

STARLIT PATH OF THE MYSTIC FORGE

Chapter 1: The Charm of That Foot

The faint curl of sandalwood incense drifted upward, filling the room with a soothing fragrance. Sunlight streamed through an intricately carved, vermilion wooden window, scattering like crushed gold across an aged wooden desk. On the desk, the scholar's four treasures—brush, ink, paper, and inkstone—were neatly arranged. An open sheet of rice paper lay beside an inkstone still wet with fresh ink, while brushes of varying thickness hung from a rack, their tips glistening. A collection of jade seals, each engraved with the character for “prosperity,” lined the desk, exuding an air of refined scholarly elegance.

Behind a silk-curtained, carved wooden bed, a figure stirred with effort, struggling to roll over. After much flailing, they propped themselves up on trembling arms. Lu, turning to peer through the silk drapes, gasped at the sight of the room's antique charm. *Where the hell am I?*

As a recent college graduate and overworked programmer, Lu's life had been a blur of late-night coding sessions, often stretching to three or four in the morning. His world revolved around screens, not this highbrow setup of scholarly tools. He vaguely recalled a sharp pain in his chest while racing to

meet a client's deadline, then... nothing. Now, he awoke in this unfamiliar room.

Lu tried to swing his legs off the bed, but his lower body refused to respond. A clumsy attempt to move sent him tumbling to the floor with a loud crash. "Young Master!" The vermilion door swung open, and several maidservants rushed in. With practiced ease, they lifted the dazed Lu back onto the bed. The sound of wooden wheels creaked as one maid retrieved an ornate wheelchair from the corner, while two others gently hoisted Lu into it.

"Young Master... your legs... if you need anything, please just tell us," one of the maids said softly.

Lu's mind reeled. *Who am I? Where am I? And... why can't I feel my legs?!* The realization hit him like a freight train: he had transmigrated. And not just anywhere—into the body of a paraplegic. *Talk about a unique way to start a new life!*

Fragments of this body's memories began to surface. "Lu, courtesy name Ping'an, only son of the Lord of Beiluo City in the Great Zhou Dynasty. Afflicted with a leg condition, unable to walk." As he chewed over this bitter backstory, Lu stole glances at the three maidservants attending him. Due to his condition, his father had assigned these three to care for his daily needs and safety.

The maids were striking in their own ways. The eldest, in her mid-twenties, had a graceful figure and a captivating, mature allure. The youngest, barely eleven, radiated innocence. The third, a seventeen-year-old with a sly, fox-like face, wore a long whip coiled at her waist. *A mature beauty, a sweet kid, and a fierce queen...* This transmigration perk could only be described in three words: *Absolutely thrilling!*

Lost in his thoughts, Lu froze, staring at the maids with a goofy grin. Their figures blurred, and in their place, a translucent panel materialized before his eyes.

Host: Lu

Title: Qi Refiner (Permanent)

Qi Refinement Level: 0

Soul Strength: 1

****Physical Strength: 0.5****

****Spiritual Energy: 10 Wisps (Undeveloped)****

****Modification Rewards: None****

****World Rating: Wuhuang Continent [Low-Martial]****

****Permissions: Locked****

Lu's eyes widened. *A system interface? The legendary golden finger!* This was the *real* transmigration perk. "Low-Martial?" he muttered. The Wuhuang Continent was a low-martial world, a term he recognized from novels and shows in his past life. It implied a world with limited power systems, likely with martial artists or cultivators. Above low-martial, there were mid-martial, high-martial, and perhaps even more fantastical realms. But what did "Qi Refiner (Permanent)" mean? Was he stuck refining qi forever? And what were "Modification Rewards"? How could he improve his soul and physical strength?

The panel offered no explanations, leaving Lu to puzzle over its cryptic details. “Young Master?” A trembling voice snapped him back to reality. Only the youngest maid remained, her wide eyes brimming with panic. “Ni Yu, what’s wrong?” Lu asked, recalling her name from his new memories.

“Young Master… you’ve been staring blankly for half an hour, not responding at all!” Ni Yu’s tension eased slightly as Lu spoke. *Half an hour?* Lu was stunned. He’d been so engrossed in the system panel that time had slipped away. “Where are the others?” he asked.

“They thought something was wrong with you and went to inform the Lord,” Ni Yu replied softly. Lu’s heart skipped a beat. The lord—his new father, Lu Changkong, the esteemed Lord of Beiluo City. Though Lu had merged with this body’s soul, he wasn’t ready to face such a figure. But avoidance wasn’t an option. “Ni Yu, take me to… Father,” he said, hesitating on the word.

Ni Yu nodded quickly, draping a thin blanket over Lu’s legs before pushing the wheelchair out of the room. The Lu Manor was vast, its architecture grand yet elegant, with traditional Chinese gardens that soothed the soul. Lu, perhaps influenced by his new memories, felt oddly at ease with being attended to, though he still marveled at the manor’s beauty.

His attention returned to the system panel, specifically the “World Rating” section. A new message appeared: *“Wuhuang Continent, a low-martial world

devoid of spiritual energy. The host may transform it into a mid-martial, high-martial, or even a grand fantastical world, earning corresponding modification rewards based on progress.”*

Lu’s heart raced. *Transform a low-martial world into a fantastical one?* In his past life, he’d devoured countless fantasy novels filled with cultivators who could shatter mountains, part rivers, or slice through stars. But creating such a world from scratch, in a place without spiritual energy, felt like an impossible task. *It’s not like I can just open a document and code a new world into existence.*

The key, he realized, was spiritual energy. Without it, this world’s power ceiling was capped. To transform it, he’d need a spiritual energy resurgence. His panel showed 10 wisps of undeveloped spiritual energy. *Ten wisps? That’s barely a drop in the bucket.*

A new prompt appeared: *“Detected undeveloped spiritual energy. Proceed with development?”* Lu’s pulse quickened. “Yes!” he confirmed. Spiritual energy was the key. Even a small amount was better than nothing—*a mosquito’s worth of meat is still meat.*

A faint hum resonated through his body. His lifeless legs began to tremble faintly, the flesh rippling like waves. In his mind’s eye, his legs turned translucent, revealing a network of blocked meridians. As the blockages

dissolved, faint blue streams of energy flowed into his lower abdomen, settling in his dantian. *This is spiritual energy!*

Lu took a deep breath. His legs, crippled by these blockages in a world without spiritual energy, had been useless. But now, that same energy was his foundation for transforming this world. Another prompt appeared: *“Congratulations, Host. Spiritual energy development successful. [Permissions] unlocked. Good luck.”*

The “Undeveloped” tag vanished from the panel. His legs, once weighed down by an invisible burden, felt free. Behind him, Ni Yu struggled to push the wheelchair, her small face flushed with effort. Unlike the other maids, who were trained martial artists capable of splitting bricks, she was just a beginner, barely able to hold a horse stance.

“Ni Yu, stop,” Lu called out, his voice tinged with excitement. She paused, looking up with her delicate, doll-like face. Lu, grinning, tossed aside the blanket, removed his boots and socks, and raised his legs. Under the sunlight, his toes wiggled rhythmically, a sight that left Ni Yu gaping in astonishment.

The charm of that foot, swaying in the breeze, marked the beginning of something extraordinary.