

## Scholar 301

### Chapter 301

Therefore, while talking with Dean Li, Lu Zhou put forward a request for talents. He conveyed that not only did he want to hire PhD students to do research, but he also wanted to hire master's and undergrad students as interns.

Dean Li told Academician Xu about Lu Zhou's idea, and Academician Xu instantly agreed.

The academician was a "reformist", he was determined to improve Jin University's reputation.

According to the agreement between the Jinling Institute of Computational Materials and Jin Ling University, every year the chemistry department would send 30 undergrad students, 10 master's students, and 1-3 PhD students to enter the research institute for internships. They would do basic assistant work.

If the method proved to work, then they could expand the number of interns.

These internship positions would not delay the students' academic studies, and it would also enhance their professional experience.

Especially for undergrad students, the opportunities to gain research experience was limited.

Because of this, the undergrad chemistry major students jumped at this opportunity.

Especially for the third and fourth-year students that planned to go into research, their application rate was very high. They would have to be selected by their grades.

Lu Zhou also allocated some of the internship spots to first and second-year students.

Although they were less knowledgeable, they often had more potential and was more malleable.

Even those who couldn't do experiments and could only clean up the laboratory, they could still listen to the experts and learn something about chemicals.

"All of the top students in the chemistry department are on this list." Academician Li had a name list in his hand as he smiled and said, "Remember our agreement; cultivate talent however you want but don't convert all of our precious students to mathematics."

Lu Zhou smiled and said, "Don't worry about this, I promise you I'll return all of your students."

Although computational materials science needed mathematics, it was still mainly based on chemistry. However, in cutting-edge research, the difference between disciplines wasn't that clear. If a student wanted to transfer to mathematics, they definitely could.

"Okay, I will remember your words." Dean Li smiled and handed the name list to Lu Zhou before he said, "Then the matter is in your hands now!"

This wasn't just about the name list, there was also an empty laboratory building.

The new laboratory building was originally intended as a material mechanics laboratory for dynamic mechanical analyzers, electronic tensile testing machines, quartz crystal micro-equal, and other new equipment.

The building was fully built, but the instrument hadn't arrived yet. Therefore, it was borrowed by Lu Zhou.

Lu Zhou asked the people from academic affairs to lend him an office.

Lu Zhou basically stayed at Jin Ling University these days. His office was on campus, he ate at the school cafeteria, and his hotel was near Jin Ling University.

Although he had a house near the university, it was too messy to live in. It was too troublesome to clean up, and the house was full of Xiao Ai's chassis smell.

Every time he called to ask someone from the computer store to help him with hardware maintenance, the people from the computer store would ask him why the house was so messy.

Lu Zhou asked his student, Vera, to help him apply for a two-week holiday extension from Princeton.

Although Lu Zhou didn't care about the professor salary anymore, the work still brought him inspiration for his research. Also, it gave him time to learn some of the "obvious" problems and discover if they were really as trivial as he thought.

He and Mr. Fermi were the same in this regard; learning and cultivating students go hand to hand.

Also, watching his students grew into top scholars was a very rewarding feeling.

Fortunately, his number theory classes would begin at the end of February, and his interviews for the fall admissions could be done online, so it was fine for him to take the two-week extension.

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Once the people were recruited, the next step was to delegate work to these people.

The interns could wait until the project had officially begun. However, formal researchers should be arranged to work as soon as possible.

Inside the laboratory building office, Lu Zhou met with Liu Bo and Brother Qian.

Lu Zhou asked them, "Does Professor Li hate me?"

Liu Bo said helplessly, "No, he just asked us two to screw off."

Lu Zhou smiled embarrassedly.

There was no other option other than to steal talent from Professor Li. His laboratory project at Silicon Valley had only just begun, he couldn't spare any talents from there. He had to rely on his two friends.

Especially Qian Zhongming. Although he only had a master's degree, his experience in the field of materials science was undoubtedly at PhD level. Even in the field of research, most PhD graduates hadn't done as much research as him.

This was why Professor Li valued him so much.

Brother Qian was wearing a white lab coat, and he smiled and said, "Don't call me brother anymore, I'm here to learn from you, I'll have to call you master now."

"I can still learn from you. Let's learn from each other, there's no need to call me master," Lu Zhou smiled and said.

Qian Zhongming shook his head and said with a serious tone, "I can barely teach you anything. But in the field of computational materials science, I can only learn from you."

Lu Zhou saw how serious Brother Qian was and smiled.

He cleared his throat and changed the subject.

"This time our project belongs to one of the key national scientific energy research projects. Specifically speaking, we have to solve the shuttle effect in lithium-sulfur batteries; I believe you know this already."

Brother Qian nodded and said, "So, do we have any ideas?"

"Some, but it is still very vague." Lu Zhou shook his head and said, "But we have another problem to solve— the problem of equipment."

Qian Zhongming and Liu Bo both nodded.

It would be impossible to do experiments without equipment. Even if one made a mathematical model of an experiment, one would still have to test the theory through real-life experiments.

Lu Zhou paused for a second before he said, "I already contacted Umicore and ordered a batch of equipment through their contact. Although I hired some people from Star Sky Technology to go to Europe to look over the purchase, I still need someone reliable to sign the contract. Therefore, you might have to go to Europe for a day."

"No problem," Qian Zhongming smiled and said, "I used to help Professor Li do equipment purchases as well. It isn't just about money, the equipment also has to be reliable."

Lu Zhou nodded and said, "Yeah, thank you."

Liu Bo saw that he wasn't assigned anything, so he raised his hand and asked, "Then what about me?"

"I hope you can go with Brother Qian." Lu Zhou looked at Liu Bo and smiled as he said, "I'd be worried if he went alone."

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In addition to lithium material professors, representatives of the national research funds, as well as representatives of energy companies such as BYD and Sugi, also participated.

The subject for the discussion was obviously lithium-sulfur batteries.

As an internationally renowned scholar, Lu Zhou naturally participated in the conference.

The conference would begin at ten o'clock, but at only nine o'clock, the conference room was already crowded and packed.

It was like people knew that this conference was going to be difficult, so everyone had a serious expression on their face. Although it was packed with people, it was oddly quiet inside the conference hall.

Lu Zhou opened his water bottle and took a sip. Before the conference began, he took the chance to observe the faces of his peers.

In short, the situation didn't look good.

Around 9:30 a.m, Old Lu whispered a few words to the academicians from the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

Once almost everyone had arrived, Old Lu adjusted the microphone, cleared his throat, and said, "Since everyone has already arrived, we won't waste anyone's precious time."

The conference room quieted down. They waited for Old Lu to continue.

