

Canon 81

Chapter 81: I'm Not a Weakling

Zhou Shu smiled brightly. But in Yin Wuyou's eyes, for some reason, she felt that this smile might not be a good thing for some people.

"I've said what I needed to say. You can handle the rest yourself." Yin Wuyou walked out proudly while speaking. "You're under me. I won't allow anyone to bully you. You can rest assured about this."

Under you? Zhou Shu pouted. In your dreams!

...

After sending Yin Wuyou off, Zhou Shu returned to the hall, sat on a chair, and rubbed his chin. *That old thief's tricks are really nonstop!*

Zhou Shu didn't need to think to know that Yin Wuyou had come today because someone was stirring up trouble!

Yin Wuyou had previously promised him that as long as the 0th Workshop developed a new weapon within three months, she would consider that Zhou Shu had completed his mission.

It hadn't even been a month, but Yin Wuyou had already come to tell him that the 0th Workshop had to take part in the monthly examination.

Wasn't this obvious?

That old thief really has some ability. Even the grand minister couldn't do anything about it.

From Yin Wuyou's attitude, it was obvious that she was unwilling.

Even though she was unwilling, she had no choice but to do it. It could only mean that she had been forced to do so.

Zhou Shu wasn't surprised by this. Even though she was a princess, she couldn't do whatever she wanted, which was normal.

Thinking about how the 0th Workshop's materials had been cut off, Zhou Shu would never believe that Zhu Chuanfeng wasn't behind this matter.

This Grand Craftsman was indeed not an ordinary person. His influence was greater than Zhou Shu had expected!

But if the Grand Craftsman thought that he would admit defeat just like that, he was wrong.

So what if you're a Grand Craftsman? I'm not afraid of you. Zhou Shu snorted coldly. Old bastard, other than being older than me, what other strengths do you have?

Just because a tiger doesn't show its might, do you think it's a sick cat?

Zhou Shu was truly a little angry.

He had never provoked Zhu Chuanfeng, but this old thief was like a ghost that refused to leave. It truly made him feel disgusted.

If not because he wasn't sure if there were any experts around the old thief, Zhou Shu really wanted to rush over and beat him up.

Of course, he could only think about it.

If he really killed a Grand Craftsman, Great Xia would definitely not let him off easily and would certainly investigate to the end.

With Zhou Shu's current strength, he couldn't ignore the existence of the Great Xia Imperial Court.

If he had the strength of a first-rank martial artist, he wouldn't hesitate to kill the old thing directly.

Of course, if he really had the strength of a first-rank martial artist, Zhu Chuanfeng wouldn't dare to scheme against him no matter how much courage he had.

You want to shut down my workshop? Dream on.

Zhou Shu snorted coldly. He stood up and walked toward the backyard.

He wanted to forge the last few Spring Embroidered Sabers. A new weapon was about to appear in the Legendary Armament Canon. At that time, he wanted to see who would still dare to say that the workshop had no results!

[You receive a reward of five years of cultivation because the Huben Saber you forged effectively completed a kill!]

[You receive a reward of three years of cultivation because the Huben Saber you forged effectively completed a kill!]

...

Zhou Shu had just stepped into the backyard when a few messages suddenly appeared in front of him. Within his dantian, a powerful force descended from the sky, and a berserk energy instantly surged into his limbs and bones.

Crack!

The Dragon Elephant Prajna Technique broke through the barrier of the eighth level and directly went up to the ninth level!

An endless stream of energy surged into his body. He felt as if his entire body was full of power. Right now, he would be able to throw an elephant out like a shot put.

This is... Zhou Shu's eyes lit up. It's only been a few days since the army set off, and they've already encountered enemies?

After he thought about it carefully, the Huben Sabers that Meng Bai wanted were for the scouts, so it was normal for them to encounter enemies ahead of time.

And judging from the feedback, the people they encountered were not ordinary people.

Previously, Zhou Shu already knew that when the Huben Sabers completed a kill, the benefits he obtained would not necessarily be two years of cultivation. Depending on the strength of the one killed, the amount of cultivation he obtained would also change.

If it was a ranked martial artist, his cultivation might even double.

Back then, his Golden Bell Shield Technique had broken through to the sixth level after a Horse Slaying Saber killed a ranked martial artist.

The ninth level of the Dragon Elephant Prajna Technique... I will soon be comparable to the King of the Golden Wheel at his peak.

Zhou Shu was happy. The growth of cultivation was always something to be happy about.

But if I want to reach the tenth level, I need five hundred and twelve years of cultivation. It's a long way to go.

The Huben Sabers that could give him cultivation were only the 100 sabers he had personally forged. It would take a while before he could receive 512 years of cultivation.

But when an army marched out, what they didn't lack the most were opportunities to fight. Zhou Shu didn't need to worry about not having a chance to become stronger.

The scouts have already met the enemy. It seems that the army will go into battle soon.

If the Hundred Refinements Ring Pommel Sabers and Horse Slaying Sabers can complete enough kills, my Heavenly Saber Art and Golden Bell Shield Technique should be able to break through.

Putting aside the Heavenly Saber Art, if the Golden Bell Shield Technique could break through to the twelfth level, it would be equivalent to having an invincible body.

At that time, Zhou Shu reckoned that even a first-rank martial artist might not be able to kill him.

Won't I be able to do whatever I want then?

However, it was even more difficult to level up the Golden Bell Shield Technique than the Dragon Elephant Prajna Technique. If he wanted to reach greater mastery, it would probably take quite some time.

It's a pity that the Spring Embroidered Sabers weren't equipped for the army. I wonder how long it will take to upgrade the Visualization of the Five Mountains' True Form.

Zhou Shu had agreed to supply the Spring Embroidered Sabers to the Divine Constable Bureau. Although the Divine Constable Bureau had many opportunities to fight, it was still much less than the army.

He could only hope that the Divine Constable Bureau's opponent's cultivation level would be higher and that the feedback of the Spring Embroidered Sabers completing kills would be greater.

If the Legendary Armament Canon could reward me with a set of flying sword techniques, it would be awesome.

When the time comes, I will take Zhu Chuanfeng's head with a swoosh. Who would know that I did it?

I can't kill the old thief now, but I can't just let this matter rest!

I have to think of a way. It's not my style to take a beating without retaliating!

This old thief is a Grand Craftsman. He has money and status. For him to use such unscrupulous means to make me his disciple, something must be up!

Regardless of whether it was in Great Xia or any other country on the land, a Grand Craftsman was an existence with an extraordinary status.

Their status was similar to that of the academicians in Zhou Shu's previous life. Ordinary benefits wouldn't attract their attention.

Zhou Shu couldn't imagine just how valuable the rewards of Great Xia's military parade would be to be able to make Zhu Chuanfeng's heart be tempted to such a point.

This was definitely not just because the military parade rewards were valuable.

Furthermore, in Grand Xia's military parade, the final reward was just for a Forging Master. The Imperial Court wouldn't reward something too precious. This reward had more meaning than value.

More importantly, it was an honor to be rewarded.

Zhu Chuanfeng can't be a fool since he could become a Grand Craftsman. There's definitely a reason why he has to do this!

If it's just for the reward given by the Imperial Court during the military parade, there's no need for him to take such a roundabout route. As long as he asks, Great Xia's emperor will definitely give it to him.

His actions can only mean that he doesn't want others to know that he needs the reward!

An idea flashed through Zhou Shu's mind. He seemed to have grasped something.

If, for some reason, Zhu Chuanfeng has to get the reward from the military parade, and this reason can't be known to others, then what could the reason be?

From instructing Xiao Zongshui and Zhen Cai to kidnap him, cutting off the supply of materials for the 0th Workshop, and then making things difficult for the 0th Workshop, all these things had already far surpassed the limits of Zhu Chuanfeng's love for talent.

He had a faint feeling that if he could find out the reason, then he would be able to turn the tables and flip Zhu Chuanfeng over!

All of this is just my guess. I still need to verify it.

If I want to overturn Zhu Chuanfeng, I have to go all out. Otherwise, not only will I not be able to beat the tiger, but I'll end up getting injured.

I have to take some risks to investigate this matter.

Although he wasn't afraid of Zhu Chuanfeng's schemes, and there was nothing he would be able to do to his workshop, people's energy was limited.

Being on guard against Zhu Chuanfeng's schemes all day long, how would he be able to work in the future?

Since Zhu Chuanfeng wanted to fight, Zhou Shu would fight him!

I have the Visualization of the Five Mountains' True Form. It can conceal my aura and remain as immovable as a mountain. Even people with cultivation much higher than mine might not be able to detect my traces.

Zhou Shu calculated in his heart. *Moreover, my Dragon Elephant Prajna Technique has already broken through to the ninth level. Even if I meet a fourth-rank martial artist, I should still be able to put up a fight.*

Even if my luck is extremely bad, I should be able to survive against a third-rank Grandmaster.

Zhu Chuanfeng is only a Grand Craftsman, not a Divine Craftsman. It's impossible for him to have more than a third-rank expert guarding his residence. It's impossible for a first or second-rank expert to be a guard for a Grand Craftsman.

In that case, the risk isn't too high.

So I'll go to Zhu Chuanfeng's residence tonight and investigate what secrets he has!

Zhou Shu made up his mind. Although he was cautious, he wasn't afraid of trouble.

Since trouble had already come knocking on his door, he had to resolve it no matter what.

Before I go, I'll fill up the number of Spring Embroidered Sabers in the Legendary Armament Canon first. Perhaps the next weapon will be useful.

Zhou Shu didn't dwell on anything else. There were still a few hours until sunset. His cultivation had improved, and the speed at which he forged should be even higher. Before nightfall, he might be able to forge the last few Spring Embroidered Sabers. At that time, the next weapon in the Legendary Armament Canon should appear..

Chapter 82: Visiting the Grand Craftsman's Residence at Night

Chang'an, the capital of Great Xia, had always been known as the city that never sleeps.

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There was no curfew here, so the main streets were still bustling with people and pedestrians even late at night.

Teams of city guards were constantly patrolling the streets. Near the palace, the patrolling guards became the Huben Troops.

Someone had once calculated that there were as many as 30,000 soldiers patrolling Chang'an every day.

With so many people patrolling the city, there was almost no blind spot in Chang'an.

Of course, no matter how tight the security was, it was not flawless.

As long as one was human, there would always be flaws.

Zhou Shu stood at the corner of the street and observed for the greater part of the night. He grabbed hold of the gap between two squads of patrolling soldiers. In the blink of an eye, he crossed the Zhu Estate's high wall like a bolt of lightning.

Like a nimble cat, Zhou Shu landed quietly on the ground. He visualized the Five Mountains' True Form in his mind, and his aura instantly became invisible, as if he had become a mountain.

At this time, even if someone passed by Zhou Shu, as long as they didn't see him with their own eyes, they wouldn't be able to sense him.

The Visualization of the Five Mountains' True Form had endless uses. Although Zhou Shu was only at basic mastery, it was enough for him to travel the world and deal with some second-rate experts.

Zhu Chuanfeng's mansion was gigantic, and there were countless servants inside.

Moreover, there were actually squads of guards patrolling his residence!

This old thief is really extravagant!

But upon thinking about it, Zhou Shu could understand why. How could there be no guards at a Grand Craftsman's residence?

In a Grand Craftsman's residence, there would definitely be many ranked weapons.

Ranked weapons were priceless. Without guards, a Grand Craftsman's residence would be completely emptied out.

Indeed, even though he's a Grand Craftsman, it's impossible for there to be too many ranked martial artists as guards.

Ranked martial artists could already obtain official positions. Under normal circumstances, they wouldn't easily pledge allegiance to anyone.

Of course, there would also be some ranked martial artists who became the guests of Grand Craftsmen in order to increase their strength. This situation wasn't rare.

This was probably the case in Zhu Chuanfeng's residence.

Zhou Shu activated the Visualization of the Five Mountains' True Form, and his spiritual sense was extremely sharp. He could sense that there were a few places in the Zhu Estate that felt dangerous.

Those few auras resembled ferocious tigers hiding there. Once anything happened to the Zhu Estate, they would definitely erupt with unimaginable power.

Apart from this, Zhou Shu didn't find many ranked martial artists among the patrolling guards.

Fortunately, I didn't act rashly. If I really did try to assassinate Zhu Chuanfeng, I might not be able to succeed. Even if I did succeed, those dangerous auras might be able to stop me from leaving. If they manage to hold me back until the experts of the Imperial Court arrive, I might not be able to escape.

However, he hadn't come here to assassinate Zhu Chuanfeng. As long as he was careful not to alert those auras, it wouldn't be too dangerous.

