

TALISMAN EMPEROR

Chapter 2 - Departure

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Chen Hao gazed at his older brother with an anxious and fearful expression and held his breath in fear.

His older brother took care of his food, housing, and sent him to cultivate in the best martial school within Pine Mist City. Even the spirit stones that Chen Xi obtained with great difficulty were all spent on him, whereas Chen Xi had always been unwilling to spend even a wee bit of spirit stones on himself.

Chen Hao knew that although his older brother seemed frosty, he actually had an extremely good heart and was considerate right down to the most trivial details of himself and his grandfather. But why does everyone make fun of him?

Deadpan Chen, Jinx...

Whenever he recalled these malicious nicknames, Chen Hao's heart would be filled with fury and he would wish for nothing more than to fiercely break the jaws of those people that made fun of his older brother.

"Hmph. I'll still beat them for as long as they continue to insult Big Brother!" Chen Hao clenched his tiny fists tightly as he secretly made this decision in his heart.

"Let's go home and have dinner." Chen Xi came to from his silent state and took a deep breath before patting Chen Hao on the shoulder. He then pushed the old and worn-out door and walked into the house.

“Big Brother, you’re not going to scold me?” Chen Hao was stupefied for a moment before joyfully grinning and yelling, “Alright, Big Brother, I was about to starve to death!”

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A pine oil lamp flickered with dim rays of light that illuminated the narrow, cramped, and worn-out wooden house.

An old man with aged and sparsely scattered hair sat silently at the dining table. His face was full of wrinkles and he had bones that were thin like twigs, as well as a pair of murky eyes that emitted a decaying aura.

The old man was Chen Tianli, a figure that once commanded the wind and the clouds within Pine Mist City. Unfortunately, after the annihilation of the Chen Clan, his old illness relapsed, causing his cultivation to be completely crippled and turning him into an ordinary old man.

“Grandfather.” Chen Xi silently sat at the table. He couldn’t help but sigh inwardly when he saw the bowl of pickled cabbage and three bowls of rice on the table. I’m still too stupid. If I could earn a few more spirit stones each day, Grandfather and Little Brother wouldn’t have to suffer anymore.

“Eat.” Chen Tianli’s voice was deep and hoarse. “I have something to say after dinner.”

Chen Xi jolted before nodding. “Okay.”

The way the group ate was extremely amusing. Chen Xi and his grandfather only ate rice; they gave the small bowl of pickled cabbage to Chen Hao. The little fellow seemed to know that refusing would be of no use, so he immersed himself in eating as he repeated in his heart the pledge that he made a long time ago. “Grandfather, Big Brother, once my cultivation becomes strong, I’ll surely get all the best delicacies in the world for you two, and we won’t eat this damned pickled cabbage anymore!”

After their meal, Chen Hao obediently cleared the dishes, then he picked up a wooden sword and walked out of the house. He wanted to train with the sword; he wanted to use every minute he had and make himself stronger!

“What level have you cultivated your Violet Sky Arts to?” Chen Tianli’s aged face revealed a trace of gratification when he heard the swishing sounds of sword training from outside the window.

The Violet Sky Arts was the Chen Clan’s qi refinement cultivation technique that was handed down from their ancestors. It had a total of 18 levels which recorded in detail the cultivation technique from the 9th level Postnatal Realm to the 9th level Congenital Realm.

“Still at the 13th level.” Even when speaking with his grandfather, Chen Xi’s face was as icy-cold as always, and that sedated and stiff aura of his seemed as if it would never change.

“Oh.” Chen Tianli nodded and made no comment, but in his heart, a trace of complicated feelings poured out.

He both loved and hated this grandson of his, because ever since Chen Xi was born, the entire Chen Clan was struck with grievous news non-stop. The clan was annihilated, Chen Xi’s mother abandoned her family and left, Chen Xi’s father left full of hatred...

Most loathsome of all was that Dragon Lake City’s Su Clan actually tore apart the previously agreed upon marriage contract before the eyes of everyone in Pine Mist City, causing Chen Tianli to lose face. Were it not for him being concerned that there would be no one to bring up his two young grandchildren, he would wish for nothing more than to commit suicide and end his own life!

