

TALISMAN EMPEROR

Chapter 3 - Grievous News



Chapter 3 - Grievous News

Chen Xi thought about the matters in his heart as he silently made his way back home.

He didn't let the departure of his grandfather and younger brother get him down. According to his knowledge, the Thousand Sword Sect in Dragon Lake City was rather famous in the southern territory and the various institutions that were established within Pine Mist City were utterly incapable of comparing to it.

Over the past few thousand years, after the perfection of the cultivation system, various novel things appeared on the path of cultivation, and institutions were one of them.

These institutions were established within towns and cities. They employed erudite cultivators to instruct students on fundamental cultivation knowledge. These cultivators earned great wealth in this manner.

These institutions didn't reject people based on their social status. Regardless of whether you were a mountain dweller, a slave, a wealthy merchant or a hawker, so long as you paid sufficient spirit stones you would be able to enter the institutions to learn.

The types of institutions varied and were divided according to their names.

For example, the various institutions established within Pine Mist City included equipment refinement, puppeteering, talisman crafting, alchemy, botany, taming, etc. Prior to this, Chen Hao was learning the fundamentals of swordsmanship in the Skystar Institution.

However, the institutions had their own limitations as well, as the knowledge taught was the most foundational and simple knowledge. If one wanted to take more advanced lessons, then they needed to enter a sect.

A sect was commonly established within renowned mountains and near great rivers that were rich in spirit energy. They often possessed great cultivators who took up positions in the sect and its conditions for disciple selection were extremely harsh. A person who didn't possess superb natural talent and a solid foundation would be utterly incapable of passing the sect's recruitment exams, and thus was far from something those common institutions could compare to.

Chen Xi was very clear about the amount of injustices Chen Hao had suffered over the years. Because of him, Chen Hao was mocked as a little jinx by his peers. No one was willing to come into contact with Chen Hao, nor did Chen Hao have even a single friend. Thus, if his younger brother was able to formally enter the Thousand Sword Sect, it would undoubtedly be a joyous occasion for Chen Hao, who was crazy about practicing his swordsmanship. Not to mention, it would be extremely beneficial for his younger brother's growth.

Chen Hao was only 12 this year. Because he was endowed by nature with unusual intelligence, he had cultivated to the level of perfection within the Postnatal Realm a long time ago. Under the devoted guidance of his grandfather, his foundation was incomparably solid. So passing the Thousand Sword Sect's exam ought to not be a problem.

When approaching his house, Chen Xi saw from afar a five or six-year-old girl cupping her chin as she sat before his door. The young girl had a headful of hair that was bundled up into a vertical pigtail, a pair of jet-black glossy eyes and an extremely cute appearance.

The young girl ran over when she noticed Chen Xi and excitedly asked, "Big Brother Chen Xi, where's Little Hao? I brought his favorite lime candy, but he still hasn't come."

The young girl's name was Xixi. She was lively and lovable, but didn't have a father. She lived with her mother, Bai Wanqing, who had moved to Pine Mist City a few years ago. They were Chen Xi's neighbors, so the relationship between their two families was extremely good.

"He's gone to a distant place to acknowledge a master and study under him. He probably won't be returning for the next few years."

Chen Xi rubbed Xixi's little head. He was extremely fond of Xixi in his heart. The little girl was a few years younger than his brother, and whenever he returned from Skystar Institution, she would be like a puppy that tagged along with Chen Hao to play, occasionally sharing some candy. Thus, the two of them had an extremely good relationship.

What was particularly important was that Xixi and her mother never gave Chen Xi's family the cold shoulder and never regarded Chen Xi as a jinx. This sort of trust that didn't have any other motives mixed in made Chen Xi value it exceptionally.

In a daze, Xixi looked upwards as she asked, "Distant place? Where's the distant place?"

Chen Xi thought for a moment before saying, "A place you can't go to is called a distant place. But once Xixi grows up, you can go there."

Xixi replied with an "Oh." before becoming dispirited and putting on a depressed face.

