

Chapter 101 - The Black Ox Departs

Li Qingshan did not even have the strength to answer anymore. The path ahead of him was filled with wind and snow. It seemed endless. He could only cling onto a single thought and continue climbing upwards.

Xuanyue suddenly whispered in his ear, "Sorry, meowster has dragged you down." Her arms let go powerlessly, falling towards the snowy, windy abyss. Her eyes were firmly shut, and she was at peace. She even smiled slightly.

Li Qingshan extended his right hand instinctively, grabbing her icy hand.

He could not let go. However, having lost his right hand, he was unable to advance any further up the icy face. The coldness invaded his body now that he had stopped, and his blood flow gradually slowed down.

He was several thousand meters from the ground. Even for him, falling down would shatter every bone in his body.

In the violent snowstorm, he finally let out a mad, hysteric howl, like a beast trapped in a hopeless situation.

Within the snowstorm, two specks of light drew closer. A figure climbed up quickly.

Xiao An leapt up and grabbed Xuanyue, clinging onto Li Qingshan's back.

There was no need for them to talk. Li Qingshan's lips had already become frozen. With his right arm freed, he continued to climb up.

The top suddenly appeared to the seemingly endless ice face. As it turned out, he was only a few dozen meters away from the top now.

A large hand grabbed the edge of the cliff firmly. Li Qingshan pulled himself up with everything he had. His body had already run out of strength. He forcefully propped himself up and touched Xuanyue's face with trembling hands. They were ice-cold.

There was no heartbeat in her chest.

She was already dead.

Li Qingshan suddenly burst out into tears. A streak of light pierced through the snowstorm, and the Soaring Dragon Elder appeared on the top of the cliff. His face was pale, and his clothes were in tatters. When he saw Xuanyue on the ground, it only confirmed his suspicions. His Starfall was not something an ordinary Daemon General could withstand.

But just in case, he still rushed over regardless of the consequences. The items stored in Xuanyue's bell could make up for his losses, and the daemon core of a Daemon General was very precious as well.

Li Qingshan wanted to throw his life at him, but he did not even have the strength to accomplish that. He asked, "Why? What did she do wrong?"

“Because she’s a daemon. You’re no different. That’s all that’s wrong.” The Soaring Dragon Elder lifted his Soaring Dragon sword. He did not even look at Xiao An who blocked for Li Qingshan, swinging down.

“I’m killing you not because you’re a human.” A man stood in front of Li Qingshan. No one knew when he had appeared, including the Soaring Dragon Elder. He seemed like he had been standing there for a very, very long time already. He was like a great master, spanning from time immemorial to the future, never changing.

His stature could only be regarded as large and tall. He did not give off a terrifying aura, but in Li Qingshan’s eyes, his back was even more imposing than the Ice Sword cliff below his feet.

His skin was enveloped in a deep, dark blue that was almost black. His defined, sturdy body did not seem to possess any unnecessary part. Instead, he was like a peak that stood among the mountains, having been exposed to the elements for countless years such that every part of him reached harmony with nature, condensed from endless power.

Afterwards, Li Qingshan saw the pair of ox horns on his head. One of them was broken. He could not help but call out, “Brother ox!”

The Soaring Dragon Elder’s pupils contracted. Every inch of his soul screamed out with warning. He had fought in countless battles and had experienced countless dangers in his life, but even if all of them were combined, they still could not match the danger he currently faced.

He wanted to roar out. He wanted to swing his sword. He wanted to use all of the abilities and techniques he had learnt throughout his life, unleashing all of his strength and trump cards. However, he just could not even move a single finger. All he could do was gaze at the man with widened eyes and ask with a warped voice, W- who are you?” How could such a terrifying figure be behind two measly daemons? The Divining Elder had never mentioned it, nor did the divination give any indication either. No, I won’t die here.

The black ox did not answer his question. Instead, he continued, “I’m killing you because I want to kill you!” He raised his right hand. The Soaring Dragon Elder disappeared from this world.

Yes, he disappeared. There were no prior signs, nor were there any powerful moves, no terror or daemon qi. An elder of the Sword Collection palace renowned throughout the Green province, a Golden Core cultivator, had been slain in such a straightforward manner.

“Brother ox...” Li Qingshan opened his mouth, but he had no idea what to say. He had considered the black ox to be very powerful, but he never expected him to be so terrifying.

The black ox looked back, extending his hand before Li Qingshan. A ring lay in it quietly. It was the Soaring Dragon Elder’s sumeru ring. “I’ve turned you into this without your permission, so take this as an apology! I’ve left something in there for you.”

It was the wealth that a Golden Core cultivator had accumulated over his entire life. Its value was enough for many desireless cultivators to become blinded by greed. Even if an ordinary person offered everything they owned, they would not be able to exchange for a single item from it.

“I know you have a lot of doubts but believe me, the answers you find yourself will be much greater than anything I can give you. You can even call them priceless. It’s just like how I could give you the

power to wander this world unopposed, but I didn't, because the power you can find yourself is far beyond what I can provide, countless times greater. Now, it is time for us to part."

"What?"

"My existence has already been detected by someone in the heavens. In the future, you must walk your path by yourself. The time we spent together was short, but very pleasant. Remember, don't lower your head to anyone, to anything. You have once ridden on my back."

As he said that, the black ox's figure gradually faded. His voice was like a great booming bell, thundering through the mountains and shaking up Li Qingshan's mind.

"Wait..." Li Qingshan extended his hand, but all he grabbed was the ring.

The black ox vanished like he had never existed before, as if all those years, all those days were just a dream. However, his last message constantly resounded through Li Qingshan's heart.

I await for you beyond the Nine Heavens, for the time when you stand beside me.

The top of the Ice Sword cliff was empty. There was no vegetation at all, only ice and snow. The layer of clouds pressed down above his head, with huge flakes of snow falling down before they could form beautiful crystals. The wind whistled, like it was sobbing.

On the boundary between the Dragon province and the Green province, people sometimes felt like they had nothing apart from a distant, unreachable dream. There would only be an icy-cold body in their arms, tears frozen and the heart numb from the severe cold. The loneliness of the entire world would surge into their hearts.

Something touched him gently. He looked back and saw Xiao An. The two balls of blood-red flames burned even in the endless wind and snow, wanting to give him some warmth, telling him that he was not alone.

Gu Yanying emerged from the snowstorm and said in surprise, "What happened?" She also used a violet talisman, breaking out of the Soaring Dragon Elder's World Cage and rushing to the icy cliff. However, right before she arrived, the Soaring Dragon Elder's aura completely vanished. It was wiped from the world cleanly.

Li Qingshan held Xuanyue's cold corpse. He did not answer. He did not know how to answer.

Gu Yanying even felt tinges of fear. A Golden Core elder had just vanished without reason. This probably could shake up the entire Green province.

Did that person from the Umbral Yin sect interfere? No, it couldn't be. Even if Soul Nascence cultivators had the ability to kill Golden Core masters, it was impossible for them to do it so silently. Even an ant knew how to put up a struggle, let alone a Golden Core cultivator.

Was it related to him? Gu Yanying glanced at Li Qingshan before shaking her head, as Li Qingshan was just too weak. If he had a terrifying background, why was his cultivation still like this, still a demonic beast who had yet to condense a daemon core? Among Qi Practitioners, he would only be at the fourth or fifth layer.

Even with her extraordinary intellect, her brain was in a mess. Everything that happened tonight was just too strange.

“You should give her to me!”

Li Qingshan said, “I promised that I would take her to the Dragon province.”

Gu Yanying said, “That’s no good place to take her. It’s better if she returns to her master’s side.”

Li Qingshan said, “It’s her final wish.”

“Final wish? But she’s still alive?” The corner of Gu Yanying’s lips twitched.

“What!” Li Qingshan was shocked. He checked Xuanyue’s pulse in a hurry, but there really was no pulse. He looked at Gu Yanying in doubt.

Gu Yanying swung the fan in her hand at the sky, and a tornado rushed into the sky. The tornado pierced a great big hole in the thick layer of low-hanging clouds. The silvery-blue moonlight, just like a waterfall, seemed like a beacon that fell from the sky.

It landed on the Ice Sword cliff, on Xuanyue’s body. The surroundings continued to roar with wind and snow, but that small region became tranquil and serene.

Her body shone with a silvery-blue light. Gradually, it became brighter and brighter. Her eyelashes seemed to tremble.

Under Li Qingshan’s shocked gaze, Xuanyue slowly opened her eyes. “Where’s this?” Blinking them, she looked around. “This is... the Ice Sword cliff!”

Li Qingshan could feel her body gradually regain some warmth in his arms. He was taken aback. “What’s this all about?”

Gu Yanying said, “The nine-lives cat daemon’s rubbish innate ability.”

Xuanyue said, “Gu, you’re the rubbish!”

Gu Yanying said, “In a state of death, it’s impossible to put up any resistance at all. Even ordinary people will butcher you and extract your daemon core. If it’s not rubbish, what is it? This time, it was all thanks to... this person.” She was uncertain whether to refer to him as Li Qingshan. He had transformed like this, so he might not want other people to know about his human name!

Xuanyue said, “Big Blacko, did you really bring me up here?”

Big Blacko? The corner of Gu Yanying’s lips curled up.

Li Qingshan fell silent for a moment before roaring out, “You bastard, why didn’t you tell me earlier!?” You made me heart-broken for nothing for so long!

Xuanyue said, “Meowhahaha. Didn’t I tell you? I won’t die.”

Li Qingshan exhaled deeply. He did not want to pay anymore attention to her, but he felt indescribable joy inside.

At this moment, Xuanyue noticed the two crystalline, frozen tear streaks on Li Qingshan's face. Her heart was tugged as she extended her hand and touched his face. "Big Blacko, you cried?"

Li Qingshan said, "Don't flatter yourself. It's just snow."

Xuanyue moved closer to Li Qingshan's face. "Hehe, don't be so embarrassed. It's very normal for a pet to cry for his meowster. Oh right, you've agreed to call me meowster, so call me that! Call me that!"

"Pet?" Gu Yanying smiled strangely. Was being taken in as a pet by another pet a good fate or a bad fate?

Chapter 102 - Starting Over as a Human

Li Qingshan checked his hand. There was a bottle of spiritual pills.

Gu Yanying only acted like it had never happened, kicking up a whirlwind with a sweep of her sleeves and taking off into the sky along the rays of moonlight with Xuanyue.

Xuanyue looked back and glanced at Li Qingshan again. Her smile had vanished now, and tears emerged from her lakewater-esque eyes.

"Wait for me! I will definitely be there!" Li Qingshan roared at the sky as loudly as he could.

Xuanyue suddenly looked back. She heard him yell something, but the snowstorm drowned out his words. However, she could read his lips. She saw the three words, wait for me.

Gu Yanying showed surprise as well. The clouds closed below their feet.

On the Ice Sword cliff, the last ray of moonlight disappeared. Li Qingshan remained in the same posture as when he roared at the sky. His roar was a promise to the black ox, to Xuanyue, and to himself.

I will definitely reach beyond the Nine Heavens. I will definitely take you to the Dragon province.

I will definitely find the answer. I will definitely possess strength.

Under the mist, Li Qingshan stood before the waterfall once again. He no longer had the arrogant black ox beside him, nor was the girl bathing in the waterfall before him anymore.

He rubbed Xiao An's head. At least you're still by my side.

Without Xuanyue leading the way, he had to rely on his rough memory to return along his original path, coming back to this place. Although he could conceal his aura, he still encountered countless dangers along the way. Only after all of that did he finally return to this waterfall.

Winter had already passed. The world was beginning to bloom.

It felt like an entire lifetime had passed.

In just three short months, someone had told him that the Green Province spanned fifteen thousand kilometers, someone had told him that their objective was to leave the Green province, and finally, someone told him that they were waiting for him beyond the Nine Heavens.

Li Qingshan lowered his head and smiled. He said to Xiao An, "Let's see just where I can reach!" After that, he leapt into the pool of water.

The first thing that Li Qingshan did in the water was not cultivate, but summarise his accumulated experiences and the lessons he had learnt.

The advantages and the disadvantages, his gains and his losses.

A tiny shrimp being involved in a battle between sharks would rarely result in anything good. Just the flecks of meat that slipped between the teeth of the sharks could allow the shrimp to strengthen significantly, but it would probably end up dead as well.

He had survived completely due to the protection of a great sea monster, the black ox. However, this sea monster had already left him, giving him the goal of similarly becoming a great sea monster.

If he wanted to achieve this goal, he could not rely on his luck for surviving. He could not take risks he could not completely grasp. No one had immunity, and even if they did, it would easily shatter before absolute strength.

Not only did he have to possess the unswerving determination of an ox and the boldness of a tiger, but he also needed the depth and tolerance of a spiritual turtle. This form of tolerance was not lying down in the face of humiliation, being a coward and afraid of everything, but maintaining lofty ambitions, enduring what others could not and achieving what others could not.

Perhaps the reason why the black ox had not wiped the Soaring Dragon Elder from existence right from the start was for him to understand this. Anyone could state the great principles of life, but only by experiencing it would they truly understand it and embed it in their heart.

