

LONGEVITY CHRONICLES

Chapter 9 8 The Terrifying Old Man

Tao Qian hastily reached a conclusion, but he wasn't entirely certain.

After all, up to this point, although he had touched on matters related to the transcendent in secret, he had yet to communicate with a true cultivator.

Despite knowing from the hero and scholar's memories that there were definitely intermediaries of cultivation in this world,

if he were to search ostentatiously, he would likely find results quickly.

But that method, he feared, was a way to court death.

The experiences of many predecessors who had transmigrated told Tao Qian that surviving by keeping a low profile was the true path to supremacy.

"The 'Nameless Secret Manual' involves corpses and decay, akin to the practices of heresy and heterodoxy with some normal accompanying costs, much like the logic of the 'Bai Qin Play.'"

"But this 'Immortal Fish Technique,' based on the description, seems like a Daoist Immortal technique and surprisingly entails even more fearsome cultivation costs..."

In Tao Qian's mind, thoughts roiled.

Though uncertain, Tao Qian felt that the law he had deduced was probably real.

He harbored countless doubts he wished to resolve and was eager to seriously examine the two secret books he had acquired, but this clearly wasn't the appropriate place.

Tao Qian gathered his thoughts, his expression normal, and picked a few more copybooks from the pile of books, showing them to the attendant student.

He then handed over dozens of copper coins.

The attendant collected them joyously. Tao Qian thought it best not to hassle anyone else and pulled out a list of books from the Cedar, purchasing several sets of picture stories and books he had long desired.

Although it was still a transaction of only a few silver coins, for the attendant student, Tao Qian counted as a big customer.

Before long, the student struggled out of the cabin carrying a heavy package.

He traded the books for the eight silver coins that Tao Qian reluctantly handed over.

His purse had been quite full on arrival, but now, as he left, it jingled with just a few silver coins.

Carrying a package filled with books, Tao Qian disembarked from the Cedar and followed his original path back to his Chengyou Bookstore.

Just before leaving, he happened to see several girls with skin as white as snow chatting leisurely by a window on the Huanxi, creating an inviting atmosphere.

A slightly bolder girl wearing a red bellyband also noticed Tao Qian from afar.

Perhaps because she saw he had just disembarked from a book ship, or perhaps because she found his appearance to her liking, she lightly lifted her arm in a gesture that clearly beckoned Tao Qian over.

Tao Qian gestured the scissors hand signal in disappointment and then walked forward, reaffirming to himself,

"I can't board the flower boat for two reasons."

"The first is poverty, and the second is that it would disgrace scholarly honor."

With a light jest, Tao Qian quickened his pace, trying to reach the bookshop as quickly as possible.

Although he had nearly spent all his fortune, his purpose for this trip could be said to have been perfectly accomplished.

The books he had bought weren't worth such joy.

What truly excited Tao Qian were the 'Bai Qin Play Fragment' and 'Nameless Secret Manual,' the two cultivation secret manuals.

Both required tremendous costs.

But Tao Qian knew he was different, fully capable of exempting most, if not all, of the costs, truly a case of profiting without sacrifice.

After all, who in the world could refuse something for nothing?

It was only because Tao Qian was relatively composed, or else he would have already started sprinting.

Perhaps it was because he did not rush ahead that he didn't miss another familiar surge of excitement.

Just then, Tao Qian first heard a commotion near the dock ahead and then felt that familiar sensation.

The crowded mass of people seemed to be forcibly split apart by someone.

Tao Qian saw the surrounding passersby each looking terrified, and he instinctively moved to the sides of the road while retreating, simultaneously advising others in a low voice,

"Get out of the way, Cao Gang's people are here."

"Something bad must have happened, the Squad Leader of the Cao Gang's Seeking Immortal Faction came in person, and he looks very angry."

"Don't speak recklessly, retreat and lower your heads."

As a poor bookstore owner, Tao Qian heeded these sounds and naturally followed the crowd.

He lowered his head a little and retreated behind the crowd.

He blended into the crowd quite seamlessly.

Before long, he saw the main group.

A crowd of a hundred or so men clad in snug outfits, displaying bulky muscles, were violently clearing a path.

Seven or eight individuals were encircled in their midst, each evoking a primal terror in Tao Qian.

But what truly shocked Tao Qian, nearly causing him to lose his composure,

was the old man leading this group.

Called an old man, but aside from graying hair and facial wrinkles, nothing else about him seemed "old."

He stood at least 1.9 meters tall, dressed in a silk robe with gold trim, his body extremely robust. His somewhat clouded but extraordinarily sharp eyes made anyone he looked at feel the sensation of a blade to their body.

This elder, in this era, at this dock.

Walking among the crowd, the scene was indistinguishable from a savage beast striding amongst a flock of sheep.

Yet, none of these were why Tao Qian was horrified.

What he couldn't believe was his perception:

The source of that throbbing sensation was not some book—it was clearly this old man.

"It's settled, my Extraordinary Perception never specified it was limited to cultivation secret manuals."

"Myself, was I not classified into the 'Abnormality' category due to that peculiar format?"

"According to that description, 'Abnormality' refers to a sentient being that has acquired some kind of transcendent attribute."

"So, what category does this old man belong to?"

