

# TALISMAN EMPEROR

## Chapter 1 - Chen Xi

*Book One — Winds of Change Blow Over Pine Mist City*

### Chapter 1 - Chen Xi

Dusk fell upon Pine Mist City in the southern territory as the fiery sun set in the west.

For the thousandth time, Chen Xi pushed upon the door and entered the Zhang General Store.

The Zhang General Store was just an ordinary, medium-sized retail store within Pine Mist City that sold self-manufactured talisman-related products to keep itself afloat.

The merchandise that sold the most were first-grade and second-grade talismans. These were the foundation of the Zhang General Store's survival. While its business wasn't great, it benefitted from the small but steady stream of income and was barely able to establish itself within Pine Mist City.

"Talisman paper, talisman brush, and ink; it's impossible to craft talismans without these three materials. It seems simple, but in reality it's extremely complex. From today onwards, you will all learn how to differentiate between talisman papers, the utilization of the talisman brush, and the composition of the ink. Once you have a solid foundation, I'll then instruct you in talisman crafting."

Only now did Chen Xi realize that the store had once again recruited seven or eight talisman crafting apprentices with immature faces. Boss Zhang Dayong's shriveled voice echoed within the general store.

“I’ll give the lot of you a month. If your skill doesn’t satisfy me after the month is over, then go home and play in the mud. You lot must remember that if you want to become a qualified talisman master, studying diligently and training hard is the only way to get there, as no one is able to easily succeed!”

The newly recruited talisman crafting apprentices had gazes that were filled with excitement and eagerness; they were itching to have a go at talisman crafting.

“Mmm, Chen Xi, you’re here.” Zhang Dayong looked over his shoulder to see Chen Xi and greeted him with a smile on his face.

“Uncle Zhang, these are the 30 Flamecloud Talismans for today.” Chen Xi pulled out a stack of azure talismans and passed them over.

Zhang Dayong waved his hand in dismissal. “There’s no rush. Since you’re here, then help me teach these little kids. These wages will be calculated separately. Hmmm, how about I pay you 3 spirit stones per hour?”

Chen Xi nodded after pondering for brief moment. “Alright!”

30 Flamecloud Talismans could be sold for 10 spirit stones but required five hours of his time to craft, and thus, if calculated in this manner, three spirit stones per hour was indeed generous.

Zhang Dayong smiled before turning to look at the newly recruited talisman crafting apprentices and said in a low voice with a serious expression, “The Dao of talisman crafting is broad and profound, and to better assist you lot in grasping the rudiments, your senior, Chen Xi, will demonstrate how a first-grade Flamecloud Talisman is crafted. I don’t dare speak about anything else, but if I were to speak about the solidity of one’s foundation in talisman crafting, then no one in the entire city is more extraordinary than Chen Xi. In this aspect, even I feel ashamed of my inferiority. You lot should look carefully and learn properly, and be sure to not miss out on this opportunity.”

Whoosh!

Seven or eight gazes descended upon Chen Xi in unison, but when they noticed that he was only a youth with a haggardly pale expression and was not much older than them, doubt arose within their eyes. *Is this fellow really as formidable as Uncle Zhang says?*

Chen Xi remained unfazed, seemingly unable to notice the subtle changes in the atmosphere around him as he moved forward and arrived before the talisman crafting desk. Here he picked up the light azure talisman paper from the side and placed it flat on the desk before lifting his brush and gently dipping it into the ink. He waved the brush in his hand in a fluid and skillful manner as if he was moving his hand without the need to reflect.

The youths hurriedly surrounded Chen Xi when they noticed this scene.

Talisman brush in hand, Chen Xi's disposition seemed to change as his gaze became focused and tranquil. His wrist swayed like a snake, moving the tip of his brush in an agile and graceful manner, rustling as it moved... Fine and elegant blackish-red lines crept across the Talisman Paper in a natural and smooth manner, seeming to be like wisps of smoke naturally curling into existence.

