Ancient ST 251

Chapter 251 - Coolsteel Boots, the feeling of boots and women

The turbulent wind precedes the mountain storm!

Qing Shui cast off all the distracting thoughts in his mind and he immersed himself in dull and dry training. Ever since he practised Duo Cultivation with Qinghan Ye, his abilities were enhanced greatly. The liquid the size of a grape in his diaphragm was now the size of a walnut, the energy contained in the core of it was frighteningly pure.

It's a pity that he hadn't broke through the ninety day cycle. Qing Shui was now expectant of the capabilities of the ninety days cycle, after all it was not easy to attain the fifth Heavenly Layer of the one could only look for an opportunity breakthrough after accumulating ninety nine days.

For the Ancient Strengthening Technique, even when Qing Shui moves it quickly, it doesn't move as fast. The liquid in his diaphragm rotated vigorously, and a tremendous and heavy burst of Ancient Strengthening Qi circulated naturally in his body.

A cycle after another, the broad and tough vital path was still blocked on the eighty-ninth cycle. The cycle would always leave some Ancient Strengthening Qi everyday, making it stronger for the next cycle, which then leaves a little Ancient Strengthening Qi for the next one...

Until the eighty-ninth cycle, the Ancient Strengthening Qi contained in the vital path was the most frightening, though it was still unable to break through to the ninetieth cycle. Once it was attained, the vital path, diaphragm, as well as the bones, tendons, muscles, body constitution throughout one's body would be greatly strengthened.

Qing Shui, who had opened his eyes, smiled bitterly. There was still no sign of a breakthrough. He couldn't help but think, if it was so difficult now, what should he do to achieve the peak of the 4th layer of the Ancient Strengthening Technique.

It was now in the accumulation period, following this ninety day cycle would be a wide expanse of accumulation till the ninety-ninth cycle, and a barrier between the 4th and the 5th layer.

Finishing the compulsory training, Qing Shui saw that there was still a big piece of 1,000 year coldsteel left, and he remembered about the unfinished men's boots that he had started making using the golden marbled skin of the Golden Ringed Snake King. Qing Shui started to smelt the 1,000 year coldsteel, and he decided to forge the boots using the 1,000 year coldsteel.

He began forging the sole using the 1,000 year coldsteel, hammering seriously using the Thousand Hammer Technique. Qing Shui was especially careful this time, as he was using the 1,000 year coldsteel, striving to be meticulous, hammering each time with his best effort.

This time, Qing Shui remembered every strike, hammering a 1,100 times made Qing Shui happy. It was probably the result of him forging till he entered a state of oblivion.

With the help of the diagrams and methods, he created the 'skeleton' so that even when forging a pair of boots wouldn't give Qing Shui an awful headache. With methods, steps, samples and examples, making one was smoother and simpler. If it wasn't for them, he would not know where to start.

Extracting the snake skin from the golden marbled part, Qing Shui had imagined it to be unisex since it was gold in colour, but the product had not turned out to be so "elegant". Feeling the grains and texture of the golden ringed snake skin in detail made Qing Shui even more depressed.

The Golden Ringed Snake King was famous for its golden rings, and the golden ringed marble portion was actually the essence of the Golden Ringed Snake King, making the practical value of the skin much much higher than the emerald portions.

Qing Shui did not know whether to be happy or to mock himself about being blind as a mole, he sheathed the golden ringed snake skin with a frame and started smelting.

This time, Qing Shui started with a warm fire, followed by a period of fierce flames, where the golden ringed snake skin and the "skeleton" of 1,000 year coldsteel sole completely fused, before resuming the smelting with warm fire again.

When the golden gleam appeared, signalling the successful forging of the boots using 1,000 year coldsteel, Qing Shui felt a small excitement in his heart. It could be due to him using a metal like 1,000 coldsteel, or because he had put in the most effort this time.

Though this pair of boots, which shone and glimmered like golden boots, were not as beautiful as the ones he gifted to Canghai Mingyue and Huoyun Liuli, it looked a little aggressive, at least men would wear it.

Increase in Speed by 10%, Strength by 50%, Agility by 30%, and Endurance by 10%!

Even though the special skill Qing Shui yearned for had yet to appear, increases in these few attributes would make many fight over it. A 1-color graded boots was so powerful, how much stronger would he be if he forged a 7-color graded item? Qing Shui yearned for it with all his heart, but he knew that that would take time, the length of time enough to make one speechless.

Qing Shui had made this boots for himself. He knew that every bit of strength would increase a little bit of hope; all this time other than training, he had been forging something that could enhance his abilities. He would forge even armours and necklaces for phoenix.

Qing Shui wanted to try on the previous two pairs of boots he forged, but it was a pity that they were too small and only suitable for women. He could finally experience how it feels to wear the boots that had enhanced speed.

Hastily putting thr pair of golden coloured boots on, the legs of the boots were much shorter than the previous pairs, but it looked much more refined!

"It does not feel cool at all? And it has a mild warm feeling." Qing Shui was very surprised. He had thought that the sole of the boot forged with 1,000 Year Coldsteel would surely be so icy cold that it is piercing to the bone. However, he would never have thought that it was not cooling at at. While the exterior felt cooling to the touch, the inside of the boots did not feel cooling at all.

When the automatically circulating Qi of the flowed into the boots, a mysterious energy flowed back from the boots' sole and "frame". That feeling was like having an ice-cream in the scorching summer, or like the moment one penetrated or was penetrated while enjoying sex. It was extremely wonderful.

"Darn, even a pair of boots could give off such a feeling?" Qing Shui did not know whether to laugh or cry. However, he did not know how Huoyun Liu-LI felt while she was wearing it, nor did he know whether Canghai Mingyue knew of this feeling.

A lady who had not experienced sexual acts would unlikely not link it to this, but rather, feel that it was extremely comfortable. Thinking of how happy Huoyun Liu-Li was at that time, and the excitement as well as the charm which was reflected on her face when she was dancing with her sword. Only now did Qing Shui realize that that was the reason, and not the excitement brought by the increase in speed.

Qing Shui displayed the Crane Steps in the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal, and the result gave him a shock. The boots which should have increased his speed by 10% gave him an increase of at least 15%. Although it had the attribute to increase one's speed, it should not have increased by so much.

"Mmm, could it be that I had used the Qi of the as a catalyst?" Qing Shui recalled how he had used the Qi of the during the forcing process and when he was tempering as well. Now, it was not impossible for him to get twice the results with half the efforts with the Qi of the Ancient Strengthening Technique.

Very soon, Qing Shui got used to the control of the increase in speed and he knew that it had an inseparable relationship with his Qi of the Ancient Strengthening Technique. The same pair of boots brought about a different set of effects, Qing Shui was very happy. It was well worth the extra efforts in forging it.

After getting used to it, Qing Shui took the pair of boots off. Seeing that it was about time, he left the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal. In the time to follow, Qing Shui knew that he had to double up his spirits. He did not want to bear hatred, but there were many things he had to do. His mother was waiting for him, Yan City still existed, his goddess-like Master at the Skysword Sect was waiting for him, he still needed to extend Luanluan's life, and had his Master really put down the events at the Lion King's Ridge...?

Working hard and forging at the blacksmith store for the whole morning, while there were many people who came by to the store, he had not sold much in the whole morning, nor did he received any good metal or mysterious gemstones and such.

When it was noon, Qing Shui closed the doors and headed for the Canghai's residence. He wanted to avoid any unwanted attention, and at the same time, tell Immortal Sword Sect that he did not have any plans to run away.

He heard from Canghai that they were not completely ready yet, and thus, he would not be able to escape fully either. mk?The control was still with the Immortal Sword Sect. By right, if they were to make their escape, the control would be with them, but Qing Shui did not dare to think of having the Canghai couple sacrificing themselves.

And Canghai Mingyue would not leave either. While Qing Shui did not understand Canghai Mingyue well, she would definitely rather die than to leave at this point.

Unknowingly, he had already reached the entrance to Canghai's residence. When he entered, he saw Canghai Mingyue standing next to the small pond not far away. Qing Shui suddenly felt that the lady with the majestic beauty, standing on top of the Golden Winged Thunder Condor now seemed to be thin to the bones. Qing Shui even felt that was a bit lonely. In the past, Qing Shui would never have felt

that she would be frail nor be lonely. She was like the bright moon hung up in the sky, bright and clear. But while the backview that Qing Shui saw now was still beautiful, Qing Shui felt a bit sorrowful.

She was worried about the events that would follow. She was afraid that what she was scared of would happen, and even more so, she did not know what she would do if they were really to happen.

Qing Shui walked over slowly, standing next to her. He turned his head to look at the side view of Canghai Mingyue's beautiful face. That slender and white neck, that translucent ear lobes, that skin that seemed as if it would break with a slight touch was giving off a glow as if a jade's; and that unique disposition of hers made Qing Shui felt as if she was a most beautiful beauty portrait, unattainable like the clear moon in the sky.

"Don't worry. We should be thinking about how to avoid it for now. Moreover, things may not be what it seems to be." Qing Shui said softly.

"I suddenly feel as if I'm in a mess. I'm very scared, I don't know what I should be doing." Canghai Mingyue looked back at Qing Shui and said softly.

No matter how proud or excellent she was, she was a lady who had been through such things. For her to suddenly be made to face such events, she was at a loss and she could not even calm herself down.

"There's still me, we can think of a solution together. Nothing is impossible to a willing mind. So long as we put in the effort, there's nothing that we cannot accomplish." Qing Shui knew that he needed to give her some support and encouragement now. If he were to stay next to her and wallow in despair together, it would only make her feel even more at a loss and helpless. While Qing Shui knew that the chances of turning things over was extremely small, but it was useless for them to be wallowing in despair. As a man, he should be upstanding and dauntless, even if he did not have a broad body, he should have a broad chest.

"Nothing is impossible to the willing mind." Canghai Mingyue repeated the line softly. Her black and deep beautiful eyes looked at Qing Shui, a lot of the paleness in her face had also left her.

"Why are you willing to come by today?" Canghai Mingyue seemed a bit surprised to see Qing Shui taking the initiative to drop by.

"Isn't it because I'm worried about you? You're not giving others a peace of mind despite your age. While the water in the lake is very clear, but to choose this kind of method, it's really torturous..."

Chapter 252 - Everyone Is A Family... Temptation? Collar

"Isn't it because I'm worried about you? You're not giving others a peace of mind despite your age. While the water in the lake is very clear, to choose this kind of method, it's really torturous..."

"Pffttt!"

Looking at the goddess's smile which was like a blooming flower in front of before Qing Shui made him fall into a daze. Qing Shui had never expected to still be able to see such a dazzling smile from her. It was even more attractive than any beautiful items.

Her laughter was unique and attractive, unlike Huoyun Liu-Li's seductive and hoarse voice and Yiye Jiange's transcendence. Her voice was something in between Yiye Jiange's and Huoyun Liu-Li's, with a tinge of unique magnetism!

It might be because that she had seen Qing Shui's expression that Canghai Mingyue turned her head unnaturally. However, she said in a seemingly coquettish voice, "You only know how to speak rubbish."

Hearing Canghai Mingyue's voice and the unique feeling it brought, Qing Shui was very happy. At least for now, her emotions were less uptight. After all, worrying persistently was not only just useless, it was also bad for the body. The reason she came here to be in a daze was likely because she did not wish to worry the Canghai couple.

"Let's go, it's time to have our meal. If not, they'll come looking for us." Canghai Mingyue said softly as she looked at Qing Shui who was looking at her and smiling warmly. She liked that smile of Qing Shui. It was slightly similar to her father's, and she liked this feeling.

The Canghai couple saw the rare sight of Qing Shui returning with Canghai Mingyue, and they were especially happy to see that they were on harmonious terms. Huoyun Liu-Li was naturally happy to see Qing Shui.

After seeing Qing Shui, Canghai's smile had not dropped at all. He saw a shadow of himself in Qing Shui, or rather, Qing Shui was even more outstanding than he was when he was younger. Most importantly, he was quick witted and brainy, and he could see through things and problems unlike people of his own age. When tackling problems, he was able to remain calm, keeping his actions in moderation. Most importantly, he was very mysterious. Canghai would very much like to see how far this young man could climb up in the future.

"Senior, I'd like to move back in the future." After the meal, Qing Shui said. Everyone looked at him in surprise.

"This is your home, you can come back whenever you wish to. We very much hope that you can stay here." Canghai Mingyue grinned and said. Her benevolent tone and heartwarming words made Qing Shui felt very happy.

After being stunned for a moment!

