

Forty Millenniums of Cultivation

- Chapter 1

Lake Rusty.

Federal Special Waste Treatment Plant No. 23.

Also known as the “Artifact Graveyard.”

Growth of civilization has been fueled continuously by the powers of cultivation. Artifacts used to be out of reach back in the day, but the artifacts that could only be operated by Cultivators spread to every household. They became necessary items in ordinary lives, helping them with living, traveling, studying, and working.

They made the lives of people easier, but also brought forth a great deal of waste — artifact waste and metal scrap.

Artifact waste usually has quite some essence energy remaining in them, easily causing radiation pollution. The glyph arrays that compose the artifacts are highly volatile such that there is risk of explosion. If left unattended, artifact waste could cause major damage to the environment.

Therefore at the perimeter of every federal city, “Special Waste Treatment Plants” were installed in order to treat artifact waste.

Special Waste Treatment Plant No. 23, located at the southern outskirts of the Federal Cultivation City “Floating Spear.”

Underneath the hazy yellow sky, a purple polluted swamp emits a heavy stench. A mountain peak of metal shards protrudes from the swamp like the spine of a dinosaur. Fragments of flying swords lay scattered chaotically on the peak. Sitting next to the swords was a rusted crystal golem; its vacuous eye socket showed its spirit fire had long extinguished. The only thing left was an essence eating bug, which poked out of the skull, cautiously looking around in the “Artifact Graveyard” where danger lurks on all corners.

“BOOM!”

Closeby within another mountain of trash, a discarded artifact’s glyph array began to fracture. Its excess essence energy suddenly exploded and sent half the mountain flying through the air.

Countless metal parts scattered in the sky like a maiden scattering flowers, spattering in all directions. The surrounding mountains were triggered into chain reactions. Looking up, all that could be seen was smoke and dust. It gave the image of a dance of demons that covered the entire sky.

Here, it appeared that life was forbidden. Only insignificant cockroaches and worms could consider this a paradise.

However...

Li Yao dormantly lurked behind a mountain of trash. Licking his cracked lips, he wore a dirt yellow windbreaker covered in dust that made him blend with the environment.

He shot a glance at the slowly rising mushroom cloud nearby. In his clear youthful eyes, no trace of emotion could be seen, no feelings rippled out.

Only when the dirt and metal shards spattered upon his refuge mountain of trash did he retreat somewhat deeper into the trash heap. At the same time, he slipped on goggles, covering half his face.

“It’s here!”

When the essence watch on his wrist began to vibrate, the youth became excited and the corner of his mouth hooked into a sly grin.

3:52:38 pm, the daily routine garbage disposal time, also known to “salvagers” such as Li Yao as party time!

The essence watch on his left wrist was an Elite Hunter Model produced three years ago by the cultivator guild “Zephyr Guild”. He had found it within a garbage mountain and it took him no less than two months to repair.

It had an extraordinary function besides telling time. It could record the frequency of unique vibrations. When a unique vibration propagates in the vicinity, the owner is notified.

This function was intended to be used to alert hunters of the existence of powerful Fiend Beasts nearby.

However, after being modified by Li Yao, the function was changed to alert at the arrival of garbage ships.

Shortly, accompanied by an insignificant sound of buzzing, a dozen or so black dots appeared on the northern horizon.

Covering the earth and concealing the sky, the smoke and dust brought upon by the explosions still had not dissipated. The dozen or so black dots were mixed within and could not be distinguished.

Li Yao raised his nose. His finger brushed gently against the glyph located on the side of his goggles. "Swoosh." A sheet of blood red appeared on the surface of the goggles.

Under the red gaze, the garbage ships hidden by the smoke had their round silhouette rendered clearly.

The essence watch's hunting function also allowed locking on to the unique vibrational frequency of a single garbage ship.

"Garbage Ship No. 1327, I choose you!"

From when Li Yao was born until he was ten, these ten years he stayed in the "Artifact Graveyard." He knew every inch of dirt and every garbage ship in the sky, as if they were fingers on his hand. This "Garbage Ship No. 1327" was specifically responsible for collecting trash from Floating Spear Inner City's Upper East Side.

