

Chapter 301 - Studying Artifact Forging for the First Time

A mocking sneer rang out from the crowd.

Li Qingshan looked back with a raised eyebrow. He was unable to tell which ignorant person was trying to provoke him. Was it a daoist disciple under the slovenly old daoist? Or was it a buddhist disciple who was unhappy with Xiao An?

However, all he saw was a young man in white dressed like a scholar with two pretty girls beside him. Hmm? A confucian disciple.

“Who’re you supposed to be? State your name.”

Chu Tian sneered. “Don’t act like you don’t know me. This young master is Chu Tian.”

Li Qingshan found him to be slightly familiar. Suddenly, he remembered who he was. Wasn’t he the genius young man who was discovered to possess the Five Elements constitution during the elemental affinity test?

However, he had never had any contact with him, so why was he so antagonistic? He had no idea about how Chu Tian had lost a thousand spiritual stones because of him, but even if he did know about it, he would have still told him that it served him right.

Seeing how hostile Chu Tian was, Li Qingshan did not bother being polite either. He said indifferently, “I don’t have a habit of remembering the names of small fry.”

Chu Tian furrowed his brows, and he immediately lost his temper. Since young, never had anyone looked down on him so much.

“Alright you, Li Qingshan. I came here and insulted you a little. All you had to do was put up with it obediently and make me happy, and it’ll be your good fortune. Instead, you’re bold enough to even talk back. You have no idea just how much trouble you’ve made for yourself. I can see you’re quite a man of talent, so if you apologise to me right now and call me big brother, we’ll be brothers.”

Li Qingshan was utterly dumbfounded by this. He really had not seen such a piece of work before. Even his anger vanished. He looked at Chu Tian with a frown, turned his head, and asked Hao Pingyang, “Is there something wrong with this person’s head?”

Hao Pingyang and Zhang Lanqing were dumbfounded too. They deeply agreed with that question. Never did they think that one of the three geniuses from the entrance examination this time, Chu Tian, would actually have something wrong with his head.

Although Li Qingshan’s identity as the primary disciple of the school of Novels garnered quite a lot of contempt or even hostility, all the people here were new disciples. Just who would want an enemy just for a moment of verbal pleasure? That was simply sheer stupidity.

However, this genius, Chu Tian, clearly had not considered that. He spouted a bunch of nonsense that even shocked the onlookers.

A girl beside Chu Tian grumbled, "How dare you speak to our big brother Tian like that? Don't you know that our big brother Tian is—"

Before she had even finished, Li Qingshan had already pulled Hao Pingyang over, hiding behind him like he was hiding from a psycho. It immediately made her face redden.

Chu Tian was furious. "Li Qingshan, stop right there! Are you afraid of me? If you're afraid, then call me big brother, or I'll never spare you!"

Li Qingshan said, "In my entire life, there's only a single person who I would call big brother. Compared to him, you're like a turd. Stay away from me. Just because you're a turd doesn't mean I'm afraid to step on you."

Their argument had already attracted quite a lot of attention. There was a roar of laughter with that.

Hao Pingyang laughed. "That's one amazing metaphor."

Hua Chenglu and Yu Zijian were there too. Under the guidance of their seniors, they knew this professor from the school of Mohism taught basic artifact forging the best.

Hua Chenglu smiled. Li Qingshan was still the same as when she first met him, as haughty and arrogant as he could be.

Chu Tian never thought he would instead become a laughing stock. He was utterly fuming. Just when he was about to blow his top, someone called out, "The professor is here."

The disciples all returned to their seats. Chu Tian was utterly furious, but even he was not bold enough to begin fighting before a professor. There seemed to be quite a lot of freedom in the academy, but it still had rules, and these rules were upheld by the school of Legalism, which was renowned for their draconian administration.

Hao Pingyang and Zhang Lanqing used this opportunity to bid farewell. They could be regarded as senior disciples in the school of Mohism, so they would never waste their own time by retaking these basic classes. They just said that they would look for him after class and show him around the island.

Li Qingshan stopped paying attention to Chu Tian too. He found a spot towards the back and sat down. The entire lecture hall was structured like a great swirl, while he sat on the edge of the swirl. This habit of his actually originated from his distant past life, which made him sigh slightly.

However, as soon as he sat down, the space beside him immediately emptied out. In particular, a female disciple from the school of Confucianism basically showed disgust as she retreated seven or eight steps away.

Li Qingshan smiled. He did not care. Chu Tian's voice suddenly rang out in his ear. "Do you understand who is the turd now?"

Li Qingshan frowned. There was a gentle gust of fragrance, and Qian Rongzhi sat down beside him. She smiled. "Nice clothes."

Chu Tian was surprised. Qian Rongzhi was a woman he had taken a fancy to. He immediately felt like he had just been betrayed. He turned his head away furiously.

“What’s up?” Li Qingshan did not shift his gaze when he asked that. A skinny old man with grizzled hair entered with a few boxes in his hands, making his way to the centre of the swirl and standing on the circular platform.

Afterwards, he began to drink tea without the slightest care in the world.

Everyone was surprised by this, but none of them dared to talk among themselves. They all communicated using true qi.

Qian Rongzhi asked, “Where’s Xiao An? Why isn’t she with you?”

“I don’t think our relationship has reached the point where we can talk about her.”

Qian Rongzhi became sad. Li Qingshan was unable to discern her real feelings either. “She’s currently in the school of Yin-yang, learning the Cloud Bookcase of the Seven Lots with Ma Buyi. If you have something to say, spit it out.”

Li Qingshan could completely disregard Chu Tian’s so-called provocations from a genius, immediately cursing back, but when he spoke with her, he had to raise his guard slightly. He was reluctant to fall out with her over something as petty as this, and he just had a feeling that her concern for Xiao An was not fake.

Even if Chu Tian ground his teeth in hatred against him, he would not care, but if he sensed hostility from her one day, then only the word “kill” would remain.

“Thank you. Wei Zhongyuan. Do you have time?”

“You’re in such a hurry?”

Qian Rongzhi leaned against her hand. “You gotta be swift with revenge, right? I don’t need you to kill him right now either. I still need to plan a little.”

“Revenge? You mean yours or mine?”

“Mine, of course.” Qian Rongzhi rubbed her smooth cheek. She wanted to return that slap ten fold, a hundred fold. She said leisurely, “I can’t wait to tell vice sect master Wei in detail just how I tortured Wei Yingjie to death. After that, I will unleash the same method on him. Hehe, now that’s the joys of life.”

Under the principle that the enemy of an enemy was a friend, Li Qingshan sucked in a deep breath and held back his urge to curse her. What a fucking deviant.

Qian Rongzhi seemed to be extremely amused by Li Qingshan’s expression, as if she had finally found someone who would listen to her inner voice, and that person would be forced to listen too.

“As remuneration, I can investigate Chu Tian’s background for you. He won’t just leave the matter like this. Oh, and that female instructor who wants to harm Xiao An too.”

“We’ll see. The old man is about to begin,” Li Qingshan answered casually, neither agreeing nor declining. Wei Zhongyuan had to die anyway. As for the female instructor, he would kill her if he met her. It would bring him a bit of pleasure too.

However, little did he know that in the eyes of regular people, this thought of his made him seem no different from a deviant.

On the lecturing platform, the professor finally stopped drinking tea. He gently coughed twice with a satisfied expression. “Everyone, I’m Meng Xiqi...”

The two of them stopped conversing, focusing on the class.

It was fine when the professor called Meng Xiqi was quiet, but once he began, he did not stop. Words flowed out of his mouth like a river, going from the origins of forging artifacts to the development of forging artifacts. His voice echoed through the spiral lecture hall, clearly heard by everyone.

“Some people say alchemy, forging artifacts, and so on are all outer paths of cultivation, and they’re not wrong. However, it’s exactly because of these outer paths of cultivation that you can sit here in peace, without having to worry about attacks from daemons, yet those daemons that truly only practise a greater path of cultivation are forced to hide deep within the mountains or underground...”

This was basically the first time Li Qingshan had come in contact with the path of forging artifacts, so he listened extremely carefully. And just like what Zhang Lanqing had said, Meng Xiqi spoke extremely well, full of wit and humour and striking great interest in the audience. He was only at the eighth layer, but he could be regarded as an expert in the aspect of forging artifacts.

After giving a general overview on the history and significance of forging artifacts, Meng Xiqi began to teach the actual path of forging artifacts.

Li Qingshan was entranced by it. Only then did he learn just how wondrous the path of refining artifacts was. From the initial transformation and fusing of materials, followed by the infusion of glyphs and inscription of formations, every single step was extremely impressive.

He never thought that these “outer paths of cultivation” would actually be so closely linked either. The glyphs mentioned in forging artifacts were different from the glyphs from the path of talismans, but they were identical in nature.

Glyphs were characters, characters that communicated with the world. Just the common types numbered at almost a thousand, and they had a myriad of effects depending on their combinations. During the process of forging artifacts, the infusion of glyphs was a crucial step, so understanding a little about the path of talismans was critical.

And, above spiritual artifacts were arcane artifacts, which were inscribing formations into artifacts to produce even more powerful and complicated effects. Qi Practitioners obviously lacked the ability to achieve this, but if they wanted to become a real artifact smith, then they had to know some basic formations.

Li Qingshan knew he had to revise the subjects he would be taking, but he felt like he had found a direction in the darkness. He was overjoyed.

Meng Xiqi spoke for two hours before returning to the very basics of forging artifacts—transforming the state of the materials.

“A good blacksmith goes through many steps to forge a sword. The basics steps include smelting, hammering, and quenching. They need many tools, like furnaces, large hammers, small hammers, air bellows, tanks of water, grindstones, and so on. However, to us, just a single artifact forging furnace is sufficient, or even no furnace...”

Finishing up with his explanation, he picked up the wooden boxes he had brought with him. Inside were many small, square pieces of wood, arranged neatly. He made the disciples in the front row pass them backwards.

Meng Xiyi requested them to turn the wood into a sphere without destroying the wood grain. The wood was pine wood, so it was relatively soft and easy to mould. In order to learn artifact forging, they needed to be able to mould a substance with their own power.

Li Qingshan received a piece of pine wood too, and he immediately began to practice with it. He slowly channeled true qi into it, following the method that Meng Xiqi had taught him, gradually fusing the true qi with the wood.

With the purity of his true qi and the gentle nature of Gui Water true qi that made it easier to control, he succeeded on his first try with this.

As he began to mould his true qi, the piece of wood began to twist and mould with it too, as if it was not wood, instead becoming gas or water with the Gui Water true qi.

Chapter 302 - Reincarnated Celestial

Li Qingshan’s confidence swelled. After experimenting around for quite a while, he finally removed the eight corners of the piece of pine wood. However, the wood grain had cracked, reduced to a mess. Panicking slightly, he could not help but increase his input of true qi, and the wood piece immediately shattered with a bang.

He looked at Qian Rongzhi beside him. She was not doing any better either.

Qian Rongzhi casually crushed the piece of pine wood and smiled. “Looks like neither of us are geniuses.”

However, they were not doing too badly. Li Qingshan believed that as long as he was a little more steady, forming a sphere would be nothing difficult. However, he would still need to closely understand just how to avoid cracking the wood grain.

There were a lot of Qi Practitioners who even struggled with the first step, unable to imbue the objects with true qi even after numerous attempts, so they obviously could not mould the pine wood at all. If they rushed it, then they would shatter their piece of wood too.

Meng Xiqi sneered. “If you can’t achieve that, it means you have no talent for forging artifacts. There’s no need for you to attend anymore of my classes. Save yourself some time.”

The Qi Practitioners were all proud people, and this professor Meng was only a Qi Practitioner as well, so a few people stood up and left.

Afterwards, Meng Xiqi smiled. “Actually, I also failed when I tried the first time.”

Everyone was stunned. Meng Xiqi said, "Arrogance is your greatest obstacle to learning. If you're not even patient enough for this, then there truly is no point for you to learn how to forge artifacts. Don't forget, talent can be made up for with hard work. Alright, show me what you've achieved. Lift them up."

Many wooden spheres were lifted up into the air. Of course, those who did too poorly were too embarrassed to show their handiwork. Meng Xiqi's gaze landed on Chu Tian. His wooden sphere was perfectly round, with the wooden grain clearly visible. There was not the slightest crack; instead, it was like it had been carved out of wood.

"You there. Please stand up. What's your name?"

"Chu Tian."

"Nicely done."

Chu Tian enjoyed everyone's gazes of admiration with pride. He thought, That's a given. I'm a genius. What talent can be made up for with hard work? That's all just to trick fools. He even glanced back at Li Qingshan.

Qian Rongzhi said to him secretly, "What'd I say!"

"These days, there really aren't as many enemies that are so simplistically cute." Li Qingshan smiled, but he was uncertain whether she understood him.

There was no break in between. Only after four hours did the lecture end, and only then did Meng Xiqi stop talking. He put his hand on the back of his head and yawned. "That's all for today. I'm getting old. I get tired just from standing a little."