Chen Xi comforted her, "Why don't you come play at my place?"

Xixi's gaze shone. "Okay. I want to watch Big Brother Chen Xi craft talismans."

"Follow me." A trace of a smile appeared on the corners of Chen Xi's mouth when he saw the little girl become happy, but in the blink of an eye he once again recovered that frosty and stiff appearance.

Holding on to Xixi's chubby little hand, Chen Xi walked into his house.

...

Placed on the table were a pile of light azure talisman papers, an ink tray of blackish-red ink, and a dark talisman brush.

Chen Xi fixed his posture to sit up straight before the table. Xixi obediently sat on the small stool at the side with a little face full of curiosity.

Chen Xi pointed to the pile of light azure talisman papers as he explained in a light voice, "These are pine grain talisman papers, the most inexpensive type of talisman paper in the market. It has a stiff texture and rough grain, and it is ordinarily used to craft the simplest basic talismans."

Xixi was like a student as she fiercely nodded and said, "Big Brother Chen Xi, I've remembered it."

Chen Xi chuckled and shook his head before pointing to the tray of blackish-red ink and saying, "This tray of ink is derived from the blood of a Crimson Flame Deer. The Crimson Flame Deer itself is the one of the lowest class of demon beasts in the world of cultivation. Other than its blood, which can be used as ink for talisman crafting, the rest of its body doesn't have a shred of value. Even the merchants that specialize in raising and training demon beasts for a living aren't willing to raise and train this type of useless demon beast."

Xixi nodded as she asked, "What about that brush?"

“That’s a talisman brush. There’s a difference in quality among talisman brushes. When crafting a talisman, a superior quality talisman brush will not only draw out smoother strokes and more symmetrical marks, it’s able to increase the success rate of talisman crafting. This talisman brush is a mere ordinary talisman brush. However, it’s sufficient for me.”

As he finished speaking, Chen Xi abruptly noticed that he had a lot more to say than usual today. Could it be that it’s because grandfather and little brother left, I’ve taken Xixi as someone to pour my heart out to?

As he thought up to this point, Chen Xi turned to look at Xixi, but noticed that the little girl was resting her head on the table and had been asleep for an unknown amount of time. A strand of glistening and translucent drool hung from the corner of her mouth.

Chen Xi randomly recalled how his younger brother had the exact same appearance when he was younger. He couldn’t help but feel his heart warm as he carefully picked Xixi up and placed her on his bed. He then tucked her in and returned to sit at the wooden table.

Without further ado, Chen Xi picked up the brush and stained it with sufficient ink, then he waved it before swinging it to draw a talisman.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

As the tip of the brush, which was stained with blackish-red ink, lightly glided on the empty talisman paper, a fine, red line gushed out from the end of the brush. It was like an intelligent earthworm as it moved along a graceful and smooth trajectory to quickly creep across the light azure pine grain talisman paper.

Chen Xi was always serious and concentrated when crafting talismans. His eyes were staring fixedly at the talisman paper beneath his brush and his back was straight, seeming like a spear that could pierce the heavens. His

right arm hung in the air motionlessly like a curled and strong section of a pine tree branch that grew wildly out from between the cracks of a tombstone on a cliff. From the beginning till the end, it didn't shift in the slightest.

What moved was his right wrist!

His right wrist was extremely nimble as it controlled the talisman brush in his hand to sketch on the paper, then he applied ink onto the talisman paper at a shocking speed. His movements were skilled and smooth; not only did they not give off an unstable feeling in the slightest, they instead seemed like a flowing stream, bringing along an agile and harmonic rhythm.

When a complicated and profound pattern quietly bloomed like a flower atop the talisman paper, the talisman paper abruptly shone before dimming down and returning to normal.

Without taking a second glance, Chen Xi casually placed the first-grade Flamecloud Talisman aside, then took another blank piece of Pine Grain talisman paper and wielded his brush onto it, unwilling to waste a shred of time.