The Upper East Side was the most luxurious of the rich districts, containing the residences of several cultivators. The artifacts they threw away were of most value.

Several of the artifacts were still in good condition. They were only discarded without care by the cultivators and the rich simply because they had gone out of style, or because a new generation of artifacts had been released.

From Li Yao's perspective, this was not a garbage ship. It was a treasure ship filled to the brim with gold!

"Swoosh!"

Li Yao's pair of legs rippled out power. Like a shell being shot, he madly sprinted through the mountains of trash and charged into the smoke and dust, charging towards Garbage Ship No. 1327.

The mountains of trash all around him were on the verge of collapsing. Bubbles of the dangerous poison swamp rumbled beneath his feet. Li Yao was like the most nimble monkey of the mountains and woods. Every now and then, he would apply force somewhere on a mountain of trash, moving tens of meters with every step. His movements were like the floating clouds and running waters, giving a sense of tranquility.

"Li Yao, you bastard. You've come to fight over food with me again!"

At the moment, from behind the base of a few mountains appeared a dozen or so figures. They were dressed similarly to Li Yao, except they didn't have the advanced red goggles and essence watch equipped on Li Yao.

Holding metal spades and rods, these people aggressively approached.

They were the same as Li Yao. They relied on "Special Waste Treatment Plant No. 23" for survival as garbage salvagers

Where there is profit, there is competition. A ship's discarded artifact waste may only be trash for the upper echelon cultivators, but for these people at the lowest rung, these artifacts represent hope for survival. Li Yao was the salvager that had adapted the best to the Artifact Graveyard. Of course, this also made him the greatest thorn in the other garbage salvagers' sides, a thorn in the flesh.

Actually, Li Yao did not care about getting along. With a laugh, his waist suddenly emitted power and his body twisted in a strange fashion. Without warning, he turned 90 degrees, splitting away from the glaring fat youth with furrowed brows that was in front of him. He seized the opportunity to use his foot to ferociously launch off of the fat face, propelling his whole body by 30-40 meters.

"Fatty Leung, everyone's here to bring dinner to the table. It all depends on who is faster! You should lose some weight!"

The fat youth's face was stamped red, his nose nearly sunk into his fatty flesh. He was angry to the point of tantrum. Unable to accept this, he commanded his men to pursue and they quickly entered the smoke and dust filled area.

As an explosion had just occurred, the area was super unstable. Dozens of garbage mountains could collapse at any time, causing even the diabolical Fatty Leung's group of youths to have no other option but to slow their steps and stare blankly at Li Yao's lightning speed.

Seeing this, Fatty Leung could not help but spit a mouthful of saliva.

"This son of a b*tch! He really lives up to the reputation of caring about money more than his life! God, if you have eyes, may lightning strike him dead..."

True to those words, a mountain of garbage exploded near Li Yao. Thousands upon thousands of metal parts and broken artifacts flooded down like a torrent!

"It came true!" Fatty Leung and the youths were flabbergasted. They were at a complete loss!

However, a shriek pierced through the smoke and dust crying, "Small Black, Save me!"

A path more profound than the night sky, a black streak shot out like lightning and carved a hole in the flood of metal. It was rusted, it had a nicked edge, and it was completely black. This flying sword possessed a giant handguard that had the shape of two extending black wings. Li Yao was like a drowning man grasping tenaciously on a rice straw. He hugged the flying sword for dear life. Curling his entire body onto the black streak, he pierced into the sky.

In the middle of the sky, the giant figures of a dozen or so garbage ships had already emerged. Each garbage ship was hundreds of meters long and had a round plump figure like the mythological turtle that props the earth. On top of each "turtle shell" was carved tens of thousands of glyphs, all densely packed together. They flickered with the light of essence in five vibrant colors, helping those gigantic over-ten-thousand-tons guys resist the effects of gravity.

"Crash!"

