

### Chapter 151 - The Auspicious Casino

Li Qingshan said, "Is the Academy of the Hundred Schools really that great? So much so that you think of it constantly, sir?"

Zhou Wenbin said, "That's the foundation of Great Xia, the place that gathers all the young talents across the fifteen hundred kilometers of the Clear River prefecture. Of course, it's a good place. What do you think of my talent for cultivation?"

Li Qingshan praised, "Sir, you are obviously outstanding to have reached the sixth layer of Qi Practitioner at your age and become the magistrate of an entire district, standing above millions." He could not help but sigh inside. It spanned one thousand five hundred kilometers. That was the size of western Europe. Just what kind of sight would it be for all the talents in an area as large as that to gather in one place, cultivating and learning together?

Zhou Wenbin shook his head with a bitter smile. "How am I outstanding? I'm just barely the average. As for my status as a district magistrate, true prodigies have no need for these additional factors for cultivation. They would never waste time on governing people. All they need to do is focus on cultivation, and they will make it further than me."

He was a sixth layer Qi Practitioner, yet he was barely the average?

Li Qingshan was slightly surprised. "There are many generations of people of talent in the world. There's no need to underestimate yourself, sir." He was not surprised by the fact that there were many people better at practising qi than him, as he understood that his talent for practising qi was nothing special, and he had only just started. He did not have any guidance either, constantly relying on common pills like Qi Gathering pills.

It was very likely for those from large Qi Practitioner clans to begin cultivating since young. They would be able to resolve their queries by asking powerful masters or seniors, and they would eat precious pills that he would not have even heard of. If their cultivation talent was just rather decent on top of all of this, they would be prodigies of cultivation.

Whether it be time, resources, or talent, there were plenty of people that surpassed him. There was nothing unfair about having people at a higher cultivation than him. This was what a head start was. Regardless of the world or age, this would always happen. Compared to grumbling, he might as well put in some more effort instead. Were those kings and lords really just born more superior than everyone else?

Zhou Wenbin said, "Your commander Hua Chengzan is the same. Although he comes from a renowned clan, he has always remained in the Academy of the Hundred Schools to study. Even now, he has yet to completely leave it. When I see him, I even have to call him senior brother! There's a saying that that the talents of the world all emerge from the hundred schools. You really should consider it!"

"Then I must check it out in the future. When that time comes, I hope you can help me out, sir."

Li Qingshan had once heard from Gu Yanying that Hua Chengzan was a tenth layer Qi Practitioner. Gu Yanying had even lectured him to stop hanging out with women so much. Back then, he still did not

really have a perspective on what a tenth layer Qi Practitioner was, but now, he understood just what that meant. He had opened all of his extraordinary meridians and was a single step away from the first heavenly tribulation. Even if Li Qinghan daemonified, there was no way he could defeat someone like that.

Zhou Wenbin said, "This falls within my duty, so you can't call it help. I'm basically under no constraints in Jiaping city, and there's not really any work I'm forced to do either. It's all up to me. However, there is something I must do, which is choose a hundred talented men and women every year to send them off to the Academy of the Hundred Schools to study."

The requirements were surprisingly lax. Li Qingshan asked, "That simple? As long as you have the talent to cultivate?"

Zhou Wenbin said, "Entering is easy, but remaining is difficult. How long you can remain there for will be up to your own ability."

Li Qingshan pondered silently for a while. "Oh right, do you still need money, sir?"

Zhou Wenbin said, "Ever since I became the district magistrate, there hasn't been a single time when I don't need money. Looks like you've reaped quite the harvest this time!"

Li Qingshan took out several million taels of silver notes and handed it all over, dismissing it as all from the Qian family. He obtained over fifty Qi Gathering pills from Zhou Wenbin, and as a result, the number of pills on him broke three hundred once again. It would be enough to last him a short while.

Regular Qi Practitioners experienced a limited frequency of ingesting pills. However, to a daemon like him, he could never get enough of them. He would be forced to budget it carefully. If only there was a day when he could eat pills as he wished.

Moreover, the Qi Gathering pills he obtained from Zhou Wenbin all had fantastic purity and quality. Every single one of them was tiny. Although their effects were the same, they were much smaller than Qian Yannian's Qi Gathering pills.

"Were these pills refined by you, sir?"

Zhou Wenbin said, "I once studied beneath a renowned master of the school of Medicine who specially focused on alchemy and apothecary. It's just Qi Gathering pills, so it obviously proves no difficulty to refine." The materials for Qi Gathering pills were relatively easy to collect as well. As the magistrate of an entire district, a single order of his could prompt countless people to go searching for medicinal herbs.

Li Qingshan thought about how if he had the opportunity, checking out the Academy of the Hundred Schools would be quite a good idea. It was impossible for him to seek guidance over refining pills, creating talismans, or formations from a person he just came across on the street. It would be best if he formally studied a little instead. Out of wealth, companionship, method, and environment, he could not go without companionship.

But now was still not the time. There were many powerful Foundation Establishment cultivators in Clear River city. It would be very easy for Xiao An to be discovered if he just hid in the jar like this. He needed to rebuild the boy's body first.

Li Qingshan stood up and bid farewell, leaving the government office. He did not travel in the direction of Clear river, but westward instead. He left the city along the main path.

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Thirty-five kilometers away from Jiaping city, within the Auspicious casino of Silver Mountain town.

Although Silver Mountain town was just a town, it was more prosperous than most cities, as there really was a mountain of silver here. Who knows how many silver mines were hiding beneath the mountain, and who knows just how many people had struck it rich overnight and lost their lives on another night.

Although the Auspicious casino was a casino in a town, it was no worse than those first-rate casinos. Moreover, it welcomed everyone, regardless of wealth, treating everyone the same. As long as you had silver, you could gamble and try your luck there.

Whether it be the mine owners who had suddenly struck it rich or those miners who worked in precarious situations, they would all come here to try their luck.

Under the brilliant lantern light, curses, laughter, and roars of anger poured into everyone's ears. The smell of sweat, smoke, and perfume mingled together.

Everyone's gazes were firmly fixed on the gambling table. They clenched their hands as their eyes widened. Their expressions changed and twisted with the numbers on the dice. There was pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy.

However, the expressions of the gamblers would often end in anger and sorrow. Only Shi Jixiang remained in pleasure and joy. He was the boss of this Auspicious casino. He held two large, golden spheres in his hands as he constantly looked around. His chubby face seemed like a smiling buddha's, always plastered with a smile. When he looked down from the second floor of the casino, there would be benevolence in his eyes as well. What a group of idiots!

Two large men carried up another man as he struggled. "Boss, we've caught him."

The man knelt on the ground and wept. "Boss Shi, great hero Shi, grandfather Shi, please, I beg you. I'll give my mines, my property. I'll give it all to you. Please show some benevolence and spare my family!"

"If I spare you, who'll spare me?"

"Then, could you please extend the loan. I will definitely gather all the money for you."

Shi Jixiang said, "If you are in debt, you gotta pay it. That's how the world works. Even your wife and daughter are busying themselves in the joyhouse. You're a man, so how can you just loaf around? Why don't you get into the mines and put some back into your work?!"

"Y- you actually..."

Shi Jixiang sighed helplessly. "People can die, but debts can't. If you vanish, what am I supposed to do?"

"Shi Jixiang you son of a bitch! The dice were rigged... you cheated me... Even if I die, I'll never spare you!" The man suddenly lost control of his emotions. He owed this usury a snowballing debt. He would

never be able to pay it back in his lifetime. The only fate waiting for him was dying in the pitch-black depths of the mines.

However, before he was even done, he was knocked out by a slap from a large man beside him.

However, Shi Jixiang lost his temper at the man. “Why did you hit him with so much force? What if you end up killing him? Are you supposed to replace him in the mines for me? Tsk tsk, look, what a pitiful person. I can’t fall asleep whenever I see someone as pitiful as him, so don’t let me see him again.”

The burly man obliged and carried the man out.

Only then did Shi Jixiang recover his smile. He liked to gamble a lot, and he knew how to gamble very well. With his gambling techniques, he had brought ruin to several mine owners already. He had already become the largest mine owner in all of Silver Mountain town. As for the mine owners who did not gamble, he had plenty of ways to deal with him, as not only was he good at gambling, but he also possessed first-rate martial arts. He could spend tremendous sums of money to gather a group of good men who could both fight and oppress.

With those two things, he would become the only mine owner in all of Silver Mountain town, and he would continue smiling like that.

“It’s right here!”

Outside the main entrance, a young man held a piece of paper and confirmed the two words on the plaque above the entrance to be ‘Auspicious casino’. Afterwards, he strode in.

The guards at the entrance studied him and welcomed him with smiles. They did not try to stop him at all. Only once the young man had entered did they discuss with smiles, “Not a bad stature.” “Heh, he probably could do a year or two in the mines.”

Li Qingshan liked to eat and drink, and with his rather unsuccessful experiences of having women attend to him while dining, he had basically tried prostitutes already. However, this really was his first time gambling. He found novelty in everything, so he constantly looked around. He arrived before a gambling table. They were playing an extremely simple game of Big or Small. As a result, he just casually tossed in one thousand taels of silver notes, betting it all on big.

Note: If you’re wondering why eating, drinking, visiting prostitutes, and gambling are listed together, there’s a Chinese idiom that basically describes the four activities. Basically, they go hand-in-hand for indulging in worldly pleasures. Li Qingshan wants to try them all.

Note: Big or Small is a rather common gambling game in China. Basically, you just roll one or several dice and see whether the sum of the dice forms a larger sum (‘big’), or a smaller sum (‘small’).

This surprised the gamblers, but they had seen larger bets before. As a result, they just dismissed him as some ignorant young master who had managed to escape from his clan.

“The bets have been cast! Roll!” And just as expected, it was big.

Li Qingshan accepted his silver cheerfully before betting it all on big again.

A while later, the ruckus in the surroundings gradually vanished. The gamblers' mouths all hung agape with mixed expressions as they looked at the small hill of silver notes and silver pieces in front of Li Qingshan. He had already won sixteen rounds consecutively. The dealer had been changed twice as well, but that was not enough to stop his winning streak. He threw all of that into a bet once again.

In the beginning, there were still some gamblers who gambled with him and managed to win some money, but now, there was no longer anyone bold enough to gamble the same as him.

A boy servant arrived beside Li Qingshan. "Brother, our boss has invited you to the second floor for a talk."

Li Qingshan glanced upstairs and said loudly, "If you want to talk, then get down here and talk. What, you're afraid of people winning against you while you run a casino?" He slammed the marble table and left behind a faint print on the thick, heavy stone.

Shi Jixiang finally could not smile any longer. Afterwards, he issued orders, Clear the casino and gather the people. A tough one has come this time, a second-rate master at the very least. He seems like he has come to make trouble. He can't just be appeased with money.

Li Qingshan lowered his head and his lips curled into a smile. It would be for the best if you cleared the casino, and the more people the better. If you can gather a thousand people, I'll burn some incense on your grave, if you have a grave that is.

## **Chapter 152 - Flaws in the Plan**

A while later, there was not a single gambler left beside him. Several dozen hostile men replaced them, armed with swords and blades; they either sneered or glared at Li Qingshan.

All of the doors and windows were shut now; not even a fly would be able to escape from here.

Only then did Shi Jixiang slowly make his way down from upstairs. He spoke like everything was under his control, "May I ask who you are, brother? If you tell me about your identity, you might even make a new friend today. If you're lacking money to cover travelling expenses, feel free to mention it. I, Shi Jixiang, am not a stingy person."

Li Qingshan looked around and said in a pity, "Just this much?"

Although he had originally come with the intention of purging evil, it was obviously impossible for him to scour every corner of Silver Mountain town after killing Shi Jixiang. He lacked both the time and energy for that. There were still another twenty-six missions and over nine hundred people waiting for him.

However, when it came to something like teaching a lesson, basically everyone who should have been here was here!

Shi Jixiang was unsure about his motives, but he could tell that Li Qingshan had no plans to answer him. He was infuriated, and he took off his thin clothes, revealing a bulky upper body and the tattoo of a buddha. He sat down in front of Li Qingshan. "I'll gamble with you this time."

Li Qingshan saw him strip and was ready to fight, but when he heard that, he was slightly surprised. Then he said, "That works."

Rattle, rattle, rattle.

Shi Jixiang rolled the dice viciously. He stared firmly at Li Qingshan with his small eyes. For some reason, he felt uneasy when he met those calm, unperturbed pupils that clearly divided the colours of the latter's eyes. However, he had fought and killed for many years now, so his mental fortitude was rather impressive. He forced back his uneasiness and slammed down the dice cup with a bang. He asked aggressively, "Big or small?"

Li Qingshan casually cast his bet. Just like before, he bet all the silver on the table and went with big once again.

