

Chapter 271 - A Complete Victory

The giant lumberman refused to appear weak. He caught the huge cauldron with one hand as easily as catching a toy. He even weighed it in his hand to show off his great strength. After that, he tossed it back to Li Qingshan.

Hua Chengzan warned, "Be careful!" The cauldron enlarged in the air.

Li Qingshan caught it, and sure enough, it was much heavier, but he did not care. He tossed it back to the giant lumberman, and it expanded in the air once again.

The cauldron was tossed between the two of them, growing in size. Even Li Qingshan had to catch it with both arms now. Many Qi Practitioners were dumbfounded by this. Was he still human with this kind of strength?

Even if they used various techniques or talismans like the Divine Strength talismans, they still would not have been able to lift it up so easily.

Only Body Practitioners could understand what was going on, and they showed admiration. They had never thought this young man would be so impressive as a Body Practitioner that he could actually challenge a giant lumberman to a match of physical strength.

Qiu Haitang frowned slightly. Just where did this kid come from? Why was he so strong as a Body Practitioner?

Body Practitioners could not be made with just a secret manual or two and hiding and training deep in the mountains. Their demand for pills would only exceed Qi Practitioners.

She was actually no longer so confident in this match of physical strength that she originally thought to be predetermined.

The Qi Practitioners in the surroundings all held their breaths and watched nervously as the huge cauldron flew back and forth. The giant lumberman had already lost a match. If he lost another, then they had essentially thrown their spiritual stones down a drain.

The giant lumberman caught the huge cauldron again. His face was flushed, his eyes were bloodshot, and he was drenched in sweat. He had completely sobered up now. The cauldron had already grown to three times its size, weighing heavily on his shoulder. He heaved for breath. Even he began to find this rather cumbersome.

On the other hand, Li Qingshan had already taken off his upper garment. His bronze body did not have any excess flab, but it was unlike the giant lumber's bulging muscles. Instead, he was perfectly streamline, like he was forged from metal. If the strength he had gained from the ox demon was a piece of ironstone, then the tiger demon had forged the ironstone into a steel blade.

He did not perspire at all. It did not seem arduous to him at all. He might not have been greater than the giant lumberman in terms of pure strength, but there were no Body Practitioners that could rival his endurance and tenacity.

The outcome of the gamble was near.

The giant lumberman made up his mind, roared out, and exerted his full strength, throwing out the huge cauldron.

The huge cauldron whistled towards Li Qingshan like a mountain.

“Dodge it!” Han Qiongzhi cried out.

Hua Chengzan’s expression changed slightly, but the cauldron still swelled in size. If he did not do that, the match would be unfair. All he could do now was let Li Qingshan give up on this match.

“If the cauldron touches the ground, then it’s a loss. You’d better catch it well, fellow Li.” Qiu Haitang smiled charmingly. She could tell the two of them had already reached their limits. If Li Qingshan did not catch it, it would be his loss, but if he tried to catch it, it would be even better. Even if he survived, he would be heavily injured, which would only guarantee his defeat in the third match.

Li Qingshan ignored these people. His eyes narrowed, his true qi sunk in his dantian, and he extended both hands towards the whistling cauldron.

The cauldron slammed into Li Qingshan, leading to a series of cries in the surroundings.

Li Qingshan could sense the tremendous force in the cauldron. If he could transform, this would have been nothing, but it was rather tough on him in human form. However, he gritted his teeth, and the sea of qi in his dantian began to circulate, gushing out with strands of true qi that flowed through his entire body. It turned into a softening force to nullify the force in the incoming cauldron.

Li Qingshan staggered back over a dozen steps with the cauldron, dragging out two long tracks in the ground. He kicked down with his right foot and suddenly came to a halt. There was a crack, and the sole of his foot sank into the floor.

Li Qingshan held the cauldron firmly and let out a toothy grin. He called out, “Back to you!” He suddenly took a step forward, unleashing all of his strength to twist his body, throwing out the cauldron.

The cauldron directly flew out with even greater force than when it first arrived. The giant lumberman was frightened. He glanced at Qiu Haitang, let out a furious roar, and extended his arms. He was prepared to die.

The moment his hands touched the cauldron, he knew that he was unable to stop this force. He knew his body was about to be crushed, so he closed his eyes as he waited for death.

The gust of wind slammed into his face, but he felt nothing. He opened his eyes and saw how the cauldron had suddenly stopped before him, only inches away.

The giant lumberman blinked his eyes, as if he was wondering what was going on. He lowered his head and saw a young man in black. He had caught the cauldron.

The young man in black turned around, revealing a handsome face with straight, slanted eyebrows and twinkling eyes. However, his face seemed like it was forged from metal before being sealed in ice, radiating with coldness.

He said coldly, "It ends here. You've already lost."

The giant lumberman became dejected, but he glanced at the young man in black gratefully. If it were not for him, he might have been dead already.

The young man in black tossed the cauldron back at Hua Chengzan. The cauldron flew into Hua Chengzan's hand, having already returned to the size of a palm. With a spurt of true qi, it was sent into the hundred treasures pouch. Hua Chengzan said to the young man in black who had suddenly appeared, "Tieyi, what brings you here?"

Han Qiongzhi waved at him. "Yo, li'l bro!"

The young man in black did not seem to see them. He turned around and stared straight at Li Qingshan, saying coldly, "Impressive skills as a Body Practitioner."

"Right back at you!" Li Qingshan saw it all unfold extremely clearly. The young man in black had only darted out from the side after he had thrown the cauldron. He was like an agile panther, arriving in the blink of an eye and catching the cauldron. His body was so powerful that even Li Qingshan was rather surprised. Was he a legendary Body Practitioner?

When the young man in black received the cauldron, he did not catch it forcefully. Instead, he twisted the cauldron slightly, catching it cleverly and demonstrating his extremely great martial arts.

As if he was already used to the young man in black's coldness, Hua Chengzan introduced, "The primary disciple of the school of the Military, Han Tieyi. Those who say I'm the greatest below Foundation Establishment must have never met him."

Li Qingshan nodded, agreeing with Hua Chengzan's words. Not only did Han Tieyi have a powerful body, but he was also at the tenth layer as a Qi Practitioner. He practised both qi and the body. He would probably struggle to find any even opponents among Qi Practitioners. Li Qingshan clasped his hands. "Li Qingshan!"

Han Tieyi ignored him. He turned around and faced Qiu Haitang, who had her brows furrowed. "How many spiritual stones for this otherfolk? I'll buy him!"

Hua Chengzan sighed gently. "Haitang, you've lost."

Qiu Haitang clenched her fist for a while before loosening it again, as if she refused to accept this outcome. In the end, she sighed. "So be it. Li Qingshan, the Sect of Clouds and Rain cleans its slate with you. You best not appear before me again either."

If she insisted that Han Tieyi had interfered with the match, she could make it to the third round, but she was not an unreasonable, pestering woman. And, with Li Qingshan's performance earlier, it would be difficult for her to emerge victorious even if she made it to the third match. Instead of that, she might as well just admit defeat now. However, the Virtue Accumulation pill truly did pain her. She gritted her teeth in hatred for Li Qingshan.

Li Qingshan smiled. "Let's hope that comes true!" With several thousand additional spiritual stones to his name and the Virtue Accumulation pill in hand, he could probably go knock on that door that led to

the Daemon General realm now! As for whether he would appear before her again, that would not be for her to decide anymore.

“Nice one, kid. Nicely done!” Han Qiongzi came over and slapped Li Qingshan’s shoulder.

The contempt in the eyes of the legalist disciples completely vanished. Just from how his strength of lifting the cauldron alone, not a lot among them could match him, and it was even rarer for him to earn a word of praise from Han Tiewi. After all, that fellow was cold to the bones. No wonder Hua Chengzan valued him so much.

Even Wu Gen could not help but admit that this countryside kid was extraordinary. He glanced at Qian Rongzhi with mixed emotion and only saw her smiling. She was not particularly overjoyed at all. Her demeanour only made him even more interested in her.

With some delighted, others would obviously be concerned. With Qiu Haitang’s forfeit, the entire building was thrown into an uproar.

They had actually lost a bet that they were certain they would win, and they had lost it in such an absolute fashion. There was not even the need for a third match.

“No, this is rigged! Refund the spiritual stones!” Someone called out.

That immediately led to a chain of similar responses. Everyone demanded for the Parlour of Clouds and Rain to refund the spiritual stones. There were quite a few Qi Practitioners who threw several hundred spiritual stones into the bet. To many Qi Practitioners, this was all that they had, and it had all evaporated in an instant, so how could they accept this?

“Does anyone doubt my oversight?” Hua Chengzan’s smiled vanished. He raised his head and looked around. Wherever his gaze passed by, the ruckus immediately settled down.

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“Brother Tian, we’ve lost.”

“Whatever. It’s just a thousand spiritual stones, right? It’s nothing at all.” The young man in white behaved like he did not care, but he bled inside. He had not brought a lot of spiritual stones with him this time to enter the Academy of the Hundred Schools. He had basically lost half of it all of a sudden. He muttered under his breath, “Li Qingshan.” before turning around and leaving furiously.

“How many spiritual stones?” Han Tiewi asked Qiu Haitang again. He was determined to purchase the otherfolk.

“Since you want him, how can I accept your spiritual stones, Tiewi? Just take him!” Qiu Haitang casually tossed out a deed.

The giant lumberman stared straight at the thin piece of paper. He was almost tempted to snatch it over, but even if he snatched it and destroyed it, it would be useless. He could not help but become dejected.

Hua Chengzan said, “Forget about my winnings. Just treat it as the payment for the otherfolk.”

Li Qingshan thought, Brother Hua sure is extravagant. A few thousand spiritual stones doesn't even mean anything to him. Li Qingshan also saw how close he was with Han Tiewi.

Qiu Haitang shot Hua Chengzan a vicious glance. "If I said I'm giving him to Tiewi, then I'm giving it to Tiewi. As for your winnings, I wouldn't give it to you even if you want it."

Han Tiewi caught the deed. He remained as cold as ever, and he did not thank Hua Chengzan and Qiu Haitang either. With just a wave of his hand, the deed was immediately reduced to powder.

He said to the giant lumberman, "You're free now. Come to the Academy of the Hundred Schools the day after tomorrow and join my school of the Military." He said it like it was an order, cold and leaving no room for negotiation.

He glanced at Li Qingshan again and then at Hua Chengzan, but he said nothing. He strode away.

Hua Chengzan rubbed his nose and smiled bitterly. "He has acknowledged me a little. At least he hasn't directly taken advantage of me."

You call that acknowledgement? Only then did Li Qingshan understand that it was not that Han Tiewi did not acknowledge him, but rather he was born with a stiff face and never acknowledged anyone. Li Qingshan then noticed that his strides and rhythm remained the same the entire time, without any variations at all. He was as precise and monotonous as a clock. Was this the demeanour of a military disciple?

The school of the Military might be a decent choice too.

Chapter 272 - Eccentric and Stubborn

The giant lumberman returned to his senses and growled at the figure with a strange voice, "I'll definitely be there!"

This was not just out of gratitude for having his life saved. Even with freedom, otherfolk in this world were truly restricted. Perhaps, he might be captured again and forced into slavery once more.

Han Tiewi's pace did not change at all, as if he had not heard him, or perhaps he was expecting this. He disappeared in the blink of an eye.

Han Qiongzhi muttered, "How eccentric!"

However, Li Qingshan felt silent admiration. Han Tiewi seemed cold and unreasonable when he handled matters, but he gave off the bearing of a great general. To be able to stand out above the millions in the Clear River prefecture and become the primary disciple of the school of the Military, he sure was extraordinary.

"That's just how he's like. Please don't mind him." Hua Chengzan passed the embroidered box to Li Qingshan, which the disciples of legalism all envied.

Many people had heard and seen this item before, but never had they eaten it. However, Li Qingshan sighed when he saw this pill that Xuanyue had once fed him.

The Virtue Accumulation pill that even Foundation Establishment cultivators treasured had been given to him by the handfuls by Xuanyue. They had been taken out as easily as how he took out Qi Gathering pills.

A while later, Qiu Haitang also ordered people to deliver the few thousand spiritual stones he had won.

The surrounding people grew even more envious. A few thousand spiritual stones was a tremendous sum to all Qi Practitioners.

Han Qiongzhi had won quite a lot too, and her gaze towards Li Qingshan became more and more gentle. She had completely forgotten about their tiny disagreement before. Seeing how Li Qingshan remained composed the entire time, she said, "I couldn't tell, but you're pretty rich."

If regular Qi Practitioners obtained a Virtue Accumulation pill and several thousand spiritual stones, they would definitely light up with joy. How could they treat such a tremendous sum with indifference or bet a thousand spiritual stones without batting an eye? Even the young masters and misses from clans would rarely be so generous. He even possessed extraordinary abilities as a Body Practitioner. He seemed to be shrouded in a mysterious haze.

When he praised the demeanour of others, others admired him too. Both Han Qiongzhi and Hua Chengzan, and even Qiu Haitang, stopped treating him as a regular sixth layer Qi Practitioner.

"Senior sister Han, don't tell me that you've taken a fancy to Qingshan?" Wu Gen said rather enviously. Among their group, Han Qiongzhi played the role of the eldest sister. She possessed extraordinary talent, she was bold and straightforward, and she was pretty too. Through her constant interactions with them, many people became interested in her. Wu Gen was one of them.

However, she was extremely haughty too. She never took regular men seriously. At most, she was just closer with Hua Chengzan. Whenever someone confessed to her, they would be shut up with a single sentence. "We'll see once your cultivation exceeds mine." Gradually, they all lost interest in her, only treating her as an elder sister. However, they still felt rather dissatisfied when they saw her taking a liking to another man.

The other legalist disciples chimed in, "Qingshan is so strong, so he must be extremely impressive in that aspect too. No wonder sister Han likes him."

Han Qiongzhi refused to accept this. She teased them by wrapping her arm around Li Qingshan's shoulder. "I think this kid is much stronger than you group of weaklings." She was not short, but she was still shorter than Li Qingshan. After wrapping her arm around him, she basically pressed most of her body against Li Qingshan. They really did seem a little like a couple.

She even counterattacked. "Rongzhi, don't you think so too?"

"Just as senior sister Han has said." Qian Rongzhi smiled. She had already realised that among the group, the last person she could afford to offend was not Hua Chengzan, but Han Qiongzhi.