The "giant turtles" opened the hatches on their bellies one after another. Out came a rain of metal parts and broken artifacts that blotted the sky, pounding relentlessly against the earth.

In a moment, the essence energy within the entire field was madly disturbed and shook. A perilous situation was triggered!

Even the over-ten-thousand-tons garbage ships shook left and right in the midst of the essence energy waves. Under the violent turbulence, they had no option but to use all their strength to separate from each other, in hopes of reducing the damage.

Fatty Leung's group even more so did not dare to rashly approach. They feared being caught in the turmoil.

Li Yao was still riding on the black flying sword, dashing quickly through the waves of essence energy. His appearance was destitute to the extreme, but he moved nimbly just like mud fish.

Naturally, he did not dare to directly face the raging waves and stormy sea head on. Rather, he relied on over ten years of survival experience, striving to discover areas where the tides of essence energy destructively interfered with each other and cancelled into tranquility, solely for the sake of approaching as close to the location of the dumped artifact waste as possible. The pavilion closest to the water was the first to bask in moonlight.

Finally—

After nearly 10 minutes of dumping, the garbage ships let out a rumble like a behemoth. They changed their direction, lazily returning home. The smoke and dust gradually dissipated as well.

Fatty Leung had just barely climbed into the center of massive garbage dumping. He saw right away Li Yao sitting comfortably on a newly made mountain of garbage, looking at him with a beaming smile.

“Sh*t!” Fatty Leung’s face was shaking in anger, but his heart was a mess.

Li Yao chose this garbage mountain rather cleverly. It was not the largest, and it also did not seem to have the most abundant of materials.

There were still dozens of garbage mountains all around, all containing priceless discarded artifacts.

As for the salvagers, there were more than just these two parties...

If Fatty Leung continued to compete with Li Yao, it was possible that some of the profits may be snatched up by other fishing salvagers.

The figures of other salvagers had already faintly emerged. Joyful cries could be heard from the peaks of several garbage mountains; people had discovered valuable treasure.

Not to mention...

Fatty Leung had heard that this loathsome kid, Li Yao, was a student of Floating Spear City’s famous Crimson Nimbus Guild’s Second Affiliated High School.

The Crimson Nimbus Guild was a famous sect located in the southern part of the Federation. Their strength was tyrannical and they had numerous experts.

Although Li Yao may not have learned any true techniques of masters, he was not someone who could be handled with just three fists and two legs. Otherwise, he would not have made a living battling for over ten years in this Artifact Graveyard, still being perfectly healthy and spry, also seizing the nickname “Vulture!”

But how could Fatty Leung just let it go? Where did his face go? His nose was still embedded inside his flesh!

While his heart was a mess, a gale of wind swept by. Fatty Leung subconsciously grasped out his hand, and his hand felt something ice-cold. In his hand was actually a scrapped crystal processor unit the size of a fist.

Li Yao laughed heartily, saying, “Fatty Leung, everyone’s here to make a living. I just snatched a”Starlight” class CPU from you last time. It’s not like I murdered your father. Isn’t it unnecessary to go this far, to be unceasing until the point of death? Here, I just found a ‘Brave Dragon-17’ CPU produced by the Viridian Dragon Guild. It’s the newest model, capable of calculating over 5000 telepathic thoughts per second. Even though

it's fried, I reckon you can get three or four thousand bucks for it. Just take it as a sign of respect from me, big brother Fatty Leung. From now on we're even, what do you say?"

"You..." Fatty Leung did not expect Li Yao to say something like this. He was immediately stunned and was somewhat distrusting, as he scratched the fat on his face.

"Yo! Look over there. Wild Wolf's men are almost here. They don't run solo like this guy. They will absolutely digest dozens of garbage mountains completely bare. They won't leave behind a single screw for you!" said Li Yao as he rapidly pointed towards the west.

Fatty Leung's face changed color. He squinted his eyes for quite a while and finally made a resolution. He immediately gave Li Yao a giant thumbs up, squeezing out a sentence, "Alright kid, you've got chops! Let's go make out with the goods asap!"

