

Ancient ST 31

Chapter 31: Limitations of the Spatial Realm

“In any case, it looks like I’m having barbecued White-Headed Inky Jade Condor for dinner tonight.”

After Qing Shui knew of the various enchantments and effects of the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal, he couldn’t help but grin even in his sleep. Now, with him being the sovereign of a spatial realm, there was no need for him to carry a backpack any longer. And how could the storage rings in the legends even compare to this? No, they can’t even be mentioned in the same breath. Qing Shui could not help but to burst out into raucous laughter. That laugh seemed to consolidate all his anger, anxiety and worries that had been burdening his heart, and disperse them all together as gales of laughter that rang out.

From his now useless backpack, Qing Shui took out a knife, flint, salt, and a cup made out of porcelain, and after which, he searched the surroundings of the mountains for dry, thin branches that could be used as firewood.

“Stare at your father, me, more, you stupid chicken, if looks could kill back then, I know that I would already be dead. Go on, don’t you like hovering in the air and staring at me? You stupid flying chicken, now I want you to look at me as I barbecue your chicken drumstick. After all, the tendons and muscles are thick without excessive fat, seems to be pretty good as a supplement and eating it should be able to provide nourishment for my own legs.” Qing Shui said vehemently, with a sardonic glint in his eyes, as he began to defeather and wash the poor condor.

Previously, a few days before, Qing Shui almost died of thirst. But now, suddenly, he had an abundance of water! Qing Shui took the water from the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal. As he washed the carcass, he couldn’t help but feel that it was a waste. After all, the water from the crystal pond possessed mystical properties, but to use it to wash a carcass? He couldn’t help but to shake his head. Also, Qing Shui was unsure if the water used up would be replenished by the spatial realm and as such, he set a water marker to gauge the water level. From his observations, this pool should be able to contain 800,000 liters of water.

Qing Shui cut a large piece of flesh from the hind-leg of the giant condor, and began roasting it after he started a fire. This was the first time Qing Shui was doing the barbecuing personally. Previously, he had only observed members of the Qing Clan doing it. Now that he tried it for himself, Qing Shui could tell that it was not as easy as it looked to be!

The aftermath of his first experiment in cooking resulted in the meat being either being too charred to be eaten or too raw. Only after experimenting a few times could he successfully barbecue a piece of meat that could barely be considered edible...

Heedless to the dangers of eating uncooked meat, Qing Shui began digging in with relish. After all, this was the first time he was roasting meat, Qing Shui ate the meal he prepared with gusto. After his hunger was satiated, he looked at the carcass of the giant condor. The size of it was so gigantic, despite Qing Shui’s many experiments in cooking earlier, the reduction in mass was barely noticeable.

After which, Qing Shui decided to store the remains of the carcass in the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal.

Qing Shui could not help but to exclaim again, "Ahh, this must be fate, who would have thought that the heavens are so good to me? The pendant which I randomly picked up was actually a heavenly treasure! Nothing in the world could make me happier, not even bedding a top grade ravishing beauty!" Although Qing Shui had not had his first taste of women yet, he was in no hurry. He knew that in this world, strength and power were the absolute authority. If one was strong enough, they could even forcibly snatch the woman away. Who would dare to contradict him then? Absolute power was what he sought after! In comparison, this treasured pendant, one did not know how much karmic merits they would have to accumulate over many lifetimes before they could obtain it!

As his thoughts drifted to the injury he received, he was reminded of the pendant which hung on his neck. "Damn, in the future whenever I get anything, I must drip my blood on it to test it. Who knows, that which appears torn and tattered, could be another heavenly treasure. If in the off-chance I miss anything, there is no point crying over spilt milk!"

After that battle with the giant condor, and discovery of the spatial realm, followed by the cooking of the carcass, the sun was already setting. The resplendent rays of light shined upon the whole region, dyeing the mountains with a golden glow. Especially for a few mountain peaks, the golden resplendent rays of light shining on them actually made them emit a sort of majestic presence, akin to that of Golden Buddha statues.

The current Qing Shui had never been so excited before in his life. His current state could only be described as something similar to the "second stage of enlightenment taught by Buddha himself - seeing mountain as not a mountain, seeing river as not a river." Even if there was a pile of dog sheet in front of him, he could also be certain that it would be able to germinate good crops from there.

"Forget it, I shall go and cultivate inside the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal. Hahaha! A time ratio of 100:1, I must abuse it to the maximum!" Qing Shui teleported to inside the spatial realm with a mere intention of his will. Now that he was calmer, he discovered that the air here was saturated with an abundance of thick spiritual energy, even more so than the world outside!"

Qing Shui sat down cross-legged, entering into the state of meditation and activated the emanating an air of profoundness.

1 Cycle of Qi Circulation, 2 Cycle of Qi Circulation.....

The past 5 years, Qing Shui manage to cultivate from 36 cycles of circulation to 48 cycles currently. This time when he activated the Ancient Strengthening Technique, it came as no surprise that he peaked at 48 cycles. More haste less speed, Qing Shui was not anxious. After all, Qing Shui had only recently broken through to 48 cycles. He did not want to rush and as a result suffer from Qi Deviation.

As the time passed, Qing Shui cultivated slowly without haste, whenever he was tired, he took a break. Whenever he was thirsty, he drank some water. He went on like this, relentlessly practicing his cultivation with a will like a madman, also training his Ghostly Steps, Solitary Rapid Fist, and the art of hidden weapon techniques continuously. Qing Shui also had completely read all 3 of the medical books which he brought along with him. After all, with a time ratio of 100:1, he wanted to abuse this effect to the maximum, if not it would be a waste.

Cultivating in the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal, Qing Shui was uncertain of how many days had passed inside it. All he knew was that the earlier barbecued meat had already been finished by him. Now, he was subsisting on water and the dried rations which he had bought from the Qing Clan.

After getting frustrated chewing on the dried rations, Qing Shui decided to exit the spatial realm in preparation for roasting some meat again. This time round, after so many failed experiments, Qing Shui could finally roast something that was edible, and Qing Shui also discovered another effect of the spatial realm. Apparently, food in there would remain fresh with no hints of decay! There was no change in the condition of the food and it would remain the same state as when it entered.

After Qing Shui was done roasting the meat, as he prepared to re-enter the spatial realm, he suddenly stopped and appeared dumbstruck! For some reason, he discovered that he could not enter the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal!

“Huh why am I barred from entering?” Qing Shui refused to believe it, and persisted in trying to enter... Looking at the skies, Qing Shui deduced that about 2 hours must have passed, and in these past 2 hours he must have tried entering it over a 1000 times! He had no choice but to conclude that there seemed to be some sort of limitation and rules set to entering the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal.

Every 2 hours spent outside the spatial realm, was equivalent roughly to 16 days inside it. During the time when he was drinking water from the crystal pond, Qing Shui had already noticed the speck of violet-colored pearl situated right in the middle of his brows! The moment he saw it, Qing Shui already knew that this was a mini version of the pendant which had always hung on his neck.

Looking at his current features, Qing Shui could not help but to slightly frown. He could be considered relatively good looking with exquisite features. “Damn, I must be more masculine, if not people would mistake me for a sissy. Wuwu, nevermind, after second thoughts, in the future if I ever run into a desperate situation, I could depend on this handsome mug of mine to beg for meals.” Qing Shui was trying to find humor in a desperate situation.

“Argh I don’t have time to joke.” Trepidation filling his heart, Qing Shui persisted in trying again and again to enter the spatial realm, but to no avail. Rivulets of sweat appeared after the repeated failures made him immeasurably frustrated.

“F*** this sheet, please stop pranking your father, damn it, If I can’t go in again, I might just as well jump down the mountain” Qing Shui desperately cursed, only when there were no people would he allow himself to lose control like that, with profanities spewing from his lips.

After the sun setted and the skies were dark, Qing Shui was still trying to enter the spatial realm. Qing Shui persisted in trying to enter every hour. Unknowingly, it was already approaching midnight, arriving at the Zi period*. Note: Zi period - the time between 11 pm and 1 am.

Tonight, the moon was full, silvery white light cascading down, softly illuminating the mountain. What a pity Qing Shui was not in the mood to appreciate the fine scenery. He was already going crazy with anxiety, occasionally extending his hand to feel the jade pendant embedded between his brows, heaving a sigh of relief every time he discovered that it was still there.

For the next hour, Qing Shui persisted in trying to enter the spatial realm again and again, but... he was still unable to gain entry. No matter what he did, he was unable to calm his fretful heart down!

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After the Zi period had passed, Qing Shui tried again. To his surprise, he finally managed to succeed! The instant when he had entered the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal almost made tears come out of his eyes... He finally succeeded after countless hours of trying.

“Exit!”

“Enter!”

“Exit!”

“Enter!”

.....

As if he was trying to make up for the all the times which he failed to enter previously, Qing Shui experimented again and again.

After a few days, Qing Shui finally discovered the reason! The longest period that the spatial realm allowed the user to stay in, was a period of about 15-16 days, equivalent to 2 hours in the outside world. Every night, after the Zi period has passed, the whole cycle would reset, and the user would be able to spend another 16 days inside the spatial realm.

“Why did the Violet Jade Immortal not inscribed this rule on the stone monument, freaking causing me to worry for nothing.” After Qing Shui discovered the limitations of using the spatial realm, he became much more relaxed. In these few days, the profanities which he spewed, were even more than what he had said in his entire lifetime!

In the next few days, Qing Shui would always stay in the spatial realm before he was forcefully ejected. 2 hours on the outside was equivalent to 16 days in the spatial realm! Making use of this effect, Qing Shui took the chance to completely read and memorize all the contents of the 3 medical books which he had brought. After undergoing his body transformation and acquiring the Yin-Yang symbol in his sea of consciousness, Qing Shui discovered that his memorization power and comprehension level had already reached a terrifying stage...

Chapter 32: Basic Sword Techniques

After he finished reading the 3 medical books, Qing Shui felt that he had benefited immensely from the contents within. Especially from the <>, this book listed and explained the effects one would get by mixing various herbs together. For example, in some cases, when mixing two types of herbs of the healing element together, the end product may end up being poisonous. Conversely, when mixing two types of poisonous herbs, depending on their properties, the two herbs could actually end up complementing each other, nullifying the poisonous elements within and form an end product that could save lives!

The thick book mainly speaks of the complex relations and interactions between herbal properties, such as “warm”, “cold”, “wet”, “hot”, “cool”. The book also explains the effects and things to take note of when mixing medicine in great detail.

After receiving the nourishment of the Yin-Yang symbol in his sea of consciousness, Qing Shui's memory could be said to have become perfect. Despite being unable to comprehend the entirety of the detailed information in such a short amount of time, he was still able to engrave the information in his mind. Every time he needed something, he could just refer to the information stored in his brain, akin to flipping the pages of a book.

