

## Worth 161

### Chapter 161: Armament Sand!

With this in mind, Wang Baole couldn't help but feel moved. He quickly opened the jade slip of the Technique of Infinite Armament Transformation. After reviewing it, he took out the materials and tried manufacturing and refining Numinous Treasures for the first time.

*Let me choose an easy one first!*

Wang Baole's eyes showed anticipation. Using the Dharmic Armament guidebook from the Dharmic Armament Pavilion, he found a Numinous Treasure known as a Water Droplet Separator. It was considered an easy to refine among the third-grade Numinous Treasures. However, it required one hundred thousand Inscriptions.

Looking at the requirements for the Inscriptions, Wang Baole was quite speechless, but after regulating his own breathing, he decided to give it a shot.

Time passed, and after five days, Wang Baole let out a long sigh. He was forced to give up on this attempt. Spirit Kernels for Numinous Treasures usually required at least a hundred Spirit Stones to condense.

Since too many Inscriptions were required, and almost all of them required advanced variations of the study of Inscriptions, it was strenuous even for Wang Baole. A single mistake could lead to the Spirit Stones' collapse, resulting in the failure of the refinement process. After studying the recipe, he realized that the second stage of refinement was way harder than Dharmic Artifacts.

More importantly, Wang Baole discovered that though the Inscriptions of the Numinous Treasures looked the same as Dharmic Artifacts, he had a nagging feeling that they were somewhat different. Yet, he was unable to figure it out exactly.

*I was too complacent in the past. The knowledge required for making Dharmic Armaments is too vast. I still need to continue learning and studying!*

Wang Baole took a deep breath. He knew that his biggest issue was not craftsmanship but that he had not mastered the knowledge of Upper Academy Island's Dharmic Armaments. As such, for the days ahead, he frequently went to the various halls in the Dharmic Armament Pavilion to learn the knowledge in the Technique of Infinite Armament Transformation and searched for videos and information on the Spirit Intranet. Occasionally, he also consulted Chen Yutong.

Like a sponge, he kept absorbing the more advanced knowledge of Dharmic Armaments, as well as studied the recipe for the third-grade Numinous Treasure.

Just like that, time passed. Gradually, Wang Baole started to have a better understanding of the differences between Dharmic Artifacts and Numinous Treasures.

*Regardless of whether it is the seniors in the halls or Chen Yutong, they all tell me that the linchpin of refining Numinous Treasures is the temperature and the changes of the Inscriptions. However, for the specifics, I will still need to figure them out and understand them all by myself.*

*The requirement for perceptivity and aptitude is high for Dharmic Armaments. Many of the principles explained by others are just the basics. Only with my own understanding can I master it.*

After trying, Wang Baole realized that even though he knew the principles, when it came to actual work, it seemed virtually impossible to complete because of a lack of understanding.

This made him quite worried, but he knew that he could not rush the matter. Unless there were other opportunities, he could only accumulate knowledge and wait for the fruits of success to ripen when the conditions were right. As such, he had no other choice but to settle down and treat the refinement of the third-grade Numinous Treasures as a mid to long term goal.

*But I cannot waste this period of time. Can I start refining using the recipe given by Little Missy?* Wang Baole took a deep breath. He felt that making Dharmic Armaments would only become harder. However, he did not give up. Instead, he became more spirited and pumped.

In the following days, he simultaneously learned and studied the Numinous Treasure recipe, as well as attempting to refine the scabbard.

Since Wang Baole was already extremely familiar with making perfect second-grade Dharmic Artifacts, the past difficulties of refining the scabbard were no longer challenging to him, regardless of whether it was sword-shaped Spirit Stones or the extremely complex Inscriptions that became Spirit Kernels. Although he didn't succeed at once, after failing multiple times, he finally...

After ten days, Wang Baole completely refined the scabbard Spirit Kernel.

Furthermore, in terms of quality, it was considered perfect!

Looking at the colorful scabbard-shaped Spirit Kernel that seemed to be circulated with light, Wang Baole was a little excited. It had been quite some time since he first obtained the recipe for the scabbard, but only then had he managed to complete the first phase.

*The difficulty level of scabbards is second only to Numinous Treasures.* Wang Baole sighed and settled down. He proceeded to the materials stage, by infusing the Spirit Kernels into various materials, which could be used to refine artifacts at the end.

But at that step, Wang Baole knew that there was a difficulty that had to be overcome; otherwise, the material forging stage might not be successful.

"It requires one hundred grains of Armament Sand!" Wang Baole muttered. He had seen this material when he studied the recipe earlier and had gone on the Spirit Intranet to search. Nevertheless, he could not find the Armament Sand on either the Spirit Intranet or the material list of the Dharmic Armament Pavilion.

He had even gone to ask Xie Haiyang, but he had not heard of such a thing. At this stage, Wang Baole understood that this Armament Sand was one of the materials that had not been found by the Federation. In order to obtain it, the only solution was to ask Little Missy.

Coming to this conclusion, he took out his Hallucination Pillow and plunged straight into his dream to start asking.

This time round, Little Missy—wearing a black mask—did not pose difficulties for Wang Baole. After Wang Baole completed his question, she immediately gave the answer, as if she already knew that he would come and ask.

But after Wang Baole took a look, he started to be suspicious.

“Recipe for Armament Sand? Is this Armament Sand not a material but a Dharmic Artifact?” Wang Baole scrutinized it while still puzzled. Slowly, he became astonished. The Armament Sand was indeed a material, but it required refinement processes. As for the materials required for these processes, they were mostly ordinary. The main component required was even simpler—Rainbow Spirit Stones.

“Why do I feel that this seems to be specially prepared for me?” Wang Baole hesitated for a while and looked at the black mask suspiciously. Then, he continued to look down and study the recipe for making Armament Sand.

According to the method mentioned, Armament Sand was an extremely special spirit material. Once successfully refined, it contained many magical powers.

Its effect was to activate all the potential that was contained within the Dharmic Artifact, reaching the stage of transforming a rotten object to having mystical effects. However, it carried the risk of failure and required precise control during the fusion process.

As for the method of refining Armament Sand, it required the materials to first be melted to a molten state. Immediately after this, the Rainbow Spirit Stones should be immersed, allowing the materials to absorb and cool. Then, Inscriptions found in the recipe would be carved on the Spirit Stones. These Inscriptions were so unique that Wang Baole had never seen them before.

According to the method written, the Inscriptions would cause the Spirit Stones to shrink, forming a grain of sand at last.

The result was Armament Sand.

Although he still had some hesitation, but Wang Baole decided to try after giving it some thought. As such, after leaving the Hallucination realm, he immediately bought large amounts of materials required to make and refine Armament Sand. He then begun the process.

To Wang Baole, if he did not consider its consumption, refining Armament Sand was not really difficult. Both the melting and engraving processes proceeded smoothly. Very quickly, he successfully refined the first grain of Armament Sand.

Placing the Armament Sand on his hand, Wang Baole raised his hand up to his eyes and examined it closely for a long while. This grain of Armament Sand was completely black and did not seem to be in any way intriguing. Most others would simply think that it was an ordinary sand grain.

“Is this thing as magical as the Little Missy said?” Wang Baole muttered and put away the grain of Armament Sand before proceeding to refining more Armament Sand.

When he gradually completed the refinement of all one hundred grains of Armament Sand, Wang Baole was shocked by the amount of materials consumed by making the Armament Sand. These were actually Rainbow Spirit Stones. If the Armament Sand was refined by others, the consumption level would be

unimaginable. Even for Wang Baole himself, the period in which he refined both the Spirit Stones and the Armament Sand exhausted him so much that he had no time for other activities.

*These are actually one hundred Rainbow Spirit Stones. I hope they really have magical powers.*

Seeing that he was about to complete the refinement of the Armament Sand, his eyes gleamed. He took out his scabbard Spirit Kernel and started to fuse it with the materials according to the recipe's instructions.

As precious materials were fused one-by-one by Wang Baole, within a short time span, a blue scabbard gradually formed on the smelting furnace in front of him.

Furthermore, a suppressive force—far exceeding a first-grade Dharmic Artifact—exuded from the scabbard. After experiencing it, Wang Baole's eyes lit up.

*It already has such a spiritual force before completely becoming an artifact!*

With anticipation, Wang Baole focused on putting in all the materials, other than the Armament Sand. In a flash, the scabbard was immediately formed. He suddenly waved his right hand, fusing all one hundred grains of Armament Sand into it.

The instant that it touched the scabbard, the Armament Sand melted, forming black lines in a bid to fuse with the scabbard.

Wang Baole was shaken. Unleashing his cultivation, he dispersed his spirit energy, his mind and body completely immersed in the process. He controlled the black lines formed by the Armament Sand, allowing them to fuse into the scabbard bit by bit. The whole process was slow, and Wang Baole did not dare allow himself to get distracted.

Six hours quickly passed. Wang Baole's forehead was already coated in sweat. With his cautiousness, the black lines formed by the Armament Sand has completely fused with the scabbard. In fact, under his observation, the black lines penetrated the material that covered the scabbard, touching the Spirit Kernel.

But the moment when they touched the Spirit Kernel, the Inscriptions carved on the Spirit Kernel by Wang Baole shone brightly, seemingly coming alive, and even swam on the Spirit Kernel on its own accord. Rushing to the fore, they seemed like they wanted to touch the one hundred black lines.

Even among themselves, they contested and started to devour and fuse with each other!

This sight made Wang Baole open his eyes widely and exclaim in shock.

“What's happening!”

Wang Baole's body shook, shocked by whatever had unfolded before his eyes. The hundred black lines shattered in unison and fused together with the scabbard.

Jumping to his feet, Wang Baole rubbed his eyes. He recalled his memory many times to ensure that his eyes were not playing tricks. Slowly, he breathed heavily, and his eyes lit up.

*It really works!*

He became high-spirited and immediately refined the scabbard Spirit Kernel and the Armament Sand. After ten days of no rest, he finally used the preparatory materials to restart the refinement of scabbards. Just like ten days ago, before the scabbard was in shape, the Armament Sand was thrown in. Wang Baole used all his might to control the process.

He was mentally prepared this time around. When he once again saw that the Inscriptions appeared to be alive, fighting for the right to be fused with the black lines, he was calmer than before despite still being somewhat shaken. Under his careful observation, the Inscriptions continuously fused and devoured each other, forming one hundred Inscriptions that Wang Baole had never seen before.

They leaped and absorbed the hundred black lines. Then, the scabbard shone intensely, shaking the whole smelting furnace. Wang Baole was so shocked that he took a few steps back. He raised his right hand and grabbed at the air.

Immediately, a beam of blue light sparkled. The scabbard flew out of the smelting furnace and floated before Wang Baole. The scabbard shook, emanating a suppressive force that exceeded the first grade and, to a certain extent, even the perfect second grade!

## **Chapter 162: Detached**

Wang Baole's mind buzzed, and his breathing halted. Staring at the scabbard in front of him, his eyes widened and slowly emitted an intense gaze.

"This suppressive force... could this be a first-grade Dharmic Artifact?" Wang Baole drew a gasp as he carefully examined the scabbard. Upon confirming that it was indeed first grade, a wave of shock and excitement unwittingly began to well up in his heart.

"This unbelievable suppressive force coming from just a first-grade weapon. Imagine this to be second-grade... or even third-grade, how much more powerful will this be!" Wang Baole exclaimed.

Just the mere thought of it caused whirlwinds in his heart. With his mind still in disarray, it took him a while before he could suppress his shock and settle down. Suddenly, with a strange glint in his eyes, Wang Baole thought of what Little Missy had said—when it reached its top level, the ancient greenish-bronze sword could be attracted. Although it seemed unreliable, it might still be a more plausible option.

Still pondering over the situation, Wang Baole waited for the scabbard to cool before grabbing it. With a fiery gaze in his eyes, he decided to test the prowess of the scabbard by transferring his Spirit Qi to it. However, the scabbard merely shimmered. Nothing happened.

Wang Baole was taken aback. He stared at the scabbard—empty yet emitting Spirit Qi. Upon checking the interior of the scabbard, Wang Baole found out that the Inscriptions on the Spirit Kernel were not the same as what he had previously seen. Instead of a hundred of them, the Inscriptions were now countless and dense, as if it was some form of encryption. Even Wang Baole himself had to carefully study those Inscriptions before arriving at only a superficial understanding of it. As for outsiders who did not have knowledge of these Inscriptions, it would be a highly difficult task for them to fully understand.