Sometimes, he would question if his grandson was really as the rumours portrayed, a jinx with misfortune looming above his head. However, he would

quickly get rid of this thought, as he and his two grandchildren were the only remnants of the entire Chen Clan. Coupled with his deteriorating body, they could only rely on Chen Xi crafting talismans to barely bring home the bacon.

That is to say that it was precisely because of the presence of Chen Xi that their family didn't stoop to the extent of becoming associated with beggars all these years. Under Chen Xi's toilsome efforts, his young grandson, Chen Hao, was even able to enter and cultivate in the Skystar Dojo, which was famous within Pine Mist City.

A jet of warmth gushed out from Chen Tianli's heart when he thought up to this point. No matter how unfortunate he was, Little Xi was still his grandson and the flesh and blood of the Chen Clan.

"I've really made you suffer all these years." Chen Tianli sighed. "I let Chen Hao eat and wear the best we have, and I even let him enter the dojo to learn martial arts. But I made you work hard to earn a living while not gaining the slightest bit of benefit. Grandfather...has really been unfair to you!"

Chen Xi's body stiffened as the grievances that were suppressed deep within his heart for so many years stirred within him. He hurriedly took a deep breath, forcefully suppressing these grievances, then he shook his head and said, "You're aged and in poor health, whereas Little Hao is young and ignorant. Thus, these things naturally ought to be done by me."

Chen Tianli laughed it off as he waved his hand and said, "Let's not talk about all this."

Chen Xi nodded and then fell silent.

His disposition was dull and unsociable, nor was he good with words. Combined with being subjected to the mocking and ridicule of the people around him all these years, it had caused him to grow reserved, and he would rather go about silently than speaking an extra word.

After pondering for quite some time, Chen Tianli abruptly spoke. "Dragon Lake City's Thousand Sword Sect will open its doors to the public in half a month and recruit disciples. I plan to take Little Hao there to try his luck."

Chen Xi jolted before saying, "That's good as well. Leaving Pine Mist City is more beneficial to Little Hao's growth."

Chen Tianli couldn't help himself from asking, "You... don't hate Grandfather for showing preference, right?"

Chen Xi shook his head. "I'll obey Grandfather's arrangements in everything."

Chen Tianli carefully gazed at his grandson's face, seeming to want to see something in it. What made him disappointed after that was that from the beginning till the end, Chen Xi's appearance didn't move in the slightest; it was as if he was a stiff log.

"He is dull when amongst people, and when others speak, he even becomes silent. I wonder if it's good or bad that he has such a firm and wilful disposition, alas!" Chen Tianli sighed in his heart, then returned to the house.

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Early in the morning of the next day, when Chen Xi had just awoken, the day had only just dawned. He used cold water to wash his face and had only just walked out of his room when he saw Chen Hao training with the sword.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

The wooden sword repeatedly emitted sounds of air being torn as it moved about uninhibitedly. Chen Hao held the sword with his right hand, and his thin and weak figure leaped about nimbly as he chopped, slashed, flicked, stabbed, and swept his sword as he scrupulously practiced his swordsmanship.

His small face was filled with sweat, but between his immature brows was a sense of staunchness, and the wooden sword in his hand didn't tremble in the slightest as it moved steadily and skillfully.

Chen Xi silently watched for a moment without disturbing his younger brother. After hurriedly preparing breakfast, instead of crafting talismans as usual, he instead quickly dashed towards the Zhang General Store.

“Ah, Deadpan Chen is here again!”

“Alas, I originally thought that I wouldn't bump into him if I came to work in the morning, but who knew that I would still run into him? Truly misfortunate.”

Within the Zhang General Store, the newly recruited talisman crafting apprentices moved away in succession when they noticed Chen Xi walk in. Their faces were full of the fear of being infected with misfortune.