Shi Jixiang raised an eyebrow. He channeled inner force into the cup before immediately lifting it. He roared with laughter. "One, two, and four. That's small. You lose?" At the same time, he circulated his true qi, and the men in the surroundings eyed Li Qingshan closely, ready to fight at any time. They were all wary of Li Qingshan flying into a rage from his loss and trying to hurt any of them.

Li Qingshan laid out his hands. "And then?"

Shi Jixiang was stunned. Originally, he thought that Li Qingshan would furiously label him as a cheat. "What and then? If you're willing to gamble, then you need to be ready to lose."

"Alright. I've lost. All of the silver is yours." With that, Li Qingshan kicked the marble gambling table.

Not a single person present had thought that the heavy, sturdy, still table could be launched with such terrifying speed and might in a single instant, whistling through the air.

Shi Jixiang's eyes narrowed as he was shocked. Even masters of external martial arts do not possess such strength! At the same time, he reacted by leaping up. The extraordinary martial arts he took pride in seemed so slow now. He could only watch as the dice and dice cup was launched into the air while the marble table slammed into him.

Boom!

Dust was kicked up into the air as the marble table slammed Shi Jixiang into the wall. It firmly lodged the lower half of his body into the wall as his bones shattered under the collision of the table.

The men in the surroundings still seemed to be lost. Didn't they win? How had their mighty boss Shi been reduced to such a horrible state in the blink of an eye?

Li Qingshan ignored them. He walked over to the marble table.

Shi Jixiang really was a first-rate master after all with how tenacious his vitality was. His lower body was crushed, but he still managed to remain conscious. "W- w- who are you?"

Li Qingshan said, "A Hawkwolf guard on a mission. I find it annoying when people like you smile. This expression suits you better." He conveniently caught the falling dice on his side, "And, you can't decide big or small through these." Without even looking back, he threw them backwards.

The dice pierced a man who was just about to launch a sneak attack on him with his blade.

"Just what are you going to use for a gamble with me?"

Everyone immediately understood their disparity in strength and the fact that death was near. They rushed for the entrance without any regard anymore. They wanted to open the main entrance that they had just shut firmly.

A man looked back in fright. A stream of fire that seemed like a dragon rolled over from Li Qingshan's waist. Wherever it passed by, everyone was reduced to nothing, only leaving behind a set of clothes that fell to the ground slowly. This was basically even more terrifying than any bloody sight. He pushed against the entrance firmly before losing all consciousness.

The fire snake opened its mouth and lunged towards Shi Jixiang before pausing again and looking at Li Qingshan.

Li Qingshan waved his hand to express there was nothing more he wanted to say to him. However, Shi Jixiang opened his mouth. He was the one who had something to say, but his face was already lit up by the firelight.

The fire snake immediately swallowed Shi Jixiang.

The gamblers had not dispersed. Instead, they paced around outside the entrance. The night had just begun. They had yet to enjoy themselves fully!

They believed that this ignorant kid from another place would suffer very soon, and the casino would reopen. However, there were other people who believed that only those with the ability would take a risk like this and that the kid would be a difficult opponent. As a result, they split into two sides and gambled on this matter.

However, they waited for a very long time, and the casino still had not opened up again. However, none of them were bold enough to force their way in either. People of the government opened the entrance only after the next morning arrived. The large casino was completely devoid of people.

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There was a speck of light in a tiny inn in the middle of nowhere.

Li Qingshan unfurled his mental map of the Green province and planned his destination for the next day. He used an invisible line to connect twenty-seven specks together.

Twenty-seven specks, one thousand people.

Xiao An sat to one side, looking at the mental map and Li Qingshan. He seemed to be in thought.

Li Qingshan asked, "Do you remember the number? How many was it?"

Xiao An dipped his finger in a cup of tea and wrote on the table, "Fifty-seven."

Twenty-six specks, nine hundred and forty three people.

Li Qingshan corrected the number in his mind. He did not deal with Shi Jixiang's property. Ever since Xiao An gave him a clear goal, that had become his greatest priority that he eagerly wanted to complete.

If he could be a little faster, Xiao An would be able to recover his body a little faster.

However, he did not go without any benefits. Shi Jixiang was swallowed by the flames, but he left behind a few talismans. Originally, this person had planned to use them as trump cards, but before absolute strength, he basically had no chance to use it.

Li Qingshan raised his head and smiled. "We'll be done very soon. Let's go to Giant Deer valley tomorrow and go find the horse bandits. What do you think? The route I planned is pretty good, isn't it?"

Xiao An then wrote on the table. "But if this continues, we'll alarm the others very soon. They will go into hiding."

"That's true. We can only move a little faster than and travel day and night. If they end up hiding, that'll be troublesome." Li Qingshan was slightly taken aback. He rubbed his chin in thought and found that Xiao An really had a good point.

These people were not mobs from games who would pace around in the same place, waiting to be slain. Though, once they were slain, new ones would definitely spawn, as there would never be an end to people like them.

News always spread rapidly through the jianghu. As long as he repeated this a few more times, probably all the figures of the jianghu on the blacklist would realise that their end was coming, and then they would subsequently vanish into hiding. Just which Qi Practitioner would waste their precious time to scour the world for them? Li Qingshan did not want to waste this time either. This was also the reason why the Hawkwolf Guard could not eliminate them all!

### **Chapter 153 - The West Gate Granny**

Xiao An was willing to search for them with him slowly, to advance slowly with him. If they found someone, they would kill them, but if they did not, there was no need to panic. However, seeing how impatient Li Qingshan was, Xiao An did not want him to trouble himself over his matters, so he came up with an idea.

"Why don't we find a way to gather them together?"

Li Qingshan gasped in admiration. Compared to looking for them one by one, he could try inviting all of them to a certain place before taking them down in a single swoop. If he wanted to grind mobs, then he obviously had to lure mobs. Why hadn't he thought of such a simple principle?

He rubbed Xiao An's head. "I couldn't tell, but this little head of yours sure can scheme."

Flattered, Xiao An lowered his head in embarrassment.

After being inspired like that, Li Qingshan's thoughts immediately sprang to life. Afterwards, he searched through the files from the missions and finally found a name.

Shen Xihua. He occupied an island on a large lake to the south. He called himself the Island Lord of Cherishing Flowers. He was a confident romantic and had a rather obscene nature. In the past, he had committed over a dozen acts of sexual assault. He was also the person with the highest cultivation in Li Qingshan's twenty-seven missions, at the first layer of Qi Practitioner. He was extremely renowned among the unorthodox martial arts practitioners, and the files mentioned that he had vast connections.



In the eyes of the Hawkwolf Guard, he thrived in a zone that no one had any interest in, yet he could also defeat all practitioners of martial arts. He could be described as a master who lived within the cracks of the system.

Li Qingshan muttered to himself, "Just from a single birthday celebration, Qian Yannian managed to invite so many people to congratulate him. You might be slightly weaker, but you shouldn't be much worse. Right now, all I need is quantity, not quality."

Of course, there probably was not a coincidence like his birthday had just come up, but whether it was getting married or having children, there were plenty of excuses! If he did not have any excuses, he could create one for him, and then invite many masters on the blacklist over to celebrate.

The corner of Li Qingshan's lips gradually curled up. Perhaps there would be many unexpected extras to it all!

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Silver Mountain town, the third day after Li Qingshan had left.

In the middle of the night.

Amidst the thick mist.

A magnificent carriage was pulled along slowly by a horse. As the wheels rolled over the cobblestone road, it did not produce any sound at all; it was as if a layer of foam separated it from the ground. It stopped silently in front of the Auspicious casino.

A handsome teenager in red disembarked from the carriage and entered the casino with his head held high.

Shi Jixiang was gone, but he had five leaders beneath him. Two of them died at Li Qingshan's hands that night. The other three had been watching over the mines and other property, which was why they managed to avoid it.

Currently, they had gathered together with their subordinates and were locked in an intense discussion over how they were supposed to divide this chunk of meat. They went into so much detail that it even included Shi Jixiang's concubines. The three of them laughed obscenely together. The atmosphere was rather harmonious. They got along rather well.

However, their faces changed as soon as they reached the topic of the profitable Auspicious casino. They argued so furiously that they almost drew their weapons.

The young man in red walked into the casino at this very moment. He seemed alone and very frail, with no signs of martial arts or qi. However, he behaved in a very arrogant manner, so obviously he was not well-received.

"Where the hell did this kiddo come from? This isn't a place you should have come to. Hurry up and get out of here!" As soon as the person finished talking, his head fell from his shoulders. His expression was still one of shock. He had no idea why the world had suddenly flipped on him.

Only at this moment did a cold snort ring out from the carriage outside the casino. A withered finger extended out from the curtained windows of the carriage.

The teenager in red smiled. "Thank you, ma'am."

"An innate master!" The three leaders immediately paled in fright. It was not just an innate master, but one that was unimaginably powerful.

Probably only Qi Practitioners who had split open a sea of qi like Zhuo Zhibo could witness the true gateway to practising qi. Even powerful sixth layer Qi Practitioners would have to rely on spiritual artifacts if they wanted to kill someone from several dozen meters away, yet she managed to do so with true qi alone.

This was completely different from using techniques. If Li Qingshan used a suitable technique, he could launch such a long-ranged attack as well, but in terms of using his true qi alone, ten meters would have been his limit, and he would have only been able to knock people away, not behead them. As for regular second layer Qi Practitioners, being able to reach three meters away would already be an impressive feat.

After all, if the power of techniques was the same as directly using true qi, why would Qi Practitioners put effort into creating techniques and condense true qi into techniques during battle?

An old, screechy voice rang out, "You'll answer whatever question he asks. If you don't know, then investigate. If he doesn't get his answer, all of you will die."

Everyone in the casino trembled all over. The boy in red took out a portrait. "Was he the person who came to the casino that night?"

Depicted in a life-like fashion within the portrait was Li Qingshan.

A while later, the boy reported back, "Ma'am, I've confirmed that he's Li Qingshan. He has left Silver Mountain town now. I wonder where he has gone."

"He has probably gone to Giant Deer valley." She seemed to have grasped Li Qingshan's tracks completely.

"Then let's set off now!"

"How impatient."

This time, an old hand extended out from the carriage curtains, except the long nails were painted bright red. It was a rather strange sight.

A series of cries rang out in the casino. An ordinary blade suddenly began to dance and swing around as white streaks, killing everyone in the casino one by one.

Compared to directly killing people with true qi, borrowing a 'tool' or 'artifact' was still much simpler. Of course, this would be even more simple if it was a spiritual artifact.

Everyone in the casino knew martial arts, and the three leaders were all second-rate masters as well. However, against the nimble blade, they could not hold their ground at all.

In just a few seconds, the casino became littered with corpses. Only then did the blade drop to the ground with a clang.

The teenager in red was slightly surprised. All he heard was the old voice in the carriage. "They've insulted my Jie'er, so how can they be left alive?"

The teenager immediately showed great happiness. He entered the carriage and threw himself into the arms of an old woman.

The old woman was dressed in red and had a head full of grey hair. Her face was shriveled, but as she held the handsome young man, they seemed like a pair of lovers. They were not the only two in the carriage. There were three more young men, all dressed in red and just as young and handsome.

One of them grumbled, "Granny is picking favourites. Granny only spoils Jie'er."

Jie'er said, "We've all sworn that we would serve granny for the rest of our lives, so you're not allowed to be jealous. Granny, why must you personally look into this matter? Can't you just send disciples from the disciplinary hall?"

"It's very likely that what happened to the Parlour of Clouds and Rain in Jiaping city is related to this person. You'll need a sixth layer Qi Practitioner at the very least to kill Zhao Liangqing without raising any attention. If we send regular disciples, we'll just be sending them to their deaths. There's no point in staying in Clear River all the time either. We can relieve our boredom by going on a stroll."

The granny's formal title was the West Gate Granny, not because her surname was Ximen, or West Gate, but because the Sect of Clouds and Rain had four gates and four grannies representing the four directions. Every single one of them were powerful ninth layer Qi Practitioners who had opened all eight extraordinary meridians.

There was no longer anyone bold enough to refer to her by her actual name within the sect, while other people gradually forgot about her original name as well. Only the title of West Gate Granny that represented her status remained, replacing her name.

#### **Chapter 154 - The Island Lord of Cherishing Flowers**

The teenager who had just been grumbling said, "It's all because granny became interested when she saw how well-built and tough Li Qingshan was, but granny already has us, so granny can't be so fickle." He spoke with a tone like he was in love. The teenagers all looked at the West Gate Granny with utter infatuation. It was not forced at all. They were just like when the men of Jiaping city saw courtesan Furong.

As a second layer Qi Practitioner, Furong's arts of charm were already enough to drive regular people crazy and strike fear into the hearts of Qi Practitioners, so just how powerful would the arts of charm of this ninth layer Qi Practitioner, the West Gate Granny, be? It was not something that a few normal boys could resist. Even Qi Practitioners would always do whatever they could to fulfil their desires, let alone ordinary people.

The West Gate Granny said in a spoilt manner, "Alright, alright. I'll kill him as soon as I see him."