“Hmm, Inscription mutation? Oh, and didn’t Little Missy say before that a sword-like Spirit Qi needle would appear on the scabbard?” Wang Baole remarked and sighed deeply. Refusing to have his beliefs shaken, Wang Baole once again gathered his Spirit Qi and transferred it to the scabbard before swinging the scabbard outward. However, the scabbard remained as before.

“Is this a lie?” remarked Wang Baole with a tinge of anger in his tone. Refusing to admit defeat, Wang Baole once again decided to confirm the suppressive force emitted from the scabbard. It was indeed a remarkable force. In a state of confusion, Wang Baole casually used the scabbard as a dagger and stabbed at the wall beside him.

With a bang, the walls cracked slightly, but nothing else happened. Seeing this, Wang Baole momentarily became dumbfounded. In the heat of the moment, he decided to take out the Hallucination Pillow and ask Little Missy for a clear explanation.

Just as Wang Baole was about to take out the Hallucination Pillow, he paused for a moment. Recalling Little Missy’s eccentric temper behind that mask of hers, he pondered for a while before turning his head around and leaving the cave abode. Upon returning from the marketplace—where he had bought a bouquet of fresh flowers—he entered the Hallucination realm.

With an affectionate gaze, he removed the mask, placed it on the ground, and softly said, “Little Missy, I have come to see you. There was nothing much to do today. I coincidentally passed by a cliff, saw these flowers, and instinctively thought of you.”

Having said that, Wang Baole took out the flowers that he had bought and placed them beside the mask.

The purple petals—together with the black mask—seemed to cast a beautiful radiance. Especially in the wintry Hallucination realm, a small breeze could gently cause the petals to flutter and be carried away by the wind.

“Little Missy, these flowers grow ever so lonely on the cliff, which reminded me of the lonely you. I cannot visit you frequently. I hope these flowers can take my place and accompany you,” Wang Baole muttered. With that, he immediately went to observe the mask. No signs of change. A wave of disappointment began to rise in him.

“Seems like Little Missy is also an experienced being. It’s so difficult to please her...” Wang Baole remarked. Heaving a sigh of relief internally, he blinked and coughed.

“Oh right, Little Missy, I suddenly thought of something. I have already refined the scabbard, which you asked me to do, but the problem is, how do I use it? I have tried a couple of times already...”

Just as Wang Baole was about to complete his sentence, a gust of wind blew, brushing the flowers against the mask. It seemed like these flowers were about to be blown away into the distance.

At that moment, a seemingly invisible hand appeared from the mask and gently pinched a fluttering flower petal. The flower petal froze and stopped in midair!

This scene made Wang Baole’s pupils shrink suddenly, and his breathing hastened. Staring at the flower that hung in midair, he saw the flower rise slightly, as if someone had brought it near their nose to take a whiff.

Not sure if it was just an illusion, Wang Baole vaguely saw a woman's silhouette above the mask. She had long hair that was swaying lightly. With an indistinct face, she was wearing a traditional regal gown. Yet, she appeared to stand aloof from the world—detached. At that instant, her tender hands held onto the flower, taking in the faint scent.

“Thank you.”

A cold, tranquil voice suddenly sounded out of the black mask while Wang Baole's heart was racing. This sudden voice gave Wang Baole a fright as he hurriedly took a few steps back. After suppressing his alarm, Wang Baole blinked and hurriedly said, “Little Missy, you have such a pleasant voice.”

The black mask remained silent. After a while, the originally cold-hearted voice became apparently less cold and seemed to have more emotions in it, just as it started to say more.

“The scabbard is a growth-typed Dharmic Artifact. Only by refining it to the third grade will you be able to release the sword-like Spirit Qi needles. Let me teach you a way where you can infuse the scabbard into your body for nurturing. This will allow you to become one with your weapon, granting you the ability to command it with ease as you wish.

“At the same time, throughout this cultivation period, it will also serve as your Intrinsic Dharma treasure. In the future, in terms of function and physical changes, this scabbard will also match your personality as well as your state of mind.

“In addition, I will impart the knowledge on how to refine this scabbard to the third grade to you. You must remember that you have to quickly refine this to the third grade.”

As Little Missy's voice constantly spoke, Wang Baole became more agitated and excited.

This was the longest conversation that Wang Baole had held with the mask ever since he obtained it. This time, it was evident that the tone was not as cold-hearted as before. This made Wang Baole excited. He realized that he had given the correct present. As he pondered over his stupidity in the past, he recognized that it was becoming apparent that there were still many things that he had to individually understand and dive deeper into.

*Hmm... It looks like I have to put in more work to please her in the future... I should quickly grab hold of the opportunity to understand everything, obtain a mutual cordial relationship, and boost our impression of each other!*

Feeling delighted, Wang Baole faithfully remembered what Little Missy had taught him—about how he had to use his scabbard as his Intrinsic Dharmic Artifact as well as how he could refine it to the third grade. Only then did he decide to leave.

Just as he was about to pick up the mask and leave the Hallucination realm, Little Missy's cold-hearted voice once again reverberated.

“I wish to remain here.”

“Ah?” Wang Baole was taken aback. Pausing for a moment, he left the Hallucination realm on his own. Before he left, he turned back to look at the mask with the flower floating in midair as before.

It was as if she was always looking, gently taking in the flowery scent...

All of this left a deep impression on Wang Baole. It appeared that he could genuinely feel the loneliness of the woman...

Amid the silence, Wang Baole returned to reality. As he opened his eyes, he realized that the mask had indeed disappeared. All that was left was just the Hallucination Pillow. As such, he carefully put away the pillow, took a deep breath, and sat cross-legged. Following the teachings imparted from Little Missy, Wang Baole attempted to infuse the scabbard into his body for cultivation.

Little Missy's technique was simple, and the process ran smoothly. In a matter of seconds, the scabbard vanished from the outside world into his body.

As for the formula to refine the scabbard to the second grade, the materials required were far more precious than those required for the first grade, and the quantity needed was at least ten times greater.

Furthermore, he also needed to acquire Armament Sand, not just a hundred grains but a thousand!

This was still not worth mentioning. To refine the scabbard to the third grade, the materials required were far more exaggerated—especially the Armament Sand. It required ten thousand grains!

These numbers—even if Wang Baole himself could refine the Rainbow Spirit Stones himself—were still an astounding amount that would leave one speechless.

However, upon thinking of the prowess of the scabbard, Wang Baole gritted his teeth. Filled with anticipation, he began to refine the Armament Sand. However, in the midst of his refinement, an idea suddenly flashed across Wang Baole's mind.

*Hmm... the Armament Sand can fully trigger the potential of the scabbard and cause the Inscriptions to evolve... then... can I use it on other Dharmic Artifacts?*

The thought of this excited him.

*The scabbard's power is hindered by its grade. Up till now, the refinement of the scabbard still has not shown any obvious effects. However, those flawless and unparalleled second-grade Dharmic Artifacts that I have are extraordinarily powerful. If I can fully trigger the potential of my scabbard and cause the Inscriptions to evolve, then won't my power increase exponentially?*

With this in mind, Wang Baole's eyes shone, and he sighed deeply. Thinking of all the possibilities, he decided to attempt to refine the scabbard and observe the outcome of it. With that—instead of the precious Dharmic Artifacts that he had—Wang Baole retrieved several leftover second-grade Dharmic Artifacts from his storage bag that he had used in his previous refinement, many of which he had been unable to sell. He then ran toward the smelting furnace and started his refinement process.

*It doesn't matter if I fail, but once I succeed, my Dharmic Artifacts will undoubtedly possess unimaginable power! However, due to the wild and uncontrollable nature of the evolution, even I myself do not know what will happen if the Dharmic Artifact evolves!*

Wang Baole's eyes were filled with longing—unable to suppress the desire in him.

*Will some kind of nascent Divine Armament appear?*

## **Chapter 163: Crossed Dharmic Artifacts**

Dreams are beautiful, but reality is cruel.

On Wang Baole's first attempt, he took out a small shield and put it into the smelting furnace. After making some measurements, he put in an Armament Sand particle. However, as soon as it was integrated, the small shield vibrated vigorously and immediately lost all its Spirit force.

Wang Baole frowned while taking it out to examine it. He realized that all the inscriptions on the Spirit Kernel had already been destroyed. The Dharmic Artifact needed to be filled with new inscriptions again, and the materials on its exterior also needed to be removed. Overall, it was considered half broken.

Wang Baole sighed and retrieved the second Dharmic Artifact to try again. His progress was initially going well, but after half an hour, a loud boom accompanied the complete deconstruction of the second Dharmic Artifact. Wang Baole got a shock, and upon taking the second Dharmic Artifact out for examination, he found that not only had the Spirit Kernel been completely destroyed, its inscriptions were also all warped.

"Is it really impossible?" Wang Baole scratched his head as he looked at the large number of Dharmic Artifacts that he could not sell off. After thinking about it, he decided to continue trying.

In the blink of an eye, three days passed. In those three days, Wang Baole was immersed in the process of trying to integrate the Armament Sand with the Dharmic Artifacts. He failed eighteen times and was so demoralized that he was about to give up.

In most of those eighteen failures, the entire Dharmic Artifact had destabilized not long after the Armament Sand was integrated. All the inscriptions within the Dharmic Artifact were destroyed and warped one after another. It was as if the Dharmic Artifacts could not withstand the integration of the Armament Sand and were being immediately destroyed.

However, when Wang Baole was about to give up dejectedly, on his nineteenth refinement trial, which involved a second-grade flying sword, a bright glow suddenly appeared after the flying sword vibrated as it integrated with the Armament Sand.

The appearance of the glow made Wang Baole excited. He immediately put in his best effort to control it. After five minutes, as he retrieved the flying sword following the disappearance of the glow, he realized that there were obvious changes being made to it.

"Success!" Wang Baole was extremely surprised as he quickly examined it. He realized that the flying sword had become heavier than before. Therefore, he integrated some Spirit Qi within it to inspect its interior and immediately found that inscriptions of greater complexity had appeared on the flying sword's Spirit Kernel, similar to the scabbard. The only difference was that those on the scabbard were more complex.

At the same time, the inscriptions on the flying sword were clearly different from before. After analyzing it closely, Wang Baole found that nine inscriptions had been changed, and it was those changes that created subtle differences in the overall arrangement of the inscriptions.

However, even though the differences were minor, it created major transformations in the potency of the flying sword. Wang Baole had never seen this inscription arrangement on the jade slip before and was unable to work out what effect had occurred to the flying sword after its transformation.

Fortunately, he had his formula for the inscriptions. Therefore, he sat down and tried to derive them. After a while, as Wang Baole lifted his head, he was mildly bewildered.

“Its speed has been decreased, and so has its degree of sharpness. Every aspect has been sacrificed, except that... it has been strengthened almost tenfold in terms of hardness?” Wang Baole mumbled to himself. That was the conclusion that he had arrived at after using the formula to derive the inscriptions. After a long while, with his head lowered, he took out the Flying Frost Sword, a perfect second-grade Dharmic Artifact, and slammed it directly on the transformed sword!

Theoretically, even though both swords were second-grade Dharmic Artifacts, one was perfect, and the other was just ordinary; one was extremely difficult to refine, while the other was easily made; one required the expenditure of many precious materials, while the other merely required cheaper materials.

This way, upon contact, the transformed sword should be broken. However, right now, as Wang Baole’s Flying Frost Sword landed, the crisp sound of metal clashing was produced. The Flying Frost Sword violently rebounded, and a hairline crack even appeared on it. Instead, the ordinary sword remained undamaged!

*It’s so strong!*

That scene caused Wang Baole to gasp in shock. He held up the transformed flying sword and flung it forward.

Instantly, the flying sword floated forward slowly, with a speed akin to a mosquito.

That made Wang Baole dumbfounded. After testing out the extent of its sharpness, he looked at the transformed sword. It could no longer be considered a sword—calling it a spear would be more appropriate.

*What is this? It was previously trash, and now, it’s still trash...*

Wang Baole sighed, tempted to change some inscriptions in order to preserve its hardness while increasing its speed and sharpness. However, after spending time trying to figure it out, Wang Baole had no choice but to give up, for he could not seem to find any clues as to how to go about doing it.

Despite that, it was not all bad—at least Wang Baole had managed to record the order of the mutated inscriptions so that if he wanted to strengthen his Dharmic Artifacts in the future, he could just carve the same inscriptions in that particular order.

He finally tossed the Dharmic Artifact aside. After pondering for a moment, Wang Baole was still indignant and continued trying to make alterations using the Armament Sand.