If he had not experienced the despair he felt when he roared out on the sheer cliff face, how was he supposed to understand the value of strength and the point of friends?

He desired even greater power.

There was no concept of time in the mountains. The buds turned into verdant leaves, and the flower buds bloomed into flowers.

The water from the waterfall also flowed more vigorously and became louder compared to during winter.

Li Qingshan sat beneath the waterfall. All of the sounds and all of the changes in the surroundings were picked up by his ears, but they did not cause his mind to waver at all.

Between extreme stillness and extreme motion, he was not just training, but also comprehending the activity and changes of nature. Or to him, the two had always been together.

He ingested the spiritual pills one by one, turning them into raging spiritual qi, but to him, that was not everything he used.

Even in an absolute state of meditation, he could still sense the existence of the tremendous spiritual qi in the surroundings. It was omnipresent, ruling over all of the activity and changes in the world.

He was like a spirit turtle, hidden deep in the sea, having forgotten about himself, and the spiritual qi would no longer reject him, naturally fusing into his body.

It was just like what was mentioned in the daoist canon. “Humble your minds, fill your bellies, weaken your pre-existing beliefs, and strengthen your backbone.” It was also like how the black ox had originally taught him—fill your body, strengthen your body, and only then will you have a foundation for everything. Only by humbling his mind and weakening his pre-existing beliefs could he be free from distracting thoughts and truly reach unity with nature, sensing the existence of the spiritual qi of the world.

To humans, this could only be achieved once Qi Practitioners had overcome the first tribulation and reached Foundation Establishment. Otherwise, it would require great luck and comprehension.

However, to daemons, this was a natural instinct. In the eyes of humans, the birds and beasts of the wilderness were foolish without a doubt, copulating and feeding, multiplying and propagating based on instincts alone. However, they were a part of nature, so they could naturally sense things that many humans could not. Spiritual qi was one of them.

At the same time, while humans possessed intellect, they lost their ability to harmonise with nature. They required various methods to cultivate in an attempt to lengthen their lifespans. Yet, the lifespan of any daemon would be much longer than a human of similar power.

With gains came losses. Perhaps this was the fairness of nature.

The black ox had once told him that Li Qingshan could only count as half a daemon, as even though his body had become a daemon's, he still had the mind and heart of a human, so he was unable to sense the spiritual qi of the world.

There were countless techniques and arts in the world. Who knows how many there were that could turn people into monsters. However, they were only monsters, not daemons. If that was all, there would have been nothing special about the black ox's plans. However, it seemed like he had already prepared everything for Li Qingshan.

With the progress of the Spirit Turtle's Method of Sea Suppression, Li Qingshan was able to temporarily put aside his intelligence as a human, along with the distracting thoughts that came with intelligence. He began to truly daemonify, looking at this world through the eyes of a daemon and comprehending this world with the mind of a daemon.

After an unknown amount of time passed again, the many flowers began to droop and fall.

Tremendous amounts of spiritual qi gathered towards Li Qingshan. The place that the black ox had chosen had always been rich in spiritual qi.

Having consumed all of the spiritual pills, the daemon qi in Li Qingshan's body surged like tidal waves before being suppressed by the Spirit Turtle's Method of Sea Suppression, rapidly being condensed and concentrated.

Xiao An, who was playing by himself on the side, suddenly raised his head, gazing at the waterfall and the pool of water. In the past few days, he had always been waiting quietly, playing around by himself and never leaving this area.

The spirit turtle suppresses the seas!

An invisible power had flattened the turbulent pool, becoming a flawless mirror of water. The water that crashed down from above no longer managed to create any more splashes.

Li Qingshan had finally reached the first layer of the Spirit Turtle's Method of Sea Suppression. At the same time, there was a great boom through his soul, and his body increased in size once again, nearing six meters. The aura he gave off pushed aside the falling waterfall.

All of his daemon qi condensed into a sphere around the size of a little finger!

He had finally completed the most important step of becoming a daemon, condensing a daemon core.

Li Qingshan lowered his head and looked at the mirror-like water surface. He gently rubbed his pair of ox horns. The two words on them, north and moon, no longer seemed so obvious. Instead, they seemed to have fused with the groovings of his horns, becoming irremovable.

He thought of Xuanyue again, recalling that promise he had yet to complete. He closed his eyes. Wait for me, I will definitely free you from your cage and send you to the Dragon province.

Suddenly, he opened his mouth, and his daemon core flew out. It revolved around him as if some invisible force was leading it around. With a thought, the daemon core shot off, immediately piercing several boulders in the water. It was basically indestructible, more terrifying than any hidden weapon out there.

Daemons did not know how to refine pills, so they were born with the knowledge of how to absorb spiritual qi. Daemons did not know how to forge weapons either, so the daemon core was their strongest weapon.

Although releasing the daemon core came with the danger of having it taken away, that required an absolute difference in strength to achieve. As a result, this kind of danger was not really any danger at all. After all, even if he did not use his daemon core against such an opponent, he would still be finished off, losing his daemon core.

It was just like when human cultivators fought against each other. If the opponent could easily take away the flying swords they unleashed, there was no point to fighting anymore.

Li Qingshan looked at the daemon core hovering before him. He thought, Even if I say I'm a human right now, no one would believe me.

At a closer glance, he discovered the daemon core was not completely spherical. Instead, it was composed of countless tiny hexagons, and it seemed rather different from regular daemon cores. It was probably due to the Spirit Turtle's Method of Sea Suppression. However, he had only seen one other daemon core before, so he could not be certain.

Li Qingshan extended his right hand and transparent ripples gathered in his palm, forming a ball of water that subsequently turned into various other shapes. If he were described using the five elements, he would be a water daemon, possessing the powers to control water spiritual qi.

He casually tossed the ball of water aside and gulped down his daemon core. He yelled out, "The Spirit Turtle's Profound Shell!" A turtle shell did not appear on his back. Instead, a spherical, glowing barrier

appeared. Upon closer inspection, the barrier was just like the daemon core, composed of countless hexagons.

The cascading waterfall landed on the Spirit Turtle's Profound Shell. Not a single drop of water could land on Li Qingshan now.

This was the innate ability he had comprehended after condensing his daemon core. However, that was not all.

Li Qingshan stood up and took in a deep breath. He raised his head and let out a fierce roar. Daemon qi formed sound waves, kicking up a fierce wind that rushed towards the horizon. The waterfall was blown away and deep, circular cracks appeared on the rock face.

The Tiger Demon's Fierce Roar seemed powerful, but it could only create a shockwave and be used against weaker opponents. Against enemies of similar strength, it was basically useless. Although his roar had decreased in range now, it could pierce through rock. It was truly lethal.

This was the second ability he had comprehended. He named it the Tiger Demon's Killing Roar.

"The Ox Demon Tramples!"

Li Qingshan leapt back into the water, landing heavily at the bottom. The rocks that had been washed by water for countless years shattered loudly as a circular shockwave spread into the surroundings. Wherever it passed by, the rocks would crack loudly.

It was as if countless explosives had been blown up on the bottom of the pool, sending all of the water into the sky and completely shattering the area.

The ox, the tiger and the turtle. Three creatures, three innate abilities. In the instant that Li Qingshan condensed his daemon core, they had all awakened at the same time.

Now, it was time to start over as a human!

Chapter 103 - Returning to Human Society

The pool water fell as rain. Under the illumination of sunlight, it formed a rainbow.

Li Qingshan shut his eyes firmly. He seemed solemn. Inside his body, his daemon core withdrew all of his aura, constantly sinking down. It was like a spirit turtle withdrawing into its shell, sinking into the abyss of the seas and entering a millennia long slumber, unknown to anyone such that its existence became a mere legend.

When Li Qingshan opened his eyes again, he leapt out of the pool and arrived in front of Xiao An.

Li Qingshan had turned back into the original Li Qingshan. Actually, such a statement was not completely correct.

That was because he no longer possessed his well-defined muscles, nor did he have a sharp bearing. Everything had been withdrawn. He seemed like an ordinary teenager from a mountain village, no longer possessing any special features. However, the depths of his eyes were just as deep and calm as the deep sea.

He looked at his human hands and suddenly remembered that he was already sixteen.

When he existed as a daemon, his concept of time became blurred. Only after turning back into a human did it abruptly clear up once more.

It had been sixteen years since he arrived in this world. Everything that happened in the last half a year was more fascinating than the first fifteen and a half years combined. He had gone from a human to a daemon, and then back to a human.

All of his daemon qi had been withdrawn into the daemon core, without the slightest bit seeping out. Even other cultivators would not be able to tell he was actually a daemon. It was funny now that it was mentioned. When he comprehended the true path of a daemon, he had instead recovered everything human.

There were countless creatures in the world, so just why weren't humans able to become daemons? Speaking of which, when cats became daemons, they were called cat daemons. When tigers became daemons, they were called tiger daemons. What were daemons that were originally human called? Human daemons? Transvestites?

Li Qingshan felt a chill. He decided to never consider this question again. He signalled to Xiao An. "I've made you wait for so long. We can set off now!"

The colour of joy lit up in Xiao An's eye sockets as he leaned up close to Li Qingshan.

Li Qingshan took out the sumeru ring that the black ox had left to him. He had no idea what it was made of. It was crystalline, yet it did not shine. Now that all of his true qi had been converted to daemon qi and withdrawn, he could not open it at all. Although he was curious about just what the black ox had left to him, he could only be patient and slowly come up with a way to open it. He strung the ring up as a necklace, hanging it on his neck and hiding it in his clothes.

He touched the charred scholar wood tablet after that. "Let's go. Compared to those distant goals, let's help you recover your body first. However, you need to hide away again for now." Li Qingshan constantly remembered his responsibility to this child. It was Xiao An who had assisted him at every crucial moment. Even during the times of greatest danger, he had stuck close to him.

He would not speak any words of gratitude. He only allowed this sentiment to silently compact in the bottom of his heart. Moreover, their relationship and bond had already surpassed mere gratitude.

He looked at the rainbow and figures flashed through his head—the black ox, Xiao An, Gu Yanying, and Xuanyue. He would achieve and complete all of those expectations, all of those promises, and all of those wild ambitions one by one.

Peace returned to the mountains. The pool no longer had any vortices. Li Qingshan's daemon qi had completely subdued it.

The sixteen year old who possessed the characteristics of both daemons and humans set foot in human society once again. Just how many dangers could he survive and how many storms could he weather?

Li Qingshan arrived at the ruins of the Black Wind stronghold with Xiao An, but he could not help but frown.

Since he was about to return to the world of humans, he obviously required quite a lot of gold and silver to pave a path for himself. All of the silver notes on him had been destroyed in the fire during the battle at the mountain god temple. They could no longer be used.

As a result, he thought about the wealth that remained in the Black Wind stronghold. He was glad that he had the foresight before, so he came here to have a look, but he discovered traces of excavation and digging everywhere.

As expected, the secret room below Xiong Xiangwu's room had been unearthed as well. Everything inside was obviously gone.

Li Qingshan breathed in deeply. "What's this supposed to be? Grave robbers?"

In Qingyang city, Ye Dachuan furiously kissed a transfer order in great joy. "Haha, I can finally leave this damned place!"

The destruction of the Black Wind stronghold and the merit he received from treating the Dragon's Gate sect as a local evil organisation had been reported to the Clear River prefecture. After a series of checks and confirmations, it was delivered to the prefect's table.

Even the prefect was rather surprised by Ye Dachuan's achievements. He could not endure the coaxings of his beloved consort either, so in the end, he sent a transfer order, transferring Ye Dachuan from Qingyang city.

Of course, returning to the clamour of the Clear River prefecture was impossible. However, he had still been relocated several hundred kilometers away, sent to the prosperous Jiaping city. As such, it was something for Ye Dachuan to rejoice about.

The advisor said, "Congratulations, sir! Congratulations!"

Ye Dachuan celebrated for a while before saying gloomily, "It's just a pity with what happened to my brother Qingshan!" At least he had not forgotten the person that made this all possible.

The advisor sighed. "Please cheer up, sir. This is all just fate. No one can do anything about it!"

Ye Dachuan considered it and emerged from the gloom very soon. "Don't forget to burn some more joss paper before we leave so that my brother Qingshan can bribe the lords of hell and have it a little easier and be reborn into a good family."

"Reborn into what good family?" Li Qingshan leapt over the wall with a strange expression and landed in the courtyard.

"Of course it would be a great, wealthy... a ghost!" Ye Dachuan replied absentmindedly, but his voice gradually slowed down. When he saw who it was, he finally cried out, hiding behind his armed chair swiftly.

The advisor said, "Sir, calm down, calm down. Under the light of day, why would there be any ghosts? Sheriff Li has returned!"

Ye Dachuan studied Li Qingshan. He saw a long shadow being cast below Li Qingshan's feet from the summer sun, and only then did he ease up. He emerged from behind the armed chair and grabbed Li

Qingshan's hand. "Brother Qingshan, you've finally returned. Where have you been all this time?" As he said that, hot tears began to well up in his eyes.

Li Qingshan drew back his hand. "I suffered some injuries and went into seclusion in the mountains for a while. Did you think I was dead?"