Hua Chengzan was sharp-witted, but he still had his dignity as a man. He would never bicker, refute, or argue with a woman like her without good reason. Once Han Qiongzhi became carried away, she would actually be capable of doing anything just to get back at someone.

As for whether this would displease the men here, it was even less of a worry. Men respected and admired beautiful women that displeased them.

Wu Gen immediately felt intense pressure. Originally, he never treated Li Qingshan as a rival. Whether it was his appearance, background, or cultivation, Li Qingshan paled in comparison to him, while Li Qingshan's eloquence and knowledge went even more without saying. He was a just countryside kid with some talent and luck. Even if he had some ties to Qian Rongzhi, he would not worry.

But now, he no longer possessed that confidence.

Han Qiongzi laughed aloud. "I loathed you a little when I first saw you, but I do like you a little now." She patted Li Qingshan's shoulder. "Qingshan, once you enter the Academy of the Hundred Schools, cultivate well. If you catch up to me, I'll give you a chance, alright?"

It was not like she had not seen men before, so it was impossible for her to fall in love at first sight. At most, it was just some recognition and approval for Li Qingshan. Most of it was encouragement anyway. She did not believe that Li Qingshan could actually catch up to her cultivation.

Although only three layers separated the sixth and ninth layers, every single layer was a tough barrier from the sixth layer onwards. The amount of time required to break through was frequently calculated using years. Being able to open the eight extraordinary meridians within a decade was already quite fast. And, with her talent, she might have already become a Foundation Establishment cultivator then. There was basically no chance for him to catch up, so that was not what she was thinking about either.

In the cultivation world, even when love existed between a man and a woman, a difference in cultivation would form an untraversable chasm between them. Within the world of regular people, perhaps there were tales of young misses eloping with poor scholars, but it was impossible for female cultivators to settle on male cultivators at a lower cultivation level than them. This was not just because of their greater power. Just lifespan alone differed by over a century between Foundation Establishment cultivators and Qi Practitioners.

Li Qingshan grinned and stayed silent. Han Qiongzi's appearance and figure went without saying, but her personality was not something that he could manage. Just what were unruly girlfriends? He had already seen far too many in his former life, so he wanted to change up his tastes after transmigrating this time.

Han Qiongzi immediately became irate. Her eyebrows rose in anger. "What, you think I'm not worthy of you?"

Wu Gen said, "I think he's just self-conscious!" The other disciples of legalism echoed him. Wu Gen was not the only envious one.

Li Qingshan glanced past them. He knew he had already offended these people slightly with everything that happened today. If he wanted to get along and build good relationships with them in the future, he needed to be modest and discreet.

Li Qingshan extended his arm and tugged Han Qiongzi into his arms. He lowered his head and smiled. "Qiongzi, please wait a little for me." Her mellow, supple chest pressed against his own. The only thing that separated them was a thin, spring dress. It was quite the feeling.

If others were willing to get along with him, then he was willing to get along with them. If others were reluctant to get along with him, then they could fuck off. He had not come to the Academy of the Hundred Schools to be discreet, nor was he here to please anyone.

Hua Chengzan shook his head. Now that was another stubborn one. Let alone Han Qiongzhi, even when Li Qingshan met her for the first time in the past, he had ogled her directly. Though, what he had in his arms right now was a female tiger. He was in constant danger of being mauled.

The disciples of legalism all widened their eyes. They never thought Li Qingshan would actually be bold enough to be frivolous with Han Qiongzhi. They all sneered inside. This guy is in for some bad luck.

Han Qiongzhi never acted too seriously. She did not pay too much attention to the boundaries between men and women. However, if any men believed they could take advantage of her because of this, bold enough to fool around with her, then they would taste the power of a ninth layer Qi Practitioner.

Han Qiongzhi already knew that he was bold, but she was still surprised when he behaved boldly. She raised her head furiously, about to lose her temper, but there was not the slightest hesitation or doubt in the clear eyes that met her, nor was there any frivolousness or teasing. There was only absolute confidence. Her anger immediately collapsed on itself.

She could not help but shift her gaze. Sniffing the odour he gave off that had mixed with the scent of alcohol, she became flushed, as if she had drunk alcohol. As she listened to his powerful, sturdy heartbeat, her heartbeat also sped up slightly for some reason.

The disciples of legalism all gasped. If they wore glasses, then their glasses would have fallen off in shock. They had never seen Han Qiongzhi, who was as fierce as a tiger, behave like this. Just what was going on today with this kid?

Han Qiongzhi unleashed her true qi and broke free from his embrace. She had already recovered. She smiled. "Alright. Now that's more like a man."

However, everyone saw her gaze flicker. She was rather awkward. Han Qiongzhi growled, "What're you looking at?"

"It's quite late. Let's all disperse!" Hua Chengzan spoke to help Han Qiongzhi out of the situation, but he never expected Han Qiongzhi to behave like that either. Suddenly, he remembered that Li Qingshan's nickname was called whatever tiger or something. The female tiger had truly met the male tiger this time.

Now, most of the Qi Practitioners gathered around there had dispersed. Regardless of their fury or resentment, they all remembered one name, Li Qingshan.

Just as the giant lumberman wondered where he would be staying, he heard Hua Chengzan ask, "What's your name?"

His gentleness warmed the giant lumberman's heart. He knew that this was his saviour friend, so he answered, "Mu Kui."

“Mu Kui, you should come with me too. I’ll send you to the Academy of the Hundred Schools in two days’ time.” Since he was someone that Han Tieyi valued, he had to take care of him a little on Han Tieyi’s behalf. Who knew what trouble could arise from an otherfolk wandering through the streets.

In the eyes of regular people, otherfolk were strange, violent creatures. As a matter of fact, you could say that cultivators basically had the same impression of them too. It was quite ironic, but compared to daemons that came in all shapes and sizes, most people feared and detested these humanoid “monsters” more.

Mu Kui nodded. He tailed very far behind everyone, maintaining a safe distance from Li Qingshan in particular. The cauldron that Li Qingshan had thrown out had almost cost him his life.

Wu Gen glanced backwards in some disgust. “Brother Hua, are we really going to bring him with us? Just what is brother Han thinking? No matter how talented otherfolk are, they’re still otherfolk. They have feuds against us as a race. Perhaps he might even backstab us in the future.”

Hua Chengzan replied noncommittally, “He has his own thoughts. Giant Lumberfolk tend to be gentle. They dislike fighting and killing. In the past when we waged war against the otherfolk, it was primarily with the Fire Devouring folk and the Featherfolk. Moreover, the Giant Lumberfolk are divided into many ethnic groups...”

He casually explained the habits and lifestyles of Giant Lumberfolk like he was very familiar with it, demonstrating his wide knowledge; this led to a series of praise from the disciples of legalism.

As Mu Kui listened to Hua Chengzan talk about his home in the deep mountains of the distant west, he became sad, almost shedding some tears.

Suddenly, he felt a figure approach him. Raising his head, he saw it was Li Qingshan, so he could not help but feel startled. He raised his vigilance, but what met him was an extremely resplendent smile.

Chapter 273 - Ninety Percent, A Hundred Percent

After embracing Han Qiongzhi, Li Qingshan knew that he could no longer get along with these elite disciples of legalism, so he did not stick with them either. He purposefully fell behind them. He was very interested in the giant lumberman, but he could not afford to have any distracting thoughts back then during the matches.

Now that the gamble was over, he could no longer hold back his curiosity after hearing Hua Chengzan’s introduction. There were actually such strange beings in the world? And there was more than just one, like those Fire Devouring folk or Featherfolk? What were they like?

Travelling to all corners of the world and taking in all the scenery that the universe had to offer was a part of his oath.

“Are all your clansmen surnamed Mu?”

Mu Kui nodded stiffly.

“Where’s your homeland?”

Mu Kui kept his mouth shut. He became extremely cautious. Was he even planning to target his clansmen?

“Fine then, I’ll change the question. Are there other otherfolk in your homeland?”

It was even less likely for Mu Kui to answer him now.

Li Qingshan suddenly extended his hand. Mu Kui almost struck him instinctively, but Li Qingshan only knocked against his wood-like skin. “So it isn’t wood.”

“Of course it isn’t!” Mu Kui said in a strange tone. He was left at quite a loss as to how to respond. The man who had been as vicious as a tiger earlier was now like a curious child, without any ill will or prejudice.

Li Qingshan said, “I’m definitely going to check out your homeland one day, whether you agree or not.” Just the thought of a group of towering Giant Lumberfolk was extremely interesting.

Mu Kui said, “If you don’t harbour any ill intentions, then I can take you there.” Though, just how far away was his home?

At this moment, Qiu Haitang suddenly appeared in front of Li Qingshan. Both Li Qingshan and Mu Kui were startled, almost lashing out instinctively. Before this common enemy, any ill will between them naturally resolved itself.

Hua Chengzan said, “Haitang!”

Li Qingshan said, “Looks like it hasn’t come true. I didn’t want to meet you again, yet here we are.”

Qiu Haitang ignored him. She looked at Xiao An again. “If this child follows you, she’ll just waste her fantastic talent all for nothing. As long as you agree, the resources of the Sect of Clouds and Rain will all go to her, and I can promise the position of future sect master too.”

Everyone was taken aback. This promise held far too much weight. Although Qiu Haitang had lost a match due to her misjudgement today, the Sect of Clouds and Rain was still a top sect within the Clear River prefecture. While the resources they possessed were not as much as the larger schools, such as the school of Confucianism and the school of Legalism, but their resources did surpass smaller schools like the school of Music and the school of Medicine.

Most importantly, the resources of the academy were not freely available to the disciples. The disciples needed to complete various missions or even contend against one another, and in the end, it would still be split among many people.

Even the resources that Hua Chengzan regularly received from the school of Legalism could not rival this promise of the Sect of Cloud and Rain. This was basically a sect pouring everything they had into a single person. All Qi Practitioners would be tempted by this.

Hua Chengzan was surprised too. Was the Aspect of Heavenly Fragrance and Beauty really that important to the Sect of Clouds and Rain?

He reevaluated Xiao An again. He had to admit that she was an extremely pretty child, the type where he could tell possessed the talent for practising qi with a single glance. However, no one could be certain just how great her talent was. He could only know after she was tested.

And to be honest, he did not like this child very much, as she did not seem like a child at all. Not only did she lack the liveliness and energy of a child her age, but the way she looked at people was chilling at times too.

Li Qingshan only smiled and rubbed Xiao An's head before this great temptation. "I know her talents better than you. I can give her ten times, a hundred times the resources that you can provide to her."

Even Hua Chengzan felt like he was boasting with that one. How could he rival a sect that had stood for centuries or millenniums alone? Little did he know that the various resources on Li Qingshan right now were already equivalent to a small sect. However, those were not the resources that Xiao An needed.

"And, even if she wastes her talent, it's better than being a..." He stopped talking. There was not a single woman who would want to hear his upcoming opinion. He did not want to provoke a Foundation Establishment cultivator with that either.

Qiu Haitang fumed, and she no longer bothered with what she was about to say next. She glanced at Hua Chengzan before storming off. "You'd better talk once you have an inkling about what you're talking about!"

Li Qingshan was slightly surprised. Qiu Haitang did not seem like someone who just had their soft spot touched. Instead, she seemed like she had been wrongly accused.

Han Qiongzhi asked, "Do you really not know, or are you acting like you don't know?"

Leaving the Parlour of Clouds and Rain, everyone clasped their hands and bid farewell, dispersing individually.

Li Qingshan was just about to return to the Hawkwolf Guard to stay for the night, but he was stopped by Hua Chengzan. "It'll be quite inconvenient for you to stay there. Come to the estate with me. There are some things I want to tell you."

"Alright." Li Qingshan agreed immediately. He was a person who drew a clear line between his debts of kindnesses and grievances. The only reason why he could stand up to Qiu Haitang today, even winning a Virtue Accumulation pill and several thousand spiritual stones, as well as a promise for no further trouble, was all because of Hua Chengzan's assistance.

They left behind the lantern-lit Parlour of Clouds and Rain and stepped into the dark streets. The huge structures of strange shapes to the two sides were like towering beasts. The few remaining lanterns were like the open eyes of these beasts.

Wu Gen and Qian Rongzhi traveled together. When they separated with everyone outside the Parlour of Clouds and Rain, Wu Gen seemed extremely confident in the mischievous eyes of his junior and senior brothers. He had always been a confident person, whether it came to cultivation or women.

He possessed what it took to back up this confidence. With his talent and identity, he had already associated himself with countless women given how old he was now. Originally, he believed that she would be a piece of cake too.

But now that the two of them were alone, his confidence had suddenly evaporated. He only found her contemplating face right now even more difficult to grasp.

There were countless questions in his head. What was her relationship with Li Qingshan? Why did Qiu Haitang know her? However, when the words reached his mouth, he became afraid to ask. His mind had basically returned to that of a teenager who had fallen in love for the first time.

Qian Rongzhi suddenly stopped and smiled at him, which made his heart tremor. However, he heard her say, "I have something to do, so you should go back first, senior brother Wu!" Before he could respond, she had already turned around and left.

If any other woman treated him like that, he would definitely burst out with curses. However, he just stood where he was in a daze, actually unable to say anything. He just watched as she vanished into the darkness.

Qian Rongzhi raised her head. The lantern-lit Parlour of Clouds and Rain was reflected in her eyes. She had made up her mind. She had a ninety percent confidence in this gamble.

"You're bold enough to return?" Qiu Haitang's voice suddenly rang out from beside her ear.

Qian Rongzhi smiled. A hundred percent.

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Under the guide of the voice, she advanced along the twisting and turning path. She did not run into anyone along the way. In the end, she arrived before a vermillion door, which she knocked on gently.

"Come in." Qiu Haitang's voice rang out from inside. The door opened automatically. There were a series of veils in the room, which drifted in the night wind. It seemed elusive and beautiful. Through the numerous veils was an enchanting figure, laying on a bed.

The door slammed shut. Qian Rongzhi glanced backwards before walking towards the veils.

Suddenly, the veils seemed to spring alive, wrapping around her like snakes.

She did not resist. Finally, she saw the figure behind the veils, but all she saw were a pair of mesmerising eyes. She was immediately thrown into a trance.

Qiu Haitang said to the dazed Qian Rongzhi, "Now, I'll ask you a question, and you'll give me the answer."

"Yes," Qian Rongzhi said numbly.

"Where did your Method of Clouds and Rain come from?"

"Wei Yingjie."