Just like that, a month passed.

After Wang Baole had exhausted all his trashy Dharmic Artifacts and tried transforming dozens of Dharmic Artifact puppets, he slapped his forehead dejectedly as he looked at the Dharmic Artifacts strewn before him.

*Why is everything in a mess?*

In his refinement process, he had quite a substantial number of refinement failures. Even though he had managed to succeed in transforming dozens of Dharmic Artifacts, none of them were what he wanted.

The transformation that occurred after integration of the Armament Sand was too unpredictable and uncontrollable. It was impossible to attain a particular change in a specific domain, seemingly a result purely based on luck.

If that was all, it might not have been so troubling. However, what made matters more complicated was that in the Dharmic Artifacts that he had succeeded in transforming, some ridiculous functions had appeared, which put Wang Baole at a loss.

For example, the flying sword originally had advantages in terms of speed, sharpness, and hardness. However, not only was the first flying sword a disaster after Wang Baole further refined it, of the two that followed, one of them was incredibly fast yet extremely fragile and blunt, and it almost disintegrated while flying in the air.

The other flying sword was even more ridiculous. It was not able to differentiate between friend and foe, charging ferociously at Wang Baole in a crazy manner once it was activated.

There were also several Golden Bell Beads, which had yet to become perfect second-grade Dharmic Artifacts, that transformed into self-destructing beads. They did not have to be thrown at others, as they would explode by themselves under the slightest pressure. As Wang Baole simply held the beads after refining them, they immediately exploded.

Yet, none of that was what gave Wang Baole the most trouble. The ones that drove him up the wall were an umbrella, a fly-whisk, and a Deity Immobilization Rope.

The transformations made to these three Dharmic Artifacts did not seem to make much sense. The umbrella was originally for shielding and protection, and even though its protective effect was increased significantly after refinement, it seemed to always malfunction. Every time that it malfunctioned, it would fly out like a flying sword. It was as if it was a flying sword born into the body of an umbrella.

The fly-whisk made Wang Baole sigh disappointingly. It had originally been made of soft whisk threads but became extremely tough after being transformed by the Armament Sand. The threads were like strands of steel and seemed to be extremely hardy. Logically, Wang Baole should have been glad that such a transformation occurred, but in reality, the threads turned limp after a maximum of three seconds...

What made Wang Baole most troubled was the rope. Wang Baole still remembered vividly that he had refined the rope five days ago. When he stepped out of his cave abode to try its functions out, the rope simply rose into the skies and... disappeared.

*That darned rope. I've no idea what happened to it after it flew away. It hasn't returned since then...*

The more Wang Baole thought about the rope, the more agitated he became, as he felt that the rope had created the greatest problem.

Even so, of the dozens of Dharmic Artifacts, there were a few that Wang Baole felt were acceptable. For example, there was a large seal that was originally an ordinary second-grade Dharmic Artifact. However, after the random mutation, it became a perfect second-grade Dharmic Artifact that was even more powerful. Wang Baole was shocked, as he felt that it was not too different from a third-grade Numinous Treasure.

However, when Wang Baole tried it out, he realized that the large seal would occasionally malfunction. When this happened, it became useless. It would become highly flexible such that, at the slightest touch, it would be tossed into the sky.

As for Wang Baole's puppet Dharmic Artifacts, there were two that were successful. One of them was incredibly tough, such that Wang Baole's punch could not even break it apart. That made Wang Baole surprised.

The other puppet was changed in terms of speed. Wang Baole took it out for a trial and realized that it was running faster than even he could. Therefore, Wang Baole hurriedly studied the inscriptions on the puppet's Spirit Kernel and made a note of them.

"What on Earth are all these?" Wang Baole looked at the Dharmic Artifacts in front of him and sighed deeply. He felt that he had wasted both time and Armament Sand during this period.

Thankfully, he had gained an understanding of the arrangement of some inscriptions that were not found in the Dao College's records. That somehow soothed his troubled mind a little. Now, as he planned to put his Dharmic Artifacts away, he stopped suddenly.

*This is not the way to go. I have so many Dharmic Artifacts, both good ones and bad ones. If they are mixed together...*

Wang Baole thought about the scenario where he was in a battle and wanting to injure the enemy using his flying sword. Instead of attacking the enemy, the flying sword would end up trying to stab him instead. This made Wang Baole sigh, and he quickly carved a cross on the surface of each modified Dharmic Artifact!

## **Chapter 164: Free If It Breaks**

After crossing out the Dharmic Artifacts one by one, Wang Baole felt more at peace. He decided that, in future, he would put a cross on all the other Dharmic Artifacts that he was unsatisfied with.

This way, not only would it be more convenient to classify them, his own reputation would also not be at stake if the undesirable Dharmic Artifacts happen to be leaked out.

*Hmm... I don't have much use for all this trash. Why don't I sell it?*

Wang Baole rubbed his chin. He had grown proficient at selling Dharmic Artifacts through his previous experience. Thus, as he looked at those Dharmic Artifacts, he felt that it was not a bad idea to sell off the trashy Dharmic Artifacts as a way to recoup some losses.

*However, I can't sell them in my name. If I do, the branding that I've worked so hard to create will be ruined...* Wang Baole thought about it and decided to stay anonymous as he listed them in the management department in charge of the Spirit Intranet.

This way, other than the management department of the Spirit Intranet, nobody would know the origins of these Dharmic Artifacts. Furthermore, the management department had always been strict in terms of confidentiality.

*I'll sell whatever I can. If no one wants to buy anything in the end, so be it.*

With that thought, Wang Baole immediately sprang into action. He only listed a portion of them, and not everything at the same time.

In order to attract attention, Wang Baole also named the few Dharmic Artifacts that he had listed with what he thought were impressive names. As for the prices, they were not exorbitant.

After finishing all that, Wang Baole did not pay further attention to the matter. Gradually, his life was restored to the state that it had been a month ago. Other than studying and researching, his days were spent refining Dharmic Artifacts and Armament Sand.

Two weeks soon flew by. Wang Baole had already accumulated hundreds of Armament Sand grains. As he continued working toward his goal of accumulating a thousand of them, he received a payment of five hundred Spirit Stones.

This payment was entered directly into his account at the Dao College. After receiving the notification, Wang Baole was slightly confused. After checking it up, he realized that someone had bought one of the trashy Dharmic Artifacts that he had listed.

The Dharmic Artifact sold was the extremely sturdy flying sword that Wang Baole had made previously by successfully integrating Armament Sand with it.

*It seems like there are many hidden talents on Upper Academy Island who have an eye for treasures...* Wang Baole was extremely delighted. He recalled that he had given the flying sword an impressive-sounding name.

He basked in delight as he continued refining more Armament Sand while anticipating that more of his trashy Dharmic Artifacts would be sold.

In the blink of an eye, seven days passed.

That day, in the Public Square of the Combat Pavilion stood an ugly youth who was dressed in a simple gray Daoist robe. He was Shi Nan, a new disciple of the Combat Pavilion. He stared with his eyes red at a man and a woman, clenching his fists.

The woman looked relatively attractive, with a provocative figure that could not be completely hidden by the Dao College's robe. The man beside her was thin and looked ordinary, but he obviously had an advantage in terms of height. Now, he lowered his head slightly, speaking as he looked condescendingly at the youth.

"Shi Nan, are you sure you want to battle me?"

Shi Nan's breathing quickened, and his eyes were filled with rage and bitterness. Both he and the woman beside the man were disciples who had just gained admission to Upper Academy Island. They were lovers, but he had never expected that the woman would abandon him and get together with Li Fei, the senior disciple, once she was on Upper Academy Island.

He was indignant and was insulted when he came to confront the man. Anger overrode his logic, which had made him propose a battle.

"Fine, if you want to battle, I'll fulfill your wish!" Just as Shi Nan stared angrily at him, Li Fei grew annoyed. He raised his right hand and slammed forcefully. Instantly, a flying sword appeared, charging toward Shi Nan.

It was moving at a high speed. Even though it did not cause a sonic boom, it made a bright sword mark in midair. In the blink of an eye, it had arrived before Shi Nan. Shi Nan was taken aback, as the gust of wind following the flying sword's movement fell on his face and felt like a cold bucket of water. He was immediately awakened from his agitated state.

As a newbie who had just gained admission to Upper Academy Island, there was a substantial difference between him and Li Fei. Now, he scrambled and retreated as he was at a loss as to what to do. He quickly took out several Dharmic Artifacts from his storage bag, but most of them were first-grade Dharmic Artifacts. Regrettably, only the flying sword was a second-grade Dharmic Artifact.

He tossed the flying sword out without thinking further as he wanted to put up some resistance. However, Li Fei's flying sword, as a perfect second-grade Dharmic Artifact, was extremely sharp and reliable. As it neared, it immediately turned many of Shi Nan's Dharmic Artifacts to dust. It was a hair's length from Shi Nan's glabella when an ordinary looking flying sword blocked it.

The moment contact was made, a deafening boom was created, causing passers-by to stop instantly in their tracks in shock. Shi Nan, who had turned pale, immediately retreated by taking several steps back.

Most of the Dharmic Artifacts in front of him had already been damaged. Only the second-grade flying sword floated before him, acting like a shield and giving off a blinding glow.

On the other hand, Li Fei's flying sword seemed to behave as if it has hit an immovable rock, as it directly bounced off as the loud boom continued reverberating. There were also cracking sounds produced as the sword tip was blunted. Even the sword body was severely broken, with a frightening crack appearing on it.

Seeing what had happened, Li Fei gasped in shock as his mind buzzed noisily. He was taken aback, his surprise swiftly apparent on his face as he looked at the half-damaged flying sword that scrambled back to him and then at the sword floating in front of Shi Nan. He felt his heart ache with pain.

"I was wondering about why you would dare to battle me... Seems like you're relying on this Dharmic Artifact, huh?" Li Fei narrowed his eyes and revealed a chilly look. He flailed his hands again as he did not believe what had just happened. Immediately, seven flying swords flew out from his storage bag.

Every single one of them was a perfect second-grade Dharmic Artifact, amazing both in terms of their speed and sharpness. He had accumulated them over the course of two years, and now, as he activated his hand seals, the flying swords charged forward at an astounding speed.

“Then... I’ll just destroy your Dharmic Artifact. Let’s see if you can still act so arrogant after that!” As Li Fei spoke, the flying sword neared Shi Nan, who was still frozen with shock, at high speed.

Loud booms instantly erupted. All the onlookers stared incredulously with their mouths agape. Some of them were even dumbfounded as their eyes widened in disbelief.

“Gosh! My eyes aren’t playing tricks on me, are they? That flying sword is too strong to be true!”

“What... what Dharmic Artifact is that? A Dharma shield in the shape of a sword?”

“There seems to be a cross at the top of it! What does the cross mean?”

Looking at everything from their perspective, Li Fei’s flying swords formed something like a sword rain, colliding with Shi Nan’s flying sword directly. However, in the blink of an eye, all those flying swords were completely repelled, breaking apart almost completely due to the high speed and force. Some of them even instantly broke into pieces. Even the most minor damage involved the sword tip breaking off the sword.

Whatever happened was unusual and bizarre. Very soon, as the loud boom quieted down, large amounts of flying sword debris flew around Shi Nan. He was still in a daze, and Li Fei was frozen with shock. His body was trembling as he stared at the flying sword in front of Shi Nan, as if he had just seen a ghost.

“Is it a Numinous Treasure? How shameless of you, Shi Nan! It’s just a battle fellow disciples, and you used a Numinous Treasure!” Li Fei trembled and was feeling so appalled that he no longer felt his physical pain. With his eyes wide open, he retreated several steps. Even though the sword did not look like a Numinous Treasure at all, he also could not figure out which Dharmic Artifact could be so robust to such a sickening degree.

The onlookers were also gasping in shock. Even Shi Nan’s ex-girlfriend was thrown into a daze.

Shi Nan, on the other hand, had become tongue-tied with shock before everyone else. He was breathing rapidly now, staring at the flying sword in front of him. He clearly remembered that he had bought the sword a week before simply because he thought that it was cheap. After he bought it, however, he had soon realized that the sword was annoyingly slow and was not sharp at all.

Despite its hardness, he felt that a flying sword was useless if it was not equipped with high speed and sharpness. If not for a no-refund policy, he would have long returned it.

However, right now, those thoughts were thrown out of his head. He snapped back to reality and clutched the flying sword before him, looking agitated.

