

Chapter 931: The Secret Within The Secrets

Li Qiye nodded in response: “Yes, I happened to be passing by this desert and found that it was very suitable to train the body, so I chose to do so.”

“Cultivation is about refining the dao foundation, what’s the point of training the flesh? Even if your body can become stronger, is it going to be as strong as a weapon?” A’Bao wanted to go against Li Qiye.

Li Qiye looked at A’Bao and smiled: “The pain of the flesh is the most direct type of pain. Only when one can withstand the pain of the flesh would they be able to bear the pain of the mind. If one can’t even withstand pain, then there is no need to talk about the dao heart. The dao heart is the true foundation of cultivation.”

Yi Chuan couldn’t help but praise after hearing this: “Little friend is still young and not from a famed sect, yet you have such wisdom, truly extraordinary! The phrase ‘dao heart is the true foundation of cultivation’ is quite enlightening, just like the morning bell.” [1. A couple of idioms are used here and localized since they become a bit wordy and confusing if translated literally.]

With that, he told the disciples behind him: “You all need to learn from this little friend. There are many types of training, enduring suffering is one of them as well.”

Many disciples looked down on Li Qiye’s training. However, they didn’t dare to comment in front of their senior. In their eyes, a mortal walking through a desert was not training at all, it was only the suffering entailed in a mortal’s life!

“So you are refining your dao heart.” The girl whose name was A’Li curiously stared at Li Qiye and thought that he was quite a strange guy.

“No.” Li Qiye gently shook his head: “I am only taking a walk. There is no need to hone my dao heart. It is as firm as a rock — completely unshakable.”

“Such arrogance! Even a Virtuous Paragon wouldn’t dare to claim that their dao heart is unshakable. At least make your bragging more believable.” A’Bao scowled and thought that Li Qiye was completely blustering.

Li Qiye only smiled. He was too lazy to reprimand a young man like A’Bao.

“Little friend, goodbye for now, I still want to take them training.” Yi Chuan laughed and bid farewell to Li Qiye before flying away on his carpet.

Li Qiye continued forward through the desert, braving the hot sun in the day while researching countless mysteries at night.

He had to ponder too many things, especially the vessel of athanasia. It had many details that required his effort. At the same time, he had a lot to learn about the Ancient Void Rune and the Heavenly Dao Primal Chapter.

The ancestors of the primal ground believed that they could find a heaven-shattering merit law by researching the chapter. However, Li Qiye's focus was not in this regard. His aim was not merit laws since he had many powerful ones already.

He wanted to make them even more perfect, but even after many derivations and calculations, he didn't gain any ground.

This was because he was lacking another piece of the puzzle. From a merit law or cultivation perspective, both the rune and the chapter were complete as far as training manuals went.

However, Li Qiye didn't want such a thing. He wanted to reform the two to create a complete system! Nevertheless, this was not an easy matter. He only had two parts of the system, and he couldn't figure out the remaining parts with just these two.

In fact, Li Qiye wasn't the only one who couldn't do so. No one could, not even Immortal Emperors.

The rune and chapter were involved in great secrets. Across the eons, no one had been able to gather the complete version! It could even be said that very few people truly knew about the existence of these two; not even emperors knew about their legends!

Eventually, Li Qiye put the two away and sighed. Just as the legend stated, creating a complete system was countless times harder than reaching the heavens.

"Dum—" Laws intertwined and the Dao Sword appeared in Li Qiye's hand. Li Qiye immediately had an extraordinary feeling with it in his grasp.

This pitch-black sword lacked the sharpness and frightening edge of a sword. If it was thrown onto the ground, perhaps no cultivators would even want to pick it up.

Li Qiye gently stroked the blunt and harmless blade edges. Of course, he was not trying to feel the sharpness of the sword but rather the power of the laws and the nature embedded within. Controlling this sword was the same as controlling the supreme myriad laws, allowing one to become the ruler of all!

"Dao Sword, this is something that would make others salivate with greed." Li Qiye gently stroked and sword and murmured: "Unfortunately, the Blood Progenitor back then never managed to utilize its real effects!"

"Dum—" Li Qiye put the sword away. His mind opened and two different rays of lights intertwined. One was a shimmering silver while the other was gold!

They coiled together like two little flood dragons and formed a perpetually revolving spiral!

The silver light was something he obtained from the silver maelstrom after destroying the Ancestral Realm while the golden light was from the golden maelstrom in the pond of Provenance's Splendor.

In the past, Li Qiye understood their mysteries as well as the secret of the silver maelstrom in the Ancestral Realm after a lot of research. Now, he was looking at the golden version. He knew a bit about it beforehand as well, but he wanted to completely unravel its mysteries.

Eventually, Li Qiye closed his mind and the two rays disappeared. He opened his eyes and smiled: "The secrets are all in my hands! Immortal Demon geezer, you only know one part of the puzzle! The real secret is still in my hands!"

With that, Li Qiye stared at the far horizon and murmured with a serious glare: "I'll come back one day! Emperors, gods, even the high heavens, I'll slay everything in my path!" He was very much looking forward to that day.

Next, he started to meditate inside his sea of memories. He carefully searched inside, not daring to miss the tiniest of details!

There were many secrets stored inside his mind. A few of them came from the old man at the base of the precipice in the Drystone Courtyard. Moreover, his secrets were very scary, so scary that they could frighten even Immortal Emperors!

In a distant past when the Dark Crow was still inexperienced, before the days where he could do as he pleased, he was tricked by the old man when he arrived at the Drystone Courtyard.

The old man wanted the secrets in his memories, but he couldn't grab them due to the seal within. At that time, the old man came up with a strange method. He directly connected his memories to Li Qiye's. From then on, the two's memories were linked.

The old man found out some information about the Immortal Demon Grotto and a few secrets from Li Qiye while Li Qiye also found out the old man's secrets.

