feng Haoyu's cold, sneering gaze.

With a fake smile, Feng Haoyu continued, "Junior Brother Su, one has to be tread steadily. If one were to attempt flying before they can even walk, they might end up falling twice as heavily."

Su Zimo furrowed his brows slightly.

The both of them had only met a couple of times before and had never spoken nor crossed one another's paths. Yet, for some unknown reason, Feng Haoyu had a strong enmity towards him!

It was particularly so today.

"Well said, Junior Brother Feng!"

“Fufu, some people are way over their heads because they have a Level 3 Spirit Fire. Know your place!”

The disciples who spoke were not from Weapon Peak; they were Spirit Peak disciples who had come to take the test. There was naturally no way they would give up on a chance to take sides with Feng Haoyu by mocking Su Zimo at such a juncture.

“Stop with all that salty talk! How about talking again after any of you can get a Level 3 Spirit Fire!” Xue Yi could not help but stand up and scoff coldly.

Many of the Spirit Peak disciples found themselves speechless as they looked awful.

No matter what, even if Su Zimo had failed in spirit gathering, it was a fact that he had managed to cultivate a Level 3 Spirit Fire. No one from the five peaks could match that!

Feng Haoyu continued, “Junior Brother Su, don’t take this loss to heart. We’ve still got the five peaks face-off at the end of the year. I hope that you’ll be able to win me by then.”

Su Zimo looked at Feng Haoyu indifferently without replying.

The disheveled old man stood at the side watching without saying anything. At the end of the day, he was a senior and was naturally not bothered with the verbal squabbles between disciples.

After awhile, the disciple hosting the test declared, “Even though all of you crafted a pseudo spirit weapon, Feng Haoyu’s flying sword has a better quality and he was faster. As such, he is the first place for this test.”

Many Spirit Peak disciples began cheering.

Feng Haoyu grinned as he looked past Su Zimo to the disheveled old man. Bowing slightly, he spoke, “Peak master, please take me to observe the projections of weapon refinement left behind by seniors of the sect.”

“Mmm.”

The disheveled old man nodded nonchalantly. “You’re naturally qualified since you took first place.”

Thereafter, he yanked Su Zimo by the arm and commented casually, “Come on, lad. You’ll go have a look too.”

Su Zimo froze for a moment.

Feng Haoyu frowned and said gruffly, “Su Zimo doesn’t even have a ranking place in this test because he failed to create a weapon. So, he isn’t qualified to watch it. Are you sure what you’re doing is appropriate, peak master?”

“Indeed, it’s inappropriate.”

The disheveled old man nodded in agreement before grinning. “But, I don’t care.”

Chapter 79: The Spirit Perception of a Weapon Refinement Master

That rebuttal by the disheveled old man nearly choked Feng Haoyu to death.

He was clearly being unreasonable and dishonest about it!

However, with his status as the peak master of Weapon Peak, Feng Haoyu could not say anything about his indignance and could only swallow it.

While all the disciples watched enviously, the disheveled old man brought Su Zimo and Feng Haoyu into the inner hall.

The inner hall wasn't large at merely dozens of square meters. The walls were lined densely with more than a thousand jade scrolls.

Most of them were dim in color except for a hundred or so that shone lusciously bright.

The disheveled old man pointed at the jade scrolls on the wall. "These are the projections left by Weapon Refinement Masters since the beginning of Ethereal Sect. Those bright ones are the projections of the successful spirit weapon refinements. Even though the remaining ones are projections of failures, they are of Weapon Refinement Masters as well. Each of you can choose 10 to observe."

Even though it seemed as though there were many jade scrolls, one had to understand that Ethereal Sect was founded thousands of years ago. Yet, only these jade scrolls remained and majority of them were projections of failures.

Without thinking twice, Feng Haoyu went for 10 lusciously bright jade scrolls.

Those were projections of successful spirit weapon refinements.

Su Zimo mulled for a short period of time before choosing five bright and five dim ones.

He understood that while there were things to learn from successes, he could also learn how to prevent similar mistakes from happening by looking at the failures.

When the disheveled old man saw that, he nodded to himself.

For a Weapon Refinement Master, it was difficult to replicate the successes of others. However, they could prevent similar mistakes – that was a form of wisdom as well.