A party of salvagers scattered in all directions, charging towards garbage mountains in every direction.

"Whew...."

Li Yao let out a long sigh of relief. His butt was sitting on a garbage heap and big beads of sweat rolled down his forehead. The grin on his face transformed into wailing as he suddenly got up.

"Die Fatty! I painstakingly found that Brave Dragon-17 Processor, and it became yours for nothing!"

"Just you wait. Do you think it is that easy to take from me, the 'Vulture' Li Yao? There will be a day where what you've eaten of mine will be spat back to me. I will take back what you took from me with interest. I will make sure it's of high interest too! I will let you know... Why everyone calls me the 'Vulture who values money more than life!'"

"No, this won't do. I need to be faster. Wild Wolf's Gang, those bunches of mince-meat, they're even more unreasonable than Fatty Leung!"

Li Yao pulled down his goggles so that it rested on his neck. Rubbing his hands together, his pair of eyes contained a gleam of light. Licking his lips, he rushed towards a newly created garbage heap!

Five hours later, nightfall had descended.

"Morning Sun Village" was located next to Special Waste Treatment Plant No. 23.

Although its name was pleasant sounding, Morning Sun Village was actually Floating Spear City's most dilapidated, cheapest residential rental area.

A location right next to the Artifact Graveyard meant the climate was absolutely vile. Year round, an acrid odor would permeate through the air. Even when the main city had blue skies and white clouds, there would be a sheet of gray overcast over here. Of Floating Spear City's nineteen residential rental areas, this one had the lowest quality of life. Naturally, the rent was the lowest.

No matter how cheap the rent was, not many people would want to live next to a waste treatment plant. Several residential buildings were completely empty. Due to years of wear and tear without any maintenance, both the exterior and interior were covered in cracks. Corridors were covered in cobwebs. It was, for all intents and purposes, a ghost town.

And Li Yao was a long term resident of this "Ghost Town."

He liked the quietness here. He wouldn't disturb anyone when he repaired and modded his artifacts at home. It was close to the Artifact Graveyard. The rent was cheap. It simply served a multitude of benefits.

His home was roughly fifty square meters. There were two rooms, an outer one and an inner one. The outer room was for eating, drinking, and entertainment. The inner bedroom was remodeled into an artifact workshop.

When one enters the house, the first eye-catching image one would see would be the hundreds of crystal processors hanging down by rope, looking like hundreds of skeletal skulls.

These crystal processor units were mostly relics of several hundreds of years past, already losing their computing abilities. They were picked up by Li Yao, becoming a part of his collection. He was a crazy crystal processor fan and was super into these kinds of artifacts which were able to process a myriad of telepathic thoughts like the brains of cultivators.

In this tiny living room were piles of paper books, something rarely seen in this era. The piles revealed titles such as <A General Guide to Repairing Artifacts>, <A Beginner's Textbook on Crafting Flying Swords>, <An Artificer Prepares>, <Black-Mountain Elder-Devil Class Crystal Battleship Maintenance Manual>, and <99 Ways to Detonate a Planet> . Many were ancient texts from hundreds of years ago. They were gray and yellow as well as flakey and mushy.

Surrounded by the books and crystal processors was a used and somewhat-old straw mattress. This was Li Yao's table, chair, and bed.

And within the artifact workshop of the inner room were piles of precious treasures that Li Yao had collected from the waste treatment plant. There were shimmering flying swords, talismans with mystical calligraphy drawn on it, and elixirs with an extremely pleasant scent...

Even more artifacts were dismantled by him into their most elementary components and were absentmindedly piled up in the corner, becoming miniature garbage mountains.

At this moment, Li Yao held up a silvery white cube-shaped artifact. His eyes shined and glistened, just like a big bad wolf eyeing a small bunny. A line of saliva nearly trickled down the edge of his mouth.

The long, black-winged flying sword was extending out his back, trying to take a look around like a rather curious plump snake.

