

A Father 34

Chapter 34: Daughter Aged 2, Dao Fruit [Pure Heart]

Li Che returned to Xu's Courtyard with his uncle's family, making do in their own courtyard for one night before seeking out Steward Sun the next day.

Thanks to Xu You's promise, Steward Sun did not make things difficult, although his attitude towards Li Che had cooled considerably since the loss of his son. Upon reflection, it was Sun Changbiao who had initially intended to sacrifice Xi Xi in order to have a son.

The fault lay with his son, not with Li Che's family who were meant to be the victims.

After successfully resolving his uncle's housing issue, Li Che breathed a sigh of relief.

Recalling the oppressive feeling brought about by the Followers of the Spiritual Infant Sect parading on the street, Li Che could not help but frown slightly.

The entire Spirit Infant Sect... none of them seemed to be good people at first glance.

A disaster waiting to happen.

Inside the workshop, Li Che put down the carving knife in his hand, his black hair dusted with wood shavings, and gazed at the snowflakes drifting in the courtyard, mentally adding the entire Spirit Infant Sect to his little notebook marked for death.

Of course, at the very top was the Spirit Infant Master, marked with a circle for special attention!

Days went by, one after another.

Ever since the reward for the Bull Demon was increased to five hundred taels, Li Che had remained low-key and had not taken action again, except for once when he assisted his uncle's family.

Of course, during this time, he had also looked for the arrest officer Zhao Chuanxiong, sadly to no avail. Zhao Chuanxiong seemed to sense that Li Che was out to kill him and became cautious and sleazy.

He never appeared alone, always accompanied by several arrest officers even when he went out, and he didn't return home at night, hiding who knows where.

Li Che, unable to find the right opportunity, chose to give up.

Perhaps due to the death of the Bone Tempering Realm martial artist wielding the Bagua Staff, Feilei Outer City seemed to be at peace for a while, but slowly, news of children being harmed began to spread again.

Where there are people, evil will never cease.

Time slipped through the fingers like sand, marking the turning of spring to summer.

Before he knew it, half a year had passed in the blink of an eye.

Xu's Wood Carving Shop.

Li Che took a deep breath, blew the dust off the wood carving, and amidst the flurry, a "Nine Sons Embracing Lotus Statue" vividly appeared before him.

Grandpa Chen had also carved a Nine Sons Embracing Lotus wood carving before, but now, the one Li Che carved seemed even more vivid and imbued with a unique essence, as if the nine children carved into it had come to life, frolicking and romping as if right next to one's ear.

This was due to the enhanced essence brought about by the upgrade of the "Immortal Artisan" Dao Fruit to lv3.

"A Che, your craftsmanship has greatly improved! In next month's assessment, you are likely to be ranked as a Four-Knife Wood Carver," Xu You, dressed in a silk white robe, leaned against the door frame with a jar of wine, and said with a gentle smile.

"A Four-Knife Wood Carver can move freely between the Inner City and the Outer City, A Che... have you ever thought about moving your family into the Inner City?" Xu You asked.

Upon hearing this, Li Che thought of the numerous masters in the Inner City and heard that the true foundation of the powerful within the Spirit Infant Sect was within the Inner City. Moving there involved too much risk.

Just as Old Chen had said, although the living conditions in the Outer City were somewhat poor, being far from the center of turbulence and devoid of so much strife made it a happier and more comfortable place to live.

Seeing that Li Che had not responded for a long time, Xu You waved his hand, "Never mind, let's not talk about this. If you were to move into the Inner City, it would be more troublesome to find you for a drink."

Being part of the family but not favored, and having lost the chance to compete for the position of Family Head, staying in the Outer City was equivalent to being exiled; he was too lazy to return to the Inner City.

Since Xu You's return from eradicating evil in the Mysterious Temple in the Outer City, he seemed to have taken a liking to Li Che, often seeking him out for drinks. At first, it might have been with thoughts of currying favor, but as time went on, he truly began to consider Li Che a friend.

