

## **AS A FATHER, I JUST WANT TO WATCH YOU ACHIEVE IMMORTALITY**

Chapter 14: The First Birthday Banquet, The Spirit Baby's Angry Glare

"Master Li, congratulations! Happy first birthday to Xi Xi!"

Snowflakes, as white as cotton, swirled in the air, standing out against the black roof tiles.

The courtyard gate stood wide open, and the sound of footsteps crunching on the snow rose and fell, with congratulatory voices following in an endless stream.

Figure after figure walked in from outside the courtyard, each presenting gifts for the one-year-old celebration.

All were familiar faces from the wood carving shop; Li Che and Zhang Ya, dressed in splendid attire, stood at the entrance to welcome these guests.

In the courtyard, attendants from Spring Breeze Building had already set up tents, arranged tables and chairs, and the chef on one side had set up his stove and lit the fire. The appetizing starters had already been delivered to each table early on.

In total, there were nine tables set, which wasn't a small number. After all, quite a few of the master craftsmen had brought their families, aiming for a joyous and lively celebration.

Chen Dabao, holding Xi Xi, who was dressed in a red jacket and skirt and looked incredibly adorable and delicate, was showing her off to several old fellows, his face piled high with smiles. The affection he felt was so thick that it seemed to overflow.

The Great Uncle's family had also arrived. The Old Scholar was clutching a tobacco pipe that wasn't lit and was followed by a young couple carrying a child still in swaddling clothes. He was a boy with plump cheeks, curiously gazing around with big eyes.

"Great Uncle, Great Aunt, Cousin and his wife, please come inside!"

Upon seeing this family, Li Che's lips curved up in a warm smile.

To the Great Uncle's family, Li Che was filled with gratitude; had it not been for the Great Uncle's family taking him in and raising him, he could not have survived so easily in these troubled times.

And the marriage with Zhang Ya was also arranged with the help of the Great Aunt.

The Old Scholar, with a face full of smile lines, looked at Li Che, now thoroughly made a name for himself, and felt deeply moved.

"You've done well, A Che."

"If your parents knew about it from beneath the springs, they would smile."

The Old Scholar patted Li Che's shoulder, his eyes brimming with mirth.

The Great Aunt took out a piece of silver jewelry wrapped in a red cloth and handed it to Li Che: "A Che, this is Xi Xi's gift for her first birthday. You must accept it."

Li Che did not decline but took it graciously and then looked towards his cousin, Li Zhengran, and his wife, Liu Chunming, who held the boy in her arms.

"Zhou is just half a year younger than Xi Xi, isn't he? His first birthday will be soon too, right? Is he starting to turn over smoothly now?" Li Che asked with a smile.

"Very smoothly indeed. One kick of his little legs and he turns over like a windmill, lively and strong!" Cousin Liu Chunming said to Li Che, beaming with pride.

Being able to become a wood carving master at Xu's Wood Carving Shop, cousin Liu Chunming was very aware of how prestigious that was, so her attitude was much warmer than before.

Having exchanged pleasantries for a short while, Li Che then led the Great Uncle's family to their seats.

As the appointed hour arrived, the feast commenced, and attendants from Spring Breeze Building called out the dishes, bringing out one delicious course after another to the tables.

Nowadays, Li Che possessed the Immortal Craft Dao Fruit, and the wood carvings he produced were in such demand for their rich implications that they sold out fast. Though not yet as established as the craftsmen like Old Chen, his most expensive carving had sold for fifty taels!

His net worth had already changed for the better. Although a feast at Spring Breeze Building was costly, he could afford to host it.

Moreover, with the master craftsmen from the large courtyard bringing gifts to the banquet, the event ended up not only costing nothing but even earning a good deal.

"Brother Che, Third Shopkeeper is here!"

Li Che, who was busy toasting with a few masters, heard that Third Shopkeeper had arrived and quickly went to greet him, carrying Xi Xi and accompanied by Zhang Ya.

"Hahaha, Xi Xi is one year old today. I came especially to see her, and this is a birthday gift for her."

Third Shopkeeper, Xu You, was amiable and held in high esteem at the shop, and naturally, he did not exclude the intention of winning over Li Che.

After all, Li Che was capable of crafting wood carvings with a true essence, which had begun to gain popularity in the Inner City.

"Thank you, shopkeeper. Xi Xi, come and thank Uncle Xu," Li Che, holding the lovely Xi Xi, called out with a smile.

Xi Xi's eyes were bright and her eyelashes long; her skin was white and smooth like jade. Xu You, catching one glance of her, liked her very much, took her from Li Che's hands, played with her for a while, and even seemed reluctant to give her back to Li Che.

"I won't partake in the birthday feast. I've got matters to attend to. Recently, the Mysterious Temple in the Outer City has become restless and many malevolent creatures have emerged. The major noble families of the Inner City have organized teams to clear them out... I have to go as well," Xu You explained.

