

Keyboard Immortal

Chapter 7: Breakthrough

Translator: Pika

Zu An turned around, grabbed a chair, and sat down. "Let's begin. I only have one request – don't hit my face. I rely on my good looks to keep myself fed."

Chu Huanzhao ground her teeth in fury, but she didn't want her parents or her sister to find out about any of this, so she assented. "Fine. I won't hit your face." With a snap of her wrist, she sent the whip howling through the air. It struck him in the chest with a terrifying crack, ripping a gaping hole in his shirt and splattering blood everywhere.

Chu Huanzhao flashed a victorious smile... but it quickly froze, then curdled. The anticipated howl of agony never came, and there was not even a pained whimper. Zu An simply sat there, still and quiet. He did, however, have a peculiar look on his face.

As the whip struck, Zu An had felt no pain - instead, a wave of pleasure overcame him. He struggled to still his facial features and maintain his composure, but only partially succeeded. He felt like a man lost in a desert taking a bite out of a juicy, frozen watermelon, or a scholar who had placed first in the imperial exams. He felt such rapture that he almost moaned in pleasure.

However, he willed himself to silence, knowing that there could be others about. He didn't want word to spread that he was some sort of masochist.

"Huh?!" Chu Huanzhao stared at him with wide-eyed shock. She had not predicted this. He must be forcing himself to remain silent and pretending indifference. Yeah. That's gotta be it! The last time I hit him, he bawled like a baby. He's probably clamping his jaws shut for the sake of this wager!

Clenching her teeth, Chu Huanzhao struck a second time. She knew better than anyone else just how terrifying the Wailing Whip was. Someone with incredible willpower could probably endure one strike, but not a second.

The whip drew a second gash across Zu An's chest, marking him with a huge and bloody 'X'. Chu Huanzhao stared at him eagerly. Let's see if you scream this time.

"Hmm? Mmm..." Zu An struggled to hold in his moaning, but he had reached his limit. He almost blushed at the amount of pleasure he felt. A whole new world of sensations had opened up for him.

Chu Huanzhao felt her hairs stand on end. Everything that had happened today was the complete opposite of what she had expected. She took some time to consider, then decided to strike a different part of him. Maybe his chest is already completely numb from his injuries.

Taking a deep breath, she slashed her whip against his leg. Alas, she was let down once again. Although his face was twisted by what must have been sheer agony, not even a whimper escaped his lips.

"I... win, right?" Zu An noticed that the first rune formation glowed golden, and the second one was almost half-full. Seems like this little brat really went all out in whacking me.

"This isn't possible!" Chu Huanzhao's eyes widened further. She stared at the whip in her hand, bewildered. Is my whip broken?

She contemplated for a while, then walked over to Zu An and handed the whip to him. "Hit me with it and see what happens."

Zu An was instantly wary. "Are you serious?"

"Stop jabbering and hit me! Just remember, don't hit me in the face." Chu Huanzhao gave him a disparaging look, her nose stuck haughtily in the air. She closed her eyes, her lashes quivering.

Zu An sighed as he studied her perfectly smooth, pale, oval-shaped face. The women of the Chu clan are all weirdos, but I have to admit, they have good genes.

There was no way he was going to hit her face. It wasn't because he was a feminist; rather, he was worried about what the Chu clan would do to him once they found out.

He chuckled softly. "I swear, all my life I've never heard of someone making a request like this. I promise to satisfy you." This little wench hit me hard as hell. Time to give her a taste of her own medicine.

He lashed out viciously with the whip. Unfortunately, his body was terribly weak. Despite his pain being converted into pleasure, the real damage to his body had not been diminished. It was a minor miracle that he was still alive. As such, there was no real power behind his strike.

His blow was soft and weak, but as soon as it connected, Chu Huanzhao shrieked, clutching the tiny wound it had made, her face contorted in pain. "That hurts!!"

Zu An watched as tears streamed down her face. For the first time, he rejoiced in having drawn the Ball of Delights as his prize.

"You bastard! Why'd you hit so hard?!" Chu Huanzhao nursed the wound with one hand and scrubbed her face furiously with the other.