Back then, the old man was a very heaven-defying existence with extreme confidence. He believed that Li Qiye would never be able to escape his grasp. He didn't expect for Li Qiye to endure for such a long period of time, so long that Li Qiye eventually fooled him completely and stole all of the secrets in his mind!

Li Qiye paid a huge price at that time, but he was rewarded with many great secrets. He even wanted the ultimate secret from the old geezer! Back then, he thought that this secret was hidden in the old man's memories, but he couldn't force it out. After this trip, the old man revealed that he had already obtained it. Alas, he still didn't know where this ultimate secret was hiding right now.

Because of this, Li Qiye was going through all the secrets he squeezed out from the old man to figure out that ultimate secret.

"Old man, you're really something special. I didn't notice it at all." Li Qiye flipped through the dust-laden memories and murmured: "Although you destroyed my body back then, you allowed me to massacre that place because of your secrets and preparations! When I'm fully ready again, even without your ultimate secret, I would still be able to make rivers of blood run across that land again!"

No matter how much he tried, he couldn't find the ultimate secret. However, he was sure that the old man was not lying to him. The issue was that he was overlooking something. Nevertheless, he was not in a rush. He gazed at the sky and told himself: "Maybe the real trick to unlocking this secret requires me to make my way back there! I'll definitely do so this generation no matter what! Just wait, those false gods will tremble beneath my feet!"

On the next day, Li Qiye continued on barefoot with the sun's rays scorching him from above!

Chapter 932: Suhang Country's Yi Chuan

This was a long journey since Li Qiye took his time. This barefoot walk might be a type of torture to others, but Li Qiye was enjoying it. He was able to let go of everything in this desert.

His goal, at the moment, was to leave the desert. All else was left behind.

"Little friend, we meet again." A carpet appeared above Li Qiye again. It was Yi Chuan's group.

Li Qiye looked at them and smiled: "It seems like all of you had a fruitful trip."

Without a doubt, the juniors behind Yi Chuan were a lot more lively than last time. They must have had a good training session.

The excited A'Li smiled and blurted out: "We obtained a lot of ores."

"A'Li, you can't just expose having treasures to others or they'll be tempted." A'Bao, as the senior brother, quickly reminded his junior sister.

In his eyes, Li Qiye was only an outsider. Such information naturally couldn't be revealed to an outsider since it might bring about unnecessary problems.

Li Qiye smiled and told A'Li while ignoring A'Bao: "I was talking about your dao heart and spirit. Compared to these benefits, the ores are just external materials. There will be many chances for treasures later on, but dao heart training is not only a process, it is a type of fate. Such gains cannot be found all the time."

"Little friend, that is quite profound." Yi Chuan couldn't help but praise. He looked at Li Qiye with growing skepticism. These weren't words that should come from a young man. It sounded like something a weather-beaten and experienced man should say.

"Just a casual remark." Li Qiye smiled without complacency. Such phrases truly were casual remarks to him.

"That's all theoretical." A'Bao snorted. He was dissatisfied with Li Qiye regardless of what he said due to having some prejudice against him.

Yi Chuan smiled and asked Li Qiye: "Are you still training? Do you want me to bring you the rest of the way?"

Li Qiye looked ahead and shook his head: "No need, it doesn't look like it'll be long until I'm able to leave this desert. I'll just go by myself."

"Not bad." Yi Chuan gave him a thumbs-up and said: "Walking barefoot through the Void Trap Desert is not a difficult task for cultivators. The hardship lies in the trouble; how many cultivators would be willing to bear this burden as a mortal? It requires great perseverance, it's definitely not easy."

Cultivators were able to do many things. However, they would usually grow used to being high above others. Many of them would not be willing to act as a mortal again.

“All of you should be learning from this dao brother. Cultivation is not just about honing your merit laws, it is also about training your willpower and determination to sharpen your mind.” Yi Chuan turned around and told his disciples. He wanted to use Li Qiye as a role model.

The disciples were quiet. They could only listen to their senior. Of course, they didn't pay Li Qiye's words any mind. In their eyes, Li Qiye was only a nobody, someone not much better than a mortal. There was nothing worth learning from him. The majority of them considered themselves to be much better than him. They came from a great sect and had trained in powerful merit laws from a young age and took in wondrous medicines. In their eyes, learning from Li Qiye, who was basically a mortal, was a shameful matter.

“Little friend, I won't bother you any longer. May we meet again in the future.” Yi Chuan bid his farewell in a very polite manner.

He had a noble status as the ruler of a country. However, he was exceptional in one regard — his vision was not something the disciples behind him could compare to. In his eyes, although Li Qiye was a vagrant cultivator, he would have a colorful future due to his dao heart and determination.

He really liked young people with great perseverance like Li Qiye. These were the ones who were most likely to have big success.

Li Qiye smiled and also bid farewell to Yi Chuan before continuing on his way.

After walking for another long period of time, he finally made it out of the desert and was met by a wave of humidity.

Right outside the desert was a land full of water. There were rolling green hills and rivers all around. One could see boats setting sail and rowing on the currents. Under the sparkling waves, the fat fishes jumped out of the water while heron swept by across the surface. On both sides of the river were green puffs of smoke as if this was a paradise.

The contrast between a desert and a land with a great river made it seem like two different worlds meeting here. It gave the sensation of stepping from an arid land to a prosperous location that could only exist in a painting!

Anyone would become relaxed while walking in this land of paradise.

Li Qiye emotionally commented: “Jiangnan River, Southern Border.” This was indeed a nice and refreshing location. Each time he came by here, he would stay for some time due to his adoration of the place.

The desert was next to the primal ground while the Southern Border was next to the desert, a rich land full of water. Anyone would feel that creation was such a magical thing. A land with a mighty river and a desert separated by only one path — this was quite difficult to believe.