"As long as granny loves us, does it matter if granny has other men? We're all good brothers."

As they spoke amorously, the carriage rolled slowly and silently over the cobblestone path. Upon closer inspection, a gap of around an inch remained between the carriage wheels and the path as if a cushion of air existed.

The horse's hooves landed on the ground as normal. After a few inscriptions flashed, the treasured horse that usually pulled the carriage during the day could now take off effortlessly. It rushed off at an unbelievable speed.

They left behind a casino full of corpses. Afterwards, the little caretakers under the little leaders gathered together and began a new discussion, just like the grass that never stopped sprouting on the plains. Perhaps, people originally unrelated to all of this would join in as well, which would be followed with further conflict and slaughter; this was the jianghu.

Li Qingshan still ended up going to Giant Deer valley, as it was not very likely for these horse bandits to accept the invitation from the Island Lord of Cherishing Flowers. The files indicated that the horse bandits were composed of people with the bloodline of barbarians. Every single one of them had a great, brown beard.

Even if the Island Lord of Cherishing Flowers invited them, it was probably unlikely for these barbarian horse bandits to visit the island on their horses, so he wanted to just finish them off conveniently.

The horse bandits dwelled on the vast, grassy plains. They had no set place where they stayed. The Giant Deer valley was only one of their resting places.

After Li Qingshan realised that it was all futile, he did not give up. Instead, he laid on the ground and used his nose before closely studying the traces there. He was like a wild beast with extremely sharp senses.

As his daemon form gradually strengthened, the world in his eyes became richer and more colourful. There were many layers to it. His tracking ability had almost become part of his instincts.

The smell and traces from the ground were still very fresh. They were not far, and from the traces on the ground, there were at least two hundred horse bandits, which made Li Qingshan's eyes light up.

As a result, he immediately set off. True qi gathered in his feet, and he crossed through the grass that stood as tall as a man. He moved swiftly under the amber sky as night set in, and two hours later, he had covered fifty kilometers and finally found the horse bandits.

Within the smoke, the horse bandits rushed at the travelling merchants, letting out war cries. The merchants did their best to stop them and raise their defenses, but the thrumming of horse hooves were unable to hide the fear in their eyes. The curved blades lit up the surroundings with dazzling, white light.

Suddenly, someone said, "What's that?"

A cloud of dust rushed over from the north-west direction, heading directly towards the group of horse bandits. A figure leapt high into the sky, through the dust and smoke, landing on the mount of the bandit leader.

Li Qingshan stood on the horse's saddle and pressed one hand against the bandit leader's head while his other hand grasped the reins. He forcefully turned the horse around. The moment he brushed past the mercantile caravan, the merchants all raised their heads and saw a teenager in high spirits. His expression gave everyone a false impression; it was as if he was not holding the head of the bandit leader, but a huge chunk of gold.

Someone murmured, "That's a person!"

The horse bandits rushed over as they cursed. They could not worry about the caravan anymore. They had to save their leader.

After that, no one ever saw the infamous horse bandits of Giant Deer valley anymore.

After arriving in the middle of the boundless wilderness, Li Qingshan swung down with his right hand and slammed the horse bandit's head into his chest. The tremendous force spread to the horse, and it collapsed onto the ground loudly.

When the horse bandits arrived, Li Qingshan had already vanished. They raised their heads swiftly, and a sky of fire filled their gazes.

The number changed to seven hundred and fifty five.

Just a day after Li Qingshan had left Giant Deer valley, the carriage arrived.

The same teenager in red disembarked to check. "Granny, he's not here."

"This kid is pretty quick." The West Gate Granny unfurled a mental map and pointed at a location, "Let's go to the next place." It was exactly the same as Li Qingshan's original route. She had a complete grasp over how Li Qingshan would go about his missions.

However, the boys all refused. They all grumbled about how it was just too boring. They had grown accustomed to the joys and pleasures in Clear River city. They disliked all the travelling.

The West Gate Granny said in a doting manner, "Alright, we'll rest when we get to the next city."

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It was a tiny puddle on the map, but when he saw it in person, it was a huge, misty swamp.

"This is the place. This bastard sure knows how to live." Li Qingshan stowed the mental map away and cast his gaze into the distance, piercing through the mist. He vaguely made out an island. The island was covered with green, shady willow trees, with some red walls and green tiles poking out.

Next to the lake was a city. The scenery was wonderful, yet it was also highly convenient. This really was a good place for someone to settle down and live out the rest of their lives. However, when he thought about how someone like him could settle down and live out the rest of his life, Li Qingshan felt extremely discontent. Afterwards, he licked his lips as he imagined the smiles dropping from their expressions with the malevolence and pleasure of a daemon.

Using the night, he tread across the water and stepped onto the island on the other side. Only then did he see the luxurious estate clearly.

There were many armed guards patrolling outside the estate. The security was very tight, but to Li Qingshan's eyes, such a security system was basically non-existent.

Li Qingshan gently kicked off the ground and landed on the eaves several dozen meters away before rushing towards the largest building.

Behind a veiled curtain, the pale bodies of people moved around. Moans and verbal teasing constantly sounded out.

"Master, you're so good!"

Li Qingshan rubbed his nose. He felt like he would always intrude at a time like this. At such a late time of the night, the bad people would be going at it in bed, while the good person could only watch the eroticism that was vividly presented before his eyes.

A gentle cough drowned out all of the sounds within the obscenity. Someone sprang up from the bed and lifted the veiled curtain. "Who is it?"

Two pairs of eyes met. Both of them were rather stunned.

Li Qingshan had never thought that Shen Xihua would actually be elderly. Most of his hair had greyed already. Only then did he suddenly remember that the files detailed that there had been an attempt to bring him to justice, but he discovered them and fled, which led to the case being placed aside. As a result, even a young boy would become an old man after all this time.

On the other hand, Shen Xihua saw a young man in cloth robes sitting boldly on an armed chair, glaring right back at him. Although he did not give off any special aura, just his ability to appear in Shen Xihua's bedroom silently was enough to shock him.

"Put on your clothes. There are some things I want to discuss with you." Li Qingshan placed something on the table before standing up.

Shen Xihua rushed to the table. He saw the item and stiffened. His face paled as he cradled it in his hands carefully. Coldness pierced his bones. He trembled once more, and he became even whiter.

It was a black wolf baring its fangs and claws, forged out of black iron.

In a small pavilion shaded by trees, Li Qingshan leaned on the railing and gazed at the scenery of the lake. Shen Xihua had put on clothes and rushed over while he cradled the Black Wolf tablet in his hands. "Sir, may I know your name and why you've come to my humble abode?"

Li Qingshan took back the Black Wolf tablet. "Don't you know what you've done? You're the culprit, Shen Xihua!" He had seen quite a lot of detective television series in his past life, so he copied how they naturally exuded confidence.

With a thud, Shen Xihua's knees crumbled to the ground. "Sir, they were all deeds that I committed when I was young and muddle-headed. Sir, you are a great man, so please just spare me. If there's anything you require, I will do everything I can to ensure it is obtained or achieved."

A powerful figure among the unorthodox martial arts practitioners of the jianghu, a first-layer innate master, had lost all of his bearing, kneeling on the ground and begging for his life. Li Qingshan had not even done anything to him yet; this was all just from seeing his Black Wolf tablet.

Shen Xihua felt extremely helpless. Who would be willing to serve a kid who was several decades younger? As soon as he saw the Black Wolf tablet, he thought about running, but he was reluctant to abandon everything he had built up. And, if the Hawkwolf Guard really tried to find him, they would always find him. As for fighting, that was even more impossible. Let alone his fate if he lost, even if he somehow managed to win, his entire family would accompany him to the grave whether it be because of infuriating the Hawkwolf Guard or killing a Hawkwolf guard.

When Li Qingshan stood before him, he was no longer just a lonely teenager, but a terrifying system of violence from the government. Anyone from the so-called jianghu could only act subserviently before this system. Of course, it was impossible for him to understand the hostile relationship between Li Qingshan and Zhuo Zhibo. That was something well beyond his reach.

However, Shen Xihua was still hopeful. Since Li Qingshan had not attacked him right from the get-go, it meant that he still had a chance. As a result, he gathered his courage to come here so that he could hear what Li Qingshan wanted to say to him.

As expected, Li Qingshan said, "I have something I want you to do for me." He sat down on the stone bench in the pavilion and looked at Shen Xihua from above. He did not tell him to walk over and sit down with him.

Li Qingshan could treat ordinary people with courtesy, but if he was supposed to dwell on this bit of courtesy with someone like this fellow, there would be something wrong with his head. Compared to murder or robbery, he found these acts to be even more disgraceful. If it were not for the sake of his plan, he would have wanted to kill Shen Xihua right now.

Shen Xihua's face lit up. "Please let me know, sir."

Li Qingshan took out twenty-four files and tossed them before Shen Xihua. "I want you to invite all the people mentioned in there to here, including their subordinates and disciples. The more the better."

Shen Xihua's expression changed drastically. He immediately thought of what Li Qingshan was trying to do. He was such a young teenager, yet he was actually hiding such terrifying thoughts. He actually wanted to take out all the unorthodox masters within the surrounding region of several hundred kilometers in one fell swoop.

Li Qingshan said, "It can be a birthday, having children, or other reasons. You might have obtained a peerless cultivation method or divine weapon for everyone to come and appreciate. You can handle the exact details."

Shen Xihua said, "Sir... t- that'll be unrighteous of me to do!"

Li Qingshan broke into laughter. "You're a rapist, yet you still mention the word 'righteousness'?"

Shen Xihua became bright red. He disputed groundlessly, "Those are all matters of the past. I even left quite a lot of money for those women. T- they aren't necessarily unhappy with the outcome..."

Before he was even done, a great force pushed his head down. With a bang, his head struck the ground heavily, drawing blood.

### **Chapter 155 - The Pill Seizing Gathering**

Li Qingshan stepped on Shen Xihua's head and breathed in deeply. He said in a deep voice, "Out of the women you speak of, three of them have committed suicide. I don't know about the others, but let me warn you. Don't piss me off!"

"Yes... yes..." Shen Xihua murmured. He was willing to face a second layer Qi Practitioner with his strength at the first layer. Even if he could not defeat them, he could still escape, but only then did he realise that he was wrong. The step was so fast that he could not react at all.

As for the heavy, murderous aura, he found it to be even more stifling than the pressure on his head.

Li Qingshan gradually lifted his foot. "Consider it!"

Shen Xihua kept his head lowered for quite a while before raising it. "Are you going to spare me if I do?"

Li Qingshan said, "I'm not here to discuss with you. You can accept it or turn it down. You are welcome to try your luck."

Under Li Qingshan's contemptible gaze, Shen Xihua said, "I accept."

Li Qingshan smiled and personally helped him up. "You could have just said that from the beginning." He had no plans to spare Shen Xihua. However, since he planned to use him, he could not express this intention of 'I'll definitely kill you'. Otherwise, that would not be called gallantry, but idiocy.

Shen Xihua's expression eased up slightly. Li Qingshan saw how his facial features were neat and dignified. He must have been handsome when he was young. "You came from a well-off family, basically a clan. Why did you do all of those things?"

Shen Xihua said, "I was ignorant in my youth. I was ignorant. Sir, when would you like for these people to be gathered here?"

Li Qingshan said, "The sooner the better."

Shen Xihua said, "I don't really know some of them, and there are a few others who have their own plans as well. Even if I do invite them, they won't necessarily come!"

Li Qingshan said, "That'll depend on your ability as the Island Lord of Cherishing Flowers then. And, it doesn't have to be them. You are welcome to invite all of your good friends who have committed crimes with no conscience at all. The more the better. If there are too few and the gathering is far too cheerless, I might end up becoming upset."

Shen Xihua's heart shivered. The person before him was young, but he was definitely not a soft-hearted figure. Otherwise, he would have never been able to come up with such a terrifying scheme. Now, all he could do was follow through with the plan reluctantly.

He invited Li Qingshan to stay in a smaller building near the lake and ordered his people to serve him carefully and not to disturb him.



The next day, an invitation card was delivered into Li Qingshan's hands. After receiving Li Qingshan's approval, several dozen copies were made and sent off. They reached the hands of the various masters on the blacklist.

This was the news on the jianghu, The powerful unorthodox master, the Island Lord of Cherishing Flowers, who has fallen silent for quite some time, has obtained a bottle of pills. These pills can allow martial arts masters to reach the innate realm. He wants to sell it to a group of masters, so he invites everyone to the Island of Cherishing Flowers on the eighth of the eighth month, at the beginning of autumn. You will contend against one another for it. The event will be called the Pill Seizing Gathering.

Li Qingshan sighed inside. This was basically what happened when he obtained the spiritual ginseng in the past. Shen Xihua was already an innate master, so he obviously could not use this pill, but to other first-rate masters, this was an irresistible event. Even if they found it to be suspicious, they would still come and check it out. After casting his bait, he could wait quietly for the fish to bite.