"... Energy is the lifeblood of the industry. Whoever masters energy, masters the future. This mission is very difficult as it relates to the strategic layout of our country in the field of energy.

"At the last meeting, the top executives have decided to develop in the direction of lithium-sulfur batteries. However, the wisdom of everyone here today is needed to solve the technical problems.

"The main discussion topic of this conference is about the thought process to solve these problems.

"I hope that everyone can brainstorm and to speak up if they come up with any ideas."

Old Lu was the moderator of the conference, therefore, he was the one to make a brief opening remark.

On the surface, this conference looked like it was useless. Everyone wasn't talking about existing results, but rather the thought process of problems. However, this wasn't the case.

The national and company research fund was limited and not every research project was able to apply for adequate research funding.

Generally speaking, if the country decided on the direction of lithium-sulfur batteries, then the projects related to lithium-sulfur batteries would increase, and other lithium batteries related projects would decrease.

This was the same for research.

There were thousands of ways to solve the lithium-sulfur battery shuttle effect. It was possible both from the positive electrode material and the electrolyte.

However, the Ministry of Science and Technology and the Ministry of Finance did not understand academia.

But that didn't matter. When they made a decision, they would often consult the industry experts and take their opinion into account. They could guarantee sufficient research funding on a certain research topic.

There was always a few research topics that had potential and could breed high-quality results.

This was why this conference was so important.

Everyone hoped that their research topic or direction could receive more financial support.

Because of this, the atmosphere was heavy even before the conference began. But after the conference began, the discussion was quite enthusiastic.

The first to speak up was Professor Wang Haifeng from Zhi University.

Professor Wang stood up and smiled as he said, "Since Director Lu told everyone to brainstorm and share their ideas, I will throw in my two cents.

“Our research team found a highly ordered nanostructured carbon-sulfur positive material. This can be used as a carbon structural framework to limit the dissolution of sulfur during charge and discharge, thus effectively curbing the sticking effect.”

Professor Wang took out some existing research results to back up his claims.

Old Lu took Professor Wang’s opinion seriously, and he asked, “What are the costs? What is the energy density? Is this technology reliable?”

“The costs are not high and the energy density is quite impressive. The theoretical energy density measured in the laboratory was close to 2000Wh/kg. This far exceeds current lithium batteries. I have published relating theses on ‘Advanced Materials’, but this technology needs to be perfected.”

Professor Wang paused for a second before he continued, “In fact, in the current mainstream practice in the academic world, the key to solving the shuttle effect of lithium-sulfur batteries is to use porous carbon materials to block polysulfide ions and reduce the loss of sulfur. My suggestion is that we can adopt a similar approach. The focus of research and development should be on sulfur-carbon composites.”

Old Lu nodded seriously.

The assistant sitting next to him quickly started to type on his laptop.

After Professor Wang ended his speech, he smiled at his peers and sat down.

Suddenly, another professor spoke.

“I have something to say.”

It was Academician Wu Shigang from Aurora University; he was also a big name in the materials science industry.



Old Lu looked at the old man and said respectfully, “Academician Wu, please go ahead.”

Academician Wu grabbed the microphone and paused for a second before speaking, “I was involved in the 863 Program, therefore, I have already considered carbon-sulfur composite materials when I was other lithium-sulfur batteries issues. This strategy seems to be very effective on paper, but the actual effect is very limited.

“The experiment in the laboratory was based on a small button cell, the electrode was very thin, the sulfur load was not high, and the total sulfur content was only about a few milligrams. Actual batteries have a much larger sulfur content, generally at a gram. Also, the electrode is very thick and the unit sulfur load is very high.

“The laboratory was able to circulate 1,000 times of sulfur/carbon composite material, which in turn can only be cycled several times in actual batteries.

“Moreover, the most deadly problem of carbon-sulfur composites is that the energy density is not high enough. If it were used in 3C products such as computers and mobile phones, it would be fine to use carbon-sulfur composite materials as the positive electrode. If it were used in cars or larger electronics, it might not be the best.”

The old man had been doing research in this area for over 10 years. As an engineer, he paid extra attention to the practical value of technology as opposed to the theoretical academic value.

Moreover, he was involved in the field of solid electrolytes, which was the opposite of Professor Wang.

Professor Wang was naturally unhappy.

However, it wasn't him that refuted; it was another professor in the field of carbon-sulfur composite materials that spoke up.

“You are right, sulfur-carbon composites do have defects in this area, but in my opinion, these defects can be solved with repeated experiments. A year ago, we all thought that lithium batteries were unstable. But what about now? Who can doubt the potential of lithium batteries?”

Lu Zhou: ... ?

Lu Zhou, who stayed silent this whole time, was inexplicably targeted.

The meeting was becoming fiercer.

Although it wasn't as aggressive as the MRS Conference, everyone could still feel the tension in the room.

Lu Zhou started to think.

Fortunately, the system's scanner gun saved him a lot of research and development costs, and the technology of lithium dendrite was sold for a good price. Otherwise, he would have to bite the bullet and join this discussion.

Suddenly, another professor spoke.

"Let me say a few words."

This time, it was Professor Sun Hongbiao from Shuimu university.

Although Shuimu ranked lower than Aurora University or Yan University in the field of lithium battery, it was still quite influential.

However, his words were different from the previous big names.

This old professor coughed and said slowly, "I noticed that Professor Lu hasn't spoken yet, but I can tell he has some good ideas about this problem. I don't want to say anything, I just want to hear his opinion."

Lu Zhou: ???

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Suddenly, Lu Zhou put down the water bottle, adjusted the microphone, and spoke in a clear voice, "... According to my findings at the MRS Conference, the biggest problem of lithium-sulfur batteries is the shuttle effect. The academic world hasn't come up with a single unified solution to this problem.

"My personal opinion is that both of these ideas are good. Solving from the positive electrode material is one way, and using solid electrolytes is another way. I think we can pursue both ideas seriously."

Lu Zhou couldn't help but feel proud of himself.

He didn't know if he was correct, but he didn't care.

Answering this way would ensure that he wouldn't offend anyone.

The professors here were trying to secure research funding, but Lu Zhou was using his own money to fund experiments, so he didn't want to get embroiled with the fight.

He was responsible for his words.

However, Professor Sun Hongbiao didn't let him off the hook.

The old man smiled and continued to ask, "Professor Lu is right, but we have limited resources. From your point of view, which path do you think is more promising?"

This Shuimu Professor was quite the character.

He probably wanted to research polymer positive electrode materials. He saw that Lu Zhou solved the lithium dendrite problem with the modified PDMS film, so he bet that Lu Zhou would be optimistic about the polymer direction just like himself.

But honestly, although Lu Zhou solved the problem of lithium dendrites with the modified PDMS film, he was not optimistic about the shuttle effect of lithium-sulfur batteries.