Ye Dachuan said, "As long as you're alive, as long as you're alive!" Afterwards, he told him the entire story. As it turned out, the news of Feng Zhang bringing a group of first-rate masters with him to encircle Li Qingshan had spread like wildfire, and in the end, everyone vanished in the mountain together.

Over the past few months, quite a few people had entered the mountains to search, but all they found was a burnt down mountain god temple. The remains there were completely unrecognisable, so rumors arose from everywhere.

Some people said Feng Zhang silenced everyone with death after he got his hands on the spiritual ginseng before subsequently hiding away. There were also some who said that other masters interfered and killed everyone.

However, regardless of the rumour, Li Qingshan was dead. No one believed that he could survive such a situation, so everyone treated him as dead. However, they had never thought that Li Qingshan would actually emerge from the mountains in the end. Moreover, he was the only one to emerge.

"As long as you're back. You can come to Jiaping with me. What do you think?" Ye Dachuan gestured at the transfer order complacently as his eyes vanished under his wide grin. He was happy from the bottom of his heart that Li Qingshan could return. Li Qingshan was his bringer of good fortune.

Li Qingshan glanced at the transfer order and said in confusion, "Vice magistrate? Aren't you being demoted?"

Normally, smaller districts did not have vice magistrates. Only larger ones did, and at most, there would be two or three. They remained under the district magistrate's command, so they obviously did not have as much authority as a solitary magistrate.

Ye Dachuan said, "Now this is something that you don't understand. You'd much rather be a beggar in a city of gold than a king among a pack of dogs. What kind of benefits can a run down place like Qingyang city provide? Even if I make money, there aren't even any decent parlours for me to dine at with prostitutes..."

As Li Qingshan listened to district magistrate Ye talk about his indulgences, he could not help but break into laughter. At least it felt slightly more realistic that he had returned to human society. It did sound primitive, but weren't these the exact things that humans pursued?

The two words, Jiaping city, made his heart skip a beat instead. He touched the Iron Wolf tablet in his bosom. The Scarlet Hawk commander 'old Wang' had once told him that if he managed to survive, he could go to Jiaping city and report to Zhuo Zhibo to become a Hawkwolf guard. However, he had yet to consider the matter completely, so he still could not make up his mind.

The Feng Zhang that he killed might have old colleagues or acquaintances in Jiaping city. Zhuo Zhibo, who sent Feng Zhang here in the first place, might not have a good impression of him either.

The advisor truly did live up to his position of advisor. He did not know much of the inside story, but he still managed to think to such a point. He reminded Ye Dachuan, "The haughty Feng Zhang came from Jiaping city, but now, his whereabouts are unknown." The reason for his disappearance was obviously Li Qingshan. They could not be certain whether the Hawkwolf Guard would investigate this matter or not.

Ye Dachuan's expression changed as well. "Yeah. Brother Qingshan, you have to be careful. If you want to, you still can run. I'll just treat it like I never saw you return." With his identity, he was still unaware that Wang Pushi had expelled Feng Zhang. The disappearance of a Hawkwolf Guard was a significant matter.

Li Qingshan said, "Thank you for your concern sir, but you don't need to worry about this. There's something I'd like to ask about."

"What is it?"

Li Qingshan said, "Who dug up the Black Wind stronghold?" With the amount of work involved, it was impossible to be completed without raising any disturbances. No matter where he went, he needed money. There was a price that had to be paid for stealing from the mouth of a tiger.

Ye Dachuan said, "I- it's the Iron Fist school. Qingshan, don't be rash."

"There's nothing to be rash over. I just want to get my money back. Will they be bold enough to turn down my request?" Li Qingshan was rather confused by Ye Dachuan's reaction. He had destroyed both the Black Wind stronghold and the Dragon's Gate sect. Was the Iron Fist school bold enough to make things difficult for him?

Ye Dachuan said, "Recently, a protector arrived in the Iron Fist school. He seems to be investigating the whereabouts of that mealy hall chief. Liu Hong excavated these items to give to him as presents. I also heard he's an innate master. He might be difficult to deal with."

Li Qingshan said, "I will be careful." With that, he vanished over the wall again. Leaping over numerous tiled roofs, he arrived in the Iron Fist school. However, he was in no hurry to show himself. Instead, he eavesdropped.

Having withdrawn his daemon qi and assumed a human form, his senses were not as sharp as when he was a daemon, but they still surpassed the senses of ordinary people. Within a range of a thousand feet, he could even hear the buzzing of mosquitoes, so he immediately located Liu Hong.

Over a hundred children currently stood neatly on the martial arts platform under the brilliant sun. They all stepped forward one after another.

Chapter 104 - Knocking on the Door for Debt

A brown-robed old man with a goatee checked their pulses one by one. He would shake his head at times and nod at others. Sometimes his eyes would shine, and at others, he would inspect the child before him. To his left was the master of the Iron Fist school, Liu Hong, and behind him was Li Long, who constantly refilled the old man's tea cup.

The disciples of the Iron Fist school formed a human wall, blocking many people outside who seemed to be the relatives of these children. They all looked at their children nervously. If they saw the old man nod, they would light up with pleasure, but if the old man shook his head, they would become dejected.

This was an important figure who had come from the Clear River prefecture from over five hundred kilometers away, a mighty protector of the Iron Fist school who possessed extraordinary martial arts. If they could gain his recognition, their children would truly skyrocket to greatness.

Li Qingshan saw the old man with his first glance. The old man's aura was heavy and condensed, slightly stronger than Feng Zhang's. He was truly an innate master, but he was not anyone dangerous. If he daemonified, he was confident about killing the old man in a single strike. Even if he maintained his human form, there would not be too much trouble. It would just take some effort.

He was just curious as to what this was all about.

Liu Hong sat beside the old man. Both of them were elderly, but even the naive children could tell who was more imposing. Liu Hong sighed inside. Recently, a lot of impressive figures have come to Qingyang city.

Ever since he came to Qingyang city for retirement, it had been many years since he last saw protector Yan Song. But speaking of which, with his status as a second-rate master, he never saw protector Yan much in the past either. The last time he saw him was during the birthday banquet of the leader of the main branch. Back then, he was still in his prime, and protector Yan was already like this. Now, he had already become an old man, but protector Yan seemed like he had never changed.

Liu Hong said, "Protector Yan, you should take a break!"

"Please try the tea!" Li Long filled up the cup with tea in a hurry. Although the hall chief had died to unnatural causes, and his plan to leave Qingyang city was cancelled, he felt happy inside. He never liked that hall chief Wu. He was rude to his master. Now that he was dead, it only served him right. In the blink of an eye, another one, protector Yan, had come. Not only were his martial arts even greater, but he was much more level-headed as well. He was proud, but he never showed it, and he could directly take Li Long to the Clear River prefecture.

Yan Song stopped and took a sip of tea leisurely. "I'm old. My body is failing." He just let the children stand beneath the sun.

Liu Hong asked, "What about the leader of the main branch?"

"Don't worry. You also count as an elderly member of the school. The one surnamed Wu was useless himself, so how would it be your fault? I will explain it clearly to the leader of the main branch." Yan Song was in a good mood; obviously, it was because he had received quite a lot of benefits from Liu Hong. He did not care too much about the silver, but one of the ancient paintings came from a famed artist. It was basically invaluable, which suited his tastes.

Liu Hong was overjoyed. "Then thank you, protector. What do you think about these children?"

Yan Song said, "There are a few promising ones among these children. Although I don't know if they can practise qi, they're at least more than enough for practising martial arts. If this was the prefectural city of Clear River, the children with better talent would have all been scooped away already. Even just a

single promising kid would take some fighting to obtain. You'll never be able to just pick them leisurely like this."

Liu Hong said, "It's all due to the main branch leader's wisdom."

"Hmm?"

At this moment, Yan Song raised his head and saw a hole in the wall formed from the disciples of the Iron Fist school. A teenager walked towards him. However, after glancing at him, Yan Song said, "Send him out. He's too old." Moreover, he was too ordinary. He had nothing worth noticing.

However, the disciples of the Iron Fist school did not try to block the teenager as ordered. Instead, they parted to the sides in fear. Yan Song was rather confused. All he saw was Li Long and even Liu Hong's eyes widening. "Li Qingshan!"

The crowd burst into discussion. "Isn't that Li Qingshan?" "The Black Tiger, Li Qingshan!" "I heard he's dead, isn't he?" "How'd he return?" Li Qingshan could be regarded as famous in Qingyang city now.

Li Qingshan walked up and waved his hand with a smile. "School master Liu, long time no see. And this protector something, I've been looking forward to meeting you!"

Yan Song raised an eyebrow. He remembered the other reason for his trip. Wasn't it exactly for this teenager?

Liu Hong said awkwardly, "Y- you've returned!"

Li Qingshan got straight to the point. "Yeah. I'll have to play the role of an unruly guest this time. School master Liu, please return a few items to me, or just exchange it into silver notes. I'd rather you do that actually. After all, it wasn't easy for you to excavate it all." The current Li Qingshan seemed very gentle, without any sort of imposing or vicious bearing.

Liu Hong looked at Yan Song. Yan Song said nonchalantly as he sipped his tea, "You're Li Qingshan? You're still bold enough to return? Right now, I'm going to ask you questions, and for every question, I expect a reply. If you don't reply, I'll smack you across the face once. How did hall chief Wu die?"

He did not even stand up. This was not a person worthy of standing up for, and Li Qingshan's 'rudeness' had irritated him slightly. He was out of his mind for trying to ask for items from him. And, there were various traces that proved that hall chief Wu's death was clearly linked to this person. Obviously, he had no reason to be polite to his enemy.

Li Qingshan is hiding his strength? Maybe! But even if Li Qingshan is a first-rate master, or even an innate master, having become a Qi Practitioner, what can he do? With his strength as a second layer Qi Practitioner, there were not a lot of people he had to take seriously.

Li Qingshan was familiar with this kind of behaviour. It came from possessing absolute confidence in personal strength. They believed they could hold their ground, and that everyone had to listen to and follow their arrangements, allowing them to do whatever they wanted.

However, when Li Qingshan compared Yan Song to the figures he had seen soaring through the skies, he found it absolutely hilarious. He was like a toad croaking loudly, ordering a group of flies around while believing that he was a king.

As a result, Li Qingshan laughed. At least I'm a frog, not a toad, and a very strong one at that.

The corner of Liu Hong's mouth twitched. After several months of not seeing him, having returned from a trip, Liu Hong had thought he would become a little more reserved, but he never expected him to remain exactly the same. He seemed amiable on the surface, but he was as arrogant as he could get inside.

Yan Song's expression became frosty. "What are you laughing about?"

Li Qingshan said, "When I see something funny, I'll obviously laugh!"

Yan Song slowly stood up. "Why don't you try to laugh again?"

Li Qingshan said, "Let's get to the point. You gobbled up all of my things. I want you to spit it all out now."

Without any prior signs, Yan Song crossed several meters with a single step to arrive before Li Qingshan. He raised a hand and swung it viciously. He wanted to slap Li Qingshan to the point where he would not be able to laugh again for the rest of his life. He wanted Li Qingshan to know the price of provoking the Iron Fist school.

Smack! There was a clear slap.

Yan Song's head turned to one side. A ripple flowed through his cheeks as his eyes were wide open. A tooth fell out. He felt disbelief. He clearly did not sense any inner force or true qi within Li Qingshan, yet his movements were swift and violent. Was he a Body Practitioner? However, he did not possess the special characteristics of a Body Practitioner at all.

Li Qingshan saw how Yan Song had tried to slap him. He did not feel irritated at all inside. Instead, it was mostly weariness. The swift movements now actually seemed so slow in his eyes, to a point where he suspected his evaluation of Yan Song might have been wrong.

As Yan Song had underestimated his opponent, he revealed many openings. Li Qingshan obviously would not let the opportunity slip, and he smacked Yan Song across the face. He continued to smile. "If you're not going to spit it out, I'll beat you until you spit it out."

"Protector Yan!" Liu Hong was dumbfounded. The indomitable protector Yan had actually been slapped across the face before so many people. He was even more surprised by how powerful Li Qingshan had become. His rate of growth was simply far too terrifying.

The crowd gasped as well. The reason why they had brought their children today was because Yan Song had demonstrated real martial arts. He had destroyed a log of over three meters wide with a single punch, which was basically divine in their eyes.

Li Long could not help but rub his eyes. Was this really the young cowherd from the Crouching Ox village? He felt like he knew less and less about this fellow villager.

Yan Song was furious inside. He took a step back and adjusted his posture. His true qi surged into his fists.

Smack!

As soon as Li Qingshan saw his stance, he decided to give him no chance to strike out at all. He walked up and slapped him across the face again.

Li Qingshan's strength was tremendous. Yan Song felt the world spin around him after being smacked, and the true qi he had just gathered collapsed again. He gathered it once again as he was unwilling to just accept this. He wanted to kill Li Qingshan.

Smach! A third slap landed. This was how bare-handed close combat was like. It was very difficult to turn the situation around after losing the upper hand from a single move.

Smach! Smack! Smack! The slaps were loud and clear, resounding through the martial arts platform. Aside from the sounds of slaps, there was nothing else.