Su Zimo took the 10 jade scrolls and assumed a lotus position. Injecting spirit qi into the scrolls, the patterns on them shone brightly as a clear image appeared before him.

He was immersed into it, deepening his insights towards weapon refinement while clearing the many doubts he had accumulated.

In the blink of an eye, a day and night had passed.

Feng Haoyu stood up and returned the 10 jade scrolls. He took a casual glance at Su Zimo who was still immersed in learning and left the Weapon Refinement Hall.

Before long, Su Zimo stood up and returned the jade scrolls too.

"How was it? You've learnt a lot, right?" The disheveled old man asked, smiling.

Su Zimo nodded his head and asked after pondering, "Indeed, I've learnt something for the first four steps of weapon refinement. However, I'm still clueless towards spirit gathering."

"The difficulty of spirit gathering lies in the fact that spirit qi existed in a stable state within the materials. However, after the smelting and combining process, there is a stark change to the structure of the flying sword. Because of that, it is astronomically difficult to infuse the spirit qi back into the flying sword. Coupled with the fact that the flying sword would be heated to a scarlet red state, any misalignment in synergy would result in an immediate explosion."

The disheveled old man then sighed gently. "It's not just you. Even Advanced Weapon Refinement Masters would not dare to proclaim a 100% spirit gathering success rate. Most of them develop a sense of spirit perception after many years of refining weapons."

The mention of that had Su Zimo's heart skipping a beat.

Spirit perception?

Through the experience of life and death as well as The Mystic Classic of the Twelve Demon Kings of the Great Wilderness, Su Zimo had already developed a sense of spirit perception.

However, could he apply that same spirit perception to spirit gathering?

His mind began to tinker, wondering if he could work in that direction.

"Head back first. If you've got any doubts, feel free to look for me here at any time," As he said that, the disheveled old man pointed to the jade scrolls on the wall and winked to Su Zimo.

"Mmm?"

Suddenly, Su Zimo realized what the disheveled old man meant.

He was hinting to Su Zimo that by coming over to look for him, the latter could seize the opportunity to look through the jade scrolls on the wall.

"Thank you, master," Su Zimo bowed with a warm sense of thankfulness seeping into his heart.

The moment he walked out of the Weapon Refinement Hall, he saw someone at the entrance.

Feng Haoyu.

He seemed to have waited for a long time.

Su Zimo frowned slightly. Right as he was about to summon a flying sword to return to his cave abode, Feng Haoyu turned around and with a slightly reared head, blocked Su Zimo's path with his hand.

"Is there anything?" Su Zimo found himself irked by the haughty expression of this man.

Feng Haoyu replied indifferently, "At the end of this year, I want to make history in Ethereal Sect and be the top of three peaks with Weapon Peak being one of them. Junior Brother Su, you're a smart man. I'm sure you know what to do."

"I don't," Su Zimo shook his head expressionlessly.

“Are you challenging me?” Feng Haoyu narrowed his gaze and released his Level 7 Qi Condensation. Instantly, a cold gust of wind shrouded around him.

“You’re crazy!”

With a cold scoff, Su Zimo rode his flying sword and left the Weapon Refinement Hall in the blink of an eye, disappearing from Feng Haoyu’s sights.

...

Back in the cave abode, Su Zimo sat on his bed and thought about the contents of the 10 jade scrolls.

Before long, a hurried knock sounded on his door.

“Bro, it’s me!”

It was little fatty’s voice.

They had not seen one another in a month and little fatty was at Level 6 Qi Condensation as well.

The cultivation speed of those with a heaven spirit root was indeed frightening. There was a high chance that Feng Haoyu, Leng Rou and the little fatty could be at Level 9 or Perfected Qi Condensation before the end of the year!

“Bro, I heard that you made an enemy out of Feng Haoyu?” That was little fatty’s first question.

Su Zimo asked, “You even know about something like that?”

“It’s not just me! News of this has already spread through all five peaks and many disciples are talking about it!” Little fatty then sighed. “Bro, that’s a little irrational.”

“Each of us can cultivate on our own. What has that got to do with anything?” Su Zimo chuckled casually, totally indifferent about it.

“Things are not that simple.