“Just as I had expected. If it weren’t for the Vitality Devouring technique, how could you have cultivated so quickly with your talent?” Qiu Haitang snorted gently. She had sensed the changes with Qian Rongzhi right from the beginning.

However, her mind was preoccupied by Xiao An and her Aspect of Heavenly Fragrance and Beauty back then. She even confronted Li Qingshan for the sake of Xiao An. As a result, she did not lose her temper on the spot. Dealing with just Qian Rongzhi alone was easy anyway.

She was right.

“Who killed Wei Yingjie?”

“I did.”

Qiu Haitang’s face sank, “No one knows you’re here, right?”

“No one.”

“Then you can go die!” Her slender finger reached towards the top of Qian Rongzhi’s head viciously.

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“Vice sect master Wei, you’re returned.” A female disciple bowed carefully in the Parlour of Clouds and Rain. Rarely had she ever seen the vice sect master with such a twisted expression.

Fortunately, Wei Zhongyuan completely ignored her and rushed past her. She sighed in relief. However, in the blink of an eye, Wei Zhongyuan appeared before her once again. He grabbed her shoulder.

“Where’s sect master Qiu?”

Receiving the answer to the question, Wei Zhongyuan tossed her aside and went to find Qiu Haitang alone.

When Wei Zhongyuan lost track of Li Qingshan in Jiaping city and had flown into a rage, a trusted disciple of his contacted him through a high level Communication talisman. He told him, “Li Qingshan has come.”

He rushed back to Clear River city through the night. As soon as he returned to the Parlour of Clouds and Rain, he learned everything that had happened from his disciple. Not only had Li Qingshan appeared in the Parlour of Clouds and Rain, but he had even won a Virtue Accumulation pill and several thousand spiritual stones in a haughty manner. How could he accept this? He immediately flew into a rage.

The Sect of Parlour and Clouds had never been walked over by others like this, nor had he, Wei Zhongyuan, ever been toyed with like this either!

He basically barged into where Qiu Haitang cultivated. Only when he met Qiu Haitang’s gaze of displeasure did he suddenly recall his identity. He bowed, “Greetings, sect master. If I’ve been rude. I hope that the sect master can forgive me.”

Although sect master and vice sect master only differed by a single word, they were worlds apart. Only a single layer separated Foundation Establishment and the tenth layer, but it was a chasm.

“It’s so late already. What brought you here?” Qiu Haitang asked coldly.

Wei Zhongyuan fumed, "Li Qingshan behaved so brazenly, and he is definitely connected to Yingjie's death. He's a sworn enemy of our Sect of Clouds and Rain. Are you really going to let him go because of that Hua person, sect master?"

Qiu Haitang said, "The Hua person you speak of is a Scarlet Wolf commander. We've already irritated him when I let you go ahead with that last time. I've gambled on this and lost, so don't say anything more. I'm weary."

Wei Zhongyuan's thoughts immediately coldened. He gritted his teeth. "If that's the case, then I'll show myself out first." In the end, he studied Qiu Haitang viciously. His gaze revealed lust and greed. Once I reach Foundation Establishment, I'll show you what's what. As for Li Qingshan, he would never spare him.

After Wei Zhongyuan's departure, a figure emerged from the wall screen. It was Qian Rongzhi. She bowed towards Qiu Haitang gracefully. "Vice sect master Wei's mind is in disorder due to the pain of losing his son. It'll be even more difficult for him to overcome that barrier, master."

Chapter 274 - Seed of Suggestion

Qiu Haitang's finger paused. Her long nail had already made contact with Qian Rongzhi's skin. All she needed was another moment, and she would have pierced Qian Rongzhi's brain.

Qian Rongzhi remained in a trance, as if she could not feel the tightening veils around her.

Qiu Haitang smiled in a self-deprecating manner. Her two miscalculations today actually made her doubt her arts of mesmerisation slightly, but how could a mere sixth layer Qi Practitioner resist her mesmerisation?

Then she asked, "And how did the two grannies of the East and West Gates die?"

Qian Rongzhi answered.

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A while later, Qiu Haitang gained a rough understanding about everything. She stared straight into Qian Rongzhi's eyes. "From today onwards, you will be my direct disciple. You must show absolute loyalty to me. You cannot deceive me."

Her eyes sparkled, and the words turned into an unshakeable seed of suggestion, planted deeply in Qian Rongzhi's heart. Afterwards, she sighed gently and became rather exhausted.

The veils receded, and Qian Rongzhi fell to the ground. Like she had woken up from a dream, she roused from her trance and shook her head. When she saw Qiu Haitang, she called out, "Master!" Afterwards, she covered her mouth in complete surprise. Not only had she been expelled from the Sect of Clouds and Rain already, but even if she was still a part of the sect, she could only call her sect master.

The arts of mesmerisation might have been nothing to people with special cultivation methods and abilities like Li Qingshan and Xiao An, but once its true effects demonstrated itself, it was terrifyingly powerful.

Mohists were only able to control puppets, while corpse refiners were only able to control dead corpses. However, those that cultivated the arts of mesmerisation could control living people. As a technique that placed great emphasis on talent, the fact that it had been passed down through the ages without becoming lost only demonstrated how impressive it was.

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Qiu Haitang said, "Should I thank you?"

Qian Rongzhi said, "I can never accept that as your disciple. I only got lucky."

"Then what about the two grannies of the East and West Gates? Did you get lucky too?" Qiu Haitang suddenly asked. She was overly suspicious, so she asked her questions from before again. Qian Rongzhi should not have had any memories from when she was mesmerised.

Qian Rongzhi frowned. "Master, you know that Wei Yingjie is completely useless, so how can he be compared to the two grannies? Only tenth layer Qi Practitioners or Foundation Establishment cultivators can kill the two grannies. In my opinion, vice sect master Wei is suspicious."

"That's not something you should say," Qiu Haitang said sternly, but the corner of her lips curled into a smile. Her behaviour was no different from before.

She looked at Qian Rongzhi from above, No matter how heartless and cruel you are, no matter how many schemes you have, it's all useless before absolute strength. From today onwards, your talent for scheming will all be mine.

Qian Rongzhi said fearfully, "Yes, master."

However, she sneered inside, Show absolute loyalty to you? Cannot deceive you? I think Hua Chengzan is the one you want to say these wishful words to the most!

Everything went according to plan.

Everyone was accustomed to using what they were best at, such as how disciples of the Sword Collection palace had to use swords and how disciples of the Burial Mound mountain had to use zombies. Qiu Haitang was no different. She had to use her technique of mesmerisation.

Sure enough, sect master Qiu was still more accustomed to directly controlling her opponent's minds compared to scheming and using her tongue.

Back when Qiu Haitang used her powers and unleashed the technique of mesmerisation.

Qian Rongzhi felt like her mind had collapsed, receding away like the tide. The superficial arts of mesmerisation that she had learned did not help her. The Pill of Calming she ingested before hand was completely useless too. Before the strength of a Foundation Establishment cultivator, her preparations and attempts at resistance were absolutely nothing.

However, all of this was just a distraction. What she actually depended on was the deep understanding of mesmerisation she had developed through the recent period of cultivation, which made her fearless.

It was impossible for Qiu Haitang to control her. Even she could not control herself.

She had grown up under the support of hatred that was as vast and deep as the sea, and for the sake of revenge, she was forced to put on masks upon masks, repressing her own ego and burying her hatred. Such a matter was not as simple as it sounded. Apart from absolute rationality, there was nothing that could repress flames of hatred.

But as time went on, all the developments had completely surpassed her expectations. Before she knew it, revenge was no longer the most important thing. If Qian Yannian was willing to make her the head of the Qian family back then, she could even continue to repress it. It would have just been so that she could become even more powerful. The flames of hatred that had burned her for almost a decade began to pale in comparison now.

Her rationality suppressed her hatred, the means surpassed the ends.

As a result, when she got what she wanted, succeeding with her revenge, she could finally peel off her many masks, but what she discovered was nothing. As a result, she cried bitterly, but she did not gain sudden enlightenment and ascend mentally, much less repent and achieve virtue. She only dried her tears and continued onwards with rationality.

Her desires and emotions continued to provide some meagre impetus, growing and entwining naturally like vines, even if the vines had no idea what the meaning of all this was.

Her trance was not an act. Instead, absolute rationality continued to impel her body. It was ridiculous how Qiu Haitang even tried to test her with such a simple method.

The seed of suggestion that Qiu Haitang had planted in the end was like the seed of hatred she had once planted for herself. It was completely insignificant. Even hatred was unable to control her.

“How can that old ruffian claim master’s pure body? I think no one is worthy of master apart from commander Hua.”

“If that’s really what you think, then I don’t have to worry.” Qiu Haitang eased up. She thought, Apart from being able to think like that, you won’t be able to have any other thoughts.

Sure enough, Qian Rongzhi said, “As your disciple, I will give master whatever she wishes even if I have to go through thick and thin. And, that Li Qingshan. I won’t spare him either. Although my cultivation is meagre, I’ll avenge master even if I have to drag him down with me.”

She had already won the gamble. It was time to collect her winnings.

Qiu Haitang pulled out a jade slip from her hundred treasures pouch. “No one must know about our relationship. I can’t guide you every single day either. In the jade slip are the cultivation notes and comprehensions for the Method of Clouds and Rain, as well as more powerful techniques of mesmerisation. You can go back and study them slowly. As for revenge, there’s no hurry for that.”

Afterwards, she took out a few bottles of pills and passed them to Qian Rongzhi. They were all pills crucial to cultivating the Method of Clouds and Rain and the arts of mesmerisation.

Even in the Sect of Clouds and Rain, rarely did anyone receive such special treatment. Not only did it require sufficient talent, but the disciple also had to go through many years of tests of their loyalty. Qian

Rongzhi's loyalty would obviously be no issue. Giving her some benefits would only propel the growth of this seed of suggestion.

Qiu Haitang was not worried that Qian Rongzhi would become powerful enough to destroy the seed of suggestion she had planted. Qi Practitioners that had the seed planted in them would have their minds twisted. Cultivation would become extremely difficult. Even if they could still make progress as Qi Practitioners, it would be impossible for them to break through to Foundation Establishment.

Qian Rongzhi beamed. "Thank you, master!"

Qiu Haitang said, "You can go!"

Qian Rongzhi bowed extremely politely. "Disciple will be taking her leave." She turned around to leave, but she suddenly heard Qiu Haitang ask, "Do you like that Li Qingshan?"

Qian Rongzhi turned around. Her face was red from embarrassment as she bit her lip and faltered, as if she was too shy to speak. However, due to the seed of suggestion, she could not help but say, "I- I like master." She knelt down fearfully. "Please forgive me, master!"

Qiu Haitang smiled. "You're very honest, so how can I blame you?" Absolute loyalty would result in emotions similar to love. It would be strange if that was not the case.

Unknowingly, Qian Rongzhi had planted a seed in Qiu Haitang's heart too. This woman is completely loyal to me. She won't betray me. She poses no threat to me.

Qian Rongzhi stepped out of the Parlour of Clouds and Rain at ease. What a stupid woman. If you want to control others, mesmerisation is only supplementary! You're not worthy of being Xiao An's master!

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Hua Chengzan, Li Qingshan, Xiao An, and Mu Kui walked slowly. They all had something on their minds, so they remained silent.

Hua Chengzan suddenly said, "There are some things that would be best if you knew, Qingshan."

Li Qingshan asked, "Regarding the Sect of Clouds and Rain?"

"Yes. The disciples of the Sect of Clouds and Rain, regardless of gender, mostly cultivate by using practices of harvesting from the other gender, but that's only for people with poor talent. The people that are actually talented will be specially picked out to cultivate alone. Compared to the promiscuous behaviour of the former, the latter basically practises severe abstinence to ensure that they don't lose their virgin yin until Foundation Establishment."

"Then, they'll find another Foundation Establishment cultivator, and only then do they practise dual cultivation. And, once they choose their partner for dual cultivation, they can't just choose someone else so freely. This lasts for centuries or even millennia. It's even more stable than marriages among regular people. This is the most orthodox method of dual cultivation within daoism. You can even call it a shortcut."

Only then did Li Qingshan understand. He saw how Xiao An became slightly worried, so he just scooped her up and put her on his shoulders. "Don't worry, we're not going anywhere. You just have to follow me. Don't you trust me?"

Xiao An bit her lip and revealed an embarrassed smile.

Only then did she seem like a pure, naive child to Hua Chengzan. Even Li Qingshan had been infected by some of her childishness. He really wondered just how they ended up together. For some reason, the word "mutual dependence" appeared in his head. He became rather eager to see Hua Chenglu.

Li Qingshan asked, "Brother Hua, are you very familiar with Qiu Haitang?"

Hua Chengzan said, "If you don't mind, you can just call me Chengzan. I met Haitang when I was still a child. The previous sect master had brought her to my home as a guest, and because we're all in the prefectural city, we did maintain frequent contact with each other."

Hua Chengzan had put it simply, but Li Qingshan could see the reminiscence on his face, and he knew that the two of them were not just very familiar. They were basically childhood friends. They were both cultivation geniuses, and there was not a large difference in their ages. It would only be strange if no sparks of affection ended up flying between them.

Li Qingshan smiled. "Then I hope you reach Foundation Establishment soon, brother Hua, and embrace a beauty. I think this sect master Qiu is very interested in you." If his eyes still worked, then he could tell what Qiu Haitang was thinking. However, this young master Hua just happened to be rather unhappy with all of it. The reason truly perplexed him.

If Qiu Haitang wanted to do something like dual cultivation with him, he would agree a hundred percent of the time. Although he still thought about Gu Yanying, that was his long term goal. He still had to eat and drink in the meantime. Thinking up to this point, he seemed like he had suddenly understood something.

Chapter 275 - Controlling Artifacts and Swords

Was Hua Chengzan actually interested in Gu Yanying? From a male perspective, this was as ordinary as it could get. It would only be abnormal if he was not interested. However, Li Qingshan had only just met him, so asking a question like that was going a little too far.

Hua Chengzan said, "Then I also hope you advance aggressively with cultivation and become the son-in-law of the Han family sooner."

The two of them glanced at each other. They both shook their heads with bitter smiles.

Before they knew it, they had left the prefectural city and crossed through the invisible formation. The grass was lush, and the night birds chirped. It was the middle of Spring. Although it was night, the fragrances of various flowers continued to infiltrate their noses.