In all job professions, the intricacies of each would be wide-ranging and profound.

Qing Shui knew that his wish to embark on the path of an alchemist could still be considered as extremely distant. It was unlike alchemists in MMORPGs, who could just throw a few herbs inside a cauldron and poof, a pill would be concocted. How could being an alchemist be so simplistic? Not to mention, in this world's 9 continents, the alchemist profession was the one with the harshest conditions and highest requirements!

Taking one step at a time, with an effort that was worth 100 times, nay, 1000 times of others, and unyielding determination! These were all qualities that Qing Shui possessed, and in addition to his recently acquired spatial realm, they made him immensely confident.

Qing Shui could only enter the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal for 2 hours a day. After that, the natural limitations of the spatial realm would kick into place. This means that, for him, a single day could be compared to 15 days for others! Qing Shui was no fool, he deeply treasured the time lengthening effect of the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal and seized every chance he could to cultivate in there.

Normally, Qing Shui would purposely select the time period (9pm-11pm) to enter the spatial realm. This way, after the Zi period (11pm-1am), the limitations would reset and he could immediately use it again. During the daytime, Qing Shui would travel or slay beasts that were unfortunate enough to cross his path. However, ever since the encounter with the 3rd Grade Desolate Beast, White-Headed Inky Jade Condor, Qing Shui had no other dangerous encounters.

The fiery sun in the sky fiercely shone down on Qing Shui's body, yet his body was entirely devoid of sweat. His body looked akin to a lithe leopard, with his muscles corded, yet not rigidly stiff.

Ever since Qing Shui obtained the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal, the lines of worries on his face had smoothed, making him appear more carefree and relaxed.

"F*** it, with my current looks, if I was in my previous world, I would be a top grade gigolo, dancing with the filthy rich cougars, eating them up and earning their money. However now, in this World of the Nine Continents, looks are useless! What I want is power, power!" Everytime Qing Shui looked at his charming countenance in the water's reflection, he began to involuntarily cuss.

Qing Shui's features were exquisite, without any hints of femininity. Either by nature or design, there was a look of cold indifference reflected on his face. Charisma reflected off the irises in his beautiful eyes. And the violet-colored pearl situated in the middle of his brows, actually had the feeling akin to a master painter adding the finishing touches, granting life to a portrait.

Despite Qing Shui gloomily messing up his hair, he was still good looking. In addition to that, there was the absence of even an ounce of excess fat on his graceful and lithe body. People looking at him would have nothing but compliments about his good looks.

On his journey, Qing Shui knew that as long as there were water sources, there would be beasts nearby. In this case, he did not need to worry about not having enough to eat! After his countless experiments with barbecuing, his skills could be said to have reached an unfathomably high level. The meat he roasted, be it the color or the taste and smell, were all of a high quality.

After travelling for an entire day, Qing Shui went in the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal to rest, after that he started to cultivate. Qing Shui's current cultivation level only allowed him to hit the 48 cycles of circulated Qi. He clearly remembered that during the first heavenly layer of the Ancient Strengthening Technique, the requirement was to hit the 12 cycles of circulated Qi. At the second heavenly layer, the requirement was 24 cycles of circulated Qi. Now, at the third heavenly layer, the requirement was 48 cycles of circulated Qi... Could it be that for him to break into the next heavenly layer, following the pattern so far, he would need to cultivate to double the 48 cycles? To 96 cycles?

As he pondered, Qing Shui could not help but recall the instance when he broke through from 12 cycles to 13 cycles and 24 to 25 cycles of circulated Qi.

Bottleneck? Obstacles?

After contemplating, Qing Shui sighed, he knew that the path of cultivation was not easy to advance on. First, let's not talk about breaking through to 49 cycles. Even after that, he still had to hit 96 cycles, 192 cycles and 386 cycles...

No wonder that practicing the to its zenith would allow one to gain a body comparable to the Gods and Demons. The practitioner would have his strength increased by increasing the number of circulation cycles. They would possess tyrannical might just based on their body strength alone!

Everytime he encountered a bottleneck, Qing Shui would circulate his Qi in order to break through. The backlash was no joke, in the past 5 years, any breakthroughs of 1 cycle to the next, would entail Qing Shui breaking through a bottleneck! Even though the bottleneck from one cycle to another was small, the pain was still extremely excruciating!

There holds two major bottlenecks. The first was from the 3rd layer to the 4th layer, breaking from lower to middle tier, and the second was from the 6th layer to the 7th layer, breaking from middle to top tier!

Circulating his Qi based on the Ancient Strengthening Technique, Qing Shui repeatedly tried to break through the barrier of the 48th cycle into the 49th to no avail. That obstacle was as unyielding as a huge mountain, and try as he might, he was still unable to budge it the slightest. Qing Shui gritted his teeth, ignoring and enduring the pain! This was precisely the point of the Ancient Strengthening Technique! Making use of the pain from the backlash in order to temper one's body!

Sighing, Qing Shui decided to rest for now. It looks like it would not be so simple to break through the major bottleneck to the 4th heavenly layer of the Ancient Strengthening Technique.

Qing Shui took out the few books he had as he decided to use his time to fully comprehend the contents in each book. After taking them out his gaze fell to a rest on the untouched <>, although he had not yet read the book, he knew that the teachings in it would not be too profound. After all, the basic sword techniques, as its name stated, formed the basis of every swordplay in the World of the Nine Continents. As long as one was a user of the sword, at some point, one would surely have read this book!

Frowning, Qing Shui narrowed his eyes in suspicion. Why would such a common book have a spot in our Qing Clan Library?

“Forget it, I shall take a look first. Everyone in the World of the Nine Continents knows that the techniques within the <> are the lowest grade of sword play. Not to mention low grade, they are so weak that they can be considered as ungraded. Despite that, the foundations of every sword user is built from this! Most of the sword users read the book when they were young and only moved onto the more advanced sword arts after they mastered these basic techniques.

Flipping open the first page of the <>, the first page, other than listing out the title of the book, also had a parenthesis that marked the book in his hands as the initial volume. <> (Beginner). Could it be that there were (Intermediate) and (Profound) levels as well?

Ignoring this, he continued reading, “Introduction to Swords”.

The sword, was reputed to be the first amongst the myriad of weapons, emitting an intent of benevolence, suffused with a heroic aura! It could also be considered as the God of weapons and also possessed an air of elegance. So what makes up a sword? A sword comprises of the following: Sword Body, Sword Tip, Sword Sharpness, Sword Core, Sword Spine, Sword Edge, Sword Frame, Sword Hilt and Sword Sheath.

Following the introduction, next up was the various sword postures and methods. The main methods of attacking positions consist of: Hooking, Hanging, Pointing, Carrying, Piercing, Slicing, Hacking! During practice, the way of the sword requires the sword to follow one’s body, the sword user to use their body and guide the sword. When using the sword as a weapon, one must attain a state of oneness with the sword, one with the Qi, and one with the Spirit!

Looking at the elementary content which could be recited by any Martial Warrior, Qing Shui could not help but ask: “So how many of the millions of sword users can actually attain this state of oneness mentioned?” After all, the more simple a thing was, the more profound the knowledge hidden within it would be. All the basics were derived from the learnings of millions of sword users, condensed down into their most basic form!

The way of Sword emphasizes “Speed, Accuracy, Decisiveness” Using these three words as the mantra to complement each of the basic sword attacking positions when practiced to the pinnacle, could kill with 1 hit, destroying your enemies with only a single strike!

The way of Sword also further emphasizes on hand-eye coordination, posture, footwork and form.

When the user of the sword art has cultivated it to its peak, any part of the sword can be used as a weapon! After attaining the stage of man and sword as one, amalgamating with the sword, and the next stage of heaven and man as one. The user himself, without his sword, can be considered as an unsheathed sharp sword!

Chapter 33: It takes 10 Years to Forge a Good Sword

Qing Shui’s imagination wildly soared as he continued reading. He was daydreaming about when would he be able to step into the fabled realm of Man and Sword as One, and Heaven and Man as One. After which, he shook his head: “A journey of a thousand miles, begins with a single step. I should stop

dreaming and start with the basics. After all, even accounting for the experiences of my past life, I do not have any experience in the way of the sword. I merely dabbled in exercises like practicing the Tai-Chi Fist and the Tai-Chi swordplay. Those were just empty stances full of air with no real substance behind them.

As he read on, other than the main basic methods of attack positions, which consisted of: Hooking, Hanging, Pointing, Carrying, Piercing, Slicing and Hacking, the book also, in great detail, explained the amount of strength which had to be exerted for each strike, the position of the sword, the posture of the body as well as breathing methods that could be utilized. Other than the descriptions, there were also pictures depicting a human wielding a sword in the various forms of sword attacks.

The more Qing Shui read, the more he was confused. "How could the techniques be so complex? If this is the case, what about the profound sword arts? How could I even begin to train in them if I don't even understand the basic techniques?" Qing Shui was lost in contemplation.

Everytime Qing Shui saw a picture, he would match it with the details stated in the description and practice them. Using his fingers in place of a sword, he held the book in one hand and practiced the basic forms of attacks: Hooking, Hanging, Pointing, Carrying, Piercing, Slicing and Hacking with the other one. One stroke after another, relentlessly pursuing perfection.

Qing Shui carried on his practice as time inexorably passed on. He did not know the exact amount of time that passed as there was no day and night cycle within the spatial realm. Qing Shui, akin to a madman, practiced almost to the boundary of Qi Deviation, continuing on his journey to comprehend the truth behind the way of the sword.

"Going all out is the only way for me to improve, even if I have to step close to the boundary of Qi Deviation, I have to succeed!" Qing Shui said with determination blazing in his eyes.

Qing Shui did not lack perseverance or determination. He understood well that he was akin to metal. Metal needs to suffer blows from the smith's hammer and be refined in fire before it can be forged into a good sword. In addition to that, the Yin-Yang Symbol in his sea of consciousness, was also enhancing his spirit and mind, granting him a high level of comprehension. That, when coupled with his unyielding personality as well as the aiding effects of his spatial realm meant that nothing would be impossible for him!

When comparing the book to the 3 other thick medical books, it could be considered rather thin. In addition, the contents of the book explained the most basic of all sword stances. Compared to the complex and the , it was infinitely easier to remember.

On the last page of the book it was written that the essence of the sword could be summarized into four insights, in a single sentence of four realms in swordplay. [Application of Knowledge], [Profoundness within Simplicity], [Swiftly equates Invincibility], [Back to Nature]!"

Qing Shui understood all of them, except for the last part, [Back to Nature]. He only seemed to have a rudimentary grasp on the meaning it contained, but nothing concrete.

For the first realm, [Application of Knowledge], essence of this insight referred to knowing when was the right circumstance, when was the right place, and when was the right time to execute which of the basic attacking sword forms. Simply put, to execute the correct moves at the correct time.

