

Domination 1171

Chapter 1171: Replenishing Life For The Peacock Tree

These slightly green branches continued to stretch even further while inside the tree, as if they were going through the Peacock Tree's trunk all the way underground to reach every root.

"This is..." Kong Qinru was slightly stunned by this. Although a treefather would die and turn into these trees, no one could violate or shake them. Even an Immortal Emperor would have trouble doing so.

But now, Li Qiye could control these branches to drill into the treefather's body before going underground. Any spectator would be dumbfounded by this scene.

Li Qiye closed his eyes. He wanted to use the Myriad Age Tree to check the Peacock Tree. As a treefather, the Peacock Tree was an untouchable existence. However, the Myriad Age Tree was different. It was something nearly comparable to the Longevity Grass.

Moreover, Li Qiye had no malicious intentions. He was only checking the Peacock Tree in order to make a comprehensive diagnosis.

After a good while, he opened his eyes and told Kong Qinru: "Let's go."

With that, he reached out with his finger. With a buzz, a door was opened. Before she could calm down, he dragged her to a different location.

They reappeared at the bottom of the sea in front of an underwater cliff. This was the bottom of Peacock Land.

She was shocked once again; Li Qiye could freely travel through space while locking onto a coordinate with incredible precision — this was the most frightening and heaven-defying method of travel she had seen yet.

At this second, she didn't know how powerful Li Qiye was for his techniques had exceeded her comprehension.

"Hum—" Li Qiye placed his palm on the cliff, allowing dao lines to emerge to form abstruse runes. Even a genius like Kong Qinru couldn't understand them in the slightest.

The emerging runes eventually intertwined to form a portal. Li Qiye once again pulled the dazed girl into a different realm.

She turned a bit silly while standing in this realm. The space inside was vast as if it was an entirely different world. One wouldn't be able to see the end of this space.

Gigantic dragons were dancing in the sky in all kinds of shapes and forms. Some were lying there, others were descending while more were coiling about... However, upon a closer inspection, it turned out that these beings were not dragons but gigantic roots. These were the Peacock Tree's roots.

However, it was much more majestic than how it was described because they were simply too large. A few of them shouldered hills of accumulated mud while other roots even had waterfalls running down from them.

When one looked up high, many bright flashing stars could be seen in the sky.

“These are the Peacock Tree’s roots?” She was quite shaken to see this.

The treefather had turned into a tree after death, but this world was completely inaccessible to outsiders. It was because these roots were the foundation of the treefather. If they were damaged, the land created by the tree would be damaged as well.

“Don’t be fooled by its magicalness.” Li Qiye lightly said: “This place is at its end and extremely close to exhaustion. Otherwise, it would be even more magnificent.”

This reminder made her look twice. At this time, she noticed that these thick and huge roots were quite close to death while some had withered already. If all of them did, then the tree itself would die.

Li Qiye walked around these roots and observed every one of them. If necessary, he would cut off a lot of these roots. She followed right behind him as he was making the assessment. She wasn’t an alchemist and didn’t understand the treefather’s situation after returning to the earth. The only thing she could do was follow him and assist if asked.

After a careful observation, he finally stood before the main root that was as large as a great mountain.

At this time, he opened his fate palace to release the Ancestor Ginseng, the Immortal Injury Peony, the twelve transformations Dragon Silkworm Soulgrass...

After seeing something like a true dragon soaring and howling in the sky, Kong Qinru stammered: “Twelve... twelve... transformations soulgrass...”

The dragon soulgrass had been cultivating nonstop. More importantly, it had absorbed many good items, such as the roots of the phoenix ginseng as well as the Pinnacle Lifewater!

She was shocked to see all of these immortal grasses. No, they were existences even above immortal grasses. The Exquisite Valley didn’t have any of them. In fact, in the entire Heaven Spirit World, very few lineages could have immortal level medicines, let alone things like these.

“These things, these things...” She couldn’t form a coherent thought at this moment.

She finally understood what Li Qiye meant earlier about how she couldn’t provide the things he truly wanted. There was no need to think any further, she had to admit that few would be able to provide what he truly wanted in this world.

He had this many existences even above the immortal level, what other things could actually tempt him?

Something like a twelve transformations soulgrass was unheard of, let alone seeing one in person.

“Alright, listen up.” Li Qiye clapped while looking at the happy grasses: “Here is a mission for everyone. Go into the main root and inject some essence and vitality into it.”

“Incredible, this is the main root of a treefather.” Even the Ancestor Ginseng commented emotionally while looking at the enormous main root. It took a good look and continued: “This treefather is dying for sure. It won’t be easy to save it without spending a massive amount of essence.”

Li Qiye commanded: “Don’t worry, you won’t do it for nothing. Now try your best.”

“We were waiting to hear those words.” The ginseng cheered after hearing this. All of them quickly plunged into the main root.

Even for them, replenishing the treefather’s life was very difficult due to the great price. However, Li Qiye had more Pinnacle Lifewater — this was a great tonic for them.

“Can they do it?” Kong Qinru asked.

Li Qiye smiled and shook his head: “Life replenishment for a treefather isn’t so simple. This is only the beginning. We are recovering some of its vitality before carrying out the more drastic measures.”

He glanced over the other thick roots and said: “Wait until it is a bit stronger. We will have to sever a lot of these roots or else it will die.”

“Can it be done?” She was quite worried. Cutting these roots would be a great loss for the tree, so of course it would be met with resistance. Even though the Peacock Tree was on the verge of death, it was still an existence that could easily kill Godkings even in this state.

“It will agree.” Li Qiye said: “If we don’t chop off a large number of roots, they will consume more vitality and essence since all of them require these resources for replenishment. Although it won’t be easy for it in the beginning after losing these roots, it will be much easier after this hurdle, and I’ll save a huge amount of resources as well.”

She asked: “How much time will this process take?”

“It will take some time. You need to be ready for when I ask for help from your valley about certain things.” He answered apathetically.

For Li Qiye, this was not a challenging matter. After all, he had even revived the Myriad Age Tree before, let alone a simple life replenishment.

However, there were two different methods for this process. If Li Qiye wanted to finish things quickly, he would use the Pinnacle Lifewater. That would save him a lot of time and alchemy ingredients.

However, this water was too precious to him. He would only use an extremely minuscule amount to act as the leading ingredient for the Peacock Tree. The true life replenishment would come from the other medicines using a different method.

The truth was that Li Qiye wouldn’t be the only one to think this way. Even if Immortal Emperors had some Pinnacle Lifewater, they wouldn’t necessarily use it to replenish someone else’s life. It was too precious, much more precious than any immortal medicine!

Thus, in order to minimize the amount of Pinnacle Lifewater spent, he would have to utilize a slower method.

Chapter 1172: Teng Jiwen

Eventually, Li Qiye looked at the bunch of grasses connecting to the main root of the Peacock Tree before telling Kong Qinru: “Come, we have a lot of things to do.”

With that, he turned and left. After returning to the resting point of the Exquisite Valley, he wrote down a long list and handed it to her: "Go gather these things for me, as fast as possible."

She carefully scanned the list. It contained many things such as pills and alchemy ingredients among other strange items. Some were quite common while others were even poisonous...

She put the list away and cupped her fists to say: "Young Noble Li, don't worry, I will personally go back to the Exquisite Valley. While I'm not here, just tell the other disciples if you ever need anything. They will take care of it for you."

Li Qiye needed too many things that were quite precious, so she had to personally take a trip back.

After she left, Li Qiye carried out his own business. He truly had too many things to do, such as working hard to sever the roots of the Peacock Tree. Moreover, he had to once more climb to the peak to prepare a grand stage for the entire land.

This was indeed a great price to pay for life replenishment. Alchemy materials alone weren't enough, so Kong Qinru couldn't afford to pay this price. This tree used to be a treefather. The difficulty of this life replenishment was not much different from revitalizing an Immortal Emperor.

Even with minimizing the use of Pinnacle Lifewater, the other method was quite expensive. It required a lot of life force, so Li Qiye had to prepare this stage for the final moment.

While he did all of this, the valley maintained a steady stream of materials to him.

Kong Qinru was very determined in this process. She spent painstaking efforts to gather the massive amount of materials and expensive treasures.

Even as the master, she couldn't decide it all by herself due to the sheer amount that was involved. In order to do so, she worked hard to convince the other ancestors of the valley and gained their support.

Due to the constant supply of materials, Li Qiye's plan was moving along quite smoothly.

On this day, Li Qiye was at the top of the Peacock Peak and was using the Myriad Heavenly Cauldron to unclog the blocked runic lines of the Peacock Tree. He controlled the cauldron with one hand and its fire with the other. This flame poured into the tree like a type of liquid.

Because of its age, many of its runic channels were blocked. By doing this, it would buy a lot more time for the tree.

However, in order to replenish its life, Li Qiye must get through all the blocked channels. Otherwise, its blood energy and essences would be quite limited, so the entire process would be meaningless.