He then took his leave.

"Manager Xu is really a good person..." Zhang Ya said softly at the side.

Li Che nodded. Xu You was indeed a good person, humble and without arrogance, rarely displaying the pride and extravagance of the noble families and clans.

However, Li Che had heard that in the Inner City, Xu You was not favored and had been assigned to manage Xu Ji in the Outer City, which was equivalent to being removed from the power center of the Xu Family.

Compared to the businesses in the Inner City, Xu Ji's wood carving shop in the Outer City was after all not a big business.

"In these times, the gentler you are, the more you suffer. Unfortunately, the bad things always seem to happen to the honest folks," Old Chen said, pinching his wine cup and walking over with a complex expression, shaking his head slightly.

"Just like the dangerous task of clearing out those evil spirits that fled from the Mysterious Temple beyond the city walls, which major noble families and clans would send their true core members?"

"That Xu Beihu's cultivation is extremely powerful, so he wasn't sent, but Xu You, with his weak cultivation, was sent instead, isn't it because Xu You isn't favored within his clan?"

Old Chen heaved a sigh.

Li Che, holding Xi Xi, looked at the lonely figure of Xu You disappearing into the snowy wind, and was also silent.

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After a round of toasting and drinking.

Old Chen was in high spirits today, who drank himself into a stupor and retired early to bed.

Zhang Ya then took Xi Xi to the inner room to put her to sleep.

Li Che rubbed his face with a handful of cold snow to sober up, then sat in the workshop of the side courtyard, lit the oil lamp, and continued working on the mechanism.

With a thought, information appeared before his eyes.

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[Name: Li Che]

[Bonds: Daughter (Li Nuanxi)]

[Dao Fruit: Immortal Artisan (lv2, 89%), Dragon Elephant Vajra (lv1, 2%)]

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His eyes fell on the [Immortal Artisan] Dao Fruit. Within a year, the maturity of the Immortal Craft Dao Fruit had risen to 89%, close to breaking through to level 3.

Just one more mechanism to complete.

He stood up, walked to a corner of the workshop, and gently turned a wood carving. Immediately, a hidden compartment appeared.

From it, he took out a statue of Guanyin seated on a blood-colored lotus mountain.

Guanyin had a compassionate and beneficent face, but upon closer inspection, one could discover that this light and shadow sculpture was actually made up of tens of thousands of tiny wooden spikes!

This was one of the three mechanisms from the "Tang's Mechanism Essentials" that did not have inner strength requirements — the Guanyin Blood Lotus.

Apart from the Guanyin Blood Lotus, there were two square matchboxes nearby. He took out one, placed it in the palm of his hand, and in a flash, tiny mechanical sounds emanated from the matchbox, and eight slender spider legs grew out, embedding into the skin of Li Che's palm.

With a gentle flick of his hand, incredibly fine silver threads shot out soundlessly, slicing a piece of wood meters away with extreme precision, the cut smooth and lustrous.

With his fingers dancing, silver threads whipped throughout the room, with a mournful whistling sound — the noise of the air being sliced apart.

After a while, the numerous silver threads, quick as lightning, retracted back into the matchbox.

"What an excellent Thousand Thread Spider, with my minor accomplishment in Skin Refinement, even an ordinary martial artist in the Sinew Transforming Stage would find it hard to withstand the threads' slicing," he thought.

"But after reaching the Muscle Channeling Stage, martial artists cultivate inner strength. If I were to enhance the inner strength, like Old Chen said, the power would grow by another thirty to forty percent, and with inner strength and martial techniques, the lethality would be even greater..."

"I can't take this lightly."

"Still, I must prioritize strengthening my own martial prowess. Once I can cultivate inner strength and drive the Thousand Thread Spider with it, its power will undoubtedly be even greater!"

Li Che placed both the Thousand Thread Spider and the Guanyin Blood Lotus mechanisms back into the hidden compartment.

He sat down in front of the oil lamp again and began to attempt other mechanisms from "Tang's Mechanism Essentials."

Due to the lack of inner strength and sufficient robust qi and blood, the production of other mechanisms during this period ended in failure.

But that wasn't a major issue, as failure was also a part of accumulating experience. Once he began to cultivate inner strength, he would be able to complete them in one go.

Suddenly.

Just as Li Che picked up the carving knife, his brows furrowed slightly.

He left the workshop and quickly reached the entrance of the courtyard, his gaze piercing the distance. He saw a shadow, fast as lightning, shattering the dark and disappearing into the night.

Li Che's eyes instantly sharpened, and he slowly looked down.

There he saw a familiar...

Three-Headed Six-Armed Spirit Infant Statue.

Only this time, the Three-Headed Six-Armed Spirit Infant Statue was not with one eye closed and the other open but was glaring with both eyes wide open.

As if staring intently at him!