“This is not a Numinous Treasure but a second-grade Dharmic Artifact that I had bought a week ago. It is named... Free If It Breaks!” Shi Nan shouted loudly in excitement.

The moment that he heard those words, Li Fei’s eyeballs almost fell out of their sockets. To him, that Dharmic Artifact was of supreme-grade, but its name was even more unbelievable... However, he agreed that its name matched its characteristics very well.

The onlookers all looked puzzled after hearing the flying sword’s name. However, very quickly, someone shrieked loudly, apparently having thought of something.

“That name... I remember now! I saw someone buy it on the Transaction Zone, and it only cost five hundred Spirit Stones!”

“I saw it before as well! I think there are seven or eight of them on sale, all marked with a cross...”

“They only cost five hundred Spirit Stones? Then I want to buy one, too!”

As everyone listened to the conversation, they suddenly all became agitated. Some of them immediately logged onto the Spirit Intranet with the intention to purchase the items. Even Li Fei joined in and opened up the Spirit Intranet without hesitation.

Seeing how things had turned out, Shi Nan also grew anxious. He quickly tried to make more purchases as well.

Instantly, everyone seemed to have forgotten about the battle. They all rushed to search for the items on the Spirit Intranet, and before long, the Dharmic Artifacts that Wang Baole had listed on it were completely sold out.

Some were delighted, while some ended up in disappointment. Wang Baole, who was refining Armament Sand inside the Dharmic Armament Pavilion, was confused as he read the messages appearing continuously on his voice transmission jade slip.

“Five hundred Spirit Stones have been transferred to your account... Your balance now is...”

“Seven hundred Spirit Stones have been transferred to your account...”

“One thousand Spirit Stones have been transferred to your account...”

...

Wang Baole immediately put away his Armament Sand to check the situation out.

*What on Earth is going on?*

## **Chapter 165: Provocation**

“How are there so many people with an eye for treasure?”

After checking the situation out, Wang Baole felt incredulous, especially upon discovering that some people were posting messages on the Spirit Intranet to purchase Crossed Dharmic Artifacts.

“Crossed Dharmic Artifacts?” Wang Baole instantly realized that they were talking about the Dharmic Artifacts that he was selling upon hearing the term. He did not continue listing the remainder of his trashy Dharmic Artifacts on the Spirit Intranet as he was still suspicious of what was happening. He planned to observe the situation for a few more days, as he felt that it was ridiculous that the popularity of the Crossed Dharmic Artifacts has grown so quickly.

However, upon observation, the results were completely not what Wang Baole had expected. In the days that followed, the term ‘Crossed Dharmic Artifact’ was increasingly mentioned by users of Upper Academy Island’s Spirit Intranet.

At the same time, the number of people who wanted to purchase the items visibly grew. Most of them had never heard of the term 'Crossed Dharma Artifact' prior to this, but curiosity got the better of them, which led them to find out more about it. Very quickly, they became aware of the items' origin and inevitably grew surprised. They had strong desires to purchase one for themselves but were unable to buy them anywhere...

This made the Crossed Dharmic Artifact even more mysterious.

If that was the case, the commotion would have died down quickly without causing much fanfare. However, very soon, a recorded video of Shi Nan and Li Fei's battle was put up on the Spirit Intranet by someone, which immediately created shock waves among many the moment it was published.

"This Dharmic Artifact is so unbelievably hardy!"

"This is obviously not a flying sword but a shield! An extremely strong and resistant shield!"

The effect of the video was akin to the ripples in the water created when one tossed a small rock into the pond. If more time passed, everything would have returned to normalcy. However, even before this ripple was attenuated, a disciple who was quick to purchase one of the Crossed Dharmic Artifacts put up another video.

"Look here, everyone! This is the flying sword that I have just bought! Don't be fooled by how tattered it seems, for you would never expect how shockingly fast it is!"

In one of the videos, a disciple from the Combat Pavilion agitatedly threw out a flying sword that looked as if it was about to disintegrate. As the sword flew out, it instantly vanished, creating a sonic boom but did not leave behind any visible tracks. However, even by looking at it in action through the video, one could still feel that at the instant the flying sword flew out, its speed was already out of the world!

In the short time needed to take a few breaths, the sword returned in a flash. The sonic boom was even louder, creating a strong gust of wind swept around the disciple. As the dust settled, the disciple stood there agitatedly, holding the sword that had just flown out.

However, from the video, one could clearly see that the sword had become more damaged than before.

"Did you see that? The speed of this sword instantly trumps all the other Dharmic Artifacts. What do you think? What's more, this sword only cost me seven hundred Spirit Stones!" The disciple laughed heartily, with an extremely happy look on his face as he had picked up a treasure for cheap.

The video immediately created a bigger commotion around the Crossed Dharmic Artifacts, which made those who already had their attention on the Crossed Dharmic Artifacts even more tempted. Even those who originally had not been following the trend began to curiously find out more about it after watching the video. In the days that followed, similar videos also emerged one after another!

Every Dharmic Artifact that appeared in the videos had some astonishing and wondrous features. The way to go about using it depended on the user. What was more iconic was that every Dharmic Artifact of this type was marked with a cross!

The Crossed Dharmic Artifacts became an instant hit, creating a huge commotion among the masses.

However, Wang Baole did not continue selling the Dharmic Artifacts during this critical period. That made the first batch of the Crossed Dharmic Artifacts limited products. No matter how much one desired it, they could not buy it.

The concept of 'that which is rare is dear' immediately boosted people's attention on the Crossed Dharmic Artifacts. At the same time, resale transactions of the Crossed Dharma Artifacts were also taking place. The prices involved were all shockingly exorbitant.

Everything that happened shocked Wang Baole himself. Looking at all the posts on the Spirit Intranet requesting for purchase of the Crossed Dharmic Artifacts, he lowered his head and looked at all the trashy Dharmic Artifacts in his storage bag, and his eyes slowly lit up.

*Perhaps all these... are not trash after all?*

Wang Baole thought about it and listed the second batch of trashy Dharmic Artifacts in order to ride the rising popularity of the items. Just as that happened, another post suddenly appeared on the Spirit Intranet!

That post was a video, where an arrogant-looking disciple from the Dharmic Armament Pavilion slowly peeled open the flying sword before him, as if he was carrying out a dissection.

"My fellow Daoists, I have heard about these Crossed Dharmic Artifacts from others, and many people have come forward to ask me about my thoughts on them. Therefore, I bought one of them at a high price out of curiosity. Initially, I was filled with excitement, but after checking them out, heh..." The Armament Soldier laughed condescendingly, as he was seen to swiftly disassemble the flying sword in the video.

Before long, all that was left of the flying sword was the Spirit Kernel. Looking at the inscriptions on the Spirit Kernel, the Armament Soldier shook his head disappointingly.

"Based on my analysis, this Dharmic Artifact is a piece of trash! Almost all of its functions are being sacrificed, with only a few of them being specifically strengthened. What's the point of that? This is simply a dishonest practice that is out to cheat people of their money.

"No one wants to make Dharmic Artifacts like these, which is why it garnered all your attention. In reality, if I put my heart into it, I could refine tens of them in a day. Trash like this is useless!"

The Armament Soldier spoke calmly. As the inscriptions on the Spirit Kernel were equipped with additional protection, he was unable to erase them. However, he did not care much and simply tossed them aside.

"Lastly, I would like to encourage everyone to be rational in their purchases. I would also want to take the opportunity to warn the black sheep who is making all these trashy Dharmic Artifacts to not taint the reputation of the Dharmic Armament Pavilion!"

The moment the video was published, a huge commotion erupted on the Spirit Intranet. It was important to note that the Armament Soldier in the video was a high-ranking figure. He was the leader of the Dharmic Armament Pavilion's audit department. It was in charge of the auditing tasks in all the departments within the Dharmic Armament Pavilion, and no one dared to provoke them for no reason.

His video naturally garnered a lot of attention. As the number of people who viewed it increased, discussions began to emerge among the masses.

“I see... Isn’t this fraud, selling trash to us?”

“Who is this? Such a lousy object. I still thought that it was some kind of treasure, but it’s actually far from it!”

Those who made those comments were people who did not manage to purchase the Crossed Dharmic Artifacts. However, despite people who had successfully bought the Dharmic Artifacts defending the Crossed Dharmic Artifacts by posting about their efficacy as proof, it was of little use in dispelling the unnecessary discussion among people.

Wang Baole instantly grew furious when he noticed the situation. The video extinguished the interest that people had in his Dharmic Artifacts, severely impacting his original sales plan.

Even though his Dharmic Artifacts were nothing to shout about, they were definitely not as bad as the other party claimed. Furthermore, the boastful claim that the Armament Soldier could refine tens of them in a single day was an impossible task in Wang Baole’s eyes. Even if he did manage to do so, it would never be as hardy as Wang Baole’s flying sword.

Therefore, Wang Baole laughed coldly and immediately retrieved another flying sword from his storage bag. He anonymously listed it and specifically put up a post directed to the Armament Soldier.

“Hey, Armament Soldier from the audit department, if you have the ability to successfully understand this, I will concede defeat to you!”

Even Wang Baole was troubled over the flying sword that he had just listed. That was the reason he had not listed it on the Spirit Intranet previously, for the sword behaved like a lunatic. After being activated, it would often malfunction, unable to differentiate between friend and foe. There was a possibility that it would charge toward the enemy but also an equal possibility that it would charge toward the owner and even the passers-by.

Therefore, Wang Baole had not originally planned to sell it. It was only now that Wang Baole was angered that he decided to list this dangerous weapon.

Zhao Hailin, the Armament Soldier from the audit department, laughed coldly upon hearing about the sword. He did not pay much attention to it initially, but the commotion on the Spirit Intranet was growing stronger by the minute. In reality, Zhao Hailin was not the first to buy the sword. Rather, someone else bought it first, but after trying it out, they could only gasp in disbelief. That person also put up a video about it.

In that video, the sword was like a lunatic, hacking anyone it encountered. That shocked everyone, and more of such videos appeared after being resold between several people.

Eventually, the commotion that rose like waves was further boosted, transforming into a form of hurricane as it garnered more attention.

With all that attention, calls for Zhao Hailin to dissect the mechanisms of the flying sword grew louder. Eventually, tempted by the opportunity to boost his fame, Zhao Hailin got someone to buy the sword for him and began trying to understand it.

However, his eyes widened in shock as he tried to dissect it. His breathing suddenly grew rapid, as not only were the inscriptions on the Spirit Kernel secured with added protection, the structure and arrangement of the inscriptions were also immensely complex. It was something that he had rarely seen, even on third-grade Numinous Treasures.

This made understanding the reason behind the sword's malfunction even more challenging.

However, news that he had bought the sword to understand its mechanisms had already spread far and wide, drawing the attention of the masses. Zhao Hailin cursed under his breath as he was trapped in a position from which he could not escape.

“Which lunatic refined this Dharmic Artifact?”

Left without a choice, Zhao Hailin could only seek help from his friends. He engaged the help of three other Armament Soldiers like him to understand the sword. After the three of them saw the inscriptions on the flying sword's Spirit Kernel, they reacted with shock. Therefore, all of them sacrificed their sleep and finally managed to understand the flying sword's mechanism after seven tiring days that fully exhausted their mental capacity.

“Thank you, everyone!” After sending the trio away gratefully, Zhao Hailin returned to his cave abode with an awful expression on his face. He grew wary of the person who had refined the Dharmic Artifact, as he felt that someone who had the ability to refine the object had to be an Armament Soldier like him at the very least.

However, he did not want to make an enemy without reason. Therefore, through his personal connections, he communicated with the department in charge of the Spirit Intranet to find out more about the refiner's identity.

Even though the department in charge of the Spirit Intranet was not able to reveal all the information due to the regulations set, they mentioned that the refiner was an Armament Disciple. Upon hearing that, Zhao Hailin heaved a sigh of relief, but a cold look soon flashed across his eyes.

“You're only an Armament Disciple, and you dare to challenge me?”

### **Chapter 166: Warm-hearted and Considerate Senior Brother Zhao**

With a cold laugh, Zhao Hailin immediately recorded a video and published it on the Spirit Intranet.

Till now, the number of people on the Spirit Intranet who had their attention on the matter grew. They all anticipated that Zhao Hailin's video that would reveal the mechanism of the flying sword. The instant that Zhao Hailin's video appeared, its viewership shot up. People told others they knew about the video, and very quickly, the number of people viewing Zhao Hailin's video skyrocketed.

