

Refining the Mountains and Rivers

- Chapter 1 – Qin Yu –

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As the sun fell, the blazing hot temperature began to cool. Warm rays of light shrouded over the medicine garden as the lush fragrance of spiritual plants in their thousands of shapes and postures began to bloom.

Qin Yu bent over, tightening the wire fence. After making sure that it wouldn't fall over he stood up straight. Suddenly, he violently coughed and a light blush crept up his pale white cheeks.

The light of the setting sun pierced through the canopy of treetops and illuminated the youth, covering half his face in long shadows. With his thin body and eyebrows, he couldn't be considered handsome. There were a few faint spots that marred his looks, but even so he seemed inexplicably kind.

The reason for his current state was that a wild boar had broken into the medicine garden earlier this year. The manager of the garden had experienced a moment of kindheartedness and had allowed Qin Yu to escape the pitiful fate of death by hanging, but, he had still been punished and his wounds hadn't received proper treatment.

Afterwards, there was still that little boy called Potato who had looked after him while he was lying ill and coughing on the bed all day, but his complexion remained paler than that of the average man and he was often mocked as a sickly ghost.

Even so, Qin Yu remained smiling. He turned and looked around indifferently. He was an orphan, and ever since he was young he had understood the truth of the fist – that strength was what mattered in this world, so he would never provoke unnecessary trouble. He tidied up some items, and after some time he bowed down and began to clean the blue stone tiles covering the ground.

This sort of stone was the most famous of the Eastern Mountain Sect. It was defined by its excellent toughness and high quality. Many cultivating sects liked to use these stones to construct their sect entrances, and they could be regarded as one of the key products to come from the Eastern Mountain Sect, earning them a considerable number of spirit stones. Of course, outer court

disciples like Qin Yu would never be fated to obtain a high end cultivation item like a spirit stone. Most spirit stones entered the pockets of the Sect Master and various Elders, with only a small number trickling down to the other disciples.

Even after seven years in the Eastern Mountain Sect, would he be able to afford a single one of the blue stone tiles beneath his feet with the entirety of his wealth? Thinking of this, Qin Yu's complexion darkened and he felt burdened. He was well aware of his talent and knew that he was doomed to a life of mediocrity; he wouldn't have thoughts that he shouldn't have.

It was time.

Qin Yu picked up his shovel and began to carefully clean it. He was responsible for the blue stone roads near the medicine garden. All year round there would be pollen, flower petals, leaves, and all sorts of things that were swept out by the wind. When these fell on the stone road they became extremely difficult to clear off. Thus, the tip of this shovel had been enhanced with a little bit of iron used to forge magic tools. Although it only came to the size of a grain of rice, the shovel's degree of sharpness increased by several levels.

Potato always joked that this shovel was Qin Yu's most valuable treasure and could be considered a ninth-grade magic tool. However, the reality was that it belonged to the Eastern Mountain Sect in actuality and he only had the right to use it.

"That brat, what a dirty mouth!" Qin Yu quietly scolded; even as the corners of his lips curved up.

Suddenly, a laugh echoed out from afar. Despite the person's attempts to make their laugh seem as natural and free as possible, they still couldn't cover up the rampant flavor behind it.

Qin Yu was startled. He quickly drew back to the side, bowed his head, and cupped his hands across his chest.

"Third senior-apprentice brother's martial talent defies the heavens. In just 27 days he broke through seven boundaries and reached Foundation Establishment, this is simply a record that has never existed in my Eastern Mountain Sect before!"

“Let alone my Eastern Mountain Sect, you cannot even find someone that can compare with Senior-apprentice Wei Wei within 100,000 miles of the Southern Empire!”

“Senior-apprentice Brother Wei Wei, I have had many questions about my cultivation recently. I wonder if senior-apprentice brother has any time tonight to help me with them?”

“Junior-apprentice Sister Zhang, just who do you think Senior-apprentice Brother Wei Wei is? He has already scheduled his daily cultivating time. If you want to ask your senior-apprentice brother for tips, then you must make an appointment at least three days in advance.”

Within the crowd of people, the one with the loudest and brightest laughter was the third senior-apprentice brother. He was surrounded by young and beautiful girls on both sides. Their laughter was like bells and as they snaked around him they wittingly or unwittingly brushed by his body. In addition with the looks of deep admiration in their eyes, it left one even more enchanted by them.

Qin Yu was left dazed for a moment.

It was unclear just what third senior-apprentice brother Wei Wei's origins were. According to his bragging, he had an ancestor that was once a military officer belonging to the royal family, and that ancestor possessed a peak Golden Core cultivation. When he was judged to have sufficient talent in cultivation, his name was changed by his clansmen so that he could one day reach the same heights that his ancestor reached in the past and revive the glory of his clan.