"Surprisingly it's the Thousand Illusion Guild's newest generation's '3D Hologram Projector' with a market price of over 20,000 bucks! If I can repair this, I may be able to get up to 10,000 bucks for it! Small Black, we've struck it big this time!" Li Yao was unable to resist letting out a long whistle.

The black flying sword made squeaking noises. It's two sheets of wings flew up and down, as if dancing in merriment. Unexpectedly it displayed the same hint of "greed" as its owner.

Li Yao's hands flared and seven to eight oddly-shaped tools used for maintenance appeared among his fingers. Some resembled screwdrivers, some resembled tiny pliers. There were also long and thin silver needles as well as curved and hooked unnamable tools.

"Small Black, guess a number of seconds?"

The Black Flying Sword make two sneering squeaking sounds, flying in the air using its pointed end to draw out a "50."

"50 seconds? You're totally underestimating me!"

He closed his eyes and took a deep breath, becoming tranquil for three seconds. After opening his eyes, the greed and excitement within his eyes disappeared without a trace. Like an unmoving ancient well, all that was left was cold and clear overflowing confidence.

Li Yao's pair of hands suddenly mobilized. Ten fingers turned into ten paths of flowing light, completely enveloping the silvery white artifact. At first, if one looked closely, they could vaguely make out the courses and movements of the tips of his fingers. Soon, however, only a cloud of dazzling fluorescence could be seen. Within the fluorescence came the sound of rustling.

Half a minute later, the fluorescence shook and a rustling sound faded away. Hundreds of shadows retreated back to their origin. Li Yao's pair of eyes were still set on their original position, not making the tiniest of movements.

As for the silvery white artifact, the "3D Hologram Projector" had already been dismantled by Li Yao into 425 elementary parts.

"39 seconds, and done!"

Li Yao let out a victory cry, winking in pride at the black flying sword. Then, he began to study with full concentration.

"Tsk tsk, this Thousand Illusion Guild's newest model hologram projector really is something. An elaborate composition, the balance of essence is like a work of nature. The most amazing part is this master crystal chip is It's about the size of a fingernail, but somehow over three-hundred glyphs were engraved on this crystal chip, all working in tandem with each other to form over twenty glyph arrays — it's simply a work of art!"

Li Yao's hand was holding a magnifying glass, carefully observing the extracted master crystal chip. His face was filled with intoxication like that of a pilgrim. The more he observed, the more profound his expression became.

"That's not right... There aren't just three-hundred glyphs. This master crystal chip appears to be utilizing crystal folding technology, taking three crystal chips and layering them atop of each other, altogether containing over a thousand glyphs and forming over a hundred three-dimensional glyph arrays. This is inconceivable!"

The more he studied, the more profound and deep he felt. Li Yao entered a state of complete engrossment, forgetting the passage of time, and studied meticulously for a complete three or so hours. He failed to completely comprehend a single glyph array; instead, his observations caused him to become dizzy and lightheaded as his vision became black.

Right now, he had at most the level of a "Junior Artifact Technician." The gulf between his level and that of a "Thousand Illusion Guild" Master Artificer was really too wide, far far too wide.

If this "master crystal chip" had a problem, then he would have no choice but to take this 3D Hologram Projector and sell it as a defect.

Fortunately, after using an "essence reserve tool" to inject essence energy, Li Yao discovered that the essence energy flowed smoothly in the master crystal chip. The essence circuits were clear, the glyph array was stable, and there were no anomalies.

After a careful inspection, he discovered that the problem originated from a crystal conduit. An essence energy fluctuation anomaly had caused this crystal conduit to burn out.

Luckily for Li Yao, this crystal conduit was a standard component and was very easy to replace. Li Yao quickly found a replacement from the inventory in his house.

Closing his eyes, he recalled in silence the process of his recent dismantling. An image of a complete structural diagram surfaced in his mind. His hands mobilized automatically, a gust of wind swept, and the 3D Hologram Projector was assembled once more.