Zhou Shu had never been to the Zhu Estate before. He didn't know where Zhu Chuanfeng lived, so he could only follow the layout of the residence and search for a few places that Zhu Chuanfeng most likely lived.

He silently observed the patrolling guards. After two hours, he began to move like a ghost.

After he broke through to the ninth level of the Dragon Elephant Prajna Technique, his physical strength had already reached an inconceivable realm.

What followed was the improvement of his physical fitness.

Even if he didn't know any lightness techniques, the speed at which he moved was enough to make people flabbergasted.

One, two...

Zhou Shu followed his understanding of the layout of the estate and found a few places that might be Zhu Chuanfeng's courtyard.

He searched a few places but found no trace of Zhu Chuanfeng.

Is the old crook not in his residence tonight?

Zhou Shu looked at the sky. It was already late at night. In four hours, it would be dawn.

If he still couldn't find Zhu Chuanfeng, he would have no choice but to return.

I'll search one last place. If I still can't find him, I'll come back tomorrow!

Before coming here, Zhou Shu had already made preparations for a long battle. It definitely wouldn't be that easy to find evidence against Zhu Chuanfeng.

He had never thought that he would be able to catch Zhu Chuanfeng's weakness with just one night visit.

Seizing the right moment, Zhou Shu pressed himself against the wall and quickly moved forward. He passed through two or three corridors before arriving at the next location.

The room was dark.

Zhou Shu leaned beside the window and listened for a moment.

There was no sound of breathing in the room. Zhou Shu could sense that the room was empty.

Sure enough, things aren't that easy.

Zhou Shu wasn't discouraged. He left the Zhu Estate carefully, leaving no trace behind.

In the following two days, every night, Zhou Shu would quietly leave his residence and sneak into the Zhu Estate.

On the third day, he finally saw Zhu Chuanfeng!

Zhou Shu started the Visualization of the Five Mountains' True Form with all his might. It was as if he had become one with nature as he disappeared into the darkness.

If no one walked up to him and touched him, it would absolutely be impossible to discover his existence.

Not far away, Zhou Shu saw Zhu Chuanfeng through a window.

Sitting opposite Zhu Chuanfeng was a middle-aged man with an aura as deep as the ocean.

Very strong! The moment Zhou Shu saw the middle-aged man, he made his judgment.

This middle-aged man was definitely not weaker than the assassin he had killed with the Spring Embroidered Saber!

In other words, he was very likely a fifth-rank or even fourth-rank powerhouse!

He had almost discovered Zhou Shu when he approached earlier. Fortunately, Zhou Shu had activated the Visualization of the Five Mountains' True Form in time!

Even so, the middle-aged man still carefully inspected his surroundings before returning to the house.

Zhou Shu was currently hiding in a dark corner. He drove the Visualization of the Five Mountains' True Form to its limit, not daring to move. If the middle-aged man discovered him, it would be a huge battle.

Zhou Shu wasn't afraid of fighting. After all, if they fought, he had a higher chance of winning.

But the monthly workshop examination was taking place tomorrow. If he still couldn't find Zhu Chuanfeng's secret, then he could only passively accept the challenge.

Even so, Zhou Shu wasn't afraid. But he didn't like the feeling of being led by the nose.

He preferred to keep things under his control!

Now that he had finally found where Zhu Chuanfeng was, he couldn't give up so easily!

Zhu Chuanfeng looked at the middle-aged man opposite him and said in a deep voice, "Did you find out? Was Zhen Cai's death an accident, or is someone targeting me?"

Perhaps it was because Zhu Chuanfeng was in his residence, he didn't lower his voice.

"There are no external injuries on Zhen Cai's body," the middle-aged man said solemnly. "The way he died looks as though his soul was destroyed."

"His soul was destroyed?" Zhu Chuanfeng frowned.

"The person who destroyed Zhen Cai's soul without harming his body is at least a Grandmaster," the middle-aged man said in a deep voice. "If a Grandmaster wanted to target you, he wouldn't have attacked Zhen Cai. He would have just attacked you directly."

No matter how one looked at it, a third-rank Grandmaster's status was no less than a Grand Craftsman's.

If a Grandmaster wanted to target Zhu Chuanfeng, there was absolutely no need to kill Zhen Cai. Not only would it not affect Zhu Chuanfeng the slightest, but it would instead seem petty.

"In my opinion, Zhen Cai's death was a coincidence. He might have encountered something he shouldn't have," the middle-aged man said.

In a sense, this world was very dangerous. If one accidentally bumped into a scene where some experts were unwilling to be seen by others, then it would completely make sense even if they were killed.

"What bad luck!" Zhu Chuanfeng said with a gloomy expression.

Zhen Cai was one of his more capable subordinates. Now that he had died, he felt like there was a person missing from his side able to accomplish things.

"You've been lucky for twenty years. There's nothing to be dissatisfied with," the middle-aged man said coldly.

"What do you mean? You expect me to be unlucky?" Zhu Chuanfeng said angrily. "You're my younger brother! If I'm unlucky, you won't end up well either! It's all because of my money that you are able to have your current cultivation!"

The middle-aged man lowered his eyes and said indifferently, "I didn't mean that. What do you plan to do now?"

"Hmph!" Zhu Chuanfeng was still fuming as he said, "Tomorrow is the monthly examination of the Forging Division workshops. I've already made arrangements. When the time comes, the 0th Workshop will definitely be shut down. If that boy surnamed Zhou doesn't want to become a Forging Apprentice with nothing, he can only bow his head to me!"

"Will it work?" the middle-aged man asked, confused. "The boy surnamed Zhou is only a Forging Apprentice. Can you really pass this hurdle by taking him in as your disciple?"

"You don't understand forging." Zhu Chuanfeng looked confident. "It's precisely because this kid is a Forging Apprentice that he's useful! If he were already a Forging Master, it would be difficult to handle."

The middle-aged man frowned and seemed even more confused.

Outside, Zhou Shu was also confused, not understanding what Zhu Chuanfeng meant. What does he want from me?

To be honest, he still didn't know what Zhu Chuanfeng was plotting. The Huben Saber, Hundred Refinements Ring Pommel Saber, Horse Slaying Saber, and Spring Embroidered Saber?

Although these four standard sabers could bring some benefits, it was impossible for a Grand Craftsman to take a fancy to them.

Apart from this, Zhou Shu couldn't think of anything else that was worth Zhu Chuanfeng's efforts.

The Legendary Armament Canon?

It was impossible for Zhu Chuanfeng to know of the existence of the Legendary Armament Canon.

Zhou Shu continued to listen.

“How’s the matter I asked you to do?” Zhu Chuanfeng continued.

“I’ve brought the weapon and stored it in the storeroom,” the middle-aged man said.

“Did you encounter any trouble?” Zhu Chuanfeng’s expression was icy.

“It’s all settled. There won’t be any problems,” the middle-aged man said. “Big Brother, it’s been twenty years. Let’s stop.”

“Stop? Tell me how to stop?” Zhu Chuanfeng said coldly. “Do you believe that if I stop now, our corpses will be hung on Chang’an’s city walls tomorrow!”

“Surely it’s not to that extent,” the middle-aged man said weakly.

“Not to that extent? Hmph, naive! You don’t have to worry about these things. Just do what I tell you to do!” Zhu Chuanfeng said coldly.. “Also, get a few people to keep an eye on that Zhou boy. Don’t let anything go wrong!”

Chapter 83: The Grand Craftsman’s Secret

Zhu Chuanfeng and the middle-aged man, who seemed to be his younger brother, whispered for another fifteen minutes before the middle-aged man got up and left.

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Zhu Chuanfeng wrote something for a while before going to bed.

After a long while, some noises came from a corner of the courtyard.

Zhou Shu was getting restless.

Zhu Chuanfeng was just a few dozen feet away from him. At this distance, he was completely confident that he could kill Zhu Chuanfeng before reinforcements arrived.

The problem was, how was he going to get away after killing him?

Grand Craftsmen were the treasures of Great Xia. If someone dared to kill one, Great Xia would definitely not let this matter rest.

‘Pursuit to death’ was definitely not just empty words.

Furthermore, the Zhu Estate truly had several experts.

If Zhou Shu really killed Zhu Chuanfeng, he might not be able to escape unscathed.

Zhou Shu would never sacrifice his life for this old thief.

What did Zhu Chuanfeng and his brother mean earlier? Zhou Shu frowned slightly.

He didn’t know Zhu Chuanfeng’s younger brother’s name. He hadn’t even heard that Zhu Chuanfeng had a younger brother.

Of course, he had never paid much attention to such matters.

He had eavesdropped for half the night. He seemed to have heard a lot of things but also seemed to have heard nothing.

Zhu Chuanfeng's conversation with his brother was completely random, and it was difficult for him to make sense of it.

The only thing that Zhou Shu could confirm was that Zhu Chuanfeng was really hiding something!

And once this secret was exposed, he and his brother would be in danger!

It sounded like his brother wanted to stop, but Zhu Chuanfeng objected.

Stop?

Are they doing something bad?

If I can find out what evil deeds they'd done, could I use the Imperial Court to get rid of them?

Zhou Shu's eyes gradually lit up.

Although he had said that he was going to overturn Zhu Chuanfeng, it was mostly words of anger. He had no idea what to do.

Even though he was already a workshop superintendent, the difference between a workshop superintendent and a Grand Craftsman was like the difference between an ordinary university lecturer and an academician of the Academy of Sciences in his previous life.

Now, he seemed to have seen a glimmer of hope!

He was afraid that Zhu Chuanfeng wouldn't have any flaws. In that case, as a workshop superintendent, he really wouldn't be able to do anything to a Grand Craftsman.

But since he was hiding something, then he was asking for it!

Just now, the old thief's younger brother mentioned something about bringing back a weapon. Zhu Chuanfeng is a Grand Craftsman, so why would he need to bring a weapon back from outside? The old thief even specially asked about it. Is there something wrong with this weapon?

Zhou Shu quickly thought. The weapon has been stored in the storeroom. Where is the storeroom?

Zhou Shu placed himself in Zhu Chuanfeng's shoes. If it were him, according to the habits of a forger, where would he have designed the storeroom?

Zhou Shu had studied architecture in his previous life, so he had some experience in designing buildings.

In addition, he had spent his entire life forging. To a certain extent, he could understand Zhu Chuanfeng's thoughts.

A three-dimensional image gradually appeared in his mind. Zhou Shu felt that he really did have some talent as a great thief.

Soon, he thought of a few places that might be storerooms.

The Grand Craftsman's storeroom should be the most important place in the Zhu Estate apart from the old thief's bedroom.

That place must be heavily guarded!

The person the old thief trusts the most should be his younger brother. In addition, his brother isn't weak. It's very possible that his brother personally guards this storeroom.

Zhou Shu gradually had an idea. In that case, the place where I can sense the aura of that middle-aged man could be Zhu Chuanfeng's storeroom!

Thinking of this, Zhou Shu didn't delay any further. He silently began to move.

After eavesdropping for half the night, it was almost dawn. He had to make haste.

After a few days of scouting the Zhu Estate, Zhou Shu was now extremely familiar with its layout.

Most importantly, his cultivation was high enough, and there were no experts above the Grandmaster level in the Zhu Estate.

He moved cautiously and entered the Zhu Estate without any obstacles.

A moment later, Zhou Shu once again sensed the middle-aged man's aura.

Zhou Shu suspected Zhu Chuanfeng's younger brother to be between the fourth and fifth ranks. His senses were extremely sharp, and he had almost discovered Zhou Shu's existence in Zhu Chuanfeng's bedroom previously.

After Zhou Shu sensed his aura, he didn't approach rashly. Instead, he visualized the Five Mountain's True Form until his entire body seemed to have turned into a rock. Only then did he carefully approach.

Zhu Chuanfeng's younger brother lived alone in a small courtyard, without a single servant around.

When Zhou Shu snuck into the courtyard, Zhu Chuanfeng's brother was sitting cross-legged on the bed, cultivating.

Zhou Shu had just hidden himself when he opened his eyes doubtfully. After looking around, he closed his eyes again.

But the doubtful look on his face only disappeared after a long while.

Zhou Shu silently let out a sigh of relief. As expected, he couldn't underestimate anyone in the world. Zhu Chuanfeng's brother's spiritual sense was quite sharp. He had already been so careful, but his brother was still able to sense him.

Thankfully my skills are better. Even if he has some doubts, he still can't find any traces of me!

He swept his gaze around and confirmed that this was the place he was looking for!

Next to the room where the middle-aged man was sitting cross-legged were rows of wooden shelves. On the wooden shelves were various wooden boxes of different lengths.