"No one has touched your room. Let us go and help you air your blankets!" Canghai Mingyue tugged Huoyun Liu-Li as she looked at Qing Shui and said.

Qing Shui rubbed his nose as he smiled and looked at the smiling Canghai couple. After that, he left with the two ladies who knew that they had said something wrong. Qing Shui could not understand why Canghai Mingyue was behaving so abnormally today.

As they walked, Qing Shui looked at Canghai Mingyue, puzzled. In the end, Canghai Mingyue could not put up with Qing Shui's gaze any further and she turned her head towards Qing Shui and said coquettishly, "Don't let your imagination run wild. I'm only expressing my thanks for your words earlier."

Qing Shui continued to remain silent and he smiled in amusement. His clear eyes stared unblinking at Canghai Mingyue's slightly embarrassed expression.

After saying her piece, Canghai Mingyue quickly turned her head after seeing Qing Shui's gaze. She felt even more embarrassed, feeling that his innocent and pretty eyes were her nemesis. Her words earlier also gave the feeling of self-deception and of a clumsy denial which resulted in her giving herself away...

Qing Shui could not help but break out laughing when he saw Canghai Mingyue's expression, causing her to feel dissatisfied!

The room that Qing Shui had once stayed in for a period of time was still very clean without a speck of dust. When he walked in and saw traces of cleaning having been done, he did not say anything.

In the end, the two ladies went ahead to change the beddings.

Looking at their beautiful figures bending, Qing Shui felt a sense of achievement, or rather, his lewd mind felt a sense of achievement.

When would he be able to settle down, and have a heartwarming place with the woman he liked? In the future, when they have children of their own, it would be very blissiful as they pamper and play with their children.

Qing Shui thought of how he was engaged with Shi Qingzhuang. If they were to get married, and have a heartwarming place of their own and then have a child, it would be a blissful family of three, or they could also have a few more children together.

However, very soon, Qing Shui recalled his mother's conflicted expression. That feeling of helplessness was very torturous. Being forced to be separated from one's flesh and blood, that agony was the most excruciating.

Following on, Qing Shui recalled that stubborn beautiful figure on Yan City's streets. That lady who was so alike to his mother. He had seen it for himself, heard it for himself, and he had even affirmed it, but yet, there was nothing he could do...

Qing Shui shook his head. Before he increased his powers, he wanted to stop himself from thinking about these matters which would make him go crazy. When he lifted his head again, he noticed that the two ladies were standing in front of him, their warming gazes were even more heartwarming than the summer sun.

"Qing Shui, don't think about it. Everything will be fine." Huoyun Liu-Li knew that Qing Shui had thought of unhappy things, and it could be related to the Yan Clan's Young Miss. But she was not sure and did not know what Qing Shui was thinking.

"I'm fine, just letting my imagination run wild!" Qing Shui said calmly, and then handed the two pieces of paper he had specially prepared to the two ladies.

The cultivation methods from the Deer Cantering to the Crane Form were all written there. Most importantly, Qing Shui had also written down his experiences and thoughts as well. This would allow them to get on the right path of these few forms very quickly. Qing Shui wanted them to be able to raise their level of cultivation as much as it was possible, since it would only be beneficial for them in the events that were soon going to occur.

Canghai Mingyue received it, feeling puzzled. After receiving it and taking a look, Huoyun Liu-Li looked at Qing Shui happily and said, "Thank you Qing Shui!"

She could tell that the Deer Cantering mothod was on it, and with just one look, she could already learn a lot and she knew that her level of cultivation for Deer Cantering would rise to higher levels. Moreover, after seeing that there were other techniques similar to the Deer Cantering, she knew these techniques could be stronger than the Deer Cantering.

Seeing that Huoyun Liu-Li was behaving as such, while she herself was attracted after a few looks, Canghai Mingyue realized that the reason Huoyun Liu-Li had improved so much was because of this. She threw Qing Shui a complicated look before smiling and nodding her head.

"Oh, right, thank you for the boots!" Canghai Mingyue said happily.

Qing Shui was stunned, before he grinned and said, "No need to stand on ceremony. Aren't we all family?"

Canghai Mingyue, "... "

Huoyun Liu-Li on the other hand, smiled. Hersexy eyes, with her long eyelashes blinked as she looked at Qing Shui. The seductive charm that she exuded was very pure, penetrating one's bones. It caused Qing Shui to have the urge to pounce on her, hug and squeeze on the soft peaks and beautiful figure before that itch he was feeling could be erased.

Qing Shui stared hard at Huoyun Liu-Li soft peaks, licking his lips deliberately. Well, this was the only brazen move he knew.

This action would always have a good effect when used on Canghai Mingyue. However, this time when Qing Shui used it on Huoyun Liu-Li the demoness, before he could complete the action, Qing Shui almost spewed blood.

Not only did Huoyun Liu-Li not avoid Qing Shui's blazing gaze, she stuck out the soft peaks, which were originally perked in the first place. Her beautiful eyes were filled with a layer of mist, and she looked at Qing Shui before she suddenly stuck out her pink and tender tongue, licking her lips like how Qing Shui did...

Qing Shui did not know what to do. If Canghai Mingyue wasn't around, he would definitely have his way with this lady who was playing with fire. However, he could only bear with it now. There was nothing else he could do...

"I'll be heading to the blacksmith store in the afternoon. You two can practice them first. For now, you only need to familiarize yourself with their application." After falling into a daze for a short moment, Qing Shui decided to go to the blacksmith store.

After getting his hands on the Soulshake Bell, Qing Shui had some expectations. Therefore, he did not wish to waste any time at all in the day. It was just like how he had unexpectedly gotten his hands on the Soulshake Bell, Qing Shui was still hoping that one day, a Time travelling box or Teleportation Device would suddenly appear as well. If that happened, there would be no need for them to waste their time here, not even being able to make their escape.

Back in the blacksmith store, Qing Shui took a look at Hu You's Tiger Form. Qing Shui wanted Hu You to leave as he did not wish for him to get himself involved in this problem. However, he eventually dismissed this thought, fearing that something might happen to him.

Finding himself a piece of Bluebronze forging material, Qing Shui started hammering and smelting. Thinking of the fire bird's neck, Qing Shui added more Bluebronze forging material while he made use of a Silver Clay Sculpture to form a very big yet thin collar.

"Darn. This is really reality, still having to take into consideration the size of the demonic beast's neck... Thank goodness that bird-typed beasts have thin necks, if not, I wouldn't know how to forge it."

Qing Shui placed the gigantic Silver Clay Sculpture carefully before he started to smelt a few more pieces of Bluebronze forging material. Before he started the smelting process, Qing Shui had no choice but to lock the door to the store so he couldn't be disturbed. Using the primordial flames, Qing Shui spent a long time smelting the Bluebronze forging materials, leaving only their essence.

When Qing Shui carefully poured them into the Silver Clay Mold, he started to moisturize the unformed collar with the Qi of the as he slowly waited for the Bluebronze collar to cool down and solidify.

After it had cooled down, Qing Shui disregarded the fact that the Bluebronze collar was still scorching hot as he picked it up and started to forge it. The width of the collar was only 4 fingers wide. Qing Shui placed it on the forging platform before he started to hammer it with proficiency.

Having gone through multiple attempts at forging, Qing Shui had grasped a lot of important key points. Most importantly, Qing Shui was very familiar and had placed much trust in his Thousand Hammer Technique.

It was the first time he had attempted to forge such a big item, so the process was not that smooth. What he had forged earlier were all smaller items, with the longswords being the biggest of them all. There were even some small items which could not be forged with a hammer, so he had to use the Thousand Hammer Technique with his hands on them.

One hammer after another, Qing Shui looked at the big item. He would probably only be able to hammer a few sets of 1000 hammerings on it, unlike the longsword and the sole of the boots which could allow over a hundred sets of 1000 hammerings, which could then really be said to have gone through thousands of hammerings and hundreds of tempering.

has a literal meaning of thoroughly tempered to be well polished.

Dismissing all these redundant thoughts, Qing Shui started the meticulous forging process, hoping to get into the same enchanted state as he had done previously!

However, the more he thought of it, the more things did not go the way he wished. Qing Shui did not manage to get into the same state, and he was even clear on how many times he had hammered during the forging process. But it was good that there was a total of a 1050 hammers, applying the forging process on the collar four times altogether.

The Bluebronze collar was considerably beautiful with its green glow. However, the collar, which was 4 fingers wide was very bare, didn't even have a single print or design.

He wondered if there was a sculpting technique which could increase powers!

Chapter 253 - Bronze Collar, Calamity of a beauty

Qing Shui was lost in his thoughts because he suddenly remembered that some blueprints in this world had special characteristic hidden in them.

The dazzling collar didn't have any adornments, and it had the thickness of a finger. It's appearance after creation appeared pure and unmixed in with other metals. Originally, for items forged with bronze, they would usually be soft. But when Qing Shui executed his primordial flames to refine them, he would obtain the bronze essence in the bronze, which was many times stronger and tougher compared to ordinary bronze.

In addition to the Thousand Hammer Technique, its density was extraordinary and obviously of a much higher quality compared to other collars.

Activating his Heavenly Vision Technique, he discovered that the collar was at the 1-color grade, and it had the effect of enhancing one's speed by 10%!

Just a simple line of words caused Qing Shui to feel extremely joyful, an increment of 10% speed wasn't a small thing to his fire bird. For equipment at the 1-colored grade, their enhancement would usually be in 10%. When converted to numbers, usually the enhancement would be over 100 points in a particular attribute. How could Qing Shui not be happy?

The best 1-colored equipment he forged had enhancement to three attributes, while the Coldsteel boots which he forged a bit later could be considered to have enhancement to four attributes. These two items could be considered the pinnacle of Qing Shui's current forging skills.

Qing Shui took the bronze collar and entered the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal. A shrill bird cry rang out as the fire bird flew towards Qing Shui.

Qing Shui mounted the firebird and then, he equipped the bronze collar on its neck. It was as though the fire bird could feel the mystical enhancement effects of the collar. With a shrill and excited shriek, it climbed up into the air and soared in the skies of the spatial realm. The gigantic red wings fanned out behind it, appearing extremely majestic.

After which, Qing Shui exited the spatial realm as he returned to his blacksmith store, opening it for business once again.

Currently, Qing Shui had five weapons; three were jagged swords, while two were Green-edge Swords.

Looking at the gender-specific equipments in his blueprints, Qing Shui prepared to forge a set of battle armor. The defense of this armor would surely be terrifying and it could ignore the hack and slashes of ordinary sword and sabres.

There were still quite a huge portion of the 1,000 year coldsteel left. However. Qing Shui wished to use them to forge boots for the Canghai couple. This time round, they would have to depend on Canghai couple if they wanted to survive the encirclement by the Immortal Sword Sect.

And as he thought of this, there wasn't any fear nor terror in his heart. Instead, there was only a passionate surge of excitement, anticipation for the coming unavoidable battle. Qing Shui was somewhat shocked by his own emotions, he had no idea why he would be feeling like this.

Looking at the patch of golden and jade green snake skins in his spatial realm, his gaze turned to the Tempered Metallic Essences that he hadn't had the chance to use yet.

This time round, Qing Shui decided that he would use it. It was a pity that his forging level wasn't high enough and could only currently handle a Grade 10 Tempered Metallic Essence.

"If I push myself to the limits, I should be able to handle Grade 20 Tempered Metallic Essences. There are 8 pieces of Grade 10 Essences, I could refine 6 of them into 3 Grade 20 essences, just like the theory behind refining gemstones.

And just as Qing Shui retrieved the Tempered Metallic Essence and wanted to begin refining it, a line of people abruptly walked into his blacksmith store. And upon seeing a young man and a familiar looking woman entering, Qing Shui couldn't help but to laugh bitterly.

Initially he had thought that after that day, the group of ruffians he chased out by demonstrating his sword skill and lightly cutting the neck of the pigtailed woman would be sufficient to scare them off. To think that they would actually still dare to come back of their own accord. Qing Shui continued doing his stuff, thinking in his heart that as long as they don't find trouble for him, he wouldn't mind having them here.

"Little Ai, is this the blacksmith that bullied you?" A scholarly and handsome looking youth nonchalantly asked.

"Yes, baby you have to get justice for me >.<, this is the first time I'm being bullied to such a great extent." The woman pouted, her eyes were filled with tears as her voice took on the nauseous sweetness of coaxing.

Qing Shui currently was irritated, he didn't have the time nor mood to deal with some rich young master from some clan because of some random woman. And if Qing Shui really wanted a 'piece' of her, he wouldn't have been stupid enough to injure her and leading to a situation like this today.

