

### Chapter 111 - A Great River and a Great City

The three unknown yellow talismans were probably the trump cards Qian Rongming had referred to. He had learned about this from Yan Song as well. Talismans were divided into various grades. Although the three talismans were all yellow, they glowed much more brightly compared to the talismans on Li Qingshan right now. They were low or mid grade at the very least. His insight regarding talismans was still insufficient to determine it precisely.

Most of the talismans and spiritual artifacts that ordinary people of the jianghu could get their hands on in exchange for money were inferior goods; people who had just learned how to create artifacts or talismans created them. Even if ordinary people could get their hands on talismans and spiritual artifacts that actually had a grade, they would struggle to use them. At the very least, they would struggle to activate a low grade talisman even if they bit their tongues and spat out blood.

There was finally no more need for him to carry his random objects on him. Apart from keeping the sumeru ring on him, Li Qingshan placed everything else he owned inside the pouch. After checking his money and the silver Qian Rongming had been carrying, he had a total of seventy or eighty thousand silver notes, several talismans, and three bottles of Qi Gathering pills. He did not take smaller items like healing pills into consideration.

However, the most precious item on him after the sumeru ring was not these items, but a daemon core. He had removed it from the rat general in the Boundless mountains. Xuanyue obviously had no interest in it, so she gave it to Li Qingshan.

Li Qingshan had no idea how to consume it, nor was he bold enough to eat it directly, which was why he kept it. He had stored it in a small bottle the entire time. He took it out again to admire it before placing it in the hundred treasures pouch as well. Finally, he placed the hundred treasures pouch in his bosom.

His drastic increase in wealth brought about quite a nice feeling. Li Qingshan's murderous nature had been roused, so he wondered whether to go all the way and find that Qian Rongzhi, uprooting this potential problem once and for all. It had to be mentioned that killing and robbing people was addictive. Why did humans constantly wage war? That was because stealing from others would always be easier than creating for themselves.

However, he quickly suppressed this thought, not because he was benevolent, but because he was worried. Once he did that, his murderous nature would rise up, and he would even kill the neighbouring dark-skinned man to steal all of his belongings.

He definitely possessed the strength. He did not even need to unleash his daemon qi to accomplish such a matter. All he needed to do was work with Xiao An. On one hand, other people possessed the items you wanted, while on the other hand, you possessed the strength to take it from them. Moreover, it would not come at any cost either. Just how many people would be able to suppress their greed?

Even with the suppression of the Spirit Turtle's Method of Sea Suppression, his primitive instincts that were no different from that of daemons almost prompted him into taking action. However, acting based on his instincts was not the path he wanted. As he rapidly gained strength, he rapidly learned how to control this power so that he would not lose himself to it.

At the same time, he also realised something else. He realised just how terrifying people could become after obtaining great power. That was probably how Qian Yongming thought. He could easily kill Li Qingshan, and it would come at no cost at all, easily venting his anger just as naturally as eating or drinking.

The dangers of this cultivation path within the human world probably surpassed the Boundless mountains. Li Qingshan dismissed his random thoughts. If Qian Rongzhi did not try to provoke him, he would let her be, but if she tried, he would kill her as well. There was no need for him to expend any additional thought on it right now.

He wrapped up the bones on the ground with the clothes and arrived outside, about to toss them overboard and destroy all traces of this ever happening. However, he saw the neighbouring man's face of disbelief as soon as he made his way out; the man was looking at the bones in his hands.

"What a coincidence!" Li Qingshan was slightly surprised, greeting him with a smile before going around the man and tossing the bundle into the pitch-black river. He was at so much ease that it did not seem like he was dumping remains, but admiring the night scenery. This had nothing to do with whether he was actually smarter than the ordinary person. Instead, it was composure that came with his confidence in his strength.

The man stiffened up. He clenched his fist before easing up again. As he looked at Li Qingshan, there was no more contempt at all anymore. Instead, his gaze was filled with caution and even a sliver of fear.

He had been waiting in a dark corner outside the entire time, ready to grasp the opportunity to launch a sneak attack. However, the person who emerged from the door was not Qian Rongming, but Li Qingshan who he thought of as dead. There was no need to ask who the pale-white bones belonged to. However, even if he launched a sneak attack against Qian Rongming, he would struggle to kill him in a single stroke. The person before him was not prey, but a Qi Practitioner countless times more vicious than a predator.

He was very tempted to ask Li Qingshan how he managed to do that, but he was unable to say anything as he looked at Li Qingshan's smile. Even more terrifyingly, he still could not sense any presence of qi on Li Qingshan. It was just like how the unknown would always be the most terrifying.

After casting the remains overboard, Li Qingshan said to the man, "What's your name?"

The dark-skinned man no longer looked down on him. He answered cautiously, "Diao Fei." He felt that the current Li Qingshan was rather different from the one during the day. The teenager seemed to be hiding something terrifying on him, but of course, it might have been a false impression.

Li Qingshan said, "Are you going to Jiaping city to join the Hawkwolf Guard as well?"

"Yes!"

"What a coincidence! Me too!"

Diao Fei's heart tightened, ready to receive any attacks directed at him.

However, Li Qingshan clearly did not plan to take such actions. He continued to talk with him, "How many people are the Hawkwolf Guard recruiting this time?"

“Three.”

“So few.”

Diao Fei remained silent.

Originally, Li Qingshan wanted to get some more information from him, but he saw how Diao Fei was extremely cautious, so he shrugged and returned to his room.

Diao Fei suddenly asked, “Sir, may I ask for your name?” After arriving at Jiaping city, this teenager might end up becoming a powerful competitor.

“Li Qingshan.”

As if he had heard this name somewhere, Diao Fei pondered it for a while, but he struggled to remember where he had heard it. He also returned to his room, but he did not catch a wink of sleep that night, remaining vigilant the entire time.

As soon as Li Qingshan returned to his room, he felt something and opened the window, looking out into the distance. All he saw was a figure leaping off the ship while the vessel was closer to the shore, landing on a sandy bank and quickly vanishing into the thicket. From the shape of her body, he could tell that she was Qian Rongzhi.

Li Qingshan could not help but sigh that the woman really was quite impressive with her thinking and resoluteness. She must have realised something was wrong when Qian Rongming did not return. She did not try to investigate the matter, nor did she question anything, directly leaping off the ship and fleeing.

Shaking his head, Li Qingshan tossed this matter to the side. He took out a bottle of Qi Gathering pills and opened it to take a look. There were only three pills in there, and each one was the size of a longan. He took one out and ate it, beginning to cultivate.

As expected, with the assistance of the products of external alchemy, his rate of cultivation sped up slightly. The medicinal effects filled up his true qi, which circulated through his body. As he inhaled and exhaled, time passed rapidly, and very soon, he had absorbed a Qi Gathering pill. Li Qingshan took out another Qi Gathering pill and ingested it.

If other Qi Practitioners saw this, they would definitely be stunned. How could pills be eaten like candy? Although pills could drastically increase the rate of cultivation, that did not mean a person could easily become a master just because they possessed some pills and medicines. They all required talent, hard work, guidance, or even luck.

And, there was a limit to the pills that could be ingested. It was not as simple as eating as many as one could before turning it all into energy. Otherwise, all actual alchemists would be supreme masters. The nine Qi Gathering pills from Qian Rongming were originally a quantity to be consumed over three months. He would eat a pill every ten days and slowly refine its effects.

And, this was for Qian Rongming, someone who was favoured by the clan and could consume pills relatively faster. The usual speed was a pill every half a month to ensure that none of its effects would go to waste. No one ate them like Li Qingshan.

This was all because it was impossible for a mere Qi Gathering pill to remain in Li Qingshan's body for ten days. He had to convert it into true qi desperately. If he were any later, it would be stolen by the daemon core and forcefully converted into daemon qi. As such, it was guaranteed that not a single bit of it would go to waste.

Li Qingshan was obviously unaware of this. He even felt pleased that it really would be faster when consuming pills while cultivating. When he ate the seventh Qi Gathering pill, he successfully reached the second layer with the Innate Method of Practising Qi. Due to the sumeru ring refining his true qi, he did not come across any bottlenecks at all.

He stood up and sensed the extremely pure true qi raging through his body. His entire body seemed to become much lighter.

He stowed the last two Qi Gathering pills away. He could hear with great clarity that a clamour was ringing out from the distance. The ship also became noisy. He could vaguely hear many people say, "We've reached Jiaping city!"

Li Qingshan made his way out in a hurry to take a look. The lower deck was already filled with people. On the other hand, the river itself had come across a great mountain that it looped around.

After making it around the bend, a grand city sat between the mountains and the waters, unfolding before Li Qingshan's eyes. More accurately, it could not be called a city, as it was not walled at all. It seemed more like a modern metropolis.

This was where two great rivers met, where the Yi river merged into the Clear river. Jiaping city was developed on the banks of the two rivers. Rows upon rows of houses, buildings, towers, temples—both daoist and buddhist—sprawled out in all directions, followed by boundless, golden fields. Large flocks of birds flew freely in the blue sky above the city.

Li Qingshan had never seen any ancient cities before, but he believed that this city was even grander and more bustling than the places renowned throughout history for their prosperity, like Hangzhou or Yangzhou. The absence of city walls demonstrated the absolute confidence of the ruler here. They did not need to rely on an earthen wall to protect themselves.

Only small cities like Qingyang required the existence of walls to protect themselves from the attacks of bandits and the like. There was not a single truly large city with city walls. This was a city that Qi Practitioners ruled, so if there really were enemies that could threaten the city, they would not be people that a stone wall could stop. It would instead affect the city's development.

Li Qingshan finally understood why Ye Dachuan had been overjoyed when he was transferred here as a vice district magistrate. Even if he was just a junior scribe here, he would be much better off than remaining in Qingyang city. So, just how prosperous would the Clear River city that ruled over the entire Clear River prefecture be? He was unable to imagine what the commandery city of Ruyi would be like.

Everything before him made him understand that this was not simply a world of the ancient times. The existence of Qi Practitioners heavily affected everything in this world, making it seem like a legend, adding a layer of wonder to it all.

The ship stopped at the dock, and Li Qingshan disembarked with the crowd. Originally, he wanted to ask Diao Fei or someone else where the Hawkwolf Guard was located, but only after arriving did he understand that such a question was unnecessary.

## **Chapter 112 - Setting Foot in the Hawkwolf Guard**

On a mountain peak to the north of the city, a hawk forged from black iron unfurled its metal wings that were several dozen meters in width. It stood on a stone altar more than a dozen meters tall, looking over the entire Jiaping city. It was not hidden at all, as if it were boldly broadcasting that the Hawkwolf Guard watched over and protected this city. Whether you were a person of the jianghu or a Qi Practitioner, you were all under the careful gaze of the hawk.

Li Qingshan disembarked from the ship and went straight towards the mountain peak. There were a series of structures below the iron hawk and that was the Hawkwolf Guard. Only after he had left did Diao Fei disembark and follow behind him. His eyes were filled with determination once more. No matter how well Li Qingshan hid his strength, it was not enough to shake Diao Fei's determination to become a member of the Hawkwolf Guard.

Li Qingshan followed the neat, stone steps. The two sides were filled with dense shrubbery, almost blotting out the sky above. The mountain peak was not very tall, only several hundred meters. It was nowhere close to the height of the great mountains of the Boundless mountains. However, when he looked back at the city below his feet, it gave him quite a lofty sensation.

At the end of the stone steps was a stone archway. The two words, Hawkwolf Guard, were written on it in a bold, obvious fashion. Past the archway was a large square, and at the centre of it was the huge iron hawk. From afar, it did not seem too special; only from up close did he get a feel for the imposing aura of the hawk. In particular, the hawk's eyes seemed to pierce right through people like it was alive. Below its feet were twelve large words written in a similar fashion, 'The Hawk Gazes Over the World, the Wolves Watch the Nine Provinces.'

The gazing hawk was obvious. It needed no explanation. They were similar to the bold hawks in the sky, watching over the land. However, watching wolves described a certain posture. Normally, when people were called by their names from behind, they would definitely look back. However, they would only turn their heads and not their bodies. This was the posture of watching wolves, and those who were like that tended to be crafty and suspicious.

Not only were the twelve words teeming with extravagance, but they also described the function of the Hawkwolf Guard perfectly. Li Qingshan did not know calligraphy, but even he could tell that the twelve words here and the two words on the archway were written by the same person. They possessed an irreplicable imposing aura, dominating and sweeping up the world. Compared to the huge hawk statue, it was even more stunning.

Before Li Qingshan could even study it carefully, a young man came up. "You must be here to enlist in the Hawkwolf Guard!"

Li Qingshan did not sense anything from this person that indicated he practised martial arts or qi. He must have only been an envoy or an attendant for receiving people. However, he naturally gave off a

feeling that he frequently ordered people around, and as expected, he was like a caretaker. Li Qingshan said, "I am."

The envoy in black studied Li Qingshan in doubt. Seeing how he remained composed, he said nonchalantly, "Come with me!" He led Li Qingshan to a large hall. "Go in. Everyone is waiting inside. You need to record your name and cultivation once you go in."

Li Qingshan stepped into the hall, and immediately, many gazes landed on him. Every single one of them were like knives.