Fortunately, it's not a secret chamber. Otherwise, it would have been troublesome! Zhou Shu thought.

He waited for a moment, and when he saw that Zhu Chuanfeng's brother's expression had relaxed, he slowly moved to the room next door.

The room was huge, and there were more than ten rows of wooden shelves. There were also countless wooden boxes placed on it.

Which one is the one they mentioned earlier?

Zhou Shu felt a headache coming on.

There were probably more than a hundred of these wooden boxes. If he opened them one by one to check, how long would it take?

This old thief sure has a lot of assets.

Zhou Shu cursed. Zhu Chuanfeng had only been a Grand Craftsman for around twenty years, but he had actually managed to accumulate over a hundred ranked weapons. If news of this spread, it might terrify some people.

Forging ranked weapons wasn't as simple as standard weapons.

Generally speaking, it would take at least a few months, or even several years, to forge a ranked weapon.

For many Forging Masters, they would only be able to forge dozens of ranked weapons in their lifetime. This was considered a high yield.

Even a Grand Craftsman might not be able to forge many quality weapons in their lifetime.

Becoming a Grand Craftsman was not based on the quantity of forged weapons but the quality!

A Grand Craftsman was a forger who could forge earth-grade or even heaven-grade weapons.

These hundreds of ranked weapons, even if they are all of the lowest yellow-grade, are still invaluable, Zhou Shu thought.

Unfortunately, he did not have the ability to take all these weapons away.

Otherwise, he would be able to lead an easy life for the rest of his life.

How did the old thief collect so many weapons? Zhou Shu was puzzled.

Generally speaking, weapons forged by forgers would be sold. Otherwise, the weapons were usually custom-made for others.

The cost of forging a ranked weapon was very high. Who would forge so many ranked weapons for fun?

Confused, Zhou Shu carefully walked to a row of wooden shelves and casually opened one of the wooden boxes.

Cold air permeated through his body as a murderous aura assaulted his face.

Inside the wooden box was a long saber!

Zhu Chuanfeng was famous for forging sabers, which was somewhat similar to Zhou Shu. In the eyes of outsiders, Zhou Shu was also skilled in forging standard sabers.

Is this a ranked weapon?

Zhou Shu examined the long saber in the wooden box. He could even hear the blade let out a happy cry.

Sure enough, ranked weapons were very different from standard weapons.

Each of these weapons seemed to have a spirit of its own. They were all unique existences!

No wonder it was said that it would take at least a few months for a Forging Master to forge a ranked weapon.

There's nothing unusual about this. Zhou Shu observed the saber for a while. It was exquisitely forged, but there was nothing unusual about it.

He closed the wooden box and randomly chose another wooden box to open.

He repeated this many times.

Zhou Shu saw several ranked long sabers of various qualities.

After he saw many ranked sabers, his doubts grew even stronger.

There was nothing remarkable about these sabers.

They were just 'ordinary' ranked long sabers. If he had to describe them, then their quality should be decent.

It was as expected of a Grand Craftsman.

Putting aside Zhu Chuanfeng's character, as a Grand Craftsman, his skills were quite impressive.

This was very normal. After all, one's forging techniques was unrelated to one's character.

Couldn't bad people be Grand Craftsmen?

It doesn't make any sense, Zhou Shu thought. If there's nothing wrong with the weapons, Zhu Chuanfeng wouldn't have deliberately emphasized it to his brother.

Did I miss something?

Zhou Shu frowned while pondering. It was going to be daybreak soon. After daybreak, the monthly examination for the Forging Division's workshops would begin.

If he couldn't catch Zhu Chuanfeng's weakness, he would have endless trouble even if he passed this monthly examination!

Thinking of this, Zhou Shu couldn't help feeling a bit anxious.

No, this storeroom is too obvious. Truly important items wouldn't be placed here. If I were Zhu Chuanfeng, I'd definitely hide something that involves my life in the safest place.

I would either carry it with me or give it to someone I trust to safeguard it!

The old thief is a Grand Craftsman and often shows himself in public. The person he trusts the most should be his brother, who is next door!

Other than the storeroom on the surface, there might be a hidden storeroom. The old thief's brother said that the weapon was stored in the storeroom, so he must be able to enter and exit freely! Could this secret storeroom be in his room?

Chapter 84: Strength That Doesn't Match Reputation

As the saying goes, one must make bold assumptions and carefully verify them.

...

Zhou Shu was giving full play to his imagination. The novels and TV series he had read and watched in his previous life flashed through his mind.

All sorts of secret room designs flashed through his mind.

He suspected that there was a secret chamber in the Zhu Estate, and the entrance was most likely inside Zhu Chuanfeng's brother's room!

This was a very reasonable deduction.

Although Zhu Chuanfeng was the master of the Zhu Estate, his Martial Dao cultivation wasn't high. If the secret chamber's entrance was in his room, he might not be able to detect anything if something happened.

As for his younger brother, he was the person he trusted the most. Moreover, his Martial Dao cultivation was extremely high. If he placed the secret chamber in his room, not only would it not attract attention, but it would also be safer.

So, here was the problem.

How could he find the entrance to the secret chamber and enter?

If he really went all out, Zhou Shu reckoned that he could beat Zhu Chuanfeng's brother.

But if that happened, it would create a huge commotion. Not only would it only alarm the entire Zhu Estate, but it might even alarm the experts in the capital.

As for quietly defeating Zhu Chuanfeng's brother, Zhou Shu really didn't have the ability right now.

I have to think of a way to lure him away.

In his previous life, when he watched martial arts movies, the protagonists could easily throw a stone to lure the guards away.

But here, if Zhou Shu did that, he would be an idiot.

The other party wasn't a fool. How could a pebble lure a tiger away from a mountain?

If there's really a secret chamber, it's a very important place. Even if something happens, his first reaction would be to protect the secret chamber, Zhou Shu thought.

He knew nothing about Zhu Chuanfeng's brother, so he naturally had no way of knowing his weakness.

He suspected that even if he pretended to assassinate Zhu Chuanfeng, this person might not leave the room.

What should I do?

Zhou Shu felt a headache coming on. This was also why it was inconvenient for him to be alone.

If he had a helper, he could easily solve this problem.

This person is the old thief's brother. Other than the old thief's safety, there's likely nothing else that can attract his attention.

The key point is that I don't know how much they value this secret chamber!

I have to give it a try!

A moment later, Zhou Shu made his decision.

He wasn't completely confident that he could lure Zhu Chuanfeng's brother away.

But it was impossible for him to give up just like that.

If he returned empty-handed after working so hard for the entire night, he would be furious.

After making up his mind, Zhou Shu restrained his aura and left the courtyard.

He ran all the way to a spot between the small courtyard and Zhu Chuanfeng's bedroom. Zhou Shu avoided the patrolling guards and set a fire...

That's right. The method he finally used was this simple and crude!

If he set a fire and caused chaos in the Zhu Estate, Zhu Chuanfeng's brother might leave his room!

Zhou Shu didn't set a fire randomly either. The place he set fire to was very close to Zhu Chuanfeng's bedroom, and there was wind tonight.

Most of the buildings in this world were made of wood. If the weather was dry, once something caught fire, the fire would quickly grow.

The moment the fire started, it attracted the attention of the patrolling guards.

"Fire! Everyone, put out the fire!" Shouts resounded from all directions.

Zhou Shu took advantage of the chaos and once again headed toward the storeroom.

There was a fire, and the entire Zhu Estate was in chaos. Even Zhu Chuanfeng ran out of his bedroom in a panic.

The guards and servants were already busy putting out the fire.

But the fire was burning strong, and it wasn't so easy to extinguish.

"What happened?" Zhu Chuanfeng ran out of the room and grabbed a guard busy putting out the fire.
"Someone sneaked in?"

"Master, I didn't see anyone," the guard hurriedly said. "Maybe it's because the weather is dry and candle fire accidentally caused it."

Zhu Chuanfeng waved his hand, and the guard ran off to put out the fire.

Zhu Chuanfeng looked at the fire that was gradually being controlled and sighed in relief.

Then he raised his head and looked in the direction of his younger brother's place. Seeing that there was nothing unusual, he finally heaved a sigh of relief.

Zhou Shu stealthily returned to the small courtyard where the storeroom was. Zhu Chuanfeng's brother was still sitting cross-legged on his bed, his eyes slightly closed and his body glowing faintly.

He's still cultivating!

Setting a fire was completely useless!

Zhou Shu was somewhat disappointed. The sky had already begun to brighten. In another two hours, the sky would completely light up.

It's too late! Zhou Shu sighed. It seemed that he could only deal with the monthly workshop examination first and then find an opportunity to deal with Zhu Chuanfeng in the future!

Just as Zhou Shu turned around to leave the Zhu Estate, he suddenly heard a pop from behind him.

Zhou Shu turned around and saw Zhu Chuanfeng's brother spit out a mouthful of blood. Then his entire body collapsed onto the bed.

Zhou Shu: "..."

Did he suffer from qi deviation?

He took two tentative steps toward the man.

The person on the bed didn't move.

He relaxed and took a few more steps forward.

The person on the bed remained still.

Heh, even God is helping me.

Zhou Shu had been ready to give up. He never expected such a thing to happen!

Zhou Shu walked up to the bed and placed his hand under the man's nose.

Her breathing was very weak, as if he could die at any moment.

Zhou Shu hesitated for a moment but ultimately decided not to kill him.

A family shouldn't be implicated. Although this person was Zhu Chuanfeng's brother, there was no enmity between them. If he killed him now, he wouldn't be able to get past his conscience.

To Zhou Shu, killing was easy. But he didn't want to become someone who only knew how to kill.

Human lives were precious.

Once he lost his respect for life, Zhou Shu felt like he might walk down the path of evil and become someone he didn't want to become.

He paid no attention to Zhu Chuanfeng's brother. Although he wouldn't kick a man when he was down, he wouldn't save him either.

Whether he lived or died depended on his own luck.

Without any reservations, Zhou Shu quickly searched the room.

A moment later, Zhou Shu really found an entrance mechanism behind the bookshelf!

A pitch-black entrance appeared in the middle of the room.

Zhou Shu sent a stream of qi into the entrance.

After waiting for a while, there was no movement in the secret chamber. Only then did he carefully enter the secret chamber.

The secret underground chamber wasn't big, only about a few square meters.

A row of shelves stood against the limestone wall, and on the shelves were several sandalwood boxes.

At first glance, it looked exactly the same as the storeroom above, but the sandalwood boxes revealed everything.

Just the boxes alone were incomparably precious, let alone the things inside!

Indeed, the real good stuff was hidden in this secret chamber!

If Zhou Shu was only here to steal, then he had already found the place.

Any one of these weapons was incomparably priceless.

But Zhou Shu wasn't here to steal. No matter how good the weapons were, he didn't care.

So what if they were heaven-grade weapons? He would be able to forge them himself sooner or later.

He had come this time to find evidence against Zhu Chuanfeng!

Without much hesitation, Zhou Shu walked to a wooden box. After confirming that there were no mechanisms, he opened it.

Sure enough, the wooden box contained a heaven-grade weapon!

Every heaven-grade weapon was a divine weapon. If it got outside, it would definitely be an existence that many martial artists would fight to the death for.

In this secret chamber, Zhu Chuanfeng had seven!

A Grand Craftsman could be proud of his life if he were able to forge seven heaven-grade weapons in his lifetime.

Zhu Chuanfeng's ranking among the Grand Craftsmen isn't high. How could he have forged so many heaven-grade weapons?

This doesn't match his ranking.

Zhou Shu keenly discovered a problem.

As long as a forger successfully forged an earth-grade weapon, they could be called a Grand Craftsman.

In other words, not every Grand Craftsman had the ability to forge a heaven-grade weapon.

A Grand Craftsman capable of forging a heaven-grade weapon was worthy of being a world-famous existence.

Zhu Chuanfeng was indeed a Grand Craftsman capable of forging heaven-grade weapons. This was why his status in Great Xia was so high.

But although Zhu Chuanfeng was famous among the Grand Craftsmen, his ranking wasn't too high. In this world, there were many Grand Craftsmen even more famous than him.

Even those Grand Craftsmen might not be able to forge so many heaven-grade weapons.

How could a heaven-grade weapon be forged so easily?

Many Grand Craftsmen had only forged one heaven-grade weapon in their entire lives. One heaven-grade weapon was enough to feed them for their entire lives!

Zhu Chuanfeng's strength didn't match his reputation.

Whether it was the heavenly-grade weapons in the secret chamber or the weapons in the storeroom, if Zhu Chuanfeng had forged all of them, then his reputation wouldn't be as it was now.