"Let's travel together!" With that, Hua Chengzan summoned the Silver Dragon horse from his seal. With a tug of the reins, the horse raised its hooves and let out a long whinny. It took off on the wind, as if Hua Chengzan had cleared up his thoughts with this.

Li Qingshan flew with Xiao An, tailing closely behind.

The giant lumberman Mu Kui took great strides. He was not slow either.

In under fifteen minutes, they spotted a city that rose and fell in the embrace of the mountains. It flickered with lights in the darkness.

Li Qingshan was astonished. "Is this the Hua family?" Just the scale of the clan had surpassed Qingyang city, and when it came to the grandeur and elegance of the structures, even a hundred Qingyang cities could not rival it.

"The clan got a little big after a while." Hua Chengzan drew his reins and stopped outside the city gates.

A group of guards passed by on top of the city walls. Every single one of them was brimming with vigour and vitality. Not only were they Qi Practitioners, but they also showed signs of being Body Practitioners too.

"The young master has returned!" someone called out from above the walls. After that, the city gates that stood over a dozen meters tall opened loudly.

Hua Chengzan rode in first. However, Li Qingshan could sense that the city gates were not the only thing that had opened. The entire formation over the Hua family had opened too. When he stepped through this formation, he immediately sensed the abundant spiritual qi in the surroundings. It even surpassed the cavern for seclusion in the Hawkwolf Guard of Jiaping city.

The Hua family was constructed on an extremely fine spiritual ground in the first place. Not only did the formation have defensive properties, but it was also a huge Spirit Gathering formation. It was possible to imagine just how much regular independent cultivators would benefit if they could cultivate here.

If regular people lived here, their bodies would be much stronger and healthier than those outside, resistant to many diseases.

Entering the city, a main road led straight to a structure that seemed like a tall tower in the centre of the city. Apart from this, there were no other particularly tall structures. The eaves were hidden within the shade of the trees. The entire city was like a huge garden, just with buildings interspersed across the entire place.

The vegetation was lush, open corridors winded around through the entire place, and there were both ponds and fake mountains. The scenery would basically change with each step, with just too much to see. However, the entire composition seemed to secretly abide to the principles of the five elements, resonating with the formation.

Pearls were embedded throughout the city, giving off dim light in the darkness and illuminating the paths.

Crossing a small bridge, Hua Chengzan brought them before a building. A small stream gurgled around the front, and a cluster of trees stood behind it.

Hua Chengzan said, "The place where I stay is close to here. It's in that direction. Everywhere surrounded by the stream belongs to me. You can move around freely in there, but it's best if you don't wander around outside. It's already late, so you should all go rest!"

Hua Chengzan explained this to them before bidding farewell politely.

Li Qingshan and Xiao An entered the building to rest.

Mu Kui arrived behind the building, standing with the trees. He stood on the ground with his feet bare as he stood dead-straight, closing his eyes.

The next morning, Li Qingshan sat before the small stream. The translucent stream glistened. Under the sunlight, the surrounding scenery became even more pleasant. Looking around, all of it seemed picturesque.

The building hidden in the trees did not stand out at all. Instead, it added a sense of humanity to it all. It completely achieved the principle of humanity being one with nature.

Li Qingshan's mind grew more tranquil too. He removed a single object from his hundred treasures pouch. It was a small, jade-green sword. Only the blade of the sword existed. There was no hilt.

The sword was as thin as a strand of hair, vaguely translucent. Detailed patterns of waves were engraved on it. Li Qingshan flicked it gently, and it rippled like water.

Since he had reached the sixth layer, he could now control artifacts. Li Qingshan had directly come to the prefectural city the moment he left seclusion, so he had not been able to refine his own flying sword.

After great thought, he had chosen this tiny sword from the hundreds or even thousands of spiritual artifacts available to him. Not only was it a high grade spiritual artifact, but it was even of the water element too. The sword did not come with any special techniques, but it was extremely light, extremely quick, and extremely sharp.

Li Qingshan held the sword in his palms. The pure Gui Water true qi flowed over in ebbs, filling the sword. The sword's glow flickered rhythmically like breathing.

Hua Chengzan walked over from the small bridge. Behind him were Hua Chenglu and Yu Zijian.

Hua Chenglu was grumbling, "Gosh. Something so fascinating went down, yet you didn't even call me over." After learning about what she had missed last night, she was filled with regret.

Hua Chengzan hushed her silently. He pointed at Li Qingshan, who sat by the stream nearby.

"Li Qingshan! He has really reached the sixth layer!" Hua Chenglu was surprised. The last time she had met him, he was only at the second layer. In just a few measly months, he had advanced four layers. He was astonishingly fast. During this period, she had never stopped cultivating either, but she had only reached the fourth layer. Of course, that was already quite impressive at her age.

"What's he doing?" Yu Zijian asked curiously. Although it had only been a few months, everything she had gone through made what happened on the Island of Cherishing Flowers seem extremely distant. The young man seated there could only be regarded as a stranger to her.

Hua Chengzan said, "He's refining a flying sword. Chenglu, don't get jealous of him. He might have cultivated extremely quickly, but his foundation will be rather unstable, and his true qi won't be pure enough. This step will become much more difficult as a result."

The Hua family had plenty of methods that could boost Hua Chenglu's cultivation to higher levels, but these methods of quick success would definitely lead to many consequences. And, with an unstable foundation and impure true qi, cultivation would become much more difficult too.

Before Hua Chengzan had even finished speaking, Yu Zijian pointed at Li Qingshan and said, "It's flying."

Hua Chengzan looked back in a rush. He saw the small sword in Li Qingshan palms take off into the air with a swish. After that, it turned around and flew back with a swoosh, silently piercing a fake mountain before returning to Li Qingshan's side, hovering before him.

Hua Chengzan was as insightful as they came. Although the flying sword was still rather stiff when it came to turns, it was basically an unbelievable achievement if this was the first time he had controlled the sword. In particular, he had noticed that the flying sword had actually flown over a hundred paces away. That had completely surpassed the range of regular sixth layer Qi Practitioners. It was on par with seventh or even eighth layer Qi Practitioners.

There was only one explanation for this. Li Qingshan's true qi was extremely pure.

Faced with Hua Chenglu's doubtful gaze, Hua Chengzan rubbed his nose and smiled bitterly. How he cultivated was truly a mystery.

Even if there were a lot of pills that could increase the purity of true qi, they could not make it so pure. It would still require tremendous amounts of time for the Qi Practitioner to refine it to such a degree, and when it came to purifying true qi, it would mean stretching out the time spent on cultivation. He must have spent day and night cultivating for the past few months! To be able to catch her attention, he possessed a lot of extraordinary aspects, sure enough.

No matter how clever Hua Chengzan was, he would have never imagined that Li Qingshan possessed a sumeru ring that even Foundation Establishment cultivators did not possess. Moreover, he could absorb the spiritual qi of the world as a Qi Practitioner.

Li Qingshan had noticed their arrival quite some time ago. However, he had just been concentrating on controlling the sword, so he could not acknowledge them.

He formed a seal with his hand, and the sea of qi in his dantian churned endlessly. Using his obscure connection with the flying sword, he made the flying sword fly about freely, piercing rocks and wood. The power was startling. It demonstrated the power worthy of a high grade spiritual artifact.

His pure true qi played a decisive role in why he could grasp the art of controlling artifacts so quickly. Water was gentle in nature. It was not suited for attacks, but it was extremely mellow, making it easy to control. And, without his pure true qi, he would have struggled to refine a high grade spiritual artifact in such a short amount of time.

After a slight estimate, he noticed that the range of his sword control was around a hundred paces. He could actually behead someone from a hundred paces away now. Once the flying sword left this range, it would weaken significantly, and he would even lose control over it. Who knew how long it would take until he could behead people from a hundred kilometers away.

However, he was already extremely satisfied with this power right now. He also gained a better understanding of why the art of practising the body was in decline. Just how much effort did Body

Practitioners have to spend to move faster than a tiny flying sword? And, under the blade of the sword, they were useless even if they were made of metal.

After refining the flying sword, Li Qingshan stood up and smiled. "You've come."

With a flash, the small sword shot into his sleeve and wrapped around his arm like a bracelet. As the first flying sword he would be controlling, this would be his primary method of attack within the human world in the near future. He had to carry it on him constantly and assimilate with it until he could wield it as freely as a third arm.

Only now did the trio approach him. Li Qingshan greeted Hua Chenglu, "Young miss Hua, long time no see. I haven't forgotten about the assistance you provided me in the past. I'm thinking about a way to return the favour right now."

Thinking about it now, he realised that both siblings had backed him up before, and it was both against the Sect of Clouds and Rain.

Hua Chenglu smiled in a reserved manner. "It was nothing difficult, so you really can't label it as kindness. There's no need to call me young miss either. Just call me by my name. After tomorrow, we'll be fellow students. I hope you can take good care of me then, Qingshan."

Li Qingshan said, "Chengzan, your dear sister exceeds you in nobility!"

Hua Chengzan smiled. "Exactly! That's what the others say too. I sigh over my inferiority too!"

Hua Chenglu had always been clever, so how could she not realise that they were making fun of her? She immediately became unhappy with it all.

Hua Chengzan felt powerless towards this younger sister of his too. Yu Zijian smiled. Only then did she demonstrate her past naivety again.

"And, long time no see to you too, miss Yu." Li Qingshan saw how Yu Zijian still wore violet, but her aura was much calmer and steadier than before. With a sword on her waist, she seemed valiant in bearing.

She asked in concern, "B- big brother Li, I heard that the Sect of Clouds and Rain wanted to do things to you. Are you fine?"

"I'm fine." Li Qingshan felt amazed inside. Back then underground, she had called him Niu Juxia. Now, she called him big brother Li.

At this moment, a series of heavy footsteps rang out from the woods. Yu Zijian thought of something and turned around in a hurry. When she saw the figure emerging from the woods, she became disappointed. Even Niu Juxia was not that tall!

Chapter 276 - Clashing with Wei Zhongyuan

At the end of the day, Hua Chenglu still had the mind of a child. She was amazed by the sight of the otherfolk, Mu Kui.

“Nice sword. What’s it called?” Hua Chengzan had seen plenty of high grade spiritual artifacts before, but he also understood their value. Regular Qi Practitioners would be doing quite well if they possessed one at the eighth or ninth layers.

Li Qingshan said, “I obtained this out of pure luck. I don’t know it’s name. Oh right, what do you think about Small Stream as its name?”

“There aren’t any decent names for it. It’s just a clear stream.”

Li Qingshan said, “Alright, then I’ll name it the Clear Stream sword.”

High grade spiritual artifacts were nice, but they were nothing in his eyes. Right now, he could even produce the money to buy a supreme grade spiritual artifact. However, there was no need for him to be so wasteful. Starting off with the Clear Stream sword was already extremely impressive.

It was just a clear stream right now, but it would definitely become a great river.

Hua Chengzan asked, “Where’s Xiao An?”

Li Qingshan said, “She’s still sleeping!” In reality, Xiao An had originally been beside them, but upon sensing their arrival, she had fled back into the building.

Hua Chengzan knew that Li Qingshan had already made up his mind. He would not be sending Xiao An to the Sect of Clouds and Rain, so he said nothing more, “Have you decided on which school you’re going to join?”

“Don’t you want me to join the school of Legalism?”

“If you want to, I’ll obviously be very happy for you to join, but if you don’t want to, I won’t force you.”

“The matters of tomorrow are for tomorrow to decide!”

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“Tomorrow” arrived very soon. A very light, spring drizzle fell from the sky, which made the air moist and cool. Everything in the surroundings seemed so fresh. Perhaps due to practising Gui Water True Qi, Li Qingshan liked this weather very much now.

The climate of the Clear River prefecture was similar to the Jiangnan in his former life. Looking down from below the clouds, the streams of water merged together on the ground. Many farmers were currently planting seedlings in the rice fields. It gave off a watery charm.

Seeing the tiny, low-hanging cloud fly through the sky, the farmers were not surprised at all. The existence of cultivators was not a secret in this world.

As people who lived near Clear River city, their insight was much broader than others who lived in Qingyang or Jiaping city. They had grown accustomed to it all. Compared to this, planting the seedlings was more important, as it would determine their harvest for the year.

Only the children would raise their heads and point at the cloud. Some of them even ran along with the cloud for a while. Dreams shone in their eyes.

Today was the entrance examination of the Academy of the Hundred Schools. Li Qingshan did not travel with Hua Chenglu and the others. Apart from Hua Chenglu and Yu Zijian, the Hua family had other members that would be attending the Academy of the Hundred Schools this year too. There was no point in sticking with them, so he just agreed to rendezvous with them before the Academy of the Hundred Schools.

The Academy of the Hundred Schools was located around fifty kilometers from the prefectural city. It was not far, nor was it close. It would take him under two hours to reach by flying.

Li Qingshan was in no hurry. He travelled a part of the journey slowly. Suddenly, he sensed a sharp, murderous aura press over from the ground.

On the ground was a small mountain range. There were no traces of human activity within a range of several dozen kilometers. It was a good place for an ambush.

A man with peppered hair in fancy violet robes stood proudly on top of one of those mountains. His cultivation was at the startling tenth layer. He was the vice sect master of the Sect of Clouds and Rain, Wei Zhongyuan.

He was dissatisfied with Qiu Haitang's decision. He had to avenge his son. Without much effort, he found out that Li Qingshan was staying in the Hua family and was about to go to the Academy of the Hundred Schools. He was not bold enough to demand for the Hua family to hand him over, and there was nothing he could do to Li Qingshan once he joined the academy.

As a result, he made up his mind to launch an ambush on Li Qingshan's way there. Even if he could not capture Li Qingshan alive and get the whole story from him, he still wanted to kill him. Only then would he be satisfied. The only thing he worried about was that Li Qingshan would be travelling together with the Hua family, but now that he saw Li Qingshan had appeared alone, he beamed with joy, and his murderous aura erupted.

Currently, his furious eyes were teeming with malice, and his violet robes ruffled despite the absence of any breeze. He was imposing, just like a mountain.

Li Qingshan realised it was a tenth layer Qi Practitioner with a single glance. Although he did not know it was Wei Zhongyuan, he had basically guessed it already. He halted and called out, "Are you the vice sect master of the Sect of Clouds and Rain, Wei Zhongyuan?"

"Get down here!" Wei Zhongyuan raised his hand, and white true qi gathered in his palm, shooting into the sky as a white blast.