Lu Zhou couldn't come up with a reason either, and this was just his intuition.

Lu Zhou didn't know what to do.

He felt like whatever he ended up saying, he would offend someone.

After all, Lu Zhou was a big name in the lithium battery industry; his opinion was valuable and influential.

If Lu Zhou knew it was going to be like this, he wouldn't have come at all.

He sighed.

He had no choice.

He didn't want to speak with unfinished research results, but he if continued to dodge the question, it would be a little suspicious.

After all, since he was given special treatment by the government on this project, he had to show his value.

He thought for a bit before saying, "I personally think the direction of the hollow carbon sphere is the best."

People were stunned.

Especially Professor Sun. Obviously, he didn't expect that to be Lu Zhou's answer.

The professors and scholars in the room all had different expressions. Some were disdainful, some were surprised. The representatives of companies were waiting for Lu Zhou to continue.

Old Lu asked, "Can you please tell us the reason?"

"Of course I can." Lu Zhou paused for a second before he continued, "The hollow carbon sphere has a large internal cavity and is suitable as a carbon matrix with high negative sulfur content. Also, the outer porous shell structure can effectively inhibit the diffusion of polysulfide ions. In addition, it has strong structural stability and good electrical conductivity. I personally think it is a good choice."

Academician Wu from Yan University said, "I have a question."

Lu Zhou replied, "Academician Wu, please go ahead."

Academician Wu said slowly, "The hollow carbon sphere is a very new concept, but the concept has hidden traps. Technically speaking, when lithium ions are embedded, with charge and discharge cycles, it will cause volume expansion of the material. This volume expansion causes the alloy to pulverize. I think this technology is very difficult to be industrially applicable."

Lu Zhou: "Reducing the particle size of the active material can reduce the degree of micronization, this is technically achievable with today's technology."

Academician Wu continued to ask, "What about the volume expansion? Have you thought about the volumetric energy density?"

Academician Wu was an interesting person; he was against anything that wasn't solid electrolyte. So far, he avoided talking about his own views in order not to give people a chance to debate with him. He intended to wait until the end of the conference to give a final blow.

This tactical wasn't unusual.

Science was objective, but their applications were subjective.

Many technical problems were not so black and white.

People had to doubt and question other people's opinions, that was the whole point of this conference.

Lu Zhou said to Academician Wu, "The sphere can be alloyed with lithium metal. In theory, the volume expansion problem of the active component can be solved through a 'buffer skeleton'."

Academician Wu didn't have anything to say, but another person stood up.

Professor Wang, who was previously arguing with Academician Wu about the feasibility of carbon-sulfur comparatives, asked with a skeptical tone, "What is your level of certainty?"

Lu Zhou wasn't happy to hear this.

I'll forgive Academician Wu since he's an outsider. You are in the field of carbon-sulfur composite materials, so we're in the same boat. Do you think that by attacking me, you won't have to worry about the volume expansion problem yourself?

Lu Zhou said with a serious tone, "Scientific research is risky. Don't expect it to be successful just because money is thrown in. I can tell you that I'm 1% or 99% certain, but what difference does it make?"

Professor Wang turned bright red; he had nothing to say.

Old Lu coughed and said, "Everyone has good intentions here, so let's keep our discussion focused on academics."

Professor Sun saw that Lu Zhou's answer didn't meet his expectations, so he got up and spoke again.

"Let me say something."

The old man smiled awkwardly and said, "Professor Wang is only asking out of concern. Actually, I am also confused about this hollow carbon sphere. However, I heard that Professor Lu is an expert in the field of computational materials. He must have some unique insights. Maybe, Professor Lu can share those insights with us?"

When Professor Sun asked this question, he didn't think that Lu Zhou could really answer this question from a mathematics perspective. Professor Sun was afraid that Lu Zhou would fool and convince Old Lu.

After all, the shuttle effect of lithium-sulfur batteries...

Was his research direction!

However, he didn't expect Lu Zhou to come up with an answer.

Lu Zhou smiled embarrassedly and looked at Old Lu.

"This is easy. Is there any blackboard around?"

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Now all he needed to do was to present his research.

This wasn't difficult for Lu Zhou at all.

The conference hall quieted down.

No one made a sound, they were all watching Lu Zhou.

Professor Sun stared blankly at the blackboard; he didn't expect Lu Zhou to actually start writing.

Actually, if Professor Sun was familiar with the mathematics industry, he would know that any mathematician would be able to prove their ideas. Especially Lu Zhou.

After all, the person standing in front of the blackboard once proved the twin prime conjecture on the spot, leaving a legacy at Princeton.

In contrast, proving an already established theory was nothing difficult.

Lu Zhou wrote down the last line of equations and stopped. He looked back at the other professors in the conference room.

“According to my calculations, hollow carbon nanospheres with a specific surface area in the range of  $[2326\text{m}^2\text{g}^{-1}, 3762\text{m}^2\text{g}^{-1}]$  and a diameter of  $[60\text{nm}-70\text{nm}]$  can theoretically slow the diffusion of polysulfide compounds and inhibit the shuttle effect.

“Of course, this is all theoretical. Specific chemical formulas, molecular morphology, and more conclusions need to be validated through repeated experiments. I only demonstrated the possibilities.

“This is the basic situation, are there any questions?”

This...

I don't have any questions.

The professors looked seriously at the blackboard, but they were muddled on the inside. The engineers from various companies were taking down notes; they didn't care if it was useful or not, they wanted to copy it down first.

Old Lu's eyes lit up. Although he didn't understand what Lu Zhou had written, he saw the possibility of a new form of energy.

Lu Zhou placed the chalk in his hand down.



At the MRS Conference, no one was able to understand his proof. The group of lithium-ion professors could only nod at his conclusion without even asking a single question.

It was the same here.

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Actually, Lu Zhou had been thinking about a problem when he was researching “Debris No.1”.

It wasn’t about the technology itself, but things outside of the technology.

Objectively speaking, the birth of a piece of technology had to be in accordance with certain laws.

For example, the zipper. Human civilization invented clothes for protection, and in order to make the clothes more convenient to wear, buttons were invented. Then, in the 19th century, the industrial revolution made a dramatic breakthrough in production technology, and the zipper was born.

For the same reason, Lu Zhou believed that there had to be previous inventions before the lithium-air batteries.

In their high tech civilization, there had to have existed a previous iteration of the invention.

It was highly possible that this invention was the lithium-sulfur battery.

Although the carbon nanospheres in the anode material of Debris No. 1 wasn’t directly related to lithium-sulfur batteries, it still brought inspiration to him.