"Wow, 3rd young master of the Qi Clan is so manly!" The sexily dressed woman called out coquettishly.

"Slut!' Suddenly an unknown person called out from within the crowd.

"Who said that? Come out if you have the guts, and watch if your mother, me, wild smack you to death!" The sexily dressed woman with her hair tied in a ponytail called out while adopting a high and mighty manner.

Everyone, "... "

Qing Shui was also extremely shocked when he heard that voice. Initially, he only thought that the fashion sense of this woman was extremely captivating, and had never imagined that such stronghanded words would actually come out of her mouth. If there was only a single man, that man would definitely be willing to be smacked to death by her hands. However now, her words actually caused the crowd of guys to burst out into derisive laughter.

Qing Shui could sense the 3rd young master of the Qi Clan shifting his gaze over to him, the gentle expressions in his eyes instantly transformed into a look as sharp as sabres. Qing Shui raise his head, looking at the youth that just stepped into Xiantian. His eyes were expressionless, he didn't give a damn about him, it was just that he didn't feel like offending the clan behind him. Actually, Qing Shui didn't really give a damn about offending these people.

"Wow Qing Shui, you seem busy. Do you need our help?" The charming90 voice of Huoyun Liu-Li suddenly drifted over.

Qing Shui inclined his head as he noticed Huoyun Liu-Li and Canghai Mingyue walking over with a smile on their faces.

"Miss Canghai, I'm very happy to see you here." Ignoring the look on surprise on Qing Shui's face, the 3rd young master of the Qi Clan smiled as he walked towards Canghai Mingyue.

"Mmm, what are you doing here?" Canghai Mingyue indifferently replied, without smiling. The smile on her face when she entered was only for Qing Shui.

"Pingtian, who is this? Why didn't you introduce her to me?" The woman rushed forward as she flirtatiously hugged the arm of the 3rd young master from the Qi Clan.

She was filled with envy and jealousy when she saw how he gazed at the two women who just arrived. She had never seen the 3rd young master of the Qi Clan look at a woman with such a gaze before.

"Pa!"

"Scram!"

Qing Shui almost couldn't believe his eyes, the 3rd young master of the Qi Clan actually slapped the flirtatious woman, the impact forcing her onto the ground.

"Miss Canghai, it's all the fault of this stupid woman. You should also know that these stupid women always behave like this, she actually dares thinks that I would fall for her charm. I, Qi Tianping, am not one of those lusty and lecherous guy."

Qing Shui naturally knew what this young master was planning. He was planning on showing his 'righteous' side to Canghai Mingyue. Qing Shui would bet anything that after the young master saw Canghai Mingyue, he immediately felt that the quality of the that woman was a pile of dogsheet, and decided to push her away for fear of misunderstandings.

Huoyun had already arrived brside of Qing Shui earlier. In her eyes, there was an unmistakable concern. Qing Shui was very thankful for the silent concern of Huoyun. Initially, he had thought that with her personality, it was impossible for her to be truly concerned about others, but he was pleasantly surprised to find out that he was wrong.

There was many people in the crowd that were attracted by Qing Shui and Huoyun Liu-Li. Even Canghai Mingyue was somewhat distracted by how good they looked together.

No one in the crowd noticed the ponytailed hair woman, who had blood seeping out of her mouth, had hatred in her eyes as she stared at Qi Tianping, Qing Shui and Canghai Mingyue, before she silently departed the area.

"Miss Canghai, I wonder if I can have the honor to inviting you to enjoy lunch together." Qi Tianping shrugged his shoulders in a carefree manner as he smiled at Canghai Mingyue.

Canghai Mingyue stared back at him serenely, with no emotions in her eyes as an imposing aura emanated forth from her. This was actually sufficient enough to cause Qi Tianping to be drenched in cold sweat. His earlier carefree demeanor totally disappeared as he tried to escape in a panic. This was something that all men had to face - rejection. Therefore, normally in this world, guys would only go after girls who were of similar strength or those that are weaker than them.

Qing Shui glanced at Canghai Mingyue with humor in his eyes. Only a minority of males dared to lock their gazes together with Canghai Mingyue, and this was actually the first time that he saw a guy ending up in such a pitiful state, getting rejected by Canghai Mingyue.

And upon seeing the laughing expression in Qing Shui's eyes, those earlier who wanted to profess their love immediately turned tail and ran away, with the 3rd young master from the Qi Clan leading the way. After which, the majority of the crowd that hung about because of the excitement left and the remaining few were those who stayed behind to look at the rumored god-like weapons.

Chapter 254 - Heart beating wildly with excitement, the Golden-Ringed Battle Armor is completed!

"Wait for me to finish this, then we'll head home." Qing Shui said as he smiled at the two women.

After he said that, he started working again, not realizing how ambiguous his words had sounded. The man below hadn't left yet and was watching him with great jealousy. The woman who could not even be touched by the 3rd young master from the Qi Clan actually belonged to this demonic-looking youth who was smithing. How could he not be amazed?

Canghai Mingyue nodded at Qing Shui soundlessly. She found herself numb and could only quietly accept Qing Shui's unintentional and vague words.

Although Qing Shui didn't see Canghai Mingyue's reaction, he could sense it through her actions. She kept a small smile on her face, lowering her head so she could watch the process of smelting the Tempered Metallic Essence in silence.

If it was smelted by someone who didn't know Smelt Synthesis, the most they could do was make the two pieces of Tempered Metallic Essence into a bigger piece. Smelt Synthesis was the most ancient art of forging. The Tempered Metallic Essence's density and purity essence were greatly increased, fundamentally changing the essence!

Qing Shui didn't mind that the two women were watching him since it wasn't such an unusual thing for people to see. If Xiantian cultivators were willing to cultivate it, they could actually form the Flame of Xiantian.

Primordial flames shot out of Qing Shui's hands. The silver flames which were half a foot high emitted some heat outwards, slowly heating up the furnace.

Placing two pieces of Grade 10 Tempered Metallic Essence into the furnace, he single-handedly started smelting. After breaking through the 4th layer of the Ancient Strengthening Technique, the primordial flames went from an inch to half a foot long while also growing thicker in size. The heat had also

increased exponentially. Not only that, but considering the amount of times he had used the flames, it wasn't exaggerating to say it was brought to the point of perfection.

Gradually, the two pieces of Tempered Metallic Essence melted into one, thus increasing the volume in size. At this moment, Qing Shui's other hand reached in, abruptly making the flame burn with more intensity!

A terrifying temperature emitted from the furnace, Qing Shui utilized all his strength and released his primordial flames, this caused Qing Shui to have no choice but to admit some things are indeed flame-resistant, for e.g. for this smelting furnace. However, based on Qing Shui's current flame intensity, there was no way he would be able to melt it. It's thermal conductivity is exceptionally good but what's a pity was that it was not flame-resistant, if not it would have been used to forge other flame-resistant items.

Increasing the intensity of the flame was to help remove the Grade 10 Tempered Metallic Essence's impurities, leaving only the essence behind to create a better quality Tempered Metallic Essence.

As time slowly passed, a fine layer of sweat formed on Qing Shui's forehead. When a black glossy flash of light appeared, Qing Shui knew he had succeeded. However, Qing Shui never expected Smelt Synthesis to be so labor intensive. At the same time, he also understood why gems were very difficult to smelt. The success rate was super low and it required too much effort to do so.

He took out the piece of cooled Tempered Metallic Essence, casting a look at the result with a great sense of satisfaction. It was much stronger than a Grade 10 Tempered Metallic Essence. With his current level of smithing, he could only make do with this for now. Anything better would had been a waste.

Seeing that there weren't many people left at the Blacksmith Store, Changhai Mingyue and Huoyun Liu-Li browsed around in boredom. Qing Shui put a few pieces of the Tempered Metallic Essence away.

"Let's go, there's no need to come back in the afternoon. I think they have already eaten at home." Qing Shui said to the two women.

"I want to eat at your place today. You have to cook for me." Huoyun Liu-Li chirped happily, the shimmer in her eyes making Qing Shui's heart tingle.

Qing Shui grinned ferociously at Huoyun Liu-Li before turning to look at Canghai Mingyue, seeking her opinion. Qing Shui realized that every single time, he looked to this young miss to make a decision. The more he thought about it, the more dazed he became!

"We'll go with whatever you say!" Canghai Mingyue smiled as she raised her head.

Right then, Qing Shui remembered that Canghai Mingyue was a strong woman. Never would he have expected to hear such gentle words before his line of thought ended.

After washing his hands, Qing Shui led the two women out of Blacksmith Store and locked the doors.

"Let's buy some food over there. You can take a look and see what you would like to eat." Qing Shui led the women towards a small residence where a food store was situated downstairs.

Both the food store and the food market were similar. They were both grand indoor establishments which primarily sold fresh vegetables, fruits and other essentials.

Qing Shui accompanied the two women, Canghai Mingyue and Huoyun Liu-Li, to choose two types of vegetables from the wide and complete selection the store had. They didn't bother to browse the variety of meats available. Qing Shui, upon spotting a wild Silkie unexpectedly, went and bought one so that he could make Silkie soup back home.

When he laid eyes on the ingredient, Qing Shui recalled that one of the ingredients for the Beauty Pellet was the blood of a thousand year old Silkie. He felt depressed as he thought about it. Was there even such a thing as a living thousand year old Silkie? Just the existence of a hundred year old Silkie alone would already be enough to cause people's eyes to pop out.

This was the women's second time coming to this place, yet it felt like it had been ages since that first time. As all sorts of thoughts flooded her mind, Canghai Mingyue unconsciously gazed at Qing Shui.

As if sensing her feelings, Qing Shui threw a meaningful glance at Canghai Mingyue with confusion in his eyes. When their eyes met, Canghai Mingyue frantically averted her eyes. At that moment, her heart was beating wildly with excitement, giving rise to a weird sensation. It felt peculiar, yet she enjoyed and longed for the feeling.

A large aquarium with dozens of swimming Snakeheads and five turtles froclicking happily in the waters came into their view as they entered the living room.

"Let's make Steamed Snakehead and Turtle soup!" Qing Shui grinned and said.

"We have enough to eat already, leave the poor little creatures alone!" Canghai Mingyue replied softly. Her eyes were trailing the movements of the strong, healthy and beautiful Snakeheads and turtles.

Qing Shui rubbed his head. He never thought that despite how beautiful and strong they were, they were still women. Their natural-born maternal instincts ran strong, and would not be completely lost even when faced by cruelty and lechery.

They probably would have enjoyed the meal more if they didn't watch him preparing it. If they did and saw how the small lively creatures were killed, they would definitely starve themselves instead of eat.

With the spices from the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal at hand, the food wouldn't taste horrible no matter how he cooked it. Both Canghai Mingyue and Huoyun Liu-Li took on the role of his assistants. Unable to control himself, Qing Shui succumbed to his thoughts, cherishing that last moment when he was alone with Canghai Mingyue in the kitchen. Except currently, the memory felt so far away.

Canghai Mingyue kept avoiding eye contact with Qing Shui. She realized that when their eyes met every time, her heart would palpitate with desire, and she would get a bit flustered.

It was a rare opportunity for the three of them to share a meal together once again. However, no one helped themselves to the dishes on the dining table. Qing Shui felt that it was already a difficult task to be taking food from the same plate as Canghai Mingyue. Thinking back to his past life, Qing Shui and his companions had went to eat on a steamboat. There was a beautiful lady looking down disgustedly upon a few villagers from the rural area. She disliked the very idea of sharing food with them.

Qing Shui stared at his plate, lost in his own thoughts.

"Qing Shui, are you alright? You zoned out while eating. Which beautiful lady were you thinking about that's left you looking so depressed?" Huoyun Liu-Li teased in a playful manner.

Qing Shui smiled with embarrassment. "Well it's because I feel extremely blessed to share a meal with the two prettiest girls in the world. Why would I even think of someone else?"

"Hehe, such a rare thing for you to say. It's too bad you usually say those words when you're trying to put on a show. Hmph!"

Qing Shui was mesmerized by Huoyun Liu-Li's cheeky laugh. This was his first time seeing this exceptionally beautiful lady laughing so boldly and it was very attractive. Qing Shui didn't think it was wrong for her to call him that, even he knew his acting was terribly lame.

"Qing Shui, we're going home!"