Li Qingshan saw over twenty people within the hall. There were men and women, old and young. Some stood in groups of three or five, while others meditated alone. Every single one of them were Qi Practitioners. Most of their gazes at Li Qingshan were hostile. Some mocked him with raised brows, happily pointing and discussing with their companions, while some showed disdain, immediately shifting their gazes. There was also a person or two who showed doubt.

This was the first time Li Qingshan had seen so many Qi Practitioners. He felt rather indescribably excited. He had finally come into contact with the cultivation groups of this world.

In reality, he had already experienced some brutal contact with this world through Xuanyue, but most of those people were monstrously powerful. As such, the only feelings he experienced were admiration and despair. It was far too great of a difference and was surreal as a result. Only when he saw these people now did he treat them as equals or even look down on them.

Li Qingshan saw several dozen wooden tablets hanging on the walls of the hall with a name on each. He glanced past it before arriving in front of a long table in a corner of the hall. An envoy in black leaned on the table and scribbled away. He said without even looking up, "Name, background, master, and cultivation. Remember, don't hide anything, or once you are caught..."

The envoy did not continue, but the threat was obvious. Only now did Li Qingshan understand why these people remained here. They wanted to learn about their opponents.

Originally, Li Qingshan wanted to take out the Black Wolf tablet and go see the Black Hawk commander Zhuo Zhibo, allowing him to directly join, but he did not see a single proper Hawkwolf guard here at all. There were only a few envoys in black receiving them, so he gave up on that thought. He just happened to be interested in taking a look around. He would come across the person he was searching for in the end anyways. He refused to believe that Zhuo Zhibo would miss such a great event.

"Li Qingshan, first layer Qi Practitioner..." Li Qingshan said.

As soon as Li Qingshan stated his cultivation, he heard a few sniggers.

"Even a first layer Qi Practitioner is trying to enlist in the Hawkwolf Guard. This kid is stupid!"

"Go home and drink milk! You shouldn't have come."

"Is he really a first layer Qi Practitioner? He doesn't seem like it. Don't tell me he's lying!?"

"You won't be far from death if you falsely report your cultivation."

The people in the hall were second layer Qi Practitioners at the very least. If people possessed the innate talent to practise qi, most of them would work hard on cultivation. They would only come out after they had broken through to the second layer. As for those who practised internal martial arts and reached the innate realm, they would use their converted true qi to forcefully break through to the second layer. As a result, very few first layer Qi Practitioners wandered the world.

Even the envoy responsible for recording the information raised his head. "Is that true? Non-Qi Practitioners are forbidden from enlisting." Although he was not a Qi Practitioner, he remained within the Hawkwolf Guard most of the time, so his insight was rather impressive. He could tell that Li Qingshan did not seem like a Qi Practitioner at all.

Suddenly, Li Qingshan understood a bad habit of his. After experiencing the dangers of the Boundless mountains, withdrawing all of his aura with the Spirit Turtle's Method of Sea Suppression had become almost an instinct of his. Even after developing true qi, he maintained the same habit.

Obviously, he had to firmly suppress his daemon qi, without allowing even a single sliver to leak out. However, there was no need for him to be so cautious with his true qi. Wearing his identity as a Qi Practitioner around could save quite a lot of trouble at times.

As a result, his aura completely changed. His true qi was no longer withdrawn and suppressed, now released naturally. He displayed the strength of a first layer Qi Practitioner.

However, it led to a roar of laughter in the hall. Even the gazes of doubt pulled back, no longer taking Li Qingshan seriously. The unknown was terrifying, which was why a donkey could scare away a tiger. However, once the donkey displayed everything it had, that was when everything would be over.

The envoy placed down his brush and also smiled. "I can see that you're young. It's not easy for you to possess this talent, so why don't you go home and cultivate for a few more years? You can come once you break through to the second layer. The competition this time will be dangerous."

Li Qingshan ignored the laughter and thanked the person for his kind-hearted warning. Afterwards, he said confidently, "I have confidence in myself!"

The envoy said nothing more, continuing to write.

No clan, no sect, no master. These were Li Qingshan's details.

In just a short while, the envoy completed the records. He raised his head. "The competition begins in three days. You can go. There will be people who will arrange accommodation for you. You are welcome to stay here as well."

Another envoy picked up a wooden tablet and hung it at the end of the wall together with everyone else's names. There obviously was not any particularly complex information on it. On the front, there was his name, while on the back, there was his cultivation.

It amazed Li Qingshan. To a Qi Practitioner, background and masters were both useless. Strength was the only calling card, the only thing that people were wary of.

When he turned around, he instead looked at the Qi Practitioners like they were trash before shaking his head. In particular, he said to the people who mocked him, "Trash." Arrogance was his nature, while mocking a whole crowd was his talent.

"Who are you talking to?" said a Qi Practitioner angrily. He was the person who told Li Qingshan to go home and drink milk earlier.

"I'm talking to whoever that answers me!" Li Qingshan said. The people who had not badmouthed Li Qingshan obviously would not feel like he was cursing at them.

The Qi Practitioner arrived in front of Li Qingshan in a flash. Suddenly, he raised his head, and true qi gathered. The envoy who recorded their information said, "Those who fight on the mountain will be executed without mercy."

The Qi Practitioner's hand trembled a few times before finally putting it back down.

The rules of the Hawkwolf Guard were no joke. In the very beginning, when the Hawkwolf Guard recruited people, they never provided any accommodation to these people. All they had to do was arrive on the day of the competition, but then many people were unable to.

Qi Practitioners stayed in Jiaping city to eliminate rivals, using everything that they had, whether it be poisoning, encircling, or ambushing. Often, it would end before it had even begun. This was why the rules were changed later on, where the people enlisting would all stay on the mountain, and any form of attacks against one another were forbidden. If they fought, they would be executed without mercy.

Li Qingshan said, "Come bite me, you idiot!" Just how did that go again? My discretion is not a reason for you to walk all over me. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. That was the principle he lived by. You know how to curse, but my mouth isn't dumb either!

The Qi Practitioner laughed out of anger. "In three days' time, I'll let you know what being better off dead than alive means." Some other Qi Practitioners sneered as well.

At this moment, Diao Fei entered the hall. He glanced at Li Qingshan before looking at the wall. He let out a sigh of relief. As it seemed, Li Qingshan really was a first layer Qi Practitioner, only concealing his cultivation using some sort of method. He sure had frightened him. However, it was still a mystery to him as to just how Li Qingshan had killed Qian Rongming. He dared not be careless.

The other people in the hall immediately shifted their attention from Li Qingshan when they saw Diao Fei. A third layer Qi Practitioner was a powerful contender for the competition this time. They needed to observe him carefully. Compared to him, Li Qingshan was just a clown. His death was near, and he deserved no attention.

Li Qingshan did not remain in the hall. He left the hall, and another envoy brought him up the mountain. He walked past the well-tended plants and the wonderful gardens. Having been managed by master gardeners, the scenery would change with every few steps. There were simply far too many beautiful things to take in.

Arriving before a house, the envoy pointed at a room. "That's your residence. You should already know, but fighting is forbidden on the mountain. You can come to the back hall for your meals. If there's anything else you need, you can just call us. As long as you don't go overboard, we will do our best to



satisfy your request.” His attitude was nothing special, but the service he offered was definitely thorough.

### **Chapter 113 - Pearl Dew Pill**

Li Qingshan entered his room and ingested and absorbed his remaining Qi Gathering pills. However, the Innate Method of Practising Qi also grew more difficult with progress. After ingesting the two pills, he could feel that the amount of growth was not particularly obvious. Of course, it had to be mentioned that this was after the daemon core had gobbled up most of it, and the energy had undergone the sumeru ring’s refinement. However, unbeknownst to him, Qian Rongzhi also arrived in the hall after he left. She lowered her head as soon as she saw Diao Fei, hiding the resentment in her eyes before recording her name as well. She thought Diao Fei had killed Qian Rongming. The people that could kill Qi Practitioners were obviously even stronger Qi Practitioners, but she did not probe into the matter.

Diao Fei felt aggrieved, but he made no attempt to explain himself. If he did, he would only seem to be afraid of her.

At noon, Li Qingshan arrived at the back hall. It was basically filled up with people already. The rosewood tables were so smooth that they were reflective; the faint smell of flowers permeated the place from a certain location. The windows were all open, depicting the picturesque scenery of the garden outside. It was an extremely beautiful and refined sight.

Delicious dishes were served up one by one, filling the long tables, allowing them to serve themselves. It was similar to the buffets of Li Qingshan’s previous life, but the quality of the dishes were fantastic, similar to the legendary emperor’s feast. After leaving Qingyang city, Li Qingshan had eaten quite a number of dishes made by so-called skilled chefs. However, they basically seemed like they were made by apprentices compared to the dishes of the chefs of the Hawkwolf Guard. The dishes made from various precious materials were all placed on the long table.

Li Qingshan gained an even better understanding as to why many Qi Practitioners wanted to join the Hawkwolf Guard. Let alone the other aspects, just the food was enough for people to eat like an emperor. He was utterly satisfied by the food, but he also attracted many eye rolls. Many Qi Practitioners came from sects and clans, so they obviously would not be as inexperienced as him. Even when Li Qingshan controlled his appetite to eat like a human, a bunch of people still secretly sneered to themselves, calling him a starving ghost.

Just as Li Qingshan ate a dish made from some sort of fish, there was a flash in front of him, and Diao Fei sat down opposite of him. He thought through what he was going to say. “Your qi concealment technique is very impressive. I couldn’t tell in the beginning.” Perhaps he believed that no one would be bold enough to ignore the rules of the Hawkwolf Guard, as he seemed much more relaxed now, without much caution or vigilance.

Li Qingshan smiled. “It’s probably just because I’m too weak!”

The corner of Diao Fei’s lips twitched. Are you really weak after silently killing a second layer Qi Practitioner and even reducing him to a terrifying state of just bones? He suspected Li Qingshan practised a cultivation method of the demonic path, which was why he liked to remain hidden. Unfortunately, Qian Rongming had really treated him as an easy target, which ended up costing his life.

Li Qingshan said, "By the looks of things, this shouldn't be your first time!"

Diao Fei said, "Impressive. This is my second time."

Then there was silence.

Li Qingshan said, "By the way, do you have Qi Gathering pills?"

Diao Fei said, "Of course I do. What do you need them for?" Qi Gathering pills were the most common pills for Qi Practitioners. They were obviously very precious, but they were very common as well.

Li Qingshan wiped his mouth and pushed his utensils to the side. "Can you sell some to me?"

Diao Fei said, "If you're offering silver, you better forget it."

It was just as Li Qingshan had been expecting. To Qi Practitioners, the gold and silver that ordinary people treasured held no great significance.

Li Qingshan said, "Of course it's not silver. It's talismans."

"What!" Diao Fei was shocked. There was not a single Qi Practitioner who did not carry at least a few talismans with them. In order to take part in the competition this time, he had made ample preparations. They were the trump cards of Qi Practitioners, or even a second life to them. Selling talismans before the battle was like selling away your weapons right before charging onto the battlefield. It was basically unimaginable.

Li Qingshan immediately removed all of his talismans from his hundred treasures pouch and laid them out on the table. He was very confident in the security of the Hawkwolf Guard as well. He asked, "How's that?"

Immediately, everyone's gazes were drawn over, not just Diao Fei's.

Diao Fei's breathing halted slightly. Aside from two inferior talismans, the others were all low grade at the very least. Even rarer, there was actually a mid grade talisman, the Lightning Strike talisman. That was a treasure that could turn the tables in a battle at a crucial moment! Even third layer Qi Practitioners could be heavily injured or directly killed off if they were careless.

"One Qi Gathering pill for one." Diao Fei immediately extended his hand towards the talismans. As long as he had them, he was guaranteed to win.

Li Qingshan scooped up all of the talismans. He smiled. "That seems a little low."

"I'll offer you fifteen Qi Gathering pills for the whole lot." a Qi Practitioner in black to the side said suddenly. He was young, but he was dressed in nice clothes. He was clearly from an aristocratic clan.

Li Qingshan extended his hand towards Diao Fei. "Look, someone has raised the price." The reason why he did this in the eye of the public was because he did not know the proper price.

However, before the Qi Practitioner had even finished what he was saying, someone else added, "I'll give you fifteen Qi Gathering pills for just this one talisman."

Li Qingshan was rather surprised as he looked at the talisman. Although it had the densest spiritual qi, he had never thought it would be worth so many Qi Gathering pills.

Many Qi Practitioners gathered over. All of their eyes shone. Li Qingshan believed that if he had not been in the Hawkwolf Guard, he would have been surrounded and attacked already, but now, no one was even bold enough to speak ill of him. Even two of the Qi Practitioners who mocked Li Qingshan earlier gathered over shamelessly.

The Qi Practitioner who had directly fallen out with Li Qingshan instead cursed under his breath with an ugly expression. "Idiot." However, he became even more vicious inside, Without those talismans, I'd like to see how you die.