Five years ago, Chen Xi's grandfather took out the last bit of his savings to allow Chen Xi to study at a talisman crafting institution. Once he successfully grasped the crafting of first-grade basic talismans, talisman crafting became the sole source of income in their household.

However, Chen Xi only knew how to craft first-grade basic talismans. This couldn't be helped because when learning the method of talisman crafting in an institution, merely the first-grade was provided. If one wanted to learn crafting of higher grade talismans, then they would have to sell an arm and a leg to buy the corresponding books. The price was too high, so Chen Xi couldn't afford it.

Even then, Chen Xi was still extremely satisfied.

When he just started crafting talismans, he was only capable of crafting five first-grade talismans a day, but now he could craft 30. When converted into spirit stones, 30 talismans were equal to as many as 10 spirit stones. In the past, it was enough to maintain the livelihood of their household as well as pay for Chen Hao's studies in swordsmanship at the institution.

Now that his grandfather and younger brother had gone to the southern territory, only he remained. So long as he lived frugally, it wouldn't be long before he could collect a good amount of spirit stones. If he did this, purchasing a higher grade talisman crafting book wouldn't be impossible.

Of course, before doing that he'd have to return the 100 spirit stones he owed Uncle Zhang.

Time trickled by. Within the cramped and dim room, Chen Xi had a concentrated and focused expression as he bent over the table and wielded the brush with smooth and familiar movements. He was entirely immersed in a type of completely oblivious state. Under this state, that pile of blank Pine Grain talisman paper shifted as time passed, slowly transforming into talismans with complicated and profound patterns.

Whoosh~

The sky was already dark when Chen Xi finished crafting the last talisman. He carefully placed the talisman brush on the inkstone before heaving a long sigh of relief. Deep exhaustion was revealed between his brows, causing his gaunt face to seem even paler.

With his cultivation at the intermediate stage of the Congenital Realm, the True Essence within his body was barely able to sustain him crafting 30 first-grade talismans. If he wanted to craft more, it would only be possible if his cultivation increased and his True Essence rose explosively.

It was easy to say, but to Chen Xi, it was exceedingly difficult to increase his cultivation.

His natural talent wasn't bad, and the Violet Sky Arts that was passed down in his family wasn't something ordinary cultivation methods could compare to. However, his cultivation realm had stagnated at the intermediate-stage of the Congenital Realm for a whole five years without a shred of progress.

It was precisely because of this that Chen Tianli placed all hope on Chen Hao, whereas he was arranged to study talisman crafting....

Could it be that it's really because I'm too stupid?

Chen Xi had questioned and was in denial more than once. The struggle, frustration, pain, and sense of loss within were things that only he understood.

Knock! Knock! Knock!

He heard a burst of light and slow sounds of the door being knocked. Accompanying the sound of door knocks was a woman's voice that was gentle and pleasant to the ear. "Chen Xi, is Xixi at your house?"

Chen Xi came to from his pondering before opening the door. A woman with an elegant appearance stood outside the door. She was wearing a cloth gown and a hairpin made of chaste tree branches, but it was difficult to hide her body's graceful charm. It was precisely Xixi's mother, Bai Wanqing.

"Aunt Bai, Xixi's fallen asleep." Chen Xi said.

Bai Wanqing heaved a sigh of relief as she smiled and said, "The little one didn't trouble you, right? I'll carry her back home now."

Chen Xi shook his head.

Bai Wanqing knew that his disposition was reserved and that he was a man of few words. She chuckled as she entered the house to carry the soundly asleep Xixi out, then she left.

However, not long after, the door sounded once again, and this time the sound of knocking was rapid and concentrated like drumbeats.

Chen Xi frowned and went to open the door. It was Bai Wanqing, who'd returned with an anxious expression.

What happened?

Right at the moment Chen Xi felt bewildered, Bai Wanqing had already cried out, "Hurry! Hurry and go outside the city. It seems your grandfather met with an accident!"

What?

Grandfather met with an accident?

Chen Xi's head buzzed as if he was struck by lightning.