He twisted his neck, and with a sudden crack, his head fell off his shoulders, rolling off the platform. Scarlet blood gushed out like a miniature spring.

The cozy classroom immediately turned into a terrifying murder scene. Cries rang out from everywhere. The female confucian disciple who had avoided Li Qingshan with disgust even screamed out.

Chu Tian's expression changed drastically. He never thought he would personally witness a murder on his first day in the academy, and despite his cultivation, he failed to see who had done it or how they did it. He released his protective true qi instinctively.

Everyone felt threatened in the lecture hall.

Meng Xiqi's body remained standing there, as straight as an arrow. The decapitated head on the ground began talking. "Oops, I've used too much force." The headless body made its way off the platform, picked up the head, and placed it back onto its shoulders. With a click, it locked back into place.

The lecture hall was dead silent. Everyone was dumbfounded.

Li Qingshan grinned. He never thought this professor from the school of Mohism would have such a mischievous hobby. Not only did he teach a class using a puppet, but he even unleashed this move at the end.

He had noticed a long time ago that the thing teaching the class on the platform was not a living person, but a puppet. It seemed identical to humans on the surface, even giving off the aura of a Qi Practitioner, but the smell it gave off was extremely strange.

Drinking tea and coughing gently were all for creating a false impression, which fooled many people, but they were not enough to fool his senses. The substance that sprayed out in the end was not human blood either.

However, he was still amazed by how exquisite the puppets of the school of Mohism were. He must have done this to create an extremely deep impression in those new mohist disciples!

He also saw that Qian Rongzhi was completely unfazed. Even though her senses were not as sharp as his, he would instead be surprised if she had failed to see through the act. As for Chu Tian, who had become so complacent over the praises from a puppet, no one took him seriously anymore.

Puppet Meng Xiqi said, "Careful observation and calm and collected thinking is even more important than turning a piece of wood into a sphere for the path of forging artifacts. Anyone can achieve the latter with practise, but those who lack the former will struggle to become an artifact smith."

The atmosphere in the room lightened up and laughter rang out. Although they knew they had just been toyed with, Meng Xiqi, who was hidden somewhere, still managed to win their admiration. However, quite a few female cultivators were still pale.

Chu Tian withdrew his protective true qi. His face was bright red. He felt like what Meng Xiqi had said earlier was purposefully directed at him, which filled him with resentment.

Puppet Meng Xiqi used his hand to point out the disciples that were not surprised earlier, asking them one by one about how they knew he was a puppet.

Li Qingshan did not believe the puppet had the ability to think, only the ability of judgement, such as which spheres were rounders and which people's expressions remained mostly the same. All of this should have been due to a certain procedure for operation. This was a piece of cake to achieve compared to puppets made for combat. Its eyes that seemed no different from real eyes should have been the key to all of this.

When it was Li Qingshan's turn, he stood up, moved his mouth a little, but produced no sound at all. He sat back down.

The puppet professor said with great sincerity, "Thank you."

Li Qingshan smiled. As it seemed, he was right.

There was a roar of laughter, while Hua Chenglu secretly applauded him. She had basically gotten her revenge for being fooled earlier. Apart from being courageous, this guy really was rather sharp-witted too. She could not help but think about that rainy night in Lakeside city, where he clasped his hands gracefully in the dark alleyway whilst wearing a rain cloak.

This memory that had already become blurred suddenly became clear. Even if the circumstances worked against a man like that, even if he had accidentally ended up in the school of Novels, he would still probably become quite accomplished!

After asking everybody, puppet Meng Xiqi bowed deeply. "Thank you for your suggestions!" He pointed at his head. "I've already stored it all in here. I'll have to keep improving it when I get back. I'll give a box of pine wood pieces to all the disciples from earlier as a reward."

The disciples that saw through the fact that the professor was a puppet climbed onto the platform one by one, collecting their box of wood.

"Don't forget to practise." Puppet Meng Xiqi repeated this.

When it was Li Qingshan's turn, just when he wanted to collect the box of wood, the puppet professor grabbed him firmly. "I might be a puppet, but you can't fool around with me."

Li Qingshan understood that he was no longer speaking to just the puppet right before him. He smiled. "Yes, professor."

Puppet Meng Xiqi released his hand and patted Li Qingshan's shoulder. "I've heard Pingyang talk about you. You're welcomed to come here more often in the future."

Li Qingshan stowed his notes away and made his way out of the huge, spiral structure. The sun was setting already. Before he knew it, an afternoon had already passed by, but he felt extremely satisfied and at ease with the small box of wood in his hand.

This was his first class. He had finally taken another step forward.

Hao Pingyang and Zhang Lanqing were waiting below the streetlight across the road. Yes, it was a streetlight. The long pole held up a hazy yellow light, illuminating a large part of the road. There were already insects buzzing around the light.

"Li Qingshan, stop right there!"

Just when Li Qingshan wanted to make his way over, a roar rang out from behind him, which attracted quite a lot of attention.

He had almost forgotten about this fellow. Li Qingshan turned around and said to Chu Tian, "Kid, what do you want?"

Fighting without permission was forbidden in the academy, while the person who started the fight would be severely punished. And, it was not just physical pain for those who thought they could play the hero. It would include a penalty of spiritual stones too.

Initially, Li Qingshan had been searching for a peaceful environment, but he felt rather unhappy now. If he were in the wilderness, he would have crushed this kid to death right now. He wanted to see just what trump cards he had apart from his Five Elements constitution and whether they were more powerful than his own.

Chu Tian said, "I want to challenge you to a gamble. Are you bold enough to accept?"

Li Qingshan was overjoyed. "This is too good to be true!"

Chu Tian was instead stunned by Li Qingshan's reaction and felt slightly anxious, but he soon settled down. Li Qingshan was just a sixth layer Qi Practitioner. Even if he knew some Body Practitioner techniques, there was nothing to be afraid about.

"Are you going to accept or not?"

"Alright? What are we gambling? Tell me."

"It'll be fighting, obviously. What, are we supposed to compete at who's better at being a good-for-nothing glutton? If that's the case, I'll never be able to beat you. Haha!" Chu Tian laughed, but he discovered that no one laughed along, so he shut up awkwardly.

Li Qingshan said, "Alright, sure. Give me a time, location, and the wager."

Chu Tian said, "The location will obviously be the Main Martial Arts stadium on Great War island. The wager will be a thousand, no, two thousand spiritual stones. The time- the time will be in three month's time."

He was tempted to teach Li Qingshan a vicious lesson right now, but he felt uneasy for some reason, which was why he pushed it back by three months. After joining the school of Confucianism, Liu Zhangqing had personally passed him the Great Palm of the Five Elements. He could practise five kinds of true qi simultaneously, giving him tremendous power. Three months were sufficient for him to attain a basic mastery of it.

By then, let alone the sixth layer, even Qi Practitioners of the ninth or tenth layer would be a piece of cake to deal with. And, Li Qingshan would definitely improve slowly in the school of Novels, so as time went on, victory would be certain for him even without using "that". He could not help but feel slightly proud over his own cleverness, but he began to worry that Li Qingshan would turn him down.

"Alright. Then in three months' time it is." Li Qingshan agreed happily. What he lacked right now the most was time. Three months were enough for him to digest most of the pills in his hundred treasures pouch, and it was enough to push his strength as a daemon and human to a new level. Chu Tian gave him exactly what he wanted.

Just like that, they agreed on their gamble, and Li Qingshan turned around and left.

"Hey, Li Qingshan."

Hua Chenglu rushed over and grumbled. "You won't even greet me when you see me. So much for going through thick and thin together in the past."

Yu Zijian said, "Big brother Li."

Chu Tian saw how another two beautiful women gathered around Li Qingshan, which only made him even more jealous.

Hua Chenglu communicated with Li Qingshan. "You mustn't fight him. You won't be able to win!"

"How come?"

"He's a Reincarnated Celestial!"

Chapter 303 - Refining the Cursive Sword Calligraphy (One)

This was the first time that Li Qingshan had heard of that phrase. He laid out his hands. "I've already agreed to him anyway, so who cares if he's a..."

"Shh. Fights in the academy aren't that simple to organise." Hua Chenglu shushed him.

Li Qingshan saw how many people were looking over. He said gently, "Here's not a place to speak. I have friends who are going to the Hundred Flavours restaurant with me. Do you want to come along?"

"I've only heard about it from my elder brother too. The school of Legalism has a gathering tonight, so I won't be able to go along. Anyway, just be careful."

Hao Pingyang said, "Isn't that the younger sister of commander Hua? I never thought you'd be so familiar with the Hua family."

"They're all pretty nice people."

Zhang Lanqing asked worriedly, "Are you really going to fight Chu Tian?"

"Haha, that kid is begging for a death sentence." Hao Pingyang was completely confident in Li Qingshan. Back then, he had already been extremely impressive when he was just at the second layer, so was he supposed to be afraid of a kid at the same level of cultivation as him now that he was at the sixth layer?

Li Qingshan smiled. "Let's go and get some grub." Though, he did take a note of the two words, Reincarnated Celestial.

In the Hundred Flavours restaurant, they gazed at the sparkling lake under the setting sun and drank until they were tipsy. The sun had already set now. Li Qingshan returned to the Cloudwisp island.

Liu Chuanfeng was currently biting the end of his brush in deep thought. There was a single light on the table that shone brightly, illuminating the entire room.

"You're going to fight someone?"

Li Qingshan took off his shoes before the porch and sat down before the table. "Yep. Let me take a look at how you've been going."

Liu Chuanfeng was currently preparing for his new novels. Of course, it would not have anymore sexual content, so it was suitable for distribution through the various channels.

"I've just begun. Sigh, what's so good about fighting? You might as well just stay home and write novels instead." Liu Chuanfeng snatched back his draft in a hurry.

"There are two thousand spiritual stones if I win."

"Go get him!"

"Oh right, do you know what a Reincarnated Celestial is?"

Liu Chuanfeng asked, "What're you asking that for?"

“That Chu Tian seems to be a Reincarnated Celestial.” Li Qingshan took out a piece of pine wood and channeled true qi into it, continuing with his practise of forging artifacts.

“What! You can’t accept his challenge then!”

“Reason?”

“You know how there’s no limit to the universe, right? How there are worlds outside of this world. So-called Celestials are basically people from beyond this world, who pass away due to various reasons. However, their spirits linger, and they reincarnate here. They’re peculiar from the moment they’re born, with extraordinary appearances and tremendous fortune. And, once they awaken their innate knowledge, they’ll become even more powerful.”

“A Reincarnated Celestial. No wonder then,” Li Qingshan muttered in thought. He had seen many Qi Practitioners in the past, whether they were friends or foes, but it was truly his first time meeting someone like Chu Tian.

With Chu Tian’s mental fortitude and intelligence, it was a miracle that he could reach the sixth layer at such a young age. As it turned out, he was the same as him. They were both transmigrators. With how vast the world was, there were countless people with strange, fortuitous encounters, not just him. As a matter of fact, the worlds beyond these worlds were not even exclusive to him.

Liu Chuanfeng said, “You don’t have to worry about embarrassing yourself either. When the disciples of two schools want to fight, the permissions of both school leaders is required. It’ll be fine as long as I vehemently refuse.”

“No, you will agree to it.” Li Qingshan crushed the piece of wood in his hand.

“You-”

“Don’t worry, I’ll win!” Li Qingshan took out another piece of pine wood. He refused to believe that he would be defeated by an idiot, even if he was some Reincarnated Celestial.

However, he would not be careless either. Increasing his cultivation as a Qi Practitioner would obviously be his main priority, and he had a trump card too.

Liu Chuanfeng no longer tried to convince him otherwise. He just agreed to it before talking with him a little more. Li Qingshan borrowed Liu Chuanfeng’s waist tablet and entered the cultivation formation. The faint light illuminated his surroundings.

He took out the supreme grade Cursive Sword Calligraphy from his hundred treasures pouch. This was the strongest trump card in his possession in human form. The supreme grade Cursive Sword Calligraphy had already been terrifyingly powerful before he had even condensed a sea of qi, enough to threaten ninth layer Qi Practitioners.

Now, he had condensed a sea of qi, which was a critical moment of development to Qi Practitioners. The true qi within his body was no less than ten times more powerful than the past. If he could truly refine this spiritual artifact, he truly believed that there would no longer be any Qi Practitioners that could resist a “gentle strike” of his.

TL: A reference to Gulong’s wuxia novel, Juedai Shuangjiao. It’s the same as the one in chapter 297.

By then, regardless of what trump cards Chu Tian possessed, all he had to do was unleash the Cursive Sword Calligraphy, and he could show him what was what.

Originally, he would never show anyone the supreme grade Cursive Sword Calligraphy. It would be no different from a child playing around in the busy streets while holding a handful of gold.

But now, with the increase in his strength, the relatively safe environment of the academy, and how it was unlikely for the school leaders to just steal from him, he began to consider this. He had to think about the consequences too. After all, he was a primary disciple now, while Xiao An was a supreme genius recognised by all the school leaders too, as well as the primary disciple of the school of Buddhism.