He had no idea about Li Qingshan's plans. Li Qingshan did not plan to take part in the competition in the first place. With Wang Pushi's guarantee, he would be out of his mind if he did not use it. And, Li Qingshan had enough trump cards on him. The talismans were nothing compared to them at all. Exchanging them for pills and rapidly converting it into his own strength was what mattered the most.

Li Qingshan stood up and said loudly, "Everyone please quieten down. I'll be selling all of these talismans, but only to the highest bidder. We'll exchange the goods at the same time, so it's fair for everyone. First up, this Swift Breeze talisman..." He assigned a grade to his talismans according to the strength of their spiritual qi, and he actually began an auction on the spot.

The envoys in black within the hall all looked at one another, but no one interfered. However, they really had never seen anyone sell talismans here.

"I'll pay one Qi Gathering pill," someone responded immediately.

"Two."

Li Qingshan said, "Are there any higher offers?" Only after asking for a while did someone offer three. Afterwards, no one contended anymore. As it seemed, inferior talismans did not interest Qi Practitioners much at all. He accepted the three Qi Gathering pills and handed the talisman to the Qi Practitioner.

In reality, the talisman had been sold for much more than usual. Normally, it would be very difficult for him to even get a single Qi Gathering pill for it, as everyone knew that pills for increasing personal strength mattered much more than external objects that offered temporary boosts.

But at a time like this, the situation had been reversed instead. No matter how many Qi Gathering pills they had, they could not increase their strength immediately, while with each talisman, even if they were inferior, they could immediately boost their strength slightly, giving them some more confidence in the upcoming competition. If they did not buy it, it was very likely for their contenders to receive it instead, becoming a tool for defeating or even killing themselves. Even inferior talismans of the lowest grades could become the blade of grass that broke the camel's back.

On one hand, there was the wonderful future that came with joining the Hawkwolf Guard, while on the other hand, there was the miserable fate of defeat or death. They had no choice but to spare no effort.

When Li Qingshan reached the low grade talismans, the atmosphere gradually heated up. The number of Qi Gathering pills began to break five for each one now. When Li Qingshan sold everything apart from

the mid grade Lightning Strike talisman, he had already gathered almost fifty Qi Gathering pills. He discovered that the size of the pills varied. Many of them were only the size of peanuts, so a single bottle could hold over a dozen of them.

As it turned out, the pills that alchemists refined were not originally pills, but pastes. The alchemists would then follow a standard and make them into pills. Alchemists of poorer abilities would produce pastes of lower efficacy, so in order to guarantee the same effects, the pills they made would be slightly larger according to the standard of Qi Gathering pills.

Many Qi Practitioners never participated in the prior bidding. Only when Li Qingshan took out the final mid grade talisman did their eyes suddenly light up.

“Ten Qi Gathering pills.”

“Twenty.”

“Twenty-five.”

The price immediately broke the record from before. This talisman was the actual talisman that could turn a battle around. It was also when Qian Rongming relied on when he confronted third layer Qi Practitioners. Whoever obtained it in the end would increase their chances by thirty percent at the very least. Many Qi Practitioners were determined to get their hands on it.

Li Qingshan smiled from ear to ear. With these Qi Gathering pills, it would be extremely easy for him to break through to the third layer of the Innate Method of Practising Qi. He suddenly turned around and saw Qian Rongzhi standing at the door, gazing at him in resentment. She obviously knew what talismans Qian Rongming possessed.

Li Qingshan sneered slightly. The fellow failed when he tried to harass him, so he tried to kill him. Qian Rongming completely deserved death. If this woman was not sensible, he could send her off to see Qian Rongming as well so that he would have a companion on the path to the afterlife.

“I’ll offer you one!” Diao Fei said suddenly after remaining silent for so long. He was currently filled with regret. If he had made a deal with Li Qingshan back on the boat, there would be no need for him to come to this point.

The surroundings fell quiet. Everyone looked at Diao Fei. The highest bidding Qi Practitioner said coldly, “Are you joking with me!?” He was also a third layer Qi Practitioner, so he viewed Diao Fei as a powerful contender.

Diao Fei took out a bottle with great reluctance. “I’ll offer you a Pearl Dew pill!”

“What, a Pearl Dew pill!” The Qi Practitioners descended into an uproar. As it seemed, the Pearl Dew pill had quite a name about it. Li Qingshan was curious. He had no idea that a Pearl Dew pill was worth far more than a mid grade Lightning Strike pill.

Qi Gathering pills definitely were not a particularly good type of pill. The only reason why it had become widespread was because its materials were easier to gather, it was easier to refine, and its effects were more stable, becoming a necessity to the cultivation of most Qi Practitioners, who demanded cheap but good products.

Actually, there were even better pills. Perhaps due to a material that was very difficult to gather or a higher level of skill required to refine them, they were relatively rarer. However, just a single one of them would be worth several dozen Qi Gathering pills.

#### **Chapter 114 - A Stretch of Clouds and Mountains**

Diao Fei originally planned to keep it for opening the Yang Linking meridian, saving it for when he would break through to the fourth layer. However, he could not allow his rival to obtain this Lightning Strike talisman no matter what, so he could only bear the pain of giving it up.

Li Qingshan said to Diao Fei, "Let me see it!"

Diao Fei poured the Pearl Dew pill into his palm. A small pill, transparent like a droplet of dew, shone brightly. All of the Qi Practitioners in the surroundings struggled to hide their greed. A pill of superior quality could play a great role at crucial times when it came to breaking through. Qi Gathering pills could not be compared to it.

Li Qingshan suddenly regretted the fact that he did not finish off both of them back on the boat very much. My demonic thoughts, oh my demonic thoughts! He smiled. "Not too bad."

Not too bad? Diao Fei was very dissatisfied with this evaluation. This is a Pearl Dew pill! Have you seen better pills before? The other Qi Practitioners all thought Li Qingshan was putting on an act as well.

Little did they know that not only had Li Qingshan seen better, but he had eaten many better as well. Only now did he realise just how nice Xuanyue had been to him. Although he had no idea what the name of the pills that Xuanyue had fed to him were, just a single one of them was countless better than the Pearl Dew pills that these Qi Practitioners desired so much. Sigh, speaking of which, I wonder how she is doing?

Achoo!

Over five thousand kilometers away, a black spiritual cat laid in a deep, blue embrace and let out a sneeze. A slender hand gently rubbed her smooth fur, as silky as moonlight.

A gentle voice said nervously, "Yue'er, have you caught a cold?" At the same time, she tightened her embrace, pulling in Xuanyue tightly.

"I'm a cat daemeown. Can cat daemeowns fall sick? Please use your head, meowster!" Xuanyue struggled hard, but she was unable to break free.

"As long as you aren't sick. Your body is far too frail. Here, eat a pill!" Her slender fingers held a spiritual pill, delivering it to Xuanyue's mouth. Its glow was hidden inside. It glistened and was transparent, just like a crystal. Compared to it, Qi Gathering pills were like mud balls, while Pearl Dew pills were like rocks.

"No more! No more! No more!" Xuanyue swung her head around, struggling even more.

"Alright, alright, alright. No more, no more." She stowed the pill away. Her voice was filled with helplessness and doting, like a mother looking at the child she loved the most. It was as if even being capricious was a good thing.

Xuanyue raised her head, looking at the beautiful face that seemed to be frozen in sorrow even when smiling. She suddenly felt sad. Even when she ran away and had been brought back, this master of hers had not scolded her even once. Instead, she took care of her with even more devotion and attention, just like moonlight that illuminated her. She used countless spiritual pills to turn her from a mere spiritual cat into a Daemon General that could assume a human form in just a few decades.

She suddenly thought of that tall, wide figure, carrying her on his back while climbing the icy cliffs in the snowstorm, shedding a pair of translucent tears for her. I'm not a good pet!

She was just like a child who only realised her parents' care and concern after having her own child. Only after trying did she understand that none of the things she possessed came so easily.

"Meowster, let me tell you a story!"

"Alright! I love hearing Xuanyue's stories!"

Outside the windows were a stretch of clouds and mountains. Two mystical beasts pulled a beautiful carriage, treading through the air.

Back to Jiaping city, Li Qingshan had already returned to his room. He laid on his bed idly as he calculated his earnings today.

Around fifty Qi Gathering pills were enough to support his cultivation for three days; he could break through to the third layer of the Innate Method of Practising Qi. As for the Pearl Dew pills, it would be used to break through the fourth layer of the Innate Method of Practising Qi, which was going from the first layer to the second layer as a Qi Practitioner, opening his first meridian.

As a result, Li Qingshan shut himself in his room, entering secluded cultivation once again. His behaviour was common. There were many Qi Practitioners who would use these three days to make some final preparations, remaining in their room for the entire time.

He ingested the Qi Gathering pills one by one. Most of it was converted into daemon qi, while a small part of it was converted into extremely pure true qi. Although he could not revert to his original form to check, Li Qingshan believed his current daemon form would be even taller and sturdier. If he remained in the mountains, he would struggle to reach this level even if he spent day and night absorbing spiritual qi of the world. It was true. The cultivation speed of daemons was nowhere near as fast as humans. This was their natural disadvantage, but Li Qingshan did his best to use the methods of humans to make up for this disadvantage.

Although external pills were beneficial to cultivation, it would lead to an accumulation of impurities in true qi, leading to impure true qi. Apart from absorbing their effects, regular Qi Practitioners would also find ways to purify and refine their true qi, which would obviously take up quite a lot of time. However, with the assistance from the sumeru ring, Li Qingshan was saved from this part of the process, basically saving him a lot of time. It instead sped up his cultivation.

Li Qingshan meditated in his room quietly. Three days passed swiftly. He had ingested a year's quantity for many Qi Practitioners, twenty-four Qi Gathering pills, in a single sitting, and only then did he break through to the third layer of the Innate Method of Gathering Qi. He originally wanted to continue

cultivating, but unfortunately for him, it was time. He could only stand up and leave. He discovered that it had begun drizzling at a certain time while he was cultivating.

Under the lead of an envoy, he arrived at the location of the competition, which was a stone square. The rules were extremely simple. Qi Practitioners would go up there and fight or kill one by one. The victor would advance, while the loser would be dropped from the competition. The final three people would become Hawkwolf guards.

At the end of the square was a vermilion pavilion with layered eaves. Its colour was rather gloomy due to being wet from the rain. There were several figures vaguely visible in the pavilion. The pitch-black of Black Wolf uniforms was a colour that Li Qingshan was familiar with. After three days, Li Qingshan finally saw the people he was looking for.

Aside from the Hawkwolf Guards, there were a few people in informal wear, leaning on the handrails and chattering between themselves while at great ease. Beside them were fruits and snacks. It basically seemed like an audience watching a show, or perhaps it was a party for gambling.

This was because Li Qingshan could clearly hear them discussing the strength of the Qi Practitioners, telling one another how much they had wagered. It was so relaxed that it seemed like they were gambling on horse-racing or dog-fighting.

A Black Wolf guard with a bulbous nose held a list, which detailed the names and cultivations of the Qi Practitioners. "There'll definitely be these two third layer Qi Practitioners in the top three. The only thing worth gambling over is just who among the second layer Qi Practitioners will emerge victorious."

The Black Wolf guard beside him leaned on a column and said nonchalantly, "I'll gamble on that woman."

Bulbous nose looked at the list. "Qian Rongzhi? Why? She's not exactly powerful."

"Just a feeling." The Black Wolf guard smiled like he was keeping a secret, but he looked towards the interior of the pavilion.

Bulbous nose seemed like he suddenly realised something and smiled understandingly.

The Hawkwolf guard suddenly said, "Oi, look at that kid. The one looking at us. That first layer Qi Practitioner. Why don't we gamble on when he'll die?"

"I'll wager the first round."

Two men sat before each other in the pavilion. They could see through the gauze curtains easily and see what was going on outside. There was a jug of green tea on the table, which wafted with a faint fragrance. Two beautiful attendants stood to the side.

One of the men was slightly chubby. He wore the dark-coloured Black Hawk uniform. He was the Black Hawk commander of Jiaping city, Zhuo Zhibo. He squinted his eyes as he smiled. "Sir Zhou, why don't we have a little gamble of our own, huh?" He seemed to still be middle-aged, but his actual age had surpassed sixty at the very least. However, due to opening the four major meridians of yin and yang along with the Girdle meridian from practising qi and condensing a sea of qi, he seemed much younger.

Sir Zhou, on the other hand, seemed even younger. He only seemed to be in his thirties, dressed like a scholar. He had a long thin beard, which made him seem more solemn, just like a refined scholar. He waved his hand with a smile. "Nah, I'm not going to gamble. I'll just be asking to lose if I gamble on your territory." However, he did not smile at all inside. This bastard wanted to demonstrate his martial might to him again. How wretched.

Within Jiaping city, there was obviously only the district magistracy of Jiaping, Zhou Wenbin, who could stand on equal footing with Zhuo Zhibo. There had never been a place where two people of equal authority got along with one another. However, they each had their fears of the other and had different jobs. As such, they could maintain peace on the surface without invading each other's territories. However, whenever a chance arose, they would want to demonstrate their strength to the other.

Under Zhuo Zhibo's repeated request, Zhou Wenbin finally picked up the list. Afterwards, he saw a name, and his interest was piqued. "Commander Zhuo, there's even a first layer Qi Practitioner enlisting this time?"