His visits to Li Che's courtyard for meals became increasingly familiar.

After finishing work, Li Che returned to the courtyard with Xu You.

The loquat tree in the courtyard was thriving, full of lush greenery.

Little Xi Xi was underneath the loquat tree, clutching a wooden stick, laughing merrily.

In just one and a half years, Xi Xi was lively and clever, incredibly intelligent, seeming as energetic as a three-year-old child, brimming with energy, bouncing around, the distinctiveness of the Spirit Baby becoming ever more apparent.

"Daddy!"

Upon seeing Li Che's return, Xi Xi's chubby little face quivered, and she scurried over barefoot, full of delight.

She hastily stopped in front of Li Che and Xu You, her hair tied up in a topknot nearly hitting Li Che's thigh.

"Daddy... did you bring me candied hawthorns to eat? Where are they?"

Xi Xi batted her large eyes, already searching.

However, after not finding them, she suddenly seemed deflated, like a balloon losing air, her puffed-up chest sagging.

Li Che laughed and picked up the disappointed Xi Xi, saying innocently, "That was something Daddy promised you the day before yesterday. Didn't I bring you candied haw yesterday? You must be mistaken."

Xi Xi looked puzzled for a moment, tilting her head, "Is that so? I've already forgotten what yesterday's candied haws tasted like..."

After saying this, she even stuck out her tongue to lick her lips.

Xu You couldn't help but chuckle, "Uncle will hold you. Your daddy didn't buy any, but your Uncle Xu You did."

As if by magic, Xu You really produced a candied haw, and Xi Xi cheered instantly.

Old Chen pulled up a bamboo chair and sat under the loquat tree to enjoy the cool air, seeing this, he couldn't help shaking his head and laughing, "Third Shopkeeper, don't spoil Little Stinky Xi too much. Candied hawthorns every day will ruin her teeth."

Hearing this, Xi Xi immediately became displeased, pouting her lips, "Stinky Grandpa Chen, I'm not Little Stinky Xi, I am Nuanxi, Li Nuanxi!"

Her muttering carried a faint hint of childishness.

This made everyone present struggle to hold back their laughter.

Zhang Ya had just finished her work in the kitchen and began to prepare the meal.

The freeloading Xu You and Old Chen, along with Li Che's family, spread a table out in the courtyard on a summer evening and started to dine.

Xu You enjoyed this atmosphere immensely. Living alone in the Outer City, he would eat by himself, but now, he cherished the lively and comfortable environment.

Taking a bite of a pig head's meat, Xu You looked at Li Che and said, "A Che, lately... the Spirit Infant Sect has been making more and more moves."

"Within the Inner City, the Spirit Infant Sect collaborated with the Si Family... and reached into the Spirit Infant Children of the other three families, thus falling out with the other three major families. Several in the Bone Tempering Realm have died."

"The Si Family is struggling to bear this wrath. The instigator, Si Mubai, was driven out of the Inner City, and the power of the Spirit Infant Sect in the Inner City has been wiped clean, with most retreating to the Outer City..."

Xu You said in a heavy voice.

Li Che sipped his wine, "If the three big families in the Inner City have fallen out with the Spirit Infant Sect, why didn't they completely eradicate the sect's power? Why not kill them off entirely?"

Old Chen sneered coldly, "This Spirit Infant Sect originated from the Mysterious Temple outside the city. How could it be so easy to clean up? Those high-ranking followers of the Spirit Infant Sect usually wear masks and hide their identities... Their power comes from complex sources, so how can it be completely eradicated?"

"It's possible that the upper echelons of the three big families, or even the high ranks of the Yamen... might have powerful members of the Spirit Infant Sect."

Old Chen seemed accustomed to such matters, his words carrying a mix of coldness and sorrow.

"If this matter of the Spirit Infant Sect isn't handled well, Fei Lei City... will eventually be doomed."

After those words, the dinner table fell silent.

Xu You's eyebrows furrowed and then relaxed...