As he was clearing through these impassable channels, someone came to worship the Peacock Tree once more. It was the descendant of the Heavenvine Citadel that Li Qiye had met before, Teng Jiwen.

The same three old men were following behind him. The moment Teng Jiwen reached the top, he saw Li Qiye burning the tree and immediately shouted in shock: "Stop, what are you trying to do?!"

He was a treant, so as one of its disciples, he was full of admiration for an existence like the Peacock Tree. So now, after seeing someone actually burning the treefather, he was astounded and wanted to stop the perpetrator.

When he rushed over to see Li Qiye's cauldron pouring an endless amount of fire into the tree trunk, he was completely stunned. The elders following him were stunned as well.

Their Heavenvine Citadel was also a lineage with a treefather, so they understood these great existences very well. Naturally, this scene was certainly astonishing.

Teng Jiwen asked in disbelief: "What, what are you doing?" Earlier when he told Li Qiye to stop, it was just an instinctive reaction.

Coming from the Heavenvine Citadel, he naturally knew that ordinary people couldn't harm this ancestral tree that used to be a treefather.

Li Qiye revealed a mysterious smile and spoke in a profound manner: "Life replenishment for the Peacock Tree!"

"Life Replenishment?!" Teng Jiwen and the three old men stared at each other. If this was a joke, then it certainly wasn't a funny one. However, all four of them were speechless at this moment.

If others were to say this, they would be amused by the joke. However, the scene unraveling before them was too far removed from a joke.

Li Qiye didn't look like he was joking. More importantly, he could actually invade the Peacock Tree. This was simply inconceivable.

When a treefather turned into an ancestral tree, it wouldn't keep its original sentience, it would become just like other trees. However, there was one aspect that was different; these ancestral trees were extremely powerful. Even Immortal Emperors wouldn't be able to invade them easily.

It didn't matter if the Peacock Tree had given permission or Li Qiye used a special technique, this was still a heaven-defying matter and definitely not a joke.

The four of them then watched Li Qiye add more gushing fire into the body of the tree.

After a long while, Li Qiye withdrew the flames and the cauldron. This was enough time to ameliorate these blocked runic pathways.

Before leaving, he glanced at Teng Jiwen and smiled: "Life replenishment isn't such an easy matter."

He drifted away coolly after leaving behind those words. Meanwhile, the four of them were still astounded, unable to say anything.

A long time after Li Qiye left, the group finally calmed down. Teng Jiwen looked at the old man next to him and asked: "Third Uncle, do you think this is possible?"

The old man pondered for a moment before replying: "I really haven't heard of life replenishment for an ancestral tree before. These are unfathomable existences, this task is probably as difficult as trying to prolong an Immortal Emperor's life."

A different old man added: "Although it's pure speculation, there is only one possibility. He is an Alchemy Emperor! Only an Alchemy Emperor would be able to replenish the life of an ancestral tree."

At this time, Teng Jiwen touched the spot Li Qiye was pouring fire into, but there were no signs of charring. It looked as if the Peacock Tree had opened a hole for Li Qiye to pour in the fire.

"Life replenishment for an ancestral tree..." He muttered to himself in a daze. Eventually, he composed himself and told the old man: "Third Uncle, go back and tell the elders that I won't be coming back for now."

This old man was surprised to hear this and retorted: "You can't, all of the elders are coming out now for your assessment! If you miss this chance, you will be handing the citadel lord's position to someone else."

Teng Jiwen was only one of the descendants from the citadel. He had another strong competitor that was not lesser than him in either background or ability. Because of this, the position for the main successor had yet to be decided.

Teng Jiwen was touring the world and offered his respects to the different ancestral trees in order to learn the dao. Through this, he wanted to enhance his strength to pass the assessment of the ancestors.

But now, he actually said that he wasn't going back. This made the people near him jump in shock.

A different old man worriedly spoke to persuade him: "That's right, this assessment is of utmost importance. If you miss it, I'm afraid your chances of becoming the citadel lord will become slim."

Teng Jiwen took a deep breath and earnestly said: "I know the gravity of the situation, but I will still remain here. Everyone, don't worry, I understand the implications very well."

The three old men glanced at each other. They couldn't do anything if Teng Jiwen had made up his mind.

Kong Qinru returned from the Exquisite Valley. All of the supplies Li Qiye specified had been brought in full.

With enough materials, Li Qiye began to perform the finishing touches for the stage he was building at Peacock Land. He had been through all the locations here, including the oceans nearby, and nailed down formation arrays. The center was done as well.

After finishing the final preparations, he could breathe easy. He looked down at his work from the mountain before casually entering a tavern in a nearby town.

He leisurely ordered some dishes and sat by a window. After being served, he slowly poured wine into his cup as if he was waiting for someone.

Chapter 1173: Deal With Teng Jiwen

While leisurely drinking his wine at the tavern, someone finally came. It was Teng Jiwen, followed by the three old men.

Li Qiye gave a faint smile after seeing him and said: "You all have been following me for a long time now, so this can't be a coincidence."

Teng Jiwen didn't hide anything after hearing this. He came forward and bowed: "This little brother's name is Teng Jiwen of the Heavenvine Citadel. Sir, I admire you, so I have decided to stay here to watch you. Please excuse us."

He was quite polite and candid. As someone from a treefather's lineage, he was not arrogant at all. This was quite rare.

Li Qiye glanced at him and said: "If I cared about it, you wouldn't be standing here and talking to me right now." Having said that, he tapped on the table with his finger.

Teng Jiwen bowed again with cupped fists before sitting down. He looked at Li Qiye but was quite hesitant for he was searching for the right words.

Li Qiye chuckled: "Speak, my time is very precious so I can't sit here all day to entertain you."

Teng Jiwen took a deep breath and spoke: "Sir, you have a supreme dao of alchemy. Your techniques are wonderful, to be able to see your method of revival—"

"No need to flatter me." Li Qiye waved his sleeve with a smile: "I know my alchemy dao is supreme and matchless. I am the best alchemist in the nine heavens and ten earths."

Teng Jiwen was suddenly dumbfounded. If Li Qiye praised himself like that, there was no need for him to say anything else.

He lamented this situation deep inside. Other people would start acting quite humble, but this person actually boasted even more!

Teng Jiwen went straight to the point after making up his mind: "Sir, can you really replenish the life of an ancestral tree?"

Li Qiye gave a mysterious smile: "I can also cure your ancestral vine. After the calamity, its situation should be quite bad."

"You..." Teng Jiwen's expression shifted as he stood up and took several steps back. The chair behind him was knocked down in the process.

The three old men had similar expressions. They stared at Li Qiye intensely, making the situation tense. This was because only the upper echelons of the citadel knew about this matter. Teng Jiwen was a descendant-level disciple, so he knew as well. Ordinary disciples didn't know about it.

Li Qiye sat there nonchalantly while sipping more wine: "Don't have any stupid thoughts such as killing me to keep it a secret or I'll bury you under the Peacock Tree as fertilizer."

In just a moment, the elders glanced at each other. They didn't know what kind of power this man before them had, but they didn't dare to act carelessly.

Teng Jiwen took a deep breath and gently waved his hand towards the three elders. They then converged their auras and slowly retreated to the side.

He went back to the table and cupped his fists: "Sir, you are quite well-informed. May I ask how you found out about this?"

Li Qiye lazily replied: "Why dwell on this dull topic? Not too many things in this world can hide from me. You stayed behind to see my dao of alchemy, so this is naturally what you were aiming for."

Teng Jiwen responded: "Sir, the truth is that this little brother is very interested in your dao of alchemy. After all, very few people in history are capable of such a feat."

Li Qiye waved his hand dismissively: "There's no need to waste time with pleasantries. You just want to ask me to save your ancestral tree."

"Sir, you are correct." He knew he couldn't hide it any longer and decisively stated: "I do have this thought simply because your dao of alchemy is matchless."

"Requesting my service is not difficult, but you need to be mentally prepared. My asking price is very high." With that, Li Qiye turned around and left.

However, he left one last message as he was walking away: "You better decide soon. My time is precious; if you miss this opportunity, it will be your lifelong regret."

Teng Jiwen mulled over the situation in the silence left in Li Qiye's wake.

One of the old men said: "Asking an outsider with an unclear background to cure our treefather is too dangerous. I'm afraid the ancestors will not agree."

A different one nodded as he echoed this sentiment: "We don't know anything about this person. It is still too early to know if his dao of alchemy is actually matchless or not. If he can do it, then the decision will be easy. If he can't, it will be a big disadvantage to you. Your opponent will use this against you and, with one misstep, you will never be able to redeem yourself. At that time, not to mention competing for the position of the citadel lord, you might not even have a place to stay in the city."

"I know that full well." Teng Jiwen wryly smiled: "But if he is truly a master, isn't this a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity? In the present times, how many people in the Heaven Spirit World actually have the ability to cure a treefather?"

He paused with a sigh: "I know, the wise decision is to recognize the complexity that lies within and focus on winning the position of the citadel lord first. However, if we truly miss this chance, then it would be a huge regret for our whole city."