In the past, everyone had considered his bragging words a joke. This third senior-apprentice brother's name might have sounded grand, but his character and attitude weren't beautiful at all. His words were sharp and biting and he was someone who haggled and took advantage of whoever he could. When one compared him to a seemingly cold and wise military officer of the royal family, it was simply too hard to see the similarities between them.

But beginning two months ago, this third senior-apprentice brother seemed to have decided to write his own epic story of rising from the grass and into the heavens. In 27 days he broke through the seven boundaries of Energy Refining and entered Foundation Establishment with unstoppable force. Then,

he continued to rush forwards and it was said that just yesterday he reached the third boundary of Foundation Establishment.

Let alone a tiny faction like the Eastern Mountain Sect, even if this cultivation speed were placed amongst one of the grand immortal cultivation sects it would still be amongst the best of the best!

On the same day that third senior-apprentice brother broke into the Foundation Establishment realm, he prayed and begged overnight to the Sect Master. On the next day, he was officially acknowledged and formally accepted. From that point on, third senior-apprentice brother was like a salted fish that came back to life. He became a direct disciple of the Sect Master and his fame and prestige rose to the peak!

On that day, the nearly thousand-strong outer court disciples of the Eastern Mountain Sect turned red-eyed with envy.

In these days, third senior-apprentice brother seemed to have become the sect's future hope. The other direct disciples were placed under increased pressure even as the third senior-apprentice brother continued blazing forwards with unstoppable arrogance.

“Fellow junior-apprentice brothers and sisters, you praise me too much. I have just stepped onto the road of cultivation and am trying to guard against developing arrogance and insolence. You all shouldn't be trying to harm me like this.” Wei Wei's expression was puckered up in anticipation of all the flattery he was about to receive. And as expected, some people said, “Senior-apprentice brother is too modest,” “I am completely sincere,” as well as “Senior-apprentice brother's heart is as stable as a rock, how can we possibly shake it?”

With his eyes flitting over the crowd one at a time, Wei Wei's eyes paused on Qin Yu for a brief moment. But soon, he retracted his gaze, his expression indifferent. The two of them no longer stood at the same level and were destined to no longer intersect in the future, so what did it matter if they knew each other in the past?

As the laughter faded away, there were a few faintly angry and coy cries. Third senior-apprentice brother had teased and flirted with a few of the beautiful young girls too much and had suffered some soft punches as a result.

Qin Yu stood up and glanced in a direction before setting off. His figure gradually faded away, his back like a lone bamboo in the setting sunlight.

With his work finished, he didn't yet return to his residence. He passed a few streets, following the hills for some time before arriving at a remote valley.

The vegetation here was thick and lush and rarely saw any activity from people. Qin Yu took several deep breaths and narrowed his eyes. Soon, he found hoofprints in the ground, and from the size and depth, one could see that whatever left these prints was a large fellow.

He crouched down and carefully examined a hoofprint. When he noticed the missing corner, he smiled.

Found you!

The wild boar that haunted this valley was the exact same wild boar that had rushed into the medicine garden half a year ago and nearly caused his death. Qin Yu had kept an eye out for this matter all this time, and in the last few days he had finally narrowed down the beast's whereabouts.

Without entering the mountain valley, Qin Yu stood up on his tiptoes and looked towards a large tree within. As he saw that the trap he laid down was still intact, he turned and left through the route he came.

The spiritual strength surrounding the sect was relatively rich and the wild boars wandering the land were exceptionally smart as a result. They were particularly sensitive to smells and he didn't want his plan to fail midway.

He wanted to deal with this wild boar because of the desire for vengeance in his heart, but that wasn't the only reason.

Qin Yu had listened to others say that this wild boar lacked a corner on one of its hooves and in the past several years it had entered the medicine garden several times and eaten numerous spirit herbs. Because of that, its flesh and blood body contained a massive amount of spiritual strength. What he wanted was this spiritual strength. If he could catch this wild boar and eat its flesh and blood, then perhaps he might be able to cure his illness.

He no longer delayed as he returned to his residence. As usual, several people mocked him along the way.

Qin Yu lowered his head and bitterly smiled. It was only when he entered his own small courtyard that his complexion became calm again. He washed his face and hair and began to eat a meal. He chewed carefully, slowly eating his food with water. He was well aware of his current physical condition. It had not improved, and the stuffiness and tightness in his chest continued to worsen with every day. In the past several mornings he had even coughed up blood.

A great deal of fear brewed in the youth's heart, but he tried his best not to think about it. He forced himself to eat more.