Bidding farewell to the two women, Qing Shui walked towards the Blacksmith Store. He planned to use the afternoon to hurry up and forge the battle armor and helmet, as well as the bracelet. He couldn't care less anymore and wouldn't mind settling for a one-color grade. For his sake, he needed to raise his strength to a greater extent. Even if it was for Canghai Mingyue and Huoyun Liu-Li, he just had to do his very best.

Locking the doors after he returned to the Blacksmith Store, he took out a smelted Grade 20 Tempered Metallic Essence. The armor was made up of different parts which needed to be forged separately, and would be assembled together to complete it.

Qing Shui used the same Tempered Metallic Essence to create the frame of the armor. Then, he used the smelted golden-ringed patterned Snakeskin on the frame itself. The reason why he forged this heavy armor wasn't just because of the defense, but also due to the unknown special effect and additional attributes. Although one of those didn't add much, it would be different if there were more than ten of them available.

As he was smithing, he realized that forging armor was an incredibly troublesome process.

Luckily there was a blueprint that he could follow to slowly guide him through the process. This time around, he wanted to do it perfectly. The more difficult it was, the more Qing Shui felt he could exhibit his power to the best of his abilities.

The parts were forged one by one. Each of them were made using the Thousand Hammer Technique. Then the golden ringed patterned snakeskin was applied and finally, combined together to smelt once more. However, the upper and lower body of the armor needed to be smelted separately since they weren't joined together. After Qing Shui was done smelting the upper half of the armor, an unexpected sudden ray of familiar golden light flashed before his eyes!

Stunned, Qing Shui stared at the dazzling battle armor. Although it was only the upper body, it still looked extremely majestic and had an awe-inspiring presence, very much like real golden battle armor.

The defence increased by 10%, but it was only limited to the area under protection. The stamina also increased by 50, strength by 30 and agility by 10!

Qing Shui cast aside the happiness in his heart, and continued to work on forging the lower body of the armor. It hadn't occurred to him that after forging the upper and lower body armor separately, he might be able to add more attributes to the armor. This gave him hope to deal with the Immortal Sword Sect later.

The lower body armor was much easier to forge when compared to the upper body piece. His speed was considerably faster and it only took him half of the time needed to complete the upper half.

Using the Heavenly Vision Technique swiftly, he saw that it actually gave the same benefits that the upper body armor had given!

Qing Shui felt an incredible sense of accomplishment, best described as the satisfaction he felt when he made love to a beautiful woman. They were entirely different approaches but it all still came down to the same result. After all, if he kept wallowing himself in a woman's charm, he would be bored of it soon enough. Furthermore, there weren't many people with that kind of ability, so being able to do the things that you like was considered to be an enjoyment and a way to prove your worth.

It was similar to his pleasure in seeing both Canghai Mingyue and Huoyun Liu-Li wore the boots he had forged. The steady heartwarming feeling he felt was an everlasting one.

Chapter 255 I'm Not Leaving Even If I were to Die, Can You Hug Me?

It was an enjoyment for Qing Shui when he saw Canghai Mingyue and Huoyun Liu-Li wearing the boots that he had forged himself. That heartwarming feeling was a very long lasting one.

Qing Shui looked at the Golden-Ringed Battle Armor that was completed. The surface of this armor was snake skin with Golden-Ringed prints, while the interior was made of Tempered Metallic Essence. Qing Shui decided to call it Golden-Ringed Battle Armor.

Looking at the sky, Qing Shui did not expect that one set of battle armor would take him almost a whole afternoon to complete, but he was satisfied.

Now, everything seemed very calm, but Qing Shui knew that it was the calm before the storm. When the day arrive, it would definitely be a case of strong howling wind and torrential rain. He was not even sure if he would be able to get through that day safely.

Qing Shui put the Golden-Ringed Battle Armor safely away, since it was something which could increase his chances of safety. Now that he had his battle armor and boots ready, for the rest of the time, other than training, Qing Shui also planned to complete the set with a helmet, belt, bangle and necklace. Qing Shui would not forgo any chance of increasing his powers, even if it was by a little bit.

The sky started to turn dim and Qing Shui planned to leave the blacksmith store and head back to the Canghai residence. After all, he had mentioned to Canghai and the others that he would be moving back.

However, at that moment, Qing Shui felt an indescribable heart-throbbing feeling rising.

It was a hair-raising feeling and Qing Shui immediately went into the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal, observing the situation outside from within.

Less than a breath time after Qing Shui had entered the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal, a figure appeared not far from Qing Shui. Qing Shui saw clearly that it was a middle-aged elegant looking man,

wearing a purple moon robe to accentuate his dignified aura. His eyes were bright and they had a tinge of feeling of one who had been through alot in life; his upright nose with that arrogant looking lips made one feel that this man was very strange and especially masculine, having a dominating aura amidst his elegance.

"I had obviously sensed that it's here, why is there nothing here?" The middle-aged elegant and handsome looking man mumbled to himself.

Qing Shui looked at this man who could possibly rival Canghai, though he would still lose out to Canghai by a bit. While he did not know who this man was, Qing Shui had the feeling that he was someone from the Immortal Sword Sect.

Qing Shui knew that the man was looking for him. Thank goodness his spiritual sense was strong enough. Qing Shui was even more certain now that the man was from the Immortal Sword Sect and he was obviously not just a notch stronger than those Elders.

It was a pity that he was not able to launch an attack on the outside from the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal. If not, it would be possible for him to scare off this strong middle-aged man.

The middle-aged man closed that pair of big bright eyes, silently feeling the movements in the surroundings. On the other hand, Qing Shui tried to restrain himself in the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal, controlling his urge to launch a sneak attack on this middle-aged man.

Even if he did not succeed, he should still be able to retreat safely into the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal. However, Qing Shui still felt that something was off, though he was not sure what it was. Therefore, he restrained the urge to launch the sneak attack.

Qing Shui restrained himself so as to not to alert the enemy in advance and try to stall for some time. If he was able to enter the 90th cycle of the Ancient Strengthening Technique, Qing Shui would dash out without any hesitation as he felt that once he entered the 90th cycle, he would definitely be able to get away with damage inflicted on his opponent if he were to launch a sneak attack.

"I wonder if Old Ancestor made his way at Canghai's residence?" The man said softly as he pondered.

Qing Shui's gaze suddenly turned red, both his fist clenched tightly as a thin trail of blood appeared slowly from his palms. He tried very hard to control himself, putting on the Golden-Ringed Battle Armor and Coldsteel Boots, calling the fire bird to his side, preparing himself to dash out at the best possible moment.

Qing Shui had the urge to dash out immediately, but he knew that he needed to grasp the opportunity to at least deal a heavy blow on this middle-aged man. However, at that moment, he heard the middle-aged man let out a sigh!

"Seems like he really isn't here." After saying that, he dashed out through the backdoor in a flash.

"Darn, trying to fool me..." Qing Shui hurled out abuses. He had also suspected that this man was trying to fool him, but under such a situation, it would be better to believe it than not to.

Only after staying for a short moment did Qing Shui then leave the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal and dashed towards the Canghai residence. Regardless if what the middle-aged man had said was to lure him out, his mind would not be at peace until he saw that the Canghai family were safe for himself.

When Qing Shui arrived at Canghai's residence, he noticed that there were no anomalies. It was already dark, so he quietly walked in, and he finally felt as ease when he heard the familiar voices chattering.

When Qing Shui walked into the hall, he noticed that they were only short of his presence and he smiled, embarrassed.

"Qing Shui, what happened to your hand?" Huoyun Liu-Li suddenly noticed that there were blood trails on Qing Shui's hands and she anxiously ran over to grab his hands, not feeling any bit of despise.

"Qing Shui, what happened?" Canghai also noticed that something was off and he walked to Qing Shui's side and asked softly.

"What would make you scratch your two hands like this?" Canghai asked, puzzled.

"It's because I heard that the Immortal Sword Sect's Old Ancestor has made his way here." Qing Shui smiled bitterly as he said. Thereafter, he smiled at Huoyun Liu-Li to express that he was fine as he gradually pulled back his hands.

Canghai Mingyue and her mother also walked over quickly, looking at him in concern. It was impossible for them to say that they were not touched. After all, Qing Shui had rushed back in a panic, unafraid of death, when he heard that something had happened to the Canghai family.

"Qing Shui, come here to clean your wound and apply medicine!" Canghai Mingyue's mother smiled and said.

Qing Shui smiled at her and went to wash the blood off his hands. Ever since he started cultivating the Ancient Strengthening Technique, Qing Shui's recovery was amazing. A light layer of scarring had already formed on the wounds, so there was no need to apply medicine.

"Let's have dinner first. We'll talk afterwards." Canghai smiled and said when he saw that Canghai Mingyue wanted to say something.

It was very quiet during the meal, and it was as if no one had much appetite. It was especially so for Canghai Mingyue and Huoyun Liu-Li as they had both ate a little. Qing Shui was also worried about what was going to happen.

"Daddy, quickly speak out. If not, your daughter won't be able to sleep." After they had their meal, Canghai Mingyue sat down next to Canghai and said!

"It shouldn't be any longer than half a month. For this half a month, we'll need to be more alert and wait for the opportunity to come up. When it does, you must listen to my arrangements." Canghai smiled and said.

"Senior plans to delay them to let us escape?" Qing Shui lifted his head as he looking at Canghai with burning eyes. His eyes were filled with fighting spirit and will, his gaze was as bright as the stars.

"I'm not leaving, I'm not leaving even if I were to die!" Canghai Mingyue said stubbornly.

Qing Shui rubbed his nose. He knew that this would happen and at that moment, he also had no plans to make his escape.

"Sigh, that old blind chap has already reached the 7th grade of the Martial King rank while I'm only at the pinnacle of the 6th grade of Martial King. It would probably take him only around a hundred moves to kill me." Canghai sighed and said.

Qing Shui quickly analyzed Canghai's words. Canghai could hold off for a hundred moves. If only he could provide him with an additional 10% speed, 10% defence, ignoring the strength, and if there were any of his techniques which could be useful for battle.

What gave Qing Shui hope was that the old blind chap was a 7th grade Martial King, and a 7th grade Martial King was not undefeatable!

"Senior, do we not even have a slight chance of winning?" Qing Shui asked, refusing to give up hope. He did not believe in miracles, but he believed that anything can be achieved through effort.

"It's not that there's none, but it's a pity that it's too hard to achieve it now." Canghai let out a sigh and said.

"Senior, since it has come down to this, you should just say it. If there was a chance, wouldn't it mean that everyone's lives would be secure?" Qing Shui refused to give up on any chances at all.

"Thirty years ago, I blinded one of the old blind chap's eyes. If his other eye is also blind, it should be no problem for us to secure our lives."

Canghai's words gave Qing Shui hope. Once he found a direction, he would work hard towards it. Qing Shui looked at Canghai earnestly.

"Which of his eye is the good one?"

"His left eye!" Canghai was also feeling weird. He felt that Qing Shui was very mysterious, and he might really be able to do something beyond their expectations. Canghai Mingyue also looked at Qing Shui, feeling complicated yet happy.

Half a month. Qing Shui felt that he would need to make good use of time to prepare for it. Thankfully, he had already started some of the preparation. After dinner, Qing Shui headed towards the building at the back together with Canghai Mingyue and Huoyun Liu-Li

"Qing Shui, dad said that there's no assurance for everyone's lives. When the time comes, when the opportunity arise, take Liu-Li and leave. Be good to her, alright?" When they were heading back, Canghai Mingyue said, feeling melancholy.

"Try saying it again and I will whack your butt." Qing Shui looked calmly at Canghai Mingyue as he said. No one able to tell if he was angry or joking.

"You rascal, this is for your own good. I can't escape alone, leaving my parents in the lurch, but it's not the same for the two of you." Canghai Mingyue said angrily.

"I'm not leaving, I'm not leaving even if I were to die." Huoyun Liu-Li smiled and said, but anyone could tell that she was very determined.

"Liu-Li, why are you acting like this too?" Canghai Mingyue's eyes turned slightly red as she looked at Huoyun Liu-Li.

"Everything that I have was given to me by Master. If I were to leave, even I would not be able to forgive myself." Huoyun Liu-Li once again addressed Canghai Mingyue as her Master at this point.

Canghai Mingyue turned her head and looked at Qing Shui again, her smiling eyes had a frail beauty to it. Qing Shui looked to her and smiled, "Don't worry. Maybe things are not as we imagine it to be. Human's effort is always the deciding factor, and humans are masters of their own fate."

"Thank you, Qing Shui!" Canghai Mingyue said seriously.

"You're standing on ceremony again. We are a family, why are you regarding me as an outsider? No matter what happens, I will stand on your side. And there's still Liu-Li, we'll all be together." Qing Shui grinned and said.