He used the essence reserve tool to inject a river of essence energy. The pure white exterior faintly emitted a blue fluorescence as if it were a lustrous transparent sapphire, giving the appearance of being possessed by a living fairy.

When the blue glow swept over his forehead, from the depths of Li Yao's mind, dozens of control glyphs automatically came into view.

"Hologram Projector, power on!" Li Yao thought to himself and the control glyph in his mind flared.

The blue fluorescence of the hologram projector converged into a single glyph in the shape of "回". The two rings spun rapidly, looking like a vortex. From the middle of the vortex, a blue beam of light was emitted into the air and solidified into a massive hologram. What appeared was the image of a middle-aged cultivator wearing an Eight Trigrams Dao Robe, rendered down to the finest hair, looking true to life.

Behind this esteemed cultivator's back was an even larger hologram. On the hologram were interweaving red and green glyph-script, numbers, and arrows, all constantly pulsing and fluctuating.

The middle-aged cultivator's face was expressionless. With a voice like that of an unmoving ancient well, he said, "Up next, news in the world of finance. Today's top story is undoubtedly the "Traceless Sword Faction's" announcement of the release of their newest flying sword propulsion glyph array, "Violet Lightning". Reports say that after implementing "Violet Lightning," the maximum velocity can be increased by 9 percent, the instantaneous destructive power can be increased by 11 percent, and the essence consumption can be decreased by 5 percent. Towards flying swords, the composite increase in performance is obvious."

"Receiving favorable reviews, the share price of the Traceless Sword Faction is on the rise. Starting before 10 AM, the share price approached the market limit and remained at that level til the market closure.

“The rest of the Sword Cultivation Industry is feeling ripple effects from the announcement. This includes the Giant Sword Gate, Polar North Sword Sect, and the 22 families of schools within the Southern Sea Sword Faction. The stocks are hot and on the rise up until market closure. The Sword Cultivation Industry as a whole rose by 5.42 percentage points.”

“On the flip side of this announcement, the defense-focused “Gold Armor Sect’s” share price fell. Experts believe that with the announcement of the glyph array “Violet Lightning”, flying swords have made a revolutionary leap in technology. Modern mainstream battle armor is fundamentally unable to guard against the newest models of offensive flying swords. By market closure, Golden Armor Sect’s shares had tumbled 8%.”

“After market closure, the Golden Armor Sect called for an impromptu news conference. The Golden Armor Sect’s spokesman, Elder Hei Yan, announced a development in the newest generation of “Star Strike Shields” thanks to an imminent breakthrough in battle armor research and development. A prototype will be available within the year and will absolutely be able to guard and nullify all flying sword attacks.

“As for the Grasslands Region in the northern part of the Federation, the calamity known as the Black Roundworm Epidemic continues to spread, already proliferating into the cultivation bases of many Beast Taming Sects’ spirit beasts. The afflicted spirit beasts numbered over 500,000. This rarely seen disaster drove the stock prices of the beast industry continuously down. Several Beast Taming Sects’ share prices have tumbled to a three-year low.”

“Now, let’s turn to a famous market analyst, Tianxingzi, here to comment for everyone on today’s developments.”

“ ... ”

Li Yao watched for a while. He confirmed that the image was stable, that the sound was clear, and that there weren’t any static or streaks. The 3D was exceptional, being extremely distinct and causing one to feel immersed. The artifact should be completely repaired.

After pondering a bit, he thought deeply within his mind, “Switch to the entertainment channel.”

The blue glow flashed. The middle-aged cultivator and the red-green hologram flashed and faded away. In their place was a stadium buzzing with activity.

This full-house stadium was filled with a hundred thousand people with sounds of clamoring people rumbling through the air. Under the shining rainbow rays of light, a hundred thousand fired-up teenagers raised their hands up high. Together, they were cheering a name:

“Lu Yinxi!”

“Lu Yinxi!”

“Lu Yinxi!”