Whenever Yan Song showed signs of counterattacking, Li Qingshan would slap him mercilessly. The reason why he chose to slap was not just to return the favour. It was also because he had no interest in killing him, so he could not use too much strength. However, he still needed to ensure he maintained the upper hand. As a result, hitting the head was the best choice. Slaps were not fatal, but they could shake up the head of his opponent, interrupting Yan Song's actions. This was the optimal way to approach the situation.

Yan Song staggered backwards as Li Qingshan advanced.

Thud! Yan Song sat back down on his armed chair, shielding his face and calling out, "Stop hitting me!" After being slapped a few consecutive times, he finally recovered from his anger. It turned into fear. Li Qingshan could kill him. As people grew older, they valued their lives more and more.

As expected, Li Qingshan stopped. "Return my things!"

Yan Song's complexion fluctuated between paleness and redness. He roared, "Liu Hong, what are you standing there for?" As he said that, he secretly reached into his bosom. He also had a talisman that he treated as a trump card. He had been humiliated so much in front of so many people, so if he did not get revenge, he would never be able to redeem himself.

Li Qingshan said, "I'd advise you not to use it!"

Yan Song's hand trembled.

Li Qingshan said, "You wanted to slap me, so I slapped you. If you want to kill me, then I can only kill you."

Li Qingshan's voice was calm and composed. He did not even stop Yan Song from fishing out the talisman. Yan Song held the corner of the talisman as his expression fluctuated violently. He was unable to make up his mind.

Yan Song said, "D- did you really kill hall chief Wu and all those people?" Although the remains were unrecognisable, he had discovered many damaged weapons. Hall chief Wu's gloves were among them.

Chapter 105 - Winning People Over with Force

Li Qingshan smiled silently. He neither confirmed nor denied it.

Yan Song said, "Did the Black Wolf guard Feng Zhang die to your hands as well?" Originally, he refused to consider such an absurd possibility. A Black Wolf guard, five first-rate masters, and a great group of second and third-rate masters would actually die to a little known kid. However, he believed it somewhat now.

Li Qingshan still did not answer.

Yan Song drew out his hand. He was not holding the talisman anymore.

Li Qingshan smiled, "We're not continuing to fight?"

Yan Song said, "You're dead already. There's no point for me to waste something like that on a dead man."

Li Qingshan said, "Oh? How come?"

Yan Song said, "You kill a Black Wolf guard. Do you think you can still live?"

Li Qingshan dodged the question. "That's something you don't have to worry about. Please return my items!"

Yan Song paled. Liu Hong pulled Li Qingshan to the side and pleaded, "Qingshan, I didn't know you would return alive, which was why I dug up those things. If you want silver, I'll give it to you, alright?"

Li Qingshan shrugged. "That's what I was asking for in the first place." He wanted to reason with Yan Song, but what could he do when Yan Song was unreasonable? He was forced to talk through his fists.

Liu Hong shot a glance, and the disciples of the Iron Fist school dispersed the crowd. The large martial arts platform emptied out.

At this moment, Ye Dachuan arrived in a carriage. After looking at everyone's expressions and seeing the redness that had yet to fade from Yan Song's face, he gained a rough understanding as to what had happened. He found it satisfying. In the past few days, he had been holding banquets and inviting Yan Song, but all this sh*tty protector did was look down on him. The protector finally knew what was what now!

He put on an act and coughed twice. "Protector Yan, do you have misunderstandings with sheriff Li? As they say, it's better to resolve grievances than to deepen them. I'll play the host for lunch and serve as a mediator for the two of you."

Yan Song interrupted him. "There's no need. I have nothing to say to a dead man!"

Li Qingshan said, "Why don't you say that again!?" He had been defeated, yet he was still so arrogant. Do you really think I won't kill you?

Yan Song sneered, but as expected, he was no longer bold enough to keep talking. There was nothing he could do given the current circumstances.

Ye Daochan asked in surprise, "What dead man?" After hearing the whole story, he began to worry for Li Qingshan as expected.

Li Long whispered, "Qingshan, you'd better go!" He received a cold glare from Yan Song.

Li Qingshan sneered inside, Do you really think I'm done for? He said nonchalantly, "I'm about to go to Jiaping city to join the Hawkwolf Guard."

"What!" Everyone was shocked.

"What a joke! Just with- hmph!" Yan Song sneered. Originally, he wanted to say, "Just with you." but then he remembered that Li Qingshan truly possessed the necessary strength, so he could only sneer in contempt.

Ye Dachuan asked, "And what's that about?"

Li Qingshan said, "The Scarlet Hawk commander, old Wang, wants me to report to Zhuo Zhibo in Jiaping city."

Yan Song cried out, "How is that possible? You killed Feng Zhang! You're an enemy of the Hawkwolf Guard!"

Ye Dachuan asked, "I- is that true?"

Li Qingshan took out the Black Wolf tablet and waved it around. "Feng Zhang has already been expelled from the Hawkwolf Guard. I'm basically replacing him!"

Discreetness was a wild beast lying in ambush, waiting for a critical moment to kill its prey. It was not about allowing some scoundrel to despise and look down on him. It would only lead to trouble in the end. That was not called remaining discreet. That was called stupidity. If you lowered yourself all the way to the ground, you could not blame others for treading on you. Demonstrating enough strength and might was the only consistent method for reducing trouble.

Liu Hong and Li Long looked at each other. Both of them were speechless. What kind of luck was that? Half a year ago, Li Qingshan was just a kid from the country. All he could do was face off against some scoundrel from the street. Yet now, he had already joined the fearsome Hawkwolf Guard. He was basically rising through the world.

Li Qingshan remained calm. Yan Song refused to believe it, but he was forced to believe it. After arriving in Qingyang, he had made some investigations of his own. He also knew that the person who took away Li Qingshan that day in the restaurant was the Scarlet Wolf commander, Hua Chengzan, taking Feng Zhang and him to see Wang Pushi.

He simply could not understand why the two of them would come to such a horrible place. However, the outcome was very clear. In the end, Li Qingshan returned, while Feng Zhang died from an unnatural death. The two of them did not help their own subordinate, Feng Zhang. The reason for this was definitely thought-provoking, but it was very clear now.

Wang Pushi had actually expelled Feng Zhang on the spot, and Li Qingshan was actually bold enough to call Wang Pushi 'old Wang'. Did he have some kind of relationship with Wang Pushi? When he looked at Li Qingshan, his gaze at him had already changed.

Originally, he thought that even if the Hawkwolf Guard would not search for Li Qingshan, he would still have to come up with a way to seek revenge. However, he could not help but dismiss this thought now.

In this world, only the Hawkwolf Guard dealt retribution to others. There was no one bold enough to deal retribution to the Hawkwolf Guard.

After further thought, he regretted his rash actions. Li Qingshan was so young, yet he was already so strong. Moreover, he could survive in the face of such danger. There might have been someone backing him. How could he actually treat him as an ordinary kid?

“That’s fantastic!” Ye Dachuan was overjoyed. “I was originally worried that you couldn’t go to Jiaping, but we can go together now.”

Li Qingshan said, “I’m still considering whether to go or not.”

Ye Dachuan said, “Why wouldn’t you go? Joining the Hawkwolf Guard is awesome. You don’t even need to pay the entry fee when you go to brothels or gambling parlours.”

Li Qingshan sweated slightly. Is this the benefit that comes with joining the Hawkwolf Guard? If old Wang was present, he’d probably kill you with a swing of his baton.

Ye Dachuan said, “It’s not early. Come, come, come. Let’s talk and eat.”

Liu Hong would never let Ye Dachuan make the arrangements. He had already made his disciples prepare everything. Yan Song’s expression changed several times, but he eventually sat down as well. He no longer said anything along the lines of ‘I have nothing to say to a dead man.’

Afterwards, under the mediation of Ye Dachuan and Liu Hong, Yan Song drank a few cups of alcohol and used the tipsiness to set up a situation for himself. He clinked cups with Li Qingshan and said awkwardly, “Y- young hero Li...” He no longer pursued the matter regarding hall chief Wu. Even their main branch leader would scold him for offending a Hawkwolf Guard over a single hall chief.

Li Qingshan smiled. “Protector Yan, I’ve offended you earlier. I’ll drink three cups in atonement to you.” He finished off his current cup before drinking another three. There was no reason to, nor did he want to develop grievances with others. If he could resolve it, it would obviously be for the best.

There were a series of praises from the table, and Yan Song’s complexion improved drastically.

Liu Hong said, “We’re all people of the jianghu, and we all have short tempers. There’s nothing strange about getting into conflict, but it’s just like what they say, it’s better to resolve grievances than to develop them. You’ll never get to know each other unless there are disagreements, right? With an additional friend comes an additional path, while an additional foe leads to an additional wall. I’ve lived for so long. My martial arts are nothing special, but that’s what I’ve relied on to live until now.”

Ye Dachuan added, “Yeah, yeah, yeah! It’s just like that!” He secretly praised Li Qingshan for knowing when to stop. He knew how to use his strength, but he did not harass those weaker than him. His conduct did not make him seem like a sixteen-year-old at all.

Both of them were experienced. They were both great at leading the atmosphere. With Li Qingshan’s apology, the atmosphere mellowed out as they talked to one another. Yan Song asked Li Qingshan about his relationship with Wang Pushi shamelessly. This was also something that everyone else was curious about, so they all fell quiet, only looking at Li Qingshan.

Li Qingshan did not want to strut about in borrowed plumes. "So this old Wang is called Wang Pushi. I'm not close with him."

Everyone became disappointed, but Yan Song refused to believe it. Wang Pushi doesn't know you, yet he treated you like this, expelling Feng Zhang for you?

As a result, he asked again, "Even in the Clear River city, the two of them usually never show themselves, so what brought them to Qingyang city?"

Li Qingshan did not try to hide anything. He roughly explained the matter regarding Gu Yanying, but he avoided the topics of the Dark Queen and the cat daemon.

"White Hawk commander! Bodhi Brew!" Yan Song gulped. To him, that was a figure of the legends. Both her strength and authority had reached a level he could not even begin to imagine. And, there had been the renowned Bodhi Brew as well. Only their main branch leader was fortunate enough to drink a cup of it. Many of his suspicions were completely dispelled now. He could totally imagine just how furious he would be if he tried to suck up to the main branch leader, yet an insensible subordinate dragged him down instead.

"You've caught commander Gu's attention! Qingshan, your future is limitless!" His resentment and discontent from being slapped in the face earlier immediately vanished. When he looked at Li Qingshan now, there was even some respect in his eyes.

He was like a small bureaucrat who had heard that a fellow bureaucrat had met the leader of the country and even conversed warmly with him. Consequently, he was unable to help himself but to develop feelings of respect and admiration. There was no point clinging to these small grievances anymore.

"Perhaps!" Li Qingshan discovered that the entire Iron Fist school, regardless of status, knew how to handle situations very well. However, his feelings were rather mixed. That extraordinarily carefree woman in clothes even whiter than snow had only invited him to a cup of alcohol, yet it could completely change how an innate master treated him. It also made him realise the difference that existed between the two of them.

Ye Dachuan gasped. "That's the three major pillars of the Ruyi commandery!" He had spent most of his life in Clear River city. Although he possessed neither intellect nor martial might, he was very familiar with the rumors and gossip on the streets.

Li Qingshan asked out of curiosity, "What do you mean by the three major pillars of the Ruyi commandery?"

Yan Song said, "The Marquis of Ruyi Jiang Fu, the White Hawk commander Gu Yanying, and the great general Han Anguo. They come from the schools of Confucianism, Legalism, and the Military respectively. Jiang Fu handles the government affairs, leading the nine prefectures. Gu Yanying leads the Hawkwolf Guard, responsible for upholding the law. Han Anguo controls the army of the Han family and the military power. Every single one of them is a figure of utmost authority. On the streets, they're known as the three pillars of the Ruyi commandery. I've heard that out of them, commander Gu is the most renowned."

Ye Dachuan said, "Even if you ignore their backgrounds, the Hawkwolf Guard is responsible for monitoring the army and the officials. This commander Gu is also the last person that people are willing to offend. Li Qingshan, seeing how you received preferential treatment from her, you can rise up in a single stroke immediately."

Li Qingshan silently remembered this information. As it turned out, the Hawkwolf Guard originated from the school of Legalism. The two from the schools of Confucianism and the Military probably were not a mere scholar or soldier either. How could they be ordinary if they stood on par with Gu Yanying? The depth of the world truly was unfathomable. But of course, most people would never get the chance to come into contact with any of these three in their entire lives.

At the same time, he felt like his decision to reconcile with Yan Song could not be more correct. Although an additional friend would not always lead to an additional path, he definitely knew many things that Li Qingshan did not since Yan Song came from the Clear River city. News was extremely important to Li Qingshan. It would even influence his decision on whether to go to Jiaping city or not.

Afterwards, he learnt from Ye Dachuan that aside from the three major pillars of the Ruyi commandery, the Clear River prefecture had three minor pillars as well. They were the prefect of Clear River, the Scarlet Hawk commander and the general of Clear River.