For the second realm, [Profoundness within Simplicity]”, essence of this insight referred to not pursuing perfection of form. Form is secondary and intent is primary. Swordplay that looks beautiful and dazzling looks good, but is nothing in comparison to true power. In fact, the more profound the sword art is, the more ordinary it would look when executing the techniques within. Upon stepping into this realm, the techniques executed those who understand the dao of the sword might even looked clumsy and sloppy.

For the third realm, [Swiftness equates Invincibility], the essence of this insight referred to, under the vast domain of heavens, the same philosophy holds true for all martial arts. As long as one achieve sufficient speed, he would be able to defeat anything in the world. With sufficient speed, one might indeed achieve the realm of invincibility. What a pity that this was just a theory. After all, who would dare to say that they are the swiftest in the world?

For the last realm, [Back to Nature], he only had a rough understanding of the insights behind it. Qing Shui could not comprehend which level this realm of swordplay belonged to. “Could it be the legendary realm...? After one had mastered the sword, one could infuse sword intent into everything in nature. At that realm, everything in nature could be used as a sword!

Sword intent! Qing Shui got lost in contemplation as his thoughts drifted far away.

After he finished the book, Qing Shui closed his eyes and started meditating. He wanted to organize his thoughts and to his heart to comprehend the various details outlined in the book.

After a long time, Qing Shui finally opened his eyes. This was indeed the basics of sword arts! No matter how profound a sword technique was and no matter which realm a sword user had attained, traces of the <> would still exist within them!

“If that is the case, when <> is cultivated to its pinnacle, could it also possess the might of profound sword techniques?” Qing Shui was lost in contemplation.

The carcass of the giant condor and the dried rations, had long since been finished off by Qing Shui, therefore he had no choice but to hunt. As he exited the spatial realm, dawn was already breaking. Although Qing Shui could spent approximately 15 days in the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal per real day, every day he chose to split the maximum of 15 days into 3 smaller segments. When he would enter on the 3rd segment, he would stay within the spatial realm until it forcibly extricated him after he passed the time limit.

A period of one month passed, Qing Shui had learnt plenty of things in the last month. He was also out in nature where he could contemplate on the significance of the 5 elements, as well as try to gain insights into the heart of the heavens.

The state of a person’s heart was very important. For people with a large frame of heart, they would naturally be able to contain more things. People with a narrow frame of heart, could be compared to a frog living in a well, forever unable to imagine or appreciate the beauty of the vast outside world!

A wild boar was hunted by Qing Shui. After which, he removed the bristles, cut open its stomach, removed the intestines, blood, internal organs, then he scraped the carcass clean, even the head of the boar was not spared.

“What a waste, how inconsiderate!” Qing Shui laughed self-deprecatingly.

Luckily, this wild boar could be considered muscular and fit, there was no excess fat in its body. During this period of time, the thing that Qing Shui ate most were the wild boars. Especially the pig trotters... Yummy, they were to die for. To satisfy his palate, Qing Shui hunted many wild boars and experimented on them to practice his cooking skills.

Currently, Qing Shui felt that his cooking skills could still be considered slightly above average. After all, he felt that the food he cooked had a superior taste when compared to other fine inns or restaurants.

After finishing his dinner, Qing Shui stored the three remaining trotters inside the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal. He then walked to the side of the cooking fire and picked up a wooden staff measuring 3 foot 3 inches long from the ground.

Entering the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal again, Qing Shui had long since mastered the basic sword forms of: Hooking, Hanging, Pointing, Carrying, Piercing, Slicing and Hacking. Now, he wielded the wooden staff, as he would have wielded a sword, the staff almost appeared to be alive in his hand, vigorously performing each of basic sword forms to perfection. After all, both of his arms had already been trained to an extremely agile state, including his palm, his wrist, his fingers, and every other part of his hands due to practicing the Solitary Rapid Fist, as such they had long since reached the peak of agility.

All thanks to the bout of enlightenment from before, it was as if all the insights gained during practicing the Solitary Rapid Fist had been absorbed by his pair of hands. So when he practiced his sword techniques, Qing Shui could achieve double the results with only half the effort, advancing at a tremendous pace.

As the saying went, "It takes 10 years to master the saber, and a 100 years to master the sword!"

Sword Arts were immeasurably deep and profound, Qing Shui knew deep in his heart that if he wanted to master the path of the sword, he would definitely need to expend tremendous amounts of efforts and time. In any case, Qing Shui was not worried. After all, he was the sovereign of the Realm of the Violet Jade immortal.

The sword follows the body, the body leads the sword, a sword user must be able to attain the state of sword and body as one, body and Qi as one, Qi and Spirit as one. Although Qing Shui was only in the beginning realm of sword users, he could still roughly understand some of the laws of the profoundness of the sword arts!

What Qing Shui understood was, using Qi to control one's sword, the breath and execution of the sword techniques must complement each other in addition to one's form and footwork. However, regarding Qi and Spirit as one, Qing Shui had not the slightest clue about it.

However, he did not need to fully comprehend this now. What Qing Shui needed to currently attain, were the three mantras associated with sword arts! Swift, Accurate, Decisive. Especially for the first mantra, Swift!

Currently, Qing Shui, with the strength of one, could already defeat 10. Now, if he managed to successfully comprehend the meaning of swift, he would be akin to a tiger that had grown wings!

Swift! Qing Shui, in order to comprehend the meaning of swiftness, unceasingly tried out different forms of sword attacks, altering their angles.

Just like this, Qing Shui decided to practice the most elementary form of all sword movements. Drawing his sword from the scabbard, Returning his sword back to the scabbard, laido. What Qing Shui currently wanted to master, was the laido technique.

This was because laido only placed emphasis on Swiftness. Once the sword is drawn, one must kill. Swift to the point of dazzling your opponents, leaving the opponent with no chance to defend!

Chapter 34 - laido

Qing Shui assiduously started his practice to master the way of laido, he stood there as images of sword shadows flashed through his mind as he visualized the most simplistic of all sword movements.

After he became exhausted, Qing Shui would take a break and drink water from the pond, eat the wild beasts that he had hunted and even read his books. There were a few times whereby Qing Shui was tempted to pluck the Energy Enhancing Fruit and eat them, but whenever he saw the glistening red color of the fruit, he would unconsciously reject the notion. This unconscious rejection was not born out of the fear that the fruit would be poisonous, however the actual reason was unknown to Qing Shui.

“Why the rush? There is always time, let’s wait for a while longer before I consume the Energy Enhancing Fruits.” Qing Shui decided to temporarily shelve the idea as he started reading the <>, <> and <> again. This was already the second time he read them, not to mention the fact that he had already memorized all of the contents in all three books! However, despite that, Qing Shui knew that he should only stop reading them when he had reached the point of forming an opinion regarding the theories behind the contents! It was only when he reached the point of forming his own opinions that he would be able to review the old and gain new knowledge. Only then would he be qualified to be a teacher!

Of course, he did not neglect the <>, in fact, practicing his sword techniques became the main point of Qing Shui’s focus during this period of time. If people from the World of the Nine Continents knew that Qing Shui was so obsessed and expended such a huge amount of time and efforts in mastering the sort of simplistic movement of drawing the sword and returning it back to the scabbard, they would undoubtedly call him a foolish madman.

Qing Shui relentlessly practiced his laido Technique, he must have already reached the point of executing it hundreds of thousands to millions of times. Practice makes perfect, Qing Shui firmly believed that as long as he practiced this set of simplistic sword movements for a few hundred million times, he would definitely turn this ordinary looking technique into something miraculous!

What Qing Shui wanted, was exactly the effect of turning something ordinary looking into something miraculous! Because <>, formed the foundation of all sword users, as long as one assiduously practiced the basics to the pinnacle, the foundation they built would be tough and solid. This would enable them to reach greater and greater heights in the way of the sword in the future!

Another month passed, inside the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal Qing Shui had already been practicing the laido technique for 3 years... It could be said that in the whole wide world, only Qing Shui had this way of thinking. Only with sufficient determination would one be willing to expend this much time and effort on something like this.

Time after time he practiced the particular movement set of drawing and returning. Qing Shui had no idea how many wooden staves he had damaged over time. In the beginning, the wooden staves he used were only as thin as the width of a thumb. However, as he progressively improved, the wooden staff he used began to get thicker and thicker and now, it was the size of a wrist!

Everytime, he practiced the laido Technique, the amount of friction generated from the force of the movement would be too tough for a normal wooden staff to handle. Qing Shui had to forage for a long time before he found the rare Scryrius Ironwood and fashioned it into a sword. The Scryrius Ironwood was famed for its toughness. Back when he was in the Qing Clan, he remembered seeing furniture made from this type of wood, which was why he recognized this material when he saw it.

What Qing Shui didn't know however, was that other than furniture, there were also plenty of other weapons out there which were created from Scryrius Ironwood.

After finding it, Qing Shui decided to practice against something instead of just solo practice the simplistic set of movements, He stood atop the peak of a high mountain, surveying all four directions, trying to find a good location for his sword practice. Now, it was already August. The climate had turned chilly, but despite only wearing a thin layer of clothes Qing Shui did not fear the cold at all. His constitution had improved to such an extent that, even if he was half naked, the chill would not bother him.

Qing Shui unconcernedly and casually strutted down the mountain, trying to look for a suitable place. He passed by a hillside where there stood a gigantic tree, so large that it would require numerous people to join hands before they could hug it. A gentle breeze blew over, making the yellowed and reddish leaves begin to flutter in the air, falling from the tree branches and landing all over the ground.

Instinctively, Qing Shui executed his laido technique and pierced a leaf with the wooden sword he had fashioned out of Scryrius Ironwood. Following this, he continued piercing leaves. A second leaf, a third leaf..... but ultimately, there were still plenty of leaves that fell to the ground.

Qing Shui's current weapon was a wooden sword fashioned from Scryrius Ironwood, it looked simple and crude, but one could not question its toughness. Before this, he had been using staves to practice the sword techniques... However, in the end, a staff is still a staff and is unable to bring out the essence behind the sword arts. So Qing Shui, using his tyrannical strength, had fashioned the staves into the shape of a sword!

Qing Shui momentarily paused and extended his left fist, sending out a punch against the trunk of the gigantic tree. After which, the impact caused numerous leaves to flutter down from the skies as he brandished the wooden sword and charged towards them.

In the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal, other than practicing his sword techniques, he had also been training his Ghostly Steps. Now, using the unfathomable mysterious Ghostly Steps technique in his footwork, Qing Shui was like a fish in water, fluidly moving amongst the leaves as he stabbed towards them from different angles.

Despite only using a technique that seemed deceptively simple,, it was actually filled with profoundness. No matter the angle or direction, Qing Shui could unleash a torrent of sword stabs that were unparalleled in speed!