"That might be true, but such a great event should be decided by the elders." The old man called Third Uncle said: "Just focus on becoming the lord for now. If you are truly determined, it won't be too late after you take the position."

"But the issue is, will this opportunity wait for us?" He replied: "If he is truly able to replenish the Peacock Tree, then it shows just how heaven-defying his alchemy is. He would become famous the moment he successfully carries out this task. At that time, people all over the world – including many imperial lineages and treefather heritages – will come begging him to prolong their ancestors' life and trees!"

“And once the nine worlds are reconnected, there would be an even larger world in front of him; even more would kneel before him to ask for life replenishment.” Teng Jiwen said: “At that point, he will be the ultimate alchemist, would he bother looking at us then? It’s just as he had put it, this will become our lifelong regret.”

The man called Third Uncle responded: “But these are only his words. He might not have this ability. Otherwise, he would be famous already.”

“Some things in this world can’t be judged with common sense. The world is too vast with many great and eccentric people.” Teng Jiwen said with a tinge of helplessness: “In my opinion, he isn’t a man of empty words. Without absolute confidence, no one would say such things. It is unwise to deceive and offend our Heavenvine Citadel unless he is powerful enough.”

After hearing this, the three old men glanced at each other. One of them said: “Even if you believe so, the other ancestors might not necessarily agree with you.”

Teng Jiwen took a deep breath and replied: “Rest assured, I will certainly be able to convince them. I’m confident in this.”

The three old men had nothing else to say after seeing that Teng Jiwen had made up his mind. In fact, his foresight was one of the reasons why he was a top candidate to become the citadel lord.

Li Qiye went back to the Exquisite Valley’s abode for several days and, sure enough, Teng Jiwen came to find him.

Kong Qinru asked: “Young Noble, were you waiting for him to come?” She knew that Li Qiye was no joke. If he didn’t wish for it, Teng Jiwen wouldn’t be here right now.

“Yes, I have been waiting for him to come since I do need to go to the Heavenvine Citadel.” Li Qiye chuckled.

“The Heavenvine Citadel?” She was surprised and asked: “What about the Peacock Tree then?”

Li Qiye shook his head in response: “Can’t rush this matter. We have done what we need to do for now. Give it time to digest. When the time is right, I will carry out the last step.”

He looked at her and continued: “This is mainly because in order to have a successful replenishment, we still need some more special items.”

She said with haste: “What else is needed? The Exquisite Valley will get them for you.”

Li Qiye shook his head: “They aren’t things you lot can obtain. I have to do it in person.”

She realized something and asked: “Does the Heavenvine Citadel have them?”

“Yes, a very important item, the key to replenishing the Peacock Tree.” He replied with a smile.

She said: “I think the citadel won’t give it up so willingly.” How could a treefather’s lineage give away their treasure to an outsider, and a human at that?

“I have always gotten what I wanted.” Li Qiye smirked.

Such domineering words left her slack-jawed. She eventually said: “Young Noble, you want to rob them?”

Chapter 1174: Ongoing Plan

“Rob?” Li Qiye chortled and said: “Whether by force or as a gift, it is entirely up to them. This is their own good fortune; if they miss the chance, I can only say that they will feel very regretful later on.”

Kong Qinru lamented the upcoming event. Forcing a treefather’s lineage into giving him something... Outside of Immortal Emperors, no one would dare to carry out this domineering task.

“The ancestral vine from the citadel is still there.” She had to remind him: “Rumor has it that it is still very young and powerful, plenty capable of fighting an Immortal Emperor.”

After treefathers turn into ancestral trees, these existences wouldn’t care for mundane matters and weren’t much different from ordinary plants.

However, when an enemy invades their lineage or when a calamity approaches, these non-sentient beings would still fight to kill the enemies and protect their descendants.

The young trees were especially powerful, no less than their peak from when they were still alive. Thus, not even Immortal Emperors could defeat them with certainty.

“I know.” Li Qiye chuckled: “It’s no big deal if that tree is still there. If I wasn’t certain, I wouldn’t be going to the citadel in the first place.”

She heaved a sigh of relief after hearing this. Even though she knew that Li Qiye was not a bulliable nice guy, she still didn’t know the true source of his power. After all, he would be facing a treefather’s lineage, an invincible ancestral tree. Not too many would come out unscathed from a battle against such foes.

Neither Godkings nor Emperor Candidates would do so without being at the Emperor Assailant level.

“Is there no other way? Maybe we can try negotiating with them. My Exquisite Valley still has some influence, perhaps we can exchange some treasures with them.” No matter from which angle she looked at it, she didn’t want him to quarrel with the citadel.

In her mind, even if he couldn’t replenish the Peacock Tree’s life, he still had an imperial bloodline. She hoped that he would be able to pass down and multiply this legacy.

“Your valley has a lot of treasures, but even if you take out the best ones hidden in your sect for exchange, they still won’t agree.” Li Qiye smiled and shook his head.

Kong Qinru was startled and blurted: “Don’t, don’t tell me that you want that item from the citadel...”

“Yes, precisely.” He nodded before she could finish speaking: “It won’t be easy for the Peacock Tree to survive for another eight to ten generations, so that item will be very useful.”

She was dumbfounded right away. Initially, she thought that he wanted something else from the citadel, not their mythical item. While looking quite silly, she had to spill her mind: “Well, well, it will be impossible. The citadel will definitely not give it to you.”

“Don’t worry, they will.” He smiled and shook his head after noticing her expression: “Don’t think of me as an unreasonable brute. Sometimes, I am very reasonable. I might need someone else’s stuff, but I will give them something of equivalent value. Look, I’m giving them a huge chance right now, it is up to them to take it.”

“It’s still impossible, they will want nothing in exchange for it.” She shook her head: “It is too precious to them.”

“That’s a pity because if that’s the case, the Heavenvine Citadel will collapse into ashes.” He faintly smiled.

“What...” She was stunned once more. No one would believe the upcoming destruction of the Heavenvine Citadel. Their ancestral vine was in its prime and would live for a long time across the generations.

Furthermore, with its protection, who would dare to attack the citadel?

“Don’t let your imagination run wild. It won’t be destroyed right away and I won’t be the one to do it.” Li Qiye gently shook his head: “I can only say that if they give up this godsent opportunity, they will cease to exist in one or two generations.”

She didn’t know what to say, this matter was beyond her comprehension and imagination.

He glanced over and said: “Outside of some other things, there is one more matter that you need to do. Go spread a message that the Peacock Tree is about to die. Remember, do not leave any traces.”

“That the Peacock Tree is dying?” She tried to confirm: “Do you want to spread this message right now?”

“No, wait until the time is right. I will let you know when.” He insipidly stated: “But you must be ready before then. I want this news to spread very quickly across the entire Heaven Spirit World.”

“I understand, the valley will do our best.” She nodded.

“One more thing.” He ordered: “Make plans to temporarily evacuate everyone from the Peacock Land. I will let you know when the time is right.”

“Evacuate?” Despite being a bit startled, she still agreed: “Leave this to our valley as well.”

Li Qiye asked: “And how are you doing on my issue?”

She quickly replied: “I have just received a new message. The person you are looking for has been seen before. She was seen at the Jade Sea, to be exact, at—”

“Cavalry Town.” Li Qiye gently sighed and finished her sentence. Who understood the Su Clan’s secret channel better than him? He naturally knew where she landed after coming to the Heaven Spirit World.

“Yes, her first appearance was at Cavalry Town. She traveled through several places since then, it seems like she was asking about an ancient tribe.” She elaborated: “But later on, she crossed the sea to the Dragon Demon Sea. It gets more complicated there and we haven’t received anything back. It might require more time.”

Li Qiye nodded and said: "Keep on searching and update me when possible. Let Teng Jiwen in, it is about time for me to leave as well."

Kong Qinru acknowledged and followed his instructions. Of course, she couldn't see Teng Jiwen herself. She took Li Qiye from Golden Isle, so if others were to find out that she was the mastermind behind this, it would bring a lot of trouble to the Exquisite Valley.

A moment later, Teng Jiwen marched inside and bowed the moment he saw Li Qiye: "Sir, this little brother will be bothering you again."

Li Qiye glanced at him and eventually smiled: "You are not bad at all."

Teng Jiwen was surprised to hear this. He didn't know why Li Qiye would suddenly make this statement. Nevertheless, he still bowed and said: "Thank you for the kind words, Sir. This little brother, no, this student came this time to ask you to come visit my Heavenvine Citadel." [1. It is important to note that he has been calling Li Qiye "sir" nonstop. This "sir" can also be what students use to call their teachers. He moved himself one position lower on the hierarchy by addressing himself as student instead of little brother. This sentence is awkward but is necessary to show the change of tone, the speaker's change of belief in the duo's relative status.]

Li Qiye cheerfully and said: "It seems like your ancestral vine's problem is not trivial."

The youth coughed and replied: "There is indeed a problem with our ancestral vine, so I'm inviting you to personally come and perform your skillful healing art, Sir."