"There are reckless people every year." Zhuo Zhibo had noticed this outlier a long time ago as well, but he did not pay too much attention to it. He had no chance. The difference was far too great. Although Wang Pushi had scolded him before because of Feng Zhang and had told him that someone new would be reporting to him, he basically never mentioned Li Qingshan's name to him. Perhaps even Wang Pushi did not believe Li Qingshan could escape from Feng Zhang's hands with his puny life given his skills. Moreover, that was several months ago.

Zhou Wenbin stopped smiling. He did not have Zhuo Wenbin's might in Jiaping, but as he originated from the prefectural city of Clear River and had attended the Academy of the Hundred Schools, he had many more connections and was better informed. His memory was rather impressive as well. He could vaguely remember a friend from Clear River city mentioning something interesting in a letter to him. He mentioned a name that seemed to bear the surname of Li.

The White Hawk commander Gu Yanying, the woman who possessed the greatest authority and power in the Ruyi commandery, was the dream lover of all men. There was not a single man who had not been interested in her upon seeing her. Although all they could do was covet her, unable to approach her, everything related to her would be an interesting topic of conversation, just like the celebrities from Li Qingshan's previous life.

And, his old friend Zhuo Zhibo had even been scolded by old Wang of the Clear River prefecture exactly for this matter, which only made the matter even more memorable.

"I'll wager ten spiritual stones on this kid. He definitely has something to rely on for enlisting as a first layer Qi Practitioner. He'll be able to rise up and become a Hawkwolf Guard."

Zhuo Zhibo's eyes narrowed. He smiled. "To think you just said you don't gamble. Aren't you even more interested in gambling than me?"

With a group of people above, they gambled on the fates of the people below. With a group of people below, they became the tools for gambling to the people above. The human past time of gambling did not change because of practising qi. Fighting and competing was an instinct of primitive creatures, but it was also present within humans. It was only presented in a different form.



Li Qingshan stood on the side of the square. A group of Qi Practitioners were filled with animosity towards him. The people who bought the talismans would not be grateful towards him because their odds at succeeding had increased. They would only hate him for making use of the situation and scamming them. Those who failed to buy any talismans would resent him as well for making their opponents stronger, let alone the people who had mocked him before he mocked them in return.

### **Chapter 115 - Directly Passing**

The Qi Practitioner who had directly confronted Li Qingshan before walked past him as he sneered. He whispered, "I'd like to see how you die. You better pray to the heavens that you don't match up with me."

Li Qingshan smiled. "I trust that I won't be matched up with you." Afterwards, under the gazes of all of the Qi Practitioners, he made his way through the square and arrived below the pavilion. Two envoys stopped him. "What are you trying to do?"

Li Qingshan ignored the envoys. He raised his head and called out, "May I ask if commander Zhuo Zhibo is present?"

"What's he trying to do?" "Is he sick of living?" The group of Qi Practitioners were stunned, and the Black Wolf guards in the pavilion were surprised as well.

Bulbous nose mumbled, "Looks like I'm wrong. The kid is going to die before the competition even begins."

"Chase him away!" Zhuo Zhibo frowned. Was his name something a little Qi Practitioner could refer to directly?

Swish!

Two Hawkwolf Guards outside the corridor drew their swords conveniently, while the other Hawkwolf Guards remained the same as before, keeping the attitude of watching a show.

"I'll wager that he'll be able to endure three moves at the very least!" Bulbous nose's words immediately made his two colleagues with the drawn blades slightly more serious. One of them even replied, "Then let's gamble!"

Zhou Wenbin said suddenly, "Hold on! Commander Zhuo, that's the person I've gambled on. I can't accept the losses if he dies. He might be seeking you out for actual matters. Why don't we see what he has to say?" The smile in his eyes grew deeper. He stood up and made his way to the corridor, while Zhuo Zhibo followed along. He felt slightly uneasy inside.

Zhuo Zhibo looked down on Li Qingshan from above. "What do you want?"

"Commander Wang Pushi sent me here." There was a dark flash in Li Qingshan's hand, which shot up the pavilion.

Zhuo Zhibo extended a hand and caught it. It was a Black Wolf tablet. The matter from several months ago suddenly crossed his mind. He raised his head and looked at Li Qingshan. "Are you that person?" He had never thought that the kid who had caused Feng Zhang to be expelled and earned him a scolding

from Wang Pushi would actually still be alive. Moreover, he would actually be bold enough to show himself before him.

Li Qingshan spread his hands and shrugged. "In the flesh."

Zhou Wenbin smiled due to the success of his scheme. "Commander Zhou? what's this about?"

Zhuo Zhibo said with a sunken expression, "Sir Zhou has schemed well, so why must you ask despite knowing the answer?" He had always taken pride in his intelligence, but he had fallen for Zhou Wenbin's scheme today, so he was in a horrible mood. As he looked at Li Qingshan, he was tempted to smack him to death.

"Does commander Wang's word count?" Li Qingshan said, completely ignoring Zhuo Zhibo's anger. From the moment he laid his eyes on Zhuo Zhibo, he had stopped worrying. From what he saw, Zhuo Zhibo was only at the level of a daemon that had just condensed a daemon core. He was within the range he could deal with.

The sixth layer, Qi Practitioners who had split open a sea of qi, were roughly similar to daemons who had condensed a daemon core. With how long daemons needed to cultivate for, it did not come without benefits. Their bodies were tough and their daemon qi was heavy, so they were much more powerful than humans of the same level. They basically possessed a one-sided advantage. Humans could only barely maintain a stalemate against them with spiritual artifacts and talismans as weapons. In the end, they would have to rely on intelligence and numbers to defeat daemons.

With the assistance from Xiao An who practised the Path of White Bone and Great Beauty, Li Qingshan was obviously filled with confidence due to his strength. Since he knew it was impossible for Zhuo Zhibo to take a liking to him, and he was not a person who would bend over backwards to get people to like him, he would just go with the flow. However, in the eyes of onlookers, he seemed rather arrogant.

There was not a single person in the Clear River prefecture who was bold enough to say that Wang Pushi's word did not count. At the very least, Zhuo Zhibo was not one of them. His expression changed a few times before recovering his composure. He even smiled a little, tossing the Black Wolf tablet back down. "Li Qingshan, you are now a Hawkwolf Guard. Wait down there."

"Thank you for accepting me, commander Zhuo!" Li Qingshan clasped his hands, but he became even more cautious inside. People who could control their emotions were like venomous snakes hiding in the grass. They were even more terrifying than furious lions or tigers.

With that, the observing Hawkwolf Guards could not help but be taken aback, while the enlisting Qi Practitioners were thrown into an uproar. Just like that, the three positions had become two. The clown who was supposed to die in their eyes had actually passed directly using such a method, so the Qi Practitioners immediately felt that it was unfair.

"This is unfair! Why doesn't he need to take part in the competition?" The Qi Practitioner who had confronted Li Qingshan and wanted him dead called out.

"He's just a first layer Qi Practitioner. Even people like that can just join the Hawkwolf Guard?"

Diao Fei and Qian Rongzhi looked at Li Qingshan from afar. They were filled with surprise and shock, no less than the people around them. They said nothing. How could a measly Qi Practitioner change the

decision of a Black Hawk commander? They wondered to themselves just how he was able to force Zhuo Zhibo into directly accepting him. Did he possess a powerful backer, Wang Pushi? Who was that?

Wang Pushi's nickname, old Wang, had spread just too much, which instead made many people forget about his real name. However, as two well-informed, quick-witted people, they immediately realised it. Was it the legendary Scarlet Hawk commander, old Wang? It couldn't be. He was a figure who watched over all Qi Practitioners in the Clear River prefecture, one of the three rulers over this expanse of one thousand five hundred kilometers.

However, aside from him, there was no one else who could force Zhuo Zhibo into making this decision despite being absent in person. Then they looked at Li Qingshan and felt that the regular sixteen-year-old now had an aura of mystery about him. If that really was the person behind him, he would be a figure that they could never afford to provoke.

Diao Fei thought about just how he had managed to establish a tie with a figure like that. It only seemed to make sense now that he could kill Qian Rongming without even batting an eye.

Zhou Wenbin looked at the clamorous surroundings with a smile and said to Zhuo Zhibo, "I was only just joking with you earlier. As I've said, I don't like gambling at all, so please forgive me, commander Zhuo."

"That may be true for you, but my word has always counted. Sir Zhou, are you perhaps looking down on my wager?" Zhuo Zhibo smiled sunkenly. He picked up a walnut from the platter of fruit and nuts on the table.

Li Qingshan suddenly felt a terrifying aura of murderousness. Out of everyone present, there were only three people who could clearly sense it. Li Qingshan was one of them.

The walnut shot off with enough force to pierce rocks, flying through the air. It smashed through countless droplets of rain, leaving behind an empty tunnel in its trajectory before slamming into the forehead of the second layer Qi Practitioner.

Bang!

The walnut shattered, and so did the skull. The Qi Practitioner's expression remained furious as his head was thrown into the ground. His neck snapped as he collapsed in a twisted manner.

All of the Qi Practitioners shut their mouths, as if someone had grabbed them by the neck at the same time. Every single one of them were prodigies in their hometowns, standing above all. They held power over the lives and property of the people of the jianghu, let alone ordinary people.

Yet right now, a Qi Practitioner that was just as noble as them had his life taken away in such an easy manner; it was as simple as slaughtering a chicken. Moreover, the person who just died could have been any one of them. He was just unlucky, which was why he was chosen and made an example out of.

They looked at the cause of all this, at Zhuo Zhibo who stood in the pavilion. His short, chubby stature suddenly seemed wide and tall. They all suddenly realised something. This was Jiaping city, the place with the most and strongest Qi Practitioners within a region of several hundred kilometers. Currently, they happened to be standing in the territory of the Hawkwolf Guard, which possessed the most and strongest Qi Practitioners in the city. They were afraid of even uttering an extra word. Even their dissatisfaction vanished.

Li Qingshan exhaled. This was the reality.

A great disparity existed between each layer for Qi Practitioners. If second layer Qi Practitioners wanted to defeat a third layer Qi Practitioner, they could rely on a numerical advantage or a powerful talisman to achieve victory. However, against a fourth layer Qi Practitioner, they could only pray to the heavens that they could escape. Up against a fifth layer Qi Practitioner, it would be certain death.

And, the difference between the fifth and sixth layers was even greater than the previous differences; it was just like how it was impossible for a daemonic beast to defeat a daemon that had condensed a daemon core. For a sixth layer Qi Practitioner who had split open a sea of qi, killing a measly second layer Qi Practitioner was even easier than eating or drinking. Let alone fleeing, they could not even react in time.

Normally, Zhuo Zhibo would have never been so intense with his punishment. After all, every single Qi Practitioner held great influence in the places that they came from, or they originated from clans or sects. He did not want to develop grievances for no good reason. However, he was furious right now, so he could no longer care. They were just a mere Qi Practitioner, so if they died, they died. Was someone supposed to come avenge them?

Zhuo Zhibo glanced past Li Qingshan nonchalantly. Li Qingshan could feel that the person he actually wanted to throw the walnut at was himself. However, he only returned his gaze with a smile. Zhuo Zhibo's frown grew deeper. Normal people would be utterly frightened when they witnessed unstoppable power, and if that person was hostile to you as well, it would lead to severe mental pressure as well. As time went on, it could even drive people insane.

However, he saw no fear from Li Qingshan at all. Instead, he remained extremely calm and composed. Either Li Qingshan was an idiot who knew no fear, or he had something he could depend on. The answer was clearly the latter.

Zhuo Zhibo obviously did not believe Li Qingshan's confidence originated from his personal strength, so it had to be due to his backing. However, Wang Pushi had never explained his relationship with Li Qingshan to him. He only told him about Feng Zhang's expulsion and Li Qingshan's offer without much thought. He seemed very unconcerned when he did that. Zhuo Zhibo could not help but look at Zhou Wenbin. This bastard had a lot of ties to Clear River city, so he must have known something.

Zhou Wenbin cleared his thoughts. "Commander Zhuo, I heard the White Hawk of the Ruyi commander met with this kid and even invited him to a cup of alcohol, getting officer old Wang to give the mental map of the Green province he carried around to him."

"Really?" Zhuo Zhibo's heart shivered. A name resounded through his mind, along with the white figure that he could never forget about even after catching just a single glimpse. He was rather well-informed as well, knowing that commander Gu had once appeared in a small, remote city. He even knew that Feng Zhang had gotten unlucky, embarrassing old Wang in front of commander Gu, which led to his direct expulsion.

However, he was unaware of the details at all, as none of the people present were people he could investigate. The reason why Zhou Wenbin knew about this was because his friend had dined with Hua Chengzan before with the presence of beautiful women.

## Chapter 116 - An Extraordinary Mindset

Zhuo Zhibo's gaze towards Li Qingshan became cautious. He frowned deeply. Li Qingshan's casual attitude only seemed to verify his thoughts.

By now, the dead Qi Practitioner had already been carried away, and the order of the rounds were rearranged. A Black Wolf guard personally hosted below.