In the video, Zhao Hailin did not show any signs of the sorry state he was in that resulted from researching the flying sword. He was energetic and carried the same supercilious look that he had previously as he spoke calmly.

“The reason this video took a few days was because I was refining a fourth-grade Numinous Treasure. I did not have any time or attention to spare this. It was only yesterday that I managed to successfully refine the grade-four Numinous Treasure, which finally gave me time to look at this sword.

“In my opinion, this sword... is still trash!

“It’s even worse than the previous one and is the trash among the trash!

“I would like to inform the maker that even though I do not care whether you concede to this or not, but as an Armament Soldier of the Dharmic Armament Pavilion, I have the responsibility to make you realize that it is not as simple as you think to be part of the Dharmic Armament Pavilion!

“As for this sword of yours... due to issues in technique, the temperature was not properly controlled and was too high. This resulted in the melting of the 3,785th inscription. This then caused an error in the inscription arrangement, such that when it was activated, it would fail in locking in its target. Furthermore, due to your messy set of inscriptions, the sword has such immense killing power that was being suppressed that it had nowhere to release it, causing it to be indiscriminate of friend and foe!

“Lastly, I want to warn you to not use these trashy Dharmic Artifacts to swindle others again. If not, I will find out who you are and bring up the matter for investigation!”

In the video, Zhao Hailin sounded strict and just. As his voice reverberated, it seemed as if he was a representation of authority, such that everyone who saw him were instantly vigilant.

That was even more so as whatever he said was logically proven. In the video, as he spoke, he took apart the flying sword and pointed at the inscription that was incorrect. His actions made everyone believe him wholeheartedly.

“So, that’s how it is! It’s no doubt that he is an Armament Soldier. It only took him a day to do such a thorough examination of the Dharmic Artifact!”

“Impressive! That’s the real capability of an Armament Soldier!”

“I said so previously! All these Crossed Dharmic Artifacts are trash. Now, this is indeed the case from what we have seen. All trash!”

Immediately, discussions erupted on the Spirit Intranet. Voices against the Crossed Dharmic Artifacts grew louder. Seeing that a momentum has been created, Zhao Hailin was delighted.

To him, even though the person who refined the Crossed Dharma Artifact was somewhat talented, that was the end of the matter. He thought that person would not retaliate any further.

That was especially so after he had observed the situation for two days and found that even as voices against the Dharmic Artifacts were growing louder, the person who had refined the Crossed Dharmic Artifact had remained silent. Zhao Hailin snorted to himself, thinking that his prediction that the refiner had been driven to his wit’s end was correct.

“He seems smart, but he is ignorant!” After making one last comment on the Spirit Intranet, Zhao Hailin shifted his attention away from the matter.

As another day went by, seeing that the maker of the Crossed Dharmic Artifact still had not made any comments, the insults and discussions about it grew.

It was also at this time that Wang Baole finally managed to complete the refinement of a thousand Armament Sand grains. In his delight, he thought about his Crossed Dharmic Artifacts and opened up the Spirit Intranet. Immediately, he saw the discussions and voices against his Dharmic Artifact, and his rage grew.

“Who would be so free as to look at the Spirit Intranet day and night?” Wang Baole was angry. When he listed the flying sword, he took a look at it once in a while. However, since the examination had taken so long, Wang Baole had subsequently forgotten about it and was busy refining Armament Sand instead.

Now, after reading all the insults, he found Zhao Hailin’s video. He was filled with indignation after watching the video. With his eyes wide and breathing rapid, a glow was apparent in his eyes. After a few moments, he slapped his thigh hard.

“So, this is the reason! The Armament Sand affects the temperature!” Wang Baole jumped up immediately in surprise. Agitated, he took out a bottle of Ice Spirit Water and gulped everything down before throwing the bottle aside. He walked circles around his cave abode, trying to play out the logic in his mind.

*This way, if that segment of inscriptions can be adjusted, such that other areas will be altered as well, then this sword will be completely improved. Not only will it distinguish between friend and foe, its power will also be significantly stronger!*

*The key to transforming a Dharmic Artifact to a Numinous Treasure lies in the temperature and the inscriptions... I... I seem to understand now!*

Wang Baole was agitated. Before listing the indiscriminate flying sword, he had memorized the inscriptions. However, due to a lack of insight and his need to pay attention on refining the Armament Sand, he had been unable to figure out where the problem lay. Therefore, he did not make any alterations to it. Now, he suddenly stopped after pacing around and retrieved a flying sword before dashing straight to the smelting furnace room.

In the smelting furnace room, Wang Baole experimented over and over again in order to confirm the hypothesis. After ascertaining that the solution given by the Armament Soldier was correct, he became even more agitated. He recalled the relationship between temperature and inscriptions, and he felt that the video was like a bolt of lightning that instantly turned the impossible into the possible.

*So, this is how it is...* Wang Baole held his breath and immediately tried it out. After several days, when he stepped out of the smelting furnace room, Wang Baole was extremely exhilarated, his eyes revealing a look of excitement. Clutching a Spirit Kernel in his hands, he laughed heartily.

That Spirit Kernel was a new product that Wang Baole had refined after achieving a breakthrough in his understanding of inscriptions, through combining his own reasoning with his understanding from Zhao

Hailin's video. Even though Armament Sand was not incorporated within it, its power was already exceedingly similar to that of a Numinous Treasure!

*There's actually such a use for inscriptions. This means that, in reality, many of the Dharmic Artifacts that I made before did not need to be completely covered with inscriptions. During the refinement process, there will be slight changes to the inscriptions due to the temperature. This is also why I failed at refining Numinous Treasures previously! If it is possible to account for the changes in temperature during the refinement, then the inscriptions can be made complete immediately, and perfection can be achieved!*

*I know now! This is the difference between a Dharmic Artifact and a Numinous Treasure! It is precisely what they told me before... the relationship and changes between temperature and inscriptions!*

Looking at the Spirit Kernel in his hands, Wang Baole laughed even more heartily. Not only did the Armament Soldier manage to solve something that he had been troubled over, which allowed him to improve on his Dharmic Artifacts, it was even more valuable that he had completely understood the fundamental difference between a Dharmic Artifact and a Numinous Treasure through the Armament Soldier's examination video!

To Wang Baole, all this was like fate. From the confusion and ignorance that he had previously, he had managed to gain a better understanding. It was like a road to the exit had appeared in front of him just as he was trapped in a maze!

*Not only is this Senior Brother Zhao capable, he is also good-natured!*

Besides feeling exhilarated, Wang Baole also conceded. His feelings of rage were immediately eliminated. He genuinely thought that Zhao Hailin was very capable and that he should not be angry at him. After all, Zhao Hailin had helped him solve a problem.

What Zhao Hailin had done was akin to helping him to become an Armament Soldier quickly!

Thinking of that, Wang Baole was excited. Now, he thought about what other problems he was unable to solve. After thinking about it for a moment, Wang Baole's eyes lit up. He then carefully retrieved two self-exploding beads from his storage bracelet.

These two self-exploding beads were placed in a cushioned box to significantly reduce the chance of accidents happening.

He had studied the beads previously but was unable to find out where the problem lay. To him, it was many times more difficult figuring them out than figuring out the problem with the flying sword. Now that he had the opportunity, Wang Baole wasted no time completing the necessary administrative work and listing them on the Spirit Intranet.

"Senior Brother Zhao is indeed very capable! Since this is the case, then I should be more serious as well. These two beads are self-exploding beads, and they explode by themselves upon the slightest touch!

"Non-professionals are not allowed to buy them, as I cannot bear responsibility for anything that happens. Therefore, I have already set a restriction that it can only be bought by you, Senior Brother. I do not believe that you have the capability to thoroughly understand it!"

Wang Baole quickly published his post before emotionally taking out a bag of snacks to eat.

*Senior Brother Zhao is such a nice person. He is so serious in helping me, and I shouldn't make him feel that it's not challenging enough. Therefore, I'm saying all that in order to agitate him...* Wang Baole laughed to himself. He felt that he should definitely change his habit of always being so considerate of others.

After finishing the snacks, he noticed that when his post was published, a commotion seemed to be created on the Spirit Intranet. It garnered a lot of attention. Wang Baole suppressed his anticipation as he delightfully took out his scabbard and began the improvement process for it.

In the improvement process, he also made adjustments to the inscriptions that he had recorded from the Crossed Dharmic Artifacts and added them to the scabbard, such that it would become more powerful than before.

At the same time, as commotion in the outside world erupted, the unappeased attitude carried by the maker of the Crossed Dharmic Artifact, as well as the self-exploding beads that he had listed as a challenge, became the spotlight of people's attention.

Very quickly, Zhao Hailin also received the news. After checking the Spirit Intranet, a glow flashed across his eyes.

*Interesting... is this a challenge?*

People who had made it to Upper Academy Island were not dumb. Almost instinctively, Zhao Hailin sensed the meaning behind Wang Baole's actions.

He realized that he had acted rashly previously, such that he was now in a situation debating Dharmic Artifacts with someone who was no match for him in terms of status.

*However, I have to see whether you're qualified or not!*

Zhao Hailin laughed coldly and retrieved a Numinous Treasure to list on the Spirit Intranet. He then posted a message.

"To the refiner of the Crossed Dharma Artifact, I will accept your request. However, I want you to try examining this Numinous Treasure as well. It has a few problems that I have not had time to correct. I'll loan it to you for a month to figure out the issue. If you fail, do not bother me in the future!"

## **Chapter 167: This Must Be a Ploy**

The moment Zhao Hailin's post was published, the incident that had already garnered so much attention became even more heated. It shocked even more people, such that at present, on Upper Academy Island, the incident had become the most widely debated topic.

Wang Baole was also paying attention to it during his spare time while refining the scabbard. After reading about the Armament Soldier's provocation, Wang Baole looked serious as he pursed his lips.

"All of them are sly old foxes..." Wang Baole was feeling upset about how he never met anyone who was simple-minded and straightforward. After all, he just wanted to learn.

Even though Wang Baole was rueful, his eyes still lit up. Almost immediately, he completed the necessary administrative processes and took Zhao Hailin's Numinous Treasure.

*However, Senior Brother Zhao is indeed a nice person. This is a Numinous Treasure, which is not cheap at all. Even I can hardly bear to use it for my studies.*

Wang Baole's heart was fired up. Even though he had some Numinous Treasures in his hands, be it Chen Yutong's Slimming Helmet, the jade pendant given by the Chancellor, or the mirror given by the Lin Family as compensation, they were all important. He was afraid that he would ruin them if he researched them and did not have the courage to do so.

Despite being relatively well off, Wang Baole still felt a pinch even though he could purchase new Numinous Treasures for himself. However, all his worries were eliminated now, since Zhao Hailin had sent one to him of his own accord for him to research.

Upon receiving the item, Wang Baole looked at the Numinous Treasure that appeared to be a bronze mirror, his heart filled with anticipation. He then immediately rushed to the smelting furnace room to begin the research and dissection process.

*It seems like there were numerous different materials used on this Numinous Treasure. Theoretically, there shouldn't be a need for so many of them. Furthermore, it doesn't look impressive and is filled with many cracks and flaws that have been left behind after the integration process...*

*This flaw... Could it have inevitably appeared because the temperature affected the inscriptions?*

*As for this Spirit Kernel... Darn it! The inscriptions on the Numinous Treasure are far too complicated!*

As he researched, Wang Baole gasped in surprise time and again. He grew more and more exhilarated, and a glow escaped his eyes. It was as if in his eyes, the bronze mirror had become a treasure, such that as he immersed himself in the process of examination and dissection, he was also putting his own knowledge and understanding of Numinous Treasures to the test.

To Wang Baole, this was like fate. As he analyzed and dissected the Numinous Treasure, he swiftly grew more confident of handling a Numinous Treasure, and that alone made him even more agitated with exhilaration.

While Wang Baole was researching on the Numinous Treasure, Zhao Hailin also received the two self-exploding beads. After trying to examine them, he realized that it was too difficult. Cursing under his breath, he invited the friends who had helped him previously for another round of examination and research.

However, this time, the four Armament Soldiers burrowed their heads in research for three days but were all disappointed and had to give up. The inscriptions within the beads were so problematic, far exceeding what they had expected.

"Senior Brother Zhao, the person who refined this Dharmic Artifact is crazy. It's just a second-grade Dharmic Artifact, but it is filled with tens of thousands of inscriptions. There are several hundred aspects that have been transformed. How do we go about this?"

“Even if we don’t eat and sleep in order to look through everything inscription by inscription, we will still need at least half a year.”