From that day onwards, Shen Xihua would visit him in person daily. He was extremely considerate for his needs.

Li Qingshan meditated and practised qi every day, without setting a foot outside his residence. The only thing the people on the island knew was that he was a valued guest of the island lord; they were afraid of disturbing him. Combined with the fact that they would sometimes hear him muttering to himself, they found it to be extremely strange and were even more reluctant to approach him.

As a result, Li Qingshan just meditated and practised qi regardless of day or night, ingesting the Qi Gathering pills like water and converting it into daemon qi and true qi. In less than ten days, he had already ingested two hundred of them.

The effects were extremely obvious. On the second of the eighth month, his Innate Method of Practising Qi finally broke through to the fifth layer. His true qi became even more powerful as they constantly raged through the Yang Heel meridian. His ability to sense the spiritual qi of the world through his Fengchi acupoint became even sharper as well. It was like a blurry image that gradually cleared up. He was able to distinguish the meaning within the image bit by bit.

Although he had not reverted to his daemon form, it must have grown by quite a lot as well!

Li Qingshan left his residence. The sky was gloomy. It had begun drizzling three days ago.

The heat of summer receded and coolness gradually set in. It was almost autumn.

The eighth of the eighth was an auspicious day, while autumn was primarily about desolation, which made it an even better time to kill.

Li Qingshan already felt rather eager. He threw a punch and true qi pierced the air, erupting with splashes on the surface of the lake. He looked back. When he saw Xiao An leaning on the rail, he could not help but smile. Looking at his body of white bones, he thought of some things. Before all of this, there were still some preparations he needed to make.

During the morning of the third, Shen Xihua visited once again.

Li Qingshan said, "Go prepare some clothes for children." Xiao An would be rebuilding his body, but it was obviously impossible for him to rebuild his clothes as well. He needed clothing.

Shen Xihua found the request to be rather strange, but he dared not think too much about it. "Clothes for children? What size? Is it for a boy or a girl?"

"A boy around seven or eight years old. Don't worry too much about the exact size," Li Qingshan said. He felt rather excited inside. He felt like a father who was about to welcome his child into the world.

The next day, Shen Xihua delivered over a dozen sets of clothes of various colours and styles. They were all made from silk of the highest quality. He even brought many toys for children.

Li Qingshan smiled. He thought about how Xiao An was no ordinary child, so why would he play with these wooden toys? However, he did not mention it. He told Shen Xihua to continue preparing for the 'Pill Seizing Gathering'.

He was determined to go through with this 'Pill Seizing Gathering'. However, he soon thought of how a great scheme like this that could overturn the entire jianghu tended to be the specialty of villains. And, his thought of killing everyone in the gathering had an even more villainous vibe.

However, he felt fantastic. It was a wonderful time since Xiao An was about to gain a new life. He sighed emotionally just like a poet. "With death comes birth." Afterwards, he gained some understanding towards the true meaning behind the Path of White Bone and Great Beauty.

After Shen Xihua left, Xiao An emerged from behind the curtains. He gently caressed the beautiful silk clothing with his bone fingers as he imagined how he would look like when he wore them. He raised his head and their eyes met. There was silence. The only sounds present were the pitter-patter of rain outside the window. However, the two of them felt silent joy inside.

Afterwards, Xiao An began to play with those toys happily, the pinwheels, spinning tops, and bamboo dragonflies.

It surprised Li Qingshan. Afterwards, he thought about how he did not show enough care and concern for Xiao An. Thinking further, he realised that the thing that he seemed to do the most with Xiao An was killing people.

Killing people was not necessarily a bad thing. In this cruel world, it should have been a crucial skill for survival. Adult beasts had to teach younger beasts the art of hunting.

That was how Li Qingshan comforted himself to avoid too much self-guilt. Afterwards, he just sat there and leaned his head against his hand. He thought deeply into the issue of Xiao An's education. He needed to take him out to see the world more often in the future so that he could feel nature and all those things!

Afterwards, he could not help but begin grinning. He felt warmth. The world was very cruel, but he was not alone.

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Even a lion would use its full strength to catch a rabbit. The day before the eighth, Li Qingshan finished ingesting all of his Qi Gathering pills such that he was at his peak condition.

By tomorrow, once those bastards all gather in the hall, what am I supposed to say as an opening line?  
For the sake of my personal happiness, please die, you twisted lot!

Seems even more villainous.

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“Am I pretty?” The West Gate Granny asked.

“Y- you are!” A naked man covered in tattoos that depicted nine dragons lowered his head and called out in fright. The blood of his companions slowly flowed beneath his feet. Just because they laughed when they saw this ugly, old woman, they ended up falling apart into pieces.

“Then why aren’t you looking at me?” The West Gate Granny said with a sunken voice.

The man slowly raised his head before becoming stunned. He had never seen such a beautiful woman before. Her cold eyes and nobility shook up his mind, almost making him lose control of himself.

The portrait of a man suddenly appeared before him. The voice that was as beautiful as an oriole’s song asked, “Have you seen this person before?”

He shook his head in a daze, blaming himself for being unable to help her at all.

“Then you can go die!” The shrivelled mouth spat out these brutal words.

The man immediately shattered his own skull with a palm strike. Even before he died, he still gazed at the West Gate Granny with infatuation. He smiled. Originally, he thought that he would only be a pirate for the rest of his life, but he had never thought he would be able to die for the person he loved. He felt happiness from the bottom of his heart.

My life... was all worth it.

Leaving the den of the Water Snake gang, the West Gate Granny said furiously, “Just where did the brat go?”

In the past few days, she followed the most optimal path for Li Qingshan, but she failed to find any signs of him. She completely lost track of him.

Finally, she could not help herself anymore and lost her temper, causing a great massacre. Behind her, the corpses of the Water Snake gang lay strewn on the ground. They would never be able to attack and rob people on the rivers again. Every single one of them smiled happily, dying for the sake of love.

A teenager in red took out a vermillion invitation card from the bosom of the leader and handed it to the West Gate Granny.

The West Gate Granny looked at the invitation card. After a while of thought, she revealed a sunken smile. “I see. This kid has got some brains. I’ve underestimated him. Let’s go to Lakeside city.”

On the eighth of the eighth, near Lakeside city on the Island of Cherishing Flowers

Li Qingshan tidied up his thoughts and took out his knicked Wind-entwining blade, hanging it on his waist. He looked out the window and saw many small boats moving through the wind and rain, stopping at the wharf. Many people emerged from them.

Most of them carried weapons and were vicious-looking. He could tell with a single glance that they were not kind folk. They matched up with the resources from Li Qingshan's file one by one.

These unorthodox masters were worried about this being a trap, and they were wary of one another, so they all brought their best subordinates, just in case. However, unbeknownst to them, someone within the shade of the green willows was counting them like sheep.

Two hundred and eighty one... Three hundred and forty two... Five hundred and fifty seven.

This lasted until night time. The number had already exceeded Li Qingshan's expectations.

The island was decorated with lanterns and streamers, with a feast set up in the hall. With Shen Xihua as the host, these martial arts masters gathered in the hall. It was quite the banquet.

Shen Xihua smiled and spoke cheerfully, without giving away anything at all.

Some people said impatiently, "Island lord Shen, where are the pills? Please take them out and show us!"

#### **Chapter 156 - The Daemon-trapping Cage of Bi'an**

Shen Xihua smiled. "Please settle down, everyone. I hope you can enjoy yourselves in my humble abode while I go retrieve the pills." He retreated to the darkness outside the hall, and his smile immediately vanished. Something seemed to weigh on his mind.

"Sir, the island lord has invited you to the back of the hall," a servant said to Li Qingshan politely.

Li Qingshan walked through the corridors, and two fierce men leapt out from the bushes in the darkness, blocking his way. "Who are you?"

The servant said in a hurry, "Good sirs, are you guests of our island lord?"

The two people studied Li Qingshan. "Why haven't we seen or heard about someone like you?"

Li Qingshan said, "Not everyone is available for the likes of you to see or hear about."

"What did you say!?" The two became enraged. They wanted to draw their blades.

With two thuds, the two of them fell back into the bushes in the darkness, reduced to corpses.

"You can go see the king of hell!" Then Li Qingshan said to the servant, "Let's keep going."

The servant shivered and obliged in a hurry.

Shen Xihua rubbed his hands uneasily within his study room. Suddenly, he saw Li Qingshan arrive and invited him to sit down in a hurry before pouring some tea for him. He treated him with the utmost hospitality.

Li Qingshan said, "Island lord Shen, what do you want to say to me? Get to the point. I can't wait any longer." With his ears, he could clearly hear the ruckus up ahead. His blood had slowly begun to boil.

Shen Xihua lifted up his robes and knelt down before Li Qingshan. "I've already followed all of your orders, sir, so please just spare the lowly me!" In all these days, Li Qingshan had never been willing to promise that he would spare him. It made him worry to a point where his food turned tasteless, and he could not even get a wink of sleep.

Li Qingshan said, "How did you know I would kill you?"

"Do you really plan on sparing no one, sir?" Shen Xihua raised his head in great surprise as he stared at Li Qingshan closely. Desperation began to fill his eyes.

Li Qingshan said, "It's not that I'm not sparing you. It's just that you cannot be spared for what you have done."

Shen Xihua croaked, "But I've already reformed myself completely!"

Li Qingshan said, "Reformed yourself completely? What about six months ago? What were you doing then? Do you really think the Hawkwolf Guard wouldn't know?" Although there were rather few core members to the Hawkwolf Guard, they had countless informants and spies within the various major cities as a Qi Practitioner organisation that did not care about silver.

No one had ever bothered with the mission of killing Shen Xihua in all these years, but the flow of information had never stopped; this was just to guarantee that the Hawkwolf Guard would know exactly where he was and what he was doing if there was a day they remembered him again.

Abruptly, Shen Xihua thought of something. Half a year ago, he had drunk a little and saw a beauty pass by in Lakeside city. As a result, he took her to the island and forced himself on her, reliving his youth.

He continued to argue, "But I've already accepted her as a concubine."

"Just how many more concubines do you plan on accepting like that? Why don't you tell me that?" Li Qingshan's tone was very calm the entire time. His anger was like hot, flowing lava beneath an icebound mountain. It could erupt at any time.

Shen Xihua's expression changed several times. He pressed down with one hand and a tile sank. A series of mechanical sounds rang out from underground, allowing a large, metal cage to spring out and trap Li Qingshan.

The place where Shen Xihua had invited Li Qingshan to sit was actually a trap, and the mechanism was extremely clever. It had not even taken a blink of an eye for the cage to appear after Shen Xihua pressed down on the tile.

Shen Xihua yelled, "Li Qingshan, you've gone too far! Since you won't spare me, then let's die together!"

The bars to the cage were as thick as an adult's arm and solid all the way through. They were also inscribed with many glyphs. When Li Qingshan's fingers touched the bars, he immediately felt like he was being stabbed by needles. At the top of the prison was the image of a strange beast that seemed like a tiger, yet also not a tiger.

Shen Xihua said, "I invited a great master of mohism to create this mechanism. It's known as the Daemon-trapping Cage of Bi'an. Even powerful daemonic beasts can't escape, so you better give up on that thought! Let me ask you again. Are you going to spare me or not? If you agree, I can release you. I can even help you kill them."

TL: According to mythology, Bi'an is one of the nine sons of the dragon. It is half-tiger, half-dragon and favours litigation and is placed over prison gates to keep guard.

"If I say I'll spare you, you'll just believe me?"

Shen Xihua seemed extremely conflicted. "I'm willing to gamble on it. I believe that you're a man."

Li Qingshan shook his head silently and slowly.

Shen Xihua screeched, "Don't regret your choice! You're in my hands now. All you need to do is nod, and we can sit down and discuss matters. Your cultivation might be higher, but there might always be a time when you need someone like me."

Li Qingshan burst out into a roar of laughter, which thundered through the entire room. It felt like a great gust of wind had been whipped up, blowing books and paintings on the ground and shattering vases and jars.

Shen Xihua blocked his ears as he resisted it with all of his true qi. He was shocked. Was he really just a second layer Qi Practitioner?

All the unorthodox masters in the front hall only stared at their trembling cups. The entire building seemed to be tottering. They became alarmed.

"What is happening?" "Is that someone laughing?" "What powerful inner force!" "It comes from up ahead. Didn't Shen Xihua go there to retrieve the pills? Has someone tried to steal the pills?"

With that, everyone became restless. "Let's go over there and take a look!" "Who the hell is so stupid to try steal from the jaws of tigers?"

Li Qingshan stopped laughing and said to Shen Xihua, "Do you think that someone like you, someone no different from an animal, is worthy enough to become associated with me?"

Even bad people had pride. Shen Xihua said, "Y- you've gone too far!"

A group of unorthodox masters rushed in and asked in surprise, "Island master Shen, what's going on?" "Who's this?" Everyone who entered the study were first-rate masters. Those who were weaker and the subordinates could only gather around outside and watch.