He was like a child who had finally grown into a teenager, moving from the busy streets to a school. Safety had increased drastically now, so he possessed some confidence in taking it out and showing it to others.

Li Qingshan unfurled the Cursive Sword Calligraphy and gazed at the criss-crossing inky sword slashes on there. He brought his fingers together on his right hand like a sword, subconsciously waving it around following the slashes on there. He was unable to replicate what Xiao An had achieved, immediately comprehending the sword intent within there, but he gradually felt like he was benefiting from it.

Compared to when he had first obtained this fragment of the Cursive Sword Calligraphy in the bandit's nest, his insight and knowledge had increased by more than tenfold. He could gradually understand many obscure things now.

Li Qingshan planned a little. He decided to get down to business first. He held the two sides of the scroll with both hands as the Gui Water true qi in his sea of qi immediately surged, gushing down his arms and into the Cursive Sword Calligraphy.

The various strokes on the Cursive Sword Calligraphy lit up one by one, far more than before and far brighter too.

Refining spiritual artifacts was a special right that only Qi Practitioners who had condensed a sea of qi possessed. It was to use their true qi to imbue the spiritual artifact with their own imprint. After doing so, the sea of qi in their dantian could resonate with the spiritual artifact itself. If they were flying swords or flying blades, then ranged control would be possible.

Of course, refining a supreme grade spiritual artifact seemed to be a little difficult for Li Qingshan right now.

After most of the strokes on the Cursive Sword Calligraphy had lit up, it stopped, and his true qi began to run out.

A blue light flashed through Li Qingshan's eyes. Obviously, he had his reasons for refining the spiritual artifact within this formation.

Specks of light, visible with the naked eye, flickered in the formation and merged into his body.

The sea of qi that had almost run out was full once more, gushing into the Cursive Sword Calligraphy. The brilliance flooded every single stroke, lighting up Li Qingshan's face with delight.

Just when he was about to succeed, Li Qingshan's smile stiffened, and the process of refining the spiritual artifact halted once more, but it was not because there was insufficient true qi.

Every single stroke on the Cursive Sword Calligraphy twisted and trembled, flickering with instability.

Li Qingshan thought, Oh no! With a flip of his hand, he directed the Cursive Sword Calligraphy outwards. At the same time, the Cursive Sword Calligraphy unleashed a blinding flash and terrifyingly sharp sword qi gushed out.

The sword qi was disorderly while the sword intent was aimless, but the Cursive Sword Calligraphy felt chillingly cold in Li Qingshan's hand. The power that a supreme grade spiritual artifact could erupt with was simply too terrifying. If it had been directed at him, it would be a miracle if he was just heavily injured if he did not transform and unleash the Spirit Turtle's Profound Shell beforehand.

The light vanished with a flash, while the sword qi and sword intent were so short-lived that it seemed like they had never existed in the first place.

Time seemed to stop for a moment. With a few gentle cracks, the parts of the bamboo building suddenly slid around.

Afterwards, like some sort of mechanism had been set off, the delicate, majestic structure was reduced to thousands of pieces. The structure did not collapse. Instead, it flew apart.

Li Qingshan felt his vision open up. A fan-shaped region opened up before him. The formation was originally located at the very centre of the building, but now, he could see the bamboo forests outside.

"Heavens. What are you doing." Liu Chuanfeng heard the disturbance and rushed over. He was utterly dumbfounded by this sight.

"I'm refining a spiritual artifact," Li Qingshan answered honestly. He even showed him the Cursive Sword Calligraphy in his hand. He had already made up his mind on this. If he needed to, he would show the Cursive Sword Calligraphy to others, so there was no need to hide it from Liu Chuanfeng anymore. They were basically in the same boat anyway.

"T- that's a supreme grade spiritual artifact. You were actually refining a supreme grade spiritual artifact?" Liu Chuanfeng had realised a long time ago that his primary disciple was not as poor as regular Qi Practitioners, but he was still astounded by the fact that he could produce a supreme grade spiritual artifact.

Li Qingshan said, "What, can't I? My true qi is very pure."

Liu Chuanfeng said, "Do you have any common sense? Let alone a sixth layer Qi Practitioner like you, even those at the tenth layer can't refine a supreme grade spiritual artifact. This isn't an issue of whether your true qi is pure enough. Instead, it has exceeded the abilities of Qi Practitioners. It's something that only Foundation Establishment cultivators can accomplish."

Li Qingshan was surprised. "But Xiao An could use the supreme grade Guardian King's pearl the moment she received it."

Liu Chuanfeng said, "Using is one thing, refining is another. Do you know what they call Xiao An in the academy?"

“What do they call her?”

“A deviant, a monster.”

“That’s just what mediocre people think,” Li Qingshan said disdainfully, but he also understood that he probably could not rely on breaking this trend for now, seeing how he practised the Gui Water Method of Condensing Qi.

“No wonder you’re bold enough to fight Chu Tian.” Liu Chuanfeng glanced at the half-destroyed building again. He was still shaken. He might be a tenth layer Qi Practitioner, but if he began fighting him, the person to die would definitely not be Li Qingshan. Even if he could not refine it, just how many Qi Practitioners could oppose him as long as he used it?

Li Qingshan said, “I obviously wouldn’t agree to a battle that I’m not prepared for. He has trump cards, so why can’t I have some too?”

“Sigh, looks like I need to put up another mission to get the disciples of mohism to come fix this place. The measly sum of spiritual stones the higher-ups give aren’t even enough for me to collect material in the Parlour of Clouds and Rain.” Liu Chuanfeng sighed before he wiggled his eyebrows at Li Qingshan. “Look, my dear disciple, when you win two thousand spiritual stones, why don’t you invite your master to a session of joy?”

Li Qingshan rolled his eyes. “Who’s supposed to be your dear disciple? Let me tell you, you better stop visiting places like that in the future. I’m on bad terms with the Sect of Clouds and Rain. Who knows, they might end up kidnapping you in order to get me. If that ever happens, I’m not even going to bother with their demands.”

“I have forgotten that, but don’t talk nonsense. I’m still a school leader after all, so how could they lay their hands on me?”

Chapter 304 - Refining the Cursive Sword Calligraphy (Two)

Li Qingshan asked, “You can resist Qiu Haitang’s mesmerisation?”

“T- obviously not. Alright, I’ll do what you say. You’re the big brother in charge then, alright?”

“Then we’re brothers from here on out.” As Li Qingshan said that, he thought of what Chu Tian had said to him and could not help but burst out laughing. His tiny bit of depression from failing to refine the Cursive Sword Calligraphy vanished too.

“You have no respect for your seniors at all.” Liu Chuanfeng put on an angry face, but he laughed along too.

In Li Qingshan’s eyes, Liu Chuanfeng was riddled with flaws, but there was something good to him. He did not have any haughtiness about him. Perhaps he had grown accustomed to this due to all the abuse he had suffered, but he lacked an air of arrogance and self-importance that regular Qi Practitioners possessed.

Li Qingshan asked, “How many spiritual stones does the school of Novels receive every month right now?”

Liu Chuanfeng crouched down outside the formation. "If it's right now, then I get around twenty each month. Oh right, you're a primary disciple, so you can collect ten spiritual stones each month too. Combined with the amount for disciples who handle management, the school receives roughly forty spiritual stones."

"That sure is pitiful." Li Qingshan shook his head, but then he remembered he was collecting over twenty spiritual stones each month for doing nothing, all the while occupying this wonderful place for cultivation. It was no wonder the academy wanted to get rid of him.

Liu Chuanfeng refuted, "That's just how much a Qi Practitioner school leader receives! The main reason is because there aren't enough disciples!"

Li Qingshan asked, "How is it calculated exactly?"

Liu Chuanfeng said, "That'll be complicated. The amount mainly depends on the quantity and cultivation of the disciples. It can also be increased through completing missions and triumphing in various competitions. On the other hand, if disciples break the rules, then it'll be reduced."

"Anyways, the more a school develops, the higher the salary the school leader will receive, and the more resources they will be able to allocate. Sigh, if we can reach the same level as the school of Buddhism, I'd give you a supreme grade spiritual artifact for free too."

"I'm putting that on record. Let's do everything we can together!" Li Qingshan gained a new understanding of the school of Novels' predicament. It was a tough start, but it also represented vast future prospects. The pie was small, but there was no need for him to share it with so many fellow disciples, so the share he received might not necessarily be smaller than the disciples of the major schools.

However, all of this was built off the assumption that the pie could grow bigger. Li Qingshan was very confident about this too.

Liu Chuanfeng became worked up. "Don't worry, I'll break through to Foundation Establishment very soon. By then, just my salary as a school leader will increase by tenfold, and the true strength of novelists can only be unleashed at Foundation Establishment."

Although novelists could turn fiction into reality, the ability was held back by two factors. One was the power of beliefs, while the other was the cultivator themselves. The former was like electricity, while the latter was like a motor. No matter how much electrical energy there was, if the motor was insufficient, then it still would not be able to convert it into electromotive force.

"Go write your novels!" Li Qingshan waved his hand with a smile. Since he had already become a disciple of the school of Novels, he had the responsibility to prop up the school of Novels as long as it did not get in the way of his cultivation.

After Liu Chuanfeng left, Li Qingshan stowed the Cursive Sword Calligraphy away with a slight feeling of pity. Afterwards, he took out another scroll of the Cursive Sword Calligraphy.

He possessed a total of three scrolls of the Cursive Sword Calligraphy right now. One was at the supreme grade, one was at the high grade, and one was at the mid grade.

The one he had taken out right now was the high grade Cursive Sword Calligraphy he had obtained from the masked man. He had already refined a high grade spiritual artifact before, the Clear Stream sword, so he was filled with confidence right now.

Fifteen minutes later, several dozen strands of sword qi shot into the night sky, and Li Qingshan failed once again. He began to find this rather difficult to accept, as he had clearly succeeded in the past before. However, with some thought, he understood the reason for his failure.

Although he had successfully refined the Clear Stream sword, that was because the sword was of the water element in the first place, and he practised Gui Water true qi. The Spirit Turtle's Method of Sea Suppression had granted him extraordinary senses for the water element too, which was why he had managed to refine it so easily.

Without his various advantages, refining a high grade spiritual artifact as a sixth layer Qi Practitioner was not that easy. Normally, they all used mid grade spiritual artifacts.

However, Li Qingshan did not become dejected. In the next moment, he took out the weakest fragment of the Cursive Sword Calligraphy, which was originally known as the Sword Qi Calligraphy. He had purchased it in the auction hosted by the school of Miscellany. It was only a mid grade spiritual artifact.

Li Qingshan exhaled gently and calmed himself from his arrogance. Perhaps he should have started with the weakest Cursive Sword Calligraphy. He had been a little too eager for easy success.

As his true qi flowed in, the Cursive Sword Calligraphy lit up, but before he could even celebrate, the light suddenly began to tremble, approaching collapse once again. Although it was just a mid grade spiritual artifact, normal mid grade spiritual artifacts could not compare to it in terms of explosiveness.

But Li Qingshan stayed put, staring straight at the Cursive Sword Calligraphy. The flickering stabilised once more. Not only did it stop spreading outwards, but it even began to withdraw slowly.

Li Qingshan suddenly saw the twisted strokes begin to move.

No, the strokes were not moving. Instead, there were countless swords swinging about. These strokes were the trajectories the swords had left behind, like footprints left behind in a desert.

However, compared to the traveller itself, these deep footprints were so temporary and insignificant. Li Qingshan had no idea who the author was, but he felt admiration from the bottom of his heart. When the black ox had praised the author of the Cursive Sword Calligraphy, he was still unable to comprehend the implications. Just how impressive was he to earn the recognition of brother ox?

Now, he had begun to understand. Perhaps this sword style was not something that should have appeared in this world.

As he felt amazed, Li Qingshan finally completed the refinement of the Cursive Sword Calligraphy, but before he could even relax, something happened. Several dozen strands of sword qi abruptly swept backwards, rushing into his sea of qi along his meridians.

With the entry of the sword qi, the sea of qi immediately began to churn and ache.

"Spirit Turtle Suppresses the Seas!" Li Qingshan growled, and the spirit turtle's daemon core appeared. The several dozen strands of sword qi were firmly suppressed, completely immobilised. However, they

refused to shatter under such pressure. They were almost solid from how consolidated they were, drifting around in his sea of qi.

Still shaken, Li Qingshan felt a cold sweat break out on his back.

If his original form were not a huge, powerful daemon, his meridians would have been in pieces already. If he did not know the Spirit Turtle's Method of Sea Suppression, he probably would not have been able to avoid the fate of death either.

He never thought there would actually be such a vicious trap within the Cursive Sword Calligraphy. Now, he felt extremely relieved that he had failed to refine the supreme grade Cursive Sword Calligraphy. Even he was reluctant to imagine the consequences of several dozen strands of raging sword qi with the power to destroy over a dozen bamboo structures erupting in his body.