The white light immediately made Li Qingshan think of Hao Pingyan's Yellow Dragon's Cannon of Devouring Light. The white light moved with startling speed. Dodging it would be difficult even if he was on the ground, let alone when he was in the sky like right now.

He was surprised, but he did not become flustered. He scooped up Xiao An and leapt. The white blast tore through the cloud, surprising him secretly.

He fell towards the ground. He required time to use the Cloud Riding technique and Mist Wielding technique, and Wei Zhongyuan clearly would not be giving him this time.

Wei Zhongyuan swung his arms backwards. The rock below his feet shattered, kicking up soil. He had already taken off like a cannonball, heading right towards Li Qingshan.

He extended his right hand, striking out again. He was trying to capture Li Qingshan alive.

However, at this moment, Li Qingshan suddenly vanished.

“An Invisibility talisman? Mere trickery.” Wei Zhongyuan snorted coldly, but his expression soon changed slightly. Li Qingshan’s aura had completely vanished as well. Despite his cultivation at the tenth layer, he was unable to detect him.

He raised his arms and launched over a hundred consecutive punches at where Li Qingshan might have landed. Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! With a string of explosions, a layer of the small mountain was directly carved away, filling the surroundings with dust. However, there were no traces of Li Qingshan. His frown grew deeper.

Being able to hide his body was nothing, but in order to erase his aura so cleanly, he must have practised some sort of secret technique. This kid would definitely become a huge problem in the future.

As a result, he held his breath and concentrated his mind. No matter what secret technique it was, his aura would definitely leak out once he used a technique.

Even kicking up a slightly unnatural breeze could allow him to sense Li Qingshan and get him through his invisibility.

Li Qingshan had obviously used the Glazed Mirror of Invisibility to hide himself. Seeing how Wei Zhongyuan lurked below like an angered lion, he knew that something was amiss, so he unfurled the Clear Stream sword.

The Clear Stream sword hovered in the air, and he stood on it. Although he was nowhere close to sword riding, supporting his own weight was not too difficult.

The only thing he needed to think about was how to deal with Wei Zhongyuan. If regular Qi Practitioners were confronted with such a terrifying enemy, they would definitely be thinking about how they could escape, but Li Qingshan was contemplating on how he could kill him. A tenth layer Qi Practitioner’s hundred treasures pouch would increase his confidence in breaking through to Daemon General.

While the location right now seemed like wilderness, he was just too close to both the Academy of the Hundred Schools and Clear River city. Transforming was extremely dangerous.

But right now, he was the one standing in the light, with Wei Zhongyuan lurking in the shadows. With Xiao An’s assistance, as well as almost ten supreme grade talismans and the Cursive Sword Calligraphy, it was not necessarily impossible. Oh right, he also had the art of controlling swords that he had recently learnt.

The Clear Stream sword produced a green flash as it stabbed towards the back of Wei Zhongyuan’s neck.

Wei Zhongyuan turned around in a hurry. He smiled viciously. “I’ve found you.”

Chapter 277 - Meeting Acquaintances Again

The flying sword controlled by a mere sixth layer Qi Practitioner was nothing in Wei Zhongyuan's eyes. It could not even pierce his protective true qi.

Without even looking at the Clear Stream sword, he raised his hand and unleashed a blast towards the flying sword.

With a boom, rocks shot off in all directions and huge trees snapped, but there was still no trace of Li Qingshan.

Wei Zhongyuan frowned. Li Qingshan's technique of erasing his aura was even more powerful than he had previously imagined.

Li Qingshan stood nearby with Xiao An in his arms. There was not even a speck of dust on him. He formed a seal with his hand and wielded it like a sword, drawing and pointing with it.

The Clear Stream sword cut through the air silently, stabbing towards Wei Zhongyuan's throat with even greater speed.

Ding! It stabbed into the protective true qi and was unable to advance even an inch further.

"Overconfident!" Wei Zhongyuan said in disdain. He reached towards the Clear Stream sword. As long as he caught the flying sword, he could use the aura on the sword to find Li Qingshan.

The Clear Stream sword suddenly rippled like water, inching through the protective true qi.

Li Qingshan was overjoyed. He poured his strength into the Clear Stream sword in a hurry, and with a flash, it turned into a green streak of light and pierced the protective true qi, brushing past Wei Zhongyuan's face.

Wei Zhongyuan touched the tiny nick on his cheek. He was shaken inside and furious. If he had not tilted his head in time, his head would have been pierced.

Li Qingshan only found out then that the Clear Stream sword could pierce protective true qi as well. Although this feature was simple and nothing special, it made the sword a true weapon for killing when combined with its speed. It truly deserved its status as a high grade spiritual artifact. However, he had failed to kill Wei Zhongyuan in a single stroke then, which was quite a pity.

However, he would be dreaming if he wanted to kill a tenth layer Qi Practitioner like this. What he was trying to do was to completely agitate Wei Zhongyuan, which would give him an opportunity to strike.

The Clear Stream sword turned around and shot over again.

Wei Zhongyuan no longer handled it carelessly. He used a protective technique. A faint, oval-shaped membrane of light appeared around him. As expected, the Clear Stream sword struggled to pierce it so easily now.

If he forced it through, the sword would probably just be caught by Wei Zhongyuan. As a result, he made the sword linger around to disturb Wei Zhongyuan. It was not like Wei Zhongyuan could find him anyway. He had plenty of time to waste on him.

The Clear Stream sword turned into a green flash. Gradually, Wei Zhongyuan became agitated.

“The Glorious Sun of Brilliance Illuminates the Four Directions!”

Wei Zhongyuan brought his hands together before parting them. He lit up, illuminating the surroundings.

The vegetation yellowed and withered, beginning to burn. Thick billows of smoke rose up.

If he used this move on regular people, he could turn several thousand of them blind. However, the effect on Qi Practitioners was nothing special. It just covered an extremely large range.

Wei Zhongyuan looked around and spotted a blurry figure within the endless light. Raising his arm, a shining sword, three feet long, had already appeared in his hand. The name of the sword was called Three Yang, and it was a high grade spiritual artifact. It had turned into a streak of white light as it shot over like a bolt of lightning.

“Oh no! Clear River sword, go!” Li Qingshan called out.

Clang! The green flash struck the white light, revealing the weapon.

With one bigger and one smaller, the two flying swords entangled with one another, producing a messy string of clangs and clangs.

The Three Yang sword was swift and powerful. It contained great force, such that it would almost knock away the Clear Stream sword with each clash.

This was the first time Li Qingshan had clashed with someone using flying swords. He only controlled it based on his feelings, but he was severely lacking in both experience and technique. The Clear Stream sword was forced backwards, and in the blink of an eye, the Three yang sword had already arrived before him.

Killing intent erupted in Wei Zhongyuan’s eyes. True qi swelled in his sea of qi, and the Three Yang sword shone brightly, sending the Clear Stream sword over a dozen meters away. It sliced towards Li Qingshan’s legs in a hurry. He had made up his mind to directly cripple Li Qingshan.

With two clangs, two white prayer beads flew out and sent the Three Yang sword flying.

“You can actually control three spiritual artifacts at the same time!” Wei Zhongyuan’s expression changed. While regular cultivators could refine multiple spiritual artifacts for use, they would never use all of them in actual combat. In particular, spiritual artifacts like flying swords required even more concentration. Their true qi would disperse if they split their focus, so they would be better off just focusing on a single spiritual artifact.

However, the two prayer beads that sent the Three Yang sword flying were heavy. They were instead even more powerful than the Clear Stream sword, which threw Wei Zhongyuan into disbelief. Never did he imagine that this actually came from Xiao An, as she seemed to possess no cultivation at all.

Li Qingshan ignored him. Instead of retreating, he advanced. With the Wind-entwining blade in hand, he shot towards Wei Zhongyuan like an arrow. After lurking around for so long, this was the first attack he had delivered in person. He seemed like he was unstoppable.

Wei Zhongyuan only beamed with joy. He was actually approaching him. Did he really think he could make up for the difference between the sixth and tenth layers just because he was a Body Practitioner? However, Wei Zhongyuan still received him seriously. His figure stood as steady as a mountain as he spread his arms forward. White true qi rapidly gathered.

Behind Li Qingshan, Xiao An hid without moving. She held a white bone sword in one hand and a supreme grade talisman in the other.

The distance of fifty paces could be covered in a mere moment; the boundary between life and death was only separated by a moment too.

“Stop!” A yell rang out from the sky, and a metal shield fell down, arriving right between Wei Zhongyuan and Li Qingshan. It turned into a wall of metal.

Li Qingshan secretly lamented over the destroyed opportunity. He kicked off the wall gently and sprang back, arriving in the air. The Clear Stream sword arrived below his feet, and he stood there, clasping his hands. “Senior sister Han, what brings you here?”

The person happened to be Han Qiongzhi. She piloted a flying shuttle with a few familiar faces behind her.

Han Qiongzhi said, “I’m the vice leader of the law enforcement team of the Academy of the Hundred Schools. I’m in charge of the public security around the entrance examinations. You’ve made such a great disturbance, so how can I not come and check?”

The entrance examination was when the Qi Practitioners from various places converged. There would be plenty of incidents when enemies met with great hostility. Some people would become tempted by wealth, resorting to murder and robbery, and there were even cases of people breaking out into a fight over a slight dispute. As a result, the Academy of the Hundred Schools arranged the disciples of legalism into law enforcement teams to maintain order.

The leader was obviously Hua Chengzan. When a bright flash in the distance occurred, regular people would have never been able to sense it during daytime, while Qi Practitioners would not care even if they sensed it. However, Hua Chengzan immediately sensed that something was amiss and realised that he had made a miscalculation, ordering Han Qiongzhi to come over and provide support in a hurry.

Han Qiongzhi turned around and faced Wei Zhongyuan. She immediately became slightly stern. “Wei Zhongyuan, do you plan on murdering a Hawkwolf guard here?” She was acquainted with Wei Zhongyuan, but she had never liked him. He was already so old but only at the tenth layer, so he was not someone worthy of her attention. As a result, she spoke without the slightest hint of courtesy.

Wei Zhongyuan withdrew the Three yang sword reluctantly and said with his head raised, “This is our personal grievance. It’s got nothing to do with the Hawkwolf Guard.”

“Your esteemed sect master Qiu has already agreed to dismiss all grievances with Li Qingshan. If you keep on clinging onto them, then sect master Qiu will never spare you even if the Hawkwolf Guard spares you.” Han Qiongzhi did find Wei Zhongyuan to be irritating, but the Sect of Clouds and Rain was still one of the more powerful sects in the Clear River prefecture. Only Wang Pushi had the authority to pass orders against a vice sect master. Unless Wei Zhongyuan actually killed Li Qingshan in front of

them, Wang Pushi would probably be reluctant to fall out with the Sect of Clouds and Rain over a single Black Wolf guard.

At the end of the day, it still depended on the individual's abilities. The banner of the Hawkwolf Guard was quite useful, but it was not an all-powerful protective charm.

Wei Zhongyuan snorted coldly. He stowed the Three Yang sword away and flew away in the wind. Before he left, he said to Li Qingshan, "You got lucky today. This won't just end like this. You better clean your neck and wait for death!"

Li Qingshan said impatiently, "You'd better fuck off!" It was difficult to say who actually got lucky today. All Wei Zhongyuan knew was how to throw threats around.

"You!" Wei Zhongyuan's face turned bright red. He glanced at Han Qiongzhi before storming off.

Han Qiongzhi shook her head. If she had not learnt that he actually came from a small mountain hamlet from Hua Chengzan, she definitely would have believed that he had some powerful background. However, at least that was better than being a coward. She smiled. "You can get on. The entrance examination is about to start, so you'd better hurry up!"

Li Qingshan boarded the flying shuttle with Xiao An. He lowered his head and sank into his thoughts. Whenever he went through a battle, he would always reflect on it, with this battle in particular since Wei Zhongyuan was an enemy he would definitely face again in the future. He wanted to think through the entire battle properly.

After travelling a few kilometers, the flying shuttle suddenly stopped. Han Qiongzhi said with a sunken face, "Get off!"

Li Qingshan asked in confusion, "What's wrong?"

Han Qiongzhi said, "Don't you feel like you've forgotten something?"

"What have I forgotten?"

Han Qiongzhi gritted her teeth. "A thank you! If it weren't for me, you would have lost your life there today." So much for rushing over here and saving him. She did not even receive a single "thank you" from him. Perhaps regular people would just grumble inside, but she did not have the personality to keep it all repressed.

Li Qingshan smiled understandingly. "Alright then. Thank you. Though, if you hadn't come, I had some confidence in making him remain there forever."

The disciples of legalism were unconvinced. They all seemed like they wanted to mock him. That was a tenth layer Qi Practitioner on par with Hua Chengzan, yet he was actually boasting that he had a chance to defeat someone like that. He sure was overestimating himself.

Although Li Qingshan was raidating with valiance when he charged at Wei Zhongyuan earlier, it was more like charging towards his own destruction. He was overconfident in his abilities.

Han Qiongzhi said, "I don't believe it."

“Then thank you.” Li Qingshan shrugged and leapt off the shuttle, riding off on a cloud instead. If someone helped him, even if it was just the tiniest bit, he would remember it. However, what other people believed in was not for him to decide, nor did he care either. Was he supposed to pull out a few supreme grade talismans or the Cursive Sword Calligraphy to justify himself?

Han Qiongzhi was surprised. Originally, she had been waiting for Li Qingshan to thank her and cheer her up, and she would then forgive him for his rudeness. However, she never thought he would be so straightforward. She ground her teeth. “Alright you, Li Qingshan!”

The flying shuttle shot past the cloud. Han Qiongzhi maintained a cold expression, suppressing the urge to glance at Li Qingshan.

Xiao An said softly, “What a weirdo.”

Rarely did Xiao An ever comment on someone. Li Qingshan smiled and pinched her cheeks. “Let’s not stoop to the same level as her.”

At this moment, expansive, mist-covered waters appeared on the horizon. Under the sunlight, the ripples and waves glistened.

Li Qingshan smiled. He was finally here.

Yes. The Academy of the Hundred Schools was located in this great marshland.

The name of the lake was Dragons and Snakes, originating from the classics of confucianism. “Dragons and snakes were produced within the deep mountains and marshes.” It implied that those who set afoot in this lake might rise from mediocrity, transforming from a snake into a dragon and setting foot upon the endless path of cultivation.

This was the beginning.

Beside the lake on a large, sandy shoal stood thousands of people. They formed small groups, either whispering to one another or engaging in lively conversations. Qi Practitioners were converging from all directions. Li Qingshan descended on the cloud, but he failed to attract much attention at all.