The Southern Barren Earth was huge and contained many things. The entire place was quite fertile, especially the most southern region. This southern region was called the Southern Border or Land of the Southern Tang. [1. Southern Tang was also known as Jiangnan, the river listed above. The author is using real locations for names right now, so I'm keeping the pinyin.]

The reason why it had this name was that it was under the jurisdiction of a nation named Southern Tang. The Southern Border didn't only consist of the Southern Tang. In fact, there were more than ten different nations here along with countless other small sects.

However, all of these nations were tributaries of Southern Tang, the biggest lineage in the Southern Border.

The weak being subservient to the strong, smaller sects being under great sects — such things were too common in the world of cultivation. However, it was different in this region. Southern Tang did not bother with managing their tributary states or interfering with their affairs.

To a large extent, the status of tributary was only in name. The smaller nations didn't need to pay tributes or act as vassals. At the same time, they were very supportive of Southern Tang as well. There were very few disputes, so the citizens in this region were able to lead peaceful lives, just like living in a paradise.

Li Qiye made it to an ancient city after a little walking. This particular city was different compared to the others in this region. There were no high walls or huge pathways, just a clear lack of magnificent architecture. Surrounding this city was a river that branched to each corner of the premises.

As long as one had a boat, they would be able to go anywhere in this city. There were many huge trees here offering their shade. Flowing water was everywhere and gave a pleasant yet all-encompassing feeling.

Li Qiye was quite tattered at this moment with dirt all over his face. He looked like a mortal in the city. At best, people would only consider him to be a beggar.

Cultivators wouldn't give him a second glance, only mortals would throw him a few coins at times.

Li Qiye didn't have to go too far before receiving a lot of coins. The reason was quite simple, this was a land of plenty. People had homes and jobs so the mortals here were quite well off. They were willing to give to a beggar like Li Qiye.

Li Qiye couldn't help but smile while looking at the coins in his hand. He put them away anyway.

As he walked by a huge tree that blotted out the sky, a familiar voice rang out: "Little friend, care to come for a drink?"

This towering tree grew near the river. There was a finely-crafted winehouse in its shade. It was clear that not just anyone could come here to drink.

There were more than ten cultivators next to the street of the restaurants. They could be considered Li Qiye's acquaintances since they were all part of Yi Chuan's group.

Yi Chuan held a wine cup and greeted Li Qiye in a polite manner.

Li Qiye smiled back and strode inside before sitting down confidently before Yi Chuan. This forced the disciples sitting next to Yi Chuan to make some room.

A few disciples were very unhappy to see Li Qiye acting so disrespectfully before their royal lord. However, Yi Chuan didn't mind at all. He had taken quite a liking to this young man ahead of him.

“Deference is no substitute for obedience.” Li Qiye sat down and said with a smile. [2. This phrase means that it is better to say yes than to say no in a respectful manner. It’s more of a polite, conversational tool.]

Li Qiye’s downtrodden look and his confident attitude conflicted with each other. However, it seemed so natural when it was Li Qiye doing it.

Chapter 933: An Old Acquaintance Is Coming?

Yi Chuan called someone to fill Li Qiye’s cup. Li Qiye drank it down in one gulp and sighed with emotion: “This is the taste. Great wine with great waterside sceneries, this is definitely different from other places. I always want to drink whenever I come by here.”

Yi Chuan smiled and asked: “So little friend must not be from Southern Tang?”

“The four oceans are my home.” Li Qiye leisurely answered: “However, Southern Tang is indeed a place worth remembering. It gives a very relaxed feeling and soothes the soul.”

Yi Chuan continued: “You haven’t had thoughts about staying here? To find a sect and embark on the path all the way to the door of the grand dao?”

“Are you saying you want to take me in as a disciple?” Li Qiye set his cup down and smiled while staring at Yi Chuan.

“Hmph, don’t act so impudently in front of His Majesty!” A’ Bao couldn’t help but scowl after seeing Li Qiye acting so condescendingly.

Yi Chuan gently waved his hand to stop A’ Bao. He smiled and said: “To tell the truth, I do have such a notion. If little friend is willing to join my sect... I won’t dare to say that I can help you reach the top of this world, but I can definitely give you a stage to display your abilities.” [1. Very polite and humble pronoun usage here from Yi Chuan when referring to himself. “Old man” instead of the “I” for kings or for nobility/important people.]

Yi Chuan did like Li Qiye, so he wanted to take him in as a disciple. He thought that it was actually easier to find a talented disciple than one with great determination and perseverance.

“I appreciate your goodwill.” Li Qiye smiled and shook his head: “But I like traveling. The entire world is my home, so settling down with new responsibilities would make me feel uncomfortable.”

Li Qiye’s answer was only a half-truth. The first half was made up while the latter was his real thoughts on the matter.

“Little friend thinks my sect is too small?” Yi Chuan smiled in response: “If that’s the case, I don’t really mind.”

Yi Chuan was not a big shot in the Barren Earth, but he was still a relatively influential character. Despite not having supreme talents, he was a broad-minded person who was easy to get along with.

“Hmm! Our Suhang is a big country even in the Southern Border! His Majesty is a Heavenly King; it is your honor that he wants you to be his disciple!” A’ Bao expressed his dissatisfaction after hearing Li Qiye’s refusal.

In fact, the juniors behind Yi Chuan were unhappy as well; some were even glaring at Li Qiye. In their eyes, it was a great honor for a mortal like him to become His Majesty's disciple. So now, they felt aggrieved by this refusal.

"Don't make such comments." Yi Chuan gently shook his head and told the group of A'Bao: "People have different aspirations. This is nothing strange."

He was a royal lord, but he didn't have the arrogance that would normally accompany the role.

Li Qiye drank another cup and leisurely smiled: "You really are a good person. Today I drank your wine so I owe you one. In the future, you can come find me, Li Qiye, if you are ever in need of assistance."

When Yi Chuan heard the name "Li Qiye", he felt that it was a bit familiar, as if he had heard it before. However, he couldn't put his finger on it, causing him to sink deeper into thought.

