

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

Chapter 8: Wood Carving Prodigy, Inner Strength Divinity

Third Shopkeeper Xu You narrowed his eyes, a hint of amazement flashing through his gentle gaze.

He looked at the rough prototype of the "Four-Armed Bodhisattva holding child statue" that was being outlined. Although it was only a prototype and the lines were rough, the whole statue already emanated a unique form of beauty.

That was... the flavor of meaning!

The expression, the posture, the demeanor... they were all strikingly palpable!

It was as if there truly was a compassionate Four-Armed Bodhisattva, cradling a child with one arm, eyelids drooping, one hand forming the rebirth mantra, another holding the Pure Jade Vase, and yet another grasping a Jade Ruyi...

Was this really carved by a laborer?

Xu You nodded slightly. As the third shopkeeper of the wood carving shop, he had handled countless wood carvings and had a high level of appreciation for the styles and techniques of many veteran carvers.

In Li Che's Four-Armed Bodhisattva, there were many carving techniques imbuing Chen Dabao's style and flavor!

The talent... was astonishing!

Li Che had not spent silver to learn wood carving at the shop, and it was clear that Chen Dabao would not have kindly taught him.

This meant... everything was self-taught by Li Che!

By day he needed to move timber and finished statues in the wood carving shop, and only at night did he have time to go back and carve, meaning he only learned during the evenings, yet he managed to reach such a level!

"The lines of the carving and processing are still slightly flawed, but what's truly valuable is... the inherent meaning! The Four-Armed Bodhisattva carved by Little Li is extremely rich in meaning, as though it came to life... This is a natural talent!"

Chen Dabao clicked his tongue, returning to his senses only after sensing the arrival of Third Shopkeeper Xu You, astonished.

"Indeed, the most important aspect of wood carving is the charm. Without it, no matter how good the technique or how superb the skills, it's still just a piece of junk wood," Xu You nodded in approval.

"He's a good seedling, and Li Che's technique is not bad either; it merely lacks a bit of the veteran carvers' finesse, but it is much better than the apprentices..."

"It seems our Xu's Wood Carving Shop is about to produce a genius."

Xu You's lips curled up, his smile brightening splendidly.

"Our Xu's Wood Carving Shop, being able to rank at the forefront in Fei Lei City, owes not only to the Xu Family; the biggest reason is that the carvings produced by Xu's are full of charm, allowing those young masters in the city to refine and extract divinity..."

"Such individuals who possess immense talent in capturing the charm of wood carving, we at Xu's will definitely grasp and nurture them well!"

Xu You stood with his hands behind his back, quietly watching Li Che's carving for a while.

From the technique of the carving knife to the deepening overall charm of the wood carving as the engraving progressed, confirming that it was indeed created by Li Che, Xu You had his answer.

Li Che was also aware of Xu You's presence and his assessment.

His heart couldn't help but be startled; he had already restrained his carving technique quite a bit, yet it seemed he was still far better than the apprentices in the shop, standing out like a crane amongst chickens...

It was his first time gauging his control... still inexperienced.

However, from the third shopkeeper's reaction, it seemed his advancement to becoming a wood carver was assured!

Four hours silently passed amidst the rasping sound of the carving knife tearing through wood.

Ding—

Accompanied by a gong-like explosion!

Sitting in a Taishi Chair and sipping tea, Second Shopkeeper Xu Beihu, with his burly figure, suddenly stood up, his fierce blood essence surging turbulently.

"The hour has come! Everyone, halt!"

"The assessment is over!"

"If I see anyone else make a move with a knife, their qualification will be nullified! Their results void!"

The domineering voice, rough yet intimidating.

All the wood carving apprentices hurriedly stopped their work, some trembling and looking with dread at Xu Beihu whose eyes swept over the crowd like a tiger, falling silent as cicadas in winter.

Li Che too put down his grinding stick, stopping his work on the "Four-Armed Bodhisattva holding child statue," and let out a long sigh, feeling a slight pity.

If only he had a moment longer, he could have finished polishing it, and the statue would have been a completed product.

The third and second shopkeepers, accompanied by several veteran carvers from the shop, began evaluating the wood carvings of many apprentices.

The evaluation, though not too strict, was quite fair.

Only when coming across an extremely poor piece, one that in four hours managed only a rough prototype without its proper form, would they scold a few words.

Chen Dabao followed in the group, squinting his eyes, and when he came to Li Che's station and saw the Four-Armed Bodhisattva, rising majestically from a pile of wood chips on the workspace, almost completed in form through polishing.