Li Qiye nonchalantly responded: "If I can't cure your ancestral vine, no one else in the world can. However, you, or rather, your citadel should be ready. My price will be sky high, don't blame me for not bringing this up at that point."

Teng Jiwen felt that he and the citadel were fishes on a platter; Li Qiye was free to do whatever he wanted to them.

He took a deep breath and solemnly said: "Sir, rest assured that everything is negotiable as long as you can cure our ancestral vine."

Li Qiye looked at the boy and smirked because the boy didn't know what he wanted at all. Li Qiye then spoke: "It is good that you all have such determination. Let us go then, my time is very precious."

Teng Jiwen didn't waste words and immediately led the way.

The Heavenvine Citadel was a great lineage in the Jade Sea. It was built on top of the Heavenvine Ancestor, also known as the Heavenvine Treefather.

Of course, it was not comparable to Golden Isle. The isle had two ancestral trees and was much older than the citadel with inconceivable resources.

Nevertheless, the citadel was still a great lineage even when placed among the rest of the Heaven Spirit World since it still had a treefather. Not to mention ordinary cultivators, even Godkings wouldn't dare to have any ideas against a place protected by an ancestral tree.

However, little did the citadel know that Li Qiye was preying on them. Moreover, the item he wanted was their lifeblood.

Teng Jiwen and Li Qiye traveled through a portal to directly reach the Heavenvine Citadel.

While standing here, anyone could feel a majestic aura full of life wafting in the air. On the platform, Li Qiye glanced at the lofty sky and boundless sea.

Chapter 1175: Heavenvine Citadel

It was more apt to describe the Heavenvine Citadel as a world suspended in the sky rather than a city.

If one were sailing on the grand sea and looking forward, this would seem like a gigantic monster, an unimaginably large tree growing on the water.

In fact, this was not a tree but a gigantic vine of an unreal magnitude since it reached even the sky canopy. One could see islands scattered about right below this great vine.

Outside of little islets that were actually made from soil, there were also islands made out of the intertwining of vines.

When squatting down for a different perspective, people could actually see more astonishing islands. They were being held up by the roots and even the leaves of the vine tree. Such islands were mountains taken from under the sea and placed on top of the vine tree.

While standing below the vine and looking up, the entire sky would be blotted out by its branches and leaves. In fact, in this sea region, countless vine roots were criss crossing each other. Some surfaced on the sea and looked like mountain ranges.

At the same time, the sheer size of the vine tree gave the feeling that the sky above was an entirely separate world. Its parts intertwined to form a new world. Palaces were built on them and even smaller cities could be found. The old ancestors worked hard to bring many mountains up the vine tree to form landmasses and cities.

In the deepest recesses of the vine tree were numerous peaks brought together into a huge continent. It was refined into a forbidden location. This was the heavenly grotto meant for the ancestors.

Such a magical scene appeared before everyone, causing them to be overwhelmed with awe. An entire world was held up by this vine tree.

“Prosperity and downfall both brought about by the heavenly vine.” Li Qiye commented as he gazed at the scenery.

Such words shook Teng Jiwen’s mind as an ominous feeling arose. He wasn’t clear of what this omen meant.

“Sir, this way, please.” He calmed down and quickly told Li Qiye: “Our disciples have prepared your quarters. Please rest well, it has been a long and hard journey.” [1. This last part is just a literary formality. They took a portal here. Usually, the host would say it to the guest who traveled far distances, especially when they’re here to carry out a favor.]

Li Qiye faintly smiled without saying anything and left the dao platform.

After preparing Li Qiye's quarters, Teng Jiwen went to report to his seniors before talking to the upper echelons.

The citadel treated Li Qiye with the greatest amount of respect for a guest. Such treatment was no less than if he was a sect master from an imperial lineage.

After Teng Jiwen left, Li Qiye opened his palace and released the Myriad Era Tree. It drilled into the ground like a spirit serpent.

The ancestral vine was everything in this place. Its roots were the foundation of the citadel. Nothing was more important or even comparable to the vine. Thus, many generations of wise sages here worked quite hard on it. Despite the large territory, every single branch and leaf had formation seals on them. Anyone who wanted to conspire against the ancestral vine would be found out right away.

Outside of being vigilant against outsiders, they prevented the disciples of their own sect from causing trouble as well. However, the truth was that even without these preparations from the wise sages, invading the ancestral vine was next to impossible since it was powerful beyond imagination.

Even if a truly heaven-defying person could infiltrate a leaf or a branch, they wouldn't be able to infiltrate the main root of the tree, let alone the truly important zones.

Of course, this was no problem for Li Qiye. Outside of the Longevity Grass, there was nothing more precious than the Myriad Era Tree.

More importantly, it didn't drill into the ancestral vine with malicious intent. It carried a vigorous life force. This was the power of eternal life, something one could only come across with great fortune.

Without a doubt, the ancestral vine did not refuse and even welcomed this quiet intruder.

Li Qiye used the Myriad Era Tree to diagnose the ancestral vine. He eventually shook his head and murmured: "Even more serious than I imagined."

Eventually, he recalled the Myriad Era Tree and smiled before leaving his room to stand on the edge of the sky.

The pavilion he was staying at was built on top of a medium-sized mountain. It was clearly transported from somewhere else to the top of this particular leaf.

While looking at the strange world ahead, he chuckled and said with emotions: "No matter which generation, there are no rootless duckweeds in this world." [2. I'm not familiar with this expression. The only idiom I know of duckweeds is duckweeds coming together by chance or strangers coming together by chance. I'm not sure what this one means, but I would guess from the narrative that the root signifies home.]

He stood there and gazed at the horizon while contemplating many things. It was difficult to find someone who understood the Heaven Spirit World more than him.

Just like he told Kong Qinru before, he didn't agree with humans staying in this world; they were simply rootless duckweeds here. [3. There we go, now the expression makes sense.]

In the future, they would one day come to find that this was not their world and that they were simply traveling passersby or even less significant than that. In his eyes, they were orphans without any shelter or support.

This was a world for the charming spirits, the world of the treants, and the world of the sea demons, leaving nothing behind for the humans.

Of course, everyone had the choice and right to stay or leave. For millions of years, Li Qiye had been too lazy to care about it. After all, people didn't know about certain things. Only when that day arrives would they realize it.

Of course, that would be when they have to make a choice.

He stood there for an unknown period of time. Teng Jiwen came back and stood next to Li Qiye without daring to disturb him. After a long time, he softly spoke: "Sir, my master is here."

Li Qiye came back from his reflection and casually smiled: "Have you ever thought about where the Heavenvine Citadel will go if the ancestral vine does collapse one day?"

Such words were too much for Teng Jiwen. The jolt made him take a step back. He had never thought about such a terrible thing before. It would be disrespectful towards his ancestors.

He wryly smiled and spoke right away: "Sir, that is a very unlucky statement."

Li Qiye raised his brows and flatly said: "I am only stating the truth, there is nothing unlucky about it. Even if an ancestral tree could be revived, it will eventually wither once more! Nothing is eternal in this world, and your ancestral vine is no exception. At the Heaven Spirit World, many ancestral trees have already fallen with their lineages following them soon afterward."

Teng Jiwen couldn't come up with a retort right away for his mind was quite confused. These ancestors would scold him if they were to hear such words. Even though he was unwilling to think about it, Li Qiye was right about this fact. That day would come. However, it was very far away to him. He would definitely not live to see it.

Li Qiye turned and walked inside at this time. Teng Jiwen regained his composure and quickly followed behind him.

There was already an old man waiting in the room. He was a little bit different. Although his body was made from flesh and blood, his right arm still carried the characteristics of a treant for it seemed to be carved out of wood.

"Profound Treehand." Li Qiye took a glimpse at the man's right hand and smiled: "To have such a level of atavism, you must be the Heavenvine Citadel Lord."

The old man was surprised to see Li Qiye blurt out his background so quickly. Anyone could see that his right hand was atavistic. However, few could see through its mysteries.

And yet, an outsider was able to discern it with a single glance. His surprise was well warranted.

Teng Jiwen was scared by Li Qiye as well. He eventually made introductions after calming down: "Sir, this is my master and also the current lord of our citadel."

Despite being the citadel lord, the old man was very respectful and polite towards Li Qiye. He bowed and said: "You must be the supreme alchemist that my disciple has been harping about..."

Chapter 1176: Heavenvine Citadel Lord

Li Qiye glanced at both of them and smiled: "It is indeed not easy to be in a great lineage. Citadel Lord, you have just won a great opportunity for the city."

The two were slightly confused at Li Qiye's words. They didn't know that their attitude and posture had just garnered great benefits for their city. It could be said that countless lives were saved because of them.

"I heard my disciple say that you are the current shining beacon who is willing to use your great skill to rid our city of worries." Though the citadel lord was a bit puzzled at this moment, he didn't lose his respectful attitude and bowed once more.

Regardless of the time and place, powerful alchemists all enjoyed great statuses. This was doubly true for alchemists who were capable of life replenishment. A single word could command experts all over the world.