Chapter 106 - The Ten Layers of Qi Practitioners

Li Qingshan gained a better understanding of the structure of the government. This should have been the separation of powers! Although it seemed very rough, the encompassing area they had to govern was simply too large, so it was impossible for them to have any finer methods of governance.

Out of them, the Hawkwolf Guard resembled the imperial guards and two bureaus of the Ming dynasty. Their authority even seemed slightly greater than that. Li Qingshan could not help but say, "So the Hawkwolf Guard is quite impressive."

Note: The imperial guards and the two bureaus were a series of secret police active during the Ming dynasty. They were the Embroidered Uniform Guard, Eastern Bureau, and Western Bureau respectively. The former two managed to grow to great power before collapsing with the Ming dynasty.

Ye Dachuan said, "Yeah, so don't hesitate anymore. A great future is awaiting you."

Yan Song said, "And indulging yourself for free is not even the main point. It's not like you lack the money to do that. You don't seem like the person who would indulge in power and influence either, Qingshan. However, the Hawkwolf Guard has many spiritual artifacts, spiritual stones, pills, medicines, and cultivation methods. There's probably not a single Qi Practitioner who wouldn't be interested in that."

Li Qingshan said, "Qi Practitioner? Then what are these innate masters all about?"

Li Qingshan asked with an open mind, and Yan Song gradually eased up. He was willing to serve as a guiding lantern for him. Moreover, these matters were all common knowledge in the first place.

As it turned out, there were extremely few people in this world who could practise true qi right from the beginning. These people were Qi Practitioners. However, the demand for talent to become a Qi Practitioner was extremely high, so most people did not take this path. Instead, there was another path

available, which was cultivating inner force. Inner force basically had no strict demands on talent. As long as someone was not an idiot and was willing to put in the effort, basically anyone could develop inner force.

The internal martial arts that ordinary people practised were equivalent to simplified versions of qi practising methods, lowering the need for talent and making it easier to achieve. As a result, basically everyone could practise it. However, the inner force developed through this process would never be as great as true qi. And, as they never truly opened their meridians, the inner force would be restricted to the meridians; it could not nourish the organs or be released externally.

However, as long as they cultivated their inner force to the limit and subsequently broke through, they could convert it into true qi and become a Qi Practitioner, which was commonly known as innate masters.

The path of practising qi was divided into ten layers.

And, it was not as rough as the first-rate, second-rate, and third-rate divisions of the jianghu. Sometimes, it would be very difficult to distinguish if a person was at the first-rate or the second-rate because the martial arts they practised were different, so their abilities would differ drastically. The paths they took differed as well.

However, regardless of the cultivation method, the path of practising qi was about opening the eight extraordinary meridian channels, which were the Yang Heel meridian, the Yin Heel meridian, the Yang Linking meridian, the Yin Linking meridian, the Girdle meridian, the Penetrating meridian, the Conception meridian, and the Governing meridian.

The eight extraordinary meridians did not directly connect to the internal organs, nor did they link the outside with the inside, which was why they were called the extraordinary meridians. Every single one of them covered the entire body, connecting several major acupoints. With each one opened, their true qi would grow slightly stronger, and that was a layer. Completely opening all eight extraordinary meridians would be reaching the ninth layer.

Reaching the tenth layer would be even more difficult. It required the complete opening of the twelve standard meridians, which were the three yin meridians of the arm, the three yang meridians of the arm, the three yin meridians of the leg, and the three yang meridians of the leg. These twelve standard meridians criss-crossed with one another, linking the hands and feet to the internal organs and five elements. It was extremely easy to suffer from qi deviation and injure the organs, but once one broke through, they would be able to reach the tenth layer, the realm of completion, reaching the peak of Qi Practitioners.

However, Li Qingshan had not opened any meridians at all, as he walked the path of a daemon, so there were completely no meridians to consider. There were countless different types of daemons that shared very few characteristics with humans. How could a snake or a bamboo possess meridians?

But when he thought up to this point, he suddenly came up with an idea. After suppressing the ox demon and tiger demon with the Spirit Turtle's Method of Sea Suppression, he was an actual human. He had recovered his original form, so was he really unable to practise qi? As it seemed, he needed to find a

method of practising qi and try it. Unknowingly, he embarked on an even stranger and more unique path with that thought.

Reaching there, Yan Song even grumbled about how their status as people who started off as martial arts practitioners was just too low. After all, by the time he reached the innate realm and could practise qi, he was already quite old. Although he used the true qi he had converted from his dense inner force to open the Yang Heel meridian, breaking through to the second layer, he was unable to take another step forward. He could not open the Yin Heel meridian and break through to the third layer.

Everyone comforted him. Yan Song said, "Body Practitioners are powerful, but it's still not the orthodox. Qingshan, you're very young, so you must be able to reach the third layer, or even the fourth or fifth layer. If you can open your Girdle meridian and develop a sea of qi, reaching the sixth layer, you'll be able to get promoted to a Scarlet Wolf guard and take office in the Clear River city. It'll all be worth it if that happens."

Yan Song was sharp-sighted. He could tell that it was impossible for Li Qingshan's true qi to have reached the second layer. The reason why he was able to defeat him so easily was because he walked the path of a Body Practitioner. From a certain perspective, the external martial arts of the jianghu were a simplified version of Body Practitioner methods. However, Body Practitioners were the same as practitioners of external martial arts in the jianghu. They were powerful at the beginning, but they had no future. It would be very difficult to reach a higher realm, so it was not a favourable path to take.

Li Qingshan said, "Thank you for your warning, protector Yan. I will keep an eye out for it in the future." But as a daemon, it was basically impossible for him to not be a Body Practitioner.

However, with Yan Song's explanations, he felt everything clear up drastically. He wondered what layer of Qi Practitioners he could take on when he was daemonified. Zhuo Zhibo of Jiaping city was probably around the level of a weaker Scarlet Wolf guard as a Black Hawk commander. His strength was probably around the sixth layer, having developed a sea of qi.

He had no idea which was more powerful, the sea of qi of humans or the daemon core of daemons, but they must have been around the same. Even if the daemon core was weaker, he could just run away. As a result, he made up his mind to visit Jiaping city. Similar to how the government could provide for people, the resources they could offer did interest him.

Li Qingshan then asked, "May I ask if you have any methods of practising qi, protector Yan?"

Yan Song said awkwardly, "The methods of practising qi are usually unique to various sects and schools and are not openly offered to outsiders."

Li Qingshan also understood that his question was rather abrupt. He had just reconciled with Yan Song, and now, he wanted a method for practising qi. It really did seem rather inappropriate, so he smiled. "I've been rude." He drank a cup of alcohol and no longer said anything more.

Yan Song considered it with some difficulty. "But, if you really do want it, Qingshan, I can try to see what I can do."

Li Qingshan was overjoyed, and he toasted a few more cups to Yan Song. Ya Dachuan and Liu Hong also congratulated him for his great luck. Li Long showed great admiration and thought about how the world

really was ruled with power. Li Qingshan slapped this old man in the face a few times and ended up receiving a method for practising qi in return.

After the meal, in a quiet room, Yan Song passed a method of practising qi to Li Qingshan.

The name of the method was the Innate Method of Practising Qi. There were also nine layers, but reaching the ninth layer was only equivalent to achieving the third layer of Qi Practitioner. It was not some impressive superhuman ability.

Yan Song had also explained this point to him calmly. “The Innate Method of Practising Qi is just for establishing a foundation. With your talent, Qingshan, you’ll definitely be able to find an even better method to practise in the future.”

Methods for practising qi could be described as very valuable, enough to make many people shed blood and lose their lives over one. However, they could also be described as not valuable, with this Innate Method of Practising Qi in particular. Among Qi Practitioners, basically everyone knew about it, and most of those who did not know about it had a better, stronger method for practising qi right from the beginning.

The most valuable part was not the method, but the person who could practise the method. Basically, as long as you possessed the talent to practise qi, countless people in the world would be willing to pass this basic method onto you. As long as Li Qingshan joined the Hawkwolf Guard, he could obviously receive the same method as well. Yan Song could see how Li Qingshan had great future prospects lying ahead of him, so he did not mind doing him this favour that did not cost him anything.

“Thank you, protector Yan!” Li Qingshan’s main objective right now was to see whether he could practise qi or not. The quality of the method was a lesser concern. And, such a basic method might not offer much of an increase in power, but it probably had the unique characteristic of being easy to grasp, so instead, it became the most suitable one for him.

He wondered about other things. Were all abilities and methods divided into nine layers? Currently, all of the abilities and methods he practised followed this standard. He even asked Xiao An, and his Path of White Bone and Great Beauty was the same.

Yan Song bid farewell and went back to picking disciples, leaving Li Qingshan to cultivate in the quiet room.

Calming incense burned in the room. Li Qingshan sat with his legs crossed, and his eyes closed gently as he quietly comprehended the wondrous truths of the Innate Method of Practising Qi.

He had experience with practising qi. He even managed to develop true qi of quite some strength, but it was all for the sake of converting it into daemon qi, turning him into a daemon in the end. It was not a proper method of practising qi.

Only now did he truly come into contact with a human Qi Practitioner’s cultivation method for the first time. After comprehending it slightly, he discovered that it was much easier than the abilities that the black ox had taught him. In particular, the first three layers did not require any meridians at all. It was all about how to gather true qi.

It was just like a high schooler taking the classes of a primary school, completing the exercises of a primary school student's physical education class. It was extremely easy. In under two hours, Li Qingshan refined a new strand of true qi, which only demonstrated his talent once again. At least he had the right to practise qi. If he was born in Clear River city, he probably would have been accepted as a disciple by someone a long time ago, embarking on the path of a Qi Practitioner.

However, before he could even celebrate, the daemon core sucked in the strand of true qi and converted it into daemon qi.

Li Qingshan could not help but become dumbfounded. Was he wrong? Afterwards, he began practising the Spirit Turtle's Method of Sea Suppression. With an unwavering mind, he absorbed the spiritual qi of the world, and after six whole hours, the daemon qi in the daemon core approached a state of saturation. Of course, even if he practised for another sixty hours, it was impossible to actually saturate the daemon core with daemon qi.

Li Qingshan practised the Innate Method of Practicing Qi again and condensed true qi. It was swallowed by the daemon core again, converted into daemon qi, but a portion was left behind for him. However, this still made him ravish with joy. It proved that his thoughts and choice were correct. He really could practise qi like a human.

The sky gradually darkened. Li Qingshan persevered with his cultivation, gradually gathering true qi bit by bit through great difficulty. He was like a labourer working under the cruel exploitation of a bourgeoisie, where most of his hard work and fruits of labour would be deprived from him.

Of course, this bourgeoisie was actually Li Qingshan himself. None of his efforts went to waste.

During this time, Li Long had come to knock, inviting him to eat. However, Li Qingshan was completely submerged in this masochistic form of cultivation, possessing no other interests and was unaware of anything else.

Chapter 107 - The Sumeru Ring

Liu Hong said, "Qingshan is cultivating. Don't disturb him!"

Yan Song said, "Little Long, you have to work hard on martial arts as well. Although you don't have the talent to directly become a Qi Practitioner, you just need to break through to the innate realm, and your inner force can be converted into true qi. You'll break through to the second layer with great ease. You won't be worse than anyone else."

Li Qingshan had finished hall chief Wu, so Liu Hong asked Yan Song to take Li Long to Clear River city. He would head to the main branch of the Iron Fist school to learn martial arts. If it were not for that, Liu Hong would never have gone to such great lengths to suck up to Yan Song.

Li Long said with respect and caution, "Yes, protector!"

The three of them gazed at the door of the quiet room. They were all thinking different things.

With the crow of a rooster, the day lit up again. Only after an entire night did Li Qingshan open his eyes. He silently sensed the true qi flowing through his body as he felt relief. He had finally achieved the first layer of the Innate Method of Practising Qi.

This did not mean he could complete the cultivation method with great ease. Any cultivation method would grow in difficulty as one progressed. The amount of time and energy it would take would increase exponentially.

It was a pity that he had consumed all the unknown spiritual pills Xuanyue gave him back then. Otherwise, he was confident that even a single pill would have been enough for him to complete the first three layers of the Innate Method of Practising Qi. It might even be enough to open the Yang Heel meridian, allowing him to break through to the second layer.

The path of cultivation remained closely attached to the four words of wealth, companionship, method, and environment. Wealth ranked first, but the wealth here was not referring to gold and silver, but spiritual medicines and herbs. Regardless of the ability or cultivation method, they were all basically a process of gathering spiritual qi. If he wanted to practise martial arts, then he needed to be well-fed. If he wanted to cultivate, then he needed to ingest qi. The products of external alchemy would provide essential assistance.

Although a person's talent and comprehension were very important, it was impossible for one to achieve instantaneous enlightenment and immediately make drastic progress unless they had spent a lot of time building up their foundations beforehand.

However, even the puny true qi was of great importance to him. He took out the Cursive Sword Calligraphy and channeled true qi into it. As expected, the spiritual artifact accepted the true qi. Although it failed to even launch a stroke in the end, it was still great motivation for him.

This meant that he could activate and use the talismans on him. The greatest difference between humans and animals was the ability to create and use tools. Daemons strengthened themselves, while humans relied on tools. They could not directly absorb spiritual qi from the world, so they refined pills and medicines. They did not have powerful bodies, so they created spiritual artifacts and talismans.