Although the Qi Practitioners were envious, jealous, and resentful of Li Qingshan, they were afraid of saying anything about it. From today onwards, he was a Hawkwolf guard. He was no longer an existence they could provoke.

The Black Wolf guards in the pavilion experienced various thoughts. They gazed at Li Qingshan with either disdain or curiosity. Regardless of the ground, an arrogant newcomer was not well-liked, let alone the fact that Li Qingshan had basically replaced their old colleague, Feng Zhang. Moreover, his strength was only at the first layer, which led to even more disdain. Many people wondered just how they would teach a lesson to this ignorant kid from the mountains.

Li Qingshan just stood below the pavilion, gazing at the platform. He was even more relaxed than the gambling Hawkwolf guards, ignoring all of the gazes on him. He discovered that it was indeed better to stand to the side and watch people fight for their lives instead of being involved as tools for gambling.

Two Qi Practitioners arrived at the centre of the square, standing ten steps away from one another.

The one to the left wore green casual wear and was in his twenties. He had fairer skin and no facial hair. His hands were empty, without a weapon. Li Qingshan could still remember that he had purchased two talismans from him, one inferior and one low grade. He clearly had some background, probably from an aristocratic clan, born with the talent to practise qi.

The person to the right was much older. He was in his thirties or forties at the very least, and he wore grey, tighter-fitting clothes. He had an extremely prominent red scar on his face. He gave off a sense of fierceness. There was a sword at his waist. If Li Qingshan had guessed correctly, he should have started off as a martial arts practitioner, having converted his inner force into true qi.

Both of them were second layer Qi Practitioners. Li Qingshan was unable to determine just who was stronger or weaker. The Qi Practitioner in green definitely possessed quite a few powerful talismans, so he had an advantage in resources, but his battle experience would definitely be insufficient. Even if he had any, it would just be overpowering people weaker than him.

However, the Qi Practitioner in green had slaughtered his way out of the jianghu. His battle experience would definitely be plentiful. And, Yan Song had mentioned before that among lower Qi Practitioners, those who were originally martial arts practitioners tended to be stronger.

Within the drizzle, the two people faced each other, and with a clang of a gong, the first battle began.

The Qi Practitioner in grey moved. He turned into a grey flash, charging towards the Qi Practitioner in green. He conveniently drew the sword from his waist. The entire motion was smooth and fluid, completed in a single stroke. In the moment prior, he was ten steps away, but in the moment after, the shining, a cold sword had already stabbed towards the Qi Practitioner in green's throat.

Li Qingshan cheered inside. He really did begin as a martial arts practitioner.

The Qi Practitioner in green spread his arms in no hurry, retreating backwards like a gliding bird. True qi circulated through his body, and he separated his hands. A fist-sized fireball flew out.

A technique!

Li Qingshan immediately gathered his attention. He had heard from Yan Song that true qi was not as simple as a stronger version of inner force. Aside from being able to make people faster and stronger, it could also be used to unleash various wondrous techniques. Talismans were basically all techniques that had been sealed within talisman paper, allowing them to be used at any time.

The rain vapourised from the heat of the fireball. Even the soaking ground dried up, teeming with white steam, which only demonstrated the power of the fireball. If a person was struck by it, they probably would end up becoming a human torch.

The Qi Practitioner in grey seemed extremely fearful as well, but he did not become frantic. He used a profound series of foot steps, moving left and right and actually brushing past the fireball. Although his hair and eyebrows were singed, he did not slow down.

The Qi Practitioner in green panicked. He had clearly underestimated the willingness of Qi Practitioners who originated as martial arts practitioners to risk their lives. He wanted to force back the Qi Practitioner in grey, so he stopped his retreat. The true qi in his body had yet to settle down either, so he was unable to use a technique in time. He made up his mind and fished out a talisman, slapping it on himself. A breeze sprang up below his feet, and he immediately became much more agile.

Li Qingshan learned that while techniques were powerful, they could not be used particularly quickly. If he were against Qi Practitioners similar to himself, he would be fine, as their reaction speed would be limited as well. However, against Qi Practitioners who started off with martial arts, he would struggle.

The Qi Practitioner in green pulled away. He unleashed fireballs and large swathes of steam rose up from the surroundings. Suddenly, one of them flew towards Li Qingshan. Just when he planned on dodging, a wind blade pierced through the air, cutting down the fireball. A hot wave of air surged over him, causing his clothes to ruffle.

Li Qingshan raised his head. A Black Wolf guard stowed his blade away and saw him look over, sneering in disdain.

Within the swathe of steam, the Qi Practitioner in grey was dishevelled. He was covered in burn marks, but none of them were fatal. He was both vicious and cautious, sticking close to the Qi Practitioner in green.

The Qi Practitioner in green had instead panicked due to wasting true qi. The length that an inferior talisman lasted for was extremely limited, so the breeze below his feet gradually dispersed. He took out a low grade talisman this time.

Li Qingshan shook his head. The outcome had already been determined. Unleashing strength that could crush the opponent right in the beginning was the correct decision. Being indecisive would not work. However, he could also understand that talismans would vanish with each use. The more he used at the

beginning, the smaller the chance of victory later on. In the end, it was very likely that he would not gain anything at all, ending up wasting the invaluable talismans.

A vicious light flashed through the eyes of the Qi Practitioner in grey. No one knew when, but he was also holding a talisman in his left hand now.

The talisman shattered, transforming into a flash of white light, blinding everyone. The Qi Practitioners on the side all looked away.

However, as Li Qingshan was further away, he saw it clearly. The talisman was just an inferior good. Aside from being able to dazzle people, it could do nothing else.

However, the Qi Practitioner in green was dazed. Due to fear, his body paused slightly.

A battle between masters would be determined in a single instant.

The light subsided, but a sword also flashed past. The Qi Practitioner in green produced meaningless gurgles. A glowing metal sword had pierced his throat. His eyes were filled with regret. He still had so many talismans he had yet to use. If he used them right from the beginning, he would definitely be the victor. Two streaks of tears fell from the corner of his eyes. He had been drowned out by regret and death.

The envoy announced loudly, "Victory to Liu Yiming!" He did not even mention the Qi Practitioner in green's name. They would either make a name for themselves out of nowhere, or they would die nameless.

Rich battle experience and decisiveness became critical points to victory. Li Qingshan also realised that whether it be talismans or techniques, it was completely up to how the person used them. Even if sheep had the claws and fangs of wolves, they would still be sheep.

However, unfortunately, Liu Yiming failed to make a name for himself. He was matched up against a third layer Qi Practitioner in his second round. Fortunately, he was swift enough with forfeiting, saving him from losing his life pointlessly.

Droplets of rain fell from the gloomy sky. Round after round passed in the competition. Not every round would result in a corpse. Those who were outmatched could forfeit, and their opponent could not force them to keep fighting, which was basically an attempt from the Hawkwolf Guard to reduce injuries and death.

However, whether it be the spiritual artifacts or the techniques Qi Practitioners employed, they were all just too powerful. Basically every single one of them had stronger attacks than defences. Most of the time, there was not even the opportunity to admit defeat. Once they were struck by an attack, they would be dead. Victory and defeat, life and death depended on a single moment.

The second round of the competition ended, and four corpses were now placed at the edge of the square. These noble Qi Practitioners just laid in the muddy water, dead. Li Qingshan suddenly fought it to be all so foolish. They had originally obtained everything already, everything that an ordinary person could not obtain throughout their entire lives, yet they risked their lives for more, for better, only to lose their lives.

However, he suddenly realised that he was no different. He could not say that he had a grand dream, while everyone else just had wild ambitions. He could not help but shake his head in self-mockery.

However, he had no plans to change his mind. The saying of knowing when to be content is happiness was just a way for weaker people to comfort themselves. It was the belief of people who had lost their motivation to live and the spirit to forge ahead. Men had dreams far and wide. If they died before achieving their dream, how could they say that knowing when to be content was happiness? Constantly advancing through struggle was the only source of happiness. Even if they died as failure, it would not be a waste at the very least.

He dismissed his unaccommodating thoughts before looking back at the square. He no longer had any mockery and self-mockery in his eyes anymore. Instead, there was appreciation, appreciating the Qi Practitioners for unleashing all of their intelligence and strength to face off against their opponent, searching for victory in the danger of defeat, searching for life in the shadow of death. The vigour they demonstrated made death seem insignificant. They were flowing with battle intent and fighting spirit.

Zhuo Zhibo had been paying attention to Li Qingshan the entire time, clearly sensing the powerful fighting spirit from Li Qingshan and his gaze of almost admiration for the competition. This was not usual. The Black Wolf guards in the pavilion were afraid of mocking and making a ruckus due to his anger, but they were still haughty, acting like they were watching a battle between caged beasts. Even though they had also emerged from the same cage, only Li Qingshan admired the battle, desiring the battle.

Zhou Wenbin also paid attention to Li Qingshan. This youngster, no, man had an aura that heavily differed from normal people. He would usually hide it all and seem normal, but once an opportunity presented itself, it would all emerge from him and display itself.

However, no matter how special he was, it was all useless if his cultivation and strength were insufficient. A first layer Qi Practitioner in his teens could be regarded as rather talented in Jiaping city, but across the entire Clear River prefecture, it was nothing special at all. He would probably spend his entire life at the level of the Black Wolf guards. If he could split open a sea of qi, then he would be lucky. Zhou Wenbin then glanced at Zhuo Zhibo and shook his head. It would be difficult for even that wish to come true under this person's command.

Li Qingshan still possessed very little experience in actual battles against Qi Practitioners. When he watched these battles, he benefited tremendously. Various novel techniques and moves were demonstrated before him. Not only was he watching, but he was also silently thinking of how he could handle them so that he would be prepared if he came across them in the future.

## **Chapter 117 - Killing a Qi Practitioner**

In the competition this time, there was no doubt that the strongest were Diao Fei and the other third layer Qi Practitioner. However, the person who attracted the most attention was Qian Rongzhi. There were many female Qi Practitioners, with quite a few attending the competition, but there were not many who were born with beauty like hers. Beautiful women would attract gazes no matter where they went.



However, out of the three positions available, Li Qingshan had already claimed one. The last two positions seemed to be in the grasps of the two third layer Qi Practitioners. As long as they did not meet in the competition, the other Qi Practitioners basically stood no chance.

The competition advanced very quickly. Many of the victories would be determined in a split second. Consequently, they reached the fourth round in less than four hours. Only four people remained in the square. It seemed like the two third layer Qi Practitioners could become Hawkwolf guards after defeating two more second layer Qi Practitioners, but the situation suddenly changed. The envoy read out the matches, but it was second layer against second layer and third layer against third layer.

The expressions of Diao Fei and the other third layer Qi Practitioner changed slightly. However, the two second layer Qi Practitioners suddenly erupted with hope. One of them happened to be Qian Rongzhi. She remained calm as if she had been expecting this.

When Qian Rongzhi made her way to the centre of the square, Li Qingshan looked down. The outcome was already determined. Since Qian Rongzhi possessed a mid grade talisman as a trump card, she vaguely surpassed her opponent in both cultivation and status. That was that.

As expected, Qian Rongzhi immediately took out a talisman as soon as the match began, but to Li Qingshan's surprise, she did not activate it immediately. Instead, she said to the Qi Practitioner gently, "Young master Zhang, you should be able to tell that my mid grade talisman possesses tremendous power. However, I don't want to harm you, so please forfeit!"

'Young master Zhang' could not help but hesitate. He had witnessed Qian Rongzhi's strength before. Coupled with the mid grade talisman, his chances of victory were less than thirty percent.

Qian Rongzhi made full use of her advantages as a female. The drizzle drenched her clothes, sculpting out her beautiful figure. Her eyes were just as misty as the rain. She did not seem like she was threatening, but begging. "I really don't want to become your enemy unless I have to. If the day comes, Rongzhi will definitely serve you well if you visit the Ancient Wind city."

In the pavilion, Zhou Wenbin smiled. "Commander Zhuo, is that allowed too?"

Zhuo Zhibo said, "Why wouldn't it? The competition is not just about cultivation in the first place. It's also about intelligence."

Li Qingshan could not help but admire this woman's thinking. As expected, the Qi Practitioner known as 'young master Zhang' chose to forfeit under the gentle request of a beauty and the threat of the talisman.

Qian Rongzhi also crossed through the square, arriving below the pavilion and standing beside Li Qingshan. She even smiled at Li Qingshan. "I underestimated young master a few days ago. If I have caused any offence, I hope that you can forgive me." Vaguely, she seemed to demonstrate awe, as if Li Qingshan was not Qian Rongming's murderer, but a talented young man who made her heart throb.

This was the first time Li Qingshan had been referred to as 'young master', but he only felt a chill run down his spine. He replied with a soft 'yep' and stopped paying attention to her. Regardless of whether she was truly unaffected by Qian Rongming's death or she hid the resentment deep inside, she was a terrifying beauty of viciousness like a snake or a scorpion. Her cruelty probably originated from the

education of the large clan she came from. No matter how beautiful a woman like that was, he would never be interested.

Not only did Qian Rongzhi ignore Li Qingshan's coldness towards her, she even tried to start a conversation. "Who do you think will win?"