Zhao Hailin was somewhat dumbfounded. He struggled as he thought about whether or not he should give up. Over at Wang Baole’s side, Wang Baole was laughing with his head raised toward the sky as he rushed out of the smelting furnace room.

“I get it now! Temperature changes do not just depend on the smelting furnace but also on the forging material!

“Different forging materials have different melting temperatures. Therefore, this point must be considered when refining Numinous Treasures!

“Refining a Dharmic Artifact involves a completely different process, as Dharmic Artifact refinement follows a sequence of steps. The second step is only considered when the first step is completed. However, this aspect is different from that of a Numinous Treasure, where all the details and steps must be considered before starting the refinement process. Obtaining an approximation of the influence of all the details on temperature is like arriving at an answer after solving a sum. Only after that can inscriptions be carved to complement it. It is only through this way that it is possible to refine Numinous Treasures!

“This is advanced inscription studies for someone who has already learned about high-level inscriptions!”

In his exhilaration, Wang Baole used his inscription formula to pinpoint the error in the Numinous Treasure. He found that the error lay in the arrangement of the wind- and fire-type inscriptions. The wind-type inscriptions were more powerful, which not only prevented the fire-type inscriptions from riding on its force but suppressed it instead. This resulted in a mess that led to the malfunctioning of the entire Numinous Treasure.

If it was someone else, a lot of research and testing would have been needed to discover the error. However, it was made easy for Wang Baole as he had a strong knowledge foundation and the necessary formula.

Agitatedly, Wang Baole immediately published a post on the Spirit Intranet. After explaining his findings from examining the Numinous Treasure, he ended the post emotionally.

“It was indeed a small problem. Senior Brother, you are definitely a man of his word.”

Many people who were keeping watch on the Spirit Intranet immediately resumed their discussions upon seeing the post. After all, no one had expected that Wang Baole would only take three days to derive an answer, and that filled everyone with surprise.

On the other hand, Zhao Hailin, who was originally still struggling to decide whether or not to continue, was taken aback after hearing the news. He subsequently let out a cold laugh.

“Previously, I needed a month’s time, heavily discussing and experimenting in order to find the root of the problem. This person only used three days... Impossible!” Zhao Hailin sighed coldly and opened up the Spirit Intranet. He searched for Wang Baole’s post and looked at it with his eyes narrowed. As he read the post, he widened his eyes suddenly and gasped in shock.

“Impossible!”

Zhao Hailin’s facial expression warped wildly. He took a closer look and took in a deep breath. When he read Wang Baole’s emotional ending clause, blue veins popped out of his forehead. To him, the emotional ending clause was the biggest insult to his ego!

“If this person is not an Armament Disciple, he must be someone with a strong backer!

“This is a plot directed against me!”

With that thought, Zhao Hailin trembled. He began making associations, and very quickly, enemies that he had made over the course of these few years surfaced in his mind. However, there were simply too many of them, and he could not put a finger on who it could be.

However, he also thought about why he sent the first video in the first place. It was because his curiosity was piqued as a relative of his had casually mentioned the topic to him.

“There is something wrong with this person!” A cold look was revealed in Zhao Hailin’s eyes. The more he thought about it, the more he became convinced that it was a meticulous plot against him.

“No matter how sly that person is, this is a battle that cannot be lost. So long as I keep winning, I will definitely be able to foil the plot!” Zhao Hailin looked vicious and determined. He gritted his teeth and activated his connections.

In the days that followed, he managed to enlist the help of tens of Armament Soldiers from the Dharmic Armament Pavilion. There were altogether over twenty people who were researching the beads intensively.

Finally, after a month, just as the people on the Spirit Intranet began gossiping, Zhao Hailin emerged disheveled with blood shot eyes. He had paid a significant price, and it was then that he sent away the twenty or so Armament Soldiers who were equally exhausted.

In the month that had passed, they had researched in seclusion. By combining the intellect and Dharmic Armament knowledge of the twenty or so people, they had finally discovered the problem with the self-exploding beads. To them, refining several Numinous Treasures was nothing compared to the research in terms of difficulty.

In the end, even Zhao Hailin himself began to grow wary of the mysterious maker of the beads. He found it impossible to imagine how the maker had managed to create the self-exploding beads.

It was a pity that he did not know that, in reality, even Wang Baole was clueless as to how the beads were made.

*This Dharmic Artifact is so difficult to make and is not particularly impressive. No one would go to the effort to make it. Therefore, this must be a carefully prepared trick by the other party to defeat me!*

After sending the people away, Zhao Hailin sat in his cave abode and laughed chillingly to himself.

*However, even though that was the case, I still managed to solve it. Retaliation is part of my personality!*

Zhao Hailin took a deep breath and combed his messy hair. He then swallowed a pill to dissipate the blood in his eyes before recording the video and sending it out!

“This Dharmic Artifact was indeed somewhat challenging, but it was still a small feat. Its Spirit Qi was too concentrated and not properly blocked, resulting in the Spirit Qi being unable to flow in the correct path to spread around the necessary inscriptions after being integrated. The accumulation of Spirit Qi results in it self-exploding with the slightest touch!”

The video was very detailed and even included the lines of inscriptions where errors were found. Zhao Hailin’s tone and facial expression were as disdainful as before. In the end, he listed yet another Numinous Treasure.

“It is rude to not reciprocate. Do you dare find out where the problem lies in this Numinous Treasure?”

Wang Baole did not care about the commotion that had erupted on the Spirit Intranet. Now, all his attention was on the answer that Zhao Hailin had given. His breathing hastened while he gained enlightenment, as if lightning was erupting in his mind.

*This is another problem in the refinement process of Numinous Treasures!*

*Not only it is necessary to estimate the temperature that is optimal for the materials, it is also important to be able to spread the Spirit Qi in the correct sequence so that it can be perfectly functioning!*

Wang Baole’s face showed his enlightenment. The only thought he had was that this exchange with the Armament Soldier had benefited him significantly.

*Senior Brother Zhao is indeed impressive!*

In his agitation, Wang Baole immediately obtained the Numinous Treasure from the Spirit Intranet. When he received it, he sprang into action to research it. After several days, Wang Baole looked exhausted, but he was energetic and in high spirits. After announcing the answer, he listed yet another Dharmic Artifact.

The Dharmic Artifact he listed was an umbrella that thought of itself as a flying sword...

In his anticipation, Zhao Hailin, with his eyes reddened, paid the price to invite others to join him in the battle of deciphering the umbrella. Just like that, the entire process cycled between the two of them, and a never-before-seen battle of treasures began!

In the days that followed, relying on Zhao Hailin’s help, Wang Baole’s knowledge of the Dharmic Armament grew significantly. That allowed him to refine the scabbard into a perfect second-grade Dharmic Artifact. In his agitation, he became even more passionate about Zhao Hailin’s videos. Wang Baole treated all the minor details in the videos as an opportunity for him to learn.

*Senior Brother Zhao is so impressive!*

*Senior Brother Zhao is so capable! He could even find out the problem with the umbrella!*

*Senior Brother Zhao’s knowledge of Dharmic Armaments is so profound!*

The more Wang Baole watched the videos, the more agitated he became. He continuously listed all sorts of Crossed Dharmic Artifacts on the Spirit Intranet. In the end, as he listed the large seal, Zhao Hailin seemed to have been driven crazy. The twenty or so Armament Soldiers that he had invited all felt that they have been surrounded by bad luck to be involved in the entire fiasco. No matter what benefits Zhao Hailin promised them, they no longer wanted to participate. As they left one by one, Zhao Hailin stood solemnly in his cave abode and was left with no choice but to give up on this battle of the treasures.

To him, the battle of the treasures was of secondary importance. It was imperative to find out the details of the other party's plot. However, even then, no matter how hard he analyzed the situation, he was unable to find out the motive of the other party's ploy.

This, in his opinion, was what made the entire situation so frightening!

*The other party is very well prepared. I imagine that this plot against me definitely took more than two years to plan. What should I do?*

Zhao Hailin took a deep breath to calm himself down. He began to feel that this was the biggest challenge that he had faced since becoming the supervisor of the audit department!

The Dharmic Artifacts prepared by the other party, as well as the speed at which he managed to understand his own Dharmic Artifacts, made him completely frightened and confirmed his hypothesis at the same time.

*There is definitely a group of people backing this person!*

## **Chapter 168: Buzz Buzz...**

Zhao Hailin's withdrawal, while causing a huge commotion, also thoroughly built up the reputation of the Crossed Dharmic Artifacts. Combined with the small number of them, they soon became rare items.

Even though this scuffle had come to an end and it was no longer trending, the three words 'Crossed Dharmic Artifact' were deeply ingrained in the hearts of people. One could say that almost everyone knew about them. Naturally, many people started guessing the identity of the Crossed Dharmic Artifact creator.

However, Wang Baole was full of regret. Zhao Hailin's withdrawal made him extremely dejected—he felt that he had learned a lot from this friendly exchange of ideas with Zhao Hailin.

Not only did he gain a deeper understanding of Numinous Treasures, he was also more confident about his capabilities in creating them. Previously, he had no confidence in creating a Numinous Treasure, but now, Wang Baole felt like he could start refining Numinous Treasures.

As for exposing himself as the creator of the Crossed Dharmic Artifacts, Wang Baole thought for a while and felt it inappropriate to do so. On one hand, the Crossed Dharmic Artifacts did indeed have problems. On the other hand, Wang Baole personally enjoyed the feeling that he had his own brand on the light side and the Crossed Dharmic Artifacts on the dark side. Having these two brands on the light and dark side made him feel like he was really powerful.

*The high officials' autobiographies once said that, in one's glorious life, people used many titles to describe them. Right now... I can be considered to have met that criteria.*

Although he might have misunderstood the meaning of the quote, he felt that he was very extraordinary at that moment.

With a prideful smile, Wang Baole started officially researching and refining third-grade Numinous Treasures. Combined with the various methods that he understood from Zhao Hailin's videos, other than his fixed daily routine of refining Armament Sand, he spent almost all his attention on refining third-grade Numinous Treasures in the days that followed.

At that point in time, his list of rewards from the Spirit Breath Village was finally recorded and sent to him. Wang Baole took a rough look, and even he got a shock.

*Over 13,600 items...*

Wang Baole had not counted the specific number of items when he ransacked the Spirit Breath Village. Now that he saw the items, he finally understood why the Dao College had taken so long to record down the items.

This number was way too large. That was especially so because all of the items had to be entered into the Dao College's records. Hence, it had taken a longer time for them to be sent to Wang Baole.

In fact, there were over three thousand items with effects unknown even to the Dao College. These items were specially marked in the list.

After checking, Wang Baole discovered that he could choose over one thousand items from the list of the items. However, for items such as corpses and pills, he could not take everything. He could only choose at most one item from each category.

After contemplation, Wang Baole chose to keep half of his right to choose the items and gave the other half back to the Dao College in exchange for Spirit Stones of equal value. Immediately, the number of Spirit Stones that he had grew to an alarming amount.

Seeing the massive number of Spirit Stones that he had in his account, Wang Baole was extremely excited. He took a deep breath after a long while.

*I'm rich!*

His eyes glowed. Seeing how he suddenly had so many Spirit Stones, he bought many ingredients he could not bear to buy in the past few months in one shot and started refining new third-grade Numinous Treasures.

But the difficulty of refining third-grade Numinous Treasures was still immense even though Wang Baole had already come to understand a lot more.

Two months passed, and Wang Baole had accumulated seven thousand pieces of Armament Sand after a lot of effort. Finally, he succeeded once after going through countless failures.

He had refined his first Numinous Treasure!

This Numinous Treasure was nothing special. It was a flying sword named Heaven Wave Sword.

Once released, this sword could conjure waves. While its aura was alarming, its offensive power was also impressive. Although it could only be considered ordinary among third-grade Numinous Treasures, and it could not cleave through perfect second-grade Dharmic Artifacts per se, it could still cause them to break into fragments.

Wang Baole was extremely excited after experiencing the Heaven Wave Sword's power, but he understood that to become an Armament Soldier, it was not enough for him to only know how to refine a Heaven Wave Sword.

After all, the Armament Soldier test in the Dharmic Armament Pavilion was a huge deal. After asking around, he understood the rules clearly and knew that every Armament Soldier test required the examinees to prepare a Numinous Treasure for the test.

The main point of the test was the excellence level of the Numinous Treasure. A third-grade Numinous Treasure was just the most basic requirement. It was possible to become an Armament Soldier by randomly refining a Numinous Treasure, but it depended very much on luck!