"You've forced me to do this." Shen Xihua's expression was twisted as he said to everyone, "Everyone, settle down. I want to tell you about something that's related to all of your lives."

Everyone quietened down. Shen Xihua said, "This is a Hawkwolf guard, sent to kill us."

When they heard 'Hawkwolf guard', everyone paled in fright. They prided themselves as masters who had made it onto the blacklist and treated their subordinates with so much arrogance that they would

even claim that the Hawkwolf Guard could do nothing to them. However, they actually feared this terrifying organization that controlled the blacklist the most.

“In other words, there are no pills at all!?”

“Fuck you, Shen Xihua! You were actually working with the Hawkwolf Guard against us!”

Everyone began to think of retreat. They looked at Li Qingshan like he was a man-eating tiger. The young man sat boldly on the armed chair with his hair draped down, hiding his face. Even when he was trapped in the cage, he gave off a terrifying sense of might.

Shen Xihua threw out a stack of paper. “Look at that. These are official documents from the Hawkwolf guard. He has come this time just to kill us all. All of you know what happened to the Auspicious casino in Silver Mountain town. This kid was the one behind it all. Do you all plan on being next?!”

They picked up the files one by one and found their own names. Afterwards, they trembled in utter fright. Their glory of being on the blacklist had already become a death sentence.

“Island lord Shen, what do you want us to do?”

“We’re in for a penny and in for a pound!”

“Killing a Hawkwolf guard!? Have you lost your minds?”

“If we don’t kill him, he’ll kill us.”

Just as everyone engaged in a bitter debate.

Li Qingshan let out a gentle cough and attracted everyone’s attention. He said, “Everyone who should be here is here!”

“Tian Zhonghao.”

A coarse, short and mischievous-looking middle-aged man shuddered. “What do you want?”

“In the past, you studied martial arts under old fist master Wang of Bamboo Willow town, but because he found you lacking in sincerity, he refused to teach you martial arts. As a result, you poisoned him to death, stole his martial arts manual, and became a highwayman. Over all these years, you held up travellers, killed them, and stole their goods. You even developed a liking to eating the hearts and livers of living people, right?”

He was being watched by all, Li Qingshan was trapped in the cage, and he was reluctant to embarrass himself, so he said in a tough manner, “What about it?”

Li Qingshan no longer paid any more attention to him. He continued, “Yue Ruyong, you loved to kidnap the children of wealthy families for ransom. If they were bold enough to report it to the authorities, or they refused to pay the ransom, you would cut off the ears or fingers of the children one by one, delivering it to their families. Am I right?”

Yue Ruyong had vicious eyes and pointed ears with a cold expression. He sneered. “Those kiddos are born more fortunate than everyone else. Of course, they should suffer a little.”

Li Qingshan no longer paid any more attention to him either. He just named these people one by one until he reached the very end. "As for the people who were not mentioned, whether you're a thief or a bandit, or whether you've helped propagate evil, committed countless crimes of evil yourself, or are hatching sinister plots, you cannot be forgiven for your crimes, and you will be executed on the spot according to the laws of Great Xia."

"And you, Shen Xihua. You will pay for what you have done!"

Everyone laughed aloud, "Just by you?" "Has he lost his mind?" "We do need to kill him!" However, the laughter gradually subsided.

All they saw was Li Qingshan standing up from the armed chair and grabbing the bars of the Daemon-trapping Cage of Bi'an with both hands before pulling at the bars. His flesh swelled, his muscles bulged, and his clothes ripped.

Blue light that seemed like electricity flowed through the bars, gathering in Li Qingshan's hands. He felt like he was being stabbed by hundreds of needles. Obviously, he did not pay too much attention to something insignificant like that. However, despite his brute force, the bars still failed to budge.

After being taken aback, Shen Xihua eased up. "It's useless. My Daemon-trapping Cage of Bi'an is not something you can destroy."

The masters from the blacklist all sneered as well. They looked at Li Qingshan like he was a dumb, wild beast.

Li Qingshan's hair was draped down, so it covered his face. However, the corner of his lips had also curled into a smile. It seemed slightly twisted.

"What's this?!" Shen Xihua sensed the change in Li Qingshan's aura first. Only a Qi Practitioner like him could sense a change like that.

However, soon afterwards, everyone saw the change with Li Qingshan's body. Li Qingshan's tall, sturdy body seemed to become even taller. His dark hair shone with a smear of scarlet, while his bronze skin seemed to grow darker. In particular, his arms actually became black like iron.

Creak. The metal cage twisted painfully. The blue electricity became more and more intense, but it was unable to stop the reality of the bars that were as thick as a person's arm being gradually pulled apart.

Shen Xihua took a step back, "T- that's impossible! Y- you're-" Afterwards, he yelled out, "Everyone, get him together! Kill him!"

The masters of the blacklist knew that they could not be soft-hearted here. They made up their minds and charged over together. They swung their various weapons towards Li Qingshan. The blades, spears, swords, and halberds all shone with light. They feared that Li Qingshan would actually break out, so they wanted to make use of the time while he was busy to deal a killing blow. However, Shen Xihua had already backed away quietly.

## **Chapter 157 - The Vicious Tiger Emerges from the Cage**

Many boats of various sizes were docked at the wharf.



The drizzle continued to pour down, creating countless ripples on the lake's surface. A thin layer of fog formed above the lake. The firelight in the glazed covers on the boats created a hazy yellow. Everything seemed peaceful.

Many men were left behind to watch over the boats to prevent anyone from severing their path of retreat. Inside their cabins, they all discussed the great laughter from the island earlier.

With a thunk, a double-masted boat seemed to hit something. It shook violently before rapidly sinking.

The men left behind on the boats all heard that. They emerged on their decks and saw the boat of the Blue Wolf gang sink. Apart from the people of the Blue Wolf gang who fell into panic, the others all stood on their decks and laughed aloud, watching on leisurely.

However, there was another great thunk very soon, and another boat began to sink slowly. A third soon followed.

Everyone all sensed that something was wrong. They called out, "What's going on?" "Oh no, there's a water ghost sinking the ships!" "If you can swim, go down and take a look!"

By water ghost, they were obviously not talking about an actual ghost, but someone lurking under the water.

Immediately, over a dozen able-bodied figures leapt into the water. After their eyes grew accustomed to the darkness in the water, they became stunned. All they saw was two large balls of fire, red in the centre and white on the edges, in the pitch-black, icy depths. None of them had ever seen such brilliant, lively fire before.

The fire rapidly expanded as they grew closer. They finally could see the source of the two balls of fire now. They could not help but become dumbfounded.

It was a huge skull that stood even taller than a man, like the skull of a giant. However, it seemed like it had been revived from the abyss of hell right now. Its eye sockets were brimming with lively fire as it looked at them brilliantly.

Afterwards, it opened its mouth and lunged towards them. The same kind of fire burned within its mouth like gates to the furnace of hell.

Xiao An stood in the pitch-black depths with his hands together in a prayer position. He controlled the Skull Prayer Beads and swallowed these people one by one before smashing it towards the other ships. The huge skull would immediately leave behind a great hole after a single collision.

With each thunk, a boat sank.

On the wharf, no one could hide their fear anymore. The boats were all destroyed, and the people who had entered the water had not emerged either. They had no idea what was hiding in the water. They were trapped here now.

Thump! Thump! Thump! Thump! There was a string of gentle sounds, and the people on the shore collapsed on the ground like puppets cut from their strings.

Everyone cried out, "There's an enemy attack!" "Where?" "Get out here! Get out here for me!"

No one could see the white streak that rushed through the rainy night. The Skull Prayer Beads had already reverted to their original, bead-like form, moving rapidly through the rain; it was like a sixth layer Qi Practitioner controlling an artifact. It was not something these people of the jianghu could discover.

Even more people collapsed on the ground. The cowardly swung their weapons wildly. They looked around, but all they saw was the dark of night. The calmer people tried to find out the reason for the deaths of the others. Very soon, they discovered a thumb-sized hole that connected their chest and back, but there was not a shred of blood from the wounds at all.

Just as they contemplated this, someone shouted out, "It seems to be... fire!"

The other people also discovered that the holes seemed to possess a speck of firelight. The wounds rapidly grew, and the holes grew as well. However, not a single droplet of blood was shed the entire time. The fire devoured the flesh and blood of the deceased quietly.

Every single person who had the right to receive an invitation to this Island of Cherishing Flowers were people who had lived with their lives on the line every single day; they were people who would even lick the blood off their blades. However, they all became frightened out of their wits when they saw the people beside them drop dead one by one, unable to see the enemy and only left with this strange sight. They all staggered backwards.

The flames swallowed all of the flesh and blood, reducing it to white bones in the blink of an eye. The colour of the flames became brighter as well, brimming with life. Afterwards, as if they were not done, they swelled and erupted, turning into thousands of sparks and landing on the other people.

The fire passed through their clothes without leaving behind a trace. However, once it came into contact with fresh blood and flesh, it was like fire to oil. It would rapidly spread and evolve into a roaring flame.

A series of miserable shrieks rang out at the wharf, with several dozen people on fire. In the blink of an eye, not a single sound was left. All that remained were several dozen sets of white bones.

Xiao An emerged from the water and counted to himself. Six hundred and ninety-seven.

The remaining sets of skeletons were now clad in a layer of pale flames. The white bones melted like snow very soon, turning into several droplets of fluid before merging with his body.

Just when Xiao An wanted to make his way to the garden and assist Li Qingshan, he suddenly sensed something and turned around.

His flaming eye sockets pierced through the fog. From extremely far away, he saw a great, black ship slowly sail over.

Xiao An thought about what to do. He still ended up deciding to go to the garden.

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"Hah!"

Li Qingshan sucked in and produced an explosive shout. Pure true qi mixed with daemon qi turned into a Tiger Demon's Fierce Roar with a great gust of wind, directly landing on the few incoming martial arts

practitioners. They were immediately blown away as they spat out blood. Their faces and chests were reduced to a bloody mess. It was impossible for them to survive.

Although this was a Tiger Demon's Fierce Roar that had been weakened countless times, it was still not something mere masters of the jianghu could endure.

Right off the bat, Li Qingshan's roar killed several first-rate masters.

These so-called first-rate masters who were accustomed to always getting their way with their powerful martial arts had witnessed the true disparity in strength between them and the Hawkwolf Guard.

With the creaking of metal, Li Qingshan forced open a great hole between the bars. The inscriptions on the Daemon-trapping Cage of Bi'an dimmed, and the spiritual qi dispersed.

Li Qingshan walked out like a vicious tiger emerging from a cage. He gave off a pressing aura. The martial arts masters all took a step back as they looked at Li Qingshan in surprise and fright.

Li Qingshan's stature returned to normal. He would never expose his daemon form before so many people unless he was certain he could clean them all up. The person he needed to eliminate immediately was obviously Shen Xihua, who could sense his daemon qi.

"Oh no, the boats! The boats have been destroyed!" A lackey suddenly rushed in and shouted out.

"What? Who did that?" Tian Zhonghao grabbed the lackey by the shoulders and exclaimed.

"I- I don't know!"

All of them looked at Li Qingshan. Although they had heard it from Shen Xihua, they had only just realised that this teenager of the Hawkwolf Guard actually wanted to trap them all here so that he could slaughter them all.

Li Qingshan smiled. Xiao An had begun as well. Afterwards, his eyes narrowed, and he gazed through the crowd at Shen Xihua, who hid among them and was about to flee. He yelled, "Where do you think you're going?!"

Shen Xihua shuddered inside. He turned around in shock. Li Qingshan had already drawn near as his voice resounded. With the roaring wind, he lunged over.

Some of the martial arts masters were unable to react in time, so they ended up blocking Li Qingshan's path. They felt like a rampaging elephant had struck them, and they were directly knocked several meters away. Their bones all shattered as they passed away, unable to let out a single sound.

There was a flash of a talisman, and it burned away to ash.

A golden figure rose up from Shen Xihua's body. He was quite fast with his reaction. At that critical moment, he used a Strength Talisman of the Guardian Kings before forcefully turning around and throwing two punches downwards at Li Qingshan's stomach.

Li Qingshan ignored the attacks. He formed a tiger's claw with his right hand and viciously reached towards Shen Xihua. "Go die!"

The Tiger Demon Digs out the Heart.

His five fingers were like five steel chisels. They forcefully stabbed through the golden light. True qi and light clashed violently, producing an ear-splitting screech.

Shen Xihua was utterly shocked. He had never thought that the Strength Talisman of the Guardian Kings could be ripped through with empty hands. However, he knew that his time was up, so all of his true qi gathered in his fists violently as he punched at Li Qingshan's chest.

Li Qingshan forcefully endured the two punches, but he only tottered slightly. His right hand pierced through the golden light and stabbed into Shen Xihua's chest. He tugged outwards and dug out a bloody heart.

