

LONGEVITY CHRONICLES

Chapter 7 6 Bai Qin Play Fragment

When the Attendant Student with a treacherous look explained the mechanics of the Wenqu Fortune Box, Tao Qian had already anticipated the reactions of the people around him.

With the allure of the Secret Book and the Book Ship owner's promise of a guaranteed price, besides the bookstore owners related to the business, or some Great Scholars with pure hearts and few desires,

most of the others could hardly resist.

Indeed, Tao Qian looked around and immediately spotted pairs of eyes shining with excitement.

"Gambling harms people!"

Tao Qian's inner admonition obviously went unheard.

In the main cabin reserved for guests, a voice rang out, "Take us there," and soon a large group of people, led by a few Attendant Students, hurried towards a certain cabin.

After Tao Qian finished commenting to himself, he chuckled and followed them.

Though he had little money in his pocket, experiencing it was always good.

Before long, the group arrived in a spacious and bright cabin, with a simple partition at the front and three sturdily placed huge bookshelves.

Each bookshelf held a large quantity of lacquered boxes of simple appearance yet exquisite aura, dazzling under the light.

This group of scholars, scholars, sons of great families, and masters of calligraphy and painting had just settled down when a man in a long robe, the storekeeper of an elegant and scholarly demeanor, stepped forward to greet everyone with a bow and then voluntarily introduced aloud:

"Distinguished guests, welcome to experience the Top Scholar's latest book purchasing project."

"Since this is the first time, the owner has specifically instructed not to make a profit from anyone here; the total price of the books in each Fortune Box exceeds the price of the Fortune Box itself."

"Heavenly, Human, and Earth bookshelves correspond to the prices of five silver coins, two silver coins, and one silver coin."

"This sale concludes today, and such an activity won't happen again for at least another half-month."

"As lovers of books, I shall reveal a little secret—not to say it was from me if you know the owner."

"As far as I know, the owner has hidden the Three Book Imitation Game, the Jialan Fragmentary Scripture, and the Ghost Hero Song—each worth hundreds and even more than a thousand silver coins—in the respective Heavenly, Human, and Earth Fortune Boxes."

"Besides, there are treasures like the Zen Collection, Jade Platform Poems, The Hand-copied Version of Dao Te Ching by Venerable Mingcheng, Wei Gong's Interpretation Map First Edition... and others."

"Which Secret Book you get and its value all depend on your luck."

"Hiss"

Blending in the crowd as if invisible, Tao Qian couldn't help but feel a bit envious.

He was now certain that the owner of this Book Ship was definitely a cunning merchant.

First, he introduced the novel blind-box method; now, he dangled prizes as lures, along with an audience that was precisely targeted, needing no filtering at all.

Fishing?

No, this fellow was outright scooping up fish.

Just as Tao Qian thought this, someone in the crowd shouted loudly, "Me, let me do it; I'm always lucky, even picked up a small silver coin this morning."

A scholar, clad in white robes holding a fan with a dandy dress style, stepped forward.

He tapped on the counter, and with a few clinks, eight silver coins were settled; then, with a face of nonchalance typical of a wealthy scholar, he tensed and said, "All three types of Fortune Boxes for me."

The shopkeeper, with a giggle, pocketed the coins and turned to signal two Attendant Students to bring the Human and Earth Fortune Boxes while he personally fetched a Heavenly Fortune Box.

The three Fortune Boxes were lined up in a row.

The shopkeeper gestured with an inviting palm, assuming the 'please-go-ahead' posture.

The scholar instinctively wanted to rub his hands together like a gambler about to reveal his cards, but realizing it was inelegant, he restrained himself and nonchalantly used his folding fan to lightly lift the lid of the Human Fortune Box.

Inside the lacquered box, indeed, ten volumes of books were arranged.

The scholar reached out to take them, quickly flipping through; each person here was a learned scholar, so a glance was enough for them all to see clearly.

"Golden Secret, Shihu Record, Liu Family's Precepts, Demon City Miscellaneous Records... some usual books, indeed worth more than one silver coin,"

someone offered a free appraisal from the crowd.

Seeing nothing surprising, the scholar pursed his lips, didn't bother to arrange them, and directly opened the Earth Fortune Box.

This time, his hands moved even faster; ten books quickly appeared in everyone's sight.

Initially, the expressions of everyone were usual, but soon, the tenth book appeared, and the scholar almost let out an "ow."

People around were all widening their eyes, and their breathing quickened.

Someone exclaimed enviously:

"It's Wei Gong's Interpretation Map First Edition; this book is a relic from Great Scholar Wei Gong from a hundred years ago. Initially, only a few dozen copies were printed, most of which have been lost; now, one copy is worth at least two hundred silver coins."

"This guy surely stepped on something lucky this morning."

At that moment, the scholar was in very high spirits, not minding the slight slander from others.

He cherished the valuable volume, placing it into his arms, then rubbed his hands together full of anticipation and opened the last Heavenly Fortune Box.

This time, everyone stretched their necks to cast concerned glances.

Initially unremarkable until the third-to-last book emerged, eliciting gasps throughout the cabin.

"It's the Jade Platform Poems!"

"Looking at the condition, it's worth at least three hundred silver coins."

"Damn, this guy definitely stepped in more than one pile of luck this morning."

"Shopkeeper, I want to open them too; get me one of each kind—no, make it three of each."