Technological inventions weren’t done in a day. The hollow carbon sphere had to have been invented before the lithium-air battery.

Lu Zhou remembered the prompt of the mission task; his intuition told him that the hollow carbon spheres had to be the key to solving the lithium-sulfur battery problem.

Therefore, he conveyed this viewpoint at this conference.

However, he didn't know if people would believe him.

The conference ended, and people began to exit the auditorium.

Professor Wang sat in his seat and didn't move; he had a dissatisfied expression.

He had no logical reason to be unhappy. After all, he was involved in carbon-sulfur composite materials, and a hollow carbon sphere was also a kind of carbon-sulfur composite materials, but Lu Zhou's attitude toward it made him very dissatisfied.

A 23-year-old researcher had just educated him?

Not only that, but he also thought that Old Lu thought way too highly of Lu Zhou.

Scientific research was esoteric, but there was no special technique. The method was nothing more than continuous experimentation, trial and error, summing up mistakes, and using the experience to build new theories.

In a sense, to experiment was to gamble.

Many people had tried to add surface polymer materials to the surface of lithium anodes. The company, Moli, had spent hundreds of millions of dollars on this research topic. After their bankruptcy, the project was picked up by NEC, who also burned hundreds of millions of dollars on the topic, but they still hadn't produced any results.

However, a mathematician like Lu Zhou just came in from nowhere, wrote a couple dozen lines of calculations, and claimed to solve this billion-dollar project? Wasn't that outrageous?

Wang Haifeng was furious.

However, he had to accept the reality.

Computational materials science was previously an unpopular master's major. Most students in computational materials science ended up working in software development. However, after the paper Lu Zhou published in Nature last year, many universities started to contemplate whether or not they should add a functional analysis class to their course.

Wang Haifeng looked at Lu Zhou and said to academician Wu Shigang, "Don't you think this kid is crazy?"

Although they had differences in academic viewpoints, they were both in the field of lithium batteries, so their non-professional relationship was still good. However, Lu Zhou suddenly appeared out of nowhere, shocking the materials science field.

But, Academician Wu and Wang Haifeng had different opinions.

Most engineers were more pragmatic, and in his opinion, age and identity were secondary. Although he had opinions about Lu Zhou, they were purely academic.

Also, Academician Wu usually spoke what was on his mind.

He was brutally honest in conferences and in his daily life.

Wu Shigang looked at Wang Haifeng and said, "He funds all of his research with his own money, why is it any your business? Just do your own research."

After that, Mr. Wu packed his things and left.

Wang Haifeng was just defeated by Lu Zhou, and now, his old friend attacked him as well; his blood pressure started to rise, and his face started to blush.

Finally, after a while, he was able to mutter something, “Why is that Lu Zhou guy so happy anyway... He’s nothing.”

Wang Haifeng picked up his vacuum flask and walked away.

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Professor Li shook his head and said, “Fine, I’m not here to complain, I’m happy that they found a good place to work at. Even though it is a shame that they didn’t do their PhDs, but they can still learn a lot from you.”

Professor Li was exaggerating. Just because they were his students didn’t mean they had to work for him. However, he did have plans for them to work at Zhongshan New Materials after their graduation.

However, the students made the right choice to go with Lu Zhou. Any student would make this their choice. This was why Li Rongen didn’t oppose his two students from going to Lu Zhou. In fact, he supported them.

It wasn’t like Professor Li’s research team would be heavily impacted due to the loss of two students.

The old man looked at Lu Zhou and said with a serious tone, “Honestly, I didn’t really understand your proof process during the meeting. Are you serious about the hollow carbon spheres?”

Lu Zhou nodded and said, “I was completely serious.”

Among the carbon-sulfur composite materials, the hollow carbon spheres was a relatively new idea and had huge potential.

Also, thanks to various breakthroughs in carbon nanotechnology, the price of carbon nanotubes, fullerenes, and graphene materials were falling every year. However, there was a real application use in industrial production.

Professor Li stared at Lu Zhou for a long time. He then suddenly shook his head and said, "... That Sun Hongbiao guy is poisonous, but he is right, you really do have a plan."

Lu Zhou smiled and humbly said, "I don't really have a plan, I'm only 30% certain on this idea."

Of course, this 30% was only the total chance of success; it wasn't some kind of experiment success rate. Who knew how many experiments it would take...

After all, his estimations on hollow carbon spheres were based on inferences. Although he could use mathematical methods to prove the feasibility, it was really hard to find the actual hollow carbon sphere materials.

"A 30% chance of success is very high. Normally, our experiments have a rate of 10% chance of success," said Professor Li as he looked at Lu Zhou. He then added, "Then, I will wait for your good news."

Lu Zhou asked, "Is your research team not involved?"

Professor Li shook his head and smiled as he said, "You're already in it, so what's the point of me joining? I'll just wait to read your thesis."

Zhongshan New Materials wasn't some kind of industry giant; they had limited resources. It was difficult to produce short term results from lithium-sulfur batteries. Li Rongen was one of the major shareholders of Zhongshan New Materials. Therefore, he didn't want to invest in this direction just yet.

Also, the Chinese lithium battery anode materials market still had a huge market cap unfulfilled. It was much better to fill in the pre-existing market demand than to research and develop new materials.

The lithium-sulfur battery project was only pursued by industry giants.

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The summary documents for the conference would be released in two weeks, but it didn't have much to do with Lu Zhou.

The national project was important, and Lu Zhou was able to enjoy advantageous government policies. However, the system mission was also very important, so Lu Zhou had to focus on both ends.

Although Lu Zhou's two laboratories both researched hollow carbon spheres, their respective missions were different. However, the two laboratories were still able to occasionally complement each other.

The next morning, Lu Zhou did some student interviews through online video calls. He then called Professor Sarrot who was at Silicon Valley.

The instrument was going to take a while to arrive at Jinling's research institute. However, the laboratory in Silicon Valley was ready to start doing experiments.

US\$100,000 salary wasn't cheap; Lu Zhou wanted to put his money to good use.

Lu Zhou wrote up a research plan and sent it to Sarrot's email.

"... I already sent the specific research plan to your email. Read it, and ask me if you have any questions."

Lu Zhou's topological analysis of the carbon nanosphere proved that its prototype could be disassembled into a C70 fullerene molecule and a carbon nanotube.

Chemically speaking, the  $\pi$  bond of the C70 fullerene material was opened and modified by a carbon nanotube, and its molecular space configuration was changed.

Although this sounded complex, it wasn't actually that difficult to do this.

First, they could produce a vacuum in the arc chamber before introducing helium gas. The two high-purity graphite rods would then be brought close to each other, and an arc effect could be generated

using a high-voltage electricity charge. The plasma generated by the carbon rod gasification would continuously collide under the inert gas atmosphere and form stable fullerene macromolecules such as C60 and C70.