The surroundings suddenly fell quiet. The strongest person present, Shen Xihua, could not even survive a single attack from Li Qingshan. Once again, this was a heavy mental blow to the many martial arts masters present.

They could no longer care about anything now. They all took out their trump card talismans, biting the tips of their tongues and spraying blood on them. The talismans activated and shattered, releasing light. However, all of them chose to flee outside. They did not even care about their subordinates. Not a single one of them tried to throw their lives at Li Qingshan.

When the vicious tiger descends from the mountains, the birds and beasts scatter.

"Talismans? I have them too!" Li Qingshan casually fished out a Swift Breeze talisman from his hundred treasures pouch and activated it with true qi. Whirlwind wrapped around his arms, and his body seemed to become much lighter. He took a step, and he felt like it was cushioned with air, allowing him to take off into the sky.

In the air, he drew his knicked Wind-entwining blade with a reverse grip and swept out with it.

The swiftest masters who had reacted first had already made it past the walls. They were cut in half by a wind blade. Their blood and organs scattered on the ground.

After using the Swift Breeze talisman, his swift body became ghostly. There were a series of blurs and splashes of blood erupted. Describing him as a tiger among a flock of sheep was no longer enough now.

This was no longer a battle, but a one-sided massacre. Before an absolute difference in strength, tricks and techniques were already pointless. All he needed to do was swing the Wind-entwining blade gently and heads would hit the ground. He could kill with each step, all the way from the study room to the courtyard, and then to the main hall. He was like a living asura.

The martial arts masters fled in all directions like a swarm of bees. They could only resent how their parents had only given birth to them with two feet. They had cursed Shen Xihua thousands of times inside by now.

One of them looked back and saw Li Qingshan flicker, rapidly approaching him, so he knelt down on the ground and yelled out, "I'm a spy from the government!" Afterwards, he blinked, and Li Qingshan stopped in front of him with his completely nicked blade paused. With another blink of his eyes, Li Qingshan had already arrived elsewhere. The person felt feeble as he collapsed on the ground. He basically crawled and rolled his way to a corner of the massacre.

With that as an example, many people copied him. They knelt on the ground and shouted out, "I'm also a spy too!"

For a moment, there were spies as far as the eye could see. Li Qingshan did not have any accurate information on these lackeys either, so he became rather hesitant.

On the distant lake surface, several dozen balls of firelight lit up in the tin fog; it was followed by shrill whistles in the air that rapidly drew closer.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Under the deafening sounds, the Island of Cherishing Flower was immediately reduced to a sea of fire.

A black cannonball pierced through the ceiling and landed five steps in front of Li Qingshan. It erupted with dazzling light and waves of heat, directly blowing away the people nearby like they were paper.

### **Chapter 158 - Reconstructing Flesh and Blood**

Many people stood on the deck of the great ship. There were both monks and daoists. They all stared at the Island of Cherishing Flowers in the distance anxiously.

If people of the jianghu were present, they would definitely cry out in surprise, as basically all of the orthodox masters who had some renown to their names within several hundred kilometers of Jiaping were gathered here.

There was black and white in the world. The so-called orthodox was not necessarily pure and honest, upholding the virtues of justice and righteousness, but they were a bunch of people who followed the law and protected order. There were quite a few who included the virtues of benevolence, righteousness, and courtesy as a part of their teachings as well. They might have been hypocrites, but most of the people in this world liked to stand under the light. This was just how virtues worked.

At the end of the day, the hypocrite Yue Bujun still performed many good deeds of purging evil and helping the weak, while the actual wretch Tian Boguang had truly harmed countless ordinary people.

TL: These characters come from *The Smiling, Proud Wanderer* written by Louis Cha, which you are welcome to check out. For those who have read the book or watched adaptations faithful to the book, you should be familiar with these references.

However, the battle between the black and the white, the orthodox and the unorthodox, had never ceased.

In simpler words, young and inexperienced martial arts practitioners all wanted to live a lavish life of being luxuriously adorned and able to throw money around. The simplest and most direct way was to become a bandit. They would be able to steal money and women. There would also be many people who were reluctant to do this but still shared the ambition of a lavish life, so they became young, gallant wanderers, young heroes. Destroying a bandit's nest was obviously not a bad choice. They would also obtain money, women, and something else, renown.

If a young hero destroyed countless nests of bandits and managed to survive, they would become a great hero. If a petty thief managed to steal tremendous wealth and countless women, they would become great thieves. These two people would obviously have a great cluster of grievances, but that did

not matter. They would have many friends, and as a result, two groups of people existed in constant conflict with one another.

In more complicated words, they had accumulated countless grievances over the generations. They had enough grievances to last them a few lifetimes. Every single unorthodox master on the Island of Cherishing Flowers had enemies on the ship.

The unorthodox masters were not the only ones who had become restless over the news of the Pill Seizing Gathering. These people became restless as well. They thought of how their enemies would reach the innate realm and confront them, killing them and then taking their money and women. As a result, they could not just let it happen. And, if there really were pills that great, who wouldn't want them?

As a result, they secretly planned this operation. However, these orthodox masters all seemed to follow a teenage girl as their leader. They stood around her courteously.

The girl was only around thirteen or fourteen years of age. She stood at the bow of the ship in plain clothes. Her face was filled with an experienced sense of maturity, but due to her baby face and the fact that she was just not that old, it was quite a funny sight.

An old monk with grey eyebrows bowed. "Miss Hua, what do you think?"

The girl narrowed her eyes to peer through the thin fog like a general. She did not answer him.

The old monk raised his head and looked at everyone helplessly. Then they all looked at a girl in violet beside the young miss.

They were all renowned figures of the jianghu, but they were helpless before this young miss, not only because she was a second layer Qi Practitioner at such a young age, but also because she came from a great clan. When she was outside to see the world and toughen up, she befriended the great hero Yu's daughter, Yu Zijian, who was the woman in violet beside her. That was also why she agreed to assist them.

As soon as they arrived by the lake, she had taken out a small boat from her hundred treasures pouch. She tossed it into the water, and it transformed into a huge ship, which stunned all of them. With her assistance, they were extremely confident in succeeding this time. They would definitely be able to grant these people a graveless death.

Yu Zijian said, "Chenglu, why don't you answer him?"

Hua Chenglu raised her hand in a composed manner to shut Yu Zijian up. Afterwards, she waved the small banner in her hand and passed an order. "Turn the ship around and prepare the cannons!"

The ship slowly turned. The port faced the Island of Cherishing Flowers, and then several dozen small, wooden hatches opened up and large, black cannons extended out.

However, the entire ship was a single mechanism, so it did not require any sailors to control it. Instead, she could achieve all of that through the tiny banner in her hand. As a result, her mighty order no longer seemed so mighty. It seemed rather funny instead. None of them knew how to react to this.

Yu Zijian whispered, "Chenglu, are the Fire Dragon cannons really that powerful?"

Due to being doubted, her mature little face became agitated. She pointed at the Island of Cherishing Flowers. "Watch as I flatten the entire place!"

Afterwards, she ordered loudly, "Open fire!"

The black cannons erupted with several dozen flashes like the roaring of fire dragons, planting the same number of mushroom clouds on the Island of Cherishing Flowers in the distance. They destroyed most of the structures there in a single instant.

The lovely hall collapsed while the exquisite structures burst into flames. The Island of Cherishing Flowers that Shen Xihua had tended to for all these years was being reduced to ashes with his death.

The orthodox masters on the deck were all shocked. They personally believed that if they themselves were on the island, they would have never been able to escape alive. Martial arts practitioners were just far too weak compared to actual innate masters.

Yu Zijian murmured, "How powerful!"

There was a sliver of complacency in Hua Chenglu's eyes, but she did not show it on her face.

Yu Zijian asked in worry, "Chenglu, will there be any innocent people on the island?"

Hua Chenglu advised earnestly, like she was her senior, "Zijian, you can't scruple over small matters if you want to achieve big things. You're still far too young."

The other orthodox masters all felt that this girl truly lived up to her background of originating from a renowned clan. They completely ignored Yu Zijian's question. As long as they could blast all of these bastards to death, who would care if there were any innocent people or not? They stood on the boat in the distance and watched as their enemies were reduced to ashes. There was nothing more joyful than that.

Great hero Yu smiled gently and generously. "Zijian, even if there are innocent people, they'll be laying their lives down for the sake of the martial arts society. All of the people of unorthodox origins are cruel and crafty. If we can't be more decisive and smarter than them, how are we supposed to defeat them? You need to learn from miss Hua."

Yu Zijian curled her lips, but she did not try to rebuke that. She just felt like her father had changed recently. In the past, if she was ever bold enough to say something like this in front of fellow people of the martial arts society, great hero Yu would have frowned and scolded her already. If she refused to oblige, he would even draw his sword. Although he had never swung it at her, he had never been so gentle to her.

Due to his daughter's friendship with Hua Chenglu, great hero Yu had now become greatly respected by his fellow members of the martial arts society. He basically would even laugh in his dreams over this. Not only did Yu Zijian's future prospects become limitless, but even he as her father benefited as well. As a result, he became very amiable with his daughter. In particular, whenever he was in front of Hua Chenglu, he would basically set the norm of a loving father.

Under the flattery from the orthodox masters, Hua Chenglu tried to smile it off like she was unfazed. She waved the banner in her hand and launched a barrage of cannonfire again.

The entire Island of Cherishing Flowers was now engulfed in fire and smoke.

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The barrage landed on a huge shield and dispersed as violent gusts of wind. Li Qingshan lowered his spiritual artifact shield as he looked at the surface of the lake in surprise. What is going on?

He was not surprised by the existence of guns and ammunition in this world. Instead, he wondered just who was trying to interfere and blow the Island of Cherishing Flowers to pieces.

However, there was no point for him to think too much about this. After all, they had assisted him instead. Cannonfire on such a level did not pose any threats to him. As he held the shield that had already transformed to the size of a table, he strolled through the cannonfire like it was nothing. He was completely unscathed.

However, to these unorthodox masters, it was basically the end of the world. Not a single super master burst out yelling, "You have cannons? Well I have divine martial arts!" They were all blown to pieces as they sobbed for their lives, saving Li Qingshan the trouble of hunting them down individually.

TL: This is a reference to the 1993 Hong Kong movie, *The East is Red*, where a group of Chinese people are under fire from the Spanish navy, and a great martial arts master bursts out, catching all the bullets and yelling, "You have science? Well I have wondrous martial arts!"

Xiao An crossed through the cannonfire easily as well and arrived before Li Qingshan.

Under the constant booms, Li Qingshan nodded; his voice was drowned out by the cannonfire. However, his lips parted, and he seemed to say, "You can start!"

Both of their eyes seemed to shine.

Xiao An brought his hands together in a prayer position, with the Skull Prayer Bead between his palms. Afterwards, he lowered his head and chanted scriptures quietly.

Flames flowed out like water, silently spreading through the heavy smoke, descending over the collapsed walls and extending towards the buildings, swallowing every single corpse it came across along the way.

Four hundred and twenty seven, three hundred and eleven, two hundred and twenty five, one hundred and thirty one...

He counted to himself inside. Suddenly, Xiao An raised his head, and his eyes were filled with joy. All of the flames began to flow back to him, wrapping around him like a snake. It turned into a cocoon that enveloped him. Gradually, Xiao An disappeared inside. All that remained was a great, scarlet cocoon composed of fire floating in the air.

Li Qingshan stared right at the cocoon of fire without shifting his gaze at all. He clenched his hands firmly as he suddenly became nervous.

The explosions continued. At this moment, a cannonball whistles through the air, passing through the thick smoke and flying towards Li Qingshan.



Li Qingshan extended his left hand with lightning speed and caught the cannonball.

Boom!

The cannonball exploded in his hands, charring it. He continued to stare at the cocoon like nothing had happened at all. He did not even turn his head.

Time trickled by. After who knows how long, the cannonfire subsided, while Li Qingshan simply sat down by a destroyed wall, leaning his head on his hand.

At this very moment, there was not a single matter, not a single person, that was worth his attention aside from Xiao An. Even Xuanyue and Gu Yanying formed no exceptions. His ambition that lied beyond the Nine Heavens was temporarily set aside as well.

Hua Chenglu smiled on the deck of the ship. "It's done!" She swung the small banner and ordered, "Let's set off and go take a look!"

"What's that?" Suddenly, someone called out and pointed behind the ship.

Everyone looked over and became extremely stunned. A horse carriage tore through the fog and rapidly rolled over the surface of the water. It arrived before the ship very soon and gradually came to a halt.

The West Gate Granny lifted the curtain and frowned. This was the Wave Breaker of the Hua family! She had seen it in Clear River city before. She could not be wrong. This mechanical ship had been created by several great masters of modhism. The Fire Dragon cannons on it were powerful, and it possessed several hundred mechanical puppet soldiers as well. Every single one of them possessed the strength of a weaker Qi Practitioner. They were extremely costly to create.