This was the formidable aspect of humans. Li Qingshan had to take advantage of this as much as possible. And, if he wanted to open the Soaring Dragon Elder's sumeru ring, he needed this power as well. He meditated again and recovered his depleted true qi.

He fished out the ring and wore it on his finger, channeling true qi into it. Although he knew it was basically impossible for him to open it, it was still worth a try.

True qi flowed into the ring like water, circling through it before flowing back into Li Qingshan's body. Obviously, the ring showed no signs of opening. However, to his astonishment, most of the true qi he had produced after so much difficulty vanished in the blink of an eye. It had not been depleted like when he channelled it into the Cursive Sword Calligraphy, which he could still recover. Instead, it had cost him progress.

He had been forced out of the first layer of the Innate Method of Practising Qi again. However, the remaining true qi became extremely pure and clear; it was like a great, muddy river turning into a clear stream. Although the quantity had decreased, the quality had increased significantly. It circulated at a much swifter rate as well.

The more impure one's true qi was, the more difficult it was to break through. True qi of greater impurity made it very easy to get caught on bottlenecks. Many Qi Practitioners would have to be patient

with bottle necks, gradually refining their true qi like they were hammering metal. However, the sumeru ring directly helped him change his crude iron into fine steel, saving some time and effort. This was a treasure that countless Qi Practitioners or even cultivators of higher realms could only dream of.

Li Qingshan had never thought the sumeru ring would have such a use aside from storing items.

But was this good news? Li Qingshan instead smiled bitterly. Had it been easy for him to refine that little bit of true qi? His daemon core would swallow most of the true qi, which the ring would subsequently refine. It was an utter nuisance. He felt like he had laboured for several decades, only to return to the times before the War of Liberation.

Note: The War of Liberation refers to the Chinese Communist Revolution. In the period before this, there was basically severe inequality in the region, so many people spent their lives toiling about, barely making a living. Meanwhile, the rich only grew richer.

Li Qingshan sighed heavily. He knew that this was the correct choice. If he spent a little more time now, he would be able to save a lot of time later. Most people did not spend most of their time on cultivation; rather, they became stuck at bottlenecks, unable to advance any further.

For example, protector Yan had reached the second layer a long, long time ago, but he could not break through to the third layer no matter what he tried. He was stuck there. Over all these years, he naturally wanted to refine his true qi, but he was helpless. His true qi that had been converted from inner force was just too impure.

Li Qingshan closed his eyes and began cultivating once again. However, he did not remove the ring this time.

Yan Song had already picked the disciples and was ready to leave, but even after waiting till the dead of the night, he did not see Li Qingshan emerge. Even when they knocked a few times, no one answered.

Liu Hong said, "Perhaps something has happened?" However, he was wondering inside whether protector Yan had purposefully given Li Qingshan a method of practising qi with issues that would make him suffer from qi deviation.

Yan Song frowned. He did not know what was happening either. If it were not for Li Qingshan's extremely long and steady breathing within the room, he basically would have suspected that Li Qingshan had died from qi deviation.

Practising qi was similar to doing anything else. It was about a combination of work and rest, knowing when to cultivate and when to rest. It was not about just wasting away time, or there would be no benefits at all, only detriments.

He did not warn Li Qingshan about this, as he should have been able to understand such a matter as he cultivated. As time went on, the effects of practising qi would grow weaker and weaker, while his mind should have become more and more exhausted. Moreover, true qi was extracted from the vitality of the human body, which needed replenishing through food and drink. Otherwise, he would be creating something from nothing.

Li Qingshan encountered a similar issue, but he just switched to the Spirit Turtle's Method of Sea Suppression. Spirit turtles could sink into the depths of the seas and sleep for millennia while absorbing

and releasing spiritual qi of the world. To Li Qingshan, meditation was not something that exhausted him. Instead, it was more like sleeping and resting.

With a thought, he switched back to the Innate Method of Practising Qi. In the beginning, the process was extremely difficult, and he would leave his state of meditation with the slightest bit of carelessness, pausing his cultivation of the Spirit Turtle's Method of Sea Suppression. However, he gradually grasped the trick and made the Spirit Turtle's Method of Sea Suppression into an automatic behaviour; it became like breathing for a sleeping person. This had nothing to do with Li Qingshan's intelligence. Instead, the ability was simply too profound, much more than what he could imagine.

Afterwards, he would practise the Innate Method of Practising Qi in this state of semi-consciousness, using both a human and a daemon's method at the same time.

Li Qingshan discovered that the daemon core would not be as greedy as before under such a state, saving him much more of his fruits of labour.

In this state, his rate of practising the Innate Method of Practising Qi reached an unprecedented high as well. His vitality was extremely powerful. Going several days without food or drink posed no problem to him at all.

For three whole days and nights, Li Qingshan did not sleep, rest, eat, or drink. He was completely submerged in cultivation. Finally, when he opened his eyes again, he had forcefully pushed his way back to the first layer with the Innate Method of Practising Qi.

He exhaled deeply as he felt pangs of hunger. He took out the Cursive Sword Calligraphy again and channeled the extremely pure true qi into it. Before his true qi had even run out, a calligraphy stroke lit up, and a strand of sword qi shot out.

Earlier, his actions were akin to tossing moist, green wood into a furnace. As such, he struggled to even light a fire. However, what he used now was high quality charcoal, which was extremely easy to set alight and could also provide large amounts of heat.

The two disciples of the Iron Fist school that guarded the entrance suddenly felt a chill run down their spines. They looked at each other. "Don't you feel a bit cold?" "I really do a little. So much for summer."

Li Qingshan stowed away the Cursive Sword Calligraphy and took off the sumeru ring, hanging it around his neck again before standing up. He opened the door, and the sunlight dazzled him.

"Young hero Li, you've finally emerged!" one of the disciples said while the other went to report the news.

Before long, Yan Song and Liu Hong had arrived.

Liu Hong said, "Qingshan, you've emerged? I even thought something had happened to you. There were almost a few times when I wanted to burst through the door."

Li Qingshan smiled. "Apologies. The cultivation method from protector Yan was just too profound. I got carried away with comprehending it, and I forgot about the time."

Protector Yan said, "Were you really practising qi? What layer did you reach?"

Li Qingshan said, "I just reached the first layer."

Yan Song said, "That's not slow at all." However, it definitely was not fast either. The first layer of the Innate Method of Practising Qi was the easiest. He had personally witnessed talented children complete the first layer within two hours. Obviously, Li Qingshan was not fast.

However, spending three days on practising qi in a single sitting during one's first time was unheard of.

Li Qingshan said, "I've made you all wait. We can set off now!"

Liu Hong took out a wad of silver notes and gave it to Li Qingshan. Li Qingshan had originally come to collect his debt after all.

Li Qingshan said, "School master Liu, you'll be looking down on me if you do that. Protector Yan has been so generous, so how can I be stingy? Let's not mention the matter of money again." He never liked to owe anyone anything. Only when he was debt-free could he find peace. Although the Innate Method of Practising Qi was nothing outstanding, it was extremely important to him. Even just getting his hands on it earlier than usual was better than nothing.

Liu Hong was delighted. Obviously, he could not make Yan Song return the money he had given to him. That was his savings for retirement.

Yan Song developed a good opinion of him as well, turning down a sum of over ten thousand taels of silver casually like it was nothing. It would be nothing surprising if he came from a wealthy clan, but he was a teenager from the mountains, so such an attitude was very rare. This child has been born with extraordinary magnanimity. It's no wonder that people would appreciate him.

Only after a series of declinations out of courtesy did Li Qingshan accept two thousand taels to cover travelling expenses.

When Li Qingshan arrived outside the Iron Fist school, all he saw and heard were a series of deafening drums and firecrackers where it was normally cold and cheerless. There were even lions and dragon dancers that completely crowded the surroundings of the Iron Fist school.

Four children with red eyes were delivered before Yan Song. They were the children that he had picked. They had the opportunity to leave this tiny Qingyang city and enter an even vaster world, but they would have to leave their homeland and their relatives.

Li Qingshan watched on from one side with folded arms. Suddenly, he heard someone call out his name. Turning around, he saw village head Li and caretaker Liu in the crowd as well. Beside them were the two brothers, Li Hu and Li Bao, and behind them were a few people from the Crouching Ox village.

Chapter 108 - Homeland Far Away From Home

Li Qingshan said, "Are you here to send off Li Long?"

Caretaker Liu said, "F- for you as well. Er- Qingshan. You really have achieved success. I hope you can forget about what happened in the past." The current Li Qingshan was an indomitable figure of importance in his eyes. Even when caretaker Liu spoke, he struggled to string words together.

The other villagers came up to congratulate him. They even carried their own produce, which all of them shoved into Li Qingshan's hands.

Looking at these familiar faces, Li Qingshan became filled with emotions, actually momentarily forgetting how to respond. Ever since he was born, he had been constantly longing to leave the Crouching Ox village, but all of a sudden, every single house and every single strand of grass from the village seemed to flash past his eyes vividly.

At that moment, the deep well that had trapped him for over a decade that he had constantly wanted to leave, the mud and lichen that he found disgusting, all seemed so familiar. Village head Li hugged Li Long as tears streamed down his face. The surroundings were in a noisy clamour, but everything suddenly fell silent when it reached Li Qingshan's ears.

Li Qingshan even discovered his big brother and his sister-in-law among the crowd. They were both jittery, cowering from the wealthy people of the city. They looked at Li Qingshan, wanting to come up to say something, yet too afraid to approach him. At that moment, they were filled with regret. If they had not fallen out with Li Qingshan, who knows how much glory they would have received because of him. They saw Li Qingshan look at them, and rays of hope erupted in their eyes.

However, Li Qingshan immediately shifted his gaze. What should be severed had already been severed. They could not cry over spilt milk. It was not that he could not forgive them, but because they were already worlds apart now. Moreover, they failed to understand that there was an even higher chance for them to be targeted and subsequently killed compared to wealthy people simply by being his relatives.

Yan Song passed an order, and everyone parted to the two sides. A large, horse-drawn carriage rushed over. Both horses were extremely well-groomed.

Li Qingshan, protector Yan, Li Long, and the four children boarded the carriage together. The carriage moved slowly, stopping in front of the government office. Ye Dachuan and the advisor boarded the carriage in delight. With the protection of these masters, it would be impossible for them to come across any danger along the way.

Li Qingshan saw the item in Ye Dachuan's hands. His eyes lit up. "The Stone Splitter bow!" He had left this bow in his courtyard within Qingyang city. He had gone back and taken a look as soon as he returned, but the courtyard had already been cleaned, and someone new had moved in. Obviously, he had no idea where the Stone Splitter bow had gone, and he did not try to look for it either. He never thought it would be in Ye Dachuan's hands. He tugged the bow gently with his index figure, and he managed to draw it with great ease. With his current strength, even firing a hundred arrows consecutively with this bow would pose no problem.

In a pavilion five kilometers from the city, Li Qingshan saw the master of the Stone Splitter bow once again.

Huang Binghu said, "Congratulations, Qingshan, on making progress with your strength yet again." He discovered that he could no longer see through this teenager anymore. However, he was very well-informed as well. The only person who could defeat an innate master in an open confrontation was another innate master. He had achieved the goal he stated in the past, and he only used a few months.

Li Qingshan smiled. "Hunting chief, you haven't wasted any time either." He could tell that Huang Binghu was extremely close to the level of first-rate masters now. After a few toasts of farewell, he set off again. Finally, Qingyang city completely vanished behind him. It was no longer visible.

Li Qingshan said to himself inside, Farewell, my homeland!

He had already thought it through; whether it be dying and becoming part of the dirt or soaring through the sky, he would never return again. From today onwards, wherever he was would be his hometown.

They travelled during the day and rested at night. After travelling through the mountains for three days, the surroundings suddenly opened up. Vast plains laid ahead of Li Qingshan.

The golden fields of wheat spanned as far as the eye could see, and the summer breeze kicked up ripples among them. Various villages and towns were interspersed among the fields, with smoke rising up into the sky. It differed from the Crouching Ox village very much.

Yan Song said, "We've left the boundaries of Qingyang city. If we travel for another three or five days, we'll reach Downstream port. We'll be able to switch to ferries and directly ride down to Jiaping city, or even the prefectural city of Clear River."

Li Qingshan took out the map that Gu Yanying gave him. With a thought, a speck of light lit up. Downstream port was only a few dozen kilometers from their present location.

Yan Song said in surprise, "A mental map, and a mental map of the Green province at that; this is worth quite a lot. Qingshan, where did you obtain it?"

Usually, the greater the region a map covered, the less detailed it would be, while the smaller the region, the greater the detail. However, mental maps could cover thousands of kilometers and remain extremely detailed, condensing thousands of kilometers into a single square inch. Although it was only a low grade spiritual artifact, it was very valuable, let alone a mental map that spanned the entire Green province.

Li Qingshan said suddenly, "Protector Yan, sir Ye, I'll be parting with you here!" He had already gained a rough understanding of the jianghu and this world from the two of them over the past few days. At the very least, it was information they knew, so when he travelled alone, he would no longer be completely clueless.