Little fatty continued, “The sect prohibits disciples from killing one another internally and therefore you can reject even if he comes to challenge you. However, things are different out of the sect. Bro, you can’t stay in the sect forever, right? Most of the sect’s missions require you to head out. Feng Haoyu has gathered a lot of disciples on his side by now. The moment you step out of the sect, many of them are going to cause trouble for you.”

Su Zimo raised his brow without saying anything.

Little fatty went on, “Actually, given Feng Haoyu’s endowment, he will definitely be at Foundation Establishment realm after the five peaks face-off and promote to be an inner sect disciple. Bro, you can actually just avoid him this time round and take part in next year’s face-off. That way, he’ll owe you a favor too.”

“Let’s discuss this another time,” Su Zimo declined to comment further.

Little fatty nodded. “No matter what, I’ll always be on your side, bro! If you need me for anything, just say the word!”

“Alright,” Su Zimo smiled.

The both of them continued chatting casually before little fatty left.

Su Zimo pondered quietly within his cave abode, deciding to head out of the sect for a bit.

He was getting a little anxious now that there was no progress for the Marrow Cleansing section in an entire month.

When he had first cultivated the Bovine-tongued Saber, he only understood the essence of it by observing a cow eating grass.

This time round, Su Zimo decided to capture a tiger and leopard at a forest nearby the sect so that he could take a deeper look at things.

Chapter 80: Change of Appearance

Since he had joined, Su Zimo had not left the sect nor taken on any missions.

Since he wanted to head out, Su Zimo decided to take on a mission along the way to earn some contribution points.

Arriving at the mission stele of Weapon Peak, he raised his head and looked.

The mission stele was divided into two sections. The upper section contained missions for the five peaks that any disciples could take on while the lower section only had missions of Weapon Peak reserved for their own disciples.

The further front the mission was, the more difficult it would be and the more contribution points earned.

Great Rock Forest.

It was located dozens of miles Northward of Ethereal Peak and was abound in pure gold, a crucial material for refining flying swords.

The mission to gather materials was not considered to be difficult. However, because it was in Great Rock Forest, the difficulty level became much more significant, even slightly treacherous in fact.

Every single mountain range and forest was bound to contain beasts.

Around the outer regions, most of the beasts were either wild ones or weak spirit ones. Yet, the deeper one ventured, the stronger the beasts were. In fact, spirit demons may even be found right in the core regions.

If targeted by a spirit demon, even a Foundation Establishment Cultivator may not be able to escape unscathed.

The gold mine was located right in the core region of Great Rock Forest!

This was a mission for Weapon Peak and even though it was already listed for sometime, no one really dared to take it on.

Great Rock Forest was one of the nearest forests to Ethereal Sect.

Because Su Zimo had intended to head over to begin with, he took on the mission out of convenience.

A sleepy elderly man rested at the mission station.

From Xue Yi, Su Zimo learnt that this was one of Weapon Peak's three elders, Elder Liu.

The disheveled old man, Elder Li who kept guard over the Weapon Peak and Elder Liu were the three elders of Weapon Peak.

In Ethereal Peak, anyone who could gain the title of elder had to be in the Golden Core realm at least.

Su Zimo came before Elder Liu and handed the latter his sect badge.

Raising his head, Elder Liu frowned before throwing the sect badge back to Su Zimo and barking coldly, "Not allowed to go!"

"Why?" Su Zimo asked.

Elder Liu rolled his eyes and replied, "Are you stupid, lad? You want to court death going to Great Rock Forest with Level 5 Qi Condensation? Even Perfected Qi Refinement Warriors would have to form a team to take on this mission!"

"I just want to go take a look. If it's dangerous, I'll leave for sure," Su Zimo smiled.

In truth, even though Great Rock Forest was dangerous, the mission wasn't too difficult for someone like Su Zimo who had spirit perception.

"You think you can escape if you really come across any danger?" Elder Liu pouted his lips. "Look how weak you are! Say, don't blame me for not reminding you if you die out there!"

"Don't worry, elder. I'm not going to die. I'm quite the lucky man," Su Zimo chuckled.

Harrumphing coldly, Elder Liu made a record and the mission on the stele dimmed in color, indicating that someone had taken it on.

After a brief silent, Elder Liu pulled out an intricate paper crane from his storage bag and passed it to Su Zimo. "This spirit crane is used for communications in our sect. If you really encounter trouble, you just have to let this fly."