The Sect of Clouds and Rain was powerful, but it was unable to ignore the influence the Hua family had over the Clear River prefecture. She called out loudly, "May I ask which fellow of the Hua family is present?"

Hua Chenglu leapt off the railing and replied, "Hua Chenglu is present."

The West Gate Granny said, "So it's you, brat. You've stolen your family's ship and come out to play? Be careful of being spanked for getting involved with these untrustworthy folk."

None of the orthodox masters had any objections to being labelled as untrustworthy folk. Regardless of their gender, they all looked at the West Gate Granny in infatuation and lamented, There are actually beauties like her in the world. Even her wrinkles seemed to be extremely charming.

### **Chapter 159 - The Aspect of Great Beauty**

However, Hua Chenglu was unfazed. She did not back down at all. "So it's you, the old coot! This ship was mine in the first place. You're the one who stole the carriage of the Sect of Clouds and Rain and came out to play!"

The West Gate Granny said in displeasure, "You're so young, yet your mouth is already so foul. When I see your father, I must mention this to him. Right now, I have matters to attend to, so I'm not going to bother with a brat like you!"

Hua Chenglu immediately rebuked her and said, "When I see big brother Chengzan, I'll mention it to him as well, how an old hag like you is harassing me just because of my young age!"

The West Gate Granny snorted coldly, and the carriage sped off towards the Island of Cherishing Flowers, forming a pair of tracks on the surface of the water.

A boy in red said unhappily in the carriage, "Granny, why won't you teach that little girl a lesson?"

The West Gate Granny said, "Her father and elder brother are not people to be trifled with. They're difficult to deal with, or I would have taken her measly life a long time ago. Hmph, there'll be plenty of times when she'll cry in the future. If you hadn't thrown a tantrum for some roasted chestnuts and wasted time, we would have arrived a long time ago and dealt with Li Qingshan already. We wouldn't have run into this girl."

If regular second layer Qi Practitioners were bold enough to be so rude to the West Gate Granny, she would have killed them a long time ago. However, since she came from the Hua family, she had to show some respect to her. Hua Chengzhan's identity as a Scarlet Wolf commander had some weight in the Clear River prefecture.

The teenager in red curled his lips. "It's not like I was the only person who wanted to eat them. Moreover, it's not too late right now either. Li Qingshan is definitely still on the island."

Hua Chenglu watched the carriage glide away from the deck. She snorted coldly as well, but her tender snort was nowhere near as powerful as the West Gate Granny's. Instead, she seemed more like she was just grumbling. She swung down the small banner, and the Wave Breaker broke through the waves, moving towards the Island of Cherishing Flowers.

Within the smoke, the outline of the island gradually became visible.

The shine of the cocoon of fire grew dimmer and dimmer, like a sun that was about to set. All that was left was a scarlet sphere that rapidly shrank.

Rain fell from the sky, landing on the cocoon and rising up as white steam.

The cocoon was filled with red light. Xiao An laid in there, curled up like he was in his mother's womb. The flames were no longer like flames, but more like a viscous fluid, like the amniotic fluid of the womb. Moreover, it contained the tremendous energy of life, gradually soaking him completely.

He had already comprehended a sliver of the essential ideas of the Path of White Bone and Great Beauty. Right now, he was going from death to life, entering a realm of neither death or life, transforming white bone into great beauty.

He formed a buddhist hand seal with his bone fingers and something profound seemed to be invoked.

From white bone to flesh, flesh and blood was reconstructed.

Li Qingshan had already begun to hold his breath.

With a great crack, a crevice appeared in the cocoon, spreading in all directions.

Li Qingshan was basically sitting on the edge of his seat now.

A tender hand extended out from the cocoon. It was white with a touch of red, like it was sculpted from blood jade. His blood vessels were almost visible.

Li Qingshan leapt to his feet, but he was afraid of disturbing him. He gritted his teeth, and he suddenly felt his eyes moisten and redden. He had witnessed in person as Xiao An went from being a spirit to a skeleton, and then to a new life with blood and flesh again. He was filled with great joy for some reason. He believed that regardless of how brutal and bloody his path would be, he had more than just murderousness and hatred.

Crack! Crack! With a series of cracks, the cocoon shattered. Flames rose up from inside as a petite figure stood among them, reborn amidst fire.

The wondrous smell of sandalwood permeated the surroundings, immediately masking the pungent smell of gunpowder and smoke. It was calming.

Li Qingshan took a step forward. "Xiao An, you've finally... huh?"

The flames dispersed. A little girl stood naked at the centre of the flames that seemed like lotus petals. Her hands formed a buddhist seal. Her skin was pale and smooth, like polished jade. There was a red mole between her eyebrows, and her eyes were like two black pearls. There was not a speck of impurity or filth on her from head to toe. She was as pure as a red lotus.

She looked at her own hands in a daze, as if she was unable to believe she had actually recovered her body of flesh. She raised her head and looked at Li Qingshan. She seemed to be rather unfamiliar with moving her face, so she was expressionless. However, her eyes that were like black pearls suddenly erupted with endless joy as she extended her arms towards him.

Li Qingshan was slightly taken aback before rushing over quickly. He embraced her firmly as tears flowed from the corner of his eyes.

He was just like a father who had been waiting outside the delivery room the entire time. Although he had only just found out that the child was not a boy that he had been expecting, this small surprise was not particularly important at all. It was unable to change the joy within him.

Li Qingshan said constantly, "Wonderful!"

A while later, Li Qingshan suddenly felt that his mouth was rather clumsy. He had no idea what to say. He wiped away his tears and said, "Let's get you dressed first!"

Xiao An nodded obediently in his arms.

Li Qingshan released her and flipped through his hundred treasures pouch. He said in distress, "Though, there are only clothes for boys. Sigh, why didn't you tell me sooner?"

Xiao An shook her head as if she was saying, I've forgotten too. So many years had passed already. Whether she had been a spirit or a skeleton, gender had never mattered.

Li Qingshan was helpless. He thought about how the witch must have dressed her like a boy when she abducted her in order to deceive everyone. As a result, she had been under the impression that she was a boy the entire time.

Li Qingshan checked Xiao An again to confirm that he had not mistaken. However, he discovered that her body was covered in red marks. With her tender skin that was no different from a newborn's, even silk would scratch and bruise her, let alone his rough hands.

He asked in concern, "Did I hurt you?"

Xiao An shook her head. Compared to the incineration of the blood flames and the pain from the bone smelting of the pale flames, this type of pain was basically happiness.

Li Qingshan carefully dressed her, like he was carrying a great treasure that could easily break.

Xiao An's eyes widened. She wanted to tell him that she was not that fragile, but she enjoyed his care and concern very much as well.

Li Qingshan could not help but touch her face, which was quite the sensation to his hand. It was so soft that it seemed like it would dissolve in his hands. He brushed past the red mole on her eyebrow and vaguely recalled that this was the mark that the droplet of ginseng juice had left behind. Did it appear on her body of flesh as well?

Xiao An was like a doll, standing there obediently without moving at all, allowing him to touch her. She could feel the warmth from the tip of his fingers as she felt eager.

Li Qingshan rubbed her bald head and smiled, "It's a pity you don't have hair. Though, it'll grow very quickly."

Xiao An blinked her eyes and suddenly took a step back. She clenched her elegant hands and held her breath, using everything that she had. Soon afterwards, dark hair began to sprout wildly, and before long, it had reached her shoulders and subsequently her waist.

Li Qingshan said in a hurry, "Enough, enough."

Only then did Xiao An stop. Her hair had already grown down to her knees. It was moist and thick like kelp and naturally curled. It was so dark that it was not glossy at all, making it extremely unique.

She wore a beautiful set of silken garments and seemed just like a little young master with extremely delicate features. Li Qingshan was unable to describe how much he liked it. He was filled to the brim with joy and could not help but laugh aloud. He felt like the future was bright, and there was nothing that he could not achieve.

At this moment, the whinny of a horse rang out from the surface of the lake. Li Qingshan turned around and saw a carriage emerge from the thick fog, approaching him rapidly. Behind it was a great ship.

Li Qingshan frowned. If he had guessed correctly, the cannonfire earlier originated from the great ship, while the carriage seemed to possess a powerful aura. There was also hostility. This did not originate from his abilities as a Qi Practitioner, but as a daemon.

The carriage sped ashore and stopped quietly before Li Qingshan.

All Li Qingshan saw was an old woman in great red robes disembarking from the carriage. She gave off a pressing aura. Even from Zhuo Zhibo, he had never sensed an aura so powerful before. Out of the

people he had previously seen, the person closest would be Hua Chengzan, but her aura was much weaker than Hua Chengzan's.

She was a ninth layer Qi Practitioner.

The West Gate Granny made her way out of the carriage, but her gaze slid away from Li Qingshan, landing on Xiao An beside him. Afterwards, her gaze became fixed. She was filled with shock as she murmured, "Brilliance like the Essence of Spring, Gaze as Smooth as Light, Skin Smooth like Ice and Jade, Powdered Jade Sculpting—how can a person possess so many aspects of beauty? Wait, i- is this the legendary Heavenly Fragrance and Beauty? That's impossible!"

The West Gate Granny was very knowledgeable, so it was obviously impossible for her to be stunned by just the appearance of a child. The string of phrases she uttered were not just simple praises.

In the Sect of Clouds and Rain, the standards and names for labelling the appearances of people included the Aspect of Floral Fairness and Moon-like Beauty, the Aspect of Natural Bone-deep Beauty, the Aspect of Peach Blossom Beauty, the Aspect of Supple and Tender Beauty, the Aspect of Admirable Beauty, and so on. They were finely divided into nine tiers, with some better than others. Anyone who possessed an aspect of beauty would find great ease in practising the arts of charm of the Sect of Clouds and Rain, while higher aspects of beauty could easily attain effects akin to transcendency.

TL: Yes, these are all idioms in Chinese that essentially mean the same thing—extremely beautiful. This is one of the translator's struggles. ;-;

The current sect master possessed the Aspect of Peach Blossom Beauty. She was chosen by the previous sect master and accepted as a disciple, which was the reason for her current accomplishments. As for the West Gate Granny, she possessed the 'Aspect of Red Flight' from the Aspect of Colourful Frolicking Beauty, allowing her to stand out and thus allowing her to become one of the four great grannies of the Sect of Clouds and Rain. As for Furong, her appearance was nothing special, but due to her charming, graceful figure, the West Gate Granny had accepted her as a disciple, which made her the courtesan of Jiaping city.

Out of these numerous aspects of beauty, there was one aspect that only existed in the legends—the Aspect of Heavenly Fragrance and Beauty.

The Aspect of Heavenly Fragrance and Beauty fused many aspects of beauty, making it the leader of all fragrances, the champion of all beauty. It made the West Gate Granny name a list of aspects of beauty upon seeing her before finally reaching this unbelievable outcome.

According to the legends, this was an omen to throwing the world into disarray. Although it would not necessarily be accurate, the charm of this aspect of beauty was a source of disaster. It could collapse cities and kingdoms.

The West Gate Granny immediately tossed Li Qingshan aside. She even forgot all about the disappearance of her outstanding disciples, Zhao Liangqing and Furong. She stared right at Xiao An as she walked over. She was basically even more excited than Li Qingshan earlier. "You're so beautiful! Wonderful!" If she could take her in as a disciple and bring her back to the Sect of Clouds and Rain...

With a swish, Li Qingshan blocked the West Gate Granny and also interrupted her thoughts. He asked, "Who are you? What are you trying to do?"

The West Gate Granny raised her head in displeasure and looked at Li Qingshan, who was much taller than her. However, the arrogance on her face made it seem like she was looking down on him instead. "Oh, you're Li Qingshan? Who are you to her?"

### **Chapter 160 - I Must Kill Her**

The West Gate Granny originally planned on killing Li Qingshan as soon as she saw him. It did not matter whether Li Qingshan was actually related to their disappearance or not. She would put an end to the entire matter.

However, now that she saw how Xiao An was so close with him, she could not kill him anymore, just in case she ended up falling out with this dear disciple of hers. As for trash like Zhao Liangqing and Furong, if they were dead, they were dead. Their deaths were not worth her attention.

Li Qingshan was taken aback. He was unable to describe his relationship with Xiao An. Instead, he answered with a question. "And who are you? What has this got to do with you?"

"She is the West Gate Granny of the Sect of Clouds and Rain!" Hua Chenglu leapt off when the ship arrived near the shore and landed gently on the ground. She possessed a masterly set of movement techniques, so she arrived before Li Qingshan after just a few bounds.

The orthodox masters all disembarked from the ship as well. They planned to search for the pill that could allow people to directly reach the innate realm.

When Li Qingshan heard the name of the sect, he was immediately taken aback. While Zhou Wenbin had warned him already, he had never thought the Sect of Clouds and Rain would actually send such a powerful master against him. It had really taken him by surprise. As it seemed, he was not the only one who understood the principle behind a lion using its full strength to catch a rabbit. The Sect of Clouds and Rain would not actually be dumb enough to send lackeys one by one to him for him to practise on.