So, for a conventional Armament Soldier test, one would always try their best to prepare the best Numinous Treasure that they could refine with their abilities. Once they were done with their preparation, they could apply for the test. Once the Dharmic Armament Pavilion approved their application, they would be given a test date.

When that day came, the four Deputy Pavilion Heads and the Pavilion Head of the Dharmic Armament Pavilion would make an appearance at the Armament Soldier test's designated area. As examiners, they would decide whether the examinees could become Armament Soldiers. Meanwhile, they would also require examinees to answer various questions on the refinement of Numinous Treasures.

Of course, they would sometimes ask an examinee to refine another piece of the same Numinous Treasure in front of them. There were even times when a Deputy Pavilion Head asked an examinee to refine a different Numinous Treasure on the spot!

Once there was a mistake in the process, they would fail to become an Armament Soldier. If they were caught cheating, the consequences were pretty serious. It was enough to get one expelled from Upper Academy Island, and Upper Academy Island would take back everything that they had learned. As a result, there were still people who dared cheat in the Armament Soldier test, but those cases were extremely rare, and they faced extremely severe consequences.

Realizing this, Wang Baole understood deeply that his current standard was still not enough. Meanwhile, he also had not prepared the Numinous Treasure required for the test.

*Besides, my target is to get to a level where I could refine perfect third-grade Numinous Treasures like how I refined second-grade Dharmic Artifacts without much effort. That way, even if someone makes things difficult for me, no one will be able to stop me from becoming an Armament Soldier!*

This was the requirement that Wang Baole had set for himself. He had a decisive look in his eyes and went into seclusion again, refining third-grade Numinous Treasures with greater intensity.

As time passed and Wang Baole refined his seventh Numinous Treasure, he could feel that his proficiency level in refining Numinous Treasures increased as the days went by. It was at this time that he finished refining his ten thousand pieces of Armament Sand.

Looking at the Armament Sand and feeling the scabbard within him, Wang Baole pondered. He was at a loss as to whether he should stick to his plan and continue familiarizing himself with third-grade Numinous Treasures or refine his scabbard first.

The former took a long time, and Wang Baole felt that he had to keep experimenting. Although he was not very confident about the latter, he had already gathered the key ingredients, and he could get the remaining ingredients on Upper Academy Island.

Moments later, Wang Baole made his decision. The Armament Sand and scabbard were too precious, and Wang Baole did not have enough confidence to try refining them. Hence, he continued immersing himself in refining third-grade Numinous Treasures.

Time trickled by. When he went into seclusion this time, Wang Baole steeled his heart and even ate fewer snacks. He lost some weight and seemed a lot more handsome.

Finally, after three months with the support of enough Spirit Stones, Wang Baole became more proficient in the refinement of third-grade Numinous Treasures through countless failures. He could finally refine perfect third-grade Numinous Treasures. Although they were of the type that were easy to refine, Wang Baole was already very motivated.

At the same time, he also upgraded all of his perfect second-grade Dharmic Artifacts. He even upgraded some of his Crossed Dharmic Artifacts. With his tremendous wealth, they all became third-grade.

Under the brave experimentation of Wang Baole and supported by his skill and a little bit of luck, Wang Baole succeeded in one try. Although not perfect, the scabbard also became a third-grade Numinous Treasure.

However, as the extremely excited Wang Baole waved the scabbard around excitedly and expected sword aura needles to appear within it, something happened to make his jaw drop.

Buzzing sounds spread from within the scabbard. Wang Baole was shocked. He stared while in a daze as nine mosquitoes flew out from the scabbard. His gaze momentarily lost its focus, and his head buzzed.

“What the heck?”

Wang Baole rubbed his eyes in disbelief and felt that what had just happened was too unbelievable. After coming to his senses moments later, he became anxious and immediately checked the inscriptions on the scabbard.

Upon closer inspection, he finally found the reason. Because there were problems with his technique, an accident happened when upgrading the scabbard to the third grade. While the Armament Sand was being infused into the scabbard, it had caused the inscriptions to change and caused an unusual transformation that Wang Baole could not understand at that moment. Hence, this unknown effect appeared.

To a certain degree, this scabbard... was both a success and a failure!

But it was different from a typical Crossed Dharmic Artifact. The transformations for those Crossed Dharmic Artifacts were caused by a grain of Armament Sand. However, the scabbard... had ten thousand grains of Armament Sand infused into it!

“No way...” Wang Baole felt like crying, but no tears appeared. He regretted having itchy hands and refining the scabbard so early. As though someone had thrown cold water on him, Wang Baole’s expectations and excitement disappeared completely. That was especially so when he saw the nine mosquitoes flying in front of him. He almost raised his hand to kill one of them, but when he thought of how he had spent ten thousand grains of Armament Sand and countless ingredients to refine this Dharmic Artifact, he could not bear to do so.

“Mosquitoes... can also be very powerful!” Wang Baole cried and comforted himself. He thought of the horrifying giant mosquito that he had encountered in the Pond Cloud Rainforest.

Thus, he gathered his courage with a grimace and walked out of his cave abode. He decided to test just how strong these mosquitoes were...

“Fatso Forefathers and the grandfathers in the high officials’ autobiographies, please bless me. These mosquitoes must have some uses; they must at least be worth my Armament Sand. After all... I spent ten thousand grains of Armament Sand!”

#### **Chapter 169: The Rumbling Smoke Signal**

Pained, Wang Baole grimaced and left his cave abode.

It was dusk, so the sky in the horizon was awash with orange hues. It was approaching spring. Even though the location of Ethereal Dao College made it seem like spring all year round, during the actual spring season, the temperature outside still carried a hint of the coldness.

The humidity was also higher. The winds blowing into one’s face went straight to the bones. It might not have seemed too cold initially, but one would start feeling the cold after an extended period outdoors.

To a cultivator, however, a little cold was something that could be disregarded.

Wang Baole was not bothered by the cold winds that preceded the approach of spring. He walked out of the cave abode area, toward the setting sun, and ended up in a corner with no one in sight. He prayed inwardly, raised his right hand in a wave, and saw, instead of the scabbard appearing, invisible strands of Sword Qi shooting out from his palm soundlessly.

The Sword Qi transformed into nine mosquitoes in midair!

The nine mosquitoes looked extremely realistic, their appearances no different from real mosquitoes. They possessed a certain mind of their own and started flying around Wang Baole.

They gave off a similar feeling. Wang Baole shivered as he heard the endless buzzing in his ears. He almost raised his hand and swatted them, but he held back his sudden urges, took a deep breath, and forced his agitated mind to calm down. Instead, he tried to control the mosquitoes.

As soon as the thought rose in Wang Baole's mind, the nine mosquitoes shook. They flew in front of Wang Baole instantly and lined up in one row, like soldiers, before him.

"Hmm?" Wang Baole's eyes brightened. Another thought formed. In an instant, the mosquitoes kept reorganizing themselves before him, forming all kinds of formations that were identical to what Wang Baole had thought up.

"They're so agile!" Wang Baole was slightly surprised and pleased. He had been too glum earlier and had not immediately realized how different the mosquitoes were. He suddenly felt the mosquitoes to be quite powerful.

*What if I don't go for precise control and instead issued a command?*

Upon thinking that, Wang Baole immediately tried doing it. He soon realized to his surprise that these mosquitoes seemed to possess a certain mind of their own and could likely carry out the orders that he issued.

Patrolling, for example, or guarding against enemies. After Wang Baole infused more Spirit Qi into the scabbard inside his body, he was surprised to find a huge transformation in his vision!

An ordinary person, when staring straight ahead without moving their eyes, would maybe have a field of vision of approximately forty-five degrees. This was something even being a cultivator could not change. The most he could do was to hone his five senses and acquire a vague sensing of his surroundings.

But now... Wang Baole discovered, much to his shock, that his field of vision had transformed from its original forty-five degrees to a full three-hundred-and-sixty-degree field of vision!

"This... this..." Wang Baole's breathing halted. After detailed observations, he immediately realized the cause. He was borrowing the field of vision from the nine mosquitoes. Each mosquito was like a pair of eyes. In this manner, he was able to exceed the limits of his original vision!

This discovery sent Wang Baole shaking inside. He immediately realized very clearly that such a field of vision would prove to be of immense help to him. When facing an enemy, it would be as if he had grown eyes all around his head... making him even more agile and aware of his surroundings.

In addition, if someone attempted to ambush him, it would be difficult for them to do so without his discovery!

Excited, Wang Baole felt that he needed to study this ability more. He maneuvered the mosquitoes and shifted their lines of sight endlessly. He found out excitedly that it did not matter if it was one mosquito or all nine mosquitoes, they could all become his eyes. He was able to control them flawlessly.

*This ability alone is worth the ten thousand Armament Sand!* Wang Baole was beyond excited. He eagerly tried to manipulate the mosquitoes into flying further away into the distance.

*Let's see how far they can fly...*

The thought had just appeared in Wang Baole's mind before a wave of emotions stirred within him again. As the nine mosquitoes flew rapidly away, Wang Baole discovered his vision transforming instantly again!

It was like ten different images being layered together without affecting one another, sharing one another's vision. He could see almost half of the Dharmic Armament Pavilion!

Even though blind spots started appearing as the mosquitoes flew further and further away, such an experience was already unprecedented to Wang Baole. It was at that moment that a cacophony of noises suddenly appeared and exploded in Wang Baole's head!

He could hear countless voices!

"The Armament Disciple exam is too hard. I hope I can pass this time!"

"Senior Brother Zhou, can this Mystic Flame Metal of yours be cheaper? I need loads of it!"

"Fried potatoes, freshly made fried potatoes..."

"Have you heard? The Beast Tide this year is approaching. A primary stronghold near my hometown is already preparing for war!"

All kinds of sounds exploded in Wang Baole's ears. It was like a huge tsunami that nearly flooded and drowned Wang Baole. The sensation was akin to being teleported instantly to a market place from a silent environment. Wang Baole was dazed instantly. He quickly controlled the mosquitoes into flying higher. This made him feel slightly better.

*These mosquitoes can actually hear sounds... It's just that there is too much noise.* Wang Baole felt his head swelling in pain. However, he was more excited than pained. He tried filtering the noises. The effect was not very promising, but it was still acceptable, though barely.

After that, he maneuvered the mosquitoes into flying in the further parts of the Dharmic Armament Pavilion. He soon heard voices and saw an image. It was the inside of the hall in the College Administrative Department. Sun Fang, his face grave, was about to leave the hall. Someone chased after him and shouted for him to stop.

"Senior Brother Sun, we..."

Upon hearing that, the look on Sun Fang's face changed. He surveyed the surroundings with great care, then turned and glared angrily at the new arrival.

"Shut up. Next time, when we're in public, call me Senior Brother Fang. I'm called Fang Sun!"

Watching Sun Fang, and hearing Sun Fang's words, the remote Wang Baole could not help but cough. This Sun Fang had offended him previously and had been disciplined by the College Administrative Department. Wang Baole felt himself to be a forgiving man, and especially with him recently promoted, he did not wish for others to find himself too harsh. That was why he had let him off lightly. He had intended to wait a while longer before finding an opportunity to deal with him, but this person was like a devious monkey spirit. After the incident, the genius had claimed to have changed his name and, from then on, was called Fang Sun.

Wang Baole could not, in good conscience, continue to pursue the matter. He thought of how forgiving and benevolent he was and truly let the matter rest.

At present, he did a sweeping glance and disregarded the scene, continued to maneuver the nine mosquitoes into flying farther ahead, and finally found that they could fly as far as three miles away from him. Wang Baole was overjoyed. He tested how fast they could go in a short-distance dash as well as the strength of their attacks.

The former was astonishing. The sudden burst of speed was too fast for the human eye to see. The latter was considerably weaker. The most that they could achieve was piercing some trees. Rocks were more challenging.

*That's okay—they're mosquitoes. They're supposed to bite people, not bulldoze them!*

After comforting himself, Wang Baole wanted to test the effects of the mosquitoes' bite on a person, but even though there were plenty of people in the Dharmic Armament Pavilion, they had done nothing to offend him. As for Lin Tianhao, he was away in seclusion. Wang Baole manipulated the mosquitoes into making a few rounds in front of the cave abode that Lin Tianhao had recently moved into, but he gave up after they could find no way in.

"It's a pity the shameless monkey isn't around," Wang Baole muttered regretfully. He planned to test out the power of his mosquitoes' bite when either the shameless monkey turned up or when Lin Tianhao emerged from his seclusion. Then, he recalled the nine mosquitoes.