If people found out about these weapons he had forged, Zhu Chuanfeng would be ranked in the top ten among the world's Grand Craftsmen!

Is the old thief hiding his strength? Zhou Shu frowned. That shouldn't be the case. Hiding his forging ability is completely meaningless to him.

On the contrary, if he showed it, his reputation would increase, and he would gain more benefits.

He was already a Grand Craftsman, and Great Xia treated him as a treasure. He didn't need to worry about the risks of becoming famous.

Zhou Shu was currently hiding his strength because he was too weak. If he really did become a Grand Craftsman, then there would be no need for him to do so.

At that time, the stronger he acted, the safer he would be.

No, there must be something wrong!

Zhou Shu paced back and forth, frowning in thought.

If the old thief can forge so many heaven-grade weapons, even if he doesn't care about fame, these heaven-grade weapons can be used to make friends with second-rank or even first-rank martial arts experts! Even if he doesn't use them to make friends with experts, if he exchanged them for money, it would definitely be an unimaginable wealth! He wouldn't let go of such an opportunity to let heaven-grade weapons collect dust in the storeroom!

Unless—

A thought suddenly appeared in Zhou Shu's mind.

Unless these heaven-grade weapons weren't forged by him!

Chapter 85: I Rely on My Skills to Make a Living

This thought popped up very suddenly.

...

But the more Zhou Shu thought about it, the more likely it seemed.

Was there a need for a Grand Craftsman to hide the weapons he forged?

If it was one or two, it might be possible.

But there were seven heaven-grade weapons here!

Zhou Shu couldn't understand why he was hiding these heaven-grade weapons!

Even if there was nothing wrong with these weapons, there was definitely something wrong with Zhu Chuanfeng himself!

In any case, if Zhu Chuanfeng had personally forged these weapons but wasn't doing anything with them, then was he already plotting something?

If this matter was revealed, would the Imperial Court suspect him?

Zhu Chuanfeng probably doesn't have the courage to rebel. The fact that he's hiding these heaven-grade weapons doesn't necessarily mean that he's up to no good. Rather, it's more likely that there's something wrong with the weapons themselves.

Zhou Shu had already inspected these weapons. Although he was only a Forging Apprentice, he still had a good eye. At least on the surface, he couldn't see any problems with these heaven-grade weapons.

Unfortunately, there's no way to prove this.

Zhou Shu frowned. Even though he had a conjecture, there was no way he could verify it. How could he prove that these weapons were not made by Zhu Chuanfeng?

... Unless the people who had forged these weapons came forward to testify against Zhu Chuanfeng!

A thought flashed through Zhou Shu's mind.

Zhu Chuanfeng had asked his younger brother if there was any trouble. His brother had said that the trouble had been dealt with.

Could he have gotten rid of the people who forged these weapons?

Zhou Shu was shocked by his own thoughts.

To be able to forge a heaven-grade weapon, one had to be a Grand Craftsman. Would Zhu Chuanfeng dare to send people to plot against Grand Craftsmen?

Not only did he plot against Grand Craftsmen, but he had even brought back the heaven-grade weapon forged by them?

Does he want to pass off these heaven-grade weapons as his creations?

Zhou Shu shuddered. He felt as if he was gradually approaching the truth.

If my guess is correct, let's start from the beginning.

Zhou Shu's heart was in turmoil.

Zhu Chuanfeng sent his brother to plot against certain Grand Craftsmen and brought back the heaven-grade weapons they forged. Perhaps these heaven-grade weapons were just forged by the Grand Craftsmen and had yet to be revealed to the world.

In that case, no one will suspect Zhu Chuanfeng if he says he forged the weapons himself. After all, the original creators have already died, and there's no evidence.

But even a Grand Craftsman isn't able to create so many heaven-grade weapons in a short period of time. So Zhu Chuanfeng hid them and took out one every once in a while...

If that's the case, then there are seven heaven-grade weapons in this secret chamber. Does that mean that at least seven Grand Craftsmen were murdered?

Zhou Shu couldn't help but shiver. They were Grand Craftsmen! In all of Great Xia, there were only three to four hundred Grand Craftsmen still alive.

This might sound like a large number. But one should know that in this world, cultivating the Martial Dao was common. The lifespan of people was generally longer, and living for a couple of hundred years was common.

Under such circumstances, even among the billions of people in Great Xia, there were only three to four hundred Grand Craftsmen. From this, one could tell how difficult it was to become a Grand Craftsman.

Even if the scope was expanded to the entire continent, the number of Grand Craftsmen wouldn't exceed ten thousand. But Zhu Chuanfeng had killed at least seven of them?

If it was true, how insane was this!

Zhu Chuanfeng himself is a Grand Craftsman. Is there a need for him to do this?

Zhou Shu frowned. Actually, he could probably think of a reason now.

In his previous life, academicians and experts plagiarized academic papers or even fabricated academic papers. Even Grand Craftsmen would do such things.

It might be difficult for Zhu Chuanfeng to forge his own heaven-grade weapon, so he used this method to maintain his reputation.

Taking out a heaven-grade weapon every year is something that only the most skillful Grand Craftsman can do.

It's actually not difficult to verify whether my conjecture is true. I just need to check how many Grand Craftsmen have been killed in recent years!

Grand Craftsmen were humans as well. It was possible that they would meet with an accident and die.

This wasn't strange at all. Countless other countries wanted Zhu Chuanfeng dead. It would be strange if he didn't encounter a few assassinations every year.

Although the various countries spared no effort in protecting their Grand Craftsmen, accidents would definitely happen.

However, if Zhu Chuanfeng had really done this, once Zhou Shu found out how many Grand Craftsmen had been killed, he might be able to find some clues.

The Divine Constable Bureau should have the relevant files, but Ma Fengzhang isn't in the capital. It's too late to go to the Divine Constable Bureau at the last minute to search for files.

Zhou Shu sighed. But he was no longer in a hurry.

If his conjecture could be confirmed, then Zhu Chuanfeng would be consigned to eternal damnation!

Impatience will spoil great plans.

Zhou Shu restored everything in the secret chamber to its original state. Then he cleared traces of his arrival before returning to the surface.

Zhou Shu glanced at Zhu Chuanfeng's unconscious younger brother and clenched his fists.

If what he thought was indeed the truth, the person who did it had to be this man.

He really wanted to slap him to death.

But if he really killed him, he would alert the enemy.

I'll let you live a little longer!

The fire in the Zhu Estate was quickly put out.

For some reason, Zhu Chuanfeng felt his eyelids twitching.

Did something happen to my brother? Zhu Chuanfeng thought. He could no longer sit still. He hurriedly ran toward his younger brother.

The moment he entered the room, he saw his brother lying unconscious on the bed. His expression immediately changed.

He hurried to the bed and shook his brother hard.

Pa! Pa! Zhu Chuanfeng slapped Zhu Chuanzhi's face and yelled, "Brother! Zhu Chuanzhi! Wake up!"

Zhu Chuanzhi woke up groggily. He opened his eyes and saw his elder brother's face. "Brother? Why are you here?"

"Why am I here? What happened to you? Who ambushed you?" Zhu Chuanfeng said anxiously.

"No one ambushed me." Zhu Chuanzhi's eyes gradually focused as he came back to his senses. He shook his head and said, "I was a little anxious when I was cultivating just now and triggered my previous injuries. I'll be fine after resting for a while."

"I'm not asking if you're alright! Is the secret chamber alright!" Zhu Chuanfeng was frantic. He ignored Zhu Chuanzhi, hurriedly opened the door to the secret chamber, and then went inside.

Zhu Chuanzhi knew how important this matter was, so he quickly entered too.

Inside the secret chamber, the Zhu brothers carefully inspected everything before heaving a long sigh of relief.

"Fortunately, nothing happened!" Zhu Chuanzhi patted his chest.

Zhu Chuanfeng frowned. "Just now, there was a fire in the manor, and you were injured. Are the things happening recently just a coincidence?"

"Are these matters related?" Zhu Chuanzhi asked. It was an old injury. The weather was dry, and it was not impossible for a fire to happen.

As for Zhen Cai's death, it was purely an accident.

There was no connection between these matters.

"I have a bad feeling about this." Zhu Chuanfeng shook his head. He didn't know how these matters were related. "Brother, we can start preparing for the escape route you mentioned earlier!"

"Big Brother, have you changed your mind?" Zhu Chuanzhi said in surprise.

"Just in case." Zhu Chuanfeng shook his head. "As long as I can make Zhou Shu submit, I will be able to take over the benefits of the Hundred Refinements Ring Pommel Sabers, Horse Slaying Sabers, and Spring Embroidered Sabers. That boy doesn't know how to make use of them and has wasted a great deal of benefits.

"Once we get this money, we will have almost enough money. By then, even if we leave Chang'an, we can live a carefree life."

"Big Brother, it's good that you've thought it through," Zhu Chuanzhi said with gratification. "That Zhou boy is just a Forging Apprentice. He won't be able to escape from you, Big Brother.

“I will get in touch with those people right now and lay out the route first. When we’re ready, we’ll be able to get away at any time.”

Zhu Chuanfeng nodded, his eyes flickering. No one knew what he was thinking.

After returning from the Zhu Estate, Zhou Shu threw his clothes into the smelting furnace.

Although he was sure that no one had seen his actions at night, there was no guarantee.

Anyway, Mi Zhifu had prepared many clothes for him. He didn’t need to worry about spending money.

Zhou Shu hadn’t expected that Zhu Chuanfeng was actually after the benefits of his weapons.

He would never have imagined that Zhu Chuanfeng, who possessed so many ranked weapons, would be interested in the small benefits of standard weapons.

But even if he knew, he wouldn’t care. He would never give in.

Zhou Shu knew that Huben Sabers, Hundred Refinements Ring Pommel Sabers, and Horse Slaying Sabers could make a lot of money.

How could arms dealing not make money?

Even if he had to give the Forging Division a cut, the amount of money that would end up in his hands would definitely be astronomical.

If it was just one weapon, Zhou Shu might not have the right to speak. But after developing four weapons in succession, he already had the qualifications to negotiate with the Forging Division.

But he didn’t do it. Other than Yin Wuyou giving him the ownership of the Hundred Refinements Ring Pommel Saber, Zhou Shu didn’t care about the other sabers at all.

Zhu Chuanfeng saw money, but Zhou Shu saw a platform.

With the Forging Division as a platform, he could make the weapons he forged the most effective, allowing the benefits from the Legendary Armament Canon to be the greatest.

As for money, Zhou Shu didn’t care. Look at his living conditions. Was he someone who lacked money?

Zhou Shu was never worried that he would run out of money, and his goal had never been to make money.

Forging weapons and becoming stronger was his goal.

Zhu Chuanfeng was short-sighted.

Regarding that old thief Zhu, I’ll go to the Divine Constable Bureau to investigate. I still have to deal with the Forging Division’s monthly examination, Zhou Shu thought.

What’s with those people? Why do they have to doubt my forging ability? Do they really think that I, a workshop superintendent, am a pretty boy who only became a workshop superintendent because of the grand minister? I rely on my skills to make a living, okay? I really have to slap your faces!

Chapter 86: They Are Trying to Kill Him!

“The 37th Workshop, 12,000 arrows and 300 strong bows were forged this month. Pass!”

...

“...”

“The 45th Workshop, 6000 standard long spears were forged this month. Excellent!”

“...”

“The 58th Workshop, 9,000 standard short swords were forged this month. Excellent!”

“...”

A clerk read aloud.

On the stage, Grand Minister Yin Wuyou, Minister Meng Jinguang, and the other big shots of the Forging Division sat in a row.

Below the stage were all the superintendents of the 37th Workshop to the 100th Workshop.

They all had different expressions.

Some of them were full of confidence, their eyes filled with joy. Some of them had worried expressions on their faces, thinking that they might not be able to get the bonus this time. Some of them were already trembling all over. They hadn't completed their assigned tasks and were about to be punished.

The so-called monthly workshop examination was actually to read out the output of each workshop and then announce the assessment results.

For those who were outstanding, there would be a reward in their monthly salary. For those who were average, there will be no punishment or reward. For those who didn't, they had to face punishment.

Among all of this, there was some shady business.

The grand minister of the Forging Division, or even the four ministers, wouldn't personally investigate the weapons supplied by each workshop.

All they saw were the numbers submitted by the people under them.

Of course, under normal circumstances, this number wouldn't differ too much from the actual number.

After all, the supply of weapons couldn't be faked. If the difference in quantity was too great, it would be a disaster if the commanders of the three armies came after the Forging Division.

Most of the time, these numbers were similar to the actual numbers.