Li Qiye flatly stated: "I wouldn't be standing here if I didn't want to cure your ancestral vine of its calamity."

The citadel lord's mind was moved after hearing this. If Li Qiye could actually do so, this would be the greatest of news for both the citadel and him.

He took a deep breath and replied: "My disciple has told me that you are also replenishing the life of the Peacock Tree..."

Li Qiye waved his hand to interrupt him: "Citadel Lord, I know what you are thinking. You want to know if I will be successful or not."

He looked at the lord and insipidly continued: "I can tell you that it is not yet done. Life replenishment can't be completed in a day or two, so there is no need to hide it. However, since I have come here, I am confident about curing your ancestral vine. It is time for you to cast aside your doubts so that you can answer one question, will your citadel be able to pay this price?"

"I can guarantee that I will be able to fully cure your tree, but my asking price is exorbitant." Li Qiye uttered clearly: "This depends on if you are willing to pay or not!"

The citadel lord stood up to bow once more: "I was being presumptuous. Sir, if you have such capabilities, then nothing could be better. Just name the price, our citadel will not disappoint you—"

Li Qiye interrupted him once more while shaking his head: "Citadel Lord, do not be so quick to accept, give it a moment. Should you still decline when the time comes, don't blame me for not giving you an easy way out."

The lord's heart trembled a bit, but he was already prepared. He solemnly replied: "Sir, just tell us what you want."

In fact, before meeting Li Qiye, the citadel lord had already arranged for everything. When Teng Jiwen reported this to the ancestors, they had discussed this matter in detail. If someone could actually cure the ancestral vine, the citadel would do its best to accommodate that person.

The truth was that the upper echelons were prepared for this as well. After all, they had assessed the potential cost earlier. An item desired by a supreme alchemist would, of course, be invaluable.

Naturally, they were also quite confident. After several generations of accumulating wealth, they could take out any treasure or great medicine. Regardless of what this alchemist wanted, they would still be able to afford the price.

“Well, in a sense, what I want is not that difficult for your Heavenvine Citadel to provide.” He leisurely smiled and said: “I’m not asking for much. To cure your ancestral vine, only your Heavenvine Calabash will be enough.”

“The Heavenvine Calabash!” Even Teng Jiwen blurted after hearing the request.

The citadel lord became silly. He stared at Li Qiye and stammered: “Sir... you, you really want the Heavenvine Calabash?”

Li Qiye flatly confirmed: “That’s right, as long as you can give me the calabash, I will fully cure your ancestral vine.”

Very quickly, both the citadel lord and Teng Jiwen became slack-jawed. The calabash was too important to the citadel. In their minds, even if they had imperial weapons, the calabash was still worth much more.

“Sir, I’m, I’m afraid this isn’t possible.” The lord calmed down and shook his head. Such a request was out of the question for both him and the citadel as a whole.

“It seems like, in your mind, the ancestral vine isn’t worth as much as a single Heavenvine Calabash.” Li Qiye laughed and said: “This is truly disappointing. It looks like your treefather’s lineage only has a bunch of short-sighted old geezers.”

The citadel lord proceeded with some helplessness: “Sir, you must know that the calabash is unique. Our ancestral vine produced just one. We’ll lose too much without the calabash...”

Li Qiye waved his hand and interrupted him dismissively: “I know the usage of the calabash. To keep it simple, those old geezers rely on it to prolong their lives, the undying ones buried underground that is. All in all, they are not willing to die and want to live longer by using the calabash.”

The lord was put in a difficult situation. He coughed and said: “Sir, it is good that you know the usage of the calabash. The truth is that your demand is too much. Could you consider asking for something else? If you want, we have two nine transformations soulgrasses, or we can give some divine weapons, ancient scrolls from the human race, or even immortal dewdrops from a heavenly tree...”

Li Qiye stopped him short once more: “Citadel Lord, I don’t care for such things, only the Heavenvine Calabash will suffice.”

Li Qiye’s firm attitude halted the conversation. The citadel lord had no response because too many ancestors required the calabash for their own lifespan. The citadel simply couldn’t hand it over.

“Sir, can you reconsider...” The lord was quite helpless as he tried to persuade Li Qiye.

Li Qiye looked at him and smiled: “In your mind, is this calabash really more precious than the ancestral vine?”

“Of course not.” The lord denied right away with an awkward chuckle.

“I know very well that all of you want to maintain an optimistic outlook. In your minds, the ancestral vine’s issue can wait a bit. If it can’t be dealt with right now, then you’ll wait until the next generation. In short, your tree is still young and can live for a long time...”

“... But have you ever thought of the day your ancestral vine actually falls?!” Li Qiye coldly looked at the lord: “Once your treefather falls, what will be left of the Heavenvine Citadel? Your numerous mountains and countless palaces are all built on the vine tree. The day of your ancestral vine’s destruction will be the day your citadel falls into ruin...”

“... How many of your islands are actually supported by the earth and sea? Only around ten or twenty percent at best. Compared to Golden Isle, your citadel is only a pavilion in the air. They have thousands and thousands of islands that are supported by the earth and rooted in the oceans to gain great stability! What about you lot?” He snorted at this point. [1. Reminder, “pavilion in the air” is an idiom meaning unrealistic utopia/imaginary future plan.]

“Well, well...” The citadel lord had to admit: “We are indeed not as great as Golden Isle.”

Li Qiye went on with his criticism: “Your citadel wants to believe in luck. Because your ancestral vine is still in its prime, you think that as long as you leave behind enough ancestors and train a new treefather out of them... With this plan in mind, there will be no need to do more since your pillar is still there, and there is ample time. All of your resources are being poured elsewhere.” He said with a laugh: “Even if this generation cannot deal with it, the next might be able to, or the one after that.”

Even though the citadel lord knew that Li Qiye was ridiculing them, he was not in a position to fight back and could only smile wryly: “Our citadel has been looking for an alchemist to cure our ancestral vine.”

“Yes, you all are still searching because death is not in the corners of your eyes just yet. Thus, you are not in a rush at all.” Li Qiye grinned.

The citadel lord had nothing to say. Li Qiye was correct in his analysis of their current plan and beliefs. They were taking their time to find a suitable alchemist to treat their ancestral vine’s calamity.

Chapter 1177: Ancestral Vine’s Calamity

Li Qiye sneered at the citadel lord: “Really, if your ancestral vine ever lives again one day, it would crush all of you into meat paste out of anger. It would be incredibly disappointed at how greedy its descendants are. Back then, in order to bear another calabash, you all tried to seize the essence of the Heaven’s Will, but none of you expected the punishment from the heavens that left behind an eternal calamity on your ancestral vine.”

“How, how, did you know?!” The citadel lord was feeling quite ashamed, but he became shocked after hearing this.

This was a great secret. Outside of the citadel lords across the generations, even very few ancestors knew about it.

Teng Jiwen was stunned as well since he didn't know about this matter. As one of the descendants, he only knew that the ancestral vine was in trouble and needed an invincible alchemist. He didn't know that this illness was caused by their ancestors in the first place.

"This is no secret at all. Even if your citadel has been quite deliberate in your attempt to conceal it, you still can't hide from me." Li Qiye smiled: "Back when Immortal Emperor Bu Si collapsed and the Heaven's Will returned to the void, your group of ancestors became greedy and wanted to seize its essence to produce another calabash so that they could live on via life replenishment. Alas, it was a complete disaster and the heavens answered with a punishment. If your ancestral vine wasn't extremely powerful back then due to being young, your Heavenvine Citadel would have been rendered to ashes right then and there!" [1. Bu Si = Undying Immortal Emperor or Everlasting Immortal Emperor.]

The citadel lord fell into silence after hearing this. Teng Jiwen was frightened as well. He didn't expect that their citadel carried such a secret. He looked over at the lord and asked: "Master, is this true?"

After a good while, the lord smiled wryly and said: "Since Sir already knows about it, then there is no need to hide it from you. Yes, it is true."

Teng Jiwen was stunned. He didn't expect that the ancestral vine's calamity was brought about by their own ancestors. His prior understanding was that it was just a natural punishment from the heavens.

"It was a very long time ago and only a few ancestors personally experienced it." The citadel lord had to tell the story: "You are qualified to become the next citadel lord, so there is no need to hide it from you. Back then, Immortal Emperor Bu Si fell into ruin and the Heaven's Will returned to the origin. The Sacred Ancestor's group had an extremely bold idea to obtain another calabash, but it only ended with the wrath from above."

Teng Jiwen was quite shaken after hearing this, it simply contained too much shocking information.

"With the collapse of an Immortal Emperor, many priceless items appeared, inciting the greed of the salivating crowd." Li Qiye chuckled. Even he was moved by this event.

Immortal Emperor Bu Si was praised as an undying who possessed true eternal life. However, his death was real. Moreover, he was the only emperor among all of them with a known ending.

The legend said that he was unkillable throughout his entire life. He was put down time and time again; these were real deaths, not a type of suspended animation. However, he always climbed out of the dirt and succeeded in reviving himself regardless of how he was killed.