Zu An was struck dumb. "You clearly hit me way harder just now."

"Then why didn't you scream?" Chu Huanzhao stared at him curiously. She was very aware that his blow only held a fraction of the force that she had used.

Zu An coughed lightly, then said with a straight face, "A real man will never scream in pain." Sometimes, you gotta fake it until you make it.

Chu Huanzhao blinked, then nodded uncertainly. "I-it looks like I underestimated you. Fine. You win. I won't blame you for killing Bootlicker."

She turned to take her leave. She had to find her maidservant quickly to poultice her wound. I hope it doesn't leave a scar.

However, Zu An stopped her with an expectant look on his face.

"Don't leave yet," he implored. "Whip me a few more times."

It was Chu Huanzhao's turn to be struck speechless. She could not believe what she had just heard.

"Ahem-hem-hem!" Zu An realised how masochistic that statement made him seem, and hurried to correct himself. "That's not what I meant! I meant to say, let's make another wager."

His second rune formation was nearly full. How could he pass on such a wonderful opportunity? Besides, his Ball of Delights would still be active for a while longer, and it would be a shame to let it go to waste.

"What's the wager?" Chu Huanzhao replied without thinking.

Zu An said, "Same as before. If I win, you are no longer allowed to take me to task for climbing into your bed last night. If you win, um... right. I'll... I'll lick your shoes."

Although there was much about this world that was foreign to him, he was fairly certain that a groom climbing into his sister-in-law's bed on his wedding night was probably an unforgivable offense. If his sister-in-law was willing to drop the matter, his life in the Chu clan would improve immeasurably.

Unexpectedly, Chu Huanzhao's flushed a bright scarlet. "Why are you so fixated on licking my shoes?! You pervert! I'm gonna go tell my sister!"

Zu An was in disbelief. You were the one who came up with this perverted bet in the first place!

“Fine! I accept your wager!” Chu Huanzhao rubbed her hands together in anticipation. She was just like any other gambler; she didn’t understand how or why she had just lost, but she was determined to win the next round.

“Then please whip me!” Zu An intoned heroically.

Three lashes ensued. Chu Huanzhao stood open-mouthed. The man had collapsed to the ground, unmoving, but he hadn’t let out a single peep. “Doesn’t that hurt?”

“Of course it hurts! But a real man never cries out in pain!” Zu An sensed that his third rune formation was half-full. He would have danced with joy, but he did not want to set off her suspicions.

Chu Huanzhao fell silent. This is the most courageous man I’ve ever seen in my life. He’s clearly pathetically weak, but he has such amazing willpower! She had encountered many mighty figures whose strength far outstripped Zu An’s, but none of them had been able to endure more than two strikes from her whip.

“Would you like to make a third wager?” Zu An probed.

Chu Huanzhao narrowed her eyes. “Do you... have some sort of special fetish?”

“Of course not!” Zu An protested innocently. Oh hell no. I refuse to end up saddled with that type of reputation. “I just want to make you lick my shoes.”

“In your dreams! No deal!” The old Chu Huanzhao would have agreed in a heartbeat, but having lost twice in a row - to someone she had thought would have no chance of winning at that! - she was feeling a bit antsy.

Zu An had expected her to turn down this third wager, and so, he proposed new terms. “Then if I win, you have to respectfully address me as ‘brother-in-law’ every time you see me. Deal?”

Chu Huanzhao took her time to consider the odds. The man was her brother-in-law to begin with, so it would be no big deal even if she lost. She nodded. “Deal!”

A new contest began! After the first lash, Zu An could not contain himself any further, and quivered as he let out a low moan. It wasn’t a moan of pain, but one of sensual arousal.

“I knew you were a pervert! I’m done here!” Chu Huanzhao’s face was beet-red. She stamped her feet angrily before picking up Bootlicker’s corpse and fleeing the scene.

“Hey, what about the two remaining hits!” Zu An called out desperately, but Chu Huanzhao disappeared into the night like a terrified little rabbit.

Jeez. She’s no fun. Zu An grumbled to himself. Thankfully, the third rune formation was close to full. He struck out with a fist to test out his newfound strength.