He had basically witnessed the dangers of the path of cultivation once again. He could understand how his predecessors who had obtained the Cursive Sword Calligraphy before him all felt when they refined the spiritual artifact happily, only to be slain instantly.

Suddenly, he felt that something had appeared in his sea of consciousness.

Chapter 305 - Sword Qi in the Dantian

A sword.

Among the countless swords that had once danced before him, one of them had condensed in his mind. It was pitch-black like ink, swinging around freely.

Li Qingshan sensed something. He left the formation and arrived in the bamboo forest, fishing out a sword from his hundred treasures pouch.

His arm drooped down naturally with the tip of the sword pointing towards the ground. Suddenly, like a willow leaf in the wind, he lifted it high up, pointing it straight at the sky.

Nearby, an old stalk of bamboo split open from bottom to top.

Li Qingshan was not in a state to be amazed. The ink sword in his mind suddenly fell.

Li Qingshan moved with the sword, turning around and slicing vertically. The sword qi shot off as blurs, causing a region of bamboo to collapse with a series of thuds.

Right now, the person was not controlling the sword. Instead, the sword was controlling the person.

Li Qingshan leapt about freely according to the dancing sword in his mind like he was a monkey. The sword in his hand vanished. Only his surroundings flickered with specks of light.

Wherever it went, it was unstoppable. The sword moves and sword intent were extremely sharp.

Numerous blurs suddenly gathered together. Li Qingshan held the sword right in front of him, stroking past the flat of the sword with two fingers. The cold, blue light shone past his resolute face.

As it turned out, the greatest use of the Cursive Sword Calligraphy was not for defeating opponents, but to store and pass on this cultivator's path of the sword.

As for the sword qi that had infiltrated his body, they were not a vicious trap, but a method for future generations to comprehend the sword intent, as well as a test!

If they had Xiao An's talent and could comprehend the sword intent to such a level from just looking at the calligraphy, then even if the sword qi infiltrated their body, they could control it freely. However, if they were mediocre people, then they would be unworthy of this legacy.

However, Li Qingshan could not help but guess that this cultivator probably never expected his Cursive Sword Calligraphy would be split into so many fragments. However, if it were the complete Cursive Sword Calligraphy, just how terrifying would the test be?

The small, inky-black sword in his mind probably would not be as simple as just dancing around a few times. Just the terrifying sword intent it would emanate with would be enough to instantly annihilate the consciousness of regular cultivators.

He sure had gotten his hands on something impressive.

Li Qingshan suddenly smiled. He tossed the sword aside, which stabbed into a rock.

He leapt up and pushed off a few tender bamboo branches, arriving on the east of the island in just a few steps. There was a small, jagged outcrop of rock.

He leapt out of the bamboo forest. Mid-air, his true qi sank into his dantian as he spread his arms. The several dozen criss-crossing strands of sword qi suppressed in his dantian shot out, striking the mound silently. Some of the rocks cracked as they were unable to withstand the force, but aside from that, there was not much sound at all.

A cricket had originally been rubbing its wings, letting out a loud chirp. Now, it had completely fallen silent. It fell off the rocks. There was not a single trace on its body, while the entire outcrop of insect cries had been reduced to silence. They had been slain by the scattered sword intent.

As it turned out, this was the correct way to use the Cursive Sword Calligraphy.

Li Qingshan understood now. He channeled his true qi into the Cursive Sword Calligraphy and allowed it to flow back into his body, hiding in his dantian. If he suddenly erupted with it while fighting an enemy, just how startling would the power be?

Of course, if he comprehended the path of the sword in the Cursive Sword Calligraphy, he obviously would not be harmed by the Cursive Sword Calligraphy. Li Qingshan was currently using a high-handed method of forcefully suppressing the sword qi.

However, he believed that while he was not a genius, he was not an idiot either. He had already refined it now, so as long as he spent some time on it, he could obviously comprehend the path of the sword in the Cursive Sword Calligraphy. Of course, it would just be whatever the mid grade spiritual artifact contained.

An idea randomly flashed through his head. Li Qingshan suddenly understood why the Cursive Sword Calligraphy had been split up into so many fragments. He also understood how to merge them back together.

It was exactly because people could not withstand the complete test of the Cursive Sword Calligraphy that it had been split up. There was no need for him to be proficient in forging artifacts. All he needed to do was refine the Cursive Sword Calligraphies one by one and merge the sword qi in his dantian. After that, he would be able to achieve the same effects as merging the fragments together.

Li Qingshan took out another fragment, the high grade Cursive Sword Calligraphy. As long as he could refine two of them, he was confident that he could defeat any Qi Practitioner, let alone Chu Tian.

However, he needed to comprehend the path of the sword in the mid grade Cursive sword Calligraphy first. It was a pity that Xiao An was not here, or she definitely would be able to help him out.

Perhaps she had sensed his calling, as Li Qingshan saw Xiao An rushing over when he looked back, arriving before him and smiling at him.

In the school of Yin-yang, Ma Buyi had placed his long hat to one side. He was in a slight daze. Due to the complexity of the Cloud Bookcase of the Seven Lots, he was prepared to spend several months teaching it to her.

The Cloud Bookcase of the Seven Lots was split into seven main parts. The depth and complexity of each part surpassed the five elements cultivation methods like the Gui Water Method of Condensing Qi by several fold. As for completely merging the seven parts, the difficulty would compound even further.

Ma Buyi finished explaining the first part to her in great detail and care. He was just about to go into detail about the wonders of the part.

Xiao An said, "Please continue."

Ma Buyi frowned, but upon considering the fact that sitting right before him was a rare prodigy that seldomly appeared even across a century, he thought maybe it would be easier for him to teach her after she had learned the entire cultivation method. As a result, he explained the entire Cloud Bookcase of the Seven Lots to her.

However, before he could tell her anything else, Xiao An had piped up. "Is there anymore?"

Ma Buyi answered, "There isn't."

"Thank you." Xiao An stood up and bowed before turning around and leaving. She was anxious to see Li Qingshan. Ever since they had come to the academy, it seemed like the time they spent apart had increased. She disliked it very much.

Ma Buyi asked, "Where are you going?"

"Isn't there no more?"

Ma Buyi asked, "Do you understand it?"

Xiao An replied, "A bit."

Ma Buyi immediately quizzed her with a few questions. She replied smoothly without batting an eye. She had truly understood "a bit".

Of course, this did not mean she had completely grasped the Cloud Bookcase of the Seven Lots. The parts of greater depth required her to slowly comprehend as she cultivated. They were not something she could understand from just a short explanation.

As a result, despite only knowing “a bit”, she answered very accurately. However, in order to reach this level of understanding “a bit” in the past, the time Ma Buyi spent under the careful guidance of his master had to be calculated with years.

Now, he could finally understand a little bit of what the One Thought master was thinking. Having a disciple like this basically made him, the master, feel defeated for some reason.

He refused to accept it. “It’s easier said than done. You need to actually achieve it through cultivation.”

As a result, all Xiao An could do was sit down. Because it was not the buddhist dharma, she was unable to practise it as swiftly as the Guardian King’s Scripture of Demon Subdual. After spending a whole day and night, she gained a basic grasp over the Cloud Bookcase of the Seven Lots.

Ma Buyi waved his hand in a daze. “You can go. If there’s anything you don’t understand, come find me.”

Xiao An bowed again before turning around and leaving.

She tread over the waves as her sleeves fluttered in the wind. As soon as she arrived on Cloudwisp island, she spotted Li Qingshan’s location with a single glance and smiled sweetly.

Li Qingshan immediately asked Xiao An about the path of the sword within the Cursive Sword Calligraphy. Sure enough, Xiao An had not refined any of them, but her comprehension of the path of the sword hidden within had surpassed Li Qingshan’s.

Li Qingshan listened to her explanation and immediately felt like he had benefited tremendously. She had also gained quite a lot of inspiration from Li Qingshan’s comprehensions through physical practice, which allowed her swordsmanship to improve yet again.

However, comprehension was one of the most complicated feelings out there. Even Xiao An was unsure of how to explain it to Li Qingshan at times, so she would just pick up the sword and spar with Li Qingshan using the sword style from the Cursive Sword Calligraphy.

For days and nights on end, a large and small figure chased one another and clashed within the jade-green sea of bamboo. The swords collided together and thrummed as large portions of the bamboo forest collapsed.

Liu Chuanfeng was pained just from the sight of it. He had just spent quite a lot of spiritual stones and issued a mission for the destroyed bamboo buildings. If this continued, the two of them would probably shave the tranquil Cloudwisp island bald of any vegetation.

He was thinking it was the two of them, but actually, it was just Li Qingshan alone. Xiao An’s sword strokes were powerful, but they were extremely focused. She would not touch a single branch or leaf unless she had to.

However, after just a few days, the amount of bamboo felled decreased drastically. Only then did Liu Chuanfeng stop worrying.

After another dozen or so days, bamboo shoots burst out of the earth during a spring drizzle.

The spring breeze danced, the sea of bamboo swayed, and the sky was filled with fine rain.

Li Qingshan and Xiao An stood within the rain. The landscape in the distance blurred within the rain, like it stood within an ink painting.

They wielded bamboo swords, sometimes close together and sometimes far away. Their swords rarely ever clashed. Every single movement they made seemed like they were mentally connected, cooperating with one another perfectly. They no longer seemed like they were clashing swords, but dancing together.

In the very beginning, Li Qingshan wielded a low grade spiritual artifact sword. Afterwards, he switched to inferior spiritual artifacts, then a regular sword, followed by the current bamboo sword.

He even sourced his materials from the bamboo forest below his feet. He had personally created it using his arts of forging artifacts. This obviously was not so that he could act cool. Instead, as his control over sword qi increased, his requirement for the material quality decreased.

If it were the Li Qingshan of the past, probably even a metal sword would be reduced to dust in his hands.

Now, it demonstrated that he had finally comprehended and gained control over the path of the sword within the Cursive Sword Calligraphy.

Though, when it came to actual fighting, it would obviously be better if his weapon was more powerful. Against an actually powerful opponent, trying to pull something like “No sword in hand, but a sword in the heart” was just looking for death.

Li Qingshan was relieved. He had finally digested the complete path of the sword within the first fragment of the Cursive Sword Calligraphy. There was no need to use the Spirit Turtle Suppresses the Seas anymore. The sword qi swam around freely in his sea of qi like fish.

He suddenly called out, “Xiao An, use your full strength.”

The bamboo sword vanished, turning into a wave of sword qi. Some of them were heavy, some light, some slow, some fast, some straight, some twisted. This was the first time Li Qingshan had comprehended the delicate differences among them. He no longer unleashed all of them at once like a swarm of bees.

Xiao An smiled. Golden light erupted from her body, and the guardian king planted its sword into the ground, standing as firmly as a mountain.

Cling! Clang! The sounds rang out like a bell. However, only the few heavy strands of sword qi managed to leave behind some shallow marks on the guardian king avatar. The rest failed to achieve anything.

“The cultivation methods of buddhism are basically cheating.” Li Qingshan grinned. It was obviously no issue for these sword qi to pierce protective sword qi, but it was impossible for them to get through Xiao An’s avatar.

However, he had only digested the mid grade Cursive Sword Calligraphy so far. If it were the high grade one instead...

Chapter 306 - Secluded Cultivation Below the Island

Li Qingshan took out another piece of Cursive Sword Calligraphy. With the foundation from refining the mid grade Cursive Sword Calligraphy, he was confident he already possessed the ability to refine this fragment.

However, he still ended up stowing it away again after hesitating for quite a while.

The infiltration of sword qi was easy to deal with, but when the sword intent invaded his mind, it would be far too dangerous.

The head, also known as the spirit platform within the world of cultivation, even surpassed the dantian and the sea of qi in terms of importance for cultivation.

And, it was extremely fragile too. If his meridians were torn to shreds and his dantian was destroyed, there was still hope for him to repair them, but once his mind was injured, he would become psychotic at best.

He was not in any life-threatening danger right now, so there was no need for him to take this risk.

At this moment, the bug pouch on his waist writhed. Li Qingshan opened it and let out Milliped.

Milliped had grown much longer. He moved his body about and scurried through the bamboo forest rapidly as soon as he emerged. "I'm getting smothered to death."

Spring and summer had always been the times when insects were the most lively. It was obviously very uncomfortable for him to be trapped in the bug pouch.

Li Qingshan felt slightly ashamed. Ever since he had entered the academy, he had been occupied, and he had even been more busy than usual lately. He had been focusing on the path of the sword, so he ended up neglecting his friend, Milliped.

After letting out Milliped for some exercise, he opened the bug pouch. "Just bear with it a little longer. I'll bring you some good food later."

He returned to the courtyard of the school of Novels, and Liu Chuanfeng demanded, "You're back. Give me two thousand spiritual stones."

Li Qingshan asked, "Two thousand spiritual stones for what?"