Then screened out the C70 molecules and mixed with carbon nanotubes produced by a CVD vacuum tube furnace. A thermal reaction would then occur in the vacuum environment.

Due to the instability of the  $\pi$  bond and the large  $\pi$  bond, a complicated chemical reaction would occur during the heating process. Then, the physical and chemical properties of the product would be analyzed using the polymer model.

It might be possible to find a few milligrams of treasure in a thousand grams of the product. Then one could draw different graphs using time, materials, and other factors. After that was to find a similar empirical formula before finally establishing a perfect theory.

Although this method seemed stupid, it was actually the most efficient method and the best choice.

Before looking for a stable preparation method, one would have to consider all of the possible problems. In fact, many materials science experiments were done through this “stupid method”.

Even though Sarrot knew that this boring experiment was the only choice, after he saw the research plan formulated by Lu Zhou, Sarrot couldn't help but say, “To be honest, we can totally outsource these experiments.”

Lu Zhou said, “I don't trust other people's data. Furthermore, what's the point of having you if I'm just going to outsource everything.”

Sarrot smiled and changed the topic of conversation.

“I promise, boss, I will follow your request immediately.”

Lu Zhou nodded with satisfaction and said, “Okay, trust in your research. This could turn into a Nature thesis.”

Although Sarrot knew not to complain, he still couldn't help but think.

This thing is going on Nature?

Impossible.

This thing has no hope.

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After all, Lu Zhou was the one that opened the door to lithium batteries.

This article was quite surprising to Lu Zhou.

He didn't know who leaked the news; he wasn't even informed that an article would be written.

However, it didn't matter too much. Although production technology could be stolen by other companies, most people were still happy to announce their research results. It wasn't like this was military weapon technology.

The person who recorded the conference was probably a reporter from CCTV, and he or she was probably rolling in cash from the article right now.

Lu Zhou didn't care about anything else. Some people agreed with his idea on hollow carbon spheres, some people criticized it.

People that agreed believed that the hollow carbon spheres had potential in the field of carbon-sulfur composites. Although there were many problems, if they could solve these problems, it might become the key to solving the shuttle effect.

Critics believed that Lu Zhou shouldn't make such public remarks without the results from the experiments.



Actually, this wasn't Lu Zhou's fault.

He did say those words, but it wasn't him that leaked the words.

Of course, the voice of criticism was still in the minority. Lu Zhou had more important things to pay attention to.

During the second week of Qian Zhongming and Liu Bo's trip to Europe, the first batch of equipment had finally arrived.

However, Lu Zhou didn't expect Umicore's CEO to also arrive at Jin Ling University's laboratory building.

At the entrance of Jin Ling University, the Belgium man got out of his car and extended his right hand as he said, "My dear friend, it is nice to see you again, how are you?"

Due to the patent of the modified PDMS material, Umicore's stock price had been roaring. This was evident by the smile on the CEO's face.

In order to enter this battery field, their old rivals, BASF Group and Nichia Chemical, had to pay a high "patent fee".

Whether it was the securities market or the materials market, Umicore was in great standing. Particularly, due to the irreplaceability of lithium battery anode materials, BASF Group was forced to give up the United States Argonne National Laboratory and file a lawsuit against Umicore on the battery patent issue.

Because of this series of good news, the board of directors was very satisfied with Grynberg's work.

Grynberg would definitely marry Lu Zhou if he wasn't a guy.

Of course, this was only an exaggeration.

“Not bad.” Lu Zhou shook Grynberg’s hand and looked at him curiously as he asked, “Why are you here?”

Although Lu Zhou bought the equipment through Umicore’s channels, there was no reason for the CEO to personally come here.

Grynberg smiled at Lu Zhou’s question.

“Remember our agreement? Thanks to your blessing, we have dominated the anode material market. The reason I came here was to talk to you about the profits.”

Lu Zhou looked interested, and he asked, “How much?”

“BASF Group and Nichia Chemicals have paid US\$50 million and US\$70 million in patent licensing fees for the lithium anode materials. This was in exchange for production licenses for two to three years in the global market, and of course, this excluded the Chinese market. Also, for every one ton of anode material that they produce, they must pay us US\$1,500.”

With a big smile on his face, Grynberg said, “US\$100 million in licensing fees have already been paid in advance. According to our agreement, half of this belongs to you. How would you like us to pay this amount?”

Lu Zhou said, “Pay off the costs for the equipment, then convert the rest to RMB and transfer it to my account in China.”

Lu Zhou planned to invest this money directly into Jinling Institute of Computational Materials. Due to his five-year tax exemption policy, there was no additional tax deduction required on this money.

After the equipment passed through customs, the research institute would soon begin their experiments. This required research funding.

Originally, Lu Zhou planned to use his money from Star Sky Technology, but he obviously didn't have to do that anymore.

Umicore had branches in China, so they could handle the money transfer for him.

Just like Lu Zhou expected, Grynberg agreed quickly.

"No problem, I will send this money according to your requirements!"

Although the CEO was here to send money, it still didn't warrant that big smile on his face.

He was here for another reason.

Grynberg smiled and talked about his true intention for this trip.

"The thing is, I heard you are researching lithium-sulfur batteries?"

Lu Zhou said, "I guess you could say that. The field of lithium-sulfur batteries is very interesting, and I have plans in this area."

Grynberg immediately asked, "What a coincidence! We are interested in lithium-sulfur battery research as well, do you need any investment?"

Lu Zhou knew Grynberg would ask this, so he had already prepared his words of rejection. He said, "Do you think I still need outside investors?"

Grynberg didn't want to give up, so he said, "But have you thought about the risk? You must know that scientific research is like gambling, no one can guarantee their research results. I can promise a 70% investment in this research project, and the investment size will be over US\$400 million! Also, we only want 50% of the research results. I trust no one will be able to provide a better offer."

Grynberg was right; no one would be able to provide a better offer.

If it wasn't for Grynberg's recent success in anode materials, he wouldn't care to offer such a huge investment.

Although this offer might seem irrefutable for most people, Lu Zhou wasn't tempted at all.

Because Lu Zhou had one more option that didn't involve money.

That was to spend a large number of general points and ask the system for help.

However, Lu Zhou wouldn't do this unless he had spent half of the US\$400 million.

Although the number of experience points for the missions had been increasing, the general points had not increased at all, thus making the general points extremely valuable.

Unless it was an unsolvable problem, Lu Zhou didn't plan on using the general points.

Lu Zhou shook his head and said, "I will not consider borrowing chips from other gamblers unless I have lost all my chips."