After so many deaths, he eventually became an Immortal Emperor. However, no one could have imagined that he would eventually collapse and die! Such a thing was too unbelievable. It became a stirring mystery.

For millions of years, everyone wanted to figure it out. Why was Immortal Emperor Bu Si unkillable? Why did he collapse? Alas, an answer was not found.

The only thing people knew for certain was that this was the only emperor whose fate was known to all.

The boy stood there, frozen. There was too much within this matter that he didn't previously know.

"I don't want to talk to you about the individual aspects of this matter since there is simply too much." Li Qiye gazed at the citadel lord and said: "Instead, I come with a message: your ancestral vine doesn't have much time left."

The lord was shaken and immediately stood up again: "Sir, are you certain?!"

Li Qiye replied: "You can also think of it as mere alarmist talk, an attempt to scare you and not worry about it. However, I can only say that I have told the truth and laid out the opportunity. Whether you wish to seize it or not is now up to your citadel."

The flustered citadel lord didn't believe Li Qiye at all. Nevertheless, he still asked: "Then, Sir, how long can our ancestral vine hang on for?"

"If I was motivated by my own gains, I could scare you and say ten years, or maybe that it's already on the verge of demise." Li Qiye smiled: "However, there's no need to do so. Your ancestral vine can still survive a bit longer than the Peacock Tree."

The citadel lord simply didn't believe Li Qiye and blurted out: "That is impossible!"

In fact, Teng Jiwen was skeptical as well: "Sir, that can't be. Our ancestral vine is still full of vitality. It can shoulder stars and grasp the sun and moon. If it wasn't doing well, we would have recognized it already."

This was an understandable reaction. After all, the tree was still in its prime with exuberant life force. How could it collapse so easily?

"This has nothing to do with its lifespan." Li Qiye lightly said: "It is due to the calamity. Despite it being very strong, it won't be able to handle this stress for much longer."

The lord countered: "Sir, our ancestors have sealed the calamity. If it broke through the seal, our citadel would know right away. I'm afraid your words are not very persuasive."

Li Qiye looked at him with one eye and dismissively said: "It is your business to believe it or not. Go ahead and think about it, but let me remind you, my time is limited."

There was nothing left to say, so the citadel lord stood up and bowed: "Since it is so, I will have to discuss this with the ancestors." He turned and walked away afterward.

Teng Jiwen was one step behind his master. After the citadel lord, he hesitated for a moment and looked at Li Qiye then spoke with sincerity: "Sir, is this the truth?"

Li Qiye looked at him and smiled: "You can think that I am deceiving you, but the person making the choice is no longer me. I'm giving your citadel exactly one chance. Think about it carefully." Li Qiye then pointed at his own head: "I can replenish the life of the Peacock Tree, what else can't I do? Do you really think that I must beseech your citadel for the calabash?"

Teng Jiwen mused quietly. It was definitely not wise for Li Qiye to try to trick them for the calabash. After all, it wasn't that easy to trick them. Plus, if he offended them, there would be no place for him to

stay at the Heaven Spirit World. Lastly, the people who are truly capable wouldn't resort to such trickery.

He eventually said: "Sir, even if I trust you, the ancestors won't."

"That is your business. As the descendant, you can go do something about it. The fate of the Heavenvine Citadel is up to you and those old geezers."

"I'll try." He said weakly: "But I'm not sure whether I can convince them."

At this moment, he believed Li Qiye more. The person didn't need to trick them. Moreover, curing the ancestral vine was much better than losing a single Heavenvine Calabash. Eventually, he bowed and left.

The citadel lord immediately met several ancestors upon his return. After hearing the claim, the group immediately went to check the seal of the calamity. The seal remained completely untouched.

Nevertheless, for prudence's sake, the citadel lord still convened a meeting and invited several more ancestors. Many old ancestors disagreed with Li Qiye's claim and thought that he was simply trying to scare them for the calabash.

However, the citadel lord still carried out this meeting solemnly. He personally met Li Qiye and, though he still had a lot of questions, his conversation with Li Qiye left him feeling that the probability of Li Qiye lying was quite low. After all, this was their territory, Li Qiye shouldn't even think about leaving if he was trying to trick them. On the other hand, those strong enough to leave their citadel forcefully would look down on such trickery.

After the meeting, many ancestors opposed Li Qiye's argument. They thought that even if he wasn't trying to trick them, it was still exaggerated.

The citadel lord's idea was to ask Li Qiye to treat the ancestral vine. In his mind, regardless of how long the vine had left to live, it indeed was trapped by a calamity that they had always wanted to eradicate.

Chapter 1178: Negotiation

Meanwhile, the Hao branch strongly opposed the citadel lord's proposal. They were quite adamant in this regard.

The Hao branch was a powerful family in the Heavenvine Citadel. They had an ancient and powerful bloodline, especially their main disciple, Hao Yuzhen. Hao Yuzhen had an old regal bloodline. Both their background and bloodline were extremely noble.

The reason was very simple. Hao Yuzhen and Teng Jiwen were evenly-matched and both were competing for the seat of the citadel lord.

At the same time, the current citadel lord and Teng Jiwen were from a different branch. Though this competition between the two branches had yet to escalate to a life-and-death conflict, it had never ceased.

In particular, the rivalry between Hao Yuzhen and Teng Jiwen was quite fierce. The old regal bloodline of Hao Yuzhen made their cultivation quite strong. On the other hand, Teng Jiwen had his wooden eyes, so he was equally powerful. Both of them had the potential to become the new lord.

Thus, the Hao branch naturally wouldn't agree with this matter. If Li Qiye could actually cure the ancestral vine, this would be a great merit for Teng Jiwen.

"He is only a charlatan of unknown origin, why should we trust his words?" An ancestor from the Hao branch was certain that Li Qiye was here for the calabash: "If our ancestral vine's calamity was really as grave as he says, we would have felt it already. Even our forefathers don't seem to think so. The calamity is clearly sealed, he is just trying to get attention."

Many ancestors outside of the Hao branch agreed as well. After all, there were no negative signs coming from their ancestral vine.

If it was on the verge of collapse, the citadel would have felt it by now. There should at least be some ominous signs, but none could be found. This was indicative of the vine's current status. Moreover, their seal was completely untouched as well.

"I don't think so." The citadel lord went against the crowd: "If Mister Li was a liar, he should know that there would be no place for him to stay at the Heaven Spirit World after tricking us. However, if he is confident enough in his own strength to deal with us, then does he need to lie in the first place?"

With that, he glanced at each ancestor and said: "Moreover, he knows more than even our imagination, secrets unknown to outsiders. How could a mere charlatan be privy to these things?"

The Hao Ancestor coldly retorted: "Some things will be found out if people try hard enough to learn about them. Plus, who dares to say with certainty that no one else has leaked the secret?"

The lord ignored him and focused on the other ancestors instead: "Let us take a step back and assume that Mister Li is simply exaggerating. Our ancestral vine was indeed inflicted by this calamity. Because of this, we have been trying to find treatments from one generation to another, yet we still haven't found an alchemist capable of doing so. But now, Mister Li is confident in his ability to cure our ancestral vine — this is a once-in-myriad-generations opportunity for us." [1. Once in a lifetime sounds so much better but it has been used recently. This phrase sounds silly in English, but it does elevate the scale and stay true to the raw]

The Hao Ancestor asserted: "What if he is just bragging in order to scheme for the Heavenvine Calabash?"

The citadel lord looked at him and flatly said: "Gentlemen, all of our ancestors are here. Do you think a single junior can deceive all of us? If Mister Li is able to cure our ancestral vine, it will finally resolve this timeless agony. Even if he doesn't, what do we have to lose? If we don't even have the courage to try, we will never be able to cure our ancestral vine."

These words were quite logical. The ancestors here took a gander at each other and thought that how could a junior possibly trick all of them?

"We can indeed let Mister Li try." An ancient ancestor finally spoke: "It will be great if he can actually succeed, but he is asking for too much. You should know that the Heavenvine Calabash cannot be traded."

"That's right!" The Hao Ancestor immediately parroted: "Do you know what not having the calabash means for our citadel? We have too many ancestors relying on it to renew their lifespans!"

Many ancestors fell silent on this topic. At this moment, they had several heaven-defying ancestors that needed the calabash to prolong their lives. Without it, they would have fallen long ago. One could even say that without it, it would result in a huge loss for the citadel in the near future.

The citadel lord contemplated quietly for a second. In fact, he meticulously considered this problem before the meeting and had made up his mind.

He stood up to look at the ancestors and raised his voice: "Ancestors, apologies for the upcoming disrespectful words from this junior. Even though the calabash is very important to us, what is more important than the ancestral vine..."

"... Without the ancestral vine, the citadel will cease to exist. Upon its collapse, what will be left of this place? Only a few islands scattered about at sea! This alone cannot help us reach the pinnacle in the Heaven Spirit World! Without the ancestral vine, our children will have to leave their home! Please ask yourselves, is the calabash more important than the ancestral vine?!" He was very solemn in his speech.