All Hua Chenglu saw was the Black Wolf tablet on Li Qingshan's waist. She asked in surprise, "You're a Hawkwolf guard? What are you doing here?" Afterwards, she looked at Xiao An beside him and praised, "What a beautiful child!"

Li Qingshan said, "I'm obviously here for a mission. You seem rather familiar." Hua Chenglu was young, but she had arched eyebrows and vermillion lips on her apple-shaped face. She was extremely charming. He seemed to have seen something similar somewhere before.

Hua Chenglu said, "Since you're a Hawkwolf guard, you've obviously met my elder brother, Chengzan. You're carrying out a mission? Did you also hear that they would gather here?"

Only then did Li Qingshan come to a realisation. A man as handsome as Hua Chengzan was rare, so his impression of him was obviously deep.

"I was the person who gathered all these people here. There were many servants and guards among them, as well as spies from the government. You've blasted them all to pieces indiscriminately. Whatever, thank you for your assistance. You've saved me quite the trouble." If it were not out of

consideration for the innocent people on the island, he would have never bothered to kill them one by one in such a troublesome manner. All he needed to do was daemonify and unleash a Tiger Demon's Fierce Roar, and it would all be over.

Hua Chenglu's eyes widened. "What? You gathered all of these people here?"

The orthodox masters behind her all shivered inside. The Pill Seizing Gathering was actually a scheme of the Hawkwolf Guard. What a ruthless young man. He actually wanted to gather all of these unorthodox masters together and kill them in one fell swoop. The pills would obviously go without saying now.

The West Gate Granny paid no attention to anyone else. All she did was stare at Xiao An, and she liked her more and more. Xiao An felt unnatural, so she hid behind Li Qingshan.

The West Gate Granny suddenly circled behind Li Qingshan and grabbed Xiao An's hand. She said to Li Qingshan, "This girly possesses tremendous fortune to be chosen by me. I want to take her as my disciple and bring her back to Clear River city. Will you allow it?"

She used her arts of charm. In a trance, Li Qingshan saw a great beauty before him, currently pleading at him in a desperate manner. He could not turn down any request of her. However, when he heard she wanted to take away Xiao An, he suddenly shuddered and yelled out, "Don't even think about it!"

When he looked at the West Gate Granny again, she no longer possessed any beauty at all anymore. Her skin was all pitted, yet she still painted her lips vermilion. She was an old monster who plastered herself with cosmetics. She only seemed sickening.

Li Qingshan thought of Furong and thought about how this old hag actually wanted to take Xiao An to a place like the Sect of Clouds and Rain. Fury rose through his head. Killing intent immediately erupted as red light shone in his eyes. He was tempted to kill the West Gate Granny on the spot, and it was not because of any good or evil. Even if you were a kind-hearted person in your past ten lives, even if you're a being of pure benevolence, I'll still cut you to pieces out of pure hatred if you mention a request like that to me.

Even the thought of daemonifying and killing the old hag on the spot before silencing everyone present crossed his head. However, he gave up on that in the end. He was both reluctant to kill the innocent, and he lacked confidence in his ability to kill the West Gate Granny. He could only hold back his anger and glare at the West Gate Granny. I must kill this old hag.

Hua Chenglu shivered. She felt like the ordinary teenager had suddenly turned into a terrifying beast such that he could swallow her in a single bite. The knees of the weaker orthodox masters directly gave way as they crumpled to the ground.

The West Gate Granny was slightly taken aback. She had never thought that a second layer Qi Practitioner like him could actually break free from her arts of charm. However, she paid no attention to the killing intent that Li Qingshan gave off. The anger of the weak was not worth the attention of the powerful.

The West Gate Granny said in a sunken manner, "That's not for you to decide. We need to ask what the child wants." She smiled at Xiao An. "Good girl, don't you want to go back with granny? Granny has everything." Her bearing suddenly became extremely amiable again.

She believed that Li Qingshan possessed a heavy aura of murderousness as a Qi Practitioner, which was why he could resist her arts of charm. However, against a little girl who had never practised qi before, it would be a piece of cake.

Never did she think that Xiao An would actually shake her head emotionlessly, completely unaffected by her. Her attitude was even firmer than Li Qingshan's. The very essence of the Path of White Bone and Great Beauty was to transform all forms and to see through all forms. It was naturally immune to arts of charm and illusions. Even if the sect master of the Sect of Clouds and Rain were present here, she would not be able to make her waver.

Hua Chenglu mocked, "West Gate hag, can't you see that they're not interested in you? You better just stop trying to flatter them."

The West Gate Granny said in irritation, "Shut up, brat!" She was utterly perplexed inside. Did the Aspect of Heavenly Fragrance and Beauty come with natural immunity to charms? However, it made her even more earnest instead. She had to take this girl back to the Sect of Clouds and Rain no matter what.

Hua Chenglu was furious after the West Gate Granny scolded her in front of so many people. She came from the Hua family, and she even came from the main branch. Her father was the patriarch. She had been spoilt since young. She was the little princess of the Hua family. Even her own parents had never scolded her like that.

The West Gate Granny no longer bothered with her anymore. She changed the topic of conversation and asked Li Qingshan, "Li Qingshan, I've come all this way this time to ask you just where Zhao Liangqing and Furong are."

Li Qingshan said indifferently, "The two disciples of your esteemed sect committed crimes and were exposed, so they fled in fear of punishment. How would I know where they went? But if you know where they are, you're more than welcome to tell me. I'll definitely bring them to justice."

The West Gate Granny said fiercely, "Don't play with me. How are you bold enough to claim that this entire matter has nothing to do with you? In my opinion, they fell to your hands. The Sect of Clouds and Rain will not let this matter go so easily."

Li Qingshan said, "Zhao Liangqing is a fifth layer Qi Practitioner. I'm only at the second layer, so how am I his opponent? Don't you even think about placing the blame on me, old granny. Though, if I do meet them again, I'll definitely kill them. That'll result in great merit in the Hawkwolf Guard. It's worth several hundred points of contribution."

The West Gate Granny and Li Qingshan bickered rapidly and furiously. As such, Hua Chenglu was unable to chime in. However, when she saw how Li Qingshan handled the West Gate Granny who was far more powerful than he was like she was no one special, even actively rebuking what she said to the point where she paled, Hua Chenglu's anger subsided slightly. She purposefully praised him loudly, "Kid, you're young, but you have quite the backbone."

"Old woman, you're completely unreasonable. This kid is only a second layer Qi Practitioner. If he comes across a fifth layer Qi Practitioner, he won't even have the time to flee, so how is he supposed to fall to his hands? Oh right, I forgot that the disciples of the Sect of Clouds and Rain all rely on their looks to get by. They're all weak as hell, so it's nothing surprising if he killed him!"



Li Qingshan glanced at her. She was so young, yet she spoke like an old man, constantly calling him 'kid'. However, seeing how she was basically on his side, he forgave her for this tiny aspect.

First, Li Qingshan had ridiculed the West Gate Granny, and now, Hua Chenglu had mocked her, so she was utterly furious. "You're just asking to die!" Her aura was like a great tidal wave as it kicked up wind and rain. It slammed into Li Qingshan wave after wave. The orthodox masters nearby were only struck by the collateral waves, yet they felt like they were heavily injured, heaving their chests. Only when they backed to several dozen steps away did they feel better.

They all looked at the West Gate Granny in utter shock. They had already heard from Hua Chenglu that she was a ninth layer Qi Practitioner, but none of them had ever thought that a ninth layer Qi Practitioner would actually be so powerful. Just the collateral damage had caused them internal injuries. Just what kind of pressure was the kid from the Hawkwolf Guard supposed to be under then?

"Then why don't you try it!?" Li Qingshan shielded Xiao An behind him. He crossed his arms and held his chest high as he looked down on the West Gate Granny. He was like a rock near the ocean, bombarded by the wind, rain, and water but completely unshaken.

Hua Chenglu was the closest. She felt her chest tighten as she truly sensed the difference between the second and ninth layers. She wanted to retreat, but she refused to embarrass the Hua family, so she forcefully endured it. Under the great pressure, even her vision blurred. Only her willpower remained.

Suddenly, she felt her wrist tighten, and she was pulled aside. The pressure decreased drastically, and her eyes cleared up. She looked up, but all she saw was Li Qingshan's large, sturdy back.

As it turned out, Li Qingshan saw her little face pale, so he pulled her behind him to shield her as well. Her elder brother Hua Chengzan had treated him well, and she had constantly stood on his side as well. The reason why the West Gate Granny was afraid of attacking him was exactly because of her. Obviously, he had to keep his protective charm safe.

Hua Chenglu gasped lightly as she felt shaken up. She thought, So brother and dad have always just been coaxing me when they clashed with me. This old woman is actually so powerful. This kid is also at the second layer, so how is he so powerful? He is actually unfazed by the old woman's aura.

Li Qingshan's actual strength was much more than the second layer. Instead, he was a daemon equivalent to the sixth or seventh layer of Qi Practitioner. And, he had not been sheltered like Hua Chenglu. Instead, he had emerged through taking thousands of lives. Consequently, his murderousness and viciousness were extremely heavy. Regular ghosts could not even get within ten steps of him, so he obviously did not fear the West Gate Granny's aura.

Then Hua Chenglu looked at Xiao An, who was completely fine as well. She felt even more depressed as a result. She called out from behind Li Qingshan, "Old woman, do you really plan on becoming enemies with the Hawkwolf Guard and the Hua family?"

The West Gate Granny saw how her threat was useless, so she could only pull back her aura. However, she felt utterly frustrated. If Hua Chenglu was not here, she would silence all of these orthodox masters before executing Li Qingshan. Even a powerful ninth layer Qi Practitioner like her was not bold enough to kill a Hawkwolf guard in the eye of the public.

## Dream Teller's Word

The month is finally over. I'm sitting in front of my computer and letting out a great exhale. I feel utterly tired and filled with joy.

I know I'm writing a book that's completely different from the Chronicles of Xu Xian, or even a book that's the exact opposite of the Chronicles of Xu Xian. One is about a gifted romantic, noble and graceful, while the other is about a fierce gallant, dyeing his blade with blood. One is about tending to his harem, while the other is about levelling up and training.

The previous book began as fan fiction and achieved success through its female characters, while this book went with the most common levelling stream. Afterwards, not a single, real female character appeared in four hundred thousand characters. There's not a hint of romance in the plot.

Readers criticized the fighting scenes in the previous book, yet this book just happened to have a lot of fighting. Compared to calling it a risk, you might as well just say that I've lost my mind.

However, I need to do this. I must not be restrained to a single theme, a single style. Those good ideas in my head include countless worlds, whether they be science fiction, eastern fantasy, city, western fantasy, or apocalyptic. And, these stories require different methods to be narrated and different main characters to act out, whether they're crazy, cruel, melancholic, or hot-blooded. You won't see a single similar main character or story from me.

However, I'm just too weak. I must admit that I lack the ability to fulfil this dream. I lack the ability to tell so many beautiful dreams.

As a result, I wrote Legend of the Great Sage. I threw away the scenes of romance I was skilled in the most, to write scenes of battle that troubled me the most. I picked up the walking stick for levelling and training, learning how to set up and achieve climaxes, learning how to ensure constant releases.

Originally, the fixed storyline would have resulted in an epic fail, which would result in me turning around and going back to my original tropes. However, I managed to break through with the storyline with my own hard work and your support. That's right, both were crucial. Writing webnovels has never been about a single person.

My attempts have also led to successes. My battles have become much smoother, and the plot is now planned and has gained its own rhythm. The novel aspect of this all was that I failed to even write four hundred thousand characters with my first book, Transmigratory Druid, and when I reached here with the Chronicles of Xu Xian, I was worrying about what I would write every single day. With Legend of the Great Sage right now, I have a grand, majestic world waiting to be displayed!

The results of the book so far are very good, but to me, it's nowhere close to being enough. The first aspect is my own problem, as I still haven't written well enough. The book has yet to reach the level of fascination I want, but I'll turn this into a problem for you very soon.

Whether it's training or killing people, it's all just supplementary to the story at the end of the day. It's impossible for Li Qingshan to eat pills and stomp enemies, levelling all the way until he meets the black ox beyond the Nine Heavens. That's far too dry and far too boring.

I've been thinking hard just how to construct a cultivator's world. I've also been thinking about how a cultivator's life would be. There'll definitely be quite a lot of these bonds of family, friendship, and love.

I purposefully set aside many things in the first four hundred thousand characters to learn many new things. However, setting aside does not mean giving up. It's so that they can become even greater when I pick them up again. Learning is not about losing myself, but for perfecting myself.

I'm not nobody. I am Dream Teller.

A new month, a new beginning. Please believe in me. When I lack confidence, please support me, no matter how.

Let's finish telling this dream together!