A'Li playfully blinked and asked: "We can come to you about anything?"

Li Qiye looked at the little lady and nodded his head: "Yes, anything. However, you may only come to find me once."

"Really?" A'Li chuckled and said: "This sounds a bit boastful. You are only a mortal, when would our master ask you for help?"

Li Qiye looked at her and blinked back. He smiled and said: "Well, you will find out later. Remember this, my favor is worth a lot of money."

The group, especially the male disciples, were very discontent. In their minds, Li Qiye was just teasing their junior sister!

"Hmph, such blustering. Our Majesty will never need the help of a mortal." A'Bao snorted.

Li Qiye only smiled, ignoring A'Bao while taking another sip of the wine. This infuriated A'Bao even more, but he couldn't do anything about it.

Li Qiye looked at the contemplating Yi Chuan and said: "You couldn't have been waiting here for me. If I recall correctly, Suhang is very far from here."

Yi Chuan returned from his thoughts and smiled: "It is a type of fate to meet little friend once more. We came to the Void Trap Desert for their training and were on our way back. However, it turns out that Her Majesty is on a patrol around here, so we came in order to grace the juniors with her presence."

"Her Majesty?" Li Qiye was a bit surprised to hear this. Yi Chuan was already the royal lord of Suhang, so not many people would refer to as Her Majesty by him.

Yi Chuan quickly replied: "Her Majesty Chuyun, the great lord of Southern Tang. Everyone refers to her by her imperial title. She is also our pride."

Li Qiye finally remembered someone and asked for confirmation: "Ye Chuyun, right? The inheritor of the Pure Lotus School." [2. World Tree Arc.]

"The great lord succeeded the Pure Lotus School and has presided over Southern Tang for many years immediately after becoming a Virtuous Paragon." Yi Chuan elaborated.

Li Qiye finally remembered the person — Ye Chuyun! Back at the Heavenly Dao Academy, she was still just a little girl. She came with Bing Yuxia, and he even brought her to the World Tree!

Many years passed in the blink of an eye. She was already the lord of the Pure Lotus School, the royal lord of Southern Tang! Under her control was her sect as well as the entire lands.

The Pure Lotus School could be considered an imperial lineage. Their progenitor had a deep relationship with Immortal Emperor Yan Wu. Moreover, their school had received part of the emperor's legacy.

It even built Southern Tang and governed the vast Southern Border. The school itself was affected by Immortal Emperor Yan Wu, lacking interest in interfering in worldly affairs. This was the reason why Southern Tang was formed, to take their place in governing the world. [3. This is a bit interesting. Yan is an interesting word because it has conflicting meanings by adding some strokes. It can mean satisfied/pleased, hate/tired from having too much, or just hate. You can see how problematic translating this name can be without context. But now, context was given. His title must mean "Tired/Hatred of All Things".]

The disciples behind Yi Chuan were full of admiration when it came to Ye Chuyun. In their opinion, it was a great honor to be able to meet the lord of their region.

Li Qiye casually asked: "Miss Chuyun is coming here?" If Ye Chuyun was here, he must go see her as he had something that required her assistance.

Yi Chuan smilingly replied: "Her Majesty is on the southern patrol path. After she gained control of Southern Tang, she began going on these inspection tours every few years to alleviate the disputes between the countries here. She just so happened to be passing by this time. The many sect masters and royal lords of this region are organizing a banquet for her tonight, so I'll be bringing the juniors to see her."

Li Qiye came up with an idea, so he asked: "Where can I meet her?"

"Hmph." The unhappy A'Bao immediately said: "The great lord is our ruler. She is supreme and noble and not someone you can meet as you please!"

"A'Bao, do not be rude." Yi Chuan stopped him: "The leaders are holding the banquet at the Waterside Garden. From what I've heard, Her Majesty should be coming today. Does little friend want to see Her Majesty too?"

Li Qiye only smiled and didn't reply.

Meanwhile, A'Li chuckled and added: "It is understandable that you want to see Her Majesty. At our Southern Tang, everyone says that her beauty is peerless. Her Majesty is not only a Virtuous Paragon, she is also incredibly pretty. Who knows how many young geniuses lost their minds because of her? If you go see her, maybe you will be awestruck by her beauty as well."

Li Qiye couldn't help but smile at the innocent A'Li. He gently shook his head in response: "Little miss, you are mistaken this time. I'm afraid there are not many women who can charm me."

“Please!” The few male disciples looked at Li Qiye with one eye, especially A’ Bao. He spoke with disdain: “No woman can charm you? That is because you haven’t seen any beautiful ones! Just wait till you see Her Majesty, your soul will leave your body.”

“A’ Bao, stop your nonsense.” Yi Chuan couldn’t help but wryly smile at the conversation between the youths. He gently shook his head and told A’ Bao to stop.

This ridicule was met with silence from Li Qiye who continued to drink.

“Oh? Isn’t this Royal Lord Yi? What is it this time? Your Suhang Country has no inheritor, so you have to stoop to recruiting a beggar?” At this time, a group came down from the upper floors. The leader was a young man wearing an imperial robe decorated with a four-clawed dragon. He had an imposing appearance and a threatening aura. [4. The Hongwu Emperor of the Ming Dynasty emulated the Yuan Dynasty rules on the use of the dragon motif and decreed that the dragon — with five claws — would be his emblem. The four-clawed dragon would typically be for nobility and certain high-ranking officials. The three-clawed dragon was used by lower ranks and the general public (widely seen on various Chinese goods in the Ming Dynasty). The dragon, however, was only for select royalty that was closely associated with the imperial family, usually in various symbolic colors. It was a capital offense for anyone — other than the emperor himself — to ever use the completely gold-colored five-clawed dragon motif. Improper usage of dragons and colors was considered treason and punishable by the execution of the offender’s entire clan.]