Qing Shui spent all of his time punching the gigantic tree and then attack the falling leaves, only after the poor tree was entirely devoid of leaves did he move on in search of other gigantic trees.

In the middle of his search, he came across a large bird that tried to ambush him. Of course, this bird was not as gigantic nor as ferocious as the previous White-headed Inky Jade Condor. Upon discovering the ambush attempt, just using a single strike, Qing Shui executed his Iaido Technique and pierced through the head of the large bird. Despite the grievous injury, the large bird still managed to fly away. It was because his current sword was fashioned out of a staff. The length of it left much to be desired, and it was unable to pierce all the way through to the brain of that huge bird.

Qing Shui sighed, the length of this sword was too short, if he had a larger and longer sword, he was absolutely certain that he would have been able to kill that bird earlier. His current sword could be considered akin to that of a mosquito bite. No matter how fiercely a mosquito bites, it is still unable to kill a person!

Especially when it comes to beasts with huge stature, it would be exceedingly tough for Qing Shui to kill them with a single strike to the head with his current sword. Conversely, if the opponent he faced was a human, he was certain that he would have no troubles at all.

As time passed and all the trees in the vicinity were stripped naked due to Qing Shui. Qing Shui knew that it was finally time for him to return back to the Qing Clan.

Qing Shui had left home for almost half a year! It was going to be November soon. For this past half year, all the leaves in the vicinity had served as target practice for Qing Shui sword technique.

“One more month should be sufficient for me to rush back to the Qing Village,” Qing Shui exclaimed.

This decision to depart the Qing Village was a right one, doing so had gained Qing Shui tons of benefits. The greatest benefit Qing Shui received was not from the mastery of his Iaido Technique but the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal! After months of arduous practice, Qing Shui had already reached a frightening level with regards to his way of the sword. Amongst the thousands of fallen leaves, if one looked closely, one would find an opening created by a sword stab in the center of every leaf. Other than that, if Qing Shui so wished, he could have bunched all the leaves together with his Iaido technique, letting none of them touch the ground.

This was the realm that Qing Shui’s mastery of the sword had reached! The total amount of time he had spent on it could be considered close to 10 years! As the saying goes, ‘10 years to train a sword’, he took precisely 10 years to master this single technique, profoundness in simplicity!

Other than using 2 hours everyday to cultivate inside of the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal, the remainder of his time was used to travel. Looking at all the majestic mountains surrounding him, Qing Shui could not help but feel that humans were just too insignificant. Qing Shui sped in the direction of the Qing Village as he could not wait to get back home.

His Ancient Strengthening Technique, was still stuck at the 48th cycle, no matter what he did, he was unable to break through the bottleneck. Despite this failure, Qing Shui was immensely excited. He believed that as long as he could manage to reach the 49th cycle, then he would break into the 4th heavenly layer of the Ancient Strengthening Technique!

During the night, after ending his cultivation practice inside the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal, Qing Shui helplessly sighed... That bottleneck was akin to a huge mountain blocking his path, no matter what he did he was unable to budge it the slightest... there was no hope of him breaking through!

At this moment, he inclined his head and looked up at the 10 blood-red, glistening fruits that hung on the Energy Enhancing Tree.

“Maybe it’s time for me to consume the Energy Enhancing Fruits?”

Chapter 35 - Consumption of the Energy Enhancing Fruits

Qing Shui glanced at the 10 glistening, blood-red Energy Enhancing Fruits, the thought of eating them and gaining 500 jin of strength directly was extremely appealing to him. It’s a pity that there was the limitation that a human could only consume two Energy Enhancing fruits in their lifetime, because of that, eating more would be pointless. If there was no limit to the stacking effect, he would definitely abuse this to the maximum, and gain an additional 5000 jin of strength every year.

The current Qing Shui, who already possessed a strength level of 15,000 jin, was not overly enamored by the effects granted by Energy Enhancing Fruits. It was only an increment of 500 jin was it not? Not enough to get flustered over. However, as the saying goes, even though the amount of meat a mosquito has is small, it is still meat. Not to mention, he was still sorely unable to break through the bottleneck of the 3rd heavenly layer of the Ancient Strengthening Technique. Although the probability was miniscule, there was still the possibility that consuming the Energy Enhancing Fruits would allow him to break through.

After thinking it through, Qing Shui went in front of the sturdy and vigorous looking Energy Enhancing Tree and sized up the 10 glistening, blood-red Energy Enhancing Fruits. He allowed their savory smell to waft over him before he extended one of his hands and plucked one of the Energy Enhancing Fruit off the branch of the tree.

“Ai! This cannot be possible right? I cannot pluck it off?” Qing Shui estimated that earlier, when he attempted to pluck the fruit off, he had only used a few dozen jin worth of strength, but unexpectedly, he was unable to pluck the fruit off the branch! Not only that, the sturdy Energy Enhancing Tree did not even budge an inch when Qing Shui exerted his strength!

Excellent! Excellent! Qing Shui exclaimed in wonder, after which he exerted even more strength, but he still failed to pluck the fruit from the tree. This time around, Qing Shui had used a few hundred jin worth of strength!

“F*ck!” Getting impatient, Qing Shui directly used an even greater amount of strength and finally succeeded in plucking the Energy Enhancing Fruit. Thinking back, during the moment he succeeded, the strength level he exerted should have been around 500 jin worth of strength!

Qing Shui was absorbed in his thoughts, eating an Energy Enhancing Fruit that gave an increment of 500 jin worth of strength actually required the strength level of 500 jin to pluck the fruit off the branch. This was the first time he had come across such a bizarre thing. However, he was not that surprised by it, as there were even more bizarre things in the World of the Nine Continents. After all, wasn't the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal even more bizarre? Shrugging it off, Qing Shui unconcernedly shook his head. Ever since the day when the appeared in his mind, his ability to comprehend bizarre stuff exceeded that of normal humans!

This fruit, could never have be plucked by an ordinary human...

The size of the Energy Enhancing Fruit was just about the size of Qing Shui's palm, it was emanating slight waves of heat when held. If the Energy Enhancing Fruit was held more tightly, one could feel a scorching heat emanate from it. Looking at the glistening fruit, Qing Shui experimentally took a bite out of it.

En, the texture was a bit tough and a bit crispy, but an extremely savory taste spread out in his mouth, giving rise to an alluring scent! Very quickly, the entire Energy Enhancing Fruit was devoured by Qing Shui! The most surprising thing was that the Energy Enhancing Fruit actually had no seed! After it was eaten, the fruit released waves of fiery Qi that arose from his Dantian, circulated through all of his energy channels and meridians, infusing his body with boundless strength!

Qing Shui activated the as his whole body slowly took on a reddish hue. When compared to his regular attempts at activating the Ancient Strengthening Technique, there was currently a lax but extremely comfortable feeling as he circulated the 48th cycle of Qi. At this moment, Qing Shui finally opened his eyes, but instead of his usual confident expression, there were hints of confusions to be seen in his eyes!

Although he did not manage to break through the bottleneck, Qing Shui was not confused about that. Instead, he was extremely puzzled as to why consuming the Energy Enhancing Fruit actually increased his strength by 2000 jin instead of the 500 jin mentioned! In addition, other than increasing his strength level, the Energy Enhancing Fruit also tempered the tendons and bones of the user! Not only that, there was even the slight effect of impurities cleansing! Too bad that Qing Shui had already undergone two rounds of impurities cleansing. Because of that, this particular effect of consuming the Energy Enhancing Fruit was not displayed. Still, he could not help but be awestruck... This type of fruit, in the hands of a normal human would certainly be considered a great heavenly sent opportunity!

"I thought the description stated that a fruit would only increase one's strength by 500 jin?" Qing Shui scratched his head and had no conclusions despite pondering over it for half a day. In any case, it was not disadvantageous for him, after all, a greater increase was always better than a smaller increase right?

Since there was the limit of two fruits, Qing Shui wasted no time and directly consumed the second Energy Enhancing Fruit. This time around, he did not pause to savor the taste and directly swallowed it. After eating, he could not help but curse "F***!" He only gained an increase of 500 jin of strength!

Reasons flashed through his mind as Qing Shui attempted to make sense of the situation. Could it be, that one could gain greater increase in strength from their first consumption of the fruit? Or was it because his body was special? Maybe it was because he was the current sovereign of the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal.....

After ingesting both of the Energy Enhancing Fruits, Qing Shui gained an increase of about 2,500 jin of strength. This increase in strength could not be looked down upon as it was an approximate increase of 20% of his original strength level. After all, there was a heaven-defying technique which focused on tempering the body of the cultivator. Its main focus was on bodily strength and defense; overall it was a technique to strengthen one's entire body!

Looking atop the tree branches, there were still eight more glistening blood-red Energy Enhancing Fruits. Qing Shui plucked them off and bundled them up in a cloth, preparing to gift two of the fruits to Qing Yi and two to Qing Luo when he returned to the Qing Village. Qing Shui had not yet decided how to distribute the rest of the fruits. In any case, after a year, 100 years would have passed in the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal and he would have 10 more Energy Enhancing Fruits!

During this period of time, Qing Shui also discovered that the crystal clear water inside the pond of the spatial realm would automatically refill itself to its original level after every reset. Qing Shui was ecstatic on this discovery as he knew that this water was not ordinary water, it had mystical properties! After that he took a look at the purplish soil underneath his feet and pondered: "Should I plant something here? If I don't, it would be a waste of fertile land, but what should I plant? Ahh, I know, herbs with medicinal properties!"

After this period of time, Qing Shui was already extremely knowledgeable about Herbal Medicine and Dan Medicine. That was why he wanted to plant crops of medicinal herbs inside the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal. The best thing that could happen was that he managed to plant the valuable and expensive herbs. However, currently, Qing Shui did not even have the seedlings for the cheapest and most common herbs, which was why the Realm of Violet Jade Immortal was still bare.

Holding the thick and heavy wooden sword in his hand, in an moment of impulse, he decided to carve three words onto the crude looking body of the wooden sword.

Even when rushing on the road, trying to return to the Qing Clan as fast as possible, Qing Shui would still hold the wooden sword in his hand, inadvertently practicing his Iaido Technique. There was a saying that a sword user must reach the state of where the sword never left one's hand. Qing Shui was trying to get a feel of that stage.

"I will soon reach home, the year is almost ending, not to forget about my celebration of coming-of-age. Also, after this year I will be considered an adult, able to marry beautiful wives and father many children, as well as struggle for survival in the World of the Nine Continents on my own."

The Qing Clan could also be considered a Cultivator Clan, which was why people from the Qing Clan tended to marry later. For example, eldest grandson Qing Zi had not married yet. This was because, after getting married, it would be bad if they started to enjoy married life too much and indulged in the pleasure of lovemaking to the point of neglecting their cultivation.