Atop the three-story main stage towered a dozen or so jutting crystals like entwining canine teeth. When the cheers of the teenagers converged to their peak, the thickest of the crystals suddenly burst. With an appearance like that of clear, cold snow yet possessing an expression heated like lava, a young lady wearing white jumped out from the crystal. Slanted on her waist was a zither that seemed to be formed out of a stack of crystals. Her slender white hand swept across the strings, and the magical clashing sounds of metal like that of a powerful army roared out.

“Within my heart, I have the dream to fly proudly. The opposing shore of the celestial river is our direction! This belongs to us. Cultivate! A! New! Era!”

Just like with all the teenagers, Li Yao’s blood also began to boil.

The girl, “Lu Yinxi”, radiated energy all throughout the stage. She was a singer of an idol school that recently rose abruptly in the last two years. Immediately debuting with an ice-cold figure and an explosive performance style, she attracted a great number of adolescents. She composed the song “Forty Millenniums of Cultivation” that became popular in the whole nation within a short half a year. Countless teenagers were motivated by this song to walk the path of cultivation.

Li Yao was also one of her fans, but for a reason different than other people’s. The reason why he liked Lu Yinxi was because their past were the same.

They were both orphans.

Li Yao was born in Special Waste Treatment Plant No. 23. For as long as he could remember, the skies were always ashy and yellow.

He ate rotting meat from the garbage heaps. He drank contaminated putrid water. He relied on primal instinct as well as a little “secret” hidden deep in his memories, struggling to survive. Since the beginning, he suffered and endured for these ten or so years, transforming into the Artifact Graveyard’s most dangerous existence, the “Vulture”.

If the “Old Man” had never appeared, Li Yao probably would have become part of the garbage plant, turning into a “Fatty Leung” or a “Wild Wolf”.

But one day, six years ago, a garbage ship had dumped the old man together with dozens of tons of garbage. Li Yao felt compassionate and dragged the scar riddled old man back home.

From then on, destiny had completely changed for him.

The old man never talked about his past. Li Yao only knew for certain that he was a tremendously skilled Expert Artifact Modder. In a short five years, the old man taught Li Yao all sorts of fantastic and bizarre skills for modifying artifacts. He taught Li Yao knowledge of all kinds of fundamental academic subjects. He also spent money for Li Yao to attend a private high school in the city, allowing Li Yao to blend into normal society.

A year ago, one of the old man's old injuries flared up again and he passed away. He left behind for Li Yao a mysterious flying sword named "Black Wing." The old man said Black Wing was a strange weapon that he tried to study for half a lifetime with no success. In the end, he left Li Yao some words:

"Little Yao, this old man has been to dozens of worlds in his life. I have seen and met thousands upon thousands of Expert Artifact Modders and Master Artificers. But, your natural talent is the highest I have seen!"

"With only the hands of an insignificant mortal, you are able to maintain low-level artifacts. You really are talented."

"But relying only on one's natural talent is not enough! By only relying on one's talent, you will always only be capable of maintaining low level artifacts, civilian artifacts!"

"Promise this old man that you will properly study, fight and get accepted into into a university, and become a cultivator! Only by becoming a cultivator will you then have the chance to move further along in artifact repair. Such that one day in the future you..."

"Become a Master Artificer!"

When the old man had spoken these words, his pair of eyes were wide open. His eyes blossomed with radiance and were filled with boundless energy. This memory was fresh in Li Yao's mind.

A Master Artificer... A part of the circle of cultivators, one of the most prestigious professions.

He did not know whether he would end up disappointing the old man.

The sword Black Wing silently accompanied his side, listening to the young lady and her volcanic performance. Its two protective wings twisted fervently, dancing along to the energetic song.

After quite some time, the youth's expression became clear. The corner of his mouth once again hooked into an unperturbed smile.

“What am I thinking so much for? Regardless of the consequences, I just have to stake it all!”

“Lu Yinxi was a small orphan and she transformed into the federation’s most popular female singer. Why can’t I, a small salvager, become a Master Artificer?”

The youth thought back to a time long long ago, in a place far far away. He remembered hearing this sentence:

“One should always have dreams, for what if they come true someday?”