Liu Chuanfeng smiled. "For the battle with Chu Tian, obviously. Liu Zhangqing has already agreed to it. You really need to thank me properly this time around."

Li Qingshan counted out two thousand spiritual stones and handed it to him. He asked in confusion, "Why do I have to thank you?"

As it turned out, Liu Zhangqing had originally disagreed with the battle between Chu Tian and Li Qingshan when he heard about it in the school of Confucianism. As the lord prefect of the region, he did

have some honour about him. This matter would affect Chu Tian and Xiao An too, the two geniuses of the academy. He was reluctant to create any internal trouble.

As a result, Liu Chuanfeng completely unleashed his talent for mockery. He declared how victory was certain for Li Qingshan and defeat was certain for Chu Tian everywhere. How could Liu Zhangqing allow a scoundrel like him get away with this? Out of sheer anger, he agreed to it and set a date. The wager obviously had to be handed up to the academy beforehand.

And, this matter involved more than a single school in the academy.

Li Qingshan had no idea on how to react. If they could not fight, then they could not fight. It was not like he had any particularly deep grievances with Chu Tian. Liu Chuanfeng sure was impressive in this aspect.

During this time, Hao Pingyang and Zhang Lanqing had come to visit too. They came twice. They wanted to ask him why he was not attending class, but when they saw how he was working hard on his swordsmanship, they left without disturbing him.

They also knew about the gamble going on between Li Qingshan and Zhu Tian. Right now, increasing his personal strength was obviously the priority, so he could only set forging artifacts aside for now.

Li Qingshan asked, "Fubai still hasn't returned?"

Liu Chuanfeng said, "Senior brother has sent back a message. He has basically set up the structure already, and the Cloudwisp association is almost ready for opening. He has invited both of us over to celebrate later!"

Li Qingshan admired Sun Fubai's ability very much. In such a large world, he was able to mobilise so many resources and achieve this step in just twenty odd days. It really was impressive.

If he were responsible for this, he probably could not finish it even if he had half a year. It had nothing to do with his intelligence. Instead, he lacked experience and contacts. It sure lived up to the saying that old people were like living treasure.

"Very good. Though, I might not be able to attend the opening ceremony. I'm preparing to cultivate in seclusion for a while."

"Seclusion!" Liu Chuanfeng immediately understood that this was for the battle with Chu Tian.

Li Qingshan, on the other hand, thought of several other things. Milliped was his friend, not his mount or pet. He could not keep his friend trapped in the bug pouch all day long.

Though, the battle with Chu Tian definitely was one of the reasons. His original plan was to ingest pills slowly while learning how to forge artifacts and refine pills so that he could accumulate even more knowledge and resources, guaranteeing that he would not run out of pills. However, he changed his mind now. Even a lion would use its full strength to catch a rabbit.

Li Qingshan asked, "I think you told me that there are special dwellings of secluded cultivation on the main island?" There were many facilities on the island, and the primary disciple could use all of them for free. The cultivation dwellings were included among them.

Liu Zhuanfeng said, "Can't you just cultivate here? The spiritual qi there isn't even as abundant as here."

“I have my plans.”

Li Qingshan arrived on Contention island with Xiao An and found the instructor responsible for managing the cultivation dwellings.

The instructor saw how it was two primary disciples who wanted to choose a cultivation dwelling. If it were just Li Qingshan, then so be it, but Xiao An had shaken up the entire academy before, so the instructor showed them all the respect that he had.

“Are you planning to enter seclusion separately or together?”

“Together.”

“Please come with me then.” The instructor did not ramble. He brought the two of them into a hall. The tiles trembled before rapidly sinking down.

There was actually a huge hole dug out in Contention island. It was divided into over a dozen floors. Each floor had many cultivation dwellings for the disciples of various schools to use, and every single dwelling was firmly sealed, covered in numerous formations, preventing them from sensing any aura of others.

Li Qingshan sensed that the closer he got to the bottom, the denser the spiritual qi became. The surging spiritual qi blew upwards like wind.

Only when they reached the very bottom of the hole did they stop.

The instructor passed a round disc to Li Qingshan. “This is the disc. This is the lowest floor. There’s only a single cultivation dwelling here. It has the best spiritual qi formations, and it’s extremely spacious too. You won’t be able to affect one another if you cultivate in there together. If regular disciples wanted to use it, it’d cost them over a dozen spiritual stones for just a single day.”

Li Qingshan asked, “Is it possible for people to spy on what’s going on inside from the outside?”

The instructor said, “It’s impossible. Not only are there several formations serving as obstructions, but there’s an interference of spiritual energy too. Even school leader Liu’s Watermoon disc can’t penetrate there. Not only is it shut off from the outside world, but it’s also impossible to enter the place too. Once the dwelling is shut, it can only be opened from the inside.”

“It can’t be opened from the outside?”

“Well, you can’t say that exactly. There are obviously ways to open it from the outside, but that’s only for extraordinary circumstances, such as when the academy is under attack, or when you haven’t paid your school fees.”

Li Qingshan smiled and clasped his hands. “Thank you for your explanations, instructor.”

“Both of you are figures with tremendous future prospects. To be able to assist you is my honour. Please make sure you have prepared food and water yourselves. If there’s nothing else, I’ll get out of here and stop wasting your time for cultivation.”

Li Qingshan and Xiao An entered the dwelling and used the key again. The stone door slammed shut and several formations began operating.

The spiritual qi here was unable to rival the formation on Cloudwisp island, but it was close. At the same time, it was safer and more secretive.

Li Qingshan let out Milliped before taking out all the food he had purchased from the Hundred Flavours restaurant, basically making it up to him. His eyes met with Xiao An's, and he pinched her nose. "Watch as I defeat you with sword qi once I emerge."

"I don't think so!"

Chapter 307 - Second Layer of the Spirit Turtle

The news of the battle between the primary disciple of the school of Novels, Li Qingshan, and the person in possession of the Five Elements constitution, had spread throughout the academy.

Now, the news of Li Qingshan and Xiao An entering seclusion kicked up another wave.

Hua Chenglu clenched her fist. "What an idiot."

Yu Zijian grumbled, "What'd I do this time?"

"I'm not talking about you."

There were many disciples seated on the cushions in the surroundings. They all turned their heads over.

"The two of you, please be quiet." The professor who was currently teaching them alchemy at the front of the daoist temple warned them.

Hua Chenglu stuck out her tongue. Just what was wrong with Li Qingshan? So much for reminding him. However, she soon remembered how that man's stubbornness was something else. Otherwise, why would he have given up on the opportunity to play up to the Hua family back then, leaving so eagerly?

After class, Yu Zijian took Hua Chenglu around Wuwei island for a stroll.

Yu Zijian said, "Big brother Li definitely won't lose. Isn't he in secluded cultivation right now?" She had witnessed just how haughty Chu Tian had been that day, so she could not help but stand on Li Qingshan's side.

Hua Chenglu said, "What would you know? How can his cultivation speed rival..." She stifled her voice. "The Reincarnated Celestial, Chu Tian? The only person who can do that is the deviant, Xiao An."

Even if they were not Heavenly Meridians prodigies, Reincarnated Celestials still cultivated at speeds beyond what regular cultivators could achieve. The reason for this was said to be because the comprehensions from their past lives lingered, remaining in their minds, which was why they could often deal with bottlenecks and difficulties that stumped regular cultivators with a "flash of inspiration".

"The brat is going to embarrass himself this time. If he chose to fight Chu Tian immediately, he might still have a chance at victory, but seclusion?" Wang Pushi sneered.

Hua Chengzan said, "You can't just treat him like a regular person. Since he's bold enough to agree to it, he's confident that he can emerge victoriously."

"Since when did you have such a high opinion of him?" Wang Pushi was surprised.

Hua Chengzan said, "Old Wang, you just have prejudice towards him, which is why you can't see his merits. Just think about it. How long did it take for him to go from the pine tree outside Qingyang city to the Academy of the Hundred Schools? And how many difficulties had he faced during the process? Had he ever been defeated?"

Wang Pushi fell silent. "Alright. I'll place a bet on him when the time comes then."

On Anāsravā? island, the only thing that the One Thought master could do was smile bitterly when he heard how his primary disciple had entered seclusion without even giving him prior notice. All he could do was let her be.

"Seclusion? Hah, if seclusion was effective, what would the point of geniuses existing?" When he heard the news, Chu Tian laughed aloud to the two girls beside him.

"Big brother Tian us the best. Big brother Tian would never lose to that ruffian."

Over two months passed in the blink of an eye. There were still two hours until the battle, but a lot of cultivators had already stopped what they were doing and ventured to the Main Martial Arts stadium to watch.

There were even a few school masters who hid themselves in the rooms for the distinguished guests.

It was impossible for Liu Zhangqing and Liu Chuanfeng to not be here. The slovenly daoist priest was fuming, wanting to see how Li Qingshan made a fool of himself, while in Wang Pushi's eyes, Li Qingshan was still a member of the Hawkwolf Guard at the end of the day.

The other school leaders who had nothing to do with this also wanted to see just how much the so-called Reincarnated Celestial could grow. Li Qingshan was obviously just playing the role of the yardstick.

However, from the beginning till the end, Li Qingshan never appeared. The door to the cultivation dwelling below Contention island remained shut.

In the end, Han Anjun declared Chu Tian's victory and handed four thousand spiritual stones to him.

Chu Tian tilted his head back and laughed. "Now that's clever of him, or it'll be even more humiliating for him! I will definitely take back what I've lost!"

"You're so powerful, big brother Tian!" "You've defeated the enemy without even fighting!"

Liu Zhangqing glanced at the pale-white Liu Chuanfeng with a sneer.

Wang Pushi cursed aloud. All he said was there was something wrong with his own head to have placed bets on Li Qingshan. If it were not for the fact that the cultivation dwellings could not be opened without special reasons, he was tempted to rush in and drag Li Qingshan out. He was not afraid that Li Qingshan would lose. It was just a few inferior spiritual stones at most. However, he could not lose like this.

Hua Chengzan frowned. "Is Qingshan at an important juncture for cultivation, which is why he can't pause for the moment?"

"It's just practising some sh*tty qi, so why can't he pause for a moment. I think he's just scared."

"Scared?"

The Main Martial Arts stadium became noisy. Those who had lost spiritual stones would definitely curse aloud, while those who had won could not help but sneer a little.

The novelists had become the laughing stock of the academy once again.

The slovenly daoist priest rubbed his chin. The kid definitely did not seem like someone who would run away from a battle. Did he become influenced by that coward, Liu Chuanfeng?

.....

On Contention island in the underground cultivation dwelling, Li Qingshan did in fact forget about the battle.

Xiao An remembered it, but she did not remind him, as even if she did, he would never emerge right now.

The cultivation progress this time had exceeded Li Qingshan's initial estimates.

Originally, he planned to digest most of the pills in his hundred treasures pouch, and then he would take another step forward with the Spirit Turtle Method of Sea Suppression.

However, this step ended up being quite large, such that he reached the boundary of the second layer. All he needed was another step, and he would succeed with his breakthrough.

At this moment, the Virtue Accumulation pill he had won from Qiu Haitang and the pill Xiao An had obtained from the One Thought master played a decisive role.

By now, Li Qingshan had already ingested all the pills he could use for cultivation in his hundred treasures pouch. All that remained was the Virtue Accumulation pill, which he had now swallowed too. He began to refine it slowly.

At a time like this, neither his wager of two thousand spiritual stones nor his own reputation was enough to distract him.

These three supernatural abilities were like the Path of White Bone and Great Beauty to Xiao An. They were his fundamentals, while the Spirit Turtle's Method of Sea Suppression was the fundamental of fundamentals.

It was very likely that the second layer of the Spirit Turtle's Method of Sea Suppression would be the key that opened the gate to Daemon General. Once he stepped through, Li Qingshan would no longer be the same. The world would no longer be the same.

Time passed slowly. Who knew how long had passed.

Suddenly, a resplendent, azure light rose up from Li Qingshan's body. The light actually formed the blurry figure of a spirit turtle, moving its head and limbs about in a vivid manner.

Only when it filled the entire dwelling did it suddenly begin to retract again, withdrawing into Li Qingshan's body. It shrank into the tiny spirit turtle's daemon core. Although it was tiny, it did become larger compared to before.

Li Qingshan opened his eyes and light shone through them. His mind felt like still water. It was at great peace.

He had finally reached the second layer with the Spirit Turtle's Method of Sea Suppression, but he did not break through to Daemon General immediately. However, he had been expecting this. Otherwise, he would be undergoing his heavenly tribulation in the academy. He would be out of his mind.

No matter how well-sealed the underground dwelling was, it was still unlikely to conceal the aura. By then, the only fate that would await him would be a combined beating from the school masters.

However, this door was already opening for him. He could vaguely see the boundless scenery inside. He had already planted a foot on the door sill. Now, all he needed to do was pull his other leg forward, and he would be able to step through.