His entire entourage consisted of powerful experts. It was easy to tell that their background was extraordinary.

“Minor-Form Crown Prince.” Yi Chuan wasn’t angered by this provocation. He only dismissively said: “A hero is a hero regardless of his background, material possessions, and sect.”

This young man was the crown prince of the Minor-Form Country, one of the ten nations under Southern Tang’s jurisdiction. Minor-Form and Suhang neighbored each other. Both sides had been at odds even till now. Although there had never been a bloody conflict, these provocations upon them meeting were too common.

“Is that so? Then feel free to continue recruiting these beggars. I hope that you can find a descendant from the bunch of them.” The Minor-Form Crown Prince looked down at Li Qiye and laughed: “Hopefully, it will be someone excellent. Otherwise, your mediocre disciples over there shouldn’t even dream about competing with me. Royal Lord Yi, before you grow old, you better find someone before it’s too late.”

Such words made A’ Bao’s group glare at him, but the prince didn’t mind at all. He let out an arrogant laugh before leaving with his entourage.

The juniors behind Yi Chuan were incensed as they watched the prince leave. He purposely humiliated them!

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"Hmph, don't act so impudently in front of His Majesty!"

Chapter 934: Waterside Garden

A'Bao gritted his teeth and said: "Hmph! That Minor-Form Crown Prince is too contemptuous. His Majesty is still in the same generation as his father. He only got lucky drinking some treasure blood; that's the only reason why he is ahead of First Brother, he's nothing special. Without that fortune, he wouldn't be stronger than First Brother!"

"No need to be angry." Yi Chuan shook his head: "As long as you're strong enough, no one will dare to mock you. The Minor-Form Crown Prince's words are not all that unreasonable. His talents are indeed higher than your First Brother's. You all still have a long way to go before you can compete with him. This is true for your First Brother as well."

Yi Chuan didn't have exceptional talents, but he had great eyesight and kindness. Because of this, Suhang continued to grow under his leadership.

A'Bao only scowled without saying anything else. The other disciples couldn't swallow the anger from this humiliation either. Yi Chuan was the only one who took it in stride.

"Let us go. Since the crown prince left so early, it seems like Her Highness is about to arrive." Yi Chuan let a disciple pay the bill while ordering the other disciples.

These disciples immediately turned excited again after hearing about being able to see Her Highness.

"Little friend, I hope that we can meet again." Before leaving, Yi Chuan was still as polite as ever towards Li Qiye.

Li Qiye smiled and nodded. He continued to drink his wine and was in no hurry.

The group made their way towards the Waterside Garden. Along the way, A'Li curiously asked: "Master, why are you so courteous towards that Li Qiye? Does he really have that much potential?"

She wasn't the only one who wanted to know. The rest of the group wanted to ask as well.

Yi Chuan gently shook his head in response: "Child, you cannot judge and look down on other people based on appearances alone. Sometimes, the most powerful expert would seem like the most common bystander."

A'Bao said with skepticism: "Master is saying that Li Qiye is already very powerful? I feel like he's only a mortal, though."

Yi Chuan continued: "This Fellow Daoist Li might not necessarily be powerful, but his future will be bright or even unlimited. All of you think that you are strong. With regards to cultivation and background, this Fellow Li might be weaker than you, but the truth is that in terms of dao heart, wisdom and perseverance, all of you can't compare to him at all. This isn't only because of his determination, it is because he remains undaunted even in the face of a landslide." With that, Yi Chuan looked at the juniors: "Cultivation is not just about becoming more powerful. It requires strengthening your mind as well! Only when one's cultivation and mind are both powerful would one be able to walk even further on the dao."

"Remember well, geniuses aren't the only ones who will become the strongest." Yi Chuan thoughtfully explained: "For ages now, countless geniuses and brilliant experts were born into the world, but in the end, only one will become the Immortal Emperor. Moreover, there were plenty who were even more incredible compared to the emperors, but in the end, they turned to nothing..."

He paused for a second before continuing: "More often than not, it wasn't because these geniuses were not strong enough. It was due to the fact that their dao hearts were lacking. Some couldn't rise again after a minor setback and forever disappeared among the crowd. I know you are all very prideful, but think about it, if you started as a mortal or a vagrant cultivator, would you be so carefree and relaxed today?"

The group turned quiet after hearing this. This speech functioned as a warning for them.

In the winehouse, Li Qiye finished his fine wine before leaving. He asked for directions to the Waterside Garden and then headed there.

In fact, he wasn't the only one to do so; many cultivators were heading there. A lot of them were vagrant cultivators.

Prior to this, the news of the great lord's southern patrol had been spread far and wide. All the cultivators here came running in order to see her once.

Many people loved talking about Ye Chuyun. It could even be said that in the entire Southern Tang, many people saw her as their pride.

They spoke her tales as if they knew it like the palm of their hand. For example, she had surpassed her Life Reduction many years ago and became one of the youngest Virtuous Paragons in the Barren Earth after the Difficult Dao Era ended!

"The great lord's story can only be described as brilliant." These cultivators couldn't contain their excitement as they discussed her stories.

A youth narrated: "That's right, our lord is the number one expert among our Southern Tang's younger generation. Way back then, she visited the Eastern Hundred Cities and trained at the Heavenly Dao Academy. She even became a student of the Sacred Era Hall!"

Another spoke while full of admiration: "Yes, the Sacred Era Hall! This is the gathering place of the greatest talents in the Mortal Emperor World. So many geniuses couldn't get in!"

"Her glorious deeds didn't stop there. Rumor has it that she had even climbed to the top of the World Tree, something that even imperial descendants couldn't do. People said that only a few people like

Deity Jikong Wudi and Goddess Mei Suyao made it to the top, yet our lord was able to do so as well. It is easy to imagine just how powerful she is...”

Self-restraint became a rare sight when the topic was about Ye Chuyun’s past.