The disciples of legalism in black maintained order in the surroundings. Hua Chengzan stood on a tall sentry post, conversing with a few stronger Qi Practitioners who had accompanied their own disciples. When he saw Li Qingshan arrive, he relaxed and nodded slightly, expressing how he was currently busy. He pointed towards a corner of the sandy shoal.

Li Qingshan looked over to where Hua Chengzan was pointing at. He saw a few hundred children standing there, separated from the Qi Practitioners.

There were two types of disciples that the Academy of the Hundred Schools accepted. One was regular Qi Practitioners. They might have come from smaller clans, or they might have been independent cultivators. As long as they were not too old and were willing to pay the school fees, basically all of them were allowed to study in the academy. The academy truly accepted everyone, both good and bad.

The other type was similar to what regular sects accepted. They would choose talented but foundationless children from various places. These children would not directly enter the Academy of the Hundred Schools, nor did they have to pay any school fees. Instead, they needed to practise the Innate

Method of Practising Qi for a while. If they managed to condense qi successfully, they could choose among the schools after establishing a foundation. If they failed, then they would be sent back to their hometowns.

Li Qingshan held Xiao An's hand and made his way over.

"Qingshan, you've finally arrived." A fatty called out and pushed his way over.

Li Qingshan looked at him. He was Ye Dachuan. It was impossible for these children to make their way over by themselves, nor was it possible for Zhou Wenbin to escort them in person. Ye Dachuan would never miss this great opportunity to return to Clear River city either.

"Sir Ye, long time no see."

"Were you the person on the cloud earlier? My god, I don't even recognise you anymore! You've made it!" Ye Dachuan came up and wanted to pat Li Qingshan's shoulder, but he was afraid to. He sized up Li Qingshan and clicked his tongue in wonder. No one would have thought that there would be a day when a farmer kid from Qingyang city would actually be able to ride clouds and fly around.

"I've heard plenty of stories about you in the past few months. What kind of friend are you supposed to be? You've made it so you've forgotten about your old friends now."

Li Qingshan smiled. "How can I forget about what sir Ye did for me to get promoted? Do I need to register her name?"

"There's no need. I've already registered her name. She's called Xiao An, right? A ship will come to receive her in a while. Oh right, the other two are here too. Just wait here, I'll call them over."

The other two? Before he could ask about that, Ye Dachuan had already vanished into the crowd. A while later, he returned with a group of people.

The leader of the group was a majestic-looking middle-aged man with a large face and mouth. He clasped his hands at Li Qingshan. "You must be young hero Li! I've been looking forward to meeting you!" He was clearly a sixth layer Qi Practitioner, but he gave off vibes of the jianghu as he spoke.

Li Qingshan asked, "You're?" He glanced around, and just as expected, there were two familiar people, one old and one young, among the group. They were the same two people who had walked out of Qingyang city with him back then, protector Yan Song of the Iron Fist school and Li Long, who had been known as one of the Two Talents of the Crouching Ox.

Yan Song remained at the second layer, while Li Long had already gone from being a third-rate master to a second layer Qi Practitioner. He did not waste the past year. When they saw Li Qingshan, they all found him to be rather unfamiliar. It had been less than half a year, yet Li Qingshan seemed to have become a completely different person. His gaze was calm as he gave off a certain weight. He did not lose out in bearing at all when compared to their school master Tie.

Yan Song exclaimed, "Qingshan, y- you've already reached the sixth layer!" He was different from Ye Dachuan. He understood the difficulties of cultivation. He had been stuck at the second layer for many years now. The same young man who did not have any foundation and even needed to learn the Innate

Method of Practising Qi from him had actually reached the sixth layer in under a year. He was filled with mixed emotion.

Chapter 278 - The Watermirror Disc

Li Qingshan said, "I only reached the sixth layer recently."

Meeting acquaintances in a foreign land should have been a matter of great joy, but Li Long was left with his mouth hanging, unsure as for how to refer to Li Qingshan. The cowherd that no one took seriously in the past could now rival their school master. Their identities were worlds apart now. Directly calling him by name seemed rather rude.

"Oh, this is the master of our Iron Fist school, Tie Zhan." His voice even bore a countryside accent that Li Qingshan found familiar.

Li Qingshan thought of the past as well, remembering the frustration with the Crouching Ox village, as well as the dangers of Qingyang city. The master of one of the four great organisations of Qingyang city in the past was now standing before him, but a sixth layer Qi Practitioner was already nothing in his eyes. He had no interest in fawning over him, nor did he want to cause any offence, so he handled him casually,

"So it's school master Tie. Apologies, apologies for failing to recognise you."

Tie Zhan said, "The Crouching Ox village sure is a place that births great men. When I saw Li Long, I already thought he was a rare talent, but only when I saw brother Qingshan did I realise that there will always be someone greater. The matter of how you beat the Sect of Clouds and Rain in two matches in the Parlour of Clouds and Rain two days ago has already spread throughout the prefectural city. It's just a pity that I wasn't able to see it for myself."

No matter how influential the Iron Fist school was, they could only treat each other as equals as they were both sixth layer Qi Practitioners. Coupled with the fact that Li Qingshan was relatively young and had limitless potential, Tie Zhan even needed to treat him politely so that he could befriend him.

"Are the disciples of your esteemed school taking part in the entrance examination too?" Li Qingshan glanced at Li Long.

Li Long's face sank, and he lowered his head. Let alone the fact that school master Tie would never agree, but even if he did agree, where was he supposed to obtain the spiritual stones for the school fees? That was a total of one hundred spiritual stones. He did extraordinarily well in the Iron Fist school, so he would obtain a few spiritual stones every now and then, but they were not even enough for buying various pills, so he was in no position to save any money. And, by the time he really managed to save a hundred spiritual stones, who knew how old he would be. He would have missed the optimal period for cultivation. If he fell behind by a single step, he would be behind forever.

"It's my son. I do hope that you can take good care of him in the future, brother," Tie Zhan changed the topic. He looked around. "Where's he? Didn't I tell you to call him over?"

Why would the Iron Fist school pay such a tremendous price to send the disciples that they had raised after so much effort to the Academy of the Hundred Schools? Once they had broadened their horizons

and increased their cultivation, who would still be willing to serve the Iron Fist school? And, even if they did return, they would probably be coming after the entire organisation to replace him.

“The young master said he’s busy,” Yan Song said awkwardly.

“Call him over!”

With just a moment of thought, Li Qingshan understood what was going on. He fell silent.

A while later, Yan Song brought over a young man with a square face and large ears who seemed slightly similar to Tie Zhan. The young man said impatiently, “What is it? I’m busy!” He was busy talking with a few pretty female cultivators, so he was in no mood to meet some man.

“You bastard, why don’t you greet your big brother Li?”

“What big brother Li? Don’t tell me it’s Li Long?” The young man snickered. Seeing how no one played along with him, he arrived beside Tie Zhan’s side and saw Li Qingshan. He leapt in fright. “You’re Li Qingshan!”

He had also been having fun in the Parlour of Clouds and Rain that night. He had a very deep impression of the person before him. He immediately grew stern. “Greetings, elder brother. I hope you can take good care of this little brother in the future. If there’s anything I can help you with, please don’t hold back.” He completely ignored the fact that Li Qingshan was younger than him. He showed great modesty and courtesy, referring to himself as little brother.

Tie Zhan nodded in satisfaction. Although this kid shirked away from his responsibilities sometimes, at least he was not completely ignorant and knew what was what.

Li Qingshan said, “I can tell with a single glance that you’re very smart with a limitless future, but you don’t have anyone to tend to you once you enter the academy. Why don’t you have Li Long enter the academy as a partner of yours? There’s no need for school master Tie to pay anything either. I’ll cover the fees for him. What do you think, school master?”

“Must you be buried in your place of home? Sufficient are the green mountains overgrown.” Since he had already decided to never return to his hometown again, Li Long was probably the last person from the same village he would be able to see in his life. The one hundred spiritual stones to enter the academy had already become nothing to him. Since it took him nothing, why not help him out?

Li Long beamed in joy when he heard that. He glanced at Li Qingshan in great appreciation before looking at Tie Zhan nervously.

Tie Zhan hesitated before smiling. “Fine then. You’re brothers, so you do have to take care of someone from the same hometown. This is Li Long’s good fortune, as well as our Iron Fist school’s good fortune. I can only celebrate over something like this, so why would I say no? If it were not for the fact that the Iron Fist school is currently experiencing some cash flow issues, you wouldn’t need to pay anything at all.” He could see how Li Qingshan was someone who valued the ties of the past. He needed to get that bastard of a son of his to be more polite to Li Long in the future.

“Then thank you, school master.” Li Qingshan took out a hundred spiritual stones from his hundred treasures pouch and passed it to Li Long.

The young master of the Iron Fist school wrapped his arm around Li Long's neck. "A'Long, you're rich!" Even without Tie Zhan's reminder, he had already begun to treat him more warmly and politely.

Li Long knew that this was all because of the young man standing before him. He said gratefully, "Qingshan, I'll definitely return this sum of spiritual stones to you." He knew extremely well that the Academy of the Hundred Schools would release various missions, providing disciples with opportunities to make spiritual stones. It was not impossible for him to make this sum of one hundred spiritual stones; this was the most difficult obstacle. Once he made it past this, there were infinite possibilities.

Li Qingshan said, "If you want to return it, then give me two hundred spiritual stones!"

Li Long was stunned, while the young school master muttered inside, Isn't this usury? He really could not tell, but sure enough, fellow townsmen would always stab each other in the back when they met.

However, Li Qingshan continued, "I'll wait until the day when a hundred spiritual stones mean nothing in your eyes."

"Alright!" Li Long nodded firmly.

Ye Dachuan said, "That's fantastic. You'll all be fellow students in the future!"

Li Qingshan smiled. As people from the same home town, this was all that he could do. What happened next would depend on how he cultivated.

At this moment, several large ships cut through the waves and mist.

There was a disturbance on the sandy shoal. Everyone stopped talking and raised their heads. The one who stood out the most happened to be the giant lumberman, Mu Kui.

Hua Chenglu and Yu Zijian stood nearby. They also had a group of young men and women beside them. They did not pay too much attention to Li Qingshan, who they had only met a few times. They did not come to find him either.

Instead, Qian Rongzhi constantly scanned through the crowd. She was standing with a few enforcement disciples of legalism. She had already heard of Li Qingshan's battle with Wei Zhongyuan, and she had heard how he said he had some confidence in killing Wei Zhongyuan.

In the eyes of the legalist disciples, this was a boastful joke. They all said it was Li Qingshan's pigheadedness, but she begged to differ. She believed that Li Qingshan had complete confidence in finishing off Wei Zhongyuan. What mattered was how she was supposed to get Li Qingshan to capture Wei Zhongyuan alive and hand him over to her.

"Rongzhi, you've met this kid before us all. Has he always liked to boast so much?" Even now, Han Qiongzhi still felt rather unhappy. She noticed Qian Rongzhi's gaze and became riled up again.

Qian Rongzhi said, "Senior sister Han, I'm not on close terms with him. Unless he possesses a supreme grade talisman, it's impossible for him to be the opponent of a tenth layer Qi Practitioner."

An idea flashed through Han Qiongzhi's head. She muttered, "Really?" A supreme grade talisman was equivalent to the attack of a Foundation Establishment cultivator. If he really was in possession of one, there really might have been a chance. Of course, it was only a tiny chance at that.

“Come with me!” She immediately could not help herself but pull Qian Rongzhi along with her as she forced her way through the crowd, arriving before Li Qingshan. She grabbed him by the shoulder. “Tell me, do you have a supreme grade talisman?”

“Ma’am Han!” Tie Zhan cried out. Young miss Han was renowned in Clear River city. Her fiery temper had made many people suffer in the past. He never thought Li Qingshan would actually be acquainted with her.

“Weirdo.” Xiao An, who had remained silent on the side the entire time, muttered quietly.

Right? Qian Rongzhi shot a glance at her. Xiao An smiled brightly, like they knew what each other was thinking.

Even Li Qingshan found Han Qiongzhi’s personality to be rather strange. He said, “Lend me your ear.”

Han Qiongzhi stuck her head over in a hurry and heard Li Qingshan whisper, “I have a few.”

Han Qiongzhi was surprised. “Lend me your ear too!”

Li Qingshan shook his head helplessly and leaned in. He heard her whisper, “Really?”

“Whether you believe it is up to you.”

Han Qiongzhi smiled. “Looks like I’ve actually gotten in your way. Fine, I’ll forgive you. Kicking you off the shuttle earlier was my fault, but I still did everything out of good intentions, so you still needed to thank me. We’re fair now.”

“Whatever.”

With that matter now over, Han Qiongzhi was in a good mood. She saw the strange gazes from everywhere, and only then did she realise the implicative nature of whispering in each other’s ears in public. She growled, “What’re you all looking at? Piss off!”

She shot a glance at Li Qingshan again, If you didn’t want others to hear you, you could’ve just used communication technique instead. Why did you have to do that? You clearly don’t have anything good in mind.

With a snort, she stamped her foot and left. Qian Rongzhi nodded at Xiao An before leaving with her. She would have plenty of time to scheme once she joined the academy. She was lucky that Wei Zhongyuan had not died.

Li Qingshan and Xiao An glanced at one another. What a weirdo.

By now, the ships had already arrived on the side of the sandy shoal. One of the ships extended a gangway to the shoal. A bitter-looking female instructor with protruding cheekbones called out, “Come here, children!”

Li Qingshan clasped his hands to bid farewell to Ye Dachuan before holding Xiao An’s hand and squeezing his way through the crowd towards the ship.

The children around them were all noisy, but none of them cried or threw a tantrum. Under the guidance of their respective leaders, they boarded the ship one by one in an orderly manner. Not only

did these regular children recommended to come here have to possess the talent to practise qi, but they also had to possess a suitable mental disposition for cultivation too.

“Go. I’ll see you in a while. If anything happens, use this.”

When Xiao An was about to board the ship, Li Qingshan crouched down and rubbed her head. He threaded a jade thumb ring and hung it around her neck, before wagging his thumb before her, showing her he was wearing another jade ring.

These were a pair of jade thumb rings, which were also a set of interesting spiritual artifacts that Li Qingshan had found from all those hundred treasures pouches. The two formed a pair, which would allow them to talk to one another from a distance.