Canghai Mingyue did not feel that feel angry at Qing Shui's words. It was already very hard to come by for Qing Shui to do this for them. He did not have any evil designs, he did not express that he wanted to chase her, nor did he overly take advantage of her when he could. It might be because of all these reasons that she was not averse towards him.

Thinking of the few jokes he had made towards her, while the meaning of the words were very ambiguous and flirtatious, that heartwarming and heart-throbbing feeling did not come with any fury.

Think about this, Canghai Mingyue felt that it was very heartwarming deep inside. It might be because they were at their wit's end that she realized that there were many things which she had yet to attempt, such as love. It was impossible for a normal lady to not long for love between men and women.

However, she had not expected for such a thing to suddenly happen. Seeing that she might only be left with a few days to live instead of having a long life before her like she had originally thought, she had not wanted to get herself involved in a romantic relationship too early. She was afraid that being tied down in a romantic relationship would be an obstacle to her cultivation.

She did not want to leave behind any regrets. She wanted to be able to feel it at least, no matter how short, even if it was an act...

"Qing Shui..."

Qing Shui was about to leave when he heard Canghai Mingyue calling out to him in a low voice! Puzzled, he turned to look towards Canghai Mingyue, who was feeling unease.

"Can you hug me? Just like how you would do to your wife!"

Qing Shui was stunned. He would never had thought that Canghai Mingyue would act like this. He felt that he had heard it wrongly. But he saw that Huoyun Liu-Li was also looking at Canghai Mingyue in surprise.

"Don't think too much of it. I'm just afraid that I wouldn't be able to live for long! I want to leave myself some memories." Canghai Mingyue was embarrassed, but she bravely lifted her head to look at Qing Shui. A flicker of brightness lit up her dark and deep gaze, her goddess-like looks exuded an unparalleled beauty.

Qing Shui felt slightly stumped when he heard her saying those words with such ambiguous feelings. While her expression was that of embarrassment and her goddess-like face was extremely beautiful, Qing Shui knew that she was afraid that she would not be able to survive through this ordeal. She did not want her lovelife to be a complete blank and wanted a warm and unforgettable hug.

Chapter 256 - Celestial Body Jade Bones (Canghai Mingyue), a Bangle that Enhances Destruction

"Can you hug me? Please... hug me like you hug your wife!"

Qing Shui also knew that she was afraid that she couldn't escape the calamity this time around. She didn't wish for her feelings to disappear into thin air so she wanted a heartwarming, unforgettable hug.

"Lass, you have to be a little more gentle when you say these words. If not, there wouldn't be any men who would dare to hug you." Qing Shui extended his hands, going past the willow-like waist of Canghai Mingyue as he pressed her soft body into a tight embrace.

This was the first time Qing Shui hugged her. The instant he came into direct contact with her, he could feel Canghai Mingyue trembling involuntarily. Qing Shui intentionally suppressed his desires, trying hard to not feel her twin peaks pressing into his chest. However, to his dismay, his rod of fire underneath became erect, pressing conspicuously on her stomach.

"En!" Canghai Mingyue couldn't bear it anymore as she let out a gasp. Her body squirmed, causing her soft, bouncy twin peaks to rub about on Qing Shui's chest!

That heavenly feeling caused Qing Shui to involuntarily press Canghai Mingyue into his embrace with even more strength, holding her tightly as he lost himself in the heavenly feeling and fragrance of Canghai Mingyue.

Canghai Mingyue didn't push Qing Shui away. She slowly yielded and rested her head on Qing Shui's shoulders. Her panting gently blew on Qing Shui's neck, causing his heart to be filled with an unbearable itch.

Just like that, Qing Shui held her in his arms as his rod of fire dishonestly humped every now and then, but he didn't do anything too drastic. Qing Shui wanted to give her a beautiful memory- he knew that Canghai Mingyue definitely did not want to do the deed with him right now.

"Do you want to come my room tonight? We will finish this tonight." Qing Shui whispered as he gently sucked on Canghai Mingyue's earlobes.

"No!! Don't do it!" Canghai Mingyue's body trembled.

And in the span of a few breaths of time, Canghai Mingyue inclined her head as she smiled, gently pushing Qing Shui away while pulling Huoyun Liu-Li into the embrace of Qing Shui.

"Liu-li, I shall return him to you." After she finished speaking, Canghai Mingyue walked away.

Qing Shui almost couldn't control himself. He wanted to grab at the buttocks of this woman and heavily smack it. However, at this moment, he had another peerless beauty in his arms.

"This woman... what... she's treating me like a item to be bartered." Qing Shui smiled bitterly.

Qing Shui then tightly embraced Huoyun Liu-Li, thinking back to that time when she had teased him. It was now finally his turn to take revenge. Gazing at Huoyun Liu-Li at this moment, she seemed like a bashful wife, and didn't dare to match her gaze with him.

Qing Shui extended his finger, propping up the delicate chin of Huoyun Liu-Li as a shameless light shone in his eyes. "You are so beautiful, just like a demoness." Pressing her tighter into his embrace, his hands started to roam about and squeezing her perky butt. Despite her struggle, Qing Shui didn't loosen his hold, but held on tighter, only releasing her after several moments.

After he returned to his room, Qing Shui locked his door, breathing heavily, trying to suppress the fire in his heart. Hugging two beautiful women and not having a fantasy was a completely impossible task. The first thing humans learnt was self-control. If not, they could only be humans of the lowest grade. Those at the lowest grade had no need for self control because they had no influential power.

Casting aside all his thoughts of distraction, Qing Shui entered into the Realm of Violet Jade Immortal.

After practicing the Ancient Strengthening Technique, he began to immerse himself in forging. After the boots, he had already prepared the golden scales of the snake king, wanting to forge a set of armor for Canghai.

Increase of speed by 10%, strength by 30, agility by 30, endurance by 10!

Qing Shui was extremely joyful. This finished product shared the same attribute enhancements with one of his earlier boots, although not with the golden-colored one that he had forged for Canghai.

"Was the frame the problem? The frame of his and Canghai's boots were forged from the 1,000 year-old coldsteel while the frame of the boots of Canghai's wife was forged from a Grade 10 Tempered Metallic Essence.

The quality of the materials had a huge impact on the end product. As a result, Qing Shui was buying all the rare and exotic materials at any cost.

Bangle!

At this moment, after the armor was completed, Qing Shui decided to forge a Bangle.

Qing Shui didn't know the usage of the Bangle, but by following the blueprints, Qing Shui used up all the remaining Grade 10 Tempered Metallic Essence. After the Smelting Synthesis, the materials should be enough for five sets of Bangles.

Although a Bangle was quite small in size, it still required a significant amount of time to forge it. Even now, Qing Shui didn't know what the effects or enhancements that the finished product would have.

For weapons, the main attributes were endurance and agility. With these enhancements, one's power would naturally skyrocket. As for armor, the main attribute was defense, while for boots, it was speed...

From his various experiments, Qing Shui deduced that these should be the only attributes that could be enhanced, but he wondered why there weren't any enhancements to attributes like magic power and physique.

Physique was something akin to vitality, while magic power referred to the strength of mental power and spirit. Qing Shui deduced that the reason might be because his level of expertise wasn't high enough yet.

The thing Qing Shui was currently trying to forge was a Bangle using the Tempered Metallic Essence. The hammer blows during the forging process were the most important, but luckily for Qing Shui, his arms were infused with agility, and his proficiency had also risen several times since the time he first started. However, despite all these gains, his abilities were still very far from the apex.

Following the diagram depicted in the blueprint, the silver clay was molded into shape, carved intricately, and refined with the qi from the Ancient Strengthening Technique.

After countless refinements, a familiar light finally shone, causing Qing Shui to be tremendously happy. This was a brand new type of item forged!

Destructive power +10%, strength +30, agility +20, endurance +20. Effects did not stack.

Destructive power, Qing Shui trembled as he saw these words. Destructive power was even stronger than normal attack power. More importantly, it meant an increase in critical rate, a higher chance to deal critical damage. For example, if normally you can only break the bones of your opponent, with enhancement of destructive power, you could shatter their bones into fragments and even meld the effects of elemental properties like cold poison into your attacks.

Chapter 257 Relentless Entanglement, All Good Things Will Come To An End

Qing Shui would never have thought that the bangle increased destructive powers. To think that this seemingly inconspicuous bangle would increase one's destructive powers by 10%.

He was able to increase the damage dealt on an opponent by 10%. In times of need, this additional 10% could be sufficient enough to send him to his death.

This was the prowess of destructive powers. While it may seem insignificant at times, these destructive powers would be the last straw to squash a camel to its death in the end.

Qing Shui picked up the bangle and put it on. Immediately, he felt a violent and destructive force of energy rising in his body. It was a feeling that would bring about additional destructive damage during an attack.

What made Qing Shui happy was that just by having one, he could activate its effects since it would save him half the time. Initially, Qing Shui had thought that he would be able to put on an unlimited number of these accessories. It would be even better if he could put on more than ten of them on each arm. However, he knew that the possibility of this would not be very high.

Qing Shui then continued to forge another, and cultivated the Qi of the to its maximum. After, he continued to forge armors and bangles, not stopping even for a short while. When he had completed forging two boots, one set of battle armor, three sets of battle skirts, and five bangles, it was about time for him to leave the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal.

When he was forging the battle skirts, Qing Shui was still slightly astonished in the process. While these battle skirts must be shorter than the knees, there was still a need to forge knee and leg guards inside. To be blunt, it was just like adding a mini skirt at the waist.

While there was an additional skirt, it was like adding the finishing touch. This allowed the whole set of battle skirts to maintain a lady's valiance while adding on a touch of gentleness.

Its properties were the same as the Golden-Ringed Battle Armor. It was the first time ever that Qing Shui had felt so exhausted. That was why after he left the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal, he immediately fell into a deep sleep.

When Qing Shui woke up in the morning, he thought of what happened the day before and immediately took the items he forged and headed out. The battle armor and battle skirt gleamed under the morning sun, causing one to feel happy from just looking at it.

Qing Shui still considered if he should call the two ladies along when he recalled the wonderful scene when they parted last night. The corners of his lips curled up as it gave him nostalgia.

Thereafter, Qing Shui smiled and looked towards the two ladies who had come down from the nearby building. It was said that beauties looked wonderful in the morning. A lady's most beautiful moment was when she woke up in bed. That state of laziness was even more beautiful. However, it was a pity that not many people could get to see it. Currently, there should not be any men who were able to see Canghai Mingyue's and Huoyun Liu-Li's lazy state when they were still in bed.

Seeing Qing Shui carrying thick stacks of armors and other stuff, the two ladies walked over curiously. It might be because they could not help but feel a little bit uneasy when they recalled the scene last night, especially for Canghai Mingyue.

"Qing Shui, what is this?"

"It's great that both of you are here. Take one each and leave the rest for Senior." Qing Shui smiled and said to the two ladies.

"For us?"

"If not, then for who? Quick, each of you take one first and then the other two. These two pairs of boots would be for Senior." Qing Shui urged again.

Canghai Mingyue opened her mouth but did not say anything as she received it from Qing Shui's hands. Huoyun Liu-Li also quickly took one. Qing Shui was very happy. He knew Canghai Mingyue might have wanted to ask him when they were forged even though she did not say anything.

"Can I try it on now?" Huoyun Liu-Li blinked her beautiful eyes and said as she recalled the effects of those boots.

Qing Shui smiled and nodded!

Huoyun Liu-Li left with her set of battle skirt and headed into the building!

"Are you going to try it out as well as to see how it is?" Qing Shui looked at Canghai Mingyue who was beside him. He felt that she would definitely be so beautiful that it would be overwhelming if she were to put it on.

Canghai Mingyue gave a weird glance towards Qing Shui. Qing Shui silently rubbed his nose and saw the bangle on his hand. He immediately took one out and handed it to Canghai Mingyue.

"This is for you. Everyone will have one."

Canghai Mingyue did not take it but looked at that black bangle. It was so beautiful that it looked mysterious. Canghai Mingyue did not receive it but extended her snow white hand.

Qing Shui's mind became short-circuited. Out of reflex, he put it onto that snow white wrist and looked dazedly at that divinely beautiful face of hers.

Canghai Mingyue moved away from Qing Shui's blazing gaze. At that moment, Huoyun Liu-Li came out in a suit consisting of a golden battle skirt and her long green boots. Although Qing Shui had some mental preparation, he was still stunned by her amazing beauty.