The newly recruited talisman crafting apprentices didn't blink; they stared wide-eyed at Chen Xi's wrist, the talisman brush, and the talisman markings slowly coming into form on the light azure talisman paper. A sense of shock slowly arose within their hearts as they watched.

Talismans were divided into nine grades. The first-grade Flamecloud Talisman was merely one of the most basic talismans, and thus it naturally was also one of the lowest level talismans. The youths originally didn't take Chen Xi, who seemed not much older than them, seriously. Chen Xi's movements were limited and repetitive, but they were filled with a graceful and lively aesthetic combined with precise control. Even though his movements

weren't grand, when the youths witnessed Chen Xi craft a talisman with their own eyes, their hearts were instantly conquered by him.

Chen Xi wore a concentrated expression and was completely oblivious to what was going on around him, not noticing the changes in the gazes from the surrounding people. Once he started crafting a talisman, Chen Xi would immerse himself in a profound and tranquil state, and only the fine and intricate talisman markings would remain in his eyes.

Zhang Dayong couldn't help but laugh heartily when he saw the shocked appearances of the youths. Not to mention these newbies, even he himself couldn't help but feel a sense of shock within his heart whenever he saw it with his own two eyes. It was exactly as he had said, Chen Xi had indeed achieved an extraordinary level of skill in terms of attainment in basic talismans.

Chen Xi controlled the brush's tip to dot, flick, hook, stroke, and whirl with sharp and precise force. Following the movement of Chen Xi's Talisman Brush, a delicate and intricate pattern slowly formed on the thin, light azure pine grain talisman paper.

The time it would take for one incense stick to burn passed.

Whoosh!

The talisman paper shone abruptly, seeming to exhale and inhale before returning to normal.

As he laid down the talisman, Chen Xi's entire body felt sore and uncomfortable; it seemed like it was about to fall apart, and that haggard and handsome face of his was so pale that it almost seemed translucent.

Before coming to the general store, Chen Xi had already crafted 30 first-grade Flamecloud Talismans, and thus not only was his True Essence on the verge of depletion, even his mental energy was consumed greatly. Therefore,

completing this talisman utterly drained him of his True Essence, and his mental energy was emaciated.

The newly recruited talisman crafting apprentices didn't take note of this, however. They instantly burst into an uproar the moment they saw Chen Xi complete a talisman with such fluidity.

"How formidable! The speed, nimbleness, and precision with which he wielded the brush is really shocking!"

"Wah! Senior Chen Xi successfully crafted a talisman in one go! Such a success rate can only be described as perfect!"

"I must properly ask Senior Chen Xi for advice in the future! I must become proficient in that brush technique!"

...

However, at precisely this moment, a sarcastic voice abruptly echoed within the store.

"Hmph, what's so great about crafting a first-grade basic talisman? If you lot are given five years, you'll be able to excel in basic talisman crafting like Deadpan Chen too. Why don't you lot ask Deadpan Chen when he'll be able to craft second-grade talismans? With his level of skill, all he can do is overawe newbies like you lot."

The person who said this was a frivolous young man who stood at the general store's entrance. He had a long and narrow face, a pair of large eyes filled with a sense of disdain, and his arms were crossed over his chest. It was unknown when he arrived.

The sounds of praise instantly vanished without a trace upon hearing what the young man said, and the originally burning gazes of reverence of the youths now contained a trace of doubt.

*He took five years to master first-grade basic talismans? What shitty natural talent!*

*Deadpan Chen, ha, what a vivid nickname.... Wait, so it's him!*

The new talisman crafting apprentices were finally able to recall who Chen Xi was, and their gazes emitted a weird sense in unison.

The name "Deadpan Chen" was known to every household within Pine Mist City, and Chen Xi was the worthy owner of the title "no.1 jinx."

On the day of his birth, the Chen Clan, which was originally thought of as a first-rate clan, was annihilated by their enemies in a night. Chen Xi's grandfather, father, and mother were the only survivors.

When he was one year old, his grandfather was bedridden with a severe illness, which eventually led to his grandfather losing his entire cultivation and becoming a cripple. His family was thus forced to move into Pine Mist City's commoner district.