"And me, give me all Heavenly Fortune Boxes, starting from five."

"Human Fortune Boxes, twenty, make it quick."

"Three types, five boxes each."

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The cabin was somewhat out of control.

Tao Qian, this insignificant figure, was almost squeezed out the door.

Seeing this group of scholars, Great Scholars, and book collectors, who had all been polite and refined before, now behaved no differently from elderly men and women scrambling for discounted vegetables at a market.

Tao Qian shook his head and directly criticized, "Gambling, it harms people!"

The so-called Wenqu Fortune Box was essentially no different from a gambling lottery.

Especially Top Scholar, which used many tricks to promote sales.

For instance, the scholar who had first drawn two valuable books, in Tao Qian's eyes, surely couldn't escape the suspicion of being a "shill."

Piercing through all the tricks, Tao Qian should have turned and left at this moment.

Open a blind box?

Did he have too much money?

Just as this thought emerged and before it could settle, abruptly, Tao Qian's form stiffened, his head turned back, and his gaze suddenly locked onto a "ren character" Fortune Box on the highest row, innermost side of the bookshelf.

His reaction stemmed from the familiar throbbing sensation he had just felt.

Tao Qian had experienced the same sensation when he had extracted the "fragmented formula" from the Hero's mind before his beheading.

"Extraordinary Perception?"

Immediately, a certain conjecture surged within Tao Qian's heart.

No sooner had he thought this through, he noticed that the lacquered boxes on the "ren character" bookshelf were visibly disappearing at a noticeable speed.

It probably wouldn't be long before the box that gave him the throbbing sensation was bought by someone else.

Gritting his teeth, Tao Qian made his move.

Hesitate?

If it were a Heavenly Fortune Box worth five silver coins, perhaps he really might have.

A "ren character," only one silver coin, I can afford it... With this thought, Tao Qian exerted his strange strength and squeezed back in from the edge.

He quickly reached the counter and roughly pulled over an Attendant Student, stuffing a silver coin into his hand, then pointed at the target lacquer box and said,

"That one, I only want that one."

Although he had taken the money, the nearly strangled Attendant Student was not too pleased.

As he turned to fetch the Fortune Box for Tao Qian, he muttered silently, "Poor folks are peculiar, what kind of books they get is all about luck, choosing any weird location is useless too."

Tao Qian didn't hear the Attendant Student's complaints; his attention was all on that strange Fortune Box.

Before long, he safely obtained his own lacquer box.

He didn't open it immediately, but rather carried the Fortune Box and squeezed his way out again.

"Verify! First, verify."

"If this throbbing, this perception, is the same as my guess."

"I will have found a place to belong in this familiar yet strange, dark yet prosperous bizarre world, and even more possibilities."

"Golden Finger or cheat device, come at me more intensely, either one."

Muttering to himself, Tao Qian went to a corner, rubbing his hands together, much like a obsessed gambler.

Luckily, at this moment inside the cabin, there were quite a few people acting like him, so he was hardly noticeable at all.

With a click, Tao Qian opened the Fortune Box.

There was no need to look at the titles or flip through the contents.

Following that "unexplained perception," Tao Qian directly locked onto the third book among the ten.

Without taking it out, he just lifted the first two books, casting his gaze upon it.

It was an extremely thin book, its cover bluish-black and old, full of wrinkles but not dirty.

The title was written in a bent and twisted script, resembling tadpoles—an ancient seal. Fortunately, having some knowledge in this area, he recognized it without issue.

"Ten Bird Imitation Games?"

A very peculiar book title, recognized by Tao Qian.

Startled for a moment, Tao Qian flipped open the first page.

What met his eyes was a kind of illustrated booklet, depicting some faceless little figures, awkwardly twisting their bodies, imitating some animals.

He knew of such things in his previous life, akin to exercise booklets like Five-Animal Play.

It seemed to have nothing to do with cultivation secret books.

While Tao Qian was thinking this, as his fingertips touched the booklet,

suddenly, his entire person momentarily blanked out, and the already distorted book title seemed to flow, as if an illusion, changing into a new name.

Bai Qin Play!

Without waiting for Tao Qian to reflect, a deluge of information exploded in his mind.

Initially chaotic, but it immediately formed the peculiar format that he had seen before:

[Name: Bai Qin Play (Fragment).]

[Record Type: Alien.]

[Record: Eighty years ago, a human Cultivator who called himself "Bai Qin Elder" devised a method of cultivation, named it "Bai Qin Play", where practicing this method gradually allows shedding the human form, obtaining

the Power of Bai Qin, with deeper practice transforming into the form of Bai Qin. It allows traversing the sky above and diving into Huangquan below. This method harbors violence, induced the chaos of Bai Qin, affecting tens of thousands, which led to decimation of Tuo County area, leaving nine out of ten households empty. Thus, most of the books were destroyed after being written, with only one or two counterfeited as other books, still circulating in the world.]

[Note 1: This fragmented book accounts for about one-tenth of the full text, but the cost of cultivation has not changed. Once started, initial stages will strip away the human form, then human heart and nature, until completely filled by the beastly nature, thereafter transforming into a devilish creature, roaming the skies and Earth freely.]

[Note 2: To practice this technique, blood of the birds mentioned in the book must be collected to conduct the method before entry can be gained.]

[Note 3: The cost can be exempted!]

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As all the streams of information were assimilated, Tao Qian was once again stunned.