This process was easier said than done. Who knew just how many cultivators had stopped at the tenth layer, unable to take this step even after an entire decade. Who knew just how many daemons had died during the heavenly tribulation. He had to be as cautious as he could be and gather even more resources so that he could complete this most crucial step in his life as a human, no, daemon.

Even without experimenting, Li Qingshan could feel that Foundation Establishment cultivators would struggle to get through his Spirit Turtle's Profound Shield as long as they did not possess wondrous treasures like Fu Qingjin, or their cultivations had reached the same level as the slovenly daoist priest.

Most importantly, he could once again continue with the abilities of the ox demon and tiger demon that he had put on pause. If both of them reached the third layer, the spirit turtle at the second layer would probably struggle to keep them suppressed, but if he only reached the third layer with the ox demon, it should be no issue.

With the progression of cultivation, the power of the Ox Demon's Fist of Great Strength became even more startling. His powerful body would be what he would rely on the most to fend off the heavenly tribulation.

At this moment, Xiao An reminded Li Qingshan about the battle.

Only then did Li Qingshan remember it. He checked the time. It should have already been summer outside, right? It only deepened his understanding of a cultivator's concept of time. It was no exaggeration that it was timeless in the mountains, and years did not exist outside the seasons.

He felt it was a slight pity, but he was not particularly fazed. If he missed it, then he missed it. He could let this kid get ahead of himself for now. Was he supposed to be worried that he would not be able to redeem himself in the future?

He missed it anyway, so there was no need for him to hurry anymore.

“Then let’s continue.” Li Qingshan saw how Milliped had curled up into a ball too in a corner of the room, drawing in the spiritual qi within the dwelling. He seemed to focus on cultivation even more than Li Qingshan. This place was obviously more suited for his cultivation and recovery than the bug pouch.

Milliped had once been the one with the highest cultivation out of them, while his understanding that it was timeless in the mountains ran even deeper than what Li Qingshan knew.

Xiao An nodded too. Recently, she had reached a whole new level through her cultivation of the Guardian King’s Scripture of Demon Subdual and her comprehension of the Path of White Bone and Great Beauty. The Cloud Bookcase of the Seven Lots required even more time from her too, so she could slowly deduce it and practise it.

Li Qingshan took out the high grade Cursive Sword Calligraphy once more. He had only focused on his daemon cultivation recently, so his cultivation as a Qi Practitioner had remained at the sixth layer.

However, he had utter confidence in himself this time around.

With his experience from refining the Cursive Sword Calligraphy last time and his comprehension of the path of the sword stored inside it, it did not take him too long to refine it. He succeeded on his first try.

Afterwards came the most dangerous moment. The infiltrating sword qi was ten times more vicious than before.

Just like last time, a sword as black as ink appeared in his mind again, dancing about like before. However, the terrifying sword intent it gave off was like countless thin needles shooting off in all directions.

The release of sword intent from last time only made Li Qingshan comprehend something, giving him the urge to wield the sword. However, Li Qingshan’s head ached with splitting pain this time, almost to a point where he could not even gather his focus.

It was possible to imagine that almost no Qi Practitioner could survive under these circumstances, with their minds in a mess and the sword qi infiltrating their bodies, basically caught in a pincer attack.

However, Li Qingshan growled, the Spirit Turtle Suppresses the Seas!

The first thing that the Spirit Turtle Suppresses the Seas suppressed was not the sea of qi, but the sea of consciousness.

A boundless spirit turtle conjured in Li Qingshan’s sea of consciousness, pressing down on the inky sword. The terrifying sword intent immediately stagnated.

The spirit turtle’s power could control everything. This was Li Qingshan’s greatest safeguard, and it was the reason why he was bold enough to refine this fragment of the Cursive Sword Calligraphy.

Chapter 308 - The Seventh Layer

Li Qingshan’s mind lightened up. At the same time, the spirit turtle completely suppressed the sword qi in his sea of qi.

Even with that being the case, traces of tears appeared in several of his meridians. His meridians stung. If he were a regular Qi Practitioner, this would have been an extremely severe injury, requiring the expertise of the school of Medicine to treat.

However, Li Qingshan just transformed slightly and released his daemon qi, washing away the residual sword qi. Before long, these injuries had gradually recovered. As a powerful daemon infinitesimally close to the realm of Daemon Generals, he possessed extremely powerful self-healing. He could basically recover from any wound as long as he had enough time.

After recovering, Li Qingshan immediately got to work, comprehending the path of the sword within the Cursive Sword Calligraphy. Under the control of the spirit turtle, he released the sword intent bit by bit, slowly feeling and comprehending it.

But clearly, it was much more difficult this time around. Li Qingshan opened his mouth and asked, "Xiao An, teach me your sword style."

Xiao An immediately stopped cultivating and began studying it with him.

Time flew, but no one noticed.

This time, it had taken him even longer than last time. Three months passed in the blink of an eye.

Li Qingshan wielded the two fragments of the Cursive Sword Calligraphy together and channeled true qi into them. When the true qi transformed into sharp sword qi, it flowed back into his body, but it had already become subdued, unable to cause him anymore harm.

He had finally comprehended the entirety of the path of the sword within the second Cursive Sword Calligraphy. Now, he wanted to merge these two Cursive Sword Calligraphies together in his sea of qi.

The two groups of sword qi of different strength gathered in his sea of qi and began fighting; it was as if they did not come from the same place and were mortal enemies instead.

Li Qingshan did not use the Spirit Turtle's Method of Sea Suppression to forcefully suppress them. Instead, he used all of his will to control them. Gradually, the stronger group of sword qi gained the upper hand, devouring the weaker group. The two fused together completely, turning into over a hundred strands of extremely sharp sword qi.

Because they had been completely refined, the cluster of sword qi was enough to rival the supreme grade Cursive Sword Calligraphy, and he could wield it as he wished, which made it even more wondrous. Just how many people would be able to block it if he suddenly unleashed this move in the middle of a battle?

A streak of golden light appeared behind Li Qingshan. The huge vajra sword swung down on him.

Li Qingshan wielded his fingers like a sword and lifted them above his head.

The vajra sword and sword qi clashed together, producing a long screech.

The vajra sword pressed down bit by bit. Li Qingshan knocked it away and rushed forward. "You're launching another sneak attack on me." In order to increase his control over the sword qi, Li Qingshan had asked Xiao An to launch sneak attacks against him at any time so that he could unleash the sword qi

when he felt threatened. This was quite a good idea for someone like Li Qingshan who was accustomed to battle. However, she seemed to have become addicted to it.

“Didn’t you want to defeat me with sword qi?” Xiao An giggled and fused with the sword. The vajra sword turned into a streak of golden light and whistled over.

“You’re underestimating me!” Li Qingshan fished out a low grade spiritual artifact sword and swung it.

The tips of the sword collided. Li Qingshan let out a roar, and the sword qi in his dantian channelled into the sword. The vajra sword cracked.

As it shattered, the guardian king avatar collapsed too, revealing her petite figure. He scooped her up and pinched her cheek viciously while tickling her. “Why don’t you keep being naughty?”

Xiao An let out a burst of laughter that sounded like silver chimes.

Li Qingshan sat down right where he was and placed her on his knee. “You weren’t holding back, were you?”

Xiao An leaned against his chest, raised her head, and looked at him. Her eyes seemed to twinkle like stars as she shook her head firmly. Her seaweed-like hair swayed from side to side like waves.

Li Qingshan asked, “Really?”

Xiao An nodded with a smile. “Really.”

The Guardian King’s Scripture of Demon Subdual was a wondrous buddhist cultivation method, but just a cultivation at the first layer was indeed insufficient to block sharp sword qi that was almost on par with supreme grade spiritual artifacts.

Li Qingshan laughed aloud. “I said I would defeat you with sword qi, yet you insisted that I couldn’t.”

“Okay, I admit that you’re good. Are you happy now?” Xiao An pouted.

However, for guardian kings to subdue demons, it required a heart of fury, while for the path of the sword to defeat opponents, it required the intent to kill. When she faced Li Qingshan, she obviously did not feel that way, so whether it was the demonified guardian king or the unmatched path of the sword from the Cursive Sword Calligraphy, she was unable to unleash even half of their power.

“It’s about time now. Let’s get ready to emerge!” Li Qingshan said. The time he had spent in secluded cultivation this time had truly exceeded his initial estimates.

“I still want to cultivate for a little longer. Can I?” Xiao An bit her lip and looked at him with her large eyes filled with eagerness.

Just who in the world could say no to a gaze like that?

Li Qingshan lowered his head and pressed his forehead against her head. “Alright, whatever you want. I don’t have any pills left, but it’s not too bad if I practise qi here.”

Xiao An smiled. To her, there was no difference in where she cultivated, but being able to cultivate with him always brought her the most joy. They would not be disturbed by anything. In this sealed dwelling,

they could spend every single moment together without being separated at all; it was like a tiny haven that allowed them to shelter from the storm of the outside world.

Li Qingshan raised his head deep underground.

Even with the layers of formations and the thick earth separating him from the surface, he could still clearly sense the unique pulse of spiritual qi of the world clearly. This was what his spirit turtle's daemon core told him as a daemon.

Xiao An pressed her thumb against the joint on her middle finger and calculated a little before saying confidently, "It's snowing."

Li Qingshan said, "Wanna go out for a snowfight?" Xiao An replied, "Okay!"

As a result, the stone door to the dwelling opened loudly.

On the Cloudwisp island, in the courtyard within the bamboo.

The entire courtyard was filled with snow, with no one to clear it away. Probably only the school of Novels would face a predicament like this, but it also managed to maintain the purest, most uncontaminated snowfields.

The bamboo stood like noble people, completely unfazed and just as graceful as before. However, some of them bent over from the accumulated snow, like they were trying to pick up a snowflake from the ground.

The door and windows were wide open. The gentle, cold breeze blew snowflakes onto the bamboo floor, and the shine of the snow dimmed in the darkness too.

It was like the most beautiful landscape painting there was. Of course, only cultivators were able to take their time and appreciate this sight quietly without fearing the cold.

Liu Chuanfeng wore a single, bluish-green gown as he leaned against the table, writing diligently. Neither the cold nor the scenery seemed to be able to faze him.

The Cloudwisp association had already begun to unleash a startling effect, and his flame for writing novels seemed to be reignited. He wrote stories painstakingly.

Of course, these stories no longer possessed any sexual content at all. Instead, they were elegant and refined.

Li Qingshan's words had given him extremely deep inspiration. He was completely aware that he was not trying to win over those educated scholars right now.

Without anyone's advice, those iconic stories of young men falling off a cliff and finding a rare treasure or young misses eloping with poor scholars emerged from the tip of his brush. Beautified by the storytellers and bards, they reached the ears of thousands of regular people. The rate at which his power of belief gathered suddenly jumped.

Of course, it was not entirely smooth sailing. He faced quite a lot of uncertainty and hesitance during the process. In order to increase his efficiency, he would write many openings before asking the Cloudwisp

association for feedback. If he could gain recognition, then he would keep writing, but if he could not, he would change it immediately. He devoted all of it to serve the readers.

Right now, he was writing exactly one of these novels that had been developed half way. Out of his many novels, this one had garnered the most recognition and support. The name, Master of Wind and Moon, began to accumulate some renown.

It had been a very long time since he last visited the Parlour of Clouds and rain, and it was not because of Li Qingshan's warning. Rather, he simply had no time at all. His deadline to hand in the draft was approaching. He had to make time for the storytellers to familiarise themselves with the story.,

He wrote and wrote like his life depended on it. If it were possible, he wanted to continue this story forever—one book, two books, three books and so on. He was not fighting alone. He was not fighting for just himself. The entire school of Novels was currently reviving in his hands.

Thump! Thump! Thump! "Anyone home?"

Liu Chuanfeng suddenly raised his head. Because his mind was still submerged in the story, his eyes were in a daze, so he seemed rather bewildered. However, he gradually made out the person standing in the corridor, blocking the light from the snow. It was his primary disciple that he thought of day and night.

"My dear disciple, you've finally returned!" Liu Chuanfeng threw himself towards him.

Li Qingshan swatted him aside and called out to the snow, "Xiao An, come on in!"

"Why were you in seclusion for so long? Don't tell me you were actually afraid of Chu Tian? If you were afraid, why didn't you tell me earlier? You made me lose so many spiritual stones, do you know? He has already reached the seventh layer, and it's said he's going to break through again soon. It's utterly infuriating with how good he is at..." Liu Chuanfeng lifted up the teapot and poured some tea as he rambled on. Suddenly, he stopped and widened his eyes.

"Y- you've reached the seventh layer." He finally sensed the aura from Li Qingshan. Sure enough, it was at the seventh layer.

"Exactly!" Li Qingshan smiled. He placed the cup into Xiao An's hands. "When I was practising qi, there was a small accident, which was why I took a little longer."

Liu Chuanfeng was filled with disbelief. Just what accident could allow a sixth layer Qi Practitioner who had just broken through to reach the seventh layer in just a few months?