Grynberg asked, "Losing all of your chips? God... You're crazy. Do you plan on investing all your money in this? I'm offering US\$400 million, are you sure you're not going to reconsider?"

Lu Zhou smiled and said, "This isn't a smart investment from a business point of view. However, I am not a businessman, I look at the problem from a different perspective."

If Lu Zhou only wanted wealth, he would just invest in real estate.

Obviously, he wanted something more than just wealth.

## Chapter 307

Lu Zhou was responsible for everything he said. He couldn't help but panic about getting so many people excited over hollow carbon spheres.

What if I'm wrong?

What will happen to my reputation?

Lu Zhou finally knew why the Scottish professor, Peter Bruce, still pursued lithium-air battery even after being proved wrong many times.

This wasn't just about research funding.

This was also about commitment and reputation.

It seems that I have to work harder...

Grynberg smiled and said, "I was only asking, don't take it seriously."

However, Grynberg didn't look like he was only casually asking about it.

Grynberg didn't stay at Jin Ling University for long. He waited for the equipment to arrive before leaving.

Even though it was a pity that he wasn't able to reach a cooperative R&D agreement with Lu Zhou, this was nothing unusual. Scientific research was like gambling, and even top scholars couldn't guarantee good research results. Maybe Grynberg dodged a bullet.

After all, Grynberg could still sign a patent agreement with Lu Zhou after the results came out.

...

After the first batch of equipment for the experiment had arrived, Lu Zhou's research institute in Jinling was no longer an empty laboratory building.

According to Qian Zhongming, the last batch of equipment had already been shipped. He and Liu Bo would probably return to China within a few days.

Qian Zhongming's tone on the phone sounded like he was excited.

After all, that was tens of millions of yuan in research equipment. Any researcher would be thrilled to work with these pieces of equipment.

The head of the chemistry department, Dean Li, heard the news and went to the laboratory building.

The old man touched the instrument and said, "Good god, this thing must be over ten million yuan."

Research on semiconductors and nanometers needed high-resolution microscopes. There was a huge difference between images collected with ordinary electron microscopes and images collected by SEM 1 .

There are many types of scanning electron microscopes.

The resolution of the high-end tungsten filament gun scanning electron microscope was about 3 nm, and the resolution of the field emission gun scanning electron microscope was below 0.8 nm. Needless to say, there was a huge difference in price between the two.

Lu Zhou equipped the laboratory with cutting-edge equipment. Whether it was the imaging lens on a scanning electron microscope, the electron gun, accelerating tube, or even the high-voltage generator... they were all top-of-the-line.

Although they were expensive, it counted as a long term investment.

Researchers were not the only ones who loved expensive equipment, journals did as well.

If someone used a high-quality scanning electron microscope to do an experiment, they could easily publish in Nature or Science.

The chemistry department at Jin Ling University had an electron microscope, but it wasn't high in quality.

It wasn't just the chemistry department that wanted the microscope, the life sciences department was also in need of it. Each professor had an allocated time to use the microscope, while the PhD students would have to apply in advance.

Dean Li always wanted to add a new SEM to the chemistry department, but his application was never approved.

"Not ten million, maybe eight or nine," Lu Zhou smiled and said, "but it's in USD."

Eight or nine million... USD.

Which means 40 million RMB?

Dean Li's eyebrows started to twitch after hearing Lu Zhou.

He couldn't say Lu Zhou was wasting money because Lu Zhou was using his own money.

Dean Li was jealous.

"You do love to spend... You might have to invest hundreds of millions on this experiment."

Lu Zhou shook his head and said, "I can save money on other places, but definitely not on the equipment. A rigorous mathematical model needs rigorous equipment to support it."

Actually, the scanning electron microscope was basically the largest expense. For the experiment, the other pieces of equipment such as the CVD vacuum tube furnace, arc chamber, Fourier infrared spectrometer, and etc cost a lot less.

Of course, even though the pieces of equipment cost a lot of money, Lu Zhou still didn't care.

It was fine to cut down on wages, but he couldn't cut down on the costs of the pieces of equipment.

If the data from the experiment was inaccurate, he couldn't produce any samples. The experiment would then be a failure.

Also, these equipment weren't for one-time use, Lu Zhou could use them for his next project.

According to Lu Zhou's plan, the first investment phase would consist of US\$50 million. After that, he planned on adding another US\$50 million and to buy equipment such as atomic force microscope and transmission electron microscope. His laboratory would be one of the leading laboratories in China.

It was no exaggeration to say that people would be willing to work at the laboratory for free just for the equipment.

After all, if a researcher worked under Lu Zhou and published a few theses, their entire career would change.

They were definitely willing to work for free.

Although having no salary would be unfortunate, but that was one of the sacrifices one had to make in research.

Dean Li said, "Most people really can't afford to research computational materials science."



Previously, Dean Li would talk to other people about opening a computational materials science department at Jin Ling University, but now it seemed that he severely lacked the money for it.

“Yeah,” Lu Zhou said. He continued, “Actually, I want to buy a supercomputer as well.”

A supercomputer was like a nuclear weapon of computational materials science. It was similar to “Anton” 1 .

Simple algebra and geometry calculations could be done with a piece of paper and a pen. However, if someone wanted to do quantitative calculations, even if the data from the experiment accurately simulated the polymer space model, it would still be insanely computationally intensive.

However, Lu Zhou had just spent US\$50 million on equipment, so he didn’t want to spend more just yet.

Lu Zhou planned to wait for some results before making any new purchases.

Suddenly, Lu Zhou noticed that Dean Li had stopped talking.

“What?”

Dean Li: “...”

He ignored Lu Zhou.

He didn’t want to say a word.

Chapter 308

In addition to Qian Zhongming and Liu Bo, Lu Zhou also hired another researcher, Dr. Yang Xu.

Dr. Yang spent two years studying for his PhD at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He was experienced in using the instrument that Lu Zhou had bought, and he was knowledgeable in the field of nanomaterials.

Although he wasn't a big name in the field of materials science, he was well-known enough for Lu Zhou.

Lu Zhou didn't need big names; he only needed people to follow his research experiment step by step.

A week ago, Dr. Yang flew to Jin Ling city from MIT.

Lu Zhou met him at a hot pot restaurant near Jin Ling University.

Dr. Yang immediately shook Lu Zhou's hand and spoke with a smile.

"Nice to meet you, Professor Lu!"

Yang Xu looked like a normal guy; he wore glasses and had no special features.

Lu Zhou smiled and said, "Nice to meet you, please sit down."

Normally, Lu Zhou and his roommates would go to the fish restaurant, so it was his first time at this hot pot restaurant. However, Lu Zhou heard from a couple of old professors from the life sciences department that this place was good. Therefore, he decided to meet with Dr. Yang here instead.