The Waterside Garden was located in the southern area of this city. It was surrounded by rivers and beautiful sceneries. Moreover, spirit energy flowed all around. This type of land was not something a mortal could own.

This was the property of a great power. This sect immediately prepared it to greet the great lord that was about to make her appearance.

The moment Li Qiye arrived, many experts and vagabonds had already been quietly waiting.

Any cultivator was able to meet her during her patrol, no matter their background or current sect. Thus, the garden was completely packed and consisted of people ranging from royal lords and sect masters to cultivators with humble beginnings...

There was no other requirement to gain entry outside of being a cultivator. Nevertheless, the garden still had bodyguards to prevent any mishaps.

“Mortals cannot enter!” The guards immediately stopped Li Qiye at the gate. Without a doubt, he was included in the no-entry category.

Even if he was not a mortal, he still couldn’t enter with his current shabby appearance. Letting someone like this in was an affront to their Southern Tang’s reputation.

“Get out of my way.” Li Qiye flipped his hair while looking at the two guards that blocked him with their spears.

The moment his calm eyes fell upon them, the two guards couldn’t help but quiver. This pair of dull eyes didn’t have any prestige. However, it exuded an unspeakable oppressive force that caused them to feel an instinctive fear as their legs grew weak!

The two had weak cultivations, so how could they withstand his glare? They simply didn’t dare to stop him and let him in.

After Li Qiye entered, the two guards finally heaved a sigh of relief. They felt a cold chill and glanced at each other: “That, that was so bizarre!” [1. Raw was, “we’ve truly met a ghost!” But the meaning in the localized version has the same meaning in this case. The ghost expression feels a bit weird here for this usage.]

At this point, the cultivators quietly stood there, waiting for the arrival of the great lord. The leaders who knew each other started to converse.

As for the vagabonds and lowly cultivators, they knew themselves full well and chose to stay in the far corners. They didn’t dare to compete against those experts and leaders for the better spots.

Of course, the powerful leaders were sitting at the front. They were qualified to meet the great lord first.

During their friendly greetings, someone saw Li Qiye coming in and asked with surprise: "Who is that?"

Suddenly, many looked at him. They noticed his appearance and frowned.

"Where did this beggar come from? Why was such a fellow allowed in?" A sect master saw him and furrowed his brows.

In their eyes, the reception for the great lord was a big event. How could they be happy to see a beggar in this place?

"Hmph, why is he here? Is this a place where he can come?" A' Bao, who had always been unhappy with Li Qiye, snorted.

Even Yi Chuan was caught off guard to see Li Qiye here.

"Junior, are you lost?" A sect master was completely disgruntled towards Li Qiye and raised his voice aggressively. A mortal would fall to the ground due to this aura.

Li Qiye slowly turned to face him and asked: "Is this the Waterside Garden?"

"Yes, this place is the Waterside Garden, but it isn't a place where you can come and go as you please..." The sect master spoke as a royal aura emerged from his body.

Li Qiye waved his hand dismissively and interrupted him: "Then it's right, I didn't come to the wrong place."

"Oh? Isn't this Royal Lord Yi Chuan's friend? What's going on, does your friend want to come here to beg?" A sarcastic voice came about. It was the Minor-Form Crown Prince.

The prince did this in order to humiliate Yi Chuan before everyone. He was deliberately causing trouble.

Chapter 935: Meeting An Old Friend

Many quickly shifted their gaze over towards Yi Chuan. A few sect masters who wanted to chase Li Qiye away looked to Yi Chuan as well.

As the old saying goes, one has to look at the owner before beating their dog. Yi Chuan was a big character in Southern Tang. Anyone would have to show some consideration towards him. The Minor-Form Crown Prince's frank attitude towards him was part of the minority.

A' Bao's group, at this moment, were angrily glaring at Li Qiye. In their eyes, Li Qiye was throwing away their country's face. He was purposely making it hard for their ruler to step down!

Yi Chuan was a bit embarrassed. He coughed and said: "I do know this little friend." He didn't deny being Li Qiye's acquaintance.

Li Qiye waved his hand and said: "Me coming here has nothing to do with Royal Lord Yi. There's no need for all of you to worry, just do as you please."

“Haha, brat, if Yi Chuan didn’t bring you here, how could you enter in the first place?” The crown prince provoked again.

“Which eye of yours saw Our Majesty bring him here?!” A’Bao couldn’t help but glare at the prince’s blatant attempt at shaming their king. [1. This expression is not used in English. I could have done “when did you see” to make it less jarring, but I left it in to maintain the disrespectful/angry tone.]

“A’Bao, do not be rude.” Yi Chuan gently shook his head: “It is not a big deal even if I brought this little friend here. Our great lord’s patrol is meant for everyone to see.”

Li Qiye only smiled and proceeded to sit even in this situation.

“Junior, scram to the side, that isn’t a place for you to sit!” A royal lord immediately shouted after seeing where he sat down.

Cold glares fell upon him. In their opinion, Li Qiye was truly too outrageous to actually be sitting all the way at the front. They thought that someone like him should be sitting in some obscure corner. Perhaps even the vagrant cultivators would be unwilling to sit beside him.

But now, he did just the opposite and took the front row, grabbing everyone’s attention. This was simply asking for a beating.

Li Qiye slowly turned around to look at this royal lord and leisurely said: “I can sit above the nine heavens, let alone this spot. Shut the hell up!”

“You...” The royal lord was shaking from anger and furiously glared at Li Qiye. It was too humiliating to be shouted at by a nobody such as him.

“Haha, it seems like someone is relying on Royal Lord Yi Chuan’s prestige to act so arrogantly.” The Minor-Form Crown Prince sneered. His country and Suhang had always been at odds, so he was fanning the flames to humiliate Yi Chuan.

The royal lord who yelled at Li Qiye earlier told Yi Chuan in a serious tone: “Royal Lord Yi, if this is your disciple, then discipline him to avoid being shamed before the great lord.”