This was difficult for many of these ancestors. Of course, the ancestral vine was the most important for them. However, those who don't put themselves first would be scorned by the heaven and earth. This was especially true for the dying ancestors. They would be doomed without the calabash! Moreover, they still thought that they had ample time to delay the treatment! [2. This is a common idiom that has a twisted meaning in this particular usage. The original intent is: those who don't cultivate themselves would be scorned by the heaven and earth. Cultivating oneself is one step to benefit society and others, not just for the self. However, the new meaning in literature is: those who don't put themselves first would be scorned by the heaven and earth. It is a justification for selfishness. Everyone is selfish, so you have to be as well in order to survive. Of course, there are other interpretations of this idiom. Another one is: those who don't better themselves (by taking action) will be scorned by the heaven and earth. One must be active and work for improvement or the heavens will not help you.]

"Collapse — this matter is still too far away from us." The Hao Ancestor coldly said: "We have plenty of time to find an alchemist who can heal it. We don't necessarily have to rely on this Junior Li!"

The citadel lord uttered clearly: "It might be far away and we might have enough time to find the right alchemist, but one thing is certain. For many generations, we have never been able to find one!"

The ancestors here found themselves in a dilemma. If Li Qiye were to actually cure the ancestral vine, it meant that they must pay a great price! Not everyone was willing to do so.

"On this matter, I will have to consult some of the older ancestors." The oldest ancestor here made his decision.

The citadel lord and the younger ancestors could only agree. They would make a final call after the ancient ancestors have made up their minds.

Regardless of whether they would employ his services, the great hospitality did not go away. Li Qiye was still treated as an esteemed guest.

He stared at the vast sea above his room on top of the giant leaf. His eyes then focused on the distant horizon.

The truth was that he didn't care for the ancestors' decision. Regardless of the method, he must obtain the Heavenvine Calabash with or without their consent.

A sweet breeze blew by. A woman suddenly floated closer and stood by his side.

She was very beautiful and emitted a fresh aura like a pearl placed on top of a green leaf.

She looked at him and asked: "Are you the alchemist invited by Senior Brother Teng?"

He looked at her and faintly smiled: "Yes, that's me."

She said: "I am a Heavenvine disciple. Senior Brother Teng asked me to come here to tell you to leave right away!"

Li Qiye laughed in response: "Leave? Why should I have to leave?"

"Sir, you might be unaware of this, but the situation is quite unfavorable for you." She explained: "The ancestors think that you want to steal our calabash, so they want to imprison you..."

Li Qiye burst out in laughter before she could finish as if he had just heard the funniest thing in his life.

"Why do you laugh?" She didn't understand.

Li Qiye observed her for a bit before leisurely replying: "An ancient regal bloodline flows within you. At the Heavenvine City, only the Hao branch has this old treant bloodline!"

"There are two main branches, Hao and Teng. For millions of years, the citadel lord would sometimes be someone with a different last name, but the majority of the time this position would be taken by one of these two branches." Li Qiye smiled and looked at the girl: "Teng Jiwen has wooden pupils, so he is qualified to be the citadel lord. Your regal bloodline can keep up with him, but barely. When his wooden pupils reach the peak, it can sentence one's life and death!"

The girl was startled and had to stagger back after hearing this. She stared at Li Qiye as if he was a ghost. Not even in her dreams would she expect for this seemingly insignificant person to reveal her identity.

"You're only a junior yet you still dare to scheme before me? You don't know your own limits." Li Qiye lazily sneered: "You just want to scare me away before telling everyone that I have escaped from being found out. Then you would put the blame on Teng Jiwen in order to smear him. This little trick is not enough to get into my sight."

The girl's complexion turned white then green in a short period of time. Her tricks were exposed in such a humiliating manner!

Chapter 1179: Hao Yuzhen

This girl was Hao Yuzhen, Teng Jiwen's strongest rival for the citadel lord's position. She had an ancient regal bloodline that qualified her for the position.

She coldly sneered: "It seems like Senior Brother Teng is quite close to you to actually tell you so many things. You better be careful, revealing the secret of the citadel is a capital offense!"

At this time, she had other plans to splash some dirty water on Teng Jiwen. [1. Smear, frame.]

Of course, she didn't believe Li Qiye saw through everything about her. This man ahead couldn't reach the apex. It must have been Senior Brother Teng Jiwen who told him everything.

"I don't care for your Heavenvine Citadel's bullshit." He didn't bother to look at her as he said: "Your competition with him is your own business, do not touch me with your dog paw or I won't mind hanging your skull on the highest peak of the citadel!"

"You!" Hao Yuzhen's expression turned ugly to the extreme. She immediately wanted to burst out in a furor, but she managed to endure it. At this moment, the ancestors were still discussing whether they should let Li Qiye cure the ancestral vine or not. Taking a shot at Li Qiye was very unwise, and Teng Jiwen would take advantage of this!

She coldly looked at him and said: "Don't make porcelain without a piece of diamond. Curing this calamity is not a joke, don't even think about it if you are not capable. If you can't do it, the ancestors will become furious and at that point, Brother Teng will push you out as a scapegoat..." [1. Okay, this phrase requires some explanation. In ancient China, poor people would not throw away broken bowls and other pieces of ceramic unless they were unrepairable. There were specific artisans skilled in repairing these ceramics. Their most important and essential tool is a drill-like contraption with a little diamond at the tip. Thus, this idiom is an old one meaning if you don't have the ability, don't try to do it.]

"I accept your goodwill." Li Qiye laughed and started before she could finish: "But this is as easy as breakfast for me. There's no need for you to worry, the calabash is as good as mine already."

Hao Yuzhen was quite unhappy. She initially wanted to scare Li Qiye away. If he had actually fled out of fear, it would have been quite beneficial for her. She would immediately use this to attack Teng Jiwen and accuse him of leaking the citadel's secrets.

However, Li Qiye simply didn't take her bait, so her efforts were for naught.

She snorted and said: "Even if you are capable and obtain the Heavenvine Calabash, you should know that paper cannot wrap fire. There are no secrets in this world; if people know that you have a calabash capable of replenishing life..."

"... You can easily imagine how many ancestors will salivate while staring at you. In less than three days, you will become prey in everyone's eyes, a piece of meat among a shiver of sharks. In just three seconds, they will tear you into pieces..." She continued to intimidate him.

He finally looked at her lazily and smiled: "Good, I have heard your advice and warning." With that, he went back into his room.

She, on the other hand, was quite unhappy. A nobody junior like him dared to look down on her — this was truly maddening.

After taking only a few steps, he turned back and laughed while issuing a warning: "By the way, stop your noxious little game. As I have said before, try to touch me with your dog paw and I'll off your head and put it at the citadel's peak."

"You!" Her face blackened from being livid while her entire body trembled. She would have killed Li Qiye already if she wasn't afraid of Teng Jiwen using this against her.

He ignored her and went back to his room.

On that same night, Teng Jiwen came back and asked: "Sir, I heard our disciples say that my junior sister visited you?"

Li Qiye noticed his tense demeanor and smirked: "Only a little matter, there's no need to be nervous. If she could do anything to me, I wouldn't be sitting here right now."

He heaved a sigh of relief after hearing Li Qiye's words. Li Qiye glanced over at him and asked: "How was your citadel's discussion? They should have an answer by now."

When this matter was brought up, Teng Jiwen rubbed his palms nervously and coughed: "Sir, my master has talked with the other ancestors. Now we have to wait for the ancient ancestors to agree."

Li Qiye lazily drank his tea and asked: "Do you think those ancient ancestors will agree?"

"Well..." Teng Jiwen found it difficult to answer: "The ancient ancestors are wise; I trust that they will come up with something more sagacious than us juniors."

Li Qiye snorted and said: "A person will be afraid of death. Those who are in higher positions and have lived for a long time would be even more scared. For ages now, very few have been able to see through life and death. These types of people are amazing and capable of having their names recorded in history."

In fact, Teng Jiwen was not certain in the least. After all, no one needed the calabash more than these ancient ancestors. It was just as Li Qiye had said, people would always be afraid of death. Those who were more powerful would try to prolong their lives regardless of the cost.

"I know that their penetrating insight will come through." Teng Jiwen quickly answered: "Sir, just be patient, they will give you a satisfactory answer."

Li Qiye gently shook his head: "I know this issue better than you. Those old buried geezers would take a year to make a decision. I'm not idle enough to wait for them and for you all to make a decision as the chance will pass by."

"Sir, you mean..." He asked with some confusion.

Li Qiye smiled and put up two fingers: "Two days. I will give your citadel two days. After that, I will take the calabash."

"Sir, this is too much." Teng Jiwen was a very good-natured person. He was hospitable, but he couldn't accept such an unreasonable demand.

Li Qiye nodded: "Yes, I am indeed pushy right now. To put it plainly, I have no time to waste at your citadel. I'll take the item after two days regardless of whether your citadel agrees or not!"

"Sir, are you trying to force us?" Teng Jiwen's expression quickly shifted.