So typically, it was those who had low talent in cultivation that could be allowed to marry a wife early and give birth to children. After they started their own family they would then help the Qing Clan handle their various businesses!

In the eyes of the Qing Clan, Qing Shui was placed in the classification of those that were allowed to start their own family. After all, in the eyes of his clan members, he was nothing but trash. There would not be much progress even if he chose to continue on the path of cultivation.

Qing Shui thought about the World of the Nine Continents, especially the region where the Qing Clan was currently residing. Most families would allow their children to marry around the ages of 16-18 and would be considered an elder after they reached the age of 20!

Regarding this type of early age marriage, Qing Shui was unsure of his own feelings towards it. He knew that in his previous world, marriage was only legal when the male was 22 years old and the female was 20. However, if he took into account his real age, then Qing Shui was already 30+ this year. He had hoped that he would be able to find a ravishing beauty to be his permanent bed warmer too.

The moment he thought of women, his thoughts would drift to Shi Qing Zhuang, he could only helplessly sigh because Shi Qing Zhuang was the most beautiful woman he had seen who was unrelated to him, but she was already the fiancée of that arrogant jackass, Situ Bu Fan. Regarding those jade-like beauties from the nearby regions, they were either already betrothed to someone or they were underage lolis!

Qing Shui, for the nearby regions at least, he did not want to bed other people's wives. He also had no interests in lolis. The only type of women that could catch his interest were those that were older than him. Shi Qing Zhuang fits this bill perfectly.....

I'm pretty sure that the author invented this saying. lol I couldn't find anything remotely similar to this. What he meant was that despite the increase in strength being small, there was still an increase in strength.

Chapter 36 - Return to the Qing Clan

As the year drew to a close, Qing Shui, carrying his backpack, finally arrived at the summit of the western mountains near the Qing Clan. The skies had already faded to a reddish yellow as dusk approached. As Qing Shui gazed into the far-off direction, at the entrance of the Qing Mansion, he saw an unforgettable silhouette. That graceful bearing and that charming appearance, it was as if it had been engraved onto his heart, unforgettable for all eternity.

What Qing Shui saw was the silhouette of Qing Yi. At the instant he saw her, an indescribable feeling of warmth materialized in his heart. Unknowingly, his pace got quicker and quicker and reached a terrifying speed as he sped over to Qing Yi.

"Mother!" Tears involuntarily dripped down his face as Qing Shui felt very blessed at this moment. Thinking back on his experiences for the half past year as well as the time when he almost died, but still, he eventually survived and finally returned home to see his mother.

Hearing the familiar voice, Qing Yi felt a shudder in her heart. Looking ahead, she saw Qing Shui lunging forward and she tightly embraced him.

"Ah, my child, why are you crying? Let mother take a good look at you, hmm your hair has grown longer, you have matured, and you have even grown taller!" Qing Yi gently patted Qing Shui's forehead as she started to tidy his unkempt hair.

“Ai, what happened Shui`er? Why is there suddenly a violet dot on your forehead? Strangely enough, it looks really good on you.” Qing Yi asked while she curiously touched that speck of violet-colored pearl in the middle of Qing Shui’s brow

“Eh, n... nothing, I do not know what happened either, maybe an unknown bug bit me. After all, I have been travelling for half a year!” Qing Shui hurriedly found an excuse to starve off Qing Yi’s question. Luckily for him, in the past 2 months, the once shiny, violet-colored speck of jade pearl had dimmed a little and was no longer as eye-catching!

“Mother dearest, why are you here, do you not need to visit Hundred Miles City before the new year?”

“Haha, who would have thought that there would be such a coincidence, I came out today in the hopes of seeing Shui`er, and Shui`er really did appear! Since Shui`er is here, this year, I will not return to Hundred Miles City.” Qing Yi cheekily pinched the cheeks of Qing Shui as she smiled, happiness apparent in her eyes.

Qing Shui felt extremely emotional in his heart, he didn’t know for how long Qing Yi had stood there, waiting for him to come back, but he knew that this was certainly not the first day Qing Yi waited for him outside of the entrance to the Qing Mansion.

“Mother, Shui`er has matured, in the future let me share your worries and burdens for you, alright? Do not worry and just let me handle it.” Qing Shui glanced at Qing Yi, gratitude almost overwhelming him to the point that he did not know what to say. Despite this, he knew that because of the love they shared, there was no need for him to actually say anything.

“Let us go home, it is going to be a new year in a few days. Mother shall personally tailor a new clothes for you to try on.” Qing Yi said as they both walked in the direction of the Qing Mansion.

Looking at the Qing Clan, Qing Shui did not feel like anything had changed, now that the year was coming to an end, he could sense the festive atmosphere everywhere. For instance, at the entrance of Qing Clan, and other families nearby, there were big red lanterns as well as some colored satin sashes hanging atop the entrances, fluttering in the wind. Looking around, he saw the kids of the various families running about as they played in the streets, while the older generations of the families would be shopping for new year goods in the bustling marketplace.

Another year was arriving!

After walking into the Qing Mansion, the only thing that made Qing Shui puzzled was that the normally cold family members actually took their own initiative to warmly greet him as he walked past. As such, Qing Shui too smiled back in response.

“Qing Shui, you are back! Did you just returned?” Qing Hai, looking as if he was about to go out, after seeing Qing Shui and Qing Yi, stopped and warmly welcomed him back even without giving Qing Shui the chance to speak.

“It is good that you are back, your mother had been standing at the entrance for every day, from dawn to dusk, for almost a month! Now that you are back, you must properly take care of your mother!” Qing Hai quickly left after speaking, as he did not want to meet Qing Yi’s fiery gaze.

“Mo... mother...” Qing Shui stuttered for a moment before his voice gave up.

Qing Shui knew that he was very important in Qing Yi's heart, although previously she had agreed to let Qing Shui leave the Qing Village, he knew that she had done so very reluctantly. Despite the worries in her mind and the fear in her heart, she did not say a single word. She had always been alone, suffering in silence.

After awhile, they arrived at the courtyard which belonged to the both of them. After entering the room, Qing Shui took off his backpack and thought of the eight Energy Enhancing Fruits in it.

"Mother, somehow, I fortuitously came across these fantastic fruits during my travels." As he was talking, Qing Shui opened his backpack and took out the glistening blood-red Energy Enhancing Fruits.

"Hundred-Year Fiery Power Fruit!" Qing Yi exclaimed, shocked to her core!

Qing Shui himself was startled too. To think that the Energy Enhancing Fruits from the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal could actually be identified in the outside world as well. Well, might as well, this saves him the trouble of explaining.

"Mother, you can identify this fruit!?" Qing Shui asked, dumbstruck.

"This is the Hundred-Year Fiery Power Fruit, it only grows in the vicinity of thousand-year old volcanoes, it takes a hundred years for them to mature, and once matured, every fruit will increase a human's strength by 500 jin after consumption. And that is not all,, it can also improve one's constitution! Furthermore, this fruit only grows under exceptional circumstances as the requirements are exceedingly harsh to meet, so this fruit could be said to be incomparably valuable. If one use this fruit as a ingredient for pill concoction, the grade of the end product concocted will at least be of the Precious Grade!" Qing Yi explained.

Regarding the effects, Qing Shui already knew all of it, it was just the fruit's name that was different. Qing Shui could only sigh in his heart, when he learned that the fruit was named as Energy Enhancing Fruit, he already felt that it sounded stupid, who could have imagined that this new name, the "Hundred-Year Fiery Power Fruit" would sound even more retarded!

"What a pity!"

"What is a pity?" Qing Shui looked at Qing Yi who was staring at the fruits with emotions akin to regret.

"What a pity that each individual can only consume two of these fruits in a lifetime. If not, then these eight fruits could have enabled your strength to increase tremendously."

"Mother, I thought that these fruits were just ordinary run-of-the-mill fruits so I have already eaten two of them. After which, I could feel that my strength increased a lot and thus, decided to bring these fruits back! Mother, since these fruits can increase strength level as well as improve constitution, hurry up and eat two!"

Qing Yi initially did not eat the fruits because she wanted to save them for Qing Shui. After ascertaining that Qing Shui had already eaten two of the fruits, she no longer hesitated.

"Hurry up and eat two of these fruits, Mother! Who knows, there may be unexpected surprises. You do not have to worry about the fruits running out, I know where the growing place for the fruits is, and it is

in a very well hidden place. I can guarantee that no one can find it but me!” Qing Shui lies became more and more far-fetched.

A lie leading to another lie, eventually ending up with a whole web of lies!

Giving in to Qing Shui’s urgings, Qing Yi consumed two of the Energy Enhancing Fruits and gained an increase of 1000 jin of strength! This made Qing Shui scratch his head in bewilderment, he still had no clue as to why the effects differed for him when he consumed his first fruit inside the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal.

After that, Qing Yi kept the remaining Energy Enhancing Fruits as she took out a few sets of satin clothings. The materials all came from Hundred Miles City, but from the intricate weavings on the set of clothings, Qing Shui could tell that each of these sets of clothes had been personally tailored by Qing Yi for himself.

From back when he was young till now, all of Qing Shui’s clothes had been handmade by Qing Yi.

“Come and try to see if it fits!” Qing Yi happily called out.

Qing Yi help Qing Shui put on a purple satin robe, and it fit him to a T. No one knew better than Qing Yi, not even Qing Shui himself, about the sizes of the clothes and shoes that he wore.

My son looks so much like a charming prince!” Qing Yi said as she admired Qing Shui in his new clothes, laughingly. The smile on her face made Qing Yi look incomparably pure, as if she was radiating sunlight. At this moment, Qing Shui felt extremely blessed in his heart to have a mother like Qing Yi.

Motherly Love was boundless!

Chapter 37 - Night Market at the Town of the Setting Phoenix

After donning the satin robe embroidered with intricate designs, Qing Shui stood in front of the mirror, admiring his reflection and his elegant features. In addition to the barely perceptible speck of violet pearl, he also gave off an unsurpassed air of grace and elegance, but not to the point where people would mistake him for a female. However, his current looks could definitely match up to the definition of the word, “beautiful”.

Qing Shui did not know how other guys would feel if they were called beautiful by others, but personally he would rather look like a beastman than have his current appearance.

Qing Shui bitterly stared at the beautiful clothes on his body. This clothing style was actually quite similar to what that Situ Bu Fan would wear. This could not be considered a new fad as the Qing Clan and the various families in the Qing Village would wear a similar style of clothings every new year. Even Qing Shui himself had worn this style of clothing before, but it had never this awkward. Maybe subconsciously, after meeting Situ Bu Fan, he had no desire to be similar to him in any way.

“If this was not personally tailored for me by mother, I would definitely not wear it!” Qing Shui inwardly grumbled.

As Qing Shui turned his head, and saw the look of happiness in Qing Yi’s eyes, he helplessly sighed. Who’s mother would not wish for their child to be good looking? Plus, how could such a beauty like Qing Yi give birth to an ugly child?

