

LONGEVITY CHRONICLES

Chapter 8 7: The First Law of the Cultivation World

Images with strange formats filled his mind, containing such a vast amount of information that Tao Qian was also stunned momentarily before he could digest it.

His fingers first loosened, letting the book return to its place, then he closed the lid of the fortune box.

His face showed an expression of utter disappointment from gaining nothing, while his mind began to sort through his thoughts.

From this exploration, more of his doubts were resolved.

Firstly, he truly possessed something akin to a Golden Finger cheat.

Specifically, it manifested as an intense perception of transcendent and deceitful objects within a certain range, allowing him to completely understand or control these objects, even managing to organize related formatted information in his mind to facilitate Tao Qian's understanding.

Besides, there was something unusual deep within his soul, seemingly able to negate some costs brought by the cultivation methods.

However, this realization also brought forth more questions:

Are there costs associated with all cultivation methods in this world?

And could he be exempt from all of them?

His thoughts flashed to this point, and Tao Qian looked at the fortune box in his hands again.

Although inherently unlucky, he had indeed obtained a cultivation secret book, bought for one silver coin.

However, this book known as the "Bai Qin Play Fragment," given the information provided, clearly wasn't any legitimate cultivation technique.

Lurking ferocity... Chaos of Bai Qin... causing disasters to tens of thousands... houses empty and desolate... These terms sounded terrifying.

Holding the fortune box, Tao Qian was apprehensive but also reluctant to let go.

Not to mention the unknown fragmented formula useful only when being beheaded, the secret book in his arms was his only method of cultivation now.

To miss out would truly be a pity.

"When I was killed, I recited the unknown fragmented formula and obtained the 'Undying Characteristic.' The expected cost was a decaying body and a dazed soul, turning into a deceitful object named 'Soul Corpse.'"

"But I was exempt, so I gained the Undying Characteristic but suffered no side effects."

"If cultivating the 'Bai Qin Play Fragment' also resulted in the same effect, wouldn't I be able to freeload those ten powers of Bai Qin?"

With this last thought, Tao Qian's heart couldn't help pounding.

Excitement flickered in his eyes.

But Tao Qian was not a reckless person and quickly calmed down.

He stayed in the cabin with the fortune box a while longer. Assured that no more palpitations came, Tao Qian turned and left.

Following that, Tao Qian, with great enthusiasm, nearly traversed every cabin of the "Top Scholar" that stored books.

He was enjoying himself, but it was hard on the attendants who accompanied him. They were delayed quite a bit, and worse, he looked but never bought, which was extremely stingy.

Eventually, the attendants on the Top Scholar all knew that there was a poor scholar on board carrying a Wenqu Fortune Box around the ship, clearly with some issues.

About thirty minutes later, Tao Qian walked to the deck with a look of regret, followed by an expressionless attendant.

As part of the service industry, with the management standards of the Top Scholar, his face should have been always wearing a radiant smile that made people feel at home.

He indeed started very professionally, until after accompanying Tao Qian several times.

Tao Qian walked ahead, already eyeing other book ships docked at the pier, saying,

"The reputation of the Top Scholar is well-deserved, truly a sea of books. It's just too regrettable today, I couldn't find a book that caught my eye."

Upon hearing this, the attendant behind him couldn't help but roll his eyes.

With a twitching smile, he said,

"Understanding your discerning tastes is fine, but please also visit the Dexing Book Boat, Book Forest, Qingfeng, and Cedar; perhaps you'll find a book you like on these ships."

As his words fell, the attendant didn't wait for Tao Qian's reaction and turned back to welcome other guests instead.

Being dismissively countered in such a way, Tao Qian was neither annoyed nor did he complain but merely laughed it off carelessly.

Hugging the fortune box tightly in his arms, he weighed his purse.

Only just over eight silver coins left now, he thought. He had to spend wisely; in terms of priorities, the cultivation secret books came first, followed by magazine girls, vulgar banned books, and then martial arts novels... Tao Qian

stepped off the Top Scholar, stomping over to the other book ships, while calculating his expenses in his mind.

Unfortunately, after nearly another half hour, Tao Qian quickly browsed the remaining book ships.

The harvest?

None.

Not even a cultivation secret book like the "Bai Qin Play Fragment."

Standing on the dock, Tao Qian wore a distressed expression.

Even the beautiful scenes on the nearby flower boat called "Huanxi" couldn't spark his interest.

Lately, although these book ships visit every day, they only stay for an hour or two, and now the time was almost up.

Tao Qian, relying on his extraordinary radar, had lost his enthusiasm for treasure hunting.