"Thank you, elder," Su Zimo kept the spirit crane in his storage bag and cupped his fists before leaving Weapon Peak on his flying sword.

Closing his eyes lazily, Elder Liu went back to sleep before grumbling, "Juniors these days really don't know what's good for them."

...

This was Su Zimo's first time out of the peak after joining it for a month.

He took out the spirit crane that Elder Liu gave him and observed it.

He had seen something like this before once.

Back in Yan Country's capital when Su Zimo was chasing after the one-armed cultivator from Joyful Clan, the latter had sent a similar paper crane to inform his sect about it.

There were mysterious patterns drawn on the paper crane and it would be activated by injecting spirit qi.

Su Zimo had a hunch that this paper crane was in reality a type of talisman.

Keeping it, he suddenly frowned as something jolted through his heart.

Someone was following him!

Su Zimo scoffed internally.

For someone to follow him right after leaving the sect? There was no need to think further – the stalker was definitely from their sect.

“Could little fatty be right? Feng Haoyu is really trying to cause trouble for me outside?”

With an unchanged expression, Su Zimo sped towards the direction of Great Rock Forest without any reaction.

Before long, he arrived at the border of Great Rock Forest.

Along the way, Su Zimo had gathered vaguely that there were five people in total behind him. The strongest of them was already at Level 9 Qi Condensation!

“If these guys are truly sent by Feng Haoyu, he really thinks highly of me.”

Su Zimo laughed and without hesitation, dove right into the forest.

Entering the forest was akin to entering Su Zimo's territory. Here, no one was his match.

Su Zimo cast away his flying sword and sprinted on his feet, zipping left and right. Before long, he lost the people trailing him and arrived at a secluded spot where he abandoned his green robes and bared his upper body.

A series of cracking sounds came forth from within Su Zimo as his tendons and bones screamed together while his body expanded. In the blink of an eye, he had grown to over two meters tall with his flesh swelled and muscles bound together. His body had inflated entirely!

Su Zimo's facial muscles contorted and joined together bizarrely. After a split second, his features had changed as he transformed into a fierce, burly man with a naked upper body!

With the first three sections of The Mystic Classic of the Twelve Demon Kings of the Great Wilderness completed, Su Zimo could change his appearance from head to toe such that even those close to him would not be able to recognize him!

Lowering his head, Su Zimo laughed and with a swift dash, disappeared from where he was.

...

“Senior Brother Zhou, where did that Su Zimo run off to? How did we suddenly lose track of him?”

“That’s why I said we should have made a move earlier on! How are we going to find him now that he slipped into Great Rock Forest?”

“Shut up!” Zhou Wei’s face was grim as he hollered, “We were so close to the sect just now. What if a disciple heading out spots us making a move at him? We’ll be punished when we head back if that happens!”

Zhou Wei was a trial disciple of Spirit Peak. At Level 9 Qi Condensation, he was quite a somebody within it too.

Then came someone like Feng Haoyu with a variant spirit root and a heavenly defying endowment, defeating him with a mere Level 7 Qi Condensation.

Zhou Wei had submitted completely in the face of Feng Haoyu’s strength.

Even though he conducted this operation on his own accord, it was with Feng Haoyu’s silent consent.

Apart from Zhou Wei at Level 9 Qi Condensation, there were four others at Level 7 and 8 – these people were enough to teach Su Zimo a harsh lesson!

“Look again carefully. That Su Zimo is only at Level 5 Qi Condensation. How far can he run? He’s definitely at the perimeter of Great Rock Forest,” Zhou Wei analyzed calmly.

A Spirit Peak disciple asked, “What if he already ran inside Great Rock Forest?”

“That’s for the best. If that lad gets shredded apart by the spirit beasts, he only has himself to blame,” Zhou Wei replied with a cold snicker.

Another Spirit Peak disciple asked, “How should we deal with Su Zimo if we find him?”

A cold look flashed through Zhou Wei’s eyes as he spoke darkly, “We’re forbidden to murder or cripple any fellow disciples of their martial arts. However, we can injure him severely by breaking his bones and tendons! If he can’t get out of bed for the whole year, he naturally won’t be able to take part in the year end face-off for Weapon Peak!”