As he watched Xiao An line up and board the ship with the other kids, Li Qingshan sighed gently. He felt like a parent who was sending their child off to school.

A while later, the surroundings emptied out. The gangway retracted into the ship, and it sailed off once more, vanishing into the misty waters.

Only when the sandy shoal was no longer visible did Xiao An look away.

The children struggled to hide their excitement. For most of them, this was the first time they had ever taken such a large ship. If it were not for the stern gaze of the female instructor, they would have begun running around in joy already.

“Hey. What’s your name?”

A pudgy child, around eleven or twelve years of age, asked Xiao An in an arrogant manner. He was dressed in silks and satins, and he was even surrounded by a group of “little brothers”. They all came from the same place. The pudgy child’s family was rich, and he was both tall and wide, so he became their leader.

Xiao An did not answer him.

“That’s a nice ring. Let me see!” The pudgy kid snatched at the ring on Xiao An’s chest as soon as he spotted it. It had always been like this for him whenever he wanted something.

Xiao An took a step back and shoved the ring into her clothes. The pudgy child missed.

“How dare you defy me!” The pudgy child shot a glare at her and actually gave off a sense of brutality. He directly reached towards Xiao An’s hair. At home, all the female servants were afraid of this move. He would only let go after they had wept and begged him.

Hmph, I’ll tear out a patch of your hair. I’d like to see whether you’ll still dismiss me after that.

Xiao An threw out a punch. She suddenly remembered that this was not an enemy she had to kill, so she subsequently held back most of her strength.

With a thump, the pudgy child was sent flying. He collided with his group of little brothers before bursting into tears. The children he collided with began crying too.

“Stop crying! What’s happened?” The female instructor immediately walked over.

“She hit me.” The pudgy child covered his face. He had lost quite a few teeth.

The female instructor frowned. “Did you hit him?”

Xiao An said nothing. Apart from Li Qingshan, she had never really conversed with anyone else. She would prefer turning this ship full of people into fire instead.

The pudgy child said pitifully, “I don’t know what’s wrong with her. She just hit me. I even lost a few teeth.”

The female instructor was irritated. She pointed at Xiao An’s forehead. “Tell me, why did you hit him?”

Xiao An suddenly raised her head. A pair of eyes that seemed like black pearls were embedded in her delicate face.

The female instructor looked into the pitch-black, severe eyes and shivered inside for some reason. She was unable to keep pointing at her anymore. Did this kid possess some powerful background? She immediately dismissed that thought. Basically all descendants of influential clans would begin practising qi at a young age. They would be sent to the academy once they developed a certain foundation. Only children chosen from regular people would be on this ship.

As a result, she became even more furious. “Do you even want to hit me too?” She raised her hand, about to beat her with it, but she suddenly thought about how the leaders of the school might be looking over here right now.

As a result, she put her hand back down and thought of something. “Don’t move.” Then she said to the pudgy boy, “Get up. She hit you, so hit her back.”

The boy wiped aside her tears. Having received the instructor’s permission, he seemed to be in pain, but he was complacent inside. Regular children probably would never be able to bring themselves to hit back, but he directly threw a punch as hard as he could. Before he could even celebrate, he felt his stomach ache as he was sent flying again, directly fainting on the ground. Fortunately, his group of little brothers dodged cleverly, so they were not struck by him this time.

There were two, however, who sobbed even harder. “Murder! Murder!”

The female instructor had been paying attention to Xiao An the entire time; she wanted to prevent her from dodging. However, the kick that Xiao An had launched after jumping up was both quick and stealthy, such that even she could not react. She could not help but become enraged as she erupted with curses. “Do you really think a troublesome little animal like you can practise qi and cultivate? I don’t think so! Once we reach the shore, I’ll have you piss off to where you came from...”

She returned to the nose of the ship furiously. She obviously did not have the authority to make the ship turn around, but she had plenty of ways to deal with misbehaving children in the Academy of the Hundred Schools.

In a quiet room within the Academy of the Hundred Schools.

There were heavy curtains in the room, which made the entire place gloomy. Around a dozen or so figures were vaguely visible, sitting in their respective seats.

The various leaders of the schools were all gathered here. The auras they radiated with in the silence was enough to make any Qi Practitioner tremble. Their wills determined everything within the Clear River prefecture that spanned fifteen hundred kilometers.

At the centre of the room was a large, jade disc. The disc was engraved with exquisite glyphs. The name of the disc was the Watermirror disc. It was a strange treasure that allowed them to see anywhere within a range of fifty kilometers.

The true examination had already begun. The leaders witnessed and took note of every single person's performance.

The Watermirror disc rippled and produced a clear image.

Right now, it depicted the ship.

No matter how the female instructor insulted or threatened her, Xiao An remained calm and unperturbed the entire time, treating the threatening woman like air.

"Is this the child that Qiu Haitang wants? She truly is quite different," said a man dressed like a Confucian scholar with a square hat on his head. He had delicate facial features and only seemed to be around thirty years of age, but he was actually at an advanced age of eighty already. He was Ye Dachuan's brother-in-law, the prefect of the Clear River prefecture, and the leader of the school of Confucianism, Liu Zhangqing. What happened in the Parlour of Clouds and Rain two nights ago obviously could not escape his ears.

TL: A square hat, as in one depicted in the picture below:

"That girly is unfazed by both harassment and flattery. Her mental fortitude is quite rare." A bald-headed monk nodded with prayer beads in his hands.

"Zhangqing, who chose this woman to receive the children? She's so harsh and impatient, without any regard for what's wrong or right. These children will develop a bad impression of the academy the moment they join it," said a skinny but energetic old man in coarse clothing with a long, formal hat.

TL: A long, formal hat, like the one depicted in the picture below:

"If the instructor is too gentle, how are they supposed to keep so many kids under control? And, it's all her fault for not speaking up and explaining what had happened, or the instructor wouldn't have blamed her. Who can she blame apart from herself? As for the little fatty, he must be removed from the academy immediately. He already knows how to gang up on people and steal at such a young age, paying no regard to what's wrong or right. What will he become if he practises qi?" The Scarlet Hawk commander, the leader of the school of Legalism, Wang Pushi, said in an impressive manner.

Liu Zhangqing said, "If that's the case, then we'll go with that!" A figure immediately stood up and departed behind the curtain. Many instructors were waiting outside, ensuring that their orders could be carried out at any time.

"Let's look at the person who brought her here instead!" The image in the Watermirror disc changed, now depicting Li Qingshan. He was currently boarding a ship with other people.

Li Qingshan seemed to sense something, so he looked around. Was someone looking at him?

The people behind him urged, "Hurry up!"

Li Qingshan made his way forward and arrived before a jolly instructor. He took out the one hundred spiritual stones he had prepared, and the instructor stowed them into his hundred treasures pouch. The instructor called out, "Another one!"

He seemed like he was running a business. However, Li Qingshan had estimated that the revenue of the academy would probably approach a hundred thousand spiritual stones from just this intake of disciples.

And, this was just the beginning. The way the academy charged their disciples was very special. It was a hundred spiritual stones for every single person for the first year. If they failed to increase their cultivation by a single layer the next year, the fees would double, becoming two hundred spiritual stones.

Li Qingshan knew with the simple knowledge of mathematics from his past life that just by compounding a few more times, the fees would reach a level that no Qi Practitioner could afford. Joining the Academy of the Hundred Schools was easy. There were so many schools, so there would always be a school willing to accept a particular person. However, wanting to remain in the academy was very difficult. Qi Practitioners at higher cultivations would struggle to increase their cultivation, so they would end up suffering instead.

If you understand, then I thank you for your understanding. If you don't understand, then I can understand why you don't understand. Anyway, just try to understand each other. Long live understanding each other. Today's the last day for double monthly tickets, do you understand?

Chapter 279 - Pure Yang Constitution

At the same time, the academy would provide various rewards to the outstanding disciples, following the single principle of natural selection. The better you did, the more resources you received. If not, your progression would only become more and more difficult, and in the end, all you would be able to do was run errands for the academy.

Li Long called out excitedly on the ship, "Qingshan, over here!"

Li Qingshan failed to find who was spying on him in the end. He rubbed the back of his head and boarded the ship.

Unbeknownst to him, the leaders of the various schools all witnessed his behaviour.

"This kid's senses sure are sharp. His cultivation isn't bad either. He's quite the talent in the intake this time," said Liu Zhangqing in evaluation, shifting everyone's attention onto the focus of the entrance examination. Perhaps there were talents among these children, but it would take a few months at the very least before they knew.

"It's just a pity that old Wang has already got his hands on him." The old man in coarse clothing with a long hat shook his head.

"The kid's a troublemaker. I don't even know which school he'll pick." While Wang Pushi did not particularly like Li Qingshan, he still felt glorified over the fact that the Hawkwolf Guard had produced a talent.

“I think there’s some destiny between this child and our buddha. May I ask if commander Wang is willing to part with him?” asked the old, bald monk.

“He’s a skilled Body Practitioner, so compared to the school of Legalism, the school of the Military suits him better.” Before Wang Pushi could reply, the middle-aged man who sat beside him silently spoke up all of a sudden.

Even as he sat there, his posture was dead-straight. He placed both of his hands on his knees and he did not move at all, staring straight ahead. When he remained silent, he seemed just like a carved statue. Even in a relaxed state, he radiated with a steady sense of power. He was the leader of the school of the Military, the General of Riling Might, Han Anjun.

“One Thought, do they all have a destiny with your buddha as long as they have a bit of talent? Old Han, even your son didn’t contend with little Hua over him. If he really chooses the school of the Military, I’ll shut up immediately.”

“Buddha refers to the buddha in our minds, which is also the buddha within all life. He’s not destined with your buddha, he’s destined with “our” buddha. Namó Amitābha!” The One Thought monk strung together a list of buddha names.

The Watermirror disc did not remain on Li Qingshan for long. It moved onto others. They focused on the young, talented people with relatively high cultivations in the entrance examination this time. They all discussed which school they should end up in.

Among them, Hua Chenglu would obviously follow Hua Chengzan’s footsteps and join the school of Legalism. Although they did not stay on her for long, they did look at Qian Rongzhi as well. As a Hawkwolf guard, she would naturally be a member of the school of Legalism too. Wang Pushi was pleased with himself.

The issue of the otherfolk, Mu Kui, led to quite a dispute. Even now, the conflict between otherfolk and humans had yet to stop. However, when Han Anjun nodded and said, “I’ll accept him.” there was nothing more that they could say.

Apart from them, the Watermirror disc checked on another dozen or two people. They were all the talents this time. Although Li Qingshan stood out among regular Qi Practitioners, he seemed to be nothing special when compared to them.

The Clear River prefecture that spanned fifteen hundred kilometers was equivalent to all of Jiangnan on the earth that Li Qingshan lived on previously. There was a population in the hundreds of millions, so there were countless people with talent and fortuitous encounters.

To be able to stand out among so many people, be depicted in the Watermirror disc, and be discussed by the leaders of the various schools, Li Qingshan could already be regarded as an extremely rare talent, but he was nowhere close to startling them with his talent. Out of everyone sitting in the room, had they not been geniuses themselves in the past?

Li Qingshan and Li Long leaned against the railing on the ship and discussed what happened after they had parted ways. Because what Li Qingshan went through was just too mysterious and startling, with far too many secrets to hide, Li Long was speaking most of the time with Li Qingshan listening.

As it turned out, Li Long was quite the talent among the Iron Fist school. Going from being a third-rate master to a second layer Qi Practitioner in under a year was already a very startling step. The Iron Fist school was already prepared to elevate him to protector.

An expansive wall of mist suddenly appeared on the surface of the water. It seemed extremely strange in the current weather, but Li Qingshan failed to sense any spiritual qi within it.

However, when the ship sailed through the mist, Li Qingshan felt like the world was spinning around him. He immediately understood that the wall of mist was part of a huge formation, except all of its spiritual qi and spiritual energy was withdrawn perfectly. Then he checked on Li Long, who failed to notice anything. He just looked around in confusion.

Suddenly, a huge, black shadow appeared in the mist, and it rapidly grew larger. It arrived right before them in the blink of an eye. It was a vicious, strange-looking fish, ten times the size of the ship. From so close, it basically seemed like a mountain. Its mouth was filled with razor-sharp teeth that were the size of spears, and it lunged towards the ship.

There were a series of cries from the ship as various talismans and techniques flew out.

Li Qingshan shook his head. There was no murderous aura, no daemon qi, and no living aura. It was a fake.

The strange fish passed through the ship. Sure enough, it was an illusion. The talismans and techniques obviously failed to hit anything. However, the illusion was just too realistic, such that many people were pale-faced, still shaken by what they had gone through.

The male instructor clapped his hands with a smile. "Don't be afraid, it's just a joke. Though, if you move through this mist without permission, the joke might end up being real!"

The Watermirror disc obviously caught everyone's expressions, leading to a series of laughter and a rough evaluation.

The cowardly were not necessarily despised, rejected from all schools. Being faint-hearted did not mean they could not make machines, practise divination, or practise medicine. Since they lacked the courage to fight and kill, then they should just stick with the work that suited them!

Of course, the cultivators that had completely paled in fright had already lost their right to be chosen in Han Anguo and Wang Pushi's minds. The very core of these two schools were based on fighting and killing. They were not places for the cowardly.

By now, the mist began to disperse as the radiant sunlight landed on the nose of the ship again. The ship inched into the domain of light.

Everyone could not help but gasp. Even Li Qingshan widened his eyes. The dark blue lakewater seemed even clearer than outside the mist. Many large, rare fish swam around in the water. The sky seemed bluer too as a flock of large, white aquatic birds flew over the ship. The spiritual qi was so dense that even breathing seemed much more delightful.

A jade-green island with a chain of mountains stood right before them, with various other islands of different sizes scattered in the surroundings like stars in the night sky. They seemed like pieces of jade that had fallen onto a blue piece of silk.

Li Qingshan suddenly understood something. It was these islands that created the formation, assimilating with nature.

This was the Academy of the Hundred Schools, while the largest island in the centre was known as “Contention”!

The ship directly sailed towards Contention island, and everyone became riled up with it.

A while later, the ship docked.

The instructor brought everyone to a square. There was a formation engraved there. Li Qingshan found the formation to be slightly familiar. Suddenly, he remembered that the formation scroll Sun Fubai had taken out when he had his yin and yang and five elements tested below the Green Vine mountain seemed quite similar, except this one was much larger and much more complicated.