“You actually reached the third step of the second rank? And you’re almost at the pinnacle of the third step, at that!” A voice called out, and a figure walked into the room. This was none but Old Mi.

Was he hiding nearby and watching this entire time?! Zu An felt a surge of anger, but he didn’t let it show. Instead he asked, “What do you mean, ‘third step of the second rank’?”

Old Mi explained, “Previously, I explained the nine ranks to you. At the second rank, you temper your skin. From the second rank onwards, there are nine small steps between successive ranks. Kid, in just two short hours you actually managed to reach the third step of the second rank! That’s intriguing. It takes an ordinary person months - or even years! - to draw in enough to reach the first rank, let alone the second rank. You, a lower Ding class talent, actually managed to reach the third step of the second rank in mere hours. The secret manual I gave you might be formidable, but it shouldn’t have allowed you to gain strength that quickly.”

Zu An quickly deduced what had happened. After he had absorbed the secret manual, the F2 button had carved all nine formations onto his skin. This allowed him to skip the most difficult part of the process, which was drawing enough ki into the body, and start from the second rank. He had already filled up two formations and was almost done with the third, which placed him on the third step of the second rank.

He racked his brains for a plausible explanation to offer Old Mi. Cowardice was the only true way of survival, after all! He was still very weak at the moment. If he demonstrated a ridiculous amount of talent, others might grow jealous and attempt to take his life.

Old Mi’s muttering interrupted his musings. “It seems the Wailing Whip truly is a formidable weapon. Not only that, your resistance against the pain must have somehow amplified its effectiveness. The unique technique of this secret manual was undoubtedly the catalyst, causing you to experience these incredible results.” Should I try this in the future too?

Hearing Old Mi’s piece together the truth on his own accord, Zu An no longer saw the need to concoct an excuse anymore. He was just about to ask what powers his new level unlocked when a wave of pain crashed into him. He howled.

Chapter 8: Faith in Brother Spring

Translator: Pika

The suspicion faded from Old Mi's face. "I was wondering how you managed to endure the agony inflicted by the Wailing Whip. Clearly, you were using your tremendous willpower to resist it. Your mental fortitude is quite admirable."

Zu An, however, was mentally firing off curses as fast as he could think of them. Did I get a counterfeit Ball of Delights? Wasn't it supposed to grant pain immunity? What the hell is going on?!

It took him a second to figure it out. The Ball of Delights only lasted for an hour, and that hour had just passed. While it had made him immune to the damage-amplifying strikes of the Wailing Whip, the injuries he'd sustained were still fresh. Now that the ball's numbing effects had worn off, he was feeling the pain from these wounds.

Old Mi walked over to examine his wounds. "Count yourself lucky, kid. If that little girl had hit you one more time, you would've died." Old Mi sighed in amazement. "Your body is unbelievably weak. I'm amazed that you managed to endure so many blows."

Only then did Zu An remember the other effect the Ball of Delights granted. It was something like, any 'lethal damage' inflicted by a woman with more money than you wouldn't kill you outright, right? Hey, doesn't that mean I now have a huge advantage when facing off against rich women?

He mentally slapped himself. What are you thinking! What kind of a man picks fights against women!? On top of that, the restrictions on the Ball of Delights made its usage incredibly impractical.

Old Mi pulled out a bottle of medicinal powder and cast it over Zu An's wounds with a wave of his sleeves. "Take these two bottles of medicine. This one is to be applied externally, and the other is to be ingested. Spend the next few days recuperating. Don't let yourself get killed."

A cool, refreshing sensation spread over Zu An's wounds, granting him immense relief. With heartfelt gratitude he said, "Elder, I really don't know how I should thank you."

Old Mi chuckled. "Don't worry. Soon, you'll know." He revealed a toothy old grin and took his leave.

Zu An paid him no heed. He was completely focused on the rewards he had received. He had farmed Chu Huanzhao for a total of 1444 Rage points, which meant that he could play the lottery 14 times! His image of her improved dramatically. She has the potential to be my ATM in the future.

