

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

Chapter 7: Four-Armed Bodhisattva Holding Child Statue

It seems there's something of value!

This ancient book... might be of great help to the "Immortal Artisan" Dao Fruit!

Suppressing the turmoil in his heart caused by the Dao Fruit, Li Che took a deep breath. His mind was agitated, yet he did not probe further.

As the sound of the gong being struck echoed, everyone in the wood carving shop put down what they were holding, and the atmosphere became heavy.

The door to the courtyard was opened, and the wind and snow rushed in, followed by several figures bustling through.

The two leading figures were clad in fox fur cloaks and wearing headbands, their eyes sharp and imposing, exuding a strong aura that seemed as if it could captivate one's soul just by looking at them.

Their vitality was robust, and the snow and wind did not cling to them. Even as they walked through the snow, not a single flake seemed to touch them.

These two were none other than the Second Shopkeeper and the Third Shopkeeper of Xu's Wood Carving Shop.

Usually, the Third Shopkeeper, Xu You, was in charge of Xu's Wood Carving Shop in the Outer City, while the Main Shopkeeper, Xu Heli, and the Second Shopkeeper, Xu Beihu, resided in the Inner City. Today, for the examination, the Second Shopkeeper Xu Beihu had personally come.

Xu's Wood Carving Shop in the Inner City was by no means weak; in fact, it could be described as formidable. This was mainly because these three shopkeepers were all top-notch, each possessing considerable strength.

Once inside the shop, they removed their fox fur cloaks and sat down in the Taishi Chairs, casually scanning the apprentices who gathered together in the shop.

"The annual examination for wood carving masters in our shop happens once a year, and we recruit three apprentices each time. After becoming a One-cut Wood Carving Master, a monthly salary of five taels can be claimed, and for the carved products sold, the shop takes forty percent while the rest goes to the individual."

"Of course, after becoming a Wood Carver, there will be an annual evaluation. For each additional cut made, the shop's share decreases by ten percent, and the monthly salary increases."

The Third Shopkeeper, Xu You, sat with a serene posture, his eyes sweeping across the room. He was fair-skinned and of a gentle demeanor.

By contrast, the Second Shopkeeper, Xu Beihu, lived up to his name – North Tiger, with an overwhelming presence. He sat upright with broad shoulders and a strong back like a bamboo pole, his body exuding a fiery vitality.

After the Third Shopkeeper finished speaking, the Second Shopkeeper also opened his mouth, and his voice boomed like a bell, stirring up waves of air in the room as if wind and waves were lashing out.

"To become an official Wood Carver of the shop means having the qualification to practice martial arts and to cultivate Inner Strength. If you want to go farther and higher in the field of wood carving, Inner Strength is essential.

Our Xu's Wood Carving Shop has been in Fei Lei City for two hundred years, and without some ability in martial arts, it wouldn't be possible to safeguard this family business."

"Furthermore, by choosing to participate in the examination, you agree to join Xu's Wood Carving Shop and become one of Xu Ji's people. If there is any betrayal, do not blame us for being ruthless."

"I, Xu Beihu, detest traitors the most!"

His rough words thundered through the room, intimidating the hearts and minds of every apprentice present.

Li Che also felt a chill in his heart.

"Now, those who wish to continue with the examination, come forward to register and receive your examination materials."

After the stern warning of the Second Shopkeeper Xu Beihu, the gentle voice of the Third Shopkeeper, Xu You, sounded as if one was basking in the spring breeze.

The many apprentices hurried forward in an orderly manner, registering their names and receiving materials.

"Little Li, go ahead," Old Chen said with a smile and a sip of his drink, squinting his eyes.

After giving a bow with his hands clenched in front of him, Li Che too went to register.

"Li Che?" The Third Shopkeeper Xu You, who was in charge of registration, was slightly surprised to see Li Che actually come forward to register.

A few days ago, when Li Che came to him, he hadn't taken it seriously. After all, every year, there were laborers who envied the high earnings of Wood Carvers and sought the opportunity to participate in the examination, but most gave up after trying to carve a few times. ¶

It was pretty rare for someone like Li Che to actually come and register for the examination.

Was it a lack of self-awareness or... did he truly possess genuine skills?

"There have been precedents of laborers turning into Wood Carvers. I hope you can give me a surprise. Do your best," Xu You, being a gentle person, encouraged him.

Li Che nodded, selected a piece of wood, and found a workstation to stand by.

When all the candidates had chosen their wood, the Third Shopkeeper Xu You stood with his hands behind his back, surveying everyone, and said indifferently, "The task for this wood carving examination... is to create a Four-Armed Bodhisattva holding a child statue."