Even if there was a slight deviation, it wasn't a big deal to the higher-ups of the Forging Division. They just turned a blind eye.

“Grand Minister, the superintendent of the 0th Workshop hasn't arrived yet, right?” Meng Jinguang, on the stage, said in a low voice.

Yin Wuyou was expressionless, and it was impossible to tell what she was thinking.

“He’ll come,” Yin Wuyou calmly said.

“He’s merely the superintendent of a small workshop. We’ve all arrived, but he still hasn’t. How disrespectful!” another minister said coldly.

“Could it be that he knows that he won’t be able to pass today’s monthly examination, so he’s decided not to come?” Meng Jinguang smiled insincerely.

“Is he taking this examination too lightly? How can he, the superintendent of the 0th Workshop, not be present when the workshop is about to be banned?”

“If he fails the monthly examination, he will be punished. He can’t hide even if he wants to.”

“Nothing can be accomplished without rules. Does he think he can hide just because he doesn’t come? Naive!”

The other ministers spoke in succession.

Yin Wuyou harrumphed coldly. These four fellows are in cahoots and control most of the business of the Forging Division. I’ve finally established the 0th Workshop to try to change the situation, yet they want to ruin it.

Do they really think that I have no temper?

If you piss me off, I’ll slash you all to death. Will the people behind you dare to say anything?

Yin Wuyou was only thinking about it. Even though she was a princess, she couldn’t kill the ministers as she pleased.

Even though these four ministers’ positions weren’t too high, the Forging Division had a wide range of connections, and these ministers had many important people backing them. Even Yin Wuyou had to be cautious.

Otherwise, she would have reformed the Forging Division a long time ago. Why would she have to condescend herself to deal with them?

However, there was nothing she could do. The four of them had been in the Forging Division for many years, and they were inextricably linked to the Grand Craftsmen and Forging Masters. If she did anything to them, it would bring disastrous consequences to the Forging Division.

This wasn’t the outcome Emperor Yuan Feng wanted to see, nor was it something Yin Wuyou could bear.

Right now, she only hoped that Zhou Shu would be able to put in some effort and hold on to the 0th Workshop. Then, using the 0th Workshop as a wedge, she would be able to open up a crack in the Forging Division’s system.

Yin Wuyou didn’t say a word, and Meng Jinguang and the others couldn’t continue either.

They stopped the conversation somewhat disinterestedly.

It would take quite some time to recite the results of dozens of workshops.

The higher-ups of the Forging Division were starting to doze off when the clerk finally finished reading.

At this time, Zhou Shu was still nowhere to be seen.

Yin Wuyou's brows furrowed slightly. If not for the fact that it was inconvenient for her to express her opinion, she would have already sent people to capture Zhou Shu.

What is wrong with him!

I already told him, and he guaranteed that there would be no problem!

Is this not a problem?

Not even coming?

As soon as the clerk finished speaking, Meng Jinguang, who was in charge of the monthly examinations, didn't speak and instead gave a discreet look.

"My lords!" A voice suddenly came from below the stage, attracting Yin Wuyou's attention.

A young man in his late twenties walked out from the crowd. He stood tall and straight, cupped his hands toward the stage, and proudly said, "I have something to report to all of you."

"Who are you?" Yin Wuyou asked.

Yin Wuyou didn't know many of the Forging Division's workshop superintendents. The person in front of her was among the people she didn't know.

"I am Xiao Bufan, the superintendent of the 97th Workshop." The corners of the young man's lips curled up into a standard smile.

"The superintendent of the 97th Workshop?" Yin Wuyou glanced at Meng Jinguang and the others.

The 97th Workshop was where Zhou Shu came from. Its previous superintendent was Xiao Zongshui.

Yin Wuyou knew all this.

Yin Wuyou also knew about Xiao Zongshui's death and Zhou Shu being brought to the Divine Constable Bureau to assist in the investigation.

Later on, when Meng Jinguang and the others arranged for a new superintendent, Yin Wuyou had originally wanted to seize the opportunity to take over the 97th Workshop. But Meng Jinguang and the others had found a Forging Master to be the superintendent of the 97th Workshop.

Yin Wuyou had wanted to refuse, but she couldn't find a suitable reason. In the end, she could only let them do what they wanted.

Now that she saw Xiao Bufan, Yin Wuyou was instinctively displeased.

"What do you have to report?" Yin Wuyou said coldly.

Xiao Bufan brought his fists together and said, "I heard that Your Highness promoted a Forging Apprentice to the superintendent of a workshop and specially set up a workshop for him."

Yin Wuyou's face turned cold. This Xiao Bufan addressed me as Your Highness instead of Grand Minister. Does he think that I don't have the qualifications to be the grand minister of the Forging Division?

Also, what does this mean?

Are you trying to say that I practiced cronyism?

Bah! What kind of relationship can I have with Zhou Shu!

"It is said that the superintendent of the 0th Workshop, Zhou Shu, is a forging genius, and he is good at developing new weapons. I'm not talented, but I have some experience in the art of forging.

"Therefore, I would like to compete with Superintendent Zhou."

"You are a Forging Master, while Zhou Shu is only a Forging Apprentice. Don't you think there's something wrong with this kind of competition?" Yin Wuyou said coldly.

"Although I am a Forging Master, forging ranked weapons is different from forging standard weapons." Xiao Bufan looked at her as if she didn't know about forging.

"My competition with Superintendent Zhou has nothing to do with whether I'm a Forging Master or not. Besides, isn't Superintendent Zhou a forging genius? We will both be forging standard weapons. He won't be afraid of losing to me, right?"

Xiao Bufan raised his voice. "Is Superintendent Zhou here? Do you want to compete? Come out and say something."

Yin Wuyou was about to explode from anger. If not for the fact that she wanted to maintain her composure, she really wanted to go down and give Xiao Bufan a good beating.

So what if you're both forging standard weapons? That doesn't mean that a Forging Master won't have the upper hand.

Does he really think that I don't know anything?

The forging skills of Forging Masters far surpassed those of Forging Apprentices. Forging Masters were able to use the same materials to the limit. How could Forging Apprentices compare?

In order to suppress Zhou Shu, Meng Jinguang and the others really spared no effort!

Not only did they want to fail him in the monthly examination, but they even wanted to damage his reputation. Without his identity as the superintendent of the 0th Workshop and his halo of a genius Forging Apprentice, he was just an ordinary Forging Apprentice. One could imagine his future outcome!

Do these people really think that I'm a pushover?

If I can't even protect him, I won't be able to show my face outside!

Yin Wuyou had a cold expression on her face and was about to flare up when she suddenly heard a voice.

“Someone’s calling for me?” Zhou Shu’s figure appeared at the back of the crowd. With a smile on his face, he said, “Sorry, I overslept and came late. Sorry, sorry.”

Although he said he was sorry, there was no hint of apology on his face.

After passing through the crowd, Zhou Shu arrived below the stage. He first cupped his hands toward Yin Wuyou before winking and saying, “Grand Minister, I’m here.”

As for Meng Jinguang and the others, Zhou Shu didn’t even glance at them.

Since he knew that they were colluding with Zhu Chuanfeng to deal with him, would Zhou Shu show them any respect?

So what if they were his superiors? The grand minister was his only superior.

“You’re finally here!” Yin Wuyou snapped. Seeing Zhou Shu’s relaxed expression, she also relaxed for some reason.

Well, weren’t they just trying to make things difficult for her?

It was just a small matter!

No matter how unhappy they were, she was the grand minister! Who could push her away?

As long as she was still the grand minister, she would be in control of the Forging Division sooner or later!

Zhou Shu smiled and gave Yin Wuyou a reassuring look. Then he looked around.

“Who called me just now? Why does it sound like you want to compete with me in forging?” Zhou Shu said.

“I am Xiao Bufan, the superintendent of the 97th Workshop!” Xiao Bufan snorted coldly. “You are Zhou Shu? The Forging Apprentice who took over the resources of the 0th Workshop and has a reputation but no achievements?”

“The 97th Workshop? You’re Xiao Zongshui’s successor?” Zhou Shu glanced at Xiao Bufan. “I have no achievements? Are you deaf? Have you never heard of the Huben Saber, the Horse Slaying Saber, the Hundred Refinements Ring Pommel Saber, and the Spring Embroidered Saber?”

“If this is called having a reputation but no achievements, then may I ask if you have any representative weapons?”

“I am a Forging Master, and what I forge are ranked weapons. I don’t want to scare you by saying it out loud!” Xiao Bufan was displeased when he saw Zhou Shu. He was even more handsome than him!

“Oh, a Forging Master? Does that mean you don’t have any achievements in terms of standard weapons?” Zhou Shu said calmly.

“Who says I don’t!” Xiao Bufan was furious. How dare a mere apprentice look down on me? “I don’t care about forging standard weapons. But in order to show you what a genius is, I spent three days to

develop a new weapon. Aren't you a genius? What new weapon has the 0th Workshop developed this month?"

Everyone was in an uproar. He developed a new weapon in three days?

As expected of a Forging Master.

Everyone's gazes fell on Zhou Shu, wanting to see how he would respond.

Zhou Shu patted his clothes and said casually, "What a coincidence. I was inspired and happened to develop a new weapon.

"Don't you want to compete, Superintendent Xiao? Let's compete to see whose weapon is better!"

Chapter 87: This Is Too Much

It was hard to determine which standard weapon was stronger.

...

Between the Hundred Refinements Ring Pommel Saber and the Horse Slaying Saber, which was more powerful?

The Horse Slaying Saber was not necessarily more powerful than the Hundred Refinements Ring Pommel Saber. Of the two, one was suitable for cavalry and the other for infantry.

It was the same for other standard weapons. The degree of sharpness, the durability, and even the appearance represented the quality of standard weapons.

This was completely different from ranked weapons.

It was very easy to determine the strength of a ranked weapon. A heaven-grade weapon was definitely stronger than an earth-grade weapon, and an earth-grade weapon was definitely stronger than a black-grade weapon.

Forgers who could forge heaven-grade weapons were definitely stronger than Forging Masters who could only forge earth-grade weapons.

Did this mean an apprentice who could forge a Horse Slaying Saber was stronger than an apprentice who could forge the Hundred Refinements Ring Pommel Saber?

This might not be the case.

This was why Zhou Shu had only said that it was better to compare whose weapon was better, not whose weapon was stronger. There was a subtle difference between better and stronger.

As a Forging Master, Xiao Bufan naturally understood this logic.

Although they were both surnamed Xiao, Xiao Zongshui became an official after passing the imperial examination, while Xiao Bufan was a genuine Forging Master.

Zhou Shu didn't underestimate his opponent, but he was confident in the Legendary Armament Canon.

Zhou Shu glanced at Xiao Bufan, then at Meng Jinguang and the other ministers. "Before that, I have a request."

"What request?" Xiao Bufan replied without hesitation.

"If I lose, then the 0th Workshop will have no value in existence. You can just shut it down," Zhou Shu said. "You can even drive me out of the Forging Division."

"If you lose, the 0th Workshop will naturally be shut down!" Xiao Bufan let out a hollow laugh.

"The 0th Workshop is where I live and work. I'm already betting it. Shouldn't you bet something too?" Zhou Shu said.

"Logically speaking, even if I lose the competition, I would have been able to develop a new weapon and pass the monthly examination. Would you still shut down my 0th Workshop?"

Meng Jinguang and the others exchanged glances with one another. It was not convenient for them to say anything now, so they gave Xiao Bufan a signal.

Xiao Bufan understood his intention and sneered. "What do you want us to bet?"

He didn't believe that Zhou Shu would win. As a Forging Master, he had lowered himself to forge a standard weapon. How could he lose?

"It's very simple." Zhou Shu's lips curled up. "If I win, all of the workshops will have to cooperate with me if I need to mass produce the weapons developed by the 0th Workshop!"

"That's it?" Xiao Bufan replied coldly. "No problem."

Zhou Shu didn't even look at him. Instead, he stared at Meng Jinguang and the others. "Your words don't carry any weight. We need the ministers to agree."

Meng Jinguang and the others had unsightly expressions on their faces. The situation had already changed from the monthly examination to a competition. Zhou Shu's words made sense. Since there was a bet, both sides naturally had to wager something.

But they were thinking even more than Xiao Bufan. Zhou Shu's words sounded simple, but if he really won, all of the workshops in the Forging Division had to cooperate with the 0th Workshop. There was too much at stake.

"I agree. Let's do it! Let's begin the competition," Yin Wuyou suddenly said.

Meng Jinguang and the others were stunned. They had almost forgotten that the person in charge at the scene was the grand minister, not them.

Since the grand minister had spoken, they could only listen.