“Looking good, hehe. In the future, I do not know how many girls will fall for our Shui`er.” Qing Yi laughingly stated as she gently straightened Qing Shui’s collar, sleeves and clothes.

“Mother, let us go to the town! I have never been there before, and I remember Qing Hu saying that the town will be bustling and full of activities since it is a new year!”

Looking at Qing Yi, Qing Shui could not help but feel a trembling in his heart as he remembered Qing Hai’s words. He never expected that Qing Yi would actually stand outside the gates and waited for him to return safely, day after day.

“Okay!” Qing Yi agreed! With hints of guilt in her eyes, Qing Yi could not help but sigh. She had always been busy in Hundred Miles City, handling external businesses for the Qing Clan and had neglected Qing Shui in his early childhood years. Qing Yi could only spare time to come back and visit Qing Shui during certain times of the year. Luckily, this child of hers was independent by nature and understood the big picture.

The skies outside had not completely darkened, yet the trees on the streets all were adorned with “Light Stones”. The Light Stones were a kind of pebble, capable of emitting soft rays of light. There were many grades of Light Stones, it was said that the Light Stones used in Qing Village were of the lowest grades, so the light rays emitted from them were the weakest as well. There were rumors that some of the grand cities in the Green Cloud Continent had light stones of the highest grade, capable of emitting light rays that were comparable to the moonlight.

At this time of the night street lights were normally supposed to be on, however, because of the festive season, the street lights were not lit as the light stones took their place. Despite this, the effects of the Light Stones, in Qing Shui’s opinion, was much better than the light lamps. Following Qing Yi, the two of them walked out of the Qing Clan and in the direction of the Town of the Setting Phoenix.

The Paulownia Town got its name from the towering Paulownia Tree planted in the town. Legend has it that during ancient times, a phoenix once resided on top of the Paulownia tree. Eventually, after it departed, the name of the town was changed to the Town of the Setting Phoenix! Even now, one was able to hear the fascinating stories from the Elders, with detailed explanations that were so vivid that it was as if the elders had seen the phoenix with their very own eyes.

Because both Hundred Miles City and Town of the Setting Phoenix were situated some distance away from the Qing Village, taking into consideration the routes to visit Hundred Miles City were all mountainous paths, many people found it very inconvenient to visit it. Hence, this led to most people choosing to visit the nearby prosperous Town of the Setting Phoenix instead, and as it was the only town in the vicinity!

So generally, people would visit Town of the Setting Phoenix for purchasing and selling items! One more main point to note was that even influential merchants from Hundred Miles City would come to Town of the Setting Phoenix to set up stores and conduct their businesses; selling and purchasing beast leather, meat, crops. Their main aim was to target cultivators who tended to go to the 1,000,000 Li mountains to cultivate. These cultivators would usually need supplies, and they would frequently stop at the Town of the Setting Phoenix to make their purchases, or sell the gains they had acquired.

The distance between Qing Village and Town of the Setting Phoenix was about a little over a thousand meters. Despite having the name of "Town of the Setting Phoenix", in reality this town was also considered a part of Qing Village. This was because, in the radius of a 100 Li, all the surrounding region were called the Qing Village. This left Qing Shui feeling a bit awed, it was as if the Town of the Setting Phoenix was the capital of the Qing Clan.

The road was swamped with many people, as the Qing Clan held absolute authority in the region, many people took the initiative to courteously greet them as they passed.

The rowdy kids infected the bustling atmosphere with a sense of innocence as they ran about and played with each other. Looking at such a scene, anyone would smile in their heart.

"Shui`er, how did your training progress during this half year?" Qing Yi asked after looking at the current Qing Shui who was already taller than her by half a head.

"Not too bad!" Qing Shui said as he smiled, giving an answer that made Qing Yi feel very happy.

Since Qing Shui said not too bad, that means that it really was not too bad, Qing Yi knew that Qing Shui would never exaggerate facts to boost his own power. She knew that Qing Shui was not as weak as he looked to be!

As mother and son chatted, unknowingly, they had already arrived at the entrance of the Town of the Setting pheonix. Qing Shui finally saw the legendary Paulownia Tree which gave the town its name. Speaking of which, even Qing Shui found it hard to believe. This was his first time here, in the last 10 years, he had never even stepped foot out of the Qing Mansion, even if he went out, he would only go to the mountains near the Qing Clan.

Qing Shui could not help but be thunderstruck by the size of the towering Paulownia tree. It was over 100m tall in height, and the girth of it requires over 10 humans before they could wrap their hands around the trunk. The many branches and leaves were akin to a gigantic umbrella, he mused to himself "Maybe, a phoenix really did once nest in this tree".

The Town of the Setting Phoenix could not be considered small, in a radius of 10 Li, even now when the night was approaching many prongs of people still remained walking about the streets. Not to mention that this was a festive celebration as the new year was approaching. Everyone was on holiday just to celebrate this occasion, and as such, vendors on the streets were busy hawking their wares, shouting in loud voices as they attempted to attract more customers to their stores! This level of bustling could be compared to some of the cities back in Qing Shui's previous life!

Qing Shui discovered that, after arriving in the town, he often saw a plethora of pretty girls; those with jade white skin, long and slender legs, and those with curvaceous figures. How could there be any shortage of pretty girls with so many people on the streets! It was just that, all of these pretty girls were still some distance away when compared to Shi Qing Zhuang.

There were many pretty young ladies shyly glancing at Qing Shui, everytime Qing Yi noticed this, she would tease: "Shui`er, look, there are so many pretty young ladies that are stealing glances at you."

Qing Shui felt very happy at this moment. He was not happy because there were plenty of beautiful girls for him to see, he was happy because he could tell that Qing Yi was no longer as depressed as before.

As they looked at the people in the streets; parents would accompany their children, teenage guys and girls were dating, the elderly grandparents were all supporting each other as they enjoyed the atmosphere...

Qing Shui unintentionally saw hints of helplessness and unwillingness flashing through Qing Yi eyes and he could roughly guess what Qing Yi was thinking about. However, to the current him, as long as he did not reach the Xiantian realm, there was nothing he could do about it...

“Mother, what are you thinking about? After tonight has passed, I can finally be considered as an adult. You previously promised me that after my coming of age ceremony, you would let me know about the circumstances of my father.” Qing Shui gently held Qing Yi’s hands as he asked. The instant Qing Shui mentioned his father, a frightening, razor sharp, ice cold look flashed in his eyes. Upon seeing it, Qing Yi could not help but tremble as she felt the menacing aura emitted from Qing Shui.

“What mother has promised, I will naturally deliver. However, you must not go against my words!” Qing Yi let out a forced smile as she look at Qing Shui with hints of doting in her gaze.

“Do not worry mother. With me by your side, even if the heavens were to tumble down, I would still be here to support you!”

Chapter 38 - Annual Competition Amongst the Third Generations (1)

“Do not worry mother. With me by your side, even if the heavens were to tumble down, I would still be here to support you!”

Looking at Qing Shui, who was in high spirits, Qing Yi suddenly felt that Qing Shui had become so reliable. That lanky frame of his was suddenly so dependable, she thought as she felt a sweet warmth rise up in her heart. Her son had finally grown up!

Both mother and son slowly strolled the streets, enjoying the lively laughter of the crowd while watching the proceedings of the bustling streets unfold.

Standing at Qing Yi’s side, Qing Shui enjoyed the peace of this moment. Even in the middle of these bustling street, as long as Qing Yi was with him, then even if the skies were to fall Qing Shui would still feel that he was safe. Safety wasn’t from any protection that Qing Yi could afford him, but from the fact that someone in this world loved him. Drawing an analogy, back in his previous world, even in a prosperous, densely populated city, one would feel that the city was empty. This loneliness stems from the lack of kinship and love, which causes one to feel endless frustration in one’s hearts.

It was getting late at night as Qing Shui and Qing Yi both returned to the Qing Clan. There were only two more days left until the new year, although Qing Shui was not clear on the customs of this world, the customs of the Qing Clan were fortunately similar to the ones back when he was on earth. Also, in his previous life, Qing Shui also originated from a poor village and thus the things they did for celebrating the new year here were also similar. Pasting matching couplets, lighting up fireworks, offering incense as a token of respect for the previous generations etc.....

The second day, Qing Shui and Qing Yi did spring cleaning together, actually there wasn't that much to tidy up. Although there were servants, Qing Yi did not like it when other people entered her residence. The only exception to this was Qing Shui.

Yesterday night, despite the late hour after they returned, Qing Shui still used two hours of time and cultivated inside the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal. There was no need to ask questions, with such a beneficial time dilation realm aiding him, how could he not grab every chance he could and abuse the sheet out of it? No matter how busy he was, he would still make time for it.

Looking at the empty space, with that time dilation effect of 100:1, Qing Shui could not help but think to himself "Sigh, what a waste." What a waste it is to not grow spiritual herbs inside the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal. Initially, Qing Shui wanted to grow Precious Grade herbs inside the spatial realm, but how sad was it that the last stalk of the 1000-year Ginseng had already been bought by the Situ Clan. They had even made the trip personally. This goes to show just how valuable a Precious Grade herb was.

"Forget it, I will just wait until I get ahold of some in the future. After all, with 15 acres of earth, I can plant plenty of herbs here, and with the time dilation effect just cultivating the herbs here for a year would be equivalent to a hundred years hehehe." Qing Shui was currently 15 years old, if he started planting herbs now, by the time he was 20, he would have plenty of 500 year old Common Grade spiritual herbs!

After thinking it through, Qing Shui was tremendously excited. If one decided on something, one should simply do it right away as there is no point in hesitating. After all, how could one simply just purchase Precious Grade herbs? Even if they ransacked the entire Hundred Miles City, there may not even be a single Precious Grade herb there. Since he had already decided to start on planting Common Grade herbs first, he still had to demarcate a boundary to ensure that there would still be space for planting Precious Grade herbs in the future.

"After the new year, I shall go and buy a few Common Grade herb seedlings, or forage for some in the wilds. After all, the current me could be considered to have some knowledge on the different types of spiritual herbs!" Qing Shui silently decided that he must do so right away, at the earliest opportunity!

"Ah Qing Shui, when did you return? I heard that for the past half year, you went out to practice your cultivation?"

At the sound of that voice, Qing Shui turned his head. This familiar voice belonged to Qing Yang. They had not met since their last meeting, back when Qing Shui first entered the Qing Clan's practice yard, and all the way to when Qing Yang broke through to the 6th Grade of Martial Warrior. Qing Yang was unlike those youngsters of the other big clans in the Qing Village who looked down and sneered at Qing Shui back in the past.