Huoyun Liu-Li who was very sexy to begin with, appeared ever so dignified in the golden battle skirt. However, her charming eyes were still gleaming, especially when she was looking at Qing Shui. She caused him to feel a tingling feeling as if he was sapped of all his strength.

"Demoness!" Qing Shui still felt that this word best described her. Between her steps, she gave off a feeling as if she had flames which would cause others to drown in wild imagination.

"Do I look good?" Huoyun Liu-Li sashayed over to Qing Shui and made a swirl around on the spot. Her long black hair that covered her shoulders was able to complement her feminine charms.

"Yes!" Saying this, Qing Shui took out another bangle. When he saw Huoyun Liu-Li acting slightly spoiled as she reached out her slender hand, Qing Shui looked towards Canghai Mingyue, embarrassed.

Canghai Mingyue, on the other hand, smiled as if she had not seen a thing!

"How can you put it on for Sister Mingyue but can't be bothered with me?" Huoyun Liu-Li's blaming tone made Qing Shui stunned. Canghai Mingyue looked towards Huoyun Liu-Li in surprise, however, her pretty face was dyed red with a blush.

"Why would I... it couldn't be more welcomed..." Qing Shui quickly put it on for Huoyun Liu-Li, as he was brooding over how Huoyun Liu-Li would chance upon the scene where he put on the bangle for Canghai Mingyue.

"For these few days, don't leave this please if there's nothing important. Pass those to Senior. I hope that they'll be of some use." Qing Shui handed over the remaining things in his hands to Canghai Mingyue.

Having gotten used to it, Huoyun Liu-Li was very surprised when she first put on the boots Qing Shui first forged. She did not ask anything even though she was still surprised. She only felt very happy to know that everything was made by Qing Shui, as if it was very normal.

"Yueyue, after you've put them on, remember to let me take a look!" Qing Shui called out towards the two ladies who had not gone far.

What he got in return were Huoyun Liu-Li's gigglings and Canghai Mingyue's blaming glance!

When Qing Shui saw Canghai Mingyue, he knew that the past events changed her, or made her put down her arrogance!

During breakfast, the Canghai couple looked at Qing Shui, brimming with smiles. Even Canghai Mingyue was slightly embarrassed when she saw their gazes.

"Thank you Qing Shui. With these items of yours, I'll be able to fend off more than ten additional moves!" Canghai smiled and said.

"Senior, you're being too modest. This time around, it'll be a fight with our lives on the line." Qing Shui grinned and said, appearing very honest. The two ladies who were looking at this scene could not even believe it, especially for Canghai Mingyue. There were several occasions when Qing Shui smiled very lewdly at her. However, seeing how honest he was smiling now, she had found it strangely unbelievable.

"Alright, but if there are any changes to the situation, you all must listen to my arrangement." Canghai looked towards Qing Shui, saying very seriously.

Qing Shui let out a sigh and nodded. He knew that Canghai's arrangements would be for him to take Canghai Mingyue and run...

Canghai Mingyue's gaze were slightly dim, but she did not speak a word. However, her stubborn gaze had told the others of her decision. Canghai smiled. When the time comes, he would naturally have a way to let Qing Shui take her away.

Qing Shui went to the blacksmith store in the morning and saw that Hu You was around. When Hu You saw him, he walked over happily!

"I mastered the Qi Movement, I mastered the Qi Movement!" Hu You said the same line twice.

Qing Shui smiled and said, "Today, you can learn this set of hammering technique."

Qing Shui did not close the door to the blacksmith shop. He was afraid that the dignified middle-aged man dress in purple would come again. The human traffic in the streets and in the store could still be able to hold some reservations.

Qing Shui shared the main points of the Thousand Hammer Technique. He taught him how to exert his strength, and did a slow demonstration before he looked at Hu You's attempt at forging from the side.

The current Hu You had long recovered from his ailment after receiving treatment from Qing Shui. His muscular build had even more strength than before.

Until half the day was gone, Qing Shui felt that Hu You could already use the Thousand Hammer Technique, but without fluency. He had initially planned on giving him two more Strength-Enhancing Fruits, but it was a pity that he had nothing left other than an Agility-Enhancing Fruit kept aside for emergency purposes. This fruit was kept aside as a means for Qing Shui to save himself and create an

escape route. That was why he had been holding onto one all this while, just for that spike in agility for fifteen minutes.

After falling into a daze for a while, Qing Shui looked at Hu You and said, "Brother Hu, I won't have any use for this blacksmith store anymore. I may never come back here again. You must practice this hammering technique as well as that Qi Movement."

"Why are you leaving?" Hu You asked, feeling a bit surprise and sad.

Qing Shui nodded, "All good things will come to an end someday. I'm very happy to have met Brother Hu. If fate allows, we will meet again. I'm here to bid my goodbye to Brother Hu."

Hu You furrowed his brows and let out a sigh after a while. "Brother, you are meant to do great things. If you were to pass by here one day, you must come and visit your elder brother. If there are no accidents, I will likely not leave this place."

After saying this, Hu You cheered up. He was thankful towards this handsome young man and knew that it was impossible for him to stay in this blacksmith store forever.

"Don't worry, I'll come back to visit you in the future. Take care!"

Qing Shui took his leave, not feeling that gloomy. Although Hu You looked like his eldest brother, he was not him. Qing Shui also wanted to give him a peace of mind. Since they were going to part, they might as well be more straightforward about it.

Qing Shui left. He had initially wanted to instruct Hu You not to leave Southern City within half a year, but when he heard that he had no plans to leave, he was relieved. After all, Qing Shui was worried that those people he had come into contact with would fall prey to the Immortal Sword Sect. If they did not leave, they would generally be safe.

Only when Qing Shui returned to Canghai's residence did he feel assured. Unknowingly, Canghai Mingyue and Huoyun Liu-Li had entered his heart, and he could not bear to cut them off.

Qing Shui could not help but recall the reason behind this adventure. Initially, he had planned to come to Greencloud Continent to gain experience and train himself. He had not expected that Canghai Mingyue and Huoyun Liu-Li would come together with him. As time passed by, feelings grew. Regardless of what kind of feelings they were, Qing Shui did not have many friends, but treated Canghai Mingyue and Huoyun Liu-Li as his companions.

It was to the extent that sometimes, Qing Shui would feel that their relationship was not as simple as just friends, but not that of love. Qing Shui did not expect this, but it was a complicated and entangled relationship.

When he went back and saw that Canghai Mingyue was standing by the pond again and in a daze, Qing Shui knew that she was feeling worried again about leaving it to his arrangements.

"Yueyue, don't worry. Come, let Elder Brother give you a hug..."

Chapter 258 - A woman is still a woman after all, the amazing Soaring Crane Steps

"Yueyue, don't worry. Come, let Elder Brother give you a hug..."

Qing Shui didn't even complete his sentence before Canghai Mingyue abruptly flung herself into the embrace of Qing Shui, collapsing and convulsing in his embrace. Qing Shui could only stand there in shock.

Initially, seeing how depressed Canghai Mingyue was, he had wanted to let her relax. But who would have thought that this would happen. Looking at the shaking Canghai Mingyue in his embrace, Qing Shui's heart grew numb.

Regardless of how strong or how outstanding, she was still a woman, bound by the emotions of humanity. She knew things would not be as simple as what Qing Shui said, and just thinking of the probability that something would happen to her parents caused her heart to be in chaos.

She didn't want to appear that weak in front of her parents, and even less let them worry about her. In front of Huoyun Liu-Li, she was the master and wouldn't possibly break down in front of her. But today, when she met Qing Shui, underneath his warm and comforting words, she saw a shadow of her father. Unable to bear the aching pain in her heart any longer, she embraced Qing Shui, wanting to give vent to all her emotions.

Qing Shui didn't continue talking, knowing the intensity of the pressure she was feeling. Such a way of venting your feelings wasn't too bad. He reached out with his hand and gently rubbed her back, helping her to relax.

Canghai Mingyue tightly clutched Qing Shui, as her body continued trembling in his embrace. Underneath the constant motion of Qing Shui's hand on her back, sounds of sobbing could be heard as he felt a biting sorrow in his heart.

"Yueyue, everything is okay, nothing bad will happen." Qing Shui gently consoled her, whispering in her ears.

Lifting her head, the expression on her exquisite face was akin to raindrops on a pear blossom. The dark and endless depths of her eyes misted over, filled with tears and redness. She would have never imagined herself collapsing into his arms like this...

Qing Shui was only half an inch away from the beautiful countenance of Canghai Mingyue. A faint lavender like fragrance drifted into his nose, and he really felt like kissing the unique and sexy cherry lips of Canghai Mingyue. However, seeing her sorrowful look, he immediately suppressed his desires and hugged her even tighter.

Tightly embracing the soft and supple Canghai Mingyue gave him an erection. And under the bashful look on Canghai Mingyue's face, Qing Shui also blushed.

Seeing what Qing Shui looked like, Canghai Mingyue involuntarily laughed, as she pinched Qing Shui's face before pushing him away. Qing Shui hugged her too tightly and she could still feel an iron rod pushing at her tummy from below.

"Thank you, I will never forget you in this lifetime." Canghai Mingyue smiled. That resplendent smile shook Qing Shui's senses, and he took a snapshot of it with his brain, imprinting it in his memory.

What did she mean by that? Did she have a premonition that they wouldn't be able to evade this calamity?

.....

He felt extremely free now that he didn't go to the blacksmith store. Walking back to his residence, Qing Shui initially wanted to go up to the second level, but he suddenly decided to go to the place where he does his daily morning practice. "I might as well practice my skills more."

Crane Form!

He had already perfected the small success stage, but still had yet to break through to the large success stage despite his constant practice of the Crane form.

Activating the Crane's Qi and executing Crane Steps, Qing Shui felt slightly distracted in his heart. He involuntarily thought of Canghai Mingyue and Huoyun Liu-Li. After some time, he suddenly heard a commotion and turned his gaze over.

Qing Shui was thunderstruck by their beauty as he looked at Canghai Mingyue and Huoyun Liu-Li who was currently walking over. The two ladies were equipped with the 'golden battle skirts' and the jade green battle boots, leaving him stunned with their imposing beauty.

Such height, with long jade-like legs, as well as the faint smile and the elegant aura they had, caused Qing Shui to almost drool as he stared at their hips gently swaying with the wind.

"Qing Shui, didn't you want to see sister Mingyue in her battle attire? She's beautiful right!"

"Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful..."

Huoyun Liu-Li was speechless!

Canghai Mingyue shifted her gaze to Qing Shui, as this was already the 6th time he mumbled the word beautiful. "Enough, look at the dumb expression on your face, where would there be people praising others like this?"

Qing Shui chortled, before coming to his senses. Since they knew that Qing Shui was practicing, them being here indicated that they wanted Qing Shui to give them pointers, as they too also wanted to enhance their strength as much as possible.

Even when practicing the ugly and clumsy looking bear form, when the two beauties executed the technique, Qing Shui almost had a nose bleed. Who would have thought that the bear form in their hands would actually be able to exhibit such grace and poise, totally different from the time when he had practiced it in front of Luan Luan, and got shredded into pieces by the harsh words of his daughter.

Sometimes, Qing Shui would guide them, and bodily contact was unavoidable. Keeping a straight face, Qing Shui suppressed his desires and guided them professionally. After that, he demonstrated the perfect stage of the Tiger Form and Deer Cantering, as well as the Crane Form which was at the peak of the small success stage.

When the two ladies executed the crane form, it was obvious that they weren't proficient with it at all. They resembled a pair of baby white cranes trying to learn how to fly. Qing Shui's spirit senses could clearly feel the breath and aura of the two ladies changing.

His spiritual senses underwent yet another improvement. Maybe it was because of him duo-cultivating with the Nine Yin body of Qinghan Ye.

Those who are too deep within, would never be able to see as clearly as the one observing from the outside.

Qing Shui unconsciously began practicing the Crane Form, integrating it in his attacks. The concept of "leaving wounds as the sabre passes" felt extremely clear to him. For the first time, he felt an unprecedented fluidity in his attacks.

The two beautiful girls halted as Qing Shui suddenly executed the crane form. His silhouette was like the drifting clouds and flowing water, dancing about beautifully.

Qing Shui finally understood the essence of the crane form, involuntarily thinking of the hanging curtain of the White Crane as it spreads its wings, emulating the posture of an actual crane.

Naturally, the circulating qi gushed around his body. Producing qi while exhaling qi, an unceasing continuous cycle. Qing Shui applied the insight to his soaring crane steps as his silhouette became more and more blurry.