Of course, it remained to be seen what they would do afterward.

Zhou Shu didn't think too much about it. He didn't care at all about politics.

He only made this request because he didn't want the development of the 0th Workshop to be impeded.

After all, if the 0th Workshop developed well, he would be able to make use of more areas.

“Understood!” Zhou Shu cupped his hands at Yin Wuyou before turning to Xiao Bufan. “You first, or should I go first?”

“I’ll go first, in case others say that I’m taking advantage of you!” Xiao Bufan said coldly.

He walked straight to the smelting furnace at the side and reached out to grab a hammer.

Xiao Bufan was actually a ranked martial artist!

The forging skills of a Forging Master and a Forging Apprentice were on completely different levels.

Although Forging Apprentices also paid attention to some techniques, most of them were manual labor. Forging Masters had real technique.

Xiao Bufan didn’t need to use his full strength to forge a standard weapon. But even so, everyone was impressed.

Zhou Shu sighed in his mind. Xiao Bufan didn’t seem like much, but his forging skills weren’t just for show. He was really skillful.

This was the first time he had seen a Forging Master forge a weapon with his own eyes. Although Xiao Bufan didn’t use any high-level techniques, as an expert, Zhou Shu could still see some of the secrets of Forging Masters.

A Forging Master forging a standard weapon was akin to shooting a mosquito with a cannon. It was overkill.

In just an hour, Xiao Bufan finished forging.

“It’s your turn!” Xiao Bufan placed the standard saber he forged on the table without hiding anything.

It was a long saber around four feet long. The curvature of the blade was extremely exaggerated, and there were even grooves on it. Just by looking at it, one could feel its baleful aura.

Zhou Shu nodded slightly. This was indeed a standard saber not recorded in the Forging Division’s weapon catalog.

But thinking about it, it wasn’t too difficult for a Forging Master to forge an improved standard saber with a little bit of additional effort.

It was just that they usually couldn’t bother to spend the effort.

No matter how strong a standard weapon forged from different metals was, it wouldn’t make much of a difference. It wasn’t worth the effort.

Zhou Shu walked to the furnace step by step.

Compared to Xiao Bufan’s, his forging process was not enjoyable at all. Every movement was mundane, making people sleepy.

Actually, Zhou Shu was also able to forge like how Xiao Bufan did, but there was no need to do so.

What was the point when he was just creating a standard weapon?

Forging paid attention to efficiency, not beauty!

It wasn't a circus act!

Of course, the most important thing was that Zhou Shu was unwilling to reveal his cultivation level, so he slowed down his forging speed.

After two hours, more than twice as long as Xiao Bufan, a weapon finally appeared under Zhou Shu's hammer.

This was also a saber. The saber was less than a meter long, and the blade was flat and straight. The tip of the blade curved in an arc, and there were multiple blade tips extending from the back of the blade to the handle. The shape looked like an elegant feather.

Xiao Bufan knew what was good. When he saw Zhou Shu's weapon, his pupils constricted slightly, and his expression became somewhat solemn.

"My lords, this is the newest saber I've developed. Please take a look." Zhou Shu placed the saber beside Xiao Bufan's saber and cupped his hands.

"Great!" Yin Wuyou clapped her hands, unable to conceal the joy on her face.

Just based on appearances alone, the two sabers were not on par with each other. In fact, Zhou Shu's saber looked even better.

If its sharpness and toughness weren't too bad, Zhou Shu had a high chance of winning this competition!

Yin Wuyou wasn't worried that Meng Jinguang and the others would evaluate against their conscience. If they really dared to do that, Yin Wuyou would bring these two sabers to the Imperial Court for the civil and military officials to evaluate!

Of course, Meng Jinguang and the others knew about Yin Wuyou's identity and inwardly mocked her. As long as they didn't show it, it didn't matter. But if they lied through their teeth, it meant giving Yin Wuyou something on them.

The expressions of Meng Jinguang and the others didn't look too good. They also felt that something was amiss.

Zhou Shu's reputation was not just for show. He had really developed a new weapon!

Meng Jinguang walked to the table and picked up Xiao Bufan's saber. He examined it while asking, "Superintendent Xiao, does your saber have a name?"

"This saber is called Blood Massacre. There are four blood grooves on the saber's blade, which allows it to maximize its destructive power."

Xiao Bufan said, "This saber will be a killing weapon in the hands of someone good at using sabers!"

Meng Jinguang nodded to show his appreciation. "This saber is full of killing intent. In my opinion, among the standard weapons, the lethality of this saber is top-notch."

The rest of the ministers nodded in agreement.

Xiao Bufan glanced at Zhou Shu with a prideful expression, his eyes full of disdain.

“This saber is indeed not bad,” Yin Wuyou said impartially, but she immediately picked up Zhou Shu’s blade.

If Xiao Bufan’s saber was full of murderous intent, then Zhou Shuyou’s saber was quite ordinary. Apart from its appearance, it was nothing compared to Xiao Bufan’s saber.

Was it just about appearance?

If it was all about the appearance, then developing new weapons would be too easy.

In the end, weapons existed for the sake of killing, not for decoration.

“A saber is a weapon of slaughter. The biggest taboo when forging a weapon is putting the cart before the horse. If one blindly pursues the appearance of weapons, then they will fall into the evil path,” Meng Jinguang said calmly.

Although he didn’t mention names, everyone present knew who he was referring to.

Zhou Shu curled his lips, too lazy to refute him. Whether it was a mule or a horse, you will know once you bring it out for a walk.

Seeing that Meng Jinguang had no intention of asking, Yin Wuyou took the initiative to ask, “Superintendent Zhou, what’s special about your saber?”

Zhou Shu’s lips curled up slightly as he said in a clear voice, “General, when you march south so bravely, the Autumn Anatidae Plume Saber hangs on your waist. As the wind blew, the lizard-skinned drums stirred the mountains and rivers, lightning flashed over your banners held as high as the sun and moon.

“In the heavens indeed there is a kirin, but in the world of men, how could even an ant escape? On the day when the imperial edict comes, I’ll take off my battle garb with you.

“This saber is called the Autumn Anatidae Plume Saber. It is a waist saber developed after I witnessed Great General Meng going to war. This saber is tough and sturdy. Compared to the Hundred Refinements Ring Pommel Saber, it can unleash the power of saber techniques in many ways. It is capable of chopping, slashing, and stabbing!”

Zhou Shu’s voice reverberated through the area, and the entire area suddenly fell silent.

Even Xiao Bufan fell silent.

“General, when you march south so bravely, the Autumn Anatidae Plume Saber hangs on your waist.

“In the heavens indeed there is a kirin, but in the world of men, how could even an ant escape?”

This is a bit too much.. You agreed to compete in forging weapons. If you do this, won’t your impression points increase!

Chapter 88: Autumn Anatidae Plume Saber

It was not a simple matter to evaluate the quality of standard weapons. After all, the upper power limit of standard weapons was as such.

...

Both standard weapons could break through two layers of leather armor, so which was better?

At this moment, it was as if they were evaluating the person they liked...

In essence, Xiao Bufan's Bloodbath Saber was on par with Zhou Shu's Autumn Anatidae Plume Saber.

This was actually very normal.

Standard weapons were only made of ordinary iron. Even if the use of ordinary iron was maximized, there was a limit to their power.

No matter what, Xiao Bufan was still a Forging Master. He wouldn't be so weak that he couldn't even unleash the power of ordinary iron.

When the power of the two weapons was about the same, the winner would depend on the likes of Yin Wuyou, Meng Jinguang, and the others.

Even Zhou Shu himself couldn't say anything about this subjective evaluation.

But now, even Xiao Bufan was speechless.

Look at the name of the sabers—

Bloody Massacre! It sounds so rustic!

Autumn Anatidae Plume Saber! So cool!

Xiao Bufan felt bitter in his heart. We are both forgers, so why do you have to be so good at poetry?

"General, when you march south so bravely, the Autumn Anatidae Plume Saber hangs on your waist. As the wind blew, the lizard-skinned drums stirred the mountains and rivers, lightning flashed over your banners held as high as the sun and moon," Meng Jinguang muttered to himself with a bitter smile.

What else could he say?

Just this poem alone could elevate the attractiveness of the Autumn Anatidae Plume Saber!

From now on, scholars would be proud to wear the Autumn Anatidae Plume Saber.

If Meng Jinguang dared to say that the Bloody Massacre Saber was better than the Autumn Anatidae Plume Saber, he would probably be cursed to death.

The rest of the ministers had different expressions on their faces, but the look in their eyes was exactly the same as Meng Jinguang's.

There was no comparison at all.

The corners of Yin Wuyou's lips turned up, and her eyes were smiling.

Her heart was already blooming with joy. Zhou Shu had really done her proud!

Did these old geezers think they could make a mockery of me, the grand minister, with just a mere Forging Master?

Look, the person that I have taken a liking to, how could he be a good-for-nothing?

So what if you got a Forging Master? Isn't he still inferior to Zhou Shu?

How could such a talent not be worthy of becoming the superintendent of a small workshop?

"Minister Meng, everyone, tell me. Which of these two sabers is better?" Yin Wuyou asked with her head slightly raised.

"Grand Minister, you are wise. I admire you." Meng Jinguang smiled bitterly. "The Autumn Anatidae Plume Saber is better."

"Did Superintendent Zhou pass the monthly examination?" Yin Wuyou asked.

"Outstandingly," Meng Jinguang said helplessly.

Xiao Bufan opened his mouth, but no sound came out.

Xiao Bufan was also a prideful person. It was embarrassing that he lost in front of so many people, but it would be even more embarrassing if he chose not to admit defeat.

"Zhou Shu!" Xiao Bufan said in a low voice, "You win this time, but we can't fully show our skills by forging standard weapons. We'll compete again after you become a Forging Master!"

Xiao Bufan cupped his fists and left without looking back.

Zhou Shu looked at Xiao Bufan's back in surprise. He had thought that Xiao Bufan wouldn't admit defeat. In that case, the face-slapping scene he had prepared could be played out.

Unexpectedly, Xiao Bufan was someone who paid particular attention to things, and he admitted defeat rather straightforwardly.

Although he looked a little proud, he was not a bad person.

Zhou Shu's impression of Xiao Bufan changed greatly.

Meng Jinguang gave his evaluation, and Xiao Bufan himself admitted defeat. The farce ended quickly.

Meng Jinguang and the others didn't have the face to stay any longer. They hastily made some arrangements and left.

"I want this saber." Before Yin Wuyou left, she took the Autumn Anatidae Plume Saber with her.

Just as Zhou Shu wanted to stop her, the grand minister had already disappeared, her movements as fast as the wind.

"You haven't paid!" Zhou Shu yelled.

All the superintendents still there rolled their eyes. What kind of person is this? He wants to ask for money from the grand minister?

Zhou Shu didn't care at all about the superintendents rolling their eyes at him. He only left them showing his confident back.

...

Chang'an, inside the palace...

Emperor Yuan Feng took the Autumn Anatidae Plume Saber from Yin Wuyou and examined it briefly before losing interest.

It was just a standard weapon.

"A new product developed by the Forging Division?" Emperor Yuan Feng looked at his daughter and smiled.

"This is a new standard weapon developed by my 0th Workshop!" Yin Wuyou said excitedly. "I've tried it. It's light, agile, and quite powerful. It can easily split open a layer of leather armor..."

Yin Wuyou talked non-stop, and Emperor Yuan Feng only listened with a smile. He was a very patient person. Even though what she said was mostly meaningless nonsense to him, he didn't show the slightest impatience.

"Father! Are you listening to me?" Yin Wuyou protested coquettishly when she didn't receive the enthusiastic response she expected.

"I'm listening." Emperor Yuanfeng chuckled. "This saber is quite good. It's almost the same as the one you brought over last time."

"It's different, okay?" Yin Wuyou didn't show the cold arrogance she usually did in front of outsiders.

"I know." Emperor Yuan Feng smiled. "The Spring Embroidered Saber was given to the Divine Constable Bureau. As for this saber..."

Seeing that Emperor Yuan Feng didn't seem to care, Yin Wuyou was a little unhappy.

"General, when you march south so bravely, the Autumn Anatidae Plume Saber hangs on your waist. As the wind blew, the lizard-skinned drums stirred the mountains and rivers, lightning flashed over your banners held as high as the sun and moon," Yin Wuyou recited loudly.

Emperor Yuanfeng was startled, and his expression changed slightly.

When Yin Wuyou saw Emperor Yuan Feng's shock, she felt a little pleased and continued to recite, "In the heavens indeed there is a kirin, but in the world of men, how could even an ant escape? On the day when the imperial edict comes, I'll take off my battle garb with you."