The usage of the Qing Clan's practice courtyard was not limited to the 3rd generation of the Qing Clan alone. Other than the Qing Clan members, there were plenty of other 3rd generation members from the other big clans in the Qing Village. When comparing the ratio, there were many more members from the other clans when compared to just the Qing Clan. For example, the 3rd generation members from the Lan Clan were also using the courtyard. The Lan Clan members all had outstanding performance throughout these past two years, even more so than the Qing Clan members.

“Hey, it has been a while, it seems like your cultivation has improved again!” After a period of five years, Qing Shui could still discern Qing Hai’s level of strength with a single glance. Currently, based on his observations, Qing Hai was at the peak of the 7th Grade of the Martial Warrior realm.

Qing Shui had a feeling that his younger cousin, the genius Qing You, had long surpassed the 7th Grade of the Martial Warrior realm. He only knew that the honest looking Qing Zi was still at the 8th Grade of the Martial Warrior realm.

“Interesting, seems like the competition this year will be more lively!” Qing Shui grinned. The end of year competition was not only limited to the Qing Clan, other clans could participate as well. However, the Qing Clan had a rule, disciples from the Qing Clan must be at least at the 6th Grade of Martial Warrior realm before they can enter the competition. Previously, a few years ago, a few youths from the other clans passed by Qing Village and arrived just in time for the yearly competition. Naturally, the hot-blooded youths, under the pretext of making friends through exchanging of pointers in martial arts, also entered the competition.

On the surface, although it was termed as a “competition”, in reality it was more of an exchange of pointers. The only other notable clans from the nearby regions were the Lan Clan from the Qing Village, as well as the Feng Clan and the Tong Clan from the Town of the Setting Phoenix.

“Brother Qing Yang, it seems like this year, you can finally unleash your prowess.” Qing Shui smiled.

Qing Yang bitterly smiled and said, “How could it be so easy, do you know not that Lan Ye from the Lan Clan, Feng Xishui from the Feng Clan and Tong Gang from the Tong clan have already broken through to the 9th Grade of the Martial Warrior realm.”

“What? the Martial Warrior 9th Grade? How is this possible? Elder Brother Qing Zi is only at the 8th Grade, does this means that no one from our Qing Clan are capable of fighting against them?” Qing Shui did not want to reveal his true strength yet. How weird, in these five years there was such a huge change, and to think that the other large clan’s 3rd generation members caught up with the strength level of the 3rd generation of Qing Clan. Looks like the decision that year, for the 2nd generation members to consume the Crippling Divine Pill, was also an action with no other recourse available to them.

“Luckily, we still have Qing You, the genius of our Qing Clan. He has already broken through to the peak level of the Martial Warrior realm and his strength should be sufficient to handle those 9th Grade Martial Warriors from the other clans, while leaving the other small fish and shrimps for us.” Qing Yang was beaming when he spoke of Qing You. After all, only when the clans had strong individuals would they be in a better position to fight for future benefits.

Any ne`er-do-well from clans or sects with a thousand years of history, could be a total wastrel or a useless bum and still be able to look down on others.

After that, Qing Shui went around meeting with other people from the Qing Clan, and also went to pay his respects to Qing Luo. Qing Luo had always doted and treasured him, despite his title of trash. It may be because Qing Luo only had one daughter and his fatherly love for Qing Yi was transferred onto him.

“Qing Shui, you have matured a lot during this half past year, though you must remember that one must not force oneself on the road of cultivation. If the way is full of obstacles, there is always some other

paths available for you to take. You should not be overly focused and single-mindedly follow a presumed path that may not be suitable for you when you could soar to greater heights if you selected another path instead. Based on your intelligence, Grandpa shall not try to persuade you anymore. Your own destiny lies in your own hands.” Qing Luo said kindly as he looked at the soon to be adult Qing Shui.

“Do not worry Grandpa, I know my limits, I will be fine.” Qing Shui knew that there was no need to say that much now.

The second day after the beginning of the new year, the streets were still bustling as everyone soaked up the lively atmosphere. Qing Shui talked about many things with Qing Yi, as they strolled in the streets.

On the fourth day, Qing Luo brought the entire Qing Clan to pay respects to their ancestors.

Another year has passed, the previous year had been an extraordinary one for Qing Shui. He was 16 years old this year, and it was also time for the coming of age ceremony as well as the time for him to decide on which path he wanted to leave the imprint of his footsteps on in the future.

small fish and small shrimps in this context refers to weaker opponents that were not worthy of mention

Chapter 39 - Annual Competition Amongst the 3rd Generations (2)

In the blink of an eye, new year’s eve had passed. The older one was, the faster time would pass, but for Qing Shui it was the same no matter how long. Although Qing Shui currently had the advantage of the Realm of the Violet Jade Immortal, even before that he was already known for his perseverance and determination. Every day, at the scheduled time, whether rain or shine, he would always doggedly pursued his path of cultivation.

The more effort Qing Shui put into cultivation, the more it stood out that he was trash. The amount of effort he put into cultivating could be said to be rivaled by none, yet he was not able to break into the 6th layer of the Blue Lotus Art before the age of 16. What a pity... As a result, Qing Shui’s destiny, the path he would walk, at least in the eyes of many, would not have much to do with cultivation.

Today was the 4th day in the new year, and tomorrow was the day for the yearly competition for the 3rd generation! Qing Shui had never once exhibited any interest in this, not even when he was younger. However, this year, he decided to take a look at how the others in his generation would fight.

Qing Shui walked out of his courtyard after he spending two hours, which was equivalent to half a month worth of time, cultivating within the spatial realm, but he was still unable to break through the major bottleneck! Qing Shui felt extremely incapable and powerless. That major bottleneck from the 3rd heavenly layer to the 4th could be said to be a stumbling block that as huge as a towering mountain, obstinately blocking his path in cultivation.

Looking at the huge practice courtyard of the Qing Clan, one could sense that the boisterous atmosphere was even more lively when compared to before. The reason for this was because tomorrow would be the start of the yearly competition between the 3rd generation of each clan. There were many people, including the villagers from the nearby regions, who rushed to the courtyard today and at the same time, secretly probed the strength level of their competitors. This had already been the custom for many years.

Noon was approaching. However, in the dead of winter, despite the sun approaching its zenith, the heat released by its golden rays was not unbearable but almost pleasant instead. The rays of sunlight gave rise to feelings of laziness as one would rather lie down and enjoy the sunlight instead of getting busy elsewhere.

Qing Shui was dumbstruck for a moment after arriving at the Qing Clan's practice courtyard. A layer of vibrant red carpet was laid around the entire courtyard, invoking feelings of celebratory joy and passion as the vibrant color seemed to reflect all of the crowd's excitement.

"Qing Shui ge, I am over here!" Qing Shui turned his head and saw Qing Hu beckoning him over!

Qing Shui didn't have any interactions with Qing Hu for the past half year, he quickly discovered that this cousin of his had already reached the 6th Grade of the Martial Warrior realm! Although Qing Hu had yet to reach the peak of the 6th Grade, Qing Shui still felt deeply moved in his heart. Qing Hu's talent could not be considered bad, he actually managed to improve so much in the short span of half a year!

Looking at Qing Hu's current level of cultivation, Qing Shui would obviously be happy for him! Initially, even if Qing Hu had failed to reach the 6th grade by the age of 16, Qing Shui would still exhaust all other possible means to aid Qing Hu from the shadows in order to increase his cultivation.

"Qing Hu, pretty impressive, but you must work harder in the future if you want to gain a foothold somewhere other than the Qing Village!"

"Haha," Qing Hu laughed in agreement. Qing Hu was about the same height as Qing Shui, only his body was more muscular and well built than Qing Shui's.

Qing Shui knew that the motivation behind Qing Hu's rapid improvements was because of Lan Yan`Er. If not, how could the lazy Qing Hu have made such a huge improvement within such a short period of time!

As the saying went "The blushed face brings about waters of misfortune!" Or more simply, "femme fatale", with mere words, a woman could motivate a man to improve himself, but on the other hand, the woman could also instantly cause the downfall of a man with a mere flick of her fingers.

For an instant, complicated thoughts could be seen swirling about in Qing Shui's eyes, but when Qing Hu looked in his direction, Qing Shui quickly reverted back to normal.

As they squeezed their way through the crowd, Qing Shui felt that there really were a lot of villagers in the courtyard today. Scanning through the faces of the crowd, he only vaguely recognized a few familiar faces, but most of them were unknown to him.

"Qing Shui ge, that guy is the famous Lan Ye from the Lan Clan!" As Qing Shui was scanning through the faces of the crowd, attempting to catch a glimpse of the few cultivators from the other clans who had broken through to the 9th Grade, Qing Hu interrupted him as he pointed to a certain direction.

In that far off direction stood a lanky youth about 20 years of age. He had an extremely lazy countenance, yet his gaze possessed a charm that cause people to look at him twice. His eyes were not filled with the radiance of glory, nor were they cold and brimming with killing intent. It was more of a look filled with unwavering determination.

“He is someone with a heart of steel and his accomplishments certainly aren’t minor things such as simply breaking through to the 9th Grade of the Martial Warrior Realm.” This was what Qing Shui’s intuition was telling him. He could tell the strength of Lan Ye with just a single glance.

Although Qing Shui did not know how strong he was currently, he knew for sure that he was stronger than all of these so called geniuses, but by how much, he could not tell. All he knew was that his current strength was still quite a distance away from reaching the door of the Xiantian realm.

Standing at the side of Lan Ye, was a beautiful teenage girl. The eyes of that girl seemed to exude flashes of brilliance that were capable of enchanting all but the most strong-willed of men. Her fair skin looked even fairer when contrasted with her silky black hair, and those gigantic twin peaks, akin to mountains, in front of her chest were swaying as she walked. In addition to that she also had a willowy waist and long, slender legs, when this was matched with her snow white shoes, the whole image exuded from her was akin to that of a pure and holy saint.

“No wonder the young master of the Heavenly River Clan wants her to be his, so this is the reason why!” Qing Shui glanced at the beautiful girl beside Lan Ye, after turning his head back he found that Qing Hu had long since spotted Lan Yan`Er and was gazing at her intently with a lovelorn expression.

Maybe it was the intense gazes focused on her, but Lan Yan`Er turned her gaze towards the two of them as her beautiful eyes were filled with slight traces of loathing as well as some disdain. After spotting Qing Hu, she raised her fist in response towards the direction of Qing Hu.

The bitterness in Qing Hu’s heart was indescribable. He doesn’t know why, but the love he felt had already reached the point of being carved into his bones and engraved in his heart .” The reason why he had worked so hard at cultivating was all because of her! The Heavens are fair and does not let down one who puts in effort. Because of his hard work, Qing Hu managed to breakthrough into the 6th grade when he was 15 years old, but despite this, the disparity of cultivation levels between him and Lan Yan`Er was too huge, as a sense of self-defeat unknowingly gushed forth in his heart.