Li Qingshan frowned and directed all of his attention to the square. The clash between the two third layer Qi Practitioners would be the headline match of the competition, but it was not as intense as imagined at all. They fought against one another warily.

After a few attempts at probing out the opponent, Diao Fei used the Lightning Strike talisman he had purchased from Li Qingshan. With a flash of scorching white light, a bolt of lightning as thick as a pillar descended from the sky, easily piercing his opponent's protective true qi and charring him.

The traces of the lightning only vanished from the opponent's face after quite a while. It was so powerful that even Li Qingshan was taken aback. Lightning was the punishment of the heavens. Even if he daemonified, it would still injure him.

The light in Qian Rongzhi's eyes flickered. "This young master Diao grasped a good time."

All techniques were about circumstances. Today, the clouds had constantly been rumbling with thunder; the Lightning Strike talisman was almost as effective as a high grade talisman during this rainy summer weather. It was not something weaker Qi Practitioners could fend off, becoming an absolute trump card.

Diao Fei also walked over to Li Qingshan's side. Although he did his best to remain calm, he was unable to hide his joy. He even thanked Li Qingshan quietly. It was as if he no longer cared about the Pearl Dew pill.

Two mid grade talismans had become the determining factors of victory. The three people had become the final victors, basically building off what had happened on the boat earlier. However, the three of them definitely were not friends.

Zhuo Zhibo said from the pavilion, "Come up!"

"I refuse to accept this!" Suddenly, someone called out boldly. His face was twisted due to jealousy. He had become rather crazy due to his failures. He looked at Li Qingshan resentfully. "How can a piece of trash like you, a first layer Qi Practitioner, surpass me..."

Zhuo Zhibo did nothing. Instead, he said to Li Qingshan, "You're already a Hawkwolf guard. When someone offends you, they're offending the Hawkwolf Guard. You should know what to do!" It was as if he did not realise a difference existed between first and second layer Qi Practitioners at all. The other Hawkwolf guards all watched on with interest, waiting for Li Qingshan to be defeated. They wanted to see if he would still be able to stand there after that.

Li Qingshan turned around with ease and walked towards the Qi Practitioner. He learned that this person's name was Lü Hui during the competition earlier. He had insulted Li Qingshan in the beginning before being labelled as trash. Li Qingshan said, "Since you want to die so much, I'll give you what you want."

To everyone else, that just sounded like boastful words.

“What’re you trying to do? You’re just a first layer Qi Practitioner!” Lü Hui watched as Li Qingshan gradually approached him. For some reason, he actually felt deep fear. Now that his head had mostly cleared up, he regretted his earlier words.

When he was twenty steps away, Li Qingshan stopped. He leaned forwards and bent his knees; he was like a tiger in the forest, stalking its prey and about to pounce. His temporarily condensed power suddenly erupted as he leapt forth.

Li Qingshan’s eyes were calm and composed like a young beast king who had gracefully leapt out of the forest. There was no ruthlessness or fury, only calmness due to confidence. It was enough to make people’s hearts shudder.

Lü Hui looked at the emotionless eyes and felt pressure that took his breath away. When Li Qingshan stopped, he had already begun circulating all of his true qi. However, due to Li Qingshan’s sudden acceleration, all he saw was a blur sweep past him. Li Qingshan moved just too quickly, to the point that it gave Lü Hui the false impression that only after quite a while did the gust of wind that the motion produced arrive. It slammed into Lü Hui’s face with the cold rain.

The figure in front of him vanished, and he felt agony in his chest. Lowering his head, he saw that his chest was empty. When he looked back with difficulty, all he saw was Li Qingshan clutching a bloody heart. He opened his mouth, but before he could even say anything, he had already collapsed face first into the ground.

The entire square immediately fell silent. Suddenly, the sound of the rain became incredibly clear. Everyone was shocked; even Zhuo Zhibo and Zhou Wenbin were fazed. They yelled out at the same time, “Body Practitioner!”

A second layer Qi Practitioner had been killed in a single stroke, and it was not through a sneak attack or a talisman but in a direct confrontation. Everyone felt a heavy, cold sensation. The Qi Practitioners looked at Li Qingshan like he was a monster. Was he really a first layer Qi Practitioner?

The Qi Practitioners present no longer grumbled about Li Qingshan avoiding the competition. Instead, they felt extremely fortunate. If he had taken part, there would probably be a few more corpses to the side of the square, which might have included them. As expected, he was not an idiot. He was bold enough to rip them off with talismans before the battle because he possessed absolute confidence in his strength, yet others actually still mocked him. Fortunately, none of them were like the idiot from before, actually stepping forward and antagonising him.

Even the Hawkwolf guards who had watched the competition unfold leisurely looked at Li Qingshan in shock. Originally, they felt much disdain towards this kid who openly joined the Hawkwolf Guard through the backdoor using his connections. But now, their opinions of him had completely changed. This kid was not someone they could just teach a lesson to.

The shock that Li Qingshan created even surpassed when Zhuo Zhibo killed the Qi Practitioner in a single move. The latter had used his overwhelming strength to crush his opponent, which only made sense, while the former still managed to crush his opponent despite being weaker in cultivation. Such a matter was simply extraordinary.

Li Qingshan tossed the heart aside and caught his breath. Earlier, he had instantaneously erupted with his physical strength and true qi. The outcome of the combination even surprised him a little. However, he was absolutely confident in himself when he launched the attack.

The Tiger Demon Leaps over the Ravine. The Tiger Demon Digs out the Heart. Ever since he became a daemon, these moves seemed to have fused into his blood, becoming a part of his instincts.

Even when he did not have a sliver of true qi, he had used his physical strength and an opening to defeat Feng Zhang in a single stroke. Ever since then, he had been cultivating daily, and the daemon qi converted from several dozen Qi Gathering pills only made his body stronger. His true qi had almost reached the peak of the first layer as well, and it was as pure as it could get. As such, his strength changed in an overwhelming fashion.

As for Lü Hui, he was the opposite. He had just been through three rounds of battles, so he was at his weakest in both true qi and physical strength. With the disparity in conditions, the outcome became extremely clear-cut.

Li Qingshan reevaluated his strength. In human form, killing a third layer Qi Practitioner in a direct confrontation should pose no difficulty. He had yet to see any fourth layer Qi Practitioners, so he was uncertain about them. Of course, this was given that his opponent did not have too powerful of a trump card. However, in terms of trump cards, just how many people could surpass him?

Li Qingshan returned to Qian Rongzhi and Diao Fei's side. Both of them shuffled back slightly in an unnatural fashion. The terrifying power to injure and kill that Li Qingshan had erupted with caused them tremendous pressure.

Qian Rongzhi could no longer force out a smile. Not a single person would be able to smile when they knew the person right beside them had the power to kill them at any time, and that they just happened to be displeased with them.

### **Chapter 118 - Fantastic Benefits**

Even the hands of the third layer Qi Practitioner, Diao Fei, became covered in cold sweat. Within a range of three steps, he would not even have the time to activate a talisman against such an opponent. He felt extremely relieved that he had not fallen out with Li Qingshan. Under the guidance of an envoy, the three of them climbed the lengthy stairs, with Diao Fei and Qian Rongzhi following behind Li Qingshan instinctively. Afterwards, they crossed through a long corridor. Over a dozen Black Wolf guards parted to form a path for them. Li Qingshan clearly saw that there were both men and women among them. There were young twenty-year-olds, but there were also many middle-aged or even elderly people.

Li Qingshan studied them. Under the gloomy weather, their various faces turned into blurs in Li Qingshan's mind. He did not try to remember them. He only silently estimated their strength. There were many third layer Qi Practitioners, with a few second and fourth layer Qi Practitioners. He did not see any fifth layer Qi Practitioners. The conclusion he reached was that he did not need to take special note of any of them.

Strength was the best calling card for Qi Practitioners. Before he knew it, Li Qingshan had also learned how to judge a person based on their strength. Only when Li Qingshan arrived before Zhuo Zhibo and

Zhou Wenbin did he take special note of them. Their auras were so powerful that they could not be ignored.

Zhuo Zhibo scanned past the three of them, with his gaze pausing on Li Qingshan slightly. He smiled kindly. "Congratulations. From today onwards, you are a part of the Hawkwolf Guard. You've all done extremely well... In a moment, there will be a welcoming banquet. Little Ge, go take them to collect their items."

"Yes, commander!" answered a short but powerful Qi Practitioner. He had a bit of a baby face, but he had a mustache. Additionally, he seemed rather funny but also very likeable.

Zhou Wenbin said, "Commander Zhuo, I won't be disturbing you any further then. I'll take my leave." He did not even mention the matter of the spiritual stones, as he knew that Zhuo Zhibo would have the spiritual stones delivered to him once he returned. If he demanded for them before so many Black Wolf guards, it would be rather humiliating for Zhuo Zhibo and overbearing on Zhou Wenbin's part.

Zhuo Zhibo urged Zhou Wenbin to stay with no sincerity at all before politely accompanying Zhou Wenbin down the stairs. Before Zhou Wenbin left, he said to the three of them, "Oh right. Don't forget to report to the district government."

In writing, the district magistrate was the highest ruler of Jiaping. He had the authority to dispatch the Hawkwolf Guard to assist his governance, so new members of the Hawkwolf Guard would have to report to the government and be recorded. While the Hawkwolf Guard was responsible for supervising the government, they could not directly disobey the orders of the district magistrate, thus creating a relationship where they checked one another. However, in reality, actual power would depend on their individual skill and strength.

Although he directed that to the three of them, anyone could tell that he was specially speaking to Li Qingshan. District magistrate Zhou was very interested in him.

Under the lead of 'little Ge', Li Qingshan finally entered the depths of the Hawkwolf Guard. The exquisite, extravagant buildings and pavilions made it seem like a royal palace rather than a government office. The envoys they came across along the way no longer possessed any arrogance at all. Instead, they were humble and polite.

'Little Ge' was very good at making conversation. He introduced the names and purposes of the structures along the way, mentioning stories or anecdotes with great ease. He also constantly asked Li Qingshan how he had managed to accomplish what he currently possessed.

"It was all by chance," Li Qingshan smiled. He had already learned that 'little Ge' was actually called Ge Jian, and he was actually past thirty years old already. The reason why he was so polite was directly connected to the strength Li Qingshan had displayed earlier. Although Ge Jian was cautious of him, being treated as an equal was still a comforting fact.

Ge Jian said, "There aren't a lot of people who practise that now. The body practising methods in the library are even close to getting moldy with how seldom people view them. However, I never thought the power would be so great. Even I want to try it out now. You'll need to teach me well when I do try."

He was just making conversation. Although Body Practitioners sounded like they were equals to Qi Practitioners, that was just Body Practitioners blowing their own trumpets. It was not some hidden, powerful path that people could take. It was just like the daoist ability of the Strength of Nine Oxen and Two Tigers. Most ancient cultivation methods were lost because they could no longer keep up with the times.

Compared to the powerful strength in battle, there were many disadvantages to the method of training the body. Every path was composed of the summaries of the countless lessons people before had learned. However, Li Qingshan was not a 'person', so he obviously had no need to follow the same path as these 'people' before.

Soon, they arrived at the depths of the mountain peak and entered a stone building carved out from the mountain. Ge Jian took the three of them through a series of stone doors. Every stone door was engraved with inscriptions. Even spiritual artifacts would not be able to blow them open. This was the armoury of the Hawkwolf Guard.

To the Hawkwolf Guard, there was not a single piece of gold, silver, or treasure worth protecting unless they were spiritual.

Ge Jian took out two Black Wolf uniforms for each person from the armoury first. Li Qingshan gently felt the smooth fabric. Through Ge Jian's introductions, he learned that it was made from dark silk; it was both fire and waterproof and was tough enough to stop crossbow bolts. This was the best piece of clothing he had ever worn even with his two lives combined. However, he did not care too much about it. With his Ox Demon Forges its Hide, he had never been afraid of any crossbow bolts in the first place.

If that was all the benefits the Hawkwolf Guard had to offer, it would just be disappointing. However, Diao Fei and Qian Rongzhi showed no signs of disappointment at all. They held the uniform like it was a treasure as they were distracted by their thoughts.

Qian Rongzhi's thoughts included both resentment and joy. If she wore this uniform and returned to Ancient Wind city, those old coots would have to show some respect to her. Everyone who had once offended her, who had looked down on her, would have to pay.

Her hatred towards her family was actually dozens or even hundreds of times more intense than the feelings of someone like Li Qingshan who had cut off his family.

What Ge Jian took out next attracted all of their gazes. Even Li Qingshan showed anticipation. They were three delicately-crafted hundred treasures pouches, completely different from the ragged versions they possessed.

Ge Jian handed the three hundred treasures pouches to the three of them. "The items inside are all a welcoming gift."

Li Qingshan channeled his true qi into it and sensed that the space in the hundred treasures pouch was the size of a box. It was ten times larger than the ruined hundred treasures pouch he had obtained from Qian Rongming. It could easily hold a larger weapon, and he could finally store his Cursive Sword Calligraphy away.