If Li Qiye was Yi Chuan’s disciple, then it wasn’t his place to discipline him, so he wanted to pressure Yi Chuan instead.

“Royal Lord Yi, you need to reign in a disciple like this better, how shameful! Junior, go sit behind your senior, this is not the place to act disrespectfully!” Another sect master was very unhappy with Li Qiye’s actions and coldly voiced his objection.

Even A’Bao’s group was glaring at Li Qiye. Li Qiye’s actions made it very awkward for their king and lost him all face.

Yi Chuan was a bit embarrassed. He couldn’t help but wave at Li Qiye: “Little friend, come sit behind me. You are sitting in a sect master’s spot.”

Yi Chuan’s attitude was very friendly towards Li Qiye. If it was someone else, they wouldn’t bother protecting Li Qiye.

Li Qiye sat there firmly and motionless. He only smiled and said: "Royal Lord Yi, thank you for being considerate, but I rather like this seat right now."

Yi Chuan could only smile wryly at this while A'Bao indignantly said: "Your Majesty, just leave this ungrateful person alone."

The crowd present had all kinds of expressions as they gazed at Li Qiye. Some felt that this brat was crazy while others thought that he was quite interesting. A few sect masters and royal lords thought that Li Qiye was challenging their authority by taking one of their spots.

"Junior, if you continue to not know any better, I will throw you out myself." The royal lord from earlier uttered with ill intent.

"Shut up." Li Qiye closed his eyes and interrupted him harshly: "If you keep buzzing in my ears, I'll twist you up like a piece of bread!"

The royal lord vomited blood from anger after hearing this. He immediately stood up while his blood energy erupted!

"The great lord is here." Right when this royal lord was about to take action, a message came from outside.

"The great lord is here." Everyone inside the garden stood up and went to greet their lord.

The royal lord that wanted to attack Li Qiye scowled and swallowed his anger, then he quickly went to greet the lord as well.

Under the receptive crowd, the current ruler of Southern Tang, the Pure Lotus School's Ye Chuyun appeared before everyone.

"Welcome, great lord." Everyone hurriedly greeted Ye Chuyun. It was not only because she was the great lord of the region, but also because she was a Virtuous Paragon.

Across the entire Barren Earth, very few people in the younger generation were Virtuous Paragons. It could be said that those who reached this level could be counted on one's hand, and she had become one many years ago on top of that. She was plenty powerful enough, someone worthy of being both feared and the pride of her people.

Li Qiye looked for Ye Chuyun who was surrounded by the crowd. After so many years, her style was even more brilliant than before.

She was still wearing an aqua-colored dress and her almond eyes contained a hint of charm and elegance. Her aura of nature was accompanied by a dignified and noble air that had a touch of indescribable femininity.

Unlike the past, the current Ye Chuyun's actions had a world-turning momentum, as if she could cause rain to fall with the flip of her palm.

There was no doubt that reaching Virtuous Paragon carried a great significance. It was the first step into the supreme grand dao, the beginning of a deified title in the future!

Outside of the sect masters and royal lords gathering around her, even regular and vagabond cultivators tried to find an opportunity to introduce themselves and leave a good impression. In the future, if they needed help from Southern Tang or the Pure Lotus School, at least they could pretend to be acquaintances.

Yi Chuan also brought his juniors to meet her. A’ Bao’s group was excited to see Ye Chuyun for the first time. For both the males and females, the great lord was their goddess and role model; it was their honor to be able to see her in person.

Ye Chuyun was not arrogant. She nodded her head as a greeting towards everyone. Before she knew it, she was surrounded by sect masters and royal lords.

At this point, her gaze paused for a moment as she inadvertently saw a lone person sitting at the front. His clothes were ragged, but that figure, that figure was all too familiar.

Ye Chuyun was shocked because he had been missing for a very long time. No one knew his whereabouts, but now he suddenly appeared in this place — this was quite astounding.

“Your Majesty, this beggar snuck in here, let me chase him out!” The Minor-Form Crown Prince thought that the great lord was angered by the sight of the beggar and quickly headed for him in order to claim this merit.

“Foul Beggar, get out of here, don’t defile Her Majesty’s view!” The prince shouted and reached for Li Qiye.

“Pop!” The prince couldn’t catch him before a crisp slapping noise resounded. No one saw how Li Qiye slapped him. The prince spat out a mouthful of blood; all of his teeth were broken.

“Little bastard!” The prince became furious and wanted to behead Li Qiye.

Ye Chuyun composed herself and shouted: “Step down!” She was a Virtuous Paragon. Her shout alone was enough to cause the prince to take several steps backward before falling down. He was no longer able to stand up since the gap between the two was too large.

Li Qiye remained seated with dirt and grit all over his face. He looked at her and smiled: “Miss Ye, long time no see.”

This address left many people breathless. In Southern Tang, no one dared to call the great lord by her name outside of Virtuous Paragons from the previous generation.

Ye Chuyun quickly walked towards him and replied: “Brother Li, long time no see. I didn’t expect Brother Li to make an entrance. If you told me, I would have personally gone to greet you.” [1. “I” here is “this little sister” from Ye Chuyun.]

This scene left the sect masters and royal lords present dumbfounded. One could imagine the person’s identity if their great lord had to act so politely.

A’ Bao’s group behind Yi Chuan watched on in disbelief. Li Qiye was completely filthy. No matter how they looked at him, he was not worthy of such grand treatment.

Li Qiye smiled and shook his head: "You are too polite. I have only recently returned and just happened to come to Southern Tang. However, I do have something to ask of you."

Ye Chuyun looked at Li Qiye. Though she didn't know what had transpired, she understood that Li Qiye had experienced something incredible. Just think about it, this man before her could nonchalantly destroy a sect. A slight gesture from him could trap many ancestors from imperial lineages to death. [2. Heavenly Dao Academy's arc.]