Although Qing Shui was also a novice in terms of love and relationships, he could still understand the pain Qing Hu was going through. After all, during the years where he could not cultivate, the sneers, humiliation and the pain that he felt, although it could not be directly comparable, it was still somewhat similar to what Qing Hu was feeling right now.

After the initial glance, Qing Shui did not spare another glance at her. Despite her beauty, when compared to Shi Qing Zhuang, Lan Yan`Er was still lacking a bit. Who asked Qing Shui to only like women that were older than him? Not only must their bodies be fully developed, their minds had to be mature as well. Qing Shui just doesn’t give a damn about immature girls who act coquettishly and throw tantrums all the time. Speaking of acting coquettishly, Qing Shui actually liked it when a mature girl does that. When a older woman does that, they give off a feeling of rapture that draws him in, completely different from the immature youngsters.

After this, Qing Shui finally left with Qing Hu. For this past half a year, they have had no interactions with each other. Naturally they would have many things on which they wanted to update each other on. After all, they were cousins who had played together since their youth.

“Qing Hu, cultivation has no limits, since you are still young you should take the chance and immerse yourself in cultivation. For stuff like women, after you become strong, many women will naturally throw themselves into your embrace. When that happens, you will find that the beautiful women from before are not worth a single dime.”

Qing Shui felt that the women from Hundred Miles City, be it in cultivation, demeanor, dress or even in terms of speech, were all far above that of the women from the villages.

Although all of this was only possible because of the difference in background and money. Men would always gravitate towards women of a certain standard. Giving birth to beautiful daughter, marrying a pretty wife? Money both directly and indirectly played a part in this.

Of course, there were exceptions to this as well. Some girls from the villages would sometimes have an aura that even eclipsed that of those from the cities. However, it was very rare for this to happen, and even if that happened, then that precious gem would be quickly snatched away by others. After all, how could people just wait for you to come and grab it?

Regarding the thoughts of Qing Shui, which were noticeably different from the norm, Qing Hu felt that they were slightly bizarre, yet somehow seemed to make sense. Every time he spoke to Qing Shui, it was as though a burden in his heart would be reduced, and Qing Hu would feel slightly more relaxed because of it.

“Tomorrow is the competition, Qing Shui ge, will you take part in it?”

The saying meant that women brings nothing but trouble, reference to Helen of Troy, whose great beauty was the source of disaster. Don't get me mistaken, I love women and I respect them.

Chapter 40 - Annual Competition Amongst the 3rd Generation (3)

Qing Shui was already up and about as dawn broke. After his morning ablutions, he would enter the Qing Clan's courtyard and do some simple stretches. The air in the morning was at its freshest during this part of the day. What Qing Shui wanted to do was to cultivate the Qi in his body by practicing a simple breathing technique, simply by breathing deeply.

The placed emphasis on the refinement of one's body and bones. Everyday without fail, Qing Shui would practice the Solitary Rapid Fist, getting himself used to the harmonization of the muscles of his body, amplifying his strength to the highest level. In a perfect state of harmonization, not to mention a strike containing 100% of his power, even strikes amplified to 200% or higher were possible.

The silence in the courtyard was broken by the growling from the mastiffs lying about, but after seeing that it was Qing Shui, they soon quieted down and went back to their normally docile posture.

“Ghostly Steps!” Shadows flashed as Qing Shui sped across the courtyard. Qing Shui knew that this set of Ghostly Steps were derived from the essence of all escape techniques. It could even be used to evade and flee when one's opponent was monstrously stronger than oneself, solely based on this fact one could tell how unfathomably mysterious this technique was.

Not only that, but in his repertoire was also the Solitary Rapid Fists! Qing Shui could not help but feel that both the Ghostly Steps and Solitary Rapid Fists complement each other perfectly, almost to the point where one could call it a flawless combination. The two skills he unlocked from the Ancient

Strengthening Technique, could actually complement each other to such a degree... This discovery gave Qing Shui pause. Can other skills I obtain from breakthroughs complement each other as well? What a pity that he had still not broken through to the 4th heavenly layer despite such a long time. For the skills that he had already unlocked, the hidden weapon arts, Solitary Rapid Fist as well as Ghostly Steps, he had already cultivated them to a state where it was tough for him to improve them more in the near future.

However, Qing Shui knew that progress on the path of cultivation was akin to a sailing a boat against the currents! Not only would it be hard to break through after a certain level, if one stagnated for too long, one might actually regress as well.

The quintessential essence of the Solitary Rapid Fists lied in both the words "Solitary" and "Rapid", one must train to the point where a single strike was so fast and agile that it would transform into two, two to four and so on. As for the Ghostly steps, the quintessential essence of it lied in the word "Ghostly". One must cultivate the technique to the point where one would be as unpredictable as a shadow, and as illusive as a ghost.

In addition, Qing Shui was now proficient in the usage of swords. Contemplating on the essence of the basic sword techniques through laido, following the three-worded mantra - Swiftiness, Accuracy, Decisiveness. Swiftiness to the point of lightning, Accuracy refers to the way one wield the sword while Decisiveness pertained to the mental state. The essence of the sword could be boiled down to: "It is fine if I do not draw my sword, but when I do, I must obtain victory with a single strike, moving first to counter against any possible retaliation."

It was still morning after he finished his regime, Qing Shui could hear the sounds of the store owners, the sounds of children hoo-hahing through the streets and the melodious sounds of chirping birds.

As he entered his residence, a delicious smell wafted over. Qing Shui looked at the table only to see Qing Yi smiling at him. Laid on the table were two dishes of vegetables and two dishes of wild boar meat, the smell was so alluring that it whet his appetite.

"Shui`er, hurry up and eat your meal, let us go and watch the competition later. Observing the battles of others can only bring benefits to your cultivation, even more so than just merely cultivating." Qing Yi beseeched Qing Shui to eat as she explained the benefits to him.

"En, I have long since planned to watch the yearly competition today mother, I am sure that today will be interesting~" Qing Shui said with a grin. Looking at the elegant features of Qing Shui, one would be shocked to find that his table manners were somewhat lacking. Armed with a voracious appetite, he devoured everything with a speed that would rival that of combat soldiers. Qing Yi could only watch with a stunned expression on her face.

In his eyes, he didn't bother much about what people thought about him. Qing Shui knew perfectly well that power was everything. If you are strong enough, then no matter what you do or how boorish you are, people would start to emulate you. If you were weak, then no matter how elegant you appeared to be, people would still only think of you as a sissy.

"Eat slower dear, no one is going to snatch the food away from you." Qing Yi hurriedly said as her eyes bubbled with laughter.

“Mother, who will maintain the order and be the host for this year’s competition?” Qing Shui suddenly thought of a question.

“The judges this year will include the Qing Clan, Lan Clan, Feng Clan and the Tong Clan, as well as someone from Hundred Miles City.” Qing Yi replied readily. It seemed like this had always been the case for the past as well.

When Qing Shui rushed to the courtyard, he found that the courtyard was swamped with a sea of people. It was as if everyone in the surrounding regions came if they could make it! It was no wonder however, the societies in the World of the Nine Continents were cultivation-oriented.

Despite the area being densely packed with people, there wasn’t a single soul to be seen in the spacious arena. At the rear area of the arena were representatives from the various clans who all sat on chairs with a table in front of them.

Standing at the bottom of the judging area, were members from each of the judge’s clans. For example, the 3rd generation members of the Qing Clan would congregate together with those of the 2nd generation. It was the same for the Lan Clan, Feng Clan and Tong Clan. Of course, there were also many separate groups of people standing there in disperse droves, but these were those who had neither status nor power.

Qing Shui walked towards the Qing Clan members.

“Oh Qing Shui is here, I thought you always hated watching these yearly competitions?” Qing Zi said laughingly as he glanced in Qing Shui’s direction.

“Haha, this event is so hyped up that everyone around me says that this year is going to be interesting. Also, this may be my last chance to watch this event. After all, after the coming of age ceremony, I do not know where my path will lead me.” Qing Shui replied with a slight smile on his lips.

Greetings unceasingly flowed from the surroundings and Qing Shui smiled back towards them. All of the 3rd generation members had arrived, and those who were 6th grade martial warrior and higher; Qing Zi, Qing You, Qing Hui, Qing Yang..... Qing Hu and Qing Bei.

The current cultivation level of Qing Bei was already at the peak of the 7th Grade and was just a hair’s breadth away from breaking through to the 8th grade. She really lived up to her name as the little genius of the Qing Clan. Despite being one of the youngest, her martial cultivation had already surpassed many others.

A short moment later, Qing Yi and the rest of the 2nd generation arrived. On the stage was Grandpa Qing Luo, which Qing Shui naturally knew. Next to him was Lan Yu from the Lan Clan, which Qing Shui had met a few times before. However, regarding the Tong Clan and the Feng Clan, Qing Shui had never met their judges before. The Tong Clan sent out a middle-aged burly brute while the Feng Clan’s representative was a charming young woman.

Qing Shui could not help but glance over at the charming young woman a couple of times. Her skin was fair and as smooth as white silk, her pair of phoenix eyes were also extremely captivating to look at. She wore a sky-blue dress that tightly hugged her curvaceous figure, displaying her body’s contour for all to

admire as a slight smile hung on her mature and seductive face. Qing Shui was unable to tell her exact age, but he guessed that she was not that young.

As Qing Shui was lost in his appreciation of the Feng Clan beauty, he got shocked back into reality after seeing Situ Nan Tian standing on the stage. To think that the representative judge from the Hundred Miles City would be this sly old fox, Situ Nan Tian. After noticing the presence of Situ Nan Tian, Qing Shui could not help but scan the crowds a few more times, as he did not know whether Situ Bu Fan would also be here amongst the spectators, together with Shi Qing Zhuang. Deep in his heart, Qing Shui had a strong desire to look upon the ice cold countenance of Shi Qing Zhuang again...

As Qing Shui had expected, the main judge amongst the five was that sly old fox! Situ Nan Tian explained the rules once, as his loud and sonorous voice reached everyone in the crowd.

The rules were common ones: no killing, no poison, no hidden weapons, and once the opponent surrenders, the winner must stay their hand.

After the rules were explained, the start of the competition was immediately announced. This made Qing Shui wonder if all cultivators possessed such a direct manner.

However, what made Qing Shui surprised was that the rules also stated that, out of all the competitors today, the last one standing could be considered the strongest across the 3rd generations.

Still, it was not so bad, as everyone had three chances on stage. This meant that if you were defeated in the first round, you could still choose to fight until you were defeated three times. The only prerequisite was that you were still be able to participate!

After the start of the competition was announced, the main judge departed. Silence reigned in the courtyard as the spectators waited to see who would be the first participant. After a short moment, Qing Hu stepped up on the arena.

The Qing clan knew that, as this were their home ground, this martial competition should naturally begin with one of their own!