

## CULTIVATION SYSTEM: STRONGER WITH AGE

### Chapter 6 - 5: Lifespan Nearing its End, 3 Threads of Qi Blood

At the entrance of Lishui Street, Lin Xuankong weaved through the crowd with his carrying pole. As he walked, he carefully observed his surroundings. Although he still couldn't be entirely sure if Ma Xiong and Zhang Wu intended to deal with him, he hadn't relaxed for a moment since walking back from the vicinity of the inner city.

*It wasn't that I'm overly cautious, he thought, but after so many days of relentless cultivation, I'm finally nearing the Pine Skill Entry Level. If I were to fail at a critical moment like this, I would be a great fool!*

At this moment, the roadsides were teeming with people. There were wealthy young masters in elegant clothes and brocade shoes, strolling leisurely with their servants, while beggars in rags, holding broken bowls with faces caked in dirt, bent over and begged by the roadside. However, women were seldom seen walking on the street. Occasionally, one might see a few, but they were seated in small sedan chairs. It was always like this in Great Xia; except for certain festive days, most women seldom ventured out and rarely revealed themselves.

What slightly relaxed Lin Xuankong's mood were the occasional Taoists in green robes passing by. *To my knowledge, these Taoists belong to the Yin Talisman Sect. The Yin Talisman Sect and the Black Tiger Gang have always been at odds. In Yin Talisman Sect territory, Black Tiger Gang members wouldn't dare kill openly in public! That's precisely why I chose this street to return home.*

He had walked over halfway down Lishui Street and was just two more miles from Wutong Village. Lin Xuankong, who had been walking for over an hour, touched his stomach; his body, growing stronger, also consumed more energy. *Despite eating five or six flat cakes this morning, I'm already hungry, even though it isn't yet noon!*

He walked to a stall selling leek-filled cakes on the roadside. The last time he passed through Lishui Street, Lin Xuankong had steeled himself and bought some leek-filled cakes, deciding to treat himself a little.

But when he returned home, his Young Lady had devoured them in just a few bites. *It turned out she loved leek-filled cakes just as much as I do!*

Recalling how Lii Xiaolan, still wanting more, had licked the leek crumbs off her fingers after finishing the cakes, a smile involuntarily touched Lin Xuankong's lips.

*In an instant, he sighed inwardly; living with me has made it hard for that little foodie!*

"Give me six leek-filled cakes!" Lin Xuankong gritted his teeth, taking out six copper coins from his waist and placing them on the table.

"Got it!" The old man quickly wrapped six leek-filled cakes in oil paper and handed them over.

As Lin Xuankong was about to reach out for them, he suddenly felt dizzy, and the world before him spun.

His heart lurched, and he quickly pressed a hand to the table to steady himself, narrowly avoiding a collapse.

After a few breaths, the feeling of blurred senses gradually subsided.

Lin Xuankong's brow furrowed deeply as he recovered. *This premonition of dwindling Lifespan, these sudden dizzy spells, are becoming more frequent. Previously, they only appeared a few times in the evening, but now one has struck before noon...*

The old man's voice was somewhat anxious, "Friend, are you alright?"

"I'm fine, just a bit hungry!" Lin Xuankong took a deep breath, accepted the leek-filled cakes, and walked towards Wutong Village.

The old man selling cakes watched Lin Xuankong's retreating back and couldn't help but shake his head. *That Lin Family fellow who sells flat cakes... a few days*

*ago, I saw him carrying dozens of pounds of flat cakes, walking with such vigor. How did he nearly collapse today for no apparent reason? I heard he married a young wife. Could it be... Alas, lust is a blade hanging over a man's head!*

CREAK.

Opening the wooden door and entering the wooden building, Lin Xuankong finally breathed a sigh of relief.

He placed the carrying pole by the door and touched the still slightly warm leek-filled cakes in his arms. He was about to call his Young Lady, the little foodie, to come and snack when his gaze fell upon the wooden table in the outer room.

On the wooden table sat a food box and a dozen or so snacks wrapped in kraft paper. Affixed to the kraft paper were slips of red paper bearing three large characters: Ancient River District.

Ancient River District was the most famous snack shop in Great Marsh Prefecture, said to have been open for over two hundred years.

Snacks from Ancient River District started at tens of copper coins per tael; only the nobles in the inner city could afford them. *The spread on the table must have cost at least ten taels of silver!*

*Who would send such expensive snacks? Lin Xuankong was surprised. My previous self certainly didn't have any relatives who could afford snacks from Ancient River District!*

He walked over, glanced at the snacks, then opened the food box.

The scent instantly filled the air. The top layer of the food box held a stewed, tender pork knuckle, obviously crafted by an adept chef! The lower layers also contained finely prepared dishes—delicacies that common folk in Great Marsh Prefecture would rarely taste in their entire lives!

*Snacks and delicacies...* Lin Xuankong's face showed even more surprise.

"No sneaking any bites!" a clear voice rang out from behind him.

Lin Xuankong turned around. Sure enough, it was Lii Xiaolan, standing silently behind him once again.

"Did you buy all this?" Lin Xuankong asked, his gaze sweeping over the food and snacks on the table, then awkwardly touching the oil-paper-wrapped leek-filled cakes in his arms.

"Where would I get the money for such expensive snacks!" Lii Xiaolan shook her head. "The Young Mistress is going out of town for a while and specially came to see me today."

Her slender fingers pinched a piece of pastry, crumbs still clinging to the corners of her mouth.

"All these snacks were bought by the Young Mistress for me!" she continued. "The food box was sent over by a servant from Wang Po at the tailor shop. She said they had ordered too many dishes for guests at her house, so she sent a box over! That Wang Po is a bit odd; she seems to know my tastes quite well!"