No sooner had he spoken than the Third Shopkeeper unveiled the red cloth covering the wood carving on the table, revealing its true form.

A statue of a Four-Armed Bodhisattva holding a child stood on the table with its four arms outstretched in different postures, one hand performing a Sealing Technique, one holding a Pure Jade Vase, one pinching a wish-fulfilling gesture, and the last arm embracing a laughing boy with an upturned braid.

"Hiss—"

A collective gasp of surprise came from the mouths of the many apprentices.

This year's examination topic... was it really this difficult?!

Even the old masters who were watching the excitement showed expressions of astonishment.

In previous years, the exam had always involved ordinary Bodhisattva statues, but this year added a child being held... and the requirement of four arms.

For wood carving, each additional arm significantly increased the difficulty in controlling the overall work, the error rate, and the test of carving skills.

Hard, hard, hard!

Master Chen smacked his lips and said, "Li Che's luck really has hit rock bottom... This exam question can't be bluffed through."

Li Che stared at the Four-Armed Bodhisattva statue and felt a slight relief in his heart...

Lucky!

It was a type he had touched before!

Stable!

Old Chen's previously completed "Nine Sons Embracing the Lotus," which had earned him one hundred and fifty taels, had already been felt by Li Che. This allowed Li Che to learn child sculpting, and the Six-Eyed Bodhisattva Statue had provided him with the Bodhisattva carving skills...

The only shortcoming was... the four arms.

But as a Lv2 Dao Fruit Immortal Craftsman, Li Che was confident he could carve it out!

"The main focus should be on putting more effort into the artistic conception."

Li Che began to make plans for his own assessment.

He didn't need to hide his skills, but when it came to something as profound as artistic conception, that could only be attributed to talent.

A laborer, if he were to display carving skills not inferior to those of a wood carving shop's master... It would ultimately be hard to explain.

"The assessment time is four hours. When the time is up, everyone must stop carving immediately. Violators will be disqualified. Do you understand?"

Second Shopkeeper Xu Beihu stood up, his presence commanding as he issued the warning.

All the apprentices, including Li Che, responded in turn.

"The Xu Ji wood carving apprentice examination in the Outer City starts now!"

Xu Beihu waved his hand grandly, and his strong qi surged throughout the shop.

Carving the "Four-Armed Bodhisattva holding child statue" in four hours was a tight schedule and not very generous.

Therefore, the apprentices dared not waste time, holding their pieces of wood, they began to outline and trace their figures with ink.

These pieces of wood had all been dried, saving some steps.

Li Che placed the wood on the workbench and reached out to touch it, visualizing the outer and inner contours in his mind. After a moment, he dipped his wolf's hair brush in ink and began to draw lines on the wood.

The workbench was prepared with axes, mallets, saws, files, and other tools for carving the rough shape.

Carving the rough shape involves summarizing the conceived forms into simple geometric bodies. Concepts such as layers, dynamics, proportions, and center of gravity must all be included in the rough shape.

Carving the rough shape is very important and is also the most demanding test of talent.

Moments later, after the apprentices had finished their outlines, they started the ding-dong sound of knocking and carving...

[Immortal Artisan] Dao Fruit vibrated, and Li Che closed his eyes and then reopened them. His entire demeanor seemed to have undergone a drastic change.

Old Chen, holding a gourd of liquor by his side, paused for a moment, as the transformation in Li Che's temperament occurred the instant he picked up the carving knife, looking at Li Che as if... looking at his younger self.

"This kid... has put on quite a convincing display of temperament," Chen Dabao muttered to himself.

However, as Li Che began carving, outlining the rough shape, Chen Dabao squinted his eyes.

Scrap wood chips fell in showers, the sharp blade tore into the wood, ripping apart the links between the wood's tissues, leaving marks.

The rough lines had already sketched out the overall rough shape of the image.

Time slipped away like sand through the fingers, dropping grain by grain with the rustling sound of sand.

Third Shopkeeper Xu You walked with his hands behind his back, his pace neither hurried nor slow, slowly passing each apprentice's workbench, inspecting the progress and standard of their work.

Suddenly.

Xu You's steps halted as he glanced at Chen Dabao, who stood stock-still as if he were a statue, and was slightly taken aback.

Following Chen Dabao's gaze, he saw the courageous laborer Li Che.

"Why are you so engrossed?"

Xu You became curious. What could captivate Chen Dabao, the senior Four-cuts Master, to pause in his tracks...

Could it be that this laborer really had something special?

Xu You walked over, hands still clasped behind his back, gradually approaching. His eyes drooped downward, falling upon Li Che who was focused on carving, then shifted.

They fell onto the wood carving on the workbench...