"On the day when the imperial edict comes, I'll take off my battle garb with you." Emperor Yuan Feng pondered for a moment, surprise flashing in his eyes.

“Great spirit, great poem!” Emperor Yuan Feng praised. “This saber is called the Autumn Anatidae Plume Saber?”

“You wrote this poem?”

Emperor Yuan asked two consecutive questions.

“This is the Autumn Anatidae Plume Saber!” Yin Wuyou said. “I didn’t compose the poem. Zhou Shu did.”

There was pride in Yin Wuyou’s eyes.

“Zhou Shu?” Emperor Yuan Feng recalled for a moment, then suddenly said, “The superintendent of the workshop that Great General Meng strongly recommended?”

“Great General Meng was not the first one to discover him. I was the one who discovered him first! I even promoted him to a workshop superintendent!” Yin Wuyou said indignantly.

“Alright, my daughter has good foresight.” Emperor Yuan Feng wouldn’t argue with the little girl about this. He smiled and said, “I remember that Zhou Shu is a Forging Apprentice, right? He even went to school?”

Although the words of this poem were not exquisite, they were very bold. It was not something a Forging Apprentice who became a workshop superintendent could make.

“He went to a private school for a year when he was young, but because of his family’s circumstances, he didn’t continue.” Yin Wuyou knew about Zhou Shu’s plight and felt a little regretful.

“What a pity.” Emperor Yuan Feng also had the same thought. He had only been to a private school for a year, yet he was able to produce such a poem. If he persisted, Great Xia might have had another great scholar.

However, it didn’t seem too bad now. He was rather talented in forging as well. If he had insisted on going to a private school back then, he probably wouldn’t have forged these weapons recently.

“Father, Zhou Shu has developed a new weapon. How do you think we should reward him?” Yin Wuyou asked.

“You are the grand minister of the Forging Division. Are you here to ask me how to reward Zhou Shu?” Emperor Yuanfeng smiled.

“Isn’t the responsibility of the 0th Workshop to develop new weapons? This is their job. Why do they need rewards?”

It was true that Emperor Yuan Feng was a good person, but this didn’t mean that he didn’t know when rewards or punishments should be given.

Yin Wuyou had told him before that the 0th Workshop didn’t take on daily forging tasks and specialized in researching and improving weapons.

Under such circumstances, developing a new weapon could only be considered an ordinary task for the 0th Workshop. Why was there a need for a reward?

“Father, haven’t you always taught me to distinguish between reward and punishment?” Yin Wuyou said. “My task for the 0th Workshop is to develop a new weapon in three months. It’s only been a month, and a new weapon has already been developed.

“Moreover, you have also seen that this Autumn Anatidae Plume Saber is not the slightest bit inferior to the previous one. In fact, it might even surpass it. If Zhou Shu isn’t rewarded, wouldn’t it make him bitterly disappointed?”

“In that case, how do you want to reward him?” Emperor Yuan Feng asked with a smile.

“I’m asking you because I don’t know,” Yin Wuyou said. “He just became a workshop superintendent not long ago. Would it be okay to promote him again now?”

For a workshop superintendent, above it was a vice director of the Forging Division. But that wouldn’t be beneficial for Zhou Shu’s talent.

“He’s a forging talent, so he might not be suitable to be an official.” Emperor Yuan Feng shook his head. “Moreover, his qualifications aren’t enough for him to hold a higher position. Since you don’t have any ideas, then you can just reward him with gold, silver, or jewels.

“Isn’t this the usual practice of the Forging Division?”

Emperor Yuan Feng didn’t really care about such a small matter. If he, the emperor, had to worry about a workshop superintendent, then he would be dead tired!

“It’s up to you how you want to reward the 0th Workshop. I have an idea on how to use the Autumn Anatidae Plume Saber,” Emperor Yuan Feng said with a smile.

“On the day when the imperial edict comes, I’ll take off my battle garb with you. Since this saber is made for soldiers who went out to battle, I will use this Autumn Anatidae Plume Saber as a reward for the victorious return of the soldiers.

“As meritorious warriors, wouldn’t it be a beautiful story to bestow them the Autumn Anatidae Plume Saber?”

Emperor Yuan Feng stroked his beard and was very satisfied with his thoughts. This poem was very well written, but if he could change a few words, it would be even better.

For example, ‘I, the emperor, will take off my battle garb with you’?

I am the ruler of a country. Is it not good to use a poem of my subject like this?

No, I am the ruler of a country. The poems of my subjects are my poems. What harm is there in using them?

“Daughter, I plan to use this Autumn Anatidae Plume Saber to reward the soldiers of the three armies. Let’s not publicize it for the time being. Also, tell everyone present to be more tight-lipped about the poem. I want to give the three armies a surprise..” Emperor Yuan Feng chuckled.

Chapter 89: Harvest Time

At the southern border of Great Xia, there were endless mountains.

There was a military camp stationed at the edge of a forest at the foot of a mountain.

...

This was the southernmost region of Great Xia, and farther south was the territory of the southern barbarians.

Mi Ziwen was dressed in a military uniform with a long saber hanging on his waist.

This long saber was not a Huben Saber, a Hundred Refinements Ring Pommel Saber, or a Horse Slaying Saber.

As a high-ranking general and a fourth-rank martial artist born into a wealthy family, Mi Ziwen naturally wouldn't lack a ranked weapon.

On the battlefield, although the ordinary soldiers were the main force, there was no lack of battles between martial arts experts. At this time, Mi Ziwen naturally couldn't use a standard weapon.

Not just him, even Sun Gongping, who was on the battlefield for the first time, had brought along a ranked weapon. The Spring Embroidery Saber he had was just for show. If he really fought with a ranked martial artist, he would be at a huge disadvantage if he didn't have a ranked weapon.

Mi Ziwen looked at the distant forest and shouted, "Where is the scout camp?!"

"Here!" An officer appeared out of nowhere. He was not wearing armor but rather fancy clothes that looked like camouflage clothing.

He was carrying a long saber on his back, and the handle extended above his right shoulder. It was a Huben Saber.

Before the army set off, Zhou Shu had led Zhang Yibei and the others to forge 3,000 Huben Sabers. Most of these Huben Sabers were equipped to the scouts.

Huben Sabers were light and sharp, suitable for scouts.

"All scouts move out and find the traces of the southern barbarians!" Mi Ziwen said solemnly. "Before the great general and his army arrive, I must grasp the deployment of the southern barbarians' military!"

"The southern barbarians dare to slaughter the citizens at the borders of Great Xia. This time, we will make them pay a hundredfold!"

Mi Ziwen was furious, and he was no longer as gentle as he was in the capital.

The southern barbarians were the barbarians to the south of Great Xia. They were a race that looked human, but they were barbaric, violent, and bloodthirsty.

Great Xia bordered the barbarians and would often be invaded by them. The barbarians resided in the Desolated Mountains, and if Great Xia wanted to invade them, it would be extremely difficult. Thus, over the years, they had been deeply disturbed.

This time, the barbarians had once again attacked a city at the border of Great Xia. Furthermore, they had wantonly slaughtered the citizens of Great Xia, completely infuriating Great Xia.

This was why Meng Bai personally led the troops to try and completely eliminate the barbarians!

As the vanguard officer, Mi Ziwen had a heavy responsibility!

“I accept the order!” the captain of the scouts said. Then he dashed out of the camp nimbly like an ape.

“Mo Dao Camp! Kill the captured barbarians and offer them as sacrifices!” Mi Ziwen shouted.

...

The imperial capital of Great Xia, Chang’an...

A barrage of messages suddenly appeared in front of Zhou Shu.

[The Horse Slaying Saber you forged effectively completed a kill. The Golden Bell Shield Technique has improved by 10%!]

[The Horse Slaying Saber you forged effectively completed a kill. The Golden Bell Shield Technique has improved by 20%!]

...

[The Horse Slaying Saber you forged effectively completed a kill. The Golden Bell Shield Technique has improved by 15%]

In the blink of an eye, streams of true qi surged out of Zhou Shu’s body.

The true qi flowed through his meridians like a flood.

Zhou Shu seemed to hear the sound of a surging river.

As he circulated his true qi, his limbs and bones felt hot, and all the cells in his body were cracking.

A moment later, an eggshell-like sound rang out. Zhou Shu’s aura suddenly surged, and then he restrained it.

The skin on the surface of his body seemed to be shedding as it fell off piece by piece, looking rather terrifying.

Fortunately, there were no outsiders present. Otherwise, they would have been shocked.

Zhou Shu reached out, tore off a piece of skin, and threw it on the ground. He himself was shocked, and then he felt a little disgusted...

Did I become a snake while mastering the Golden Bell Shield Technique? Why am I molting? Zhou Shu thought as he endured the nausea, swept up the skin he had shed, and then threw it into the smelting furnace.

The aroma of roasted meat wafted over.

Zhou Shu felt even more disgusted. He didn’t want to eat roasted meat for a year!

After walking out of the forging room and taking a breath of fresh air, Zhou Shu felt much better.

He raised his hands. His hands had been forging weapons all year round, and they were originally covered in calluses. But now that he had shed a layer of skin, the skin on his palms looked fair and delicate, and his slender fingers made all beauties envious.

I didn't expect the Golden Bell Shield Technique to have such an effect.

It wasn't just his hands. Zhou Shu's skin had become much more delicate than before. Even his pores had become almost imperceptible.

Initially, he thought that after practicing the Golden Bell Shield Technique, he would become like the Golden Arhats in his previous life's television series. He would be covered in muscles and emit golden light.

In the end, this Golden Bell Shield Technique actually had a beauty effect.

At this rate, would he become as fair as jade when he reached the twelfth level?

This is a pleasant surprise.

Zhou Shu didn't care much about this effect. It was just a side effect. More importantly, his skin had become much tougher than before.

At the seventh level of the Golden Bell Shield Technique, true qi flowed through his entire body. Other than his eyes, ears, and head, even his private parts were resistant to attacks. He could even turn the soft willow branch solid to fight against swords!

In my previous life, I would have become popular if I was an internet celebrity who performed crotch techniques... Zhou Shu thought. Then he couldn't help laughing.

Staying in the Forging Division was indeed the right choice. If not for this place, how could the weapons I forged be equipped to the army? Only the army has opportunities to kill on such a large scale.

Zhou Shu glanced at the page on the Legendary Armament Canon. There were almost 80 completed kills!

Furthermore, from the feedback of the Legendary Armament Canon, the targets they killed weren't weak.

Because of this, Zhou Shu's cultivation of the Golden Bell Shield Technique was able to break through to the seventh level.

Otherwise, just relying on his own cultivation, with his poor aptitude, it would have probably taken him at least ten to twenty years to reach the seventh level.

Ever since he had cultivated the Dragon Elephant Prajna Technique, Zhou Shu knew very well what he was capable of.

His current body's aptitude for martial arts was extremely poor. A genius who had cultivated for a year could probably match his cultivation of ten years or more.

If not for the Legendary Armament Canon, it would have already been an achievement to cultivate the Dragon Elephant Prajna Technique to the third or fourth level in his lifetime. That way, he might not even be comparable to a ninth-rank martial artist.

Fortunately, I have the Legendary Armament Canon.

With the Legendary Armament Canon and the Forging Division backing me, I just need to wait for the benefits.

As Zhou Shu was happily thinking, he suddenly heard a voice from outside.

“Is Superintendent Zhou here? Come out and receive your reward.”

Zhou Shu’s heart skipped a beat as he walked to the front yard.

Zhang Yibei and the others had already been alerted by the noise. They had long arrived at the front yard and were nervously looking at the person at the door.

Standing at the entrance of the 0th Workshop was an official from the Forging Division. His surname was Zhang, and his name was Wufu.

Even though his name was Wufu, he was actually an out-and-out great figure to Zhang Yibei and the others.

In the Forging Division, there were four ministers under the grand minister. Below them were the directors, while below the directors were the vice directors.

Although vice director was only one rank higher than workshop superintendent, this was within the Forging Division. In reality, vice directors were sixth rank officials, while workshop superintendents were merely ninth-rank officials. There was a difference of three ranks between the two.

Strictly speaking, workshop superintendents were out-and-out low-ranking officials, while the vice directors had a certain status.

One had to know that ordinary county magistrates were only seventh-rank officials.

Zhang Wufu stood at the entrance of the 0th Workshop. Although his expression was gentle, Zhang Yibei and the others were still frightened into silence.

Zhou Shu came to the front yard and could only roll his eyes when he saw how hopeless they looked. *There’s still a long way to go before I can change them. I wonder if they’ll be better after they start cultivating.*

He didn’t want the people in the 0th Workshop to be a bunch of yes-men.