*The Young Mistress of the Huang Family had grown up with Lii Xiaolan; such a deep bond between mistress and servant was quite normal, Lin Xuankong thought.*

"Why would Wang Po be so kind?" Lin Xuankong asked curiously.

"She said the handkerchiefs I embroidered sold very well with the ladies of the inner city, and she made a lot of money from them! So, what do you think? Pretty impressive, right?"

Lii Xiaolan took a bite of her pastry, looking rather smug.

Lin Xuankong looked at the delighted expression on his Young Lady's face and couldn't help but laugh. "Impressive! My Young Lady is skilled in both civil and martial arts; of course, you're impressive!"

*But when he thought about the leek-filled cakes he had especially bought for her, his spirits fell a little.*

So he headed towards his room, saying, "I'm a bit tired. I'm going to lie down for a while."

*The delicacies in that food box could probably be traded for thousands of leek-filled cakes!* he thought as he pushed open his wooden door.

"Stop!" Lii Xiaolan's voice suddenly tightened.

Lin Xuankong was startled. Before he could react, Lii Xiaolan had darted to his side. Her delicate little nose twitched as she sniffed at his chest, and then her eyebrows shot up.

"This is the smell of leek-filled cakes! You bought leek-filled cakes and were planning to eat them all by yourself in your room?"

Then, Lin Xuankong felt his chest lighten as Lii Xiaolan snatched the oil-paper package from his arms.

Lii Xiaolan squeezed the oil-paper package, a stern look on her face. "And there are six leek-filled cakes! You were actually going to eat six all by yourself? Hmph, they're all mine now!"

With that, she grabbed the oil-paper package and headed up the stairs. After a few steps, she turned and shook the package in her hand smugly. "Considering you worked hard for half a day and bought these six leek-filled cakes, the dishes in that food box are yours!"

Lin Xuankong was astonished.

*Not a single leek-filled cake left for me?*

He turned to look at the food box on the table, then couldn't help but shake his head slightly and chuckle. *Ah, this Young Lady of his...*

...

*This is the most sumptuous meal I've had since I transmigrated! Normally, it's either flat cakes with pickled vegetables, or sorghum flatbread with greens. Only*

*occasionally can I afford half a pound of boar meat! It's all thanks to my Young Lady's excellent embroidery skills that my stomach got such a treat!*

Having consumed half a pork knuckle, half an order of braised shrimp, along with a few flat cakes, and downed two bowls of soup to wash it all down, Lin Xuankong patted his slightly bulging stomach and returned to his room.

*The food was delicious... but unfortunately, due to old age, I lack quite a few teeth, and the few I have left have large gaps... Even soft and sticky pork knuckle gets stuck in them! Who knows if after cultivating the Pine Crane Longevity Technique to a High Realm, there's a chance to grow a whole new set of good teeth? This Pine Crane Longevity Technique could potentially extend Lifespan. Once I cultivate it to a High Realm, growing a gleaming set of white teeth shouldn't be an issue!*

As he was thinking this, Lin Xuankong suddenly felt a tightness in his chest.

A feeling of suffocation surged up. He quickly leaned back against his bedding, not daring to move recklessly.

After about a dozen breaths, the extreme suffocating sensation finally dissipated, but Lin Xuankong was left with a lingering fear.

*These signs of my Lifespan approaching its end are becoming more frequent. I must hold on! As long as I get through today, I'll have a chance for the Pine Skill to reach Entry Level tomorrow. I'd be consumed by regret if I died at this moment!*

Thinking this, he pulled the quilt over himself. Like a typical old man, he burrowed deep into his bed.

*This afternoon and evening, I'll just lie here and go nowhere. Better to avoid stepping out and accidentally collapsing from a stroke!*

In a drowsy state, he fell asleep.

Later, Lii Xiaolan came by. Seeing him sleeping so soundly, she didn't wake him for dinner.

「At the fourth watch」

"BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!" The night watchman's clapper echoed, followed by his emotionless cry from the nearby street: "The weather is freezing cold! Be sure to keep warm!"

Lying in bed, Lin Xuankong groaned, jolting awake in extreme suffocation.

The feeling of suffocation was like having his mouth and nose sealed with cement, and his vision began to blacken.

He opened his mouth, gasping for air in big gulps, but felt no relief at all.

After dozens of breaths, just as Lin Xuankong felt himself about to faint, the sensation finally eased. By then, he was drenched in cold sweat, his face ashen, and his lips had turned somewhat purple.

After a brief moment of recovery, the shivering Lin Xuankong dared not hesitate. He quickly donned an outer robe, sat cross-legged on the bed, and carefully began to circulate the Heart Method and Breathing Technique of the Pine Crane Longevity Technique.

After completing one circulation of the Pine Crane Longevity Technique's Heart Method, there wasn't much difference from usual.

As he began the second circulation of the Pine Crane Longevity Technique's Heart Method, Lin Xuankong's slightly closed eyes suddenly flickered with a hint of joy.

He sensed the emergence of a third strand of Pine Crane Transcendent Qi Blood within his body.

Although it began somewhat weak, it gradually solidified as the Heart Method circulated.

It merged with the previous two strands of Transcendent Qi Blood, growing quite substantial. Then, imbued with vigorous vitality, it began to circulate swiftly through every piece of flesh and blood in his body, deeply nourishing his hidden injuries and chronic ailments!

He guided the Pine Crane Transcendent Qi Blood to flow throughout his entire body and was surprised to discover that his flesh and blood were constantly changing, vibrating faintly as they pushed towards some kind of ultimate limit...