He had resigned himself to his bad luck and turned to walk toward a Book Ship named "Cedar."

He had compared prices, and most of the Book Ships at the dock sold authentic books, but the "Cedar" offered the best deals.

Unable to find a second Cultivation Secret Manual, Tao Qian decided to purchase some magazine girl booklets and sets of vulgar banned books.

"These ought to sell well; I'll make some money first, then recuperate," he muttered, planning to explore the spiritual nourishment for men of this era.

At that moment, he suddenly smelled a unique musty odor of books.

Then, almost immediately, that familiar "throbbing sensation" reappeared.

With a whoosh, Tao Qian swiftly turned around, looking toward the water.

There, not far on the river, a fishing boat that had undergone some modifications was approaching. Two boatmen were rowing together, and a weary scholar stood at the bow, the boat laden with a large number of books tied with hemp ropes to prevent them from falling into the river.

That boat was docking with the "Cedar."

After a hurried exchange with an experienced Attendant Student, the scholar went straight into the cabin to rest.

The Attendant Student directed the boatmen to move the books onto the deck but stopped them from taking the books into the cabin. Instead, he instructed a teenage apprentice beside him,

"These books have just been collected. Not only do they have a strong musty smell, but they might also have book-eating insects like Silverfish."

"Let's lay them out neatly on the deck and leave them to sun for a few hours before storing them."

"If any new customers are interested in some of the books from this pile, let them choose. Sell the thick volumes for fifty copper coins, medium ones for thirty, thin ones for twenty, and if it's just scribbles, ten copper coins will do."

"It's just a collection from a poor old scholar who isn't even a scholar, with no secrets and no value; sold clean by his son after his death for one silver coin."

"Spent his life in vain studying to exhaustion, all for just a yuan."

After finishing, the seasoned Attendant Student turned and also headed into the cabin.

As he turned around, he caught a glimpse of Tao Qian boarding the ship out of the corner of his eye, but he pretended not to see and hurried away, disappearing in a flash.

Obviously, he was resolved that if Tao Qian followed, he would have to deal with other students.

Unfortunately, he was wrong. As soon as Tao Qian got on board, he headed straight for the musty pile of books.

He first greeted the two working boatmen with a bow, then turned to the apprentice, politely saying,

"I heard what was said just now. I happen to be interested in these new books. May I pick some?"

"Please, honored guest!"

Seeing the potential for a sale, the apprentice immediately brightened up and agreed.

Tao Qian had actually identified his target instantly, but out of caution, he still pretended to rummage through the pile of books.

Quickly, he casually picked up a roughly printed, dirt-covered, and even hole-pocked medium-sized volume.

The book's title?

Strangely, there was none.

Tao Qian managed his expression and flipped open the first page.

In that instant, his mind exploded with that bizarre flow of information.

A familiar strange format began to unravel slowly:

[Record Name: Nameless Secret Manual.]

[Record Type: Alien.]

[Record: In the ninth year of Tianming, Seeking Immortal Hermit Wu Ming died on his cold bed at home, aged ninety-three. A man of lofty and unrestrained nature, stubborn and reticent. Despite his lifelong dedication and study, repeatedly failing examinations, he turned to Cultivation at sixty and

styled himself as Seeking Immortal Hermit... This book, written in his later years when his mind was unclear, contains confused and unintelligible content, except for the last page, which contains the "Immortal Fish Technique" that can connect to the Heavenly Dao.]

[Note One: This book, tainted by "Wu Ming's" spirit, possesses characteristics that can drive one insane. If one practices the Immortal Fish Technique written therein, each cultivation will assimilate the mind and soul with the Heavenly Dao until the body stiffens in death while the spirit and soul merge with the Heavenly Dao like an Immortal Fish.]

[Note Two: One of the costs of practicing the Immortal Fish Technique is the chance of sudden death each time the soul transforms into a fish and swims through chaos.]

[Note Three: Practice ten times and you're exempt from nine, but one is beyond control.]

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"Tsk,"

Tao Qian didn't make a sound, yet he inwardly gasped in shock.

Though he had made a new discovery, the information revealed did not bring him joy.

Starting with that unknown fragmented formula that had granted him the Undying Characteristic, to the Bai Qin Play Secret Manual, and now this Nameless Secret Manual.

Three items clearly from the Extraordinary Cultivation World in succession, all sharing one commonality, was hard to describe as mere coincidence anymore.

Tao Qian felt he had vaguely grasped the first law, or perhaps iron law, of the Cultivation World:

Every practice, every supernatural affair, comes with a cost!