The two ladies only saw Qing Shui's silhouette shuddering on the spot, but his body didn't seem to move from it's original spot. The more Canghai Mingyue watched, the more she realised that there was something wrong. She felt that Qing Shui had already moved many times in the instant they blinked, instead of just shuddering on the spot like this.

Widening her eyes and focusing all her attention, she managed to catch glimpses of Qing Shui appearing in front of her, then moving back to his original spot in the blink of an eye. This speed of his compared to her father, didn't lose out in the slightest. Not only did she catch glimpses of Qing Shui, she could feel that he took the chance to touch her boobs as well. At this moment, Canghai Mingyue finally discovered that her heart was changing, she had already started to have an unending tolerance for this particular man.

Qing Shui gave an awkward smile knowing that he had been spotted, and in the blink of an eye, he shifted and returned back to his original spot.

Soaring Crane Steps!

Qing Shui also didn't expect that he would manage to breakthrough to the large success stage of the crane form. His body weight lightened by 20%, and that increment in speed naturally also increased his power by a marginal factor.

The most important thing was that his crane steps had already been upgraded to the soaring crane steps, and under the condition of an increase of three times energy exhaustion rate, he could instantly boost his speed by three times. Although the consumption rate was insane, Qing Shui didn't complain. He was a firm believer that speed was invincible.

After the breakthrough, Qing Shui felt extremely happy, and guided the two ladies up till noon. The tired ladies glared at Qing Shui. Qing Shui didn't even pause to let them have a rest throughout the entire morning. From the Deer Cantering Technique to the Crane Form, fully drawing out their potential and exhausting them, doesn't this fellow know how to cherish girls?

Looking at the sheen of perspiration on their faces, Qing Shui laughed, ignoring their looks of complaint. After which, in order to hasten their mastery, he switched to the Tiger Form and attacked them for real. Naturally, before any of his attacks landed, he would change his fist to a light pat, not forgetting to take advantages of their lithe bodies...

The skies also gradually darkened, and the two ladies went for a bath and change of clothes. Qing Shui also went to prepare for his shower. With the Soaring Crane Steps in his arsenal, he was more confident.

Let the wind and the rain come, he wouldn't shy away. Thinking of that purple-robed middle aged man as well as the blind old ancestor of the immortal sword sect that wanted to hurt Qing Shui. he was filled with a seething fury. If he had mastered this soaring crane steps earlier, he would have definitely crippled that middle aged man.

"How good would it be if there isn't a time limit in the Violet Jade Immortal Realm." Qing Shui sighed, followed by a bitter smile. He shouldn't be as greedy as a snake trying to swallow an elephant. He should be content with just having such a heaven defying artifact already.

Standing alone in his room, aimlessly doing nothing, he reflected on his memories. He missed his mom, wondering what she was doing now. A mother would unceasingly worry about her son even if he was 1,000 miles away, and it was the same for him. Qing Shui wanted nothing more than to rush off straight towards the Hundred Miles City.

After which, he thought of his fiancee, Shi Qingzhuang, wondering if she's living well in the Torrid Fragrance Valley. It had been 2 years since he last interacted with her and he couldn't help feeling that she had grown increasingly colder.

No wonder it was said that there was nothing that could withstand the test of time. Regardless of how impactful, how awe-inspiring and glorious something was, after 10 years, 100 years, 1,000 years, or 10,000 years, it would be buried within the endless river of time that was named history.

The rainbow after the storm. Qing Shui wasn't afraid of the incoming tempest, but rather, he was anticipating the beautiful rainbow that would come after that!

Chapter 259 - Scene of Tragedy, the Uncertain Death of Huoyun Liu-Li

The next few days passed in peace. Qing Shui was idling around during the day. He was basically stabilizing his Crane form and practicing his Soaring Crane Steps. At the same time, he supervised the last minute cultivations of the other two women.

Among these few days, Qing Shui forged the helmet at the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal. However, it yielded the similar effect with the armor.

Effects: Increment of 10% defense in protection, strength, endurance, and agility.

Qing Shui was a little speechless. This helmet was too ungenerous. Although the increase in defensive power was acceptable, the increase in its other properties was too little. However, Qing Shui still forged the remaining few items as every little increment counted.

"Qing Shui, I'm bored, let's go out and have fun!" Huoyun Liu-Li pouted at Qing Shui after breakfast.

The sun was still high and Qing Shui realized that they must have been worn out from the past few days. Seeing the hopeful eyes of Huoyun Liu-Li, he could only agree to get some fresh air with them. After all, this was a stressful period.

Qing Shui was still worried that them Immortal Sword Sect would capture them to threaten Canghai, or directly kill a few of them.

"Remember to wear your battle skirt and bring your weapons!" Qing Shui thoughtfully reminded. It was just in case.

Qing Shui, Huoyun Liu-Li and Canghai Mingyue planned to visit the Southern Ancient Pass, which was not too far away. Before the trio left, Canghai urged them to be cautious and to come back soon.

The streets were bustling as usual, and the crowd never thinned out; everyone was busy with their own things. The loud cries of sales, prices and the noises became an awkward yet harmonious scene.

Huoyun Liu-Li was especially enthusiastic today. She dragged Qing Shui and Canghai Mingyue to look at everything, but she'd rarely buy anything. Canghai Mingyue seemed uninterested by these things. Unless she was pulled by Huoyun Liu-Li, she wouldn't seriously look at the merchandises much.

They wandered around blindly along the Southern Ancient Pass through the countless changing doors, not knowing how far they walked or how many streets they passed. Canghai Mingyue's and Huoyun Liu-Li's appearances and their beauties attracted a lot of attention. Qing Shui, who was in tow, was stared at, envied, being jealous of, scorned at and cursed at.

The next street they turned in was empty. It was as if they had stepped into another dimension though the street was still extremely wide.

The sudden change made Qing Shui feel a little weird. Even though similar streets were close to each other, one was bustling with noise while the other was completely deserted.

"Why is there no one on this street?" Qing Shui asked Canghai Mingyue. Qing Shui realized that he could jokingly call her Mingyue. When it came to serious chats, he wasn't too sure of what to call her. Qing Shui could naturally address Huoyun Liu-Li as Liu-Li.

Canghai Mingyue paled. How could they arrive here unknowingly? When she was about to speak to Qing Shui, an unexpected voice interrupted.

"This street is known as the Bloody Street. Generally any fights are settled here. It may look clean here but it is actually already stained by blood all over!"

The voice was filled with immense hatred!

Qing Shui saw a line of figures garbed in white with long swords emerging from a corner nearby. They were led by two elderly men, one being a refined man, the other a tougher man. The owner of the voice was the refined old man.

Qing Shui's facial expression changed, the other two women paled even more and looked at Qing Shui. This made Qing Shui uncertain if he should be happy or depressed about it. The reliance in the gaze of those two women should made him feel proud as a man, however, he did not have such capability.

Qing Shui forced his gaze to no less than twenty people from the Immortal Sword Sect, in which among them were two leading elders.

"You all are really going to such lengths to catch us. How free of you to be waiting for us everyday. Is this interesting?" Qing Shui frowned at the elderly man across him who looked refined yet with a dark look on his face.

"Follow you? Do you think you're worth the trouble? We were going to finish you all in two days time, but since we bumped into you today, might as well grant my grandchild his wish!" The elder on the left spat, his hateful glare was enough to make one's hair stand on end.

"Elder Ying, didn't the Ancestor said not do anything reckless?" the elder who stayed quiet this whole time frowned.

"The Ancestor has already instructed to catch all of them within these two days. If we make the three of them stay here forever, then our job is done. Surely the Ancestor will reward both of us handsomely. Elder Sun, don't tell me that we aren't even capable of making these three people stay." Elder Ying said to the other old man in disdain.

"Well..."

"If both of us take care of these three today, I will agree to that term of yours," Elder Ying casually said.

"Are you serious about this?"

"It's just a Xiantian level combat technique," Elder Ying said to Elder Sun while holding his gaze at Qing Shui and his companions darkly.

"Qing Shui, what do we do?" Huoyun Liu-Li asked calmly although she was frightened.

Qing Shui actually has no good idea. The two elders standing across him were the masters of the Martial King grade. Albeit they were Martial King Grade 1, there were two of them. Qing Shui thought he could at least stand a chance if there was only one of them.

It was already difficult to escape now, even if he were to summon Fire Birdnow, he predicted that his opponents would not allow the three of them the time to climb onto its back. But Qing Shui still summoned Fire Bird, in hopes that at least the two women could make it. They should still escape if situation allows for it.

Unfortunately his opponents dashed towards him as soon as Qing Shui made his move. Qing Shui smiled wryly. He could only push the two women aside helplessly, at the same time ensuring that Fire Bird could come near enough to let both of them onto its back.

Qing Shui had planned this out. If those two women could successfully climb onto Fire Bird, Qing Shui would order the Fire Bird to leave for Canghai's home. While he could escape with the help of Soaring Crane Steps and the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal.

"Elder Sun, leave this little kid to me. You and your Iron Feather Hawk can take on that bird and those two little girls." Elder Ying said while his dry palms were stretched out towards Qing Shui, his breath puffed out like white smoke.

Qing Shui was cautious in his first match against a Martial King Grade opponent. Even if he was only a Grade 1 Martial King, his power was boundless compared to a Xiantian. Such was the insurmountable gap between them.

Accompanied by a tiger roar, a layer of faint yellow gas emitted from Qing Shui's tiger form-like claws. To date Qing Shui's power had already reached a whooping 30,000 jin of strength. It was not much of a difference compared to the power of a low-level Martial King opponent. Qing Shui could fight without holding back this time round.

The tiger form of Qing Shui was perfect. The ferocious tiger was known as the King of Beasts in the past. Even a normal claw attack could reach up to the strength of two thousand jin. A Siberian Tiger and Bengal Tiger could grow up to three meters in height and five hundred to six hundred jin in weight. A normal claw attack could reach up to the power of a ton. The title of the King of Beasts was not undeserved.

To date Qing Shui's power had surpassed that of a ferocious tiger's. After all, if the ferocious tiger in the past was to be brought here, it wouldn't be able to defeat a wild boar. However there were powerful tiger species here, just like that giant White Jade Snow Tiger of LuanLuan.

Qing Shui did not lack power nor techniques, he lacked real combat experience. He lowered his palms, two loud bangs were heard.

Qing Shui felt his blood seething, but the Qi of the in his body instantly calmed it down. He thought to himself: "Is this Martial King even capable? To be on par fighting head on with himself, is he even using his full strength?"

In Qing Shui's surprise, Elder Ying was even more surprised. Even if it wasn't part of his plan to take this kid's life, he would at least heavily damage him. It was out of his expectation to see this young man actually stood against his attacks.

After this encounter, Qing Shui knew where he stood. He had always wanted to battle a newly promoted Martial King.

When Elder Ying suddenly pulled out his blade during his exchange with Qing Shui, Qing Shui almost yelped because that blade looked like the Heaven Shattering Blade.

It was an unsophisticated and heavy big blade. Qing Shui figured it was at least two meters long, about one foot in width, and an inch in thickness with the exception of the edge of the blade. The whole blade appeared to be casted in bronze and was emitting an air of might. It was a domineering sight.

It seemed like he had cultivated lifting heavy as though it was light. After all, having significant strength did not necessary mean one can wield heavy weapons. Even if one could barely wield a heavy weapon, he would not be able to master it. Even someone with the strength of 100 jin would not be able to swing a weapon of 10 jin in weight for an extended amount of time. To be able to reach a 1:100 ratio of weapon mass to wielder's strength was already considered very powerful.

Qing Shui was already struggling to wield the Big Dipper Sword that weighed 2000 jin with his enormous strength of 300,000 jin. In general, anyone who could wield heavy weapons were either born with super powers or had undergone vigorous cultivation to the extent of being able to lift any weight as though it

was light. So it was important to note there was a significant difference in the output power between a 50 jin weapon and a 500 jin weapon even if they are wielded with the same strength.

Qing Shui quietly lifted his own sword, the Big Dipper Sword. He had already cultivated the sword, which was no less than 2000 jin in weight, to a profound level.

Qing Shui knew that Elder Ying's trump card should lie in his blade because he unshielded his blade without any hesitance right after their clashed. It seemed like he wanted to settle score quick.

Chirrrrp!

A sharp cry from a bird rang out. Qing Shui glanced up and couldn't help laughing. The black Iron Feather Hawk which was a lot smaller in size than the Fire Bird was trying to put out the fire on its own body in the sky. And the Fire Bird, which was not too far away, breathed out a purple fireball.

Violet Flame!