Ye Dachuan said, "What? Didn't we agree on going together?"

Li Qingshan shook his head. "I plan on travelling by myself and going out for a spin. I've made you wait three days for nothing, so my sincerest apologies." The reason why he chose to set off with them perhaps might have only been due to a certain fear. He was a person who had remained in a village for over a decade, but was now suddenly going to see the outside world. Such a matter was basically like entering a large city. He would always have some fear about this, even going as far as relying on these two people who were not as powerful as him, just so that they could look after one another along the way.

Every single person had an urge to roam, and urge for freedom, but when a boundless, free world was actually presented before them, every single one of them would feel fear and be left at a loss as for what to do. Li Qingshan was the same.

But now, it was time for him to throw these emotions aside. When he left the mountains and saw the vast plains, the glistening fields of wheat and the limpid, gurgling river water, the faint markings on the map all flashed across his mind. They were so beautiful and vivid, yet he had not even covered one ten-thousandth of the area depicted in the map.

They looked at each other, uncertain as to how to convince him. Suddenly, they heard Li Qingshan spread his arms and say to the vast plains, "I want to travel through all corners of the world, across the entire universe! I want to taste all of the delicacies and drink all of the finest alcohol the world has to offer! I want to practise the fiercest abilities, fight the strongest foes, and sleep with the most beautiful women! World, I'm coming! Hahahaha!"

His voice grew louder as he spoke, such that his laughter became thunderous. When he mentioned it, it did sound like a stupid declaration. Was it foolish? Perhaps. The ox that had listened to his foolish oath was no longer here, but he no longer needed to ask anyone, "Will my dream really come true?"

He did not need anyone to answer him. He did not need anyone's recognition. And obviously, he did not care about other people's gazes either. The answer was already in his heart.

After agreeing to rendezvous in Jiaping city, these people watched Li Qingshan's large, tall figure travel off into the distance from the hill. As they watched him enter the golden plains, he seemed like a large child rolling through the wheat, vanishing very quickly.

Li Qingshan's choice originally seemed rather ridiculous and childish, but in their minds, they all thought of a few phrases together. Dragons swim through the vast ocean. Tigers enter the depths of the mountains.

Li Qingshan did not follow the main path, running madly through the open fields. He arrived at a small speck on the map very soon. It was a city that was much more prosperous than Qingyang city. He did not bother to remember its name. Instead, he directly rushed to their largest establishment and ordered a table of the best food. Every single dish was a local specialty. He had not seen or even heard about many of them before. Every single jar he ordered was fine, aged alcohol of twenty years. Although they were not as great as the spiritual alcohol, they had their own unique taste.

The shopkeeper saw how he was a major client, so he personally came to receive him, even drinking a few cups with him. He suddenly smiled. "There's no fun in drinking alone. Young master, would you like a few beauties to accompany you?" From how Li Qingshan acted, he seemed like a wastrel who had managed to escape from his clan after quite some difficulty.

Li Qingshan was surprised at first before smiling. "Of course! Why wouldn't I want any? I have plenty of money!" He acted like the most vulgar upstart there was.

He wanted to work hard on cultivation. He wanted to travel beyond the Nine Heavens. However, he did not plan on being an ascetic. He had sworn that he wanted to marry a woman like Gu Yanying, but before he actually took the oath of marriage with a woman, he had no plans to act like an ascetic monk.

Living in the world was not suffering. Otherwise, people would be better off dead. The distant dream planted seeds of hope in his heart. There was no point to turn it around against him and cause torment.

As a result, around a dozen seductively-dressed women, wonderfully adorned, sat beside him. They giggled as they spoke to him, constantly referring to him as 'master' or 'young master'. They boldly extended their hands into his bosom.

At first, Li Qingshan felt rather unnatural and was teased by a few of the escorts, but he relaxed very quickly. He hugged and touched them without minding it at all, smiling from ear to ear. However, his eyes remained as clear as water the entire time; he was just like a child playing an extremely new and interesting game.

However, it was very easy for children to become bored. He did not actually plan on doing anything. It was not because he had any disdain towards these escorts, but because it was extremely easy for him to grow sick and tired of a game-like thing after having seen the almost perfect beauty of people like Gu Yanying and Xuanyue.

He did not know before, but only now did he understand the meaning of 'When she smiled she was an extremely charming female. By comparison, all other bower maids became pale.'

Bang!

Suddenly, someone flung open the door to the room and yelled, "Can you quieten down!?" He was a young man in expensive clothes, carrying a treasured sword and wearing a treasured head ornament. Just as the saying went, three women made quite the chatter. It was impossible for dining with a table of escorts to be quiet.

Behind the young master was a charming woman. She looked at Li Qingshan in disgust.

Li Qingshan raised a finger to his lips and let out a long hush before yawning and standing up. He casually fished out some silver notes and placed them on the table. The escorts immediately ignored him, scrambling for the silver notes.

Li Qingshan walked past the young master and studied him. The young master placed his hand on the hilt of his sword. He was arrogant, but he did have the power to back up his arrogance. Li Qingshan could tell that he was already an innate master, no, he should have been regarded as a talented Qi Practitioner. The woman behind him was the same. With two Qi Practitioners, they obviously had the right to look down on everyone. In their eyes, Li Qingshan was just a regular wastrel. Cutting him down with a stroke of his sword would be nothing special at all.

Chapter 109 - Demons Come Knocking

Li Qingshan said, "Please let me through!" Afterwards, he squeezed past the young master and looked deeply at the woman dressed like a scholar. He shook his head. She was a beauty. In his former life, he would struggle to make her smile even if he used everything he had. But now, his target was much higher. With the small joys of his own, private dream, he walked past her and conveniently caught a whiff of her fragrance. Dreams were the source of happiness.

The woman's frown deepened, perhaps due to the smell of women on Li Qingshan, or perhaps due to Li Qingshan's fearless gaze. Maybe Li Qingshan shaking his head at the end was the reason why she was so furious.

The young master wanted to draw his sword, but the woman shook her head. She allowed Li Qingshan down the stairs as she showed contempt in her eyes.

Li Qingshan did not leap up and fight back immediately like a cat that had its tail stepped on. He definitely possessed the strength, but he realised that as long as he held back momentarily, he could avoid a lot of trouble. Of course, he had not lost his temper either.

However, the person who had just evaded trouble was about to go make trouble for others now. He made his way down the stairs and shook off the smell of women on him. He wanted to try it, so he had tried it now and no longer cared about it. He knocked the jar on his waist. "Xiao An, let's go kill some bad people!" He did not choose to part with protector Yan and the others just for the sake of hanging out with some women.

The jar thumped back in response, and Li Qingshan sniggered. He strode away, walking towards a dark alleyway. Only when he entered the darkness did he feel the gaze on him completely vanish.

"Rongzhi, what's the matter?"

The scholar called Rongzhi said, "I saw that his steps were level and steady. He seems to have practised martial arts before."

"He's just a practitioner of some external martial arts at most. If you hadn't stopped me, I definitely would have taught him a lesson."

"He's just someone insignificant. Even if you kill him, you'll just dirty your hands, so what's the point? We better eat quickly instead and travel quickly tomorrow so that we can get to Jiaping city early."

"Yeah, it's rare for the Hawkwolf Guard to be recruiting new members. We can't miss this opportunity." The man's eyes blazed. As long as he joined the Hawkwolf Guard, he would be on a completely different level compared to the jianghu, becoming a man among men. No one could resist such a temptation, so he was determined to obtain this position.

"It probably won't be that easy. This time, all of the masters within a range of five hundred kilometers of Jiaping city have been drawn over. There might even be third or fourth layer Qi Practitioners, and the number of places are limited as well. There'll definitely be a tough struggle."

"Don't worry. With these talismans as trump cards, we'll be able to turn the tables even if we come across powerful masters." The man was confident. He forgot about Li Qingshan very soon. Yeah, he was just an irrelevant figure.

However, unbeknownst to them, Li Qingshan heard everything they said loudly and clearly. His auditory senses had already reached the level of demonic beasts, so as long as he wished, he could clearly hear anything within a range of five kilometers.

The Hawkwolf Guard had actually begun recruiting people; this was probably the position that had cleared out due to Feng Zhang's expulsion. Probably even Wang Pushi would have never imagined he would be able to survive and actually fill in the spot! Obviously, he did not care if his appearance would crush the hopes of these people. He did not have too much time to think about it right now either.

That was because a few dark, shady figures had already begun to block up the alleyway he was in. The small city was more prosperous, but there were not too many outsiders. And, there were even fewer people who attracted as much attention to themselves as Li Qingshan. The news that a teenager with a tremendous sum of money spread very quickly, and he had actually walked into this world of darkness himself. It would make no sense if he was not robbed.

Li Qingshan whispered, "We're pretty lucky!" He knocked the jar. "It's time to eat!"

"Hand over your money!" A person pulled out a shiny dagger, but what answered him were the Blood Flames of Corpse Incineration that shone even brighter. Basically unable to let out any sounds, the people had been swallowed by the flames. Their flesh and blood turned into pure energy, becoming part of the fire.

A lantern lit up the darkness, bringing light to an old man's dumpling stand. Although there were no customers, only moths fluttering about, he did his best to remain open.

A young man strode over and said loudly, "Senior, give me a bowl of dumplings!"

"Alrighty!" The old man began moving dexterously, and very soon, some dumplings were floating in some clear water.

"It's so late, so why aren't you resting? You're elderly now, so shouldn't you be enjoying your time in retirement?" Li Qingshan chattered casually. The old man sighed away his complaints. It was all because of his unfilial children. His wife and he had no proper source of income; this was all part of the most ordinary bleaknesses of the world.

Li Qingshan sat beside the stand, eating dumplings as he comforted the man with a smile. He actually found this much better compared to dining with escorts in a fancy restaurant. He preferred sitting in the corner of the darkness, eating simple food and talking to a weathered old man. How strange.

"Little brother, you don't seem to be a local. Forgive me, but you better quickly return to your inn after you're done. It's not very safe here at night."

Li Qingshan said, "Are there bad people?" Afterwards, he heard even more woes and grumbles. Every single place had them, procuresses who forced women into prostitution, wretched loan-sharks and jianghu gangs that harassed the weak while cowering before the strong.

Li Qingshan listened and memorised it all quietly. He casually asked for the names and addresses of these people, eating four or five bowls of dumpling as he did that. He left behind all of the silver he found on the ruffians who just tried to rob him before standing up and bidding farewell.

"T- that's too much!" The old man astounded, but when he raised his head, Li Qingshan had already vanished. There was a night breeze. He thought about the stories of monsters and ghosts he had heard before. He decided to close up for the night immediately.

On that night, demons came knocking, upholding justice and helping the weak, ridding the cruel and bringing peace.

There were no evil abilities or techniques in the world, only evil people. If I were to kill every single bad person in the world, I would be a man of great benevolence.

Before the sun had even risen for the day, Li Qingshan had left the small city. He began practising the Ox Demon's Fist of Great Strength in a region of wilderness. He had consecutively killed over a dozen people last night. He felt at ease, throwing fists like beating drums that boomed through the air.

Xiao An sat by one side, refining the essence blood of the people. The Blood Flames of Corpse Incineration constantly flowed around him, assuming various shapes such as wild beasts and venomous snakes. In the end, it actually became a lotus pedestal that lifted him up from the ground. It hovered in the wilderness, sometimes higher and sometimes lower in quite an imposing manner. Wherever it passed by, the verdant wild grass would immediately wither and die, leaving behind a trail of death on the ground.

Xiao An could kill second layer Qi Practitioners like Yan Song as easily as a piece of cake now. Li Qingshan felt both admiration and awe. He was definitely stronger than Xiao An right now, but he could not fly. However, Xiao An was still nowhere close to the level where he could rebuild his body. The Path of White Bone and Great Beauty was terrifyingly powerful, but it was difficult to practise. It required even more sacrifices.

Although Li Qingshan had not purposefully tried to gather money, his wealth had easily reached several tens of thousand taels after the slaughter last night. If those people were lamb-eating wolves, then he was a wolf-eating tiger. Suddenly, he discovered that to Qi Practitioners, the currency of ordinary people no longer held much significance at all, as they all possessed powers that surpassed ordinary people. Even through the most underhanded methods of stealing, they could easily gather a sum that ordinary people would struggle to accumulate through their entire lives.

To Qi Practitioners, the true treasures were spiritual pills and spiritual stones that could increase their cultivation. However, it was evident that these resources would remain in the hands of powerful organisations. Ordinary people would probably never even hear about it in their entire lives. If he wanted these items, joining the Hawkwolf Guard was the best choice.

He signalled to Xiao An and continued on the way. Regardless of day or night, he travelled and stopped whenever he wanted. He casually destroyed two or three nests of bandits, and after three days, he finally arrived before a river and stopped.

The river was Clear river, as well as where the name, Clear River prefecture, came from. It flowed for thousands of kilometers, directly to Clear River city. The river was five to ten kilometers wide. Even with his two lives combined, he had never seen such a mighty river before. Looking at the rippling, reflective water, he immediately felt his mind open up.