There was a bottle of pills in the hundred treasures pouch as well. Despite its size, it held thirty Qi Gathering pills. Every single one of them was only the size of a soybean, but they were perfectly round and translucent, teeming with spiritual qi. Their effects surpassed regular Qi Gathering pills. There were also three low grade talismans.

It amazed Li Qingshan. The Hawkwolf Guard truly were wealthy, truly a government office of authority of the best of the best. The benefits that came with a position were just so good. There really was a reason why so many Qi Practitioners would risk their lives desperately to join them.

To his side, Diao Fei and Qian Rongzhi also showed surprise and joy when they took their hundred treasures pouches.

However, that was not all. Ge Jian then took the three of them into the armoury, opening three stone doors. When the third stone door opened, a brilliant glow flooded out, dazzling Li Qingshan.

The large armoury room was filled with various types of weapons. Whether it be blades, spears, knives, glaives, axes, hooks, or tridents, it had them all. Light flickered in there like stars in the night sky. Every single one of them was a spiritual artifact.

“How are there so many spiritual artifacts here?” The spiritual artifacts Qian Rongzhi currently saw was more than she had seen throughout her entire life. She had grown up in Ancient Wind city, so she believed the Qian family was one of the largest clans in the world, a tremendous existence that could not be shaken. Yet, when she came to the Hawkwolf Guard, only then did she realise she had just been experiencing tunnel vision.

Ge Jian explained, “Over all these years, we’ve killed many enemies, with many Qi Practitioners among them. Since we obtained their weapons that we have no use for, we offered them up as contribution, which ended up being stored here.”

Li Qingshan asked, “What’s contribution?”

Ge Jian explained patiently. As it turned out, Hawkwolf guards were not always busy with their duties. They just needed to deal with a few cases every month, and they would be permitted to use their other time freely. They could practise qi on the mountain or have fun outside, all depending on their preferences. They had great leisure.

Within the Hawkwolf Guard, strength was everything. No matter how hard a person worked, they could not be promoted if their strength was insufficient. As a result, in order to motivate people to work, they set up a contribution system. Whenever a case was completed, they could receive a corresponding amount of contribution, which could be exchanged for pills, talismans, or spiritual artifacts.

Moreover, the Hawkwolf Guard did not pay their salaries with silver. There was no silver on the mountain at all. Instead, they would give each member ten Qi Gathering pills for their cultivation.

A great salary, great benefits, and high amounts of freedom. When I work, I even receive bonuses, and I get respected wherever I go. Apart from the fact that the commanding officer doesn’t seem to like me, it’s basically a perfect job. But even if the commanding officer does dislike me, he’ll have to live it with. Who told him to send someone to come steal my things? Serves him right. If he develops spite against

me because of this, then he'd better be careful when he goes out at night, just in case he falls into the hands of daemons.

Li Qingshan smiled subconsciously, which made Qian Rongzhi and Diao Fei shiver.

Ge Jian said, "Everyone pick one as your weapon. If you don't have confidence in your insight, I recommend that you choose a standard issue Wind-entwining blade. Be quick, because I still have to take you to your residences."

The three of them immediately began picking eagerly. Originally, Li Qingshan wanted to choose a heavy weapon, the heavier the better. He had already chosen a long battle-axe, but he changed his mind and directly went to the rack to the west, choosing a Wind-entwining blade. He drew the blade from its sheath; it was covered with a cloud-like pattern, shining with cold light. He could tell from a single glance that it had not been used before, brand-new. There were inscriptions on the hilt so that as long as true qi was channeled into the blade, it could unleash wind blades. It was basically a well-made low grade spiritual artifact.

Ge Jian extended his thumb at him, praising his choice. Li Qingshan replied with a smile. He was extremely satisfied with the Wind-entwining blade as well, but he did not choose it because he was unconfident in his insight. Weapons all depended on circumstances. The current him no longer needed to go trample through the Black Wind stronghold.

An overly-large or long weapon could not be stored in the hundred treasures pouch, so it was difficult to carry around and unwieldy. He had begun with the blade at the very beginning, so it was perfect for him to return to the blade now. And, he currently lacked a way to launch long-range attacks. He could not just use the Cursive Sword Calligraphy against anyone and everyone. The Wind-entwining blade was imbued with the Wind Blade technique, so it suited what he was looking for.

Diao Fei and Qian Rongzhi also chose their respective weapons. Diao Fei also chose a Wind-entwining blade, while Qian Rongzhi chose a Water-splitting barb.

### **Chapter 119 - Hidden Killing Intent**

There were many small, two-storeyed buildings on the mountain, sparsely between the exuberant vegetation. It was a quiet and tasteful set up. These were the residences allocated to the Hawkwolf Guard. A few had already been cleaned out for the three of them to choose from, which added to Li Qingshan's understanding of the benefits that the Hawkwolf Guard provided.

Ge Jian said, "Once you have chosen, please clean up and change your clothes. When it's noon, I will come to receive you again."

Li Qingshan chose the residence that was the quietest and closest to the edge. After bidding farewell to Ge Jian, he walked over.

There were flowers and shrubs planted at the front, which had now bloomed. Li Qingshan was not skilled in this area of knowledge, so he had no idea what they were called. However, they did form an assortment of colors, which was quite beautiful. Butterflies floated around them, drinking nectar while there was a break in the rain.



Li Qingshan stood there and admired the area for a while before using his key to open the door. A dangling bamboo curtain split the antique style room into two parts. The front was a room to receive guests, while the back was a quiet tearoom.

The jar on his waist trembled. Li Qingshan said, "Come out, Xiao An. I've kept you in there for too long!" Opening the jar, a skull flew out. The various bones connected into a skeleton, standing in front of Li Qingshan. It shook its head at Li Qingshan, expressing that it was fine.

Those who practised the Path of White Bone and Great Beauty were neither alive or dead, neither dead or alive. They existed in a wondrous state, carrying the profound truths of buddhism. In terms of concealing auras, even Li Qingshan, who practised the Spirit Turtle's Method of Sea Suppression, could not be compared to him. After all, dead people had no auras.

Xiao An ran over to a wall and admired the antique paintings there before nodding at Li Qingshan, expressing that they were all the real deal.

Li Qingshan held the railing and ascended up the stairs. Xiao An followed behind him in a hurry, climbing up the stairs with a series of thumps.

On the square table, wisps of smoke curled up from a crane-shaped incense burner onto a rosewood screen. The decor and items in the room were extremely luxurious, but not overboard. With a single glance, Li Qingshan could tell that a master had designed this. Any item there was worth far more than what an ordinary person could afford in their entire lives.

Li Qingshan opened the window and looked out. His gaze passed through the treetops as he looked towards the entire sprawl of Jiaping city. The buildings were layered together neatly like matchboxes. A blue band of water glimmered at the centre of all of that, passing through the entire city. It was the Clear river.

If this was compared to what he saw when he was living in the cowshed in the Crouching Ox village, one was truly like hell, while the other was heaven. Now this was the unfettered life that Qi Practitioners were worthy of. Li Qingshan closed his eyes and took in a deep breath, as if he wanted to inhale all of his freedom and happiness.

The bloody slaughter in the rain immediately grew distant. Xiao An tilted his head and looked at Li Qingshan as the flames in his eyes flickered. He was also happy for him.

Li Qingshan called Xiao An, sitting down in front of the square table. Like a miser, he poured out the contents of the two hundred treasures pouches, looking through it carefully again. He smiled from ear to ear as he rubbed Xiao An's head. "Once I formally take my post, I will definitely work hard and help you achieve your ability as quickly as possible, okay? Perhaps you'll be able to practise qi by then as well? I'll have to work even harder then and earn some more Qi Gathering pills."

Xiao An nodded firmly, expressing agreement. He guessed at what 'taking post' meant.

A big monster and a small skeleton planned their lives in a serious manner like this. They were like the most ordinary people in this aspect. Work hard and make money! Make money and get married! So on and so on.

In the end, he stored everything back into the new hundred treasures pouch before giving the old one to Xiao An. "One each! You don't have anything, so I'll keep the larger one. But don't worry, I will definitely find a better one for you." The one hanging from Zhuo Zhibo's waist seemed quite nice. Li Qingshan could not help but wonder to himself, Should I be hoping that you come for me? Or should I be hoping that you don't come for me?

Obviously, Xiao An had no objections to this. He accepted the hundred treasures pouch and stored the scholar wood tablet in there.

Li Qingshan had a comforting hot shower and changed into the Black Wolf uniform, equipping his Wind-entwining blade. He told Xiao An to watch over the house before making his way out.

A banquet was held in a large hall.

Zhuo Zhibo sat in the primary seat with over a dozen tables to his two sides. Two people sat at each table, arranged according to their cultivation.

Ge Jian patted Li Qingshan's shoulder. "You'll just have to bear with it!" As he was a first layer Qi Practitioner, he had the weakest cultivation in the Hawkwolf Guard, so he could only sit at the very end. However, everyone knew that when it came to fighting, his strength was probably no less than third layer Qi Practitioners.

Li Qingshan expressed that he did not mind. As soon as he sat down, he caught a whiff of fragrance. Qian Rongzhi actually sat right next to him, telling him in a charming manner, "I'm technically the weakest. It really is unfair for you."

Li Qingshan wondered whether this was really like the legends, where the colder you were to a beauty, the more the beauty became glued to you? However, this thought vanished in a flash. He could not forget this woman's expression when she achieved what she wanted. If he really could accept her actions from before, that would not be called lenience, but having something wrong with his head. Trying to put on an act now was already too late.

However, since she had spoken to him in such a friendly manner, he could not lose in this aspect. He replied nonchalantly, "Looks like strength is what groups people in the world. It's the same everywhere."

Qian Rongzhi did not seem to hear his sarcastic remark, continuing to smile. She seemed to be in an extremely good mood after having joined the Hawkwolf Guard.

Zhuo Zhibo came very late. After saying some conventional greetings, he congratulated the three of them before introducing the Hawkwolf guards present to them one by one. Including the three of them, there were a total of thirty-one Hawkwolf guards in the region of Jiaping. Aside from the few who were in secluded cultivation or out on missions, everyone was present.

Under Zhuo Zhibo's lead, everyone raised their cups and congratulated the three of them on joining the Hawkwolf Guard. No matter how cold and arrogant they were before, they were all colleagues now, so they obviously could not argue or bicker. At the very least, they could not make their disagreements and conflict too obvious and had to focus on staying united. Of course, Li Qingshan's vague backing played quite a large role here.

Otherwise, people would have begun provoking him a long time ago. It was very impressive when Li Qingshan instantly killed a second layer Qi Practitioner, shocking everyone very much, but after some thought, the Qi Practitioner who died had already lost half the battle from the beginning after being frightened by him. Li Qingshan was just a first layer Qi Practitioner, at the lowest level among Qi Practitioners. There were plenty of third and fourth layer Qi Practitioners present, so they were not afraid of him.

If a regular newcomer had been so 'arrogant', someone would have definitely stepped forwards and taught them a lesson. However, Zhuo Zhibo had suggested to everyone to not act recklessly, but when he said that, he seemed rather cold and seemed like he was in thought.

As a result, Li Qingshan did not sense any hostility from Zhou Zhibo at all. The exact opposite happened instead. Just when he was drinking to his heart's content, this great commander of Jiaping even walked over to his table personally.

Diao Fei and Qian Rongzhi stood up in a hurry, but Li Qingshan remained seated, which formed quite the contrast. He could take the initiative to repair his relationship with people who had been defeated by his hand, such as Yan Song and Liu Hong, which made him seem extremely wise.

However, against a powerful opponent like Zhuo Zhibo, he instead held his head up high. He did not believe that he could change Zhuo Zhibo's opinion of him if he yielded now. And, he knew extremely well that these Qi Practitioners had a twisted sense of pride. If they were smacked in the face by those stronger than them, they would just pass it off as bad luck or that they deserved it. However, if they were provoked by those weaker than them, someone had to die.

Just like on the ship, he had only turned down Qian Rongming's rude request, and that was enough for Qian Rongming to try and kill him in a sneak attack at night. Was Zhuo Zhibo any better? He had no confidence in that. Someone with authority like Zhuo Zhibo would probably only become even more twisted.

The peace on the surface right now was only due to a veil that Gu Yanying's name had cast down. However, this veil would vanish very soon. He was not Gu Yanying's subordinate, although he did hope very much that Gu Yanying could become his one day.

With his experience from his two lives, Li Qingshan understood his current position and their relationship extremely well. As a result, he made the choice that seemed the most appropriate to him. He did not feel that his current situation was all a fluke.

In the story of the 'Exhausted Tricks of the Donkey', the tiger had only become afraid of acting recklessly because of how composed the donkey was. He did not mind learning from this donkey, bluffing his commanding officer a little. At the very least, he would be able to get a few days of peace. Once the truth was revealed, he would like to see who was the donkey, who was the tiger, and who had exhausted all of their tricks.

Note: Exhausted Tricks of the Donkey is a Chinese idiom that means that 'all tricks have been exhausted'. The idiom comes from a story; once upon a time in the land of Qian (present day Guizhou), there were no donkeys. A person who had nothing better to do transported a donkey from the north and let it out to graze by the mountains. A tiger in the mountains discovered this strange creature, only

gazing at it from afar in the beginning before slowly approaching the donkey. It was frightened away by a cry from the donkey, but in the end, it discovered that all the donkey could use was its hooves and that was all of the tricks it possessed. As a result, the tiger lunged on it and had a good meal. You can draw allusions to the current situation yourself.