Qing Shui had known that Fire Bird could breathe fireballs, he just didn't expect that the flame would be purple in color and it was of speed of light. Then it would explode on contact with the target.

Just that he had no clue on how many times Fire Bird could breathe out this kind of violet fireballs. A burst of aura could be sensed in the air. It turned out that Elder Ying swung his blade down at the very moment Qing Shui was distracted and built up all the energy in his body to the crown of his head.

He did not bother to hide his aura because he wanted to overwhelm Qing Shui. The aura was so intense that even the normal disciples of Immortal Sword Sect backed off a few steps.

Qing Shui was very vigilant and on top of that, did not let his guard down, so he readily slashed the Big Dipper Sword in his hands upwards. To date Qing Shui had already cultivated lifting heavy as though it was light to a significant level.

The noise of metal clashing against each other was piercing to the ears. Qing Shui saw that his Big Dipper Sword was not scratched at all and then also noticed that the giant blade of his opponent was equally unscatched.

Sabre Tyrannical Qi, Power stance!

The first method of unravelling a blade technique was to be more powerful and have a stronger stance than the opponent to conquer the opponent with absolute power. The second was to evade the opponent's stance. Unravel with technique, Unravel Stance!

Strength and technique were contradictions themselves. Whether they were strong or weak all depended on the users themselves.

Qing Shui's first technique to reach the Obscure Realm was the most elementary Basic Sword Principle. When Qing Shui evaded Elder Ying's blade and countered him with his own strike, Elder Ying looked as if he had seen a ghost.

"Basic Sword Principal of the Obscure Realm, you're not a human, boy!" Elder Ying's exclamation rendered Qing Shui speechless. This godd*mn old geezer was scolding him during a life and death duel...

Qing Shui felt extremely worried when he noticed that Canghai Mingyue was already fighting Elder Sun. Fortunately, Fire Bird had already incapacitated the opponent's Iron Feather Hawk and was able to attack synchronously with Canghai Mingyue so the fight was in her favor. On the other hand, Huoyun Liu-Li could only stand at a side dreadfully. The difference between their capabilities was too great. The other normal disciples who would prove to be useless in the fights blocked off Huoyun Liu-Li's escape route instead.

Elder Sun, this kid is persistent. Hurry up and take care of those girls and help me out here." Elder Ying could not do anything other than defending himself against Qing Shui's Basic Sword Principal of the Obscure Realm and only managed to sneak in one of two counter attacks in between.

Qing Shui did not expect his Basic Sword Principal of the Obscure Realm to be this much more powerful than that of a Truth Realm's in an actual battle too. Its power had at least increased 20%, although it had merely just stabilized in the Obscure Realm.

Although he could keep his opponent at bay but he could not kill him. Qing Shui actually did not manage to take hidden weapons. Although retrieving items from the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal did not require any physical entrance, but it still required a short period of time. However, that was no longer the case now. Even entering the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal physically now would require "a ton" of time. These were absolutely forbidden during the battle of experts; it could steal a life in an instant.

Within just a short actual combat, Qing Shui had the feeling that his sword technique had become more unique than from his own cultivation from before. It was a peculiar feeling; as if it was of very precise judgment and handling.

It was no wonder so many Martial Kings were also going towards the direction of Obscure Realm. Just an Obscure Basic Sword Principal could push a Grade 1 Martial King to the point where he could only struggle.

"This red haired beast is aggressive. Stupid brat has weird techniques and is not slow. You hang in there for a little more, I can win this within 30 moves." Elder Sun huffed loudly in rage.

Qing Shui got even more worried upon hearing the yell of Elder Sun. His Soaring Crane Steps did only little damage to his opponent, and now even all of his attacks were blocked by that giant blade.

Qing Shui had the feeling that this old geezer was just buying time. His giant sword was just like a shield; its defense was so solid that not even a droplet of water could pass through. Seemed like this old geezer was very seasoned from the countless actual combats and battlefields he had experienced throughout many years.

"Liu-Li!"

Qing Shui heard a sudden alarmed cry rang out along with a sharp bird cry!

Qing Shui's stomach gave a lurch. He turned around and was greeted by only red...

Huoyun Liu-Li was still suspended in mid-air, with her blood splattering all over the place. Her ribs and rib cage were completely destroyed. The old man made a deep cut that ran all the way from her battle skirt to the right corner of her lips and then to the corner of her left eye. The cut was so deep that the bone was exposed in sight.

Qing Shui stared at the tragic scene in the sky achingly. He could only watch in horror as Huoyun Liu-Li was tossed aside, motionlessly and her death uncertain.

"Liu-Li..."

Chapter 260: Kill! Kill! Qing Shui's tears, Saintly Hands!

Qing Shui could feel his heart breaking as he took in the sight of the beautiful tragedy unfolding in midair, watching on helplessly as Huoyun Liu-Li's motionless body was cast aside, possibly dead.

"Liu-Li....."

Qing Shui let out a loud, anguished wail. His cry was like a grieving wolf's howl, shocking and deafening everyone around him. From the sound of his hoarse voice, anyone could tell that he had screamed his heart out.

After his shout,, the Qi of the that had been circulating very quickly in his body suddenly went berserk, and the thick energy rapidly whirled around within him.

Like a racing horse, the Qi of the circulated quickly without without any sign of slowing down. Traces of blood similar to the shape of spiderwebs dyed both his eyes in an unusual demonic shade of red. The Big Dipper Sword trembled slightly in his hands because of the overflow of power.

"Pa!"

In one breath, a clear sound sounded out from Qing Shui's body. Never did he imagine that the Qi of the could circulate at this alarming rate. This aggressiveness was too difficult for him to handle.

When the sound of a sharp snap ran through the air, Qing Shui once again succeeded in surpassing the 89th cycle of circulated Qi and breaking into the 90th cycle. However, even with the sudden flow of tremendous power rising from within his body, he couldn't bring himself to be delighted.

Seeing how Qing Shui had zoned out, Elder Ying soundlessly swung the large Heaven Shattering Blade to deliver a strike to Qing Shui with an evil grin on his face.

Was this his killing move?

As soon as Elder Ying swung his blade, Qing Shui's bloodshot eyes abruptly froze him on the spot. It made his heart palpitate unevenly. His blade was also paused from delivering the attack. What kind of expression was that? The clarity in both of his eyes were long gone, replaced by a demonic presence.

After the pause, the blade then came smashing down with great agility!

Driven by pure hatred, Qing Shui went all out to fight under the surge of an explosive amount of power. He refused to think about anything else at that moment. The only thing that was clear in his mind was the uncertainty of whether or not Huoyun Liu-Li was still alive. Remembering all those times he had been through with her, the power of fury impelled him to attack even more violently than before.

The sword brimming with subconscious hatred had actually infused with the third wave!

Sword of third wave!

Peng!

Stupefied, Elder Ying watched as his large blade was blown away from the impact. At the same time, his chest suffered a kick. It was at that moment he knew that he was done for.

Filled with hatred, Qing Shui's foot had lashed out and directly tore a hole in Elder Ying's chest, causing his battered and smashed-up body to ram against a stone wall located some distance away. Amidst the rain of blood in the sky, the vivid sound of the large Heavenly Shattering Blade falling to the ground alarmed Elder Sun.

Qing Shui looked in the direction of the injured Canghai Mingyue and saw that she was having much difficulty in holding herself together. If she didn't have the Golden-ringed Battle Skirt with her, the injury she suffered would be worse. Fire Bird was also covered in scars and wounds as his fiery feathers scattered around. It had sustained the most injuries since it had repetitively used its large physique to shield Canghai Mingyue from the chain of dangerous attacks.

It hadn't been breathing violet fireballs for a long period of time!

As Qing Shui stared in sorrow at Huoyun Liu-Li who was lying on the ground motionlessly on top of a pool of blood, he flung the Big Dipper Sword into the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal!

Soaring Crane Steps!

The agitation and the fury he felt in his heart was enough to drive him to the brink of destruction. Elder Sun cowered at the sight of Qing Shui's bloodshot eyes. He never cried out for Elder Ying's death the entire time. Other than the feeling of utter disbelief and incomprehension, he just wanted to survive.

"Mingyue, take care of Liu-Li. I will be there in less than three breaths."

Canghai Mingyue's heart quivered when she heard his hoarse voice and saw the traces of blood in his eyes. Then, she quickly turned and hurried in Huoyun Liu-Li's direction!

It was a rather long story to tell. In short, it was just Qing Shui brazenly speaking to Elder Sun in a dull manner as he dashed out towards him. Curious, Canghai Mingyue cast a quick glance over her shoulders and was shocked at the sight of Qing Shui running towards Elder Sun.

In a flash of lightning, Qing Shui used Soaring Crane steps to move in Elder Sun's direction. Panicking, Elder Sun quickly made use of his abrasive wit, intending to thrust the sword into Qing Shui's chest. The strike had a fierce drilling force that was as fast as lightning, causing sparks of fire. Yet, the move looked very simple.

Canghai Mingyue was in a state of shock. Stunned, she stared as the long sword missed. However, it still managed to pierce through Qing Shui's abdomen. When she saw the diabolical laugh on Elder Sun's face, she felt as if a piece of her soul went missing.

Elder Sun glared at Qing Shui in a ruthless manner, only to find the youth giving him a small merciless smile in return. On top of that, the sight of Qing Shui's pair of bloody eyes made him shiver uncontrollably!

Right at this moment!

Qing Shui used a tiger form skill, the Ripping Tiger Claw, that had never been used before. It was the most brutal of all tiger form attacks! Elder Sun could only watch helplessly as Qing Shui effortlessly impaled his hand through his chest!

Ripping Tiger Claw's explosive force could effectively raise the might of his palm by 10%!

His other hand pulled a punch that instantly smashed the head of Elder Sun, who did not die in peace, into pieces. The more Qing Shui thought about Huoyun Liu-Li's condition, the more he wanted to thrash the man until he turned into nothing but dust. Even if he did, it would still not assuage his hatred.

He pulled the sword out from his abdomen, causing blood to immediately gush out from the wound. Only this would make him feel better. Pale, Qing Shui quickly ran towards Huoyun Liu-Li, leaving a trail of blood behind him. He reached to find Canghai Mingyue staring at him in a daze.

But Qing Shui couldn't care less anymore. His wounds were gradually being healed by the Ancient Strengthening Technique's abnormal effect. He didn't even bother to look at Canghai Mingyue as he ran past her, only stopping when he reached Huoyun Liu-Li's side.

Bloodstains covered Huoyun Liu-Li's face as her whole body laid in the pool of blood.

Qing Shui hurriedly extended his hand to Huoyun Liu-Li's nose to check if she's still breathing. In an instant, he took out the Nine Golden Essence Needles and extended his right hand. Slowly, his hand turned transparent, similar to that of a translucent and sparkling jade!

It was the mystical sacred hands displaying its full power after a complete breakthrough!

"Liu-Li, listen to me, you can't die, you can't! I won't allow you to die, can you hear me?" Tears started to fall from Qing Shui's eyes, his hoarse voice carrying a strange, penetrative force.

Without any hesitation, the first Golden Essence Needle was penetrated into the major acupoint at her breast, which was also known as the death acupoint, Shan Zhong!

Eyes brimming with tears, Canghai Mingyue kneeled by Huoyun Liu-Li's side. She couldn't bring herself to cry no matter how it grieved her to see Huoyun Liu-Li in this state. She was at a loss at what to do. The body lying on the ground right now should have been her, but who knew that Huoyun Liul-Li would dash out at that last moment, taking her place...

"Qing Shui, how's Liu-Li doing?"

Canghai Mingyue looked at them both: Huoyun Liu-Li, so disfigured that she barely looked human, and Qing Shui, covered in blood and marked with a fearsome wound. Even at this very moment, Qing Shui was still giving Huoyun Liu-Li the acupuncture treatment while crying all the while.

It was her first time seeing Qing Shui bursting into tears for a woman as a reason. His murder of the two elders kept replaying in her mind, haunting her constantly, especially the moment when he risked his life and limb to end the fight with an alarming speed.

All so he could attempt to save Huoyun Liu-Li faster.

Fear invaded her heart as she took in the sight of Qing Shui's appearance and what he had said. If this man was now in such a state, then the possibility of reviving Huoyun Liu-Li must be very small.

His tears kept streaming down his cheeks with every insert he made with the needle. Saintly Hands, a pair of glittering and translucent hands, slapped against the body that wore only thin bloodstained clothes with the battle skirt removed. The sound of cracking bones going back to their original positions could be heard throughout the process.