

Forty Millenniums of Cultivation

Chapter 2: Hologram Projector

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. 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?”