He looked at Old Chen, wanting to say more but stopping himself.

Old Chen gulped down a bowl of wine and slammed the bowl on the table, "The Third Shopkeeper knows about my origins. I originally came from the refugees of Zhouyun City in the north. How Zhouyun City ended up... I will never forget in this lifetime."

Xu You sighed, not saying much more, just looking at Li Che, "During this time, look after Xi Xi; don't let her run around. After the matter of the Spirit Infant Sect is over, or maybe after next year's Spirit Child selection, I'll arrange for her to enter the 'Divine Cultivation Institute' established by the major clans of Fei Lei City. That way, her safety will be somewhat guaranteed."

"However, I've also received news... the Divine Sect will dispatch experts to take on disciples next year. Sadly, Xi Xi is a bit young. I don't know whether she'll catch the eyes of the Divine Sect's disciples. I will see how things go at that time. If she can join the Divine Sect, Xi Xi won't have to worry about the threat from the Spirit Infant Sect anymore."

"In front of such a colossus as the Divine Sect, the Spirit Infant Sect... is pitifully weak."

"Therefore, it's likely that the Spirit Infant Sect will go on a rampage before the arrival of the Divine Sect's disciples."

Li Che nodded, filled his own cup, and then offered a bowl to Xu You.

"The matter concerning Xi Xi... I'll have to trouble you, Old Xu."

Xu You rolled his eyes but raised his bowl in response.

"Don't mention it. Xi Xi and I are close."

...

...

Li Che was very receptive to Xu You's advice and did not wander around with Xi Xi.

He also specifically noticed that the Outer City had indeed become much more chaotic. The activities of the Spirit Infant Sect's followers became more frequent, and even outside Xu's Wood Carving Shop late at night, martial artists would often lurk and covet incessantly.

However, the guard squad organized by Xu You with numerous martial wood carvers enhanced patrolling. And after Xu You personally killed an intruder who had achieved Completion in Transformed Sinews, the Spirit Infant Sect started to restrain themselves a bit.

Yet, the activities of the Spirit Infant Sect were still intense elsewhere.

Over half a year, Feilei Outer City fell into a chorus of mournful cries. Many parents who had lost their children lodged complaints with the Yamen.

The arrest officers from the Yamen organized patrols, but to little effect. The evil followers of the Spirit Infant Sect seemed to always get wind of the officers' movements ahead of time.

In such chaos, half a year passed by. But far from improving, the turmoil only became worse.

Cold winds blew, and early winter quietly arrived.

Another half year slipped away unnoticed.

Xi Xi turned two years old.

Outer City, Ting Yu Alley.

Inside a rented courtyard of Li Che's.

Li Che sat cross-legged, and the snowflakes falling from the sky, when nearing him, were met by a surge of inner strength reminiscent of a Jiaoshe serpent, violently exploding into a mist of snow upon ejection.

Slowly opening his eyes, the strength receded inward, all converging into the Dao Fruit of the Dragon Elephant Vajra.

"Si Snake Inner Strength... has reached the Three Heavens. This inner strength technique has reached its limit."

"To make a breakthrough to the Fourth Layer of Inner Strength, I need to get my hands on a Superior Internal Strength Technique."

Li Che exhaled, the breath rushing out of his mouth like a sharp arrow.

Suddenly, the Dao Fruits of Immortal Artisan and Dragon Elephant Vajra in his chest began to flutter slightly!

Familiar scenes appeared before him.

On the vast earth, a towering treasure tree rose into the clouds, its numerous leaves shimmering as they fluttered. On the tree, a multicolored fruit slowly formed, gleaming brightly, reflecting the various stages of Xi Xi's growth over the past year.

With his black hair cascading over his shoulders, Li Che's eyes gleamed brightly.

Another year of anticipation finally blossomed at this moment.

Two years old, Xi Xi's third Dao Fruit...

Had arrived!

...

[Your daughter is two years old, safe and sound, without illness or disaster. You have obtained a Dao Fruit, "Pure Heart."]