He dragged himself onto his bed, and with nothing else to do, he decided to try his hand at the lottery. Thankfully, the Keyboard was virtual and could be controlled via his thoughts alone. Otherwise, he doubted that he had the strength to even pick up a physical one.

He mentally 'clicked' on the lottery button, then began eagerly watching as the light marker danced across the keyboard. What reward will I receive this time?

He was baffled when he noticed that, this time, the light only flickered across the numbers and the spacebar; it didn't touch the letters at all. Then he recalled the earlier notice mentioning that only part of the rewards were currently available. Only the first three pulls had been unlimited because they were part of the newbie package. He would probably have to unlock the letters in the future.

Wait a sec. I also remember something about a 'greatly increased drop rate' for the first three pulls... but one of them was still a 'Thanks for playing'. Doesn't that mean the normal drop rate is...

Thanks for playing!

Zu An frowned, but this was to be expected. He didn't worry too much, and spent another 100 Rage points for another pull.

Thanks for playing!

Thanks for playing!

Thanks for playing!

.....

Eight tries in a row, but all of them were 'Thanks for playing'!

I'm going to bloody ... Zu An was on the verge of smashing the Keyboard to pieces. It was a pity that he couldn't farm Rage points off himself; otherwise, he would have maxed out his meter.

He wanted to wash up before trying again, but his injuries made moving impossible. He didn't have the strength to even sit up.

He was oblivious to the pair of eyes watching him coldly from outside his window. If he had but glanced over, he would have instantly recognised the willowy frame of Chu Chuyan's personal maid, Snow.

Has this man gone mad? Snow's beautiful eyes clouded with confusion as she watched Zu An's face twist and contort. The man was even floundering his hands and stamping his feet feebly. She took a closer look at the situation and was taken aback by the bloody wounds that covered his body. The Wailing Whip?

She was familiar with the tell-tale marks of the Second Miss' weapon. Her face was a mixture of satisfaction and regret. "I guess it'd be better for him to die at her hands. If I

act personally, I would run the risk of exposing myself.” She knew just how weak this useless son-in-law was; there was no way he could survive so many lashes from the Wailing Whip. He was almost certainly going to die in bed.

She turned and departed, returning to her own room. After ensuring that no one was around, she began to nibble on some melon seeds as she quickly scrawled out a secret message on a piece of paper.

“Respected young master, rest assured; the young miss remains pure and unblemished. The two have not shared a room together. I believe that I will get rid of Zu An soon. I expect you will hear some good news soon.”

She began to detail Zu An’s impotence, but hesitated and scrubbed that part out. She was unable to account for what caused it, and she was also unwilling to let her young master know that another man had touched her.

She gritted her teeth in anger as she recalled how that bastard Zu An had touched almost every part of her body by the pool, and then gone even farther in Miss Chu’s room. She hatefully bit down on a few seeds. Letting him die by the hands of the Second Miss is letting him off easy. I was planning to let him experience utter torment tonight.

She could not forget Chu Chuyan’s role in the night’s events, instructing her to wait upon Zu An. She bit her lips and added another line to the message. “I may be overthinking things, but I sense that the young miss harbors suspicions against me. Please do not delay in carrying out your mission, young master.”

After finishing the letter, she sealed it and then summoned a beautiful little hawk. She attached the letter onto the hawk’s foot. “Hurry up and deliver it to the young master.”

The hawk seemed to possess human sentience. It spread its wings and then quickly flew off into the night.

Zu An was blissfully unaware of how narrowly he had just escaped assassination. All of his attention had been focused on the lottery. Finally, on his tenth attempt, the ball of light came to a halt on the ‘1’ key. An image of a red bottle appeared on the virtual screen, accompanied by a line of text.

Faith in Brother Spring (S): In the unfathomably ancient cosmos, there has long been a famous saying – ‘Have faith in Brother Spring, and you shall gain everlasting life!’ This bottle will quickly replenish your health. So long as you are still alive, even the deadliest of wounds will be healed and you will regain all your health.