“Uncle Zhang, is it alright for me to borrow 100 spirit stones from you?” How could Chen Xi have the mood to pay attention to these fellows who taunted and jeered at him? He directly arrived before the counter and raised his request to Zhang Dayong.

Zhang Dayong said, in a questioning manner, “Chen Xi, what happened? Tell me and maybe I can be of some help.”

Chen Xi has helped craft talismans for his general store for more than five years, and he had never once borrowed money from him, but today Chen Xi unexpectedly wanted to borrow 100 spirit stones from him. He was naturally bewildered and thought that if it was something within his ability, he would help the kid out.

Chen Xi perceived the sense of care within Zhang Dayong's words, and his heart was warmed as he said while shaking his head, “I haven't encountered any trouble; I only want to buy something.”

Zhang Dayong came to a sudden understanding. He then decisively took out a spirit jade and said, "Here, is it enough? If it isn't, I can still lend you a little more."

"It's enough. Thank you, Uncle Zhang. I'll repay you quickly." A spirit jade was roughly comparable to 100 spirit stones, and the exchange rate was only higher, not lower. After Chen Xi received the spirit jade, he turned around and left with hurried steps.

"Strange, this kid is usually extremely thrifty for the sake of maintaining the livelihood of his family, so he has never once spent money recklessly. What's going on today?" Zhang Dayong gazed at Chen Xi's figure that vanished outside the store and was extremely bewildered.

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The Hundred Refinement Hall was situated in a busy district at the center of Pine Mist City. It exclusively sold weapons and equipment that were required by cultivators on a grand scale, and it was rather famous within the city.

After Chen Xi dropped by, it wasn't even 15 minutes before the spirit jade was spent, but he didn't feel pained at all; a sense of gratification arose within his heart instead.

When he returned home, it was already near midday. Chen Tianli was packing their bags, whereas Chen Hao sat before the door with his hands cupping his face, pondering about something.

"Brother, you're back." Chen Hao stood up with a 'whoosh,' and his small face was filled with joy.

Chen Xi rubbed Chen Hao's head as he asked, "Leaving soon?"

Chao Hao nodded, and his expression dimmed. He wasn't willing to part with his older brother, and when he thought of how he wouldn't be able to

frequently see his older brother once he'd gone to Dragon Lake City, he felt extremely sad.

Chen Xi took out a rectangular, jade case and passed it over. "I bought this for you; you have to work hard."

"For me?" Chen Hao was stupefied. He looked at the exquisite, jade case, and for a moment, he didn't dare believe his eyes.

Ever since he was small, whenever he saw the kids of other families flaunting various gifts, he would feel extremely envious, but he didn't dare have any extravagant hopes of possessing one. Because he knew that the life of his family relied on the toilsome efforts of his older brother in order to maintain their livelihood, and under these circumstances, he didn't dare crave for it at all.

Now, at the moment before he departed, his older brother didn't say a thing and bought him a present. How could this not make him feel touched?

"Brother..." Chen Hao's voice was slightly choked as he lowered his head. He spent a great deal of effort to stop himself from crying, but his eyes were already red.

Chen Xi patted his young brother's shoulder. "Take good care of Grandfather, and take good care of yourself as well."

"Mmm!" Chen Hao fiercely nodded.

"I'll go see to Grandfather, and I'll escort you two out of the city later." Chen Xi's face revealed a rare trace of a faint smile as he turned around and walked into the house.

Chen Hao took a deep breath as he slowly opened the jade case. Within the case, a longsword that emitted a piercingly cold sheen silently laid there.

Om!

After holding up the longsword and pouring his True Essence into it, the long sword suddenly emitted a clear and melodious cry, and a trace of a dense, sharp qi gushed out.

“Brother, don’t worry, I won’t let you down!” Chen Hao gazed at the longsword in his hand with a firm gaze. It was like he had grown up overnight and was no longer the ignorant child from before.

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Outside the city’s gate.

At midday, as the sun hung high in the sky, a carriage carried the pair of grandfather and grandson as it slowly sped off.

Chen Xi stood atop the city wall. With his gaze focused on something in the distance, his heart rose and fell like the waves.