Many of the veteran carvers began to marvel.

"Quite a rarity, a laborer actually possessing such knife skills and standards!"

"The apprentices I've taught really learned nothing of value!"

"A talent indeed, it's truly a pity that he hasn't been formally trained in wood carving over these years; he started late, but the meaning imbued in his carvings... I'd believe it if you told me they were carved by a Three-Knife Master!"

...

Praise was never in short supply.

Xu You looked at Li Che with a gentle expression, a flicker of admiration in his eyes as he nodded slightly, "Not bad."

Li Che bowed with his fists clasped, his expression calm, not losing himself in the praise.

The group continued to appreciate the work, and moments later, all the assessments were completed.

"Li Che, Zhao Xuan, Wang Zhengpin, the three of you have distinguished yourselves in this assessment and can be granted the title of One-Cut Wood Carver. Your monthly salary will be five taels, divided into sixty percent."

Upon Xu You reading out the three names, the shop suddenly erupted into a buzz.

When the final results settled, many apprentices were visibly distressed, some disoriented, others shedding tears...

Years of hard study had ultimately failed to pass the assessment, and being surpassed, even overwhelmed by a laborer threw them off balance.

The small shop displayed a hundred human emotions.

"The three of you, follow me."

Xu You and Xu Beihu donned their fox fur cloaks and glanced over the three who had passed the assessment.

Li Che and the other two apprentices quickly followed, stepping into the swirling snow, walking deeper into the courtyard.

They passed through a corridor, arriving in a spacious yard that appeared to be a flattened practice field, filled with snow-covered stone stumps and other martial arts equipment.

"This place serves as the martial arts area for Xu Ji's wood carving shop in the Outer City. Becoming a wood carver of the shop means you're one of us. From now on, you can enter this area with the 'jade talisman knife' that signifies your status as One-Cut Wood Carvers, to practice martial arts and Inner Strength, preparing to reach the higher levels of wood carvers."

Everyone, standing in the courtyard amidst flying snow.

After distributing three jade knives to them, Xu You stood with his hands clasped behind, and Xu Beihu, the Second Shopkeeper, began to speak.

"I will conduct the martial arts training. Each month, I will take two days off to come to the Outer City. If you have any questions about martial arts during that time, you can ask me."

His voice was like a large bell, his vitality robust. Standing in the heavy snow, not a flake touched him.

Li Che and the others quickly responded.

"Now, let's start discussing the Martial Path..."

"Martial arts training is divided into three types: Body Refinement Technique, Internal Strength Technique, and... the Divine Method."

"The Divine Method is beyond your reach and not something you are qualified to contact. Body Refinement is available to everyone, while Internal Strength somewhat depends on talent and requires time to accumulate."

"I will teach you the Body Refinement Technique now. As for the Internal Strength Technique, you'll wait until your body refinement reaches the skin-grinding level. Then, I will teach it to you, so you can try."

Xu Beihu said indifferently.

He immediately began to explain the Body Refinement Technique, which in fact... involved some austere practices using external tools to refine the body. The various equipment in the practice field all served this purpose.

"The Body Refinement Technique involves skin-grinding, sinew transforming, bone tempering, and blood exchange. Once you can circulate your body's blood and energy, transforming it as fluid as quicksilver, you are considered a

master in this area! As for the stage above Blood Exchange – Channel Opening – it is rarely achieved by anyone in this city."

"Starting with skin-grinding, every half month you can get a bowl of 'boiling skin powder.' If that's not enough, you can buy it yourself, one bowl for one silver tael to accelerate your body refinement pace."

...

Xu Beihu taught earnestly, and Li Che listened just as earnestly.

This was his first encounter with the Martial Arts of this world, and naturally, he did not dare to neglect it. The threat from the Spirit Infant Master, like a knife hanging over his head, kept him from relaxing his vigilance.

Practicing martial arts would enhance his ability to stand against the Spirit Infant Master, and he dared not be negligent.

When the sky turned completely dark,

Xu Beihu finally ended today's teaching.

He would stay another day in the Outer City tomorrow to teach everyone martial arts.

"Disperse now, digest well the knowledge of the Martial Path I have imparted, and tomorrow we officially start the skin-grinding practice."

Xu Beihu said solemnly, waving his hand grandly before turning to leave.

However, Li Che did not leave but found the Third Shopkeeper to inquire about moving.

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