*Right, I still have to test their defense!*

When the nine mosquitoes appeared before Wang Baole again, he thought for a bit before pinching one of them. It seemed quite hardy, but after Wang Baole used his strength...

Smack.

The mosquito shattered into pieces...

Wang Baole frowned and quickly his heart stirred. Spirit Qi surged into the scabbard. With a wave of his hand, another mosquito appeared. Wang Baole's eyes shone brightly at the sight of it. After multiple tries, he realized that as long as he did not exhaust his Spirit Qi, the mosquitoes could be regenerated for an infinite number of times after they were destroyed.

"This is too much!" Wang Baole examined all the data he had collected. As a soon-to-be Armament Soldier who could refine Numinous Treasures, he was blown away.

Even though he did not know how powerful the actual scabbard that could shoot out flying sword needles would be if he had followed the instructions of Little Missy in the black mask and refined that scabbard, from how he saw it, this mutated scabbard of his was not that much weaker. In some respects, it might even surpass the real deal!

While Wang Baole was about to test out the Dharmic Artifact that were the mosquitoes, a signal was activated a long distance away from Ethereal Dao College in a vast expanse of mountains.

From afar, the mountain range was obscured in darkness. Only a smoke signal rose in thick waves into the sky. It seemed like it would never be extinguished and exuded an aura that was beyond description. It seemed to be connected directly to the heavens and made the entire sky appear to be scattered with rings of clouds!

However, if one should approach for a closer look, one would discover that the mountains seemed like they were coated in metal. On the peak of the mountain, where the smoke signal rose, sat a giant stronghold!

This stronghold was imposing and grand, made not from bricks and mortar but from a special kind of metal. It glimmered with a pitch-black light. Constructed against one side of the mountain, the walls of the stronghold were covered with spikes. The spikes varied in length, some long and some short, and were stained in dried blood. At the edge of some of the spikes stood a ring-shaped platform. Upon the platform sat what looked like a giant cannon.

This was the composite Numinous Treasure that had been invented by the Federation; it was extremely powerful. With a single glance, one could see numerous Numinous Treasures like it on the spikes lining the stronghold walls. It was almost impossible to count them all.

The main body of the stronghold spanned hundreds of yards. It stood impressively tall, towering five thousand yards. It was as if a gate that could seal the heavens stood on the mountain, merged with the entire mountain range. It impressed, astounded, and at the same time, divided the lands into what lay inside and what was kept outside.

Inside was the Federation!

As for what lay outside, it was an expanse of scorched land. Even further beyond it were endless jungles. One could almost hear the howls of ferocious beasts thundering from the within the jungles, resounding through the air.

It was like a primordial land!

### **Chapter 170: The Seventh Stronghold**

At present, a swarm of ferocious beasts, their flying forms illuminated by lightning, approached rapidly. The Numinous Treasures outside the stronghold retaliated swiftly before the beasts could draw near. With a terrifying roar, the sharp spears and cannons let loose a blast of light, slaughtering the creatures without mercy.

The flying lightning beasts stood no chance of escape. Their deaths were instant. The cries that they released before their deaths could shake one to their core.

However, to the countless soldiers in the stronghold bustling around with their affairs, this was but the daily course of affairs—nothing that they were not accustomed to.

There lay one of the primary strongholds guarding the Federation, also known as the Seventh Imperial Gate!

Seven primary strongholds spread across the entire Federation. Within each area that fell under the protection and command of a primary stronghold were hundreds of smaller, minor strongholds.

The military stationed all year round in the strongholds exterminated all beasts that ventured near and defended against minor Beast Tides that occurred from time to time.

At every primary stronghold, a general stood watch and held the fort. The general was responsible for and directed the mission of hundreds of minor strongholds within the primary stronghold's sphere of influence—the mission of defending against the beasts.

At this precise moment, within the Seventh Imperial Gate, General Zhou, who first made his appearance at the Combat Pavilion Tournament alongside Zhou Lu, stood on a tower. He had his hands behind his back, his gaze set upon the wild jungles in the distance. He stood like this for a long time, and a tinge of concern colored his eyes.

“The Federation predicted that the upcoming Beast Tide will take place on a small scale... so why can't I rid myself of the nagging sense of worry that has been plaguing me for the past few days?” General Zhou frowned and muttered to himself. Then, he barked out an order.

“Contact the four Dao Colleges. The numbers joining our party this year are to be increased!”

General Zhou's orders were sent without delay to the four Dao Colleges. Similar requests from other strongholds arrived at the same time.

While the colleges went about their preparations, Wang Baole ended his examination of the mosquitoes in a great mood. He was humming a tune softly while strolling back to his cave abode. It was when he saw his cave abode in the distance that it happened.

Suddenly, a rope flew out of nowhere and flung itself—not at Wang Baole—at the huge tree beside him. As soon as it wrapped itself around the tree trunk, it tightened into a strangle.

“Who's there!” Wang Baole's eyes brightened in a flash. His body surged a step forward in an instant, and with a swift wave of his hand, nine mosquitoes appeared. A glove appeared around his right hand; faint strands of mist wove themselves around his left hand. He stared warily in the direction that the rope had come from.

He stared for a very long while and could stop doubts from surfacing. There did not seem to be anything out of place. Stunned, he turned and looked at the rope that had the tree in a chokehold. It was a common item that often turned up among Dharmic Artifacts on Upper Academy Island. Recognition escaped Wang Baole at first. After repeated looks, his eyes suddenly widened.

“Could it be that?”

Wang Baole stepped forward for a closer examination. He could feel his own seal within the rope, and his eyes narrowed.

“It really is...” There was a look of disbelief on Wang Baole's face. This was the rope that he had refined with Armament Sand a few months ago, the one that had flown into the sky and disappeared without a trace as soon as he had flung it out!

Wang Baole had almost forgotten it. Who could have expected that it would make its way back a few months later?

*There's something seriously wrong with this rope...* Wang Baole sighed and retrieved the rope. He intended to take a closer look at it when he was back, to see if there was any possibility for modification.

If there was not, this rope would just be trash. For something that, after being thrown at the enemy, would rise into the sky and disappear, only to reappear a few months later—anything that it could do then would be too little, too late.

Not to mention where the rope had actually gone those few months... it was something that defied Wang Baole's imagination.

As he immersed himself in thought, Wang Baole placed the rope in his storage bag and returned to his cave abode. He immediately marched over to the smelting furnace. After hours of study, he finally stepped out. He let loose a deep sigh of exasperation. The rope was an unsolvable puzzle.

Under his close examination, he had found that the inscriptions carved within the rope had been completely transformed. The inscriptions clustered together like the messy, overlapping lines of a cypher, thwarting his attempt at analyzing them.

There was nothing to do but store the rope and come back to it again when he was more well-versed in Dharmic Armaments.

*Let's not care about the rope now. Now that I've achieved the basic requirements of becoming an Armament Soldier, the next step is... to familiarize myself with the refinement of third-grade Numinous Treasures as well as to prepare the Numinous Treasure for the advancement assessment!*

After thinking for a bit, Wang Baole sat down and opened up the Dharmic Armament guidebook. He went down the list, his eyes finally pausing on a third-grade Numinous Treasure named Dragon's Tooth.

Among third-grade Numinous Treasures, the Dragon's Tooth was considered a top-tier treasure. It was a challenge to refine; not only were the inscriptions complicated, the materials required to craft it were extremely rare. Besides metals and precious stones, a large quantity of teeth had to be harvested from monsters.

There was even a note in the Dharmic Armament guidebook stating that the more monsters' teeth used, the greater this Numinous Treasure would turn out. In theory, if one could venture into the unfathomable Sea, slaughter the Sea Dragon—a fearsome beast whose sightings started in the Spirit Inception Era—and harvest its teeth for crafting, the final treasure created would have power rivaling that of a fifth-grade Numinous Treasure!

The same principle applied for the use of any teeth belonging to monsters stronger and more fearsome than the Sea Dragon. With such teeth, the power of this Numinous Treasure would increase exponentially!

*This Numinous Treasure looks like a mace.* Wang Baole stared at the picture of the Numinous Treasure on the Dharmic Armament Scroll hesitantly. He was ambivalent.

After studying the other Numinous Treasures in the guidebook though, Wang Baole concluded that he could only guarantee a smooth advancement by crafting the Dragon's Tooth.

*Monsters' teeth are sold in the Dharmic Armament Pavilion, but there aren't many for sale, and the variety's limited. Besides, this Dragon's Tooth will need a core tooth... what should I choose for its core tooth?* Wang Baole thought. His mind instantaneously brought up the image of the Diamond Ape grinning fiercely at Wang Baole.

*The stupid monkey's teeth are very white. They look to be in pretty good shape. If I can get my hands on one of its teeth and use it as the core material, this Numinous Treasure of mine should turn out to be pretty strong.*

The temptation was strong, but Wang Baole knew that the task was too challenging. Putting aside the question of whether he would even succeed in the first place, even if he did successfully get his hands on one of the teeth, he would not dare to flaunt its use in public. With some regret, he moved on to consider other potential options.

Even though there were few monsters' teeth available in the Dharmic Armament Pavilion, Wang Baole received many replies from Upper Academy Island disciples after posting his request on the Spirit Intranet. Many of these disciples were from the Combat Pavilion. They had many monsters' teeth in their possession. After some hunting, Wang Baole finally had his eyes set on the tooth of a Severed Finger Wolf; it would form the core tooth of the Numinous Treasure that he was going to craft.

Severed Finger Wolves traveled and lived in packs. A fully-grown wolf would rival one who was at the second, maybe even third, level of the True Breath realm. In addition to its brutal nature was its gruesome appearance. Tentacle-like cartilage in the shape of human fingers grew all over its body.

For someone seeing a Severed Finger Wolf for the first time, a glance at a distance was enough to make one's hair stand on end.

Its teeth were razor-sharp and poisonous. Wang Baole spent quite a number of Spirit Stones on the purchase. After a few tests, he was impressed and awed; at the same time, he believed his choice of the tooth as the core tooth for his Numinous Treasure to be quite the sound decision.

Before he could continue his purchase of other monsters' teeth, a piece of news turned up and spread across the entire Upper Academy Island like wildfire.

"There's a Beast Tide approaching! Think it won't be long before we are summoned to fight!"

"These wretched monsters! Not only do they compete with us for Spirit Qi, evolve faster than us, and leave us in the dust, they even intrude upon our lands every year!"

"Who cares? During the Beast Wars, we were the ones who won! We annihilated every one of those monsters in all the Beast Tides that followed!"

"We've had casualties every year, but the senior brothers who returned were all richly rewarded with wealth and other benefits!"

The spreading news was a surprise to many new disciples. After all, they had not had full access to such news when they were at the Lower Academy Island. They had some vague semblance of awareness, superficial and limited.

Now, having entered Upper Academy Island, they finally understood the order of the world and the horror that were the monstrous beasts. The news traveled. Wang Baole heard it all. More information surfaced on the Spirit Intranet without pause.

Wang Baole set aside his shopping and instead focused on the upcoming Beast Tide. He browsed through some readings and a number of Spirit Intranet posts, which cemented what he had known

previously. The Federation had seven generals. In the Beast Wars, the seven generals had expanded Federation territories, pushed the frontiers ever closer to the primordial lands, and finally established the seven primary strongholds!

Surrounding each primary stronghold were hundreds of minor strongholds that guarded against and exterminated all encroaching monsters. For the strongholds in the entire Federation, the Beast Tide every spring was a season of war.

The four Dao Colleges that enjoyed elevated statuses were also obliged to shoulder a portion of the responsibility. Every year, the respective Upper Academies would send out numerous disciples to join the seven primary strongholds. The disciples would fall under the military's command. Their assistance in the monster extermination also served as a form of cultivation.

Combat disciples killed; Alchemy disciples healed; Array Formation disciples supported with their array formations; disciples from the other pavilions were tasked with their own responsibilities. As for the Dharmic Armament disciples, they repaired and restored damaged Dharmic Treasures, especially the large-scale composite Numinous Treasures in the stronghold.

Every disciple who headed toward the stronghold faced the threat of death. If they returned, they would be gifted with praise and rewards from the college. There would even be a record made in their academic dossier. When they took up a position in the Federation in the future, this would form a part of their qualifications.

The news on the Beast Tide spread further and wider. It was then that Wang Baole received a missive from the college. He was to join Chen Yutong and head for the seventh primary stronghold.