The path of cultivation became more difficult the further a person went. After condensing the sea of qi, it would be quite fast if a person could open the three remaining meridians, the Penetrating, Conception, and Governing meridians, within a decade, before spending another decade to open the twelve standard meridians throughout their body, reaching the peak of Qi Practitioners, the tenth layer.

Afterwards, they could use two or three decades to slowly comprehend the final step, or should one say the first step, Foundation Establishment.

People would be considered as elites if they reached the tenth layer before the age of fifty, outstanding if it was before the age of forty, and geniuses if it was before the age of thirty.

This was the path that most talented Qi Practitioners and many Foundation Establishment cultivators took. Plenty of geniuses like Hua Chengzan would emerge on the path too, but they were all the renowned geniuses.

Li Qingshan was just seventeen. If he continued at this pace, he could easily make it into the category of geniuses.

If he knew about the exact time Li Qingshan had spent cultivating, his eyes would probably fall out from shock. He had spent just three months, not the nine months that Liu Chuanfeng thought.

Although he could absorb spiritual qi of the world to no end, practising qi was not about just absorbing spiritual qi. Originally, he should not have reached the seventh layer so quickly, but he ended up finding another wondrous use for the sword qi in his dantian.

Forcefully splitting open meridians.

Chapter 309 - I'll Let You Take Three Moves First

After reaching the sixth layer, converting the spiritual qi into endless true qi and attacking the various acupoints no longer seemed as useful as before.

At this moment, the sword qi in Li Qingshan's dantian gave him a great inspiration. He tried merging the sword qi into his true qi so that he could forcefully split open meridians and smash through acupoints. He never thought he would actually succeed.

His true qi was already extremely pure. Combined with the support from the sword qi in his dantian, the various obstacles on the path of practising qi could no longer serve as a bottleneck to him. The Cursive Sword Calligraphy truly was extraordinary.

Liu Chuanfeng saw Li Qingshan take a step in the corridor. The mist gathered rapidly beneath his feet. His speed of using techniques had become startling.

"Where are you going?"

"I'm obviously going to go find Chu Tian. I think it's best if I take back that sum of spiritual stones." Li Qingshan clasped his hands without looking back. Xiao An leapt onto the cloud, and with a whoosh, the cloud took off with a long tail.

The school of Buddhism had a forest of stūpas, while the school of Confucianism had a forest of stone tablets on Great Virtue island.

The dark-grey, shiny tablets recorded the life events of the past seniors of virtue of Confucianism to inspire the later generations.

Chu Tian and a group of confucian disciples sat before a huge stone tablet as they listened impatiently to the instructor explain the past events. What sh*tty virtuous person? Could he match a celestial?

The instructor suddenly stopped and gazed past Chu Tian. Chu Tian turned around, and his eyes suddenly widened. He saw Li Qingshan leaning against a stone tablet, smiling at him. He was not dejected or resentful over his loss at all. He even waved his hand, like he was greeting an old friend.

And- and he had actually reached the seventh layer too, just like him. This brought great disappointment to Chu Tian, as he wanted to see Li Qingshan's appearance as a defeated dog. He no longer cared about the ongoing lesson and suddenly stood up.

"Li Qingshan!"

"It's about time anyway. We'll stop here for today." The professor glanced at the sky. He was reluctant to offend a rising genius disciple like Chu Tian. It was not like a lot of people were actually paying attention to this lesson anyway.

The confucian disciples all gathered beside Chu Tian, gazing at Li Qingshan nearby. Their eyes were filled with contempt.

Chu Tian said, "You're still bold enough to come here?"

Li Qingshan answered, "Why wouldn't I be?"

"What do you want? Don't tell me you've come to admit your defeat? Now that's something a man would do. Call me big brother, and from now onwards, we'll be..."

"Have you defeated me?"

Li Qingshan interrupted him with a single question. Chu Tian immediately lost his temper. He pointed at Li Qingshan. "Acting shamelessly isn't going to save you from me!"

Li Qingshan said, "How about this? Would you like an opportunity to defeat me?"

"Is that so? Alright, I agree. I'm just afraid you'll scamper away with your tail between your legs again!" Chu Tian sneered, and the confucian disciples laughed along.

Li Qingshan extended four fingers. "This time, we'll gamble this much. Four thousand spiritual stones!"

The laughter stopped. All the confucian disciples taking the lesson here were new disciples. Even if they poured together all the spiritual stones they had seen in their lives, they had never seen so many before. They could not help but become frightened by the number. Chu Tian was stunned too.

Li Qingshan asked, "What, you don't have enough spiritual stones? Need me to lend you some?"

"Alright. Since you're gifting me spiritual stones, why wouldn't I agree?" Chu Tian sneered as he ravished in joy. He was filled with absolute confidence. He had already attained an extremely deep understanding of the Great Palm of the Five Elements. As he practised five kinds of true qi simultaneously, the five elements promoted one another, so he had over ten times as much true qi as regular seventh layer Qi Practitioners. How could he lose?

"Same location. As for the time, let's do three days later, just in case something else gets in the way and a scoundrel ends up getting away with his small success again!"

"This time, I will leave you convinced over your defeat," Chu Tian said viciously. Not only did he want to win, but he wanted to properly humiliate Li Qingshan too. He planned to show him the difference between a mortal and a celestial.

.....

Three days later, in the Main Martial Arts stadium of the school of the Military.

This was the first time Li Qingshan had come to Great War island. When he saw the Main Martial Arts stadium, it reminded him of a huge arena, but there were no tightly-jammed seats. Instead, several platforms of varying heights stood in the surroundings. They were for watching the demonstrations of martial might. From afar, there was a clear order among the platforms with quite the pattern. It did not seem messy at all. Clearly, it was the handiwork of an architect from the school of Mohism.

Chu Tian stood with his arms behind his back as his white clothes fluttered about. Although he was not exactly handsome, he appeared to be filled with an intense bearing in the eyes of onlookers as a result of his great strength.

The platforms in the surroundings were filled with standing people. This huge gamble had already attracted the attention of the entire academy.

A few figures were vaguely visible in the special seats at the very top.

Wang Pushi gazed at the sun. It was about time.

However, Li Qingshan still was not here. The other platforms were filled with discussions.

A group of legalist disciples either sat or stood on one of the platforms. There were plenty of familiar faces that Li Qingshan would recognise.

“Why hasn’t he come yet? Don’t tell me he’s afraid again!”

“He gave away a few thousand spiritual stones last time. Why haven’t I run into an opponent as nice as him?”

“You’d better stop talking. He’s the primary disciple of the school of Novels! You can’t afford to offend him!” Wu Gen said extremely seriously.

It led to a roar of laughter. Wu Gen laughed along as well and felt proud of himself.

“Rongzhi, how much have you gambled this time?”

Qian Rongzhi said, “The same as last time.”

“The same? Surely not.” Last time, Qian Rongzhi had wagered on Li Qingshan and lost quite a lot of spiritual stones as a result. Wu Gen gave Li Qingshan a good scoffing to her, but he never expected that she would still gamble in the same way. It made Wu Gen quite unhappy.

She possessed quite a lot of suitors in the academy right now. She even seemed to have a somewhat ambiguous relationship with that genius, Chu Tian. However, she had always maintained her distance from him.

Wang Pushi lowered his head and asked Hua Chengzan beside him, “How much did you gamble this time?”

Hua Chengzan sat on the edge of the platform with his legs crossed. He extended two fingers. “Two thousand. I need to make back what I lost last time, after all!”

Wang Pushi said, "You just trust him that much?"

Hua Chengzan smiled. "If he loses this time, then I'll wager four thousand next time."

"He's here, he's here!" A series of calls rang out from below, and everyone raised his heads.

A cloud with a long tail shot over. It glided past a high platform, and Xiao An leapt off, landing beside the One Thought master. The One Thought master looked at his primary disciple he had not seen in quite a while with a bitter smile. He had no idea whether to praise her or berate her. At least there was someone beside him now.

The unspoken rule of the academy was that only the primary disciple could stand beside their respective school leader. Although this high platform was very spacious, only two people could stand on it at most.

Hua Chengzan said, "Old Wang, were you this fast back then?"

"My affinity for water is only yi." Wang Pushi could use the Hell of Ice, so he was obviously familiar with this water element technique with the highest practicality. However, he did not move as quickly as Li Qingshan when he was at the tenth layer.

"This speed seems to make him more than just high jia," Hua Chengzan said in thought.

The formation for testing elemental affinity was only used on Qi Practitioners. High jia was already an extremely rare affinity, so there was no point in setting the range so that it could measure to something higher.

After reaching the second layer with the Spirit Turtle's Method of Sea Suppression, his connection with water had increased drastically, which was why he was able to sense the snowfall from inside the cultivation dwelling. Just like the Ox Demon's Fist of Great Strength and the Tiger Demon's Fist of Bone Forging, the Spirit Turtle's Method of Sea Suppression gradually changed his constitution.

They were trying to measure a spirit turtle's water affinity using a human formation. Was that not a joke? A spirit turtle was water itself, no, the ruler of water.

After dropping off Xiao An, the cloud plummeted down without slowing down at all, straight towards the ground.

With a boom, the cloud was smashed into pieces and dust rose up in the surroundings.

Yu Zijian felt something tighten around her right hand. She saw how Hua Chenglu was extremely nervous.

"Are you worrying for him?" Yu Zijian asked quietly.

"You idiot! I've wagered a lot of spiritual stones on this!" Hua Chenglu stared straight into the mist and vaguely saw a figure standing with his chest held high in there. Only then did she relax.

The dust dispersed. Li Qingshan stood with his arms crossed. He smiled slightly as his bronze face radiated with confidence. His blueish-green clothes that should have been very elegant just radiated with power on him.

This time, he was perfectly on time.

The leader of the school of Military, Han Anjun, was presiding over the battle, and he said, "During the battle, all pills, talismans, puppets, and spiritual stones are forbidden from use. If you break these rules, you will be disqualified immediately."

This was the rule for fighting within the academy. Most of the battles were competitions of martial prowess and matches to grow stronger in. They were not battles to the death.

If they were allowed to use these items that offered boosts, it would devolve into a pointless battle of endurance where they would waste large amounts of resources for nothing. The academy did not endorse that. School leader Han Anjun was presiding over this battle to ensure that he could stop the battle at any time to minimise injuries and avoid casualties.

After a simple explanation of the rules, he cut right to the chase. Han Anjun asked, "Do you have any objections?"

"I don't." "I don't."

"Begin!"

The giant lumberman Mu Kui wielded a huge hammer and struck a bronze gong that stood even taller than him.

The thunderous sound boomed through the entire island, startling flocks of birds. The battle began.

Chu Tian said, "And I had thought you would run away from the battle again. Hmph, seeing how you're gifting me so many spiritual stones, go ahead. I'll let you take three moves first."

Swish! Swish! Swish!

Without batting an eye, Li Qingshan launched three water arrows. They failed to even pierce Chu Tian's protective true qi. Water element techniques were not known for their offensive power. He did not use his entire strength in the attack either.

"Courtesy demands reciprocity. I'll let you take three moves too. Go ahead!"

Chu Tian was furious. He never thought he would actually try toying with him. Sharp, golden light lit up in his hand and swung out like a blade. He called out, "Metal Crescent Slash!"

The sharp, crescent-shaped golden light whistled through the air.

"One move." Li Qingshan took half a step back and twisted his body naturally. The Metal Crescent Slash brushed past him. He was completely unscathed.

Before he could even correct his posture, he felt the ground below him shake.

"Lone Wood Spiling!" Chu Tian's voice rang out. Green light flickered around his right foot as he stamped down.

A huge log burst out from the ground, straight into the air.

"Two moves." Li Qingshan leapt up slightly and stomped down. The log splintered loudly.

Waves of heat emanated over. Fire turned Li Qingshan's face bright red.

“Bird of Flames!” A bird scorching with fire like a phoenix extended its wings that spanned over thirty meters across and lunged over violently. It turned into a sea of flames that swallowed Li Qingshan.

Chapter 310 - Cloud Ridge Giant

With how silent the platforms had fallen, it was clear that Chu Tian’s strength had shocked everyone. Not only did the three moves include metal, wood, and fire element techniques, but all of them possessed startling power too. If they were fighting Chu Tian instead, they would probably be killed with his first move. It would be even less likely for them to escape from these flames.

How was it possible for Li Qingshan to win against such an opponent? He even tried acting tough, letting Chu Tian take three moves. He was just knocking on death’s door.

Yu Zijian felt her hand tighten until it ached. She saw how worried Hua Chenglu was. “Are you worried about your spiritual stones?”

“I’m worried about him!” Hua Chenglu quickly realised what she had said and blushed. “Oh you. I can’t believe you’re still in the mood to joke around right now.”

“Don’t worry, Chenglu. He’s not the type of person who would be defeated by moves like this.” Yu Zijian patted Hua Chenglu’s hand. She seemed to see that person’s figure on Li Qingshan, an unyielding will.