To the Academy of the Hundred Schools, the elemental affinity of their disciples was the most important. As a matter of fact, it served as a first prerequisite.

Li Qingshan had already understood from the Book of All that the school of Legalism preferred profound yin, the schools of Buddhism and Confucianism preferred Profound Yang, the schools of Mohism and Agriculturalism preferred earth and wood, the school of the Military preferred metal and fire, the schools of Names and Novels preferred water, the school of Yin-yang preferred a balance in yin and yang, while the schools of Daoism and Miscellany accepted everyone.

Of course, the prerequisite of elemental affinity was not always absolute. Even if a person had non-matching elemental affinities, they could still join the various schools. The school of Legalism accepted all elements, while the school of the Military was not fixed on metal and fire either. On the other hand, while the school of Buddhism did accept all, the main cultivation method they practised focused on force and strength, so yang, and the great, righteous spirit of the school of Confucianism also required Profound Yang.

They could write an entire book on the considerations they took into account. Li Qingshan only possessed a rough understanding, ensuring that he would not make any general mistakes.

All of the Qi Practitioners stood in line according to how they had initially boarded the ship. They would hear the instructor call their names one by one. After they were called, they would step onto the formation.

“Chen Han!”

A man walked out from the group and arrived at the centre of the formation. The five elements lit up simultaneously. His metal, wood, water, and earth elements were all very weak, but his fire was a blazing ball that stood seven feet high. The yin and yang qi above his head displayed two shades, one light and one dark. Light completely exceeded dark.

Only then did Li Qingshan understand why the testing formation was so large. As it turned out, it could simultaneously test the strength of the various elements.

The male instructor took note of this. "High yi for fire, low yi for yang, and the rest is low ding."

TL: Once again, the levels of talent is named after the twelve heavenly stems (just the top four in this case). High, mid, and low are self-explanatory, but the heavenly stems in this case appear to be jia] yi] bing] ding, from highest to lowest. The heavenly stems also appear to be the more dominant measure, so a low jia talent would be better than a high yi talent for example.

When Hua Chenglu walked into the formation, a huge shadow immediately appeared above her. She was deemed to have low jia for yin, making her a good disciple for the school of Legalism. She left the formation under everyone's gazes of amazement.

Closely following her was Yu Zijian. She was slightly nervous. She still practised the Innate Method of Practising Qi right now, and she never had her element affinity tested so far.

The formation flashed and produced an extremely soft thrum. Scorching, white light blinded everyone's eyes as a dazzling ball of light rose up above her head, like a miniature sun.

The light poured through the Watermirror disc, landing in the gloomy room and lighting up everyone's faces. The expressions of all of the leaders changed slightly.

Liu Zhangqing smiled. "High jia for yang. She's suitable for practising the righteous spirit of Confucianism. Surely she's mine, right?"

All people who could reach the extremes of any single element were rare geniuses.

"The fuck do you know?" The slovenly daoist priest that had remained silent the entire time, sipping his alcohol with his head lowered, suddenly spoke.

"Please enlighten me, senior!" Liu Zhangqing was an extremely cultivated person. He bowed and asked for guidance, demonstrating the gentleness, modesty, and courtesy of confucianism.

Of course, the primary reason was because he was not this old daoist priest's opponent. He was only at early Foundation Establishment, while the old daoist priest had already reached late Foundation Establishment.

The slovenly daoist priest ignored him, remaining fixated on the Watermirror disc as his gaze became quite fervent. All the other leaders of the schools were shocked by this. All of them knew this old daoist was violent-tempered and foul-mouthed, looking down on everything. Yu Zijian's talent might have been extraordinary, but there was no need for him to behave like this!

But that gave everything away. Liu Zhangqing exclaimed, "The Pure Yang constitution!"

Apart from the scorching ball of light above Yu Zijian's head, there was not even the tiniest sliver of darkness.

Regular people possessed both yin and yang, just like how birth could not happen with yin alone, and growth could not happen with yang alone. Only extremely accomplished cultivators could reach the limits of yang and produce yin as a result, attaining the state of pure yang. This had always been the

most simple principle in cultivation. If there was light, then there was darkness. If there was yin, then there was yang.

However, there were a few, rare cases of people being born with pure yin or pure yang, which gave them a sacred constitution for cultivation. However, men were primarily yang, and women were primarily yin. For the Pure Yang constitution to appear on a woman, it was an outlier among outliers.

Chapter 280 - Five Elements Constitution

At the same time, among the five elements for Yu Zijian, a fine-textured, treasured sword directly condensed for the position of metal. It had also made the rankings of jia, but no one took note of it.

Everyone's eyes lit up. The slovenly daoist priest immediately began to regret his actions.

Sure enough, Liu Zhangqing clapped his hands. "Now that's a disciple of my school of Confucianism!"

The slovenly daoist priest shook his head. "Now that's nonsense! If the Pure Yang constitution isn't used to practise daoism, it's literally throwing it to waste. The righteous spirit is just a lesser path of cultivation!"

"Amitābha. Sirs, please do not argue. This child has a destiny with the buddha. She'll definitely be able to attain the fruition of wisdom and condense a ʔarīra!" Before Liu Zhangqing could refute him, the One Thought monk had already begun spouting buddhist terms.

The slovenly daoist priest smiled. "Why don't you ask the girly whether she wants to shave her head and become a damned ass with you?"

The One Thought monk was taken aback. Although hair was known as the strands of kleshas, or afflictions, were there any young women willing to cast it aside unless they were completely devastated inside? The school of Buddhism was a major school, but they had nowhere near as many disciples as the slovenly daoist priest, and it was exactly because of these rules and precepts. As a result, the One Thought monk stopped arguing. He only lowered his head and chanted to himself, having already made up his mind to try to win her over later.

The slovenly daoist priest thought, This bald ass won't pose any problems, but as for Liu Zhangqing, he'll be an issue. Though, I can just tell the girly about prefect Liu's romantic affair when the time comes. He snickered.

Liu Zhangqing shivered inside when he heard the snicker. He knew the slovenly daoist priest was up to no good, but he only smiled elegantly, expressing his determination to win her over.

Since the three of them had already spoken, the other leaders decided to keep their mouths shut, and it was not just because the Pure Yang constitution was indeed suited for their three schools the most. Among the academy, the schools of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism possessed the greatest influence and power too, so how were they supposed to contend in terms of resources?

All the schools just served as a platform for cultivation. Even the line between the statuses of master and disciple was not as clear as it was in sects. Disciples were responsible for earning their own cultivation resources, rather similar to the schools from Li Qingshan's previous life.

However, once they came across an actual genius, they would do everything that they could, regardless of the cost, to win them over. The hundred schools of thought would contend against one another, forming their own factions. An additional genius disciple would be additional power in the future.

Originally, no one paid much attention to this young girl beside Hua Chenglu, but the radiance she displayed now stunned everyone.

Hua Chengzan glanced over from afar and saw Yu Zijian scamper out of the formation in a hurry. He smiled. So it was the Pure Yang constitution. That was what it was. They should be able to tell, right?

Among these people, no, the entire Academy of the Hundred Schools, probably no one had a brighter future than her; this was just a glimpse of her glory.

A while later, Mu Kui entered the formation too. He directly condensed a towering tree for the wood element and was evaluated as high jia for wood, displaying the Giant Lumberfolk's extraordinary talent and affinity for the wood element.

The sun rose higher and higher as the cultivators were tested one by one. A genius would appear from time to time, leading to admiration and praise from everyone. Qian Rongzhi happened to be one of them. She also had an affinity for yin, which was evaluated as low jia. She was only slightly worse than Hua Chenglu.

Finally, it was Li Qingshan's turn. He made his way into the formation slowly, and a vast wave of water suddenly expanded into the surroundings.

Yu Zijian sighed in admiration. "So powerful!" Hua Chenglu remarked too, "No wonder he can control the water elemented flying sword so easily."

At the same time, he condensed a weapon and a boulder for metal and earth. Although they seemed much coarser compared to Yu Zijian's treasured sword, they were still quite rare. A ball of white light appeared over his head, along with a small shadow.

"Quite interesting." The male instructor smiled and took record of it. "High jia for water, low yi for metal and earth, mid bing for wood, low ding for fire, high yi for yang, and low bing for yin."

If he knew the results of Li Qingshan's previous test, he would not just find it as quite interesting anymore. Last time, the wave of water was only half this size, while the metal and wood elements were nowhere as prominent either.

Although it was not exactly impossible to change the talent and elemental affinity of a person, it was extremely difficult. It either required extremely precious pills and herbs, or decades or centuries of bitter cultivation.

However, the supernatural abilities from the black ox had directly turned Li Qingshan into something else, and gradually, he began to possess the talent and power only available to daemons.

A few more leaders took note of Li Qingshan in front of the Watermirror disc.

Everyone in the crowd looked at him with gazes of admiration and jealousy too.

“Brother Tian! Isn’t he the person that we saw in the Parlour of Clouds and Rain? His talent for the water element is so impressive!”

The young man in white said disdainfully, “It’s so-so. I’ll show you what impressive actually means later.”

A while later, the instructor called out, “Chu Tian!”

The young man in white smiled at the two girls beside him before stepping into the formation gracefully. His eyes were filled with absolute confidence.

Now, the testing period was almost over. The sun had almost risen to its highest point. Everyone felt slightly sick of this now, no longer focused on it, conversing among themselves instead. A few instructors discussed among themselves, ready to clear away everything as well and take everyone to go eat. They would then continue with other tests in the afternoon.

Suddenly, five colours, gold, green, blue, red, and yellow, rose up into the sky. Above the five corners of the formation hovered a fine, sheathed sword, a towering tree, ebbing waves of water, a scorching ball of fire, and a lofty, miniature mountain.

All five elements demonstrated their extremes.

The square immediately fell silent.

“They’re all high jia. No, even the formation can’t test it. Is there something wrong with the formation?” The instructor that took notes cried out, breaking the silence. Cries and sighs of admiration rose up in the surroundings. Everyone could not help but stare at the centre of the formation, at the young man in white called Chu Tian.

A genius. A true genius.

Even the various leaders almost ended up missing the Pure Yang constitution that Yu Zijian had demonstrated because it was just too rare, let alone these Qi Practitioners.

Yu Zijian had only stood in the formation for a moment before leaving in a hurry. Even if some people noticed the absence of darkness in the light, they would just dismiss it as having not looked carefully enough.

In the end, the only evaluation she received was high jia for yang, so the treatment she received was similar to what Mu Kui and Li Qingshan went through. It was nowhere near as shocking as Chu Tian right now.

“You’re so outstanding, brother Tian!” The eyes of the two girls by Chu Tian’s side lit up. Chu Tian smiled at them, as if he was saying, How’s that?

“The Five Elements constitution!”

The various leaders were all stunned. The intake this year sure was special. There was the Pure Yang constitution, and then the Five Elements constitution appeared. They were both extraordinary talents that rarely appeared even across the span of several decades. It would lead to quite a competition between the schools.

Li Qingshan watched on silently too. He lamented over how there sure were a lot of geniuses in the world! Suddenly, he felt the young man called Chu Tian shoot a provoking glance his way, which perplexed him slightly.

Chu Tian stood there for quite a while before slowly making his way out. He unfurled his fan and seemed extraordinarily elegant. If he was slightly more handsome, he would be perfect. However, no one noticed this small flaw of his right now. The talent he had displayed was enough to make up for everything. Strength served as the best appearance for a man.

Not only did the various leaders stop caring about the remaining tests, but even the Qi Practitioners present stopped paying attention. There was a racket on the square. The people who had demonstrated extraordinary talent in the testing earlier were now surrounded by quite a lot of people. Some clever Qi Practitioners had already chosen their targets to befriend. Everyone belonged to the same cohort, so they should have gotten along with one another anyway.

In particular, several dozen people filled Chu Tian's surroundings. No one doubted the fact that this young man would rise up very soon.

Li Qingshan rubbed the jade ring on his thumb. He wondered how Xiao An was doing.

The ship that Xiao An was on instead sent them to a smaller island on the outskirts. The children were all taught the Innate Method of Practising Qi and bestowed with a single Qi Gathering pills. After that, they were taken to a hall where they began meditating in search of the mysterious feeling of qi.

Nearby, the female instructor stood with a pointer and a sunken expression. She would glance at Xiao An from time to time, appearing even more bitter now.

Although an instructor had already told her the entire story due to Wang Pushi's orders, she became even more furious. This girl was clearly making a fool out of her!

And, the messaging instructor had told her that some of the leaders of the schools had become displeased with her, so she became both fearful and furious. She was tempted to give Xiao An a beating immediately, but the instructor also warned her that this child was not a regular child, but one that a few leaders might end up favouring. As a result, she was no longer able to lash out in anger, but that did not mean she was willing to just accept this.

She had already made up her mind. She would not let Xiao An have it easy. She refused to believe that she was unable to teach a single kid a lesson in the next few months with everything in her reach.

Xiao An ignored this hostility. Instead, she focused on practising qi. She did not find the Innate Method of Practising Qi unfamiliar. When Li Qingshan practised this cultivation method, he had frequently come to her for guidance.

Finding the feeling of qi was enough for these children to turn red from holding their breaths, but it was no difficulty for her. In a single instant, a strand of true qi appeared, beginning to flow through her body.

After flowing for a while, it had strengthened by several fold. The Qi Gathering pill had already been absorbed completely, but the true qi continued to grow at an unbelievable rate.

The path of practising qi, in simpler terms, was refining vitality into qi. Primarily, it was about extracting vitality from the body and refining it into true qi. Who knew how many people she had refined in order to create the tiny body of hers, so the vitality she possessed was countless times more abundant than regular children.

She was neither limited by understanding and comprehension nor resources, so before long, she had completed the first three layers of the Innate Method of Practising Qi.

Afterwards, the true qi began to push through her Yang Heel meridian, but in the end, it flowed smoothly through the Shenmai acupoint before passing through the other acupoints too. It connected the acupoints to form the Yang Heel meridian.

The various obstacles in the eyes of regular people was a piece of cake to her. If the meridian was a river, then her river had no dams at all.

Right from the very beginning, her body condensed from the Path of White Bone and Great Beauty had been perfect.

A while later, Xiao An stood up.

The bitter-looking female instructor immediately scolded her, "Who told you to stand up?"

Xiao An replied emotionlessly, "I'm done."

"What do you mean you're—" To her surprise, the female instructor suddenly noticed that the aura Xiao An gave off had already reached the third layer.