Lu Zhou ordered a large plate of beef slices and watched the waiter as he turned the hot pot stove on. They chatted for a bit before arriving at the topic of research.

"The use of hollow carbon spheres and sulfur to form a composite material to solve the shuttle effect is a very promising direction. This is our main direction of research.

"The hollow carbon sphere has a large surface area, it can increase the sulfur loading and the utilization of sulfur in the electrochemical reaction. The small-sized nanopores can inhibit the diffusion of soluble polysulfide ions into the electrolyte.

“Your mission right now is to collect data on the surface area of the hollow carbon sphere, the effect of the pores on the sulfur loading, and the mass fraction of polysulfide in the electrolyte. After that, send all of the data to me.

“You’ve done similar research studies before, right?”

Yang Xu nodded his head.

“I did a similar study at MIT, so just send the requirements to my email. Oh yeah, which reagent do you plan on using?”

Lu Zhou thought for a bit before he replied, “Use a copolymer of polyaniline and polypyrrole for the precursor, and for the pores, use polydiallyldimethylammonium chloride.”

While the two chatted, the hot pot began to boil, producing a strong scent.

There was nothing wrong with talking about chemistry. However, it was a bit unappetizing to talk about chemical products while eating.

The two then switched the topic of conversation.

“You just came back right, do you have a place to live?”

“I’m from Jinling, I have a house here,” Yang Xu replied. He then smiled and said, “I haven’t been back for a long time though, and there has been a lot of changes.”

Lu Zhou: “How long have you been overseas?”

Yang Xu: “Around five years. I have been living at MIT since my master’s.”

Lu Zhou: "Actually I have a question about your resume, but I forgot to ask it during our interview. I don't know if it's appropriate to ask the question now."

Yang Xu smiled and said, "Go ahead, just don't take my offer back."

"Of course not, you'll have to work for at least three years before I let you go," Lu Zhou said. He then smiled as he continued, "With your resume, you can earn a lot more working in Silicon Valley, why did you come back?"

Yang Xu could easily get a US\$100,000 per year job in Silicon Valley. However, he would struggle to even earn half of that in China.

Unless a researcher was invited to work in China by the Chinese Academy of Sciences, that researcher would earn a lot more working overseas.

Yang Xu heard this question and placed his chopsticks down; he had a depressed look on his face.

"A PhD has no value in Silicon Valley anymore. This is especially so in the field of engineering where the market is saturated. During my two years of PhD studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, I have been applying to jobs everywhere, but I couldn't find a suitable position."

Most researchers had to eat the crumbs left from big-name researchers.

Dr. Yang shrugged and said, "Plus my family is urging me to get married, so there's no point for me to stay overseas. I'd rather just come back here."

The biochemical materials industry was new.

People said that materials science was one of the three pillars of modern technology.

They also said that the 21st century was the century of biology.

However, the field of biology had yet to produce any titans.

Lu Zhou thought for a bit before asking, “Are you interested in teaching?”

Yang Xu: “I have thought about working as a lecturer at Jin Ling University. However, I heard that the lecturer positions at Jin Ling University were difficult to apply for. Maybe once my career is stable, I’ll apply for a position at Jinling Polytechnic.”

Lu Zhou smiled and said, “Don’t go to Jinling Polytechnic. If you want to work at Jin Ling University, I can help.”

Yang Xu’s eyes lit up as he said, “Really? Thank you so much!”

Including the end-of-year bonus and welfare from the provident fund, a lecturer could earn more than 100,000 yuan per year. The lecturer could also enjoy the academic resources of the university.

Working at Jin Ling University would provide a much better future than working at Jinling Polytechnic.

This faculty position was highly sought after. However, Lu Zhou only had to write a recommendation letter for Yang Xu to get in.

Lu Zhou was quite a compassionate boss to his researchers.

Chapter 309

Lu Zhou replied to the email.

[I will return to Princeton in the near future. I will sign the documents as soon as possible.]

Lu Zhou clicked “Send” and threw his phone on the bed. He then got up and went to take a shower.

After his shower, he lay in bed and was about to take an afternoon nap. However, his nap was interrupted by a notification.

[Professor, when will you come back?]

The email was from Vera.

Lu Zhou remembered that he had been away for a long time and felt a little apologetic.

Although he planned to let his students take on the Collatz conjecture by themselves, he also agreed to give them advice and methods. He hadn't been back for an entire month, and he had left the little girl alone.

Lu Zhou typed a few words on his screen and replied to the email.

[Soon, in a few days.]

Lu Zhou had already arranged for all of the necessary research work, so there was no reason for him to stay at the research institute. He could easily communicate from Princeton using the Internet.

Vera lay in bed and looked at the email on the screen. She finally sighed in relief.

Over the past few days, she had been worrying about Lu Zhou quitting his job as a Princeton professor to go back to China to teach.

But now, it seemed that her worries were superfluous.

The anxiety in Vera's heart disappeared, and she gradually smiled.

A long time ago, when she was Ukraine, her peers viewed her as a strange child. No one could understand her strange math symbols.

The time she spent at Princeton was the best time of her life.

At Princeton, she could focus on any mathematics problem she wanted. She could devote her full attention to deep mathematical proofs.

She felt like time flew by when she was discussing mathematics problems with Lu Zhou. She had never felt this way before.

Not only that, but she had never received genuine care from a professor before. There weren't any Berkeley professors that cared about her family difficulties or offered her a teaching assistant job.

Hardy always complained that Professor Lu was too demanding and gave him too much academic pressure. However, Vera had never experienced this kind of concern, so she quite enjoyed it.

On the other hand, she had mixed emotions.

Suddenly, another email notification popped up on her screen.

[How is the conjecture going? Is there any progress?]

Vera shook her head and got rid of her strange thoughts. She typed a reply on her screen.

[Not yet, but I recently discovered a new idea when I was reading a paper by Professor S. Eliahou. I have told Qin Yue and Hardy about this idea. This idea may become the key to solving the problem between the set of normal points  $z_0$  and transcend the whole function  $g(x)$ .]

The Collatz conjecture was equivalent to the function equation  $h(z^3)=h(z^6)+\{h(z^2)+\lambda h(\lambda z^2)+\lambda^2 h(\lambda^2 z^2)\}/3z$  (where  $\lambda=e^{2\pi i/3}$ ) and the analytic function solution in the unit disc  $\{z: |z|<1\}$ :  $h(z)=h_0+h_1 z/(1-z)$  (where  $h_0, H_2$  is a complex constant).

This conclusion was proved by Professor Benguez and Professor Minardus in 1994. The follow-up study on the Collatz conjecture had been based on this foundation.