Li Qingshan arrived in a large town on the banks of the river. It was called Downstream town, originally developed due to the Downstream port. It was only a town, but it was much busier than Qingyang city. On a horse, he saw a sea of heads, jostling about in the streets with quite the noise. Suddenly, he thought of something. If he killed all these people, would Xiao An be able to reconstruct his body immediately? But afterwards, he shook his head. Wouldn't he just be a mass murderer then?

There were countless vessels on the river bank as people hurried to and fro from the port. It was extremely busy, and there were obviously many ferries travelling south. Li Qingshan immediately saw huge, dragon ships of several stories high, constructed from beautifully carved beams and painted

rafters. They seemed like luxurious restaurants and hotels built on water. He immediately gave up on the thought of hiring a smaller boat and boarded a large, dragon ship instead.

The room at the very top of the dragon boat offered the best views, but it was also the most expensive. It actually cost several thousand taels of silver. Obviously, Li Qingshan was not lacking silver, so after fishing out a few silver notes, the manager of the ship immediately smiled from ear to ear before ordering some maidservants to take him to the very top. Before they left, he even gave ambiguous hints for them to take care of his needs as much as possible.

The room was extremely large. Even if there were several dozen people there, they would not find it crowded. Its decor even exceeded the best establishment Li Qingshan had visited along the way here in terms of extravagancy. He opened the window and looked down at the port and Downstream town. He wondered when Yan Song and the others would arrive, but he ended up seeing two familiar figures. It was the pair he had come across in the restaurant three days ago.

“What? The top room is already booked, and we have to stay below?” The man was displeased.

The manager said awkwardly, “There’s nothing we can do. Young master, the next level down is very luxurious as well, so please just make do!” A person who could spend several taels just to board a ship obviously did not need money. Even if you offered them several tens of thousand taels to switch rooms, they would never agree to it out of pride.

The woman said, “We’ve never had the habit of making do. Please find a way, manager. Money isn’t an issue.”

The man frowned. He raised his head and saw Li Qingshan.

The man smiled with composure. “I’ll go talk to him myself.” The woman hesitated slightly before nodding. Although she did not want to make trouble, she disliked staying in a lower cabin even more; that would mean staying right under other people’s feet. She hoped this teenager could be sensible. If he was not sensible, then he would have to suffer a little and understand the dangers of society.

Chapter 110 - Countering a Night Attack

As a result, the two of them appeared before Li Qingshan once again. The man cut straight to the chase, tossing a wad of silver notes before Li Qingshan. “Take the money and go downstairs!”

Li Qingshan slapped the wad of notes back into the man’s hand. “You’d better ask someone else instead!”

The woman stopped the man who wanted to lose his temper. She introduced with a smile. “I’m Qian Rongzhi. This is my elder brother, Qian Rongming.”

The manager interrupted them in shock. “Are you perhaps from the Qian family of Ancient Wind city?” Ancient Wind city was a relatively larger city. The manager was a person who travelled around on ship, so it was impossible for him to not have heard about the great clan that could produce Qi Practitioners.

Qian Rongming snorted proudly, while Qian Rongzhi nodded in a reserved manner. She continued towards Li Qingshan, “I’d advise you to accept it. When my elder brother loses his temper, he ends up killing people.” Since they came from a large clan, they had to take the image of the clan into

consideration. They could not afford to lose their bearing at any times, and she preferred scaring away the enemy instead of fighting straight away.

Li Qingshan crossed his arms. "Really? That's something I'd like to see actually." This was the second they had come for him. There was a limit to his patience.

Qian Rongzhi's expression changed slightly. Originating from a large clan, she was born with the talent to practise qi. Moreover, she was beautiful, claiming the title of greatest beauty of Ancient Wind city. She could be described as a woman of influence and talent. Since she was young, everything she mentioned would end up happening one way or another. In particular, those stinky men were willing to toil about like beasts of burden for her. She had never been turned down before. Compared to the patience she showed on the surface, the arrogance in her bones even exceeded her elder brother, Qian Rongming. She said coldly, "You'll be refusing a toast only to be drinking a forfeit."

"I like drinking, so I welcome both toasts and forfeits!" Li Qingshan looked at her face seriously, wanting to see how a young lady from a large clan would react. It was as if he was watching some kind of show.

Qian Rongzhi sighed deeply and took a step back. She said nonchalantly, "To think that a person of the jianghu who has just practised some external martial arts would be bold enough to be unreasonable to Qi Practitioners. You're as reckless as they come. Even if you remain alive, it's redundant for idiots like you. Killing a few won't matter at all."

Qian Rongming smiled viciously and took a step forward. The manager sighed. He had already prepared people to collect the corpse. Confronting the people of the Qian family was far too foolish of a choice.

"What Qian family of Ancient Wind city? Are you supposed to be very impressive?"

At this moment, a voice suddenly rang out. Everyone looked over and saw a man in his thirties emerge from his cabin. He was not tall and had a dark-skinned face with a pair of upward-slanting eyes. He looked over in contempt.

"Who are you supposed to be?" Qian Rongming was furious as he walked over, but he was stopped by Qian Rongzhi once again. She looked over cautiously. "May I ask who you are, sir? And what do you plan on doing?"

Li Qingshan's heart skipped a beat. It was another Qi Practitioner, and one that had reached the third layer. It was no wonder that he was bold enough to look down on the second layer siblings.

The man with a darker skin tone mocked them. "If it's just the two of you, you're nowhere close to joining the Hawkwolf Guard. Why would you waste time going to Jiaping city? You'd better get off the ship and go home quickly!"

Only now did Li Qingshan understand that this person was not standing up for him, but because the positions open in the Hawkwolf Guard were limited. He managed to read the siblings' purpose of travelling, which was why he had come to launch a verbal blow against them.

Qian Rongming and Qian Rongzhi looked at each other. Although the difference between their strength was a whole layer, they might still have a chance if they worked together. However, they would definitely use up their precious talismans and lose their opportunity to contend for a position in the Hawkwolf Guard.

“Just you wait.” After a moment of hesitation, they threw behind a threat before leaving in a hurry. However, those words were not solely directed to the small, skinny man. They also glared at Li Qingshan viciously.

Li Qingshan said, “Thank you for helping me out. May I ask for your name?”

“Kid, you better not think that you can fool around just because you have a bit of money. There are far too many people you can’t afford to provoke in this world. I’d advise you to leave the ship as soon as possible!” The man said coldly before slamming his door shut.

Li Qingshan shrugged; this was just how weaker people were treated.

The ship moved slowly. It steadily broke through the waves on the river, moving with the flow and gliding towards Jiaping city.

There were just a few cabins at the very top of the ship, and all of their doors were firmly shut. Only Li Qingshan paced around on the deck, admiring the scenery from the two banks. With too much to see, he immediately put the incident from before to the side.

Night descended on the ship. Currently, Li Qingshan was meditating and practising in his room. Right now, he possessed four cultivation methods, the Ox Demon’s Fist of Great Strength, the Tiger Demon’s Fist of Bone Forging, the Spirit Turtle’s Method of Sea Suppression, and the Innate Method of Practising Qi. All of them had nine layers, and he had attained the first layer with every single one of them. The former three were daemon abilities, which would become more difficult the more progress he made. The amount of time they would consume with each subsequent layer would multiply as well.

Instead, he made much more rapid progress with the Innate Method of Practising Qi, as it was the lowest grade and was a human cultivation method. In order to obtain the items in the sumeru ring, Li Qingshan had devoted great effort into practising this technique as well. With his powerful body, the rate at which he refined his vitality into qi was startling. After just a few days, he was close to the second layer.

Xiao An did not practise. Instead, he crouched in a corner of the room, holding and reading a book. There were two bookshelves in the room, which held many books of songs and poetry for leisure, as well as some common buddhist scriptures and books from the daoist canon. Xiao An was reading a buddhist scripture.

Although the eminent monk who tried to attain the fruit of bodhisattva fell into the demonic path, and the Path of White Bone and Great Beauty was also an ability of the demonic path, its essence still originated from the buddhist dharma. Naturally, Xiao An had to comprehend it. The blood-red flames in his eye sockets illuminated the words of the book, forming a rather strange sight. Suddenly, he raised his head.

Li Qingshan opened his eyes as well, looking at the door. They had both sensed it. One of them used their senses towards living creatures, while the other used their powerful senses as a daemon.

A figure silently made it to the highest floor of the ship, arriving outside Li Qingshan’s eyes. Killing intent shone in his eyes.

Qian Rongming believed he had not produced any sounds or given off any aura at all. Obviously, he was not worrying about Li Qingshan. Instead, he was guarding himself from the neighbouring Qi Practitioner. He only wanted to kill Li Qingshan tonight. He thought viciously inside, I should have killed him the first time I saw him.

As for the Qi Practitioner next door, he had already come up with a plan to deal with him. When they sparred to become a member of the Hawkwolf Guard, he would definitely use his trump card against him to show him what was what. Alternatively, he could become a member of the Hawkwolf Guard, and there would be no need to hurry his revenge if that happened.

The heart of the dark-skinned man neighbouring Li Qingshan skipped a beat as well. He also sensed Qian Rongming. However, he had no plans to interfere. In his eyes, Li Qingshan was just someone insignificant, and he had blindly confronted a Qi Practitioner, ignoring his warning. Even if such a person died, he would have deserved it.

He considered if he could derive any benefit from this issue, killing Qian Rongming while he was alone. The people of the Qian family from Ancient Wind city should possess some good things on them. Afterwards, he could go down and kill Qian Rongzhi, which would increase his chances at joining the Hawkwolf Guard. His lips curled into a smile as he stood up silently.

The door opened by a crack, and Qian Rongming entered in a flash. He saw Li Qingshan on the bed and raised his right hand, Utilising his true qi, he delivered a palm strike, resulting in a soft thump. Qian Rongming smiled in delight.

“What are you smiling about?” Li Qingshan suddenly opened his eyes and red light shone in them.

Qian Rongming was shocked inside. His muscles seized up. He wanted to follow up with another attack, but his body slackened again. He gazed at his chest in disbelief. A sword had pierced his heart.

He was unable to believe that someone had dealt a sneak attack to him. Even more terrifyingly, he had yet to feel the existence of anyone behind him even right now. It was impossible for them to have no presence at all, unless they did not breathe or have a beating heart. Afterwards, he turned around with difficulty; the last sight of his life was a skeleton with rolling flames in its eye sockets. The Blood Flames of Corpse Incineration permeated his body and converted him into a part of it.

This was not because Qian Rongming was far too weak or far too careless, but because Xiao An’s current strength was on par with third or fourth layer Qi Practitioners. Before absolute strength combined with a sneak attack, it would be strange if he had not been slain in a single stroke.

Li Qingshan sighed slightly. “It was just a slight disagreement, so why must you go as far as to try to kill me? Were you far too haughty, or was I far too discreet?” Even back then on that day in the restaurant, Li Qingshan possessed the strength to kill this person. However, Li Qingshan did not attack him; it was not because he was afraid of trouble, but because he did not want to kill indiscriminately. He would only be a ruffian if he attacked and killed over the slightest disagreement. When he killed, he wanted a good reason for doing so. However, others might have different thoughts. Perhaps in their eyes, everyone really were ants, to be squished whenever they felt like it.

He casually searched through his spoils, but he failed to find any talismans or pills like he had been expecting. All he found was a black, embroidered pouch, which seemed rather familiar. It was very worn

out and dim, where even many of the stitches had broken. It formed quite the contrast for appearing on a young master like Qian Rongming.

With a thought, Li Qingshan channeled his feeble spiritual qi into the embroidered pouch, and suddenly, a wondrous space opened up in his mind. It seemed like he was looking into a small, virtual box that held all sorts of things.

There were obviously plenty of silver notes, as well as a few small bottles and talismans. With a thought, the items inside appeared in his hand.

Li Qingshan was overjoyed. As it turned out, this was the legendary hundred treasures pouch. In the past few days, he had asked Yan Song many things about the common knowledge of Qi Practitioners. He learned that sumeru rings were items that only truly powerful cultivators could use, and these rings possessed extremely vast spaces. As for just how vast, Yan Song had only heard about it before. He had never seen one with his own eyes. It was rare for regular Qi Practitioners to even possess a hundred treasures pouch.

The reason why he found this embroidered pouch familiar was because he had seen one the Scarlet Hawk commander, Wang Pushi, before. However, Wang Pushi's hundred treasures pouch was much more impressive than this, and it must have had a much larger storage space as well. Without much thought, he knew Qian Rongming's hundred treasures pouch was just the standard, inferior version. It could not even hold a longer weapon.

However, even an inferior hundred treasures pouch was extremely rare. At the very least, a second layer Qi Practitioner like Yan Song did not possess one. He really did live up to his background. He was quite impressive.

Li Qingshan examined the items from the hundred treasures pouch. Out of the bottles, one was a bottle of healing pills, with three bottles of Qi Gathering pills. They were not the random pills refined by regular people of the jianghu, but actual spiritual pills. Of course, there was no point in trying to compare them to the spiritual pills that Xuanyue gave him. However, they were actual pills that Qi Practitioners ingested. They were exactly what Li Qingshan needed right now.