Li Qiye placed the teacup in his hand back on the table and smiled: "You can view it as that since I want the calabash for sure."

Teng Jiwen thought of something and immediately stumbling back a step while staring at Li Qiye in disbelief: "Sir, you wanted the calabash from the very beginning! Curing our ancestral vine was only an excuse. I, I have led a wolf into our home!" He breathed in hard at this point.

"You are right yet wrong at the same time." Li Qiye looked at the frightened youth: "You can indeed become the leader of this city. Your talents are not the best, but you aren't blinded by your noble upbringing. For someone with your background, it isn't easy to be free of complacency and arrogance. Although many geniuses put on an air of humility, they are still very arrogant inside. This makes you better than many people."

"Sir, I suppose I should be honored by your praise." At this time, the youth was clearly showing his hostility.

Li Qiye smiled: "I can understand your emotions right now. You're right, I simply wanted the calabash from the beginning; it is very important in the process of life replenishment for the Peacock Tree. Very few things can replace it."

The boy murmured: "I knew it..." He had his suspicions earlier, but now, Li Qiye had confirmed it with his own mouth.

"You can think of it as you having led a wolf into your home." Li Qiye said: "But I don't agree with that notion."

Teng Jiwen coldly countered: "Sir, you have been scheming against us from the start, so how are you not a wolf?"

Li Qiye laughed in response: "Will your citadel not pay me after I cure your ancestral vine? Will you not hand the calabash over? Regardless of the process, I will get the calabash in the end, so is it a crime to be aiming for your calabash in the first place? If I didn't want it, do you think I would be sitting here wasting my time?"

"That's, that's different." He had maintained a strong front despite finding things difficult: "Sir, you are simply forcing us."

Li Qiye casually replied: "I am, but what is more important, the ancestral vine or the calabash? Without the vine, you will have nothing. Your citadel will be nothing."

The boy's face turned white. He didn't know what to say at this moment. In the end, he stared at Li Qiye and asked: "So you are saying you are one hundred percent confident in curing our vine?"

Li Qiye lazily answered: "Do you think the Peacock Tree's condition is more serious, or your ancestral vine's? If I can renew that tree's life, how can I not be capable of curing your ancestral vine?"

Chapter 1180: Fairness

After internally deliberating his next question, Teng Jiwen asked Li Qiye: "If the citadel doesn't hand the calabash over in two days, will you take it by force?"

"Correct." Li Qiye chuckled: "Two days is all you have before you must hand it over."

"You..." He didn't know whether to be scared or angry. Li Qiye was being quite blunt with his intentions.

Li Qiye raised his teacup again and took an elegant sip: "There's no need to be angry. Trust me, even though I am a fierce person that is unreasonable at times, I won't take your calabash for free. I will cure your ancestral tree, a quid pro quo."

Teng Jiwen had been finding it difficult to choose his words when talking to Li Qiye. It was just as the man said, even if he took the calabash by force, as long as he were to cure the ancestral vine the ultimate outcome would still be the same. The only thing different would be the process.

"But you should ready yourself." Li Qiye drank another mouthful and smiled: "I am not a nice guy. I won't show any mercy to those who try to stop me, and you are no exception." A light flashed across his eyes as he uttered these words.

Teng Jiwen felt a cold chill after seeing the glint, as if something sharp had pricked his heart. At the same time, he felt death looming over him. He took a deep breath and said: "The Heavenvine Citadel isn't a place where people can come and go as they please. Not even a Godking could tread freely within our walls, let alone become our enemy."

His statement was not a threat, he was simply telling the truth. The citadel was powerful enough to the point where no one could look down on it. Moreover, who would dare to do anything foolish while the ancestral vine was protecting it?

"You underestimate me too much." Li Qiye laughed and shook his head: "You still don't know who you are facing or the gravity behind your citadel's choice. Do you think I am scared of the citadel after choosing to come here all by myself? Do you think I even place it in my sight?"

Such words left Teng Jiwen breathless. They were arrogant and aggressive to the point of being humiliatingly offensive.

Someone was blustering and viewing his citadel with such contempt. As its descendant, even though he was very well-mannered, a blazing fury still burned in his heart. Even a mud Buddha would become angry at times.

"Sir, your words are too outrageous. In the entire Heaven Spirit World, not too many people would dare to say them in front of me." He took a deep breath and glared at Li Qiye while lowering his voice.

"Look me in the eye." Li Qiye retorted: "Do you see the Heavenvine Citadel in there?!"

Teng Jiwen shivered and subconsciously stared straight into Li Qiye's eyes.

He immediately felt something with just a glimpse and took several thumping steps backward with a shocked expression.

What he saw was bloodthirst, a bloodthirst that blotted out the sun; one that would slay any god that attempted to block its path! This direct and naked bloodthirst couldn't be faked.

A wanton will to murder was the most terrifying emotion. It was a force that instilled an instinctive fear in others, thus it was also the most authentic sensation.

Teng Jiwen was frightened by this murderous aura. At this second, he understood that Li Qiye truly wasn't lying to him and that he would really kill anyone that stood in his way.

Regardless of where his confidence stemmed from, he knew that Li Qiye really didn't care for the Heavenvine Citadel. He would truly start a massacre in this place.

"You..." He stared at Li Qiye with awe and anger. At this time, he was full of regret for bringing a wolf into his own home, an unlucky star to the citadel.

Li Qiye withdrew his gaze and blinked before setting the teacup down again: "There's no need to feel regret or anger, you did not bring an enemy to the citadel."

The dazed youth asked: "What do you mean?"

Li Qiye smiled and said: "Think about it, even if you didn't bring me here, how would that stop me from wanting the calabash? I need it in order to heal the Peacock Tree, so whether you led me here or not doesn't matter at all."

Nevertheless, Teng Jiwen still felt guilty because it was him who took Li Qiye here.

Li Qiye began: "Instead of standing there hating me or feeling regretful, why not seize the opportunity?"

He looked at Li Qiye and asked: "What opportunity?"

"A chance to maintain the peace of your citadel." Li Qiye lightly said: "Me telling you to bring me here was to give you and the citadel a chance for peace. Complete the trade willingly and there will be no need for killing, for blood to stain these walls. This is a transaction beneficial to both sides."

"Take this chance and I won't have to bother cutting people's heads off one by one, and your citadel won't have to lose too many people. Finally, everyone would happily end this deal with a smile on their faces." Li Qiye glanced at the youth after saying this.

The boy blurted out: "But you are just forcing us! How is this a deal? Do we actually have a say in this matter—"

Li Qiye interrupted him with a wave of his sleeve: "What you are choosing between is the trade or the collapse of the ancestral vine and your citadel turning into ashes! To be frank, right now, your citadel only consists of a bunch of idiots..."

Having said that, his glare turned cold: "A group of greedy fools that only want everything without paying the price. Your ancestral vine's calamity has lasted for how many years? Yet you all have failed to eradicate it. Were you willing to pay a fortune to look for an alchemist in the nine worlds? The answer is no, the effort has never been there. This so-called search for an alchemist was only a little sham..."

"... To be even harsher, the descendants of the Heavenvine Citadel are a bunch of parasites latching onto the vine itself! You're all only worrying about your own desires instead of thinking about the ancestral vine. Meanwhile, those undying geezers struggling to live till now, are they actually thinking about trading away the calabash? No, they simply don't want to die! In their eyes, their dog lives are more important than the calamity that is tormenting their ancestral vine!" He sneered with disdain.

"If you weren't the treefather's descendants, I'm sure it would have trampled all of you to death, a bunch of vermins and parasites!" He was particularly harsh this time.

This denunciation left Teng Jiwen's complexion red and white. At this moment, he had even forgotten to refute.

"We, we still have plenty of time..." He replied weakly. In fact, he didn't know if this was true or not. If Li Qiye was speaking the truth, then they didn't have that much time left.

"Plenty of time?" Li Qiye laughed: "How many times do you think those geezers have repeated this phrase? Ever since the end of Immortal Emperor Bu Si, how many generations have passed?"

"Your ancestors only know how to spew this worthless drivel and have never proven it with any actions! Just a bunch of trash!" Li Qiye sneered in disdain and said: "Go repeat every single word I have said to them. Let them know that they are all talk, a bunch of useless parasites! So what if they are strong? Using the calabash to prolong their own lives without doing shit, there is nothing more useless than them!"

Teng Jiwen was quite stimulated by this blatant disdain. He wanted to retort, but no words came out of his gaping mouth. He felt completely powerless to refute Li Qiye.

"If I didn't want the calabash to save the Peacock Tree, I wouldn't bother coming here. Your ancestral vine's fate has nothing to do with me. To be frank, if I didn't have to save the Peacock Tree, even if your ancestors prostrated before me while handing over the calabash to save your ancestral vine, I wouldn't care about your citadel's bullshit!" Li Qiye coldly stared at the youth.

Teng Jiwen stood there for a moment, speechless. At this minute, he felt his voice waning away. This was because Li Qiye's words had penetrated his innermost thoughts. He was right, the citadel had never cared for or tried to save the ancestral vine.