Liu Zhangqing smiled. Chu Tian might have been lacking a little mentally, but his strength went without saying. Not only did he have over ten times more true qi than regular people, but his techniques were extremely powerful too by using the principle of the mutual promotion of the five elements.

Li Qingshan had challenged him out of sheer ignorance. He was simply asking for trouble. Even if he managed to survive this attack, he should be heavily injured, unable to keep fighting!

Chu Tian laughed aloud, just like he did during the battle last time. “Do you really think you’re worthy enough to give me a handicap of three moves? General Han, I’ve won this battle!”

Han Anjun stood on a platform nearby; he was like a statue, as if he had not heard Chu Tian. Suddenly, he raised his hand and pointed at the fire.

Chu Tian looked over with a frown, and his eyes narrowed. Li Qingshan stood within the sea of fire, unscathed. His posture had not even changed. A circular, faint-blue barrier enveloped him, which resisted the roaring flames no matter how hard they collided against it.

Li Qingshan said, “Three moves!”

The Water Curtain technique was relatively more renowned among the various water element techniques. It was a defensive technique that could nullify power and neutralise attacks.

However, how was a seventh layer Qi Practitioner’s Water Curtain technique able to block Chu Tian’s Bird of Flames? Not only was Chu Tian puzzled, but even Liu Zhangqing was perplexed as well.

Li Qingshan smiled. “What, do you want another three moves?”

“Since you want to be so reckless, don’t blame me for not holding back!” Chu Tian erupted with fury. He formed seals with his hands. He moved so quickly that his hands seemed to multiply.

Li Qingshan did not use this opportunity to attack either. Instead, he just stood there with his arms crossed, as if he really planned on letting him take another three moves. Even the various school leaders felt like he was being a little too conceited now, but he had a plan.

Chu Tian pulled back his hands, and all the blurs vanished, merging before his chest. He slammed his hands against the ground violently.

There was an unbelievably loud rumble. The onlookers all felt the platforms shake slightly, as if there was an earthquake. A crack immediately appeared between Chu Tian's hands, spreading to Li Qingshan's feet.

A huge, earthen yellow hand extended out from the ground and headed towards Li Qingshan. The five thick fingers reached towards him like stone pillars.

Li Qingshan leapt up and unleashed his cloud, flying around the arena while looking down.

The entire stadium was filled with cracks now. The earthen yellow arms extended out of the earth and into the air before pressing against the ground. A humanoid figure used it to hoist itself out of the earth, like it was a giant that had awakened from its millennium-long slumber by the outside world. Rock and soil rolled off its body, revealing a perfect, humanoid shape. It stood over thirty meters tall.

The huge shadow it cast even enveloped quite a few platforms.

The people on the platforms were alarmed. "W- what is this technique?"

"The Earthen Strongman!" Earth elder Huang squinted his eyes.

"What? This is the Earthen Strongman?" A tanny, simple-looking young man beside earth elder Huang cried out, as he also knew this technique, and he was at the tenth layer.

The Earthen Strongman was an earth element technique. Anyone who cultivated Wu Earth true qi could use it, but when regular weaker Qi Practitioners used it, the ones they summoned would only be the size of a man. Stronger Qi Practitioners might have been able to summon ones towering at ten meters, but an Earthen Strongman this huge had already exceeded the understanding of regular Qi Practitioners. They struggled to make out what this technique was.

The power of techniques were basically determined by three factors—elemental affinity, true qi quantity, and understanding of the technique itself.

Without a doubt, Chu Tian was one of the best of the best for all three factors, particularly with the last factor. With his advantage as a Reincarnated Celestial, he basically knew how to use techniques even without being taught them, as if he was born with them. Even the primary disciple of the school of Agriculture paled in comparison to him. After all, in this current day and age of peace, regular Qi Practitioners would never spend too much time or effort on techniques.

Chu Tian stood on the Earthen Strongman's shoulder and looked down at Li Qingshan. "If you want to admit defeat now, it's already too late. If I want to kill you, no one can save you!"

This was extremely arrogant of Chu Tian to say, but no one treated it as a boast. This colossal figure probably weighed thousands of tonnes. Before a single punch from it, any protective true qi or

defensive techniques would be rendered useless. He would immediately be crushed to pulp. Even if someone wanted to save Li Qingshan, it would be too late.

Before they knew it, this battle had already evolved into a struggle of life and death.

Han Anjun's eyelashes trembled, while the primary disciple of the school of the Military, Han Tieyi, said, "General."

Han Anjun said, "Let him kill him."

Chu Tian laughed madly. Under his control, the Earthen Strongman extended a huge hand towards Li Qingshan.

Li Qingshan rode the cloud and slipped between the huge fingers in an extremely close shave. He felt his vision darken. At this moment, the other hand had already slammed down from above. The cloud descended rapidly, which was the only reason he managed to avoid that punch.

With a boom, the Earthen Strongman's punch struck the ground heavily. A shockwave visible with the naked eye spread out in all directions. Wherever it passed by, masses of earth leapt up with it.

A few Qi Practitioners on the platforms basically wanted to flee out of fright. A screen of light appeared as the several hundred platforms formed a circular barrier, enveloping the entire stadium.

The shockwave dispersed, leaving behind a huge pit in the ground. Everyone was dumbfounded by the power. Was this really a technique used by a seventh layer Qi Practitioner?

Basically every corner of the stadium was within reach of the Earthen Strongman's arms, and it definitely did not have any points of weakness.

Li Qingshan rode around on his cloud like a fly, weaving and dodging around, avoiding the Earthen Strongman's attempts to catch him time and time again in close shaves.

Chu Tian sneered aloud. "What, is running all you know? Or are you trying to exhaust my true qi? I might as well tell you this then. Once my Earthen Strongman is created, the earth itself serves as a foundation for it. As such, it will never run out of power."

"Twelve moves."

Chu Tian was stunned. "What did you say?"

Li Qingshan smiled. "All for you to take!"

The slovenly daoist priest laughed too. He took a sip of alcohol. "This kid is still so arrogant. I like it! It's just a pity!"

"Fuck you!" Chu Tian completely lost his temper. The Earthen Strongman opened its mouth and let out a soundless roar. It took quaking steps and spread out its arms, lunging towards Li Qingshan.

A huge shadow extended over. Li Qingshan felt like a mountain was falling on him, but he kept smiling. "Since you want to play, I'll play with you!"

Boom! The two huge hands collided together heavily, and everything in between them vanished.

Hua Chenglu screamed. Wasn't Li Qingshan dead now? Why hadn't the referee Han Anjun interfered? Did he really want to see Li Qingshan die?

Chu Tian said, "As I've said, if I want to kill you, no one can..."

The Earthen Strongman opened its hands. There was nothing between them apart from a puddle of water.

The Water Clone technique. It could mould water into shapes and mislead people.

Sounds of amazement rang out in the surroundings. A shadow enveloped Chu Tian, but he did not care. At such an altitude, the only thing that could shroud the sun were clouds.

At this moment, Chu Tian saw many Qi Practitioners pointing behind him in surprise. He quickly turned around. He saw "clouds".

A cloud giant even larger than the Earthen Strongman grabbed the Earthen Strongman by the shoulder with its left hand while forming a fist with its right. It threw it heavily at the Earthen Strongman's face, causing it to stagger backwards and collapse heavily, striking the barrier around the stadium.

A huge slab of earth slid off the Earthen Strongman's face as rock and soil flowed out. The punch was originally directed towards Chu Tian who stood on the Earthen Strongman's shoulder, but his reactions were quite fast, so he managed to dodge it.

Li Qingshan sat on the cloud giant's shoulder and said, "What a coincidence! I just happen to know a similar technique!"

During the time he spent in seclusion, Li Qingshan did not just practise qi. He also tried the techniques that came with the Gui Water Method of Condensing Qi, but he discovered it was all different now. These techniques that originally required him tremendous amounts of time to understand and grasp suddenly posed no difficulty at all anymore. He could use them after just a bit of study, and their effects were extraordinary too.

He did not become a genius overnight. This had nothing to do with his ability to comprehend. Instead, it was instincts, just like how fish could swim and birds could fly. Controlling everything that had to do with water was the spirit turtle's natural ability. The Spirit Turtle's Method of Sea Suppression had almost changed his very essence.

As a result, he tried all of the water element techniques in the cultivation dwelling. Li Qingshan did not wait around during the three days before the battle either. He got Liu Chuanfeng to find some stronger water element techniques suited for battle.

Liu Chuanfeng might not have been well-off, but he was still the leader of a school, while his senior brother, Sun Fubai, literally sold these things. As a result, he immediately gave him a few powerful water element techniques.

The "Cloud Ridge Giant" was one of them. Learning the Cloud Ridge Giant required great mastery over Mist Wielding and Cloud Riding.

The Cloud Ridge Giant was condensed from water vapour after all. It was massive, which was why it was called a “giant”, though it was not exactly more powerful than Chu Tian’s Earthen Strongman. However, it seemed like he had gained the upper hand.

“You actually- You actually!” Chu Tian roared. As if the punch had landed on his face, it ached with a fiery pain. Originally, he wanted to annihilate Li Qingshan quickly with absolute supremacy, but reality had proved him wrong time and time again.

The Earthen Strongman stood up once again as it rapidly recovered from the damage to its face.

The two colossal figures stood within the stadium, as if they had returned to a battlefield of primeval times.

Amidst the shock, all the Qi Practitioners wondered about the same question. Was this still a battle between Qi Practitioners? And ones at the seventh layer?

Painting a Snake and Dabbing in the Eyes

The name might be a little weird, but this is actually a note for requesting for monthly tickets at the start of the month!

Though, I still want to use this opportunity to ramble about some things, things about the novel itself.

This month’s been quite surprisingly difficult. First, my grandfather passed away, which forced me to halt releases for a week, but all it affected was releases. There are some things that run much deeper that are troubling me.

You can say that this is also the primary reason behind the unstable releases of Chronicles of Xu Xian. It has once troubled me deeply. When I thought I could avoid it by switching to a Levelling-up novel, it has instead come knocking once again.

Note: Levelling-up novels, just as the name suggests, is about the main character powering up throughout the novel, like he “levels up” in a game. The novel places quite an emphasis on growing stronger, if you couldn’t tell already.

I didn’t even understand what it was, until one day. I suddenly realised what’s troubling me isn’t my flaws, but my strengths. You might find this strange. How can my strengths trouble me?

All of this originates from the very source of this. Why do I write novels?

I think I’m the same as most people. If you’ve ever thought about writing novels, you must have experienced this too. In the very beginning, it’s just a good idea in your mind, a novel thought, a touching scene. But afterwards, it will extend on forever, making you feel like you have to write something.

However, when many people start writing, they realise that they can’t express these ideas in their minds, so they give up. Fortunately, I possess this ability. I can turn those ideas into interesting and touching segments of the story.

One of my strengths is that I don’t lack these ideas. They seem like inexhaustible starlight, leaping out and calling out to me everyday, “Write me! Write me!”

All I can say is, "Alright." That's because this is my mission. I need to use an invisible thread to string them together so that they can shine before you.

However, it's not that easy.

Only now did I realise, Did I mess something up?

I think you've all heard the story about "Drawing legs for snakes". I once treated this old fable as the story of a fool, "Just who can be so stupid!" This continued until a certain moment, which was right now. I suddenly realised that I was that idiot.

Note: Drawing legs for snakes is a fable (and a Chinese idiom) where there's a group of people who compete for a jar of alcohol. Basically, they decide to compete by seeing who can draw a snake the fastest. One of them finishes well before everyone else, and in his arrogance, he even spends time to add legs to his snake. When he goes to claim his prize of a hearty drink, one of his competitors says that snakes don't have legs, so he hasn't drawn a snake. At this moment, that same person finishes drawing and takes the alcohol for himself. The moral of the story is not to go over the top, as you might end up shooting yourself in the foot.

Writing a novel isn't threading a line. Instead, it's drawing a snake. There's a head and a tail, while the in between forms the snake's wriggling body.

However, this snake was just too long and too big, to a point where I often forget this. In order to demonstrate these ideas in my head, you guessed it! That's right, I drew legs for the snake!

This is not a small matter, so I paused the releases and passed it off as thinking over the plot. However, no matter how beautiful these "legs" were, no matter how diligently I drew them, even I could feel that something was off, let alone you. So afterwards, I paused the releases.

And as you know, "He who draws legs for the snake misses out on drinking."

I finally understood that while these ideas were very beautiful, very touching, and very interesting, they did not belong to this story. They belong to another story, another style.

If the twisting and warping of all these ideas didn't exist, it would be good news to both this book and to me. I can write this story of grinding and levelling-up in peace. Perhaps the novel won't shine, but it'll still be a snake.

If you complain about how you're worse than others and how they're more successful than you, that's probably because you've done something stupendously idiotic and you're still unaware. The idiotic thing is probably so simple that it can be accurately described using a fable.

Racking your brains out sometimes isn't as great as a convenient scribble from others.