“Faith in Brother Spring?!” These random Chinese internet memes caused Zu An to strongly suspect that the creator of this keyboard came from his world... but that didn’t

make sense. Despite modern society's technological advancements, it wasn't even close to being able to produce something like this Keyboard. [1]

He withdrew the item and hefted it in his hand. It bore a resemblance to the health potions found in modern-day video games. He considered his present state, then immediately quaffed it. He was worried that he would drop it, weak as he was. That would suck.

Once the red liquid entered his stomach, a warm sensation spread through his limbs and into his bones. The terrifying wounds caused by the Wailing Whip began to close at a visible rate, and even the scorch marks he had suffered from the earlier lightning strike were healing, regenerating fresh new skin.

"Oh, wow. It's this effective?!" Zu An sat up, no longer feeling himself teetering on the edge of death anymore. His body swiftly reverted to normal, as though he hadn't been injured at all.

This is a miracle drug! If I had a supply of this, I'd become virtually invincible! Wait a second – 'Faith in Brother Spring (S)'. What does the 'S' stand for? Zu An pondered a moment. It probably means 'small'. And it should bear some similarity to how healing potions work in games, right?

There was probably a limit to how much health a small potion could restore. If he levelled up in the future and had too much health, a single small potion might not be able to heal him fully. Unfortunately, the stupid explanation didn't give him any details as to the maximum amount of health a bottle like this could restore.

He stood up and stretched his body. His vitality had returned, and he sensed a new degree of power in his limbs. He credited his new-found strength to him reaching the third step of the second rank.

He put his body through a series of tests and evaluated his current strength to be equivalent to that of four normal men combined. One must know that he had been weaker than an average man prior to this transformation!

However, the result failed to satisfy Zu An. His current rank had not come easily, but he didn't feel that powerful. He felt he had not gained any advantage over an ordinary cultivator.

It was his lack of knowledge of this world that hindered his understanding. This was a land where a person's status and authority was determined by their progress as a cultivator. The Emperor - an Earth Immortal - had the highest status and was also the strongest cultivator. The leaders of the various major sects and the patriarchs of major clans were usually Grandmasters, while the Kings, Princes, and Grand Marshals were generally Masters. Ordinary Generals and the Nine Ministers were of the ninth rank,

while most dukes and commandants, as well as some marquesses, were of the eighth rank. City governors were usually of the seventh rank, and so-on and so-forth.

The lowest-level officials such as village teachers and village tax collectors only needed to be at the second rank. Reaching second rank was more than enough to qualify them as officials of the imperial court, granting them a commensurate salary and resources for cultivation. Many spent their entire lifetimes struggling and failing to reach this level. In fact, only 10% of most would-be cultivators made it to the first rank of harmonizing with the natural world. Reaching the second rank required an enormous amount of ki stones, which was out of reach for most ordinary folk.

After spending some time getting used to his 'new' body, Zu An returned to the lottery. This time, he harbored no illusions that he would draw a decent prize. All he wanted was to get something, even an item that may seem useless like the Ball of Delights. It had taken him a thousand Rage points to get a single bottle of health, and he only had four pulls left. He just hoped they wouldn't all be empty draws.

The first three pulls were unsuccessful. On the fourth, however, the ball of light finally came to rest on the '0' key. Stunned, Zu An shifted his gaze to the screen, and saw a strange crimson pill appear in the center.

Marrow Cleansing Pill: Why is it that you train so hard every day, yet your results pale in comparison to those of some young masters who just go through the motions? There is a famous saying – genius is 1% inspiration, 99% perspiration. However, that 1% inspiration is often more important than the 99% perspiration. This pill will cleanse and refine your marrow, dramatically improving your body's overall quality and increasing your gains.

Zu An recalled that both Chu Chuyan and Old Mi had dismissed his body as one that was extremely unsuitable for cultivation. With this pill in hand, I'm sure to quickly rise up the ranks, earn a higher salary, win the affections of beautiful women, and begin my trek up to the highest heights of society!

1. Li Yuchun, with 'chun' meaning spring, was a very popular Chinese singer some years back. Because she dressed in a tomboyish manner, many people nicknamed her 'Brother Spring'. Her fanbase made a meme by photoshopping her pictures to make her look like Jesus, then captioned them with 'Have faith in Brother Spring, and you shall gain eternal life!'