In Lu Zhou's research framework that he developed for his students, he let  $g(z)$  be the transcendental function,  $z_0$  be a point in the complex plane, and  $\Phi(g)$  be the set of normal points of  $g(z)$ .

If someone could prove that the function column  $\{g(z)\}_{k=1}^{\infty}$  existed and that sub-column locally converged to  $\infty$  or some analytic function in a neighborhood of the point  $z_0$ , then the normal point where  $z_0$  is  $g(z)$  could be obtained.

In theory, these problems could be solved using the Group Structure Method. Its difficulty wasn't much higher than Polignac's conjecture.

Lu Zhou raised his eyebrows and looked interested.

[What idea?]

[It's about...]

Vera stopped typing.

Perhaps it was because of her teasing personality, but she quietly deleted the sentence and wrote a new line.

[I want to tell you after you get back.]

When Lu Zhou read this message on the other side of the planet, he smiled and shook his head.

This chick is leaving me hanging.

However, she has been bad at expressing her thoughts, so I guess this is a small improvement.



After all, being extroverted means that you have to present yourself whether it is an academic point of view or a personal point of view. She has always been afraid of this.

Lu Zhou might consider introducing the Ivy Club to her.

The food there was delicious, but it had a high barrier of entry. Only well-known scholars or scholars that could debate with others could get in.

Right now, only Hardy earned the right to eat there. Lu Zhou took out US\$5,000 from the Collatz conjecture fund to pay for his yearly membership fee.

Qin Yue was still working on his social skills.

As for Vera, she was still a long way from debating with the other scholars.

Lu Zhou wrote an email and hit "Reply".

[Then tell me when I come back. I look forward to coming back to Princeton.]

Vera read this email and sighed. She was disappointed that Lu Zhou didn't respond to her teasing.

She thought that Lu Zhou would react strongly to her flirtations.

But now it seemed that she had thought too much about it.

Vera sat on her bed and sighed before she buried her face in her knees.

After a long time, she crawled under the blanket and went to sleep.

Chapter 310

These were the difficulties one had to face when trying to become a big name.

Other than those successful academicians, most scholars had to consider these real-life problems.

Wang Haifeng read the summary report from beginning to end and started to smile.

He was very satisfied that carbon-sulfur composites were mentioned at the conference.

But soon, his smile turned into a frown.

In the document, the argument for hollow carbon spheres as positive sulfur materials was exactly the same as Lu Zhou's argument.

Obviously, the research group from Beijing accepted Lu Zhou's opinions.

This wasn't the worst part.

Wang Haifeng always thought that Director Lu from Beijing paid too much attention to Lu Zhou.

Even though Lu Zhou was a genius who won the Crafoord Prize, that was in mathematics, it had nothing to do with materials science.

And even though Lu Zhou's thesis in Nature shocked the whole industry, Wang Haifeng interpreted it as luck as opposed to ability.

After all, scientific research was like gambling. No matter how beautiful the theory or graphs were, it still depended on reputation.

However, Wang Haifeng couldn't completely ignore Lu Zhou's opinions.

After all, he was in the field of carbon-sulfur composite materials, and the hollow carbon spheres could bring great benefits to him.

Wang Haifeng placed the document on the table and looked at Liu Hong, who was sitting at the desk next to him. He then asked, "Have you researched the thesis yet?"

He was obviously talking about Lu Zhou's writings during the meeting.

Although Lu Zhou's writings at the meeting were not officially submitted to a journal, the organizers of the meeting edited Lu Zhou's proof process according to academic standards.

Of course, the meeting wasn't as formal as the MRS Conference, so the standard of the thesis was still relatively low.

After Lu Zhou agreed, the thesis was published in the latest edition of the journal by Shuimu University, Natural Sciences.

The impact factor of this journal was low, but it had a large following and could be found in the libraries of many universities.

After the journal was published, Wang Haifeng immediately bought a copy for himself and gave it to his PhD student to read.

Liu Hong scratched his head and pulled out the thesis from his drawer before he said, "I have consulted the mathematics professor, Professor Liu, about this, and there is nothing wrong with the proof..."

Wang Haifeng said, "No sh\*t! I know there is nothing wrong with it, I'm asking what do you think of it?"

Lu Zhou is a mathematics professor at Princeton. Of course you won't be able to find a problem.

Who would write bullsh\*t at a conference like that?

Liu Hong couldn't help but complain.

I'm only a PhD student, why are you asking for my opinion?

Wang Haifeng felt a little better after releasing his anger on his student.

He looked at the other master's student in his office and spoke with a calmer voice.

"You are not able to evaluate the thesis with your current ability. I am only asking your opinion on the hollow carbon spheres; you can say anything you want."

Liu Hong suddenly had a thought and said, "Professor, I think that the hollow carbon sphere is a promising direction. Since we are also in the field of carbon-sulfur composites, why don't we try to develop in this direction?"

As expected, Professor Wang changed his tone and criticized, "What are you trying to say? How many times have I told you that the most important thing in scientific research is to be down-to-earth?! The hollow carbon sphere has gotten popular recently, but we can't jump on the bandwagon like others. Otherwise, what are we even researching here?"

After being criticized, Liu Hong wasn't depressed. Instead, he felt relieved.

This old man's temper was quite strange, and he would often do illogical things.

However, the old man was also gullible.

Liu Hong continued to speak, "Professor, you are right! We have our own research, we cannot be influenced by other newly rising topics!"

Liu Hong spoke in a polite tone, "However, we are in the field of carbon-sulfur composites, and the hollow carbon sphere is in the scope of our research. Making minor adjustments to our research isn't jumping on the bandwagon, but instead, it means that other people are jumping on our bandwagon."

Wang Haifeng nodded and smiled.

This was what he wanted to hear.

Like Liu Hong guessed, Wang Haifeng only wanted a reason to change the research topic.

After all, Wang Haifeng had been talking sh\*t about Lu Zhou to his students, so it would be embarrassing for him to suddenly switch to researching hollow carbon spheres.

How could he still be a leader to his students?

Wang Haifeng sighed and said, “You’re right, this topic is important, I’ll have to do more research.”

Wang Haifeng was talking about hollow carbon spheres.

He paused for a second before he said, “Oh yeah, time is ticking, you can start writing the opening report. I’ll hand this matter to you.”

Liu Hong asked, “How much should I apply for the research fund?”

Wang Haifeng said, “Try 10 million yuan for now.”

Normally his projects wouldn’t get funded for this much.

But this was a special time; the country was vigorously developing new energy technologies, and research projects in related fields were being heavily funded.

Coincidentally, Wang Haifeng’s laboratory was planning on buying a new scanning electron telescope.

He could use this opportunity to upgrade his equipment.