After he finished eating, he put away his utensils and quietly rested for a moment. Once he had calmed himself, he began to cultivate.

That was right – even outer court disciples could cultivate. After all, in order to join an immortal cultivating sect, the basic requirement was that one possessed the talent to cultivate. The only difference was that their cultivating talent was considerably poorer.

The outer court disciples of the Eastern Mountain Sect were all issued the same uniform materials: three pages of the True Wood Arts. But even a complete amateur of immortal cultivation like Qin Yu knew that the True Wood Arts was nothing but defective goods. The quality was subpar and incomplete to a frightening degree; it couldn't even be graded.

But there were no other choices available. Qin Yu understood this and never complained. He had cultivated diligently for the last seven years without missing a single day and had barely managed to reach the second level of the Energy Refining realm. When he revolved his cultivation method, he could feel a weak and cool aura circulating through his body, making him feel just a bit more comfortable.

Two hours later, Qin Yu opened his eyes. Disappointment flashed deep in them. He noticed that after every time he cultivated, the pain in his chest would fade away a little, but the magic powers of Energy Refining's second level were far too weak and weren't able to eliminate the hidden wounds in his body.

Moreover, every time the magic power circulated through his chest it would cause a loss. Although it wasn't much, it still surpassed the rate at which Qin Yu could restore himself. By this time, his second level of Energy Refining was teetering on collapse. Once his boundary fell and he was forced to rely on

the magic powers of Energy Refining's first level alone, he feared his condition would immediately erupt.

Thus, Qin Yu only dared to cultivate for two hours each day.

He rose up and stretched his muscles. He pushed open the door and began to slowly run along a remote path. This was actually a considerable challenge to Qin Yu's exhausted body, but he knew it helped circulate the blood energy within his body, so he clenched his teeth and persisted through it.

Hu –

Hu –

His heavy gasps were like worn-out bellows of a shabby smith. A faint red blush began to appear on the youth's pale face. An hour later, Qin Yu stopped. His body swayed a little and his ears began to ring.

He forced himself up, closed his eyes, and adjusted his breath. After his heart rate returned to normal, he turned and walked back on the path he came from.

After running for an hour, he would need at least twice the amount of time to walk back. Normally, he would return to his residence by the time the sun set and today was no exception.

Qin Yu dragged himself back. When he emerged from the remote path, he stopped and surprise colored his face.

When he was a child he discovered that his five senses far surpassed those of an ordinary person, and his hearing and eyesight were particularly keen. At this time, the night wind was blowing and he could hear faint ripples of sound echoing along it. As he listened carefully, he could identify that this sound came from around the steep slope in the back, and not too far from this steep slope was the valley where that wild boar appeared. Could his trap have finally worked?

Suddenly overjoyed, strength somehow gushed out from within Qin Yu's fatigued body. He turned around and rushed towards the slope.

The spiritual energy around the Eastern Mountain Sect was relatively rich, and because of this the weeds that grew here had increased in quality over time. For example, the common vines on the slopes were often harvested by county

farmers to feed their livestock, but on this slope, these vines were actually as tough and thick as cowhide.

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Qin Yu raced down the slope and the lines of vines constantly whipped against his legs, causing them to burst out in heat. But in his excited state he didn't notice this at all.

As he rushed down the slope he could hear the sounds coming from the valley much more clearly. His eyes brightened. However, as he approached the valley he suddenly heard a pitiful cry sound out and he froze in his steps!

Wei Wei!

This voice, there was no way he would be wrong.

How could he be here?

Qin Yu knew that he had likely been wrong from the very start. Before the sickly sweet smell of blood met his nostrils, his forehead was already covered in beads of sweat. He turned to leave, but then his heart rapidly contracted and he tossed himself to the ground without hesitation.

Woosh –

A faint green blade tore through his robe, cutting dangerously near his head before sinking into the ground. Qin Yu's robe immediately became wet with sweat. If he had been struck just then, he feared he would have been decapitated.

“Junior-apprentice brother, since you've already arrived, why are you in such a hurry to leave?” The sect master's chief disciple said, his complexion pale white. A smile hung on his lips and his voice was mild and steady, completely different from the fierce killing intent displayed just before.

Wei Wei had fallen to the ground, a long wound crossing over his chest and belly. His blood pooled on the ground and he gasped like a fish thrown onto shore. There was still a little bit of the pride and arrogance that he had displayed before. As he saw who arrived, light suddenly burst out from his eyes. He shouted out, “Junior-apprentice Brother Qin Yu! Hurry and help me! Han Dong has gone insane, he wants to kill me!”