Zhou Shu cupped his hands at Zhang Wufu. “Zhou Shu pays his respects to Milord. Might I know what sort of instructions you have for me?”

Zhang Wufu had already met Zhou Shu during the monthly workshop examination, but the two of them hadn’t spoken at the time.

Zhang Wufu looked at Zhou Shu with a bit of envy in his eyes. "I have come under the orders of His Majesty to give you a reward from the Imperial Court."

"Reward?" Zhou Shu asked curiously.

"That's right." Zhang Wufu nodded. "Superintendent Zhou, you obtained excellent results in the monthly workshop examination and also developed the Autumn Anatidae Plume Saber. His Majesty is very happy, so besides the rewards from the Division, His Majesty has also heavily rewarded you."

There's such a good thing? Zhou Shu was amused. Although he didn't really care about earning money, it was better than nothing.

Surely something rewarded by the emperor wouldn't suck. He'd be rich.

Before Zhou Shu could ask, Zhang Wufu had already waved his hand. The ten odd-job workers outside had already entered. Each of them carried a burden and placed it aside.

When Zhou Shu saw so many things, his mood became even better. "Thank you for the trouble, Milord."

Zhou Shu chuckled as he walked forward and silently stuffed a banknote into Zhang Wufu's sleeve.

Zhang Wufu laughed out loud. *This Superintendent Zhou is really a wonderful person.*

"I have already delivered the items, so I won't disturb your rest." Zhang Wufu smiled. "Superintendent Zhou, when you come to the Division Headquarters to handle some matters in the future, you can come to my office to sit down for a drink and a chat."

Zhang Wufu left in satisfaction. Zhou Shu's gaze fell on the ten boxes in the courtyard.

"Superintendent..." Zhang Yibei and the others stared at the boxes. They still didn't know what was going on, only that this was a reward from the emperor.

"Don't just keep looking." Zhou Shu laughed. Today, the Golden Bell Shield technique had broken through the seventh level, and the emperor had rewarded him with so many good things. He was in a good mood, so he had to share his good mood. "Today, I am in a good mood. Open the boxes. Everyone has a share."

Even though Zhang Yibei, Wu Laoliu, and the others were still confused, it didn't stop them from rejoicing. The superintendent actually wanted to give them rewards bestowed by the emperor?

Who would have thought that they would have the chance to come into contact with imperial rewards in their lives?

"All hail the superintendent!" the Forging Apprentices shouted.

"Open the boxes and split the loot!" Zhou Shu laughed loudly.

1. Meaning no fortune

Chapter 90: Money Is Not Important

In the front yard of the 0th Workshop, the ten boxes lined up had all been opened.

...

The scene was eerily quiet.

Someone gulped, and then similar sounds came one after another.

“What a scam.” Zhou Shu let out a long sigh and looked up at the sky, speechless.

“Well, Superintendent, we’d better not accept it,” Zhang Yibei said awkwardly.

The ten boxes were full.

But these things were useless to them.

They didn’t even recognize a single character, so why would they need these things?

They couldn’t sell things bestowed by the emperor either, so should they use them as displays?

Don’t be ridiculous. People who work hard for a living couldn’t afford time for this.

Looking at the opened boxes, Zhou Shu was also bewildered.

Is there something wrong with the old emperor’s brain? How can he reward people with these things?

The boxes were full of ink, paper, and books...

Even though these things looked like tributes and were extremely valuable, what did Zhou Shu want these things for?

He wasn’t going to study for the imperial examination!

At first, he thought that these books were secret manuals on martial arts or forging techniques.

But when he looked through them, it was all f*cking poetry!

I am a forger. Why would you reward me with some poetry books?

What is the meaning of this?

Zhou Shu stared blankly for a while before letting out a long sigh.

There was really no way to reason this matter out. Moreover, these were all rewards bestowed by the emperor, so it was impossible for him to sell them for money.

“Forget it. I’ll just put these books in the workshop and make a reading corner. In the future, all of you can read when you have nothing to do. It’s also good for you to cultivate your moods.” Zhou Shu waved his hand.

His dream of becoming rich had been shattered. He should just focus on forging.

...

Inside the imperial city, Emperor Yuan Feng was writing in the imperial study.

What he was writing was Zhou Shu's poem about the Autumn Anatidae Plume Saber.

"Zhou Shu is already past the best age to study. Isn't it too late for me to reward him with books now?" Emperor Yuan Feng suddenly said.

Standing beside him was Eunuch Zhao, whom Zhou Shu had met before. Eunuch Zhao said respectfully, "If he really is talented, he will definitely live up to Your Majesty's expectations."

"I don't have much expectations." Emperor Yuan Feng shook his head. "I just think that since he was able to create such a good poem after studying in a private school for only a year, if he read more books, wouldn't he be able to create even better poems?"

Emperor Yuan Feng's eyes lit up. What many people didn't know was that the good old Emperor Yuan Feng was actually an artistic middle-aged man who loved poetry.

However, as the ruler of a country, he couldn't indulge in his own hobbies.

Of course, it was purely his hobby. As for talent—

That was all.

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In any case, after so many years, the poems he wrote couldn't compare to Zhou Shu's Autumn Anatidae Plume Saber...

"General, when you march south so bravely, the Autumn Anatidae Plume Saber hangs on your waist. As the wind blew, the lizard-skinned drums stirred the mountains and rivers, lightning flashed over your banners held as high as the sun and moon," Emperor Yuan recited in a loud voice. The words were good, and the poem was even better!

What a pity. If Zhou Shu had written this poem before the army set out, how great would it have been?

Emperor Yuan Feng even imagined that before the great army left for war, he would personally give Great General Meng Bai the Autumn Anatidae Plume Saber. Then he would say, "On the day when the imperial edict comes, I, the emperor, will take off my battle garb with you."

The scene would have been perfect.

Eunuch Zhao had served Emperor Yuan Feng for dozens of years, so he more or less knew some of his preferences. He said, "On the day of the great general's triumphant return, Your Majesty can bestow upon him the Autumn Anatidae Plume Saber. This is not a bad gift."

"You don't understand." Emperor Yuan Feng shook his head regretfully. "This is a poem about going to war. It is somewhat inappropriate to read it when the army returns victorious."

"Then, get Superintendent Zhou to make another poem?" Eunuch Zhao said.

Emperor Yuanfeng's eyes brightened, but he immediately shook his head. "It is not easy to come up with such a good poem. Let's not talk about this anymore. Hand over today's memorials."

...

Some were happy, while others were sad.

Although the emperor's reward didn't make Zhou Shu rich, which was a little depressing, he quickly forgot about it. It didn't affect his mood much.

However, someone else was in a bad mood.

In the Zhu Residence...

"That Zhou boy has developed a new weapon?" Zhu Chuanfeng said, surprised. "That kid is really a weapon forging genius?"

"It's true!" Zhu Chuanzhi said in a deep voice, "Although the Forging Division has sealed off all information, I've already confirmed with Xiao Bufan that he lost to Zhou Shu in terms of forging standard weapons.

"Now, no one in the Forging Division will suspect that he's a weapon forging genius. Furthermore, I feel that in the next issue of the Heavenly Mountain Villa's Standard Armament Manual, his weapons will definitely be on the list.

"At that time, he will probably be the number one Forging Apprentice in the world, right?"

"Hmph, even if he's the number one Forging Apprentice in the world, he's just a Forging Apprentice." Zhu Chuanfeng snorted disdainfully.

This title was created by Zhu Chuanzhi himself. Actually, there was no such thing as the number one Forging Apprentice, Forging Master, or Grand Craftsman.

"That Zhou boy is truly a weapon forging genius. We definitely can't let him go. He is a money tree," Zhu Chuanfeng said.

"Big Brother, aren't you planning to retire and retire from the forging world?" Zhu Chuanzhi asked, puzzled. "Is it that important whether or not we have him?"

"You don't understand." Zhu Chuanfeng shook his head. "Although we seem to have made some money over the years, we've spent more. Once I stop, our savings won't last long.

"That Zhou boy has developed four, no, five standard weapons. If we can obtain the ownership of these five standard weapons, lots of money will come to us. By then, we will be able to rest easy."

"But doesn't the ownership of standard weapons belong to the workshops?" Zhu Chuanzhi was puzzled.

"That's because he is a Forging Apprentice! If he's the disciple of a Grand Craftsman, then it's naturally different. The Forging Division has to give up its benefits!" Zhu Chuanfeng said confidently.

Zhu Chuanzhi didn't understand these things, and he didn't care either. Anyway, there was his elder brother.

"Big Brother, what should we do now?"

Originally, if Zhou Shu had been stripped of his position as the superintendent of the 0th Workshop, Zhu Chuanfeng would have been able to recruit him.

But now, not only did Zhou Shu not lose his position as the superintendent of the 0th Workshop, but he stayed in his position even more firmly.

If Zhu Chuanfeng wanted to receive him as his disciple now, Zhou Shu would probably give him the cold shoulder.

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“We can’t delay any longer. Once the Standard Armament Manual of the Heavenly Mountain Villa is announced, more people will pay attention to him,” Zhu Chuanfeng said. “Since that boy wants to do it the hard way, then don’t blame me!”

“Chuanzhi, you...” Zhu Chuanfeng lowered his voice and whispered something into Zhu Chuanzhi’s ear.

...

“I love forging. Forging makes me happy~” Zhou Shu hummed a completely random tune as he swung the large hammer in his hand.

With the addition of the Autumn Anatidae Plume Saber, there were already five weapons in the Legendary Armament Canon.

He had filled up the Huben Saber, Hundred Refinements Ring Pommel Saber, Horse Slaying Saber, and Spring Embroidered Saber.

The Autumn Anatidae Plume Saber was new. Currently, Zhou Shu had only forged two of them, and he was still far from filling it up.

However, Zhou Shu wasn’t in a hurry. In any case, with the first four sabers, he was constantly growing stronger. As for the Autumn Anatidae Plume Saber, he could take it slow.

He was now considering how to distribute the Autumn Anatidae Plume Saber.

To Zhou Shu, forging the weapons was very important. But what was even more important was how to make the most out of the weapons he forged.

If he couldn’t deliver his weapons to the right people, how could they complete kills?

Without any kills, he wouldn’t get any benefits from the Legendary Armament Canon. In that case, these weapons would be equivalent to trash.

Some of the weapons forged by the Forging Division were directly distributed to the soldiers. Some were sold by the Forging Division themselves.

Zhou Shu didn’t know that Emperor Yuan Feng had already specified a use for the Autumn Anatidae Plume Saber. He was still thinking about which army would have more chances to fight and how to get them to purchase Autumn Anatidae Plume Sabers.

It’s a pity that Sun Gongping went out with the army. Otherwise, I could have asked him to introduce his father. Zhou Shu rubbed his chin in thought.

Sun Gongping's father was Great Xia's Marquis Weiyuan, a commander of the Country Protector Army, a combat force. Selling Autumn Anatidae Plume Sabers to him wouldn't be bad.

After all, Zhou Shu's foundation was too shallow. Even though he had already befriended some people, he had too little military relations.

Even if he wanted to promote his weapons, there were not many ways.

The exposure rate is still not high enough.

Zhou Shu thought to himself that it was better to be a Forging Master. People would then come to him, begging him to forge ranked weapons for them.

It was nothing like forging standard weapons. After forging standard weapons, he had to find a way to promote them. If no army was willing to use them, the workshop would cut off production and stop forging them.

This was also one of the reasons why there were very few Forging Masters willing to develop modified weapons.

Because it was meaningless. There was a limit to the strength of standard weapons, and even Forging Masters wouldn't be able to increase their power by much.

After spending so much effort to modify a new weapon for no one to use, wouldn't that be a waste of effort?

If one had the time, they might as well forge a ranked weapon. They could earn money and fame. Why not?

Unless the standard weapon was good enough to be wanted by others. But how would he let others know that the standard weapons developed by the 0th Workshop were good?

At the very least, he had to have a chance to display them. Only then would others be able to see his weapons. He would have to take the initiative to promote them.

Compared to the other workshop superintendents, Zhou Shu's desire to promote his weapons was even stronger. It wasn't just because of the pressure from the Forging Division's task but also because of the benefits from the Legendary Armament Canon.

If he couldn't sell the forged weapons, how could he earn the rewards of the Legendary Armament Canon?

Without the Legendary Armament Canon's rewards, how could he become stronger?

Money was not important. What was important was that he didn't want his efforts to be wasted.

How could his painstakingly forged weapons be left to dust in the warehouse? Wouldn't it be a waste?