"Do I need to touch his body to make my perception more concrete? To discover more secrets?"

At this moment, Tao Qian's mind was unstoppable.

Various questions and thoughts rapidly emerged.

If someone nearby were to observe carefully, they would detect this impoverished bookstore owner in a state of both excitement and nervousness.

Excited?

Of course.

Like a giant beast advancing step by step, the identity of the elderly man was "Cao Gang Seeking Immortal Faction Squad Leader."

Indeed, aside from himself, Tao Qian sensed that this was the second human related to transcendent cultivation.

Had it not been for his concern for his own life, Tao Qian would have very much liked to rush up to the elderly man to frisk him, to see if he could sense any detailed information.

Unfortunately, he could not.

The reaction of the people around him made it clear that this elderly man was no easy figure.

Tao Qian and the others, just like him, were all in a state of confusion about the current situation.

They did not know what exactly had happened at the dock or what these "Evil People" had come to do.

However, this confusion did not last long.

The next second, a drastic change occurred.

Boom!

Without any warning, a loud noise erupted in the largest warehouse in the main area of the dock.

Accompanying this massive explosion were thick smoke, flames, and debris scattering in all directions.

In an instant, the dock descended into chaos.

The crowd scattered like frightened rats, running in every direction with screams, shouts, cries for help, and roars mixing together—those with slightly poor hearing could have gone deaf on the spot.

But soon, all the noise was suppressed by a deep roar, as fierce as a dragon or tiger.

Unsurprisingly, the sound came from that elderly man.

He seemed entirely unconcerned by the chaos at the dock, only chuckling coldly as he looked in the direction of the now-ruined warehouse.

"Come out, you've already generated killing intent and can't hide your aura; I smelled it from a street away," the elderly man said.

As soon as his words fell.

The sound of clothes whistling through the air could be heard from different parts of the dock, as approximately a hundred figures wearing various robes, all with red bands tied around their foreheads, appeared.

Each one, to Tao Qian's senses, seemed stronger than those of the Cao Gang.

Even, there was a very subtle "palpitation."

Especially the young man who led them, who the elderly man targeted and who slowly walked out from the center of the smoke and debris.

He was at least 1.9 meters tall and dressed in clothing similar to a Daoist robe.

His features were extremely handsome, with a scar that stretched from below his left eye to under his right, practically spanning his entire face.

Though his body didn't seem as exaggerated as the elderly man's, it was still lean and robust, surpassing anyone else in the vicinity.

In Tao Qian's previous life, such a man could have entered the entertainment industry and been dubbed a male god.

And the "palpitation" he gave Tao Qian was only slightly weaker than that of the elderly man.

"This elderly man and young Daoist must be Cultivators, while that group following the Daoist, being involved with the transcendent and the abnormal, still fundamentally belong to the mundane," Tao Qian concluded.

From excitement, he became a bit numb.

"Reborn through transmigration for two days, straining to find the existence of transcendent, abnormal, and cultivation elements, I did not expect to stumble upon them so quickly."

"Although I had some expectations after seeing the memories of Heroes and scholars, this is indeed too fast."

"However, there are still many confusions, what exactly is the situation within the Cultivation World?"

"Whichever side it is, I really want to touch them to see what other categories of abnormalities there are?"

While swiftly contemplating, Tao Qian also did not forget to retreat quickly.

The experience from many movies and TV series in his previous life told him a massive battle was about to begin, and the highest risk of death in such a battle wasn't the participants but the onlookers.

As Tao Qian retreated swiftly, it seemed both parties were saying something.

However, Tao Qian retreated too far to hear clearly.

He didn't need to hear everything clearly and didn't need to guess; it was likely just some sort of revenge plot unfolding.

Just as Tao Qian felt he had retreated far enough and discreetly turned back to look toward the main area of the dock.

A battle beyond anyone's imagination erupted without warning.

The Cao Gang Squad Leader, that elderly man.

He unexpectedly waved his hand, signaling his men to retreat.

Even more odd was that those burly men, before the elderly man even gave the order, were already ready to bolt, and upon receiving the command, they ran even more frantically backwards.

Everyone felt it strange initially until the next second:

"Roar!"

When the roar, akin to that from an ancient beast, resounded across the dock.

Hundreds?

Thousands?

Yes, at least a thousand people felt excruciating pain in their ears, blood spurting out.

Those worse off, naturally, were the group of killers closest to the elderly man.

Except for the leading young Daoist, the rest seemed to have fallen into a "rigid" state.

And finally, the elderly man moved.

Something terrifying seemed to awaken inside him, and in Tao Qian's eyes, he momentarily lost the aura a human should have.

He sneered, took a big step forward, and like a wild beast, leaped in front of a killer.

With a hand as big as a leaf fan clenched into a fist, it struck like a hammer.

With a loud "bang," the killer's head, perfectly intact, burst like a watermelon under a heavy blow.

And the next moment, something happened that made everyone, including Tao Qian, cover the backs of their heads, unable to control their expressions.

After smashing the killer's head, the elderly man stretched out his hand, grabbed the mutilated corpse, and pulled it towards him.

He then opened his mouth wide and fiercely moved it towards the neck, gushing blood.

Then, with "gulp, gulp" noises, he began to guzzle down the blood.