Zhuo Zhibo continued to smile just like before, but the killing intent in his heart only grew. He personally clinked cups with Li Qingshan and mentioned many personal things.

“Qingshan, this must be the first time you’ve left home!”

“Yep.”

“You don’t have to worry at all. All you need to do is treat the Hawkwolf Guard as your family. If you have any questions, fire away. Everybody here are your siblings. I’m your eldest brother, so it’s my responsibility to take care of you.”

Li Qingshan sneered inside when he was pulled aside by Zhuo Zhibo like this. He could tell that Zhuo Zhibo was trying to probe his relationship with Gu Yanring.

Li Qingshan directly stated that they had only met once, but it only made Zhuo Zhibo even more doubtful; this was Li Qingshan’s intention. Clever people would definitely overthink, and he welcomed Zhuo Zhibo to continue doubting like this. He knew just how quickly his strength grew. Once Zhuo Zhibo reached the bottom of this, just how much more powerful would he have become?

Diao Fei was extremely jealous of the treatment Li Qingshan received. Zhuo Zhibo basically had not even cast a second glance at him. He had no idea about the twisted truth behind all of this.

Zhuo Zhibo cast a glance at Qian Rongzhi before returning to his seat. Qian Rongzhi became even more enthusiastic towards Li Qingshan, acting as if she wanted to mend her relationship with him. As a matter of fact, she did not even wait for the female attendants, personally filling up Li Qingshan’s cup with alcohol. She had drunk quite a lot herself, so she was utterly charming, causing quite a few Black Wolf guards to look over enviously. However, when they glanced at Zhuo Zhibo, they all looked away.

Li Qingshan did not hold back at all. He downed the alcohol as soon as it was poured, enjoying her treatment with indifference. His senses were so sharp such that he had realised a long time ago that Qian Rongzhi had some filthy ties with Zhuo Zhibo.

As it seemed, she had been busy during the three days he spent cultivating in seclusion. As expected, unspoken rules would be present everywhere. He only found her to be even more shameless. However, he could not care too much about other people’s matters. They could do whatever they wanted. The only thing he considered was whether these two hidden enemies would work together against him.

## **Chapter 120 - The Parlour of Clouds and Rain**

Although he had absolute confidence in his strength, he did not want to be an idiot with no brains and all brawn. He answered all of Qian Rongzhi’s attempts to probe him out with a bunch of lies.

The banquet ended, and everyone dispersed.

On the highest point of the mountain peak, within the Black Hawk commander’s special residence.

Zhuo Zhibo asked, "How did your investigations go? Just what relationship does this kid have with commander Gu?"

Qian Rongzhi sat on Zhuo Zhibo's leg as she ground her teeth. "He constantly went in circles, unwilling to tell the truth." Just as Li Qingshan had expected, Qian Rongzhi had already established a relationship with Zhuo Zhibo during the three days on the mountain.

Zhuo Zhibo said, "Then let's wait a little longer and see. I will get to the bottom of this. If he really is a person that she favors, you might as well forget about your revenge."

Qian Rongzhi suppressed her hatred and extended her index finger towards Zhuo Zhibo's face. She smiled charmingly. "My revenge is not significant at all. I have far too many siblings anyways. What matters is your face and your pride, great commander Zhuo, which you only have one of. You've seen it all today with the kid's attitude towards you."

Zhuo Zhibo said, "If she really does stand behind him, it doesn't matter even if he drags all of my pride through the mud. However, if that's not the case, hmp, hmp!" He smacked Qian Rongzhi's bottom. "You don't need to urge me on. Even if he is favoured by her, I have my ways of dealing with him. Even if he's a hero, I can reduce him to a piece of trash. Let's see whether anyone takes him seriously then."

Qian Rongzhi grumbled in a flirtatious manner and wriggled around in Zhou Zhibo's arms, which aroused him. However, he then asked out of curiosity, "Since you don't mind him killing your elder brother, why do you insist on vengeance?"

Qian Rongzhi said, "Because he looks down on me. Everyone who looks down on me will pay the price."

If Li Qingshan were present, he definitely would be dumbfounded. Not only was the result of his behaviour unlike the legends, making him steal the heart of a beauty, but it had even led to deep hatred. As it seemed, legends were only legends.

Zhuo Zhibo gazed at Qian Rongzhi deeply. He did not judge her. With how old he was, he had played around with many women before, but there were very few female Qi Practitioners. Even if he had, they would not necessarily be beautiful. As a result, Qian Rongzhi caught his attention at first glance. Qian Rongzhi also wanted to use the opportunity to elevate her position, so they were drawn together naturally. Their relationship developed into a sexual one as time went on. His body was currently declining, so it was no longer possible for him to make any more progress with practising qi. Enjoying himself was his greatest objective.

Qian Rongzhi said, "I heard that Body Practitioners are all relatively stronger." With that, she set off Zhuo Zhibo's bestial nature, and he threw himself on her. "I'll have you taste my strength today." Qian Rongzhi giggled as they went at it in the room.

Li Qingshan was currently submerged in a sea of books. The library of the Hawkwolf Guard was filled with various martial arts and secret manuals that they could freely view. It covered everything, whether it be fist styles, kicking styles, blade styles, or sword styles. Many of them could lead to a battle if they were tossed into the jianghu, yet they were like garbage here. They were placed around carelessly, with only an old man guarding it.

However, Li Qingshan failed to find any cultivation methods for Qi Practitioners. Just when he wanted to climb up the stairs, the old man stopped him. "Ten points of contribution for two hours. Credit is not taken."

Li Qingshan could only give up on that. However, just these martial arts manuals had inspired him quite a lot. He stayed there for two hours before becoming afraid that Xiao An would worry about him. As such, he returned to his residence.

Afterwards, he continued his rather boring cycle of cultivating, eating pills, and practising qi.

However, just when dusk had fallen, Ge Jian knocked on Li Qingshan's door and said in a mysterious manner, "I'll take you to a good place." He even purposefully told him to change his clothes and leave his blade behind.

Don't tell me they're trying to mess with me? That was what Li Qingshan thought, but he agreed readily. They would come sooner or later. He just needed to remain vigilant. At most, he could slaughter them all. He made Ge Jian wait for a bit as he returned to his room and brought Xiao An with him.

Arriving below the archway, he discovered that Diao Fei had already been waiting there.

Li Qingshan asked curiously, "Where are we going?" There was no need for them to kill Diao Fei as well, right?

Diao Fei said, "Brother Ge said he wanted to take us on a stroll so that we can see Jiaping city at night. Speaking of which, why don't we bring along Qian Rongzhi as well?"

"A place like that isn't suited for women." Ge Jian let out a smile that all men could understand.

Li Qingshan and Diao Fei glanced at each other. Neither of them said anything. It was difficult to turn down something like this in the first place, not to mention that it was good will from a fellow colleague. Li Qingshan personally believed he was a 'man who had dined with beautiful women' before, so he did not mind it too much.

Ge Jian could not help but smile when he saw their reactions. He thought about Zhuo Zhibo's orders again, to take Li Qingshan out for fun regardless of the cost. Make him play to his heart's content, the more the better; it was best if he would toss aside cultivation or practising qi altogether.

Li Qingshan had no idea that Zhuo Zhibo had already moved against him. There was no need for any violence at all to destroy a person through other ways. Many a times, sugar-coated bullets were even more terrifying than torture or beatings. Luxury and indulgence could easily wear away a person's willpower, making them descend into their most basic joys.

Zhuo Zhibo believed that Li Qingshan was just a bumpkin from the mountains, so how was it possible for him to endure such temptation? Even if Li Qingshan had truly been favoured by Gu Yanying, it was not like it was Zhuo Zhibo's fault at all. The only person that could be blamed would be Li Qingshan for being useless. This was a vicious scheme he had come up with through his great grasp over human nature. It was utterly silent, but it was devastating.

Jiaping city was illuminated completely. Even though it was night, lanterns blazed brightly, making it drastically different from Qingyang city. It reminded Li Qingshan of the large cities from his former life

again. Under Ge Jian's eager guidance, the three of them entered the well-lit place, entering the most dazzling and busiest area.

The Parlour of Clouds and Rain.

This did not seem like the name of a brothel, but not only was it a brothel, but it was even the largest, most luxurious brothel within a range of several hundred meters.

From a certain perspective, this was the grandest structure Li Qingshan had seen so far in his time in this world. The pagoda-shaped building had a total of seven storeys, and the lantern light seemed to set the entire place ablaze.

Large numbers of people moved in and out of its huge entrance decorated with lanterns. It was even busier than the markets.

Before they had even entered, a steamy, exotic fragrance surged over. Li Qingshan shrugged. "It's just a brothel." Although it was quite extravagant, it still paled in comparison to the skyscrapers and neon lights of his former life.

Ge Jian said mysteriously, "You'll know once you go in. This isn't an ordinary brothel."

Before the three of them had even entered, a person came out. He had been tossed from the third floor, hitting the ground like a sack of potatoes.

A homicide case? Li Qingshan shivered inside. In a certain sense, the Hawkwolf Guard were the police of this world. He had never thought he would have a case as soon as he officially took his position. However, the passers-by in the surroundings all hurried off with their own matters after being surprised in the beginning, acting as if nothing had happened at all.

As for the person on the ground, he actually stood up with a groan and cursed aloud while rubbing his waist. Even louder curses replied to him from the parlour, "What gang leader or branch leader? If you don't have money, you'd better get out of here! If you're not going to leave, we'll cripple your martial arts and keep you around as a eunuch!"

The man tossed out from the third storey was actually a first-rate master, which was why he was uninjured. However, just how powerful was the person who managed to casually throw out a first-rate master?

That seemed to have shut the man up. He cursed beneath his breath a little more before joining the flow of people as if nothing had happened at all.

Ge Jian said, "Here, even the Hawkwolf Guard has to pay. It's best if we don't make any trouble."

Li Qingshan said, "They're just a brothel, so how can they be so haughty?"

Diao Fei said, "The Sect of Clouds and Rain is renowned throughout the Clear River prefecture. They're skilled in dual cultivation, and they've established parlours of Clouds and Rain in various large cities. This is only one of them, though it is my first time."

Ge Jian smiled. "It looks like Diao Fei is the one with knowledge. Qingshan, you know what dual cultivation is, right?"

“Isn’t it just that?” Li Qingshan truly felt like his horizons had been broadened. Sure, there were violent organisations and government systems composed of Qi Practitioners, but there were actually even brothels run by Qi Practitioners. He could not help but let his opinion of Qi Practitioners crumble slightly.

Ge Jian said, “Dual cultivation is just like ingesting pills and herbs. They’re both ancient daoist methods, focusing on the unity of yin and yang. However, you’re right as well. It’s that, also known as sexual practices. Think about it. The women raised by a sect that specially studies sexual practices...”

Li Qingshan grinned. “Don’t tell me they’re harvesting yang to nurture their yin!” It was no wonder that Zhuo Zhibo wanted him to go out on the top of a woman. It would be far too hilarious.

Ge Jian laughed. “How could that be? If that’s really the case, why would there still be so many people? Anyways, you’ll know once you try it.”

Li Qingshan shook his head. “I think we should forget about it.” He did not feel like this was a good place.

Diao Fei wanted to leave as well. He would not have minded if it were a regular brothel. He had heard about many rumors regarding the Parlour of Clouds and Rain before. No matter when, pursuing pleasure would never benefit a Qi Practitioner’s cultivation.

As a result, Ge Jian flapped his gums and rambled, “It’s so tiring to practise qi, so shouldn’t we reward ourselves?” “Only a combination of work and play will benefit cultivation. It doesn’t matter if it’s just once or twice.” “You’re men, so stop being so indecisive. Just enjoy yourselves. Are you supposed to be afraid of women as men?”

He diligently played the most common role in the world, a vile, silver tongued person with ill intentions. A vicious friend was even more terrifying than an impressive enemy.

Under his persuasions and urging, he basically dragged the two of them into the brothel. A hubbub of noise erupted in their ears. Many men and women embraced one another with ruffled clothing, forming a scene of ecstasy. In such a bizarre atmosphere, no one cared anymore, releasing their desires. It was just like the scenes of indulgences in the legends, such that even Li Qingshan became rather dumbfounded despite being a modern transmigrator.

“Master Ge, you’ve made the girls wait quite a bit. You’ve booked the best room. Please go upstairs!” A plump woman covered in makeup received them. She saw Li Qingshan and Diao Fei. “Hmm? Little brothers, you seem unfamiliar.”

Li Qingshan saw true qi flow through the lady. She was actually a Qi Practitioner.

Ge Jian introduced the two of them, and the procuress said, “So you’re the young talents the Hawkwolf Guard has recently recruited. I hope you’ll take good care of this elder sister’s business in the future.” She extended her hand and touched Li Qingshan’s chest. “Oh? You’re quite able-bodied! You must be a Body Practitioner!” Her gaze towards Li Qingshan made it seem like she basically wanted to swallow him whole.