When he was two, his younger brother, Chen Hao, was born, but his mother, Zuo Qiuxue, went missing. Rumor had it that she detested the fallen Chen Clan and couldn't bear with such an impoverished life, and thus eloped with a young and handsome son of a wealthy family.

When he was three, his father, Chen Lingjun, left his family and had not returned since.

When he was four, the Su Clan from the southern territory, which had formed a betrothal contract with him since before he was born, dispatched more than ten Golden Hall Realm masters to Pine Mist City. When they arrived, they stood atop the sky and tore the marriage contract to shreds before the eyes of everyone within Pine Mist City before flying off with a swagger.

Misfortune after misfortune befell Chen Xi continuously for five years, each more stirring than the previous. Pine Mist City wasn't large at all, so before

long, the name of Chen Xi the jinx seemed to have grown wings and spread throughout the city, and it became known to all.

Chen Xi had been reserved since he was young and had a cold and detached expression; no one had seen him smile before. Combined with the dissemination by some busybodies, the nickname “Deadpan Chen” resounded within Pine Mist City.

“Uncle Zhang, I’ll come again tomorrow.”

Chen Xi could feel the strange atmosphere around him. That is to say, he grew up under such gazes in these past few years and had long since gotten used to them. He nodded towards Uncle Zhang before turning around and leaving with a calm expression.

“Hmph!”

Not long after Chen Xi left, Zhang Dayong fiercely glared at the young man at the entrance before scolding him. “Yun Hong, come with me!”

The youth jolted. “Uncle, I...” Before he could explain himself, the young man called Yun Hong noticed that his uncle had long since entered the rear room. As he hurriedly ran to follow, he resentfully muttered, “Incomprehensible. All I did was present some facts about Deadpan Chen. What’s he getting so serious about?”

Right after the two of them left, the group of newly recruited talisman crafting apprentices couldn’t help themselves from discussing what they had just witnessed.

“Heh, so that was Deadpan Chen. If I knew this earlier, I wouldn’t have come. I wonder if I’ll be contaminated with misfortune if I learn talisman crafting from him.”

“Ah! Shit! I accidentally bumped into Deadpan Chen earlier when he was crafting the talisman... This won't do, I have to hurry home and take a bath.”

“Haha, look at how intimidated all of you are. My father said that Deadpan Chen only brings disaster upon the Chen Clan and doesn't affect us.”

...

The night sky was as dark as ink and studded with stars.

Under the piercingly cold gale, Chen Xi silently loosened his fist, which was clenched to the point where his joints were pale, then tightened the thin clothes on his body as he swiftly walked towards his home.

When he was about to reach his home, he spotted a thin figure sitting before the door. Thanks to the starlight, he was able to vaguely discern that the figure was his younger brother, Chen Hao.

“Big Brother, you're home.” Chen Hao, who was only 12, stood up and shouted out in joy before seeming to realize that something was wrong, making him hurriedly lower his head.

Chen Xi walked up and said with a voice that contained a trace of sternness, “Raise your head.”

Chen Hao was like a child that had made a mistake, but he stubbornly refused to raise his head as he spoke nervously. “Grandfather is waiting for you to have dinner. Let's go inside.”

After he spoke, Chen Hao turned around and wanted to enter the house, but he was grabbed by Chen Xi from behind.

“Did you get into a fight again?” Chen Xi extended his hand to raise Chen Hao's chin. He frowned slightly when he saw blotches of red and swollen bruises on his younger brother's small face.



Chen Hao forcefully struggled free of Chen Xi and lifted his head, then he loudly said with a gaze that contained as much stubbornness as before, “They called me a bastard, they called Big Brother a jinx and cursed our family, saying we will all die sooner or later. Of course I had to beat them.”

Chen Xi jolted, then he gazed at his stubborn younger brother, gazed at the sense of rage and unwillingness on his immature and small face, and an indescribable pain suddenly arose within his heart.