"I will do my best to provide assistance for whatever you need." Ye Chuyun quickly answered: "You must be tired from the journey. If you don't mind, how about staying at my place for a few days?"

"Very well, since Miss Ye is showing such magnificent hospitality, I can only obey." Li Qiye smiled and nodded his head, intending to stand up.

Ye Chuyun quickly helped him up. She gave orders to the disciple next to her before personally accompanying him away.

[spoiler title='935 Teaser']Many quickly shifted their gaze over towards Yi Chuan. A few sect masters who wanted to chase Li Qiye away looked at Yi Chuan as well.

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Chapter 936: Ye Chuyun

In just a second, the entire Waterside Garden turned quiet as everyone watched the great lord help Li Qiye leave hand-in-hand.

They were shocked by this scene. No one knew the identity of this dirty youth. Such actions from their great lord were beyond being polite. It was at the level of deference!

Suddenly, their heads went blank and they felt suffocated. Ye Chuyun was not only the current ruler of Southern Tang, she was also a paragon. Among the youths in the Barren Earth, she was definitely among the top talents.

But now, she personally accompanied this young man away with full respect. It was easy to see how highly she regarded him.

No one here could believe such a thing, not even Yi Chuan. He only thought that Li Qiye was an ordinary vagrant cultivator.

As for the group of A’ Bao, their mouths were wide open and wouldn’t close for a long time. The great lord was their goddess who was completely unreachable. However, she was personally helping Li Qiye away. Such a respectful attitude was too unbelievable!

Prior to this, they were very unhappy towards Li Qiye. But now, they thought that the ignorant ones were themselves!

“It’s over...” The Minor-Form Crown Prince dropped to the ground with a completely pale complexion. Even their great lord was so respectful, yet he offended the person.

The royal lord who wanted to attack Li Qiye was drenched in cold sweat. He didn’t think that this inconspicuous beggar had such a great background. At this time, a few people were reminded of Yi Chuan. He was the only person here who was Li Qiye’s friend.

“Brother Yi, what is the background of that young noble earlier?” Many royal lords and sect masters quickly swarmed towards Yi Chuan to ask for Li Qiye’s information. They actually thought that Yi Chuan knew his identity.

Yi Chuan smiled wryly and shook his head: “I don’t know that young noble’s exact background either.”

Li Qiye was sitting inside Ye Chuyun’s carriage. She noticed his ragged appearance and showed concern: “What happened to Brother Li?”

She was still a paragon, so she was able to notice a thing or two after a look.

Li Qiye smiled in response: “No big deal, it is just that I only got back from the Stone Medicine World with a bit of difficulty.” Li Qiye answered in such a nonchalant manner, but Ye Chuyun’s expression shifted. The pathways between the nine worlds had yet to be opened. Forcefully breaking through the world barriers was definitely courting death, even for a God-Monarch!

“Are you okay?” Ye Chuyun asked with concern.

Li Qiye gently shook his head: “There’s no need to worry, Miss Ye. It was only a small matter. I only made a bet with someone and my dao foundation got sealed — just a minor inconvenience.

Ye Chuyun naturally understood that this “minor inconvenience” was definitely a heaven-shattering event to anyone else.

She welcomed him into the Pure Lotus School and prepared the best place for him as well. All of this was carried out with the most prestigious reception possible for an esteemed guest.

Ye Chuyun was already waiting in the hall by the time Li Qiye finished taking a bath. She saw him coming and immediately stood up then bowed: “I left in a hurry back then and couldn’t show you my gratitude. Please accept this bow today.”

Li Qiye waved his sleeve and smiled: “It is all in the past, there’s no need to mention it. You didn’t need to thank me for back then either.”

“No, without your guidance, the me standing here today wouldn’t exist.” Ye Chuyun insisted on bowing and continued in a formal manner: “My achievements today were mostly given to me by Brother Li.”

Back then, Li Qiye brought her to the World Tree which led to her obtaining quite a big fortune. This allowed her cultivation to suddenly rise after returning. Some even said that she was the first Virtuous Paragon of the young generation after the end of the Difficult Dao Era!

She left quickly back then and couldn’t thank Li Qiye. Today, she bowed solemnly in order to express her gratitude upon meeting him again.

Seeing her persistence, Li Qiye sat down and accepted her grand gesture.

After handing over her gift, she sat down with Li Qiye. He looked at her and smiled: “Miss Ye is an acquaintance, so I won’t be too reserved. First, I want to ask about the Cleansing Incense Ancient Sect.”

“Brother Li can rest easy about this.” Ye Chuyun smiled. When a gentle girl like her smiled, it was especially pleasing to the eyes. She said: “The Cleansing Incense Ancient Sect is extraordinary in present times. Although I have not been to the Grand Middle Territory, I still hear some news from there. It is said that Miss Li and Miss Chen have reached half completion of their Immortal Physiques, and the same goes for your sect’s Master Su. They are a threat to the Grand Middle Territory and even the entire Mortal Emperor World! Back when they reached half completion, the majority of the sects in the world went to congratulate them. Unfortunately, I was undergoing a cultivation session so I couldn’t go and instead only sent disciples with gifts.”

Her answer was not an exaggeration. One sect with three Immortal Physiques... It was no wonder that this would shock the entire world. Three half completion Immortal Physiques could force any Virtuous Paragon to back off! This was not taking into account the fact that they could become three grand completion physiques in the future.

If one sect could have three grand completion physiques, then even if an Immortal Emperor was present, they wouldn’t carelessly start a fight. One grand completion Immortal Physique was enough to assail an Immortal Emperor. Just imagine the power of three in the same sect!

Of course, the world didn’t know about Chen Baojiao’s physique. However, someone gauged her physique’s power and assumed that she was cultivating an Immortal Physique as well, despite not knowing the exact one.

After hearing this, Li Qiye sighed in relief and nodded his head: “Then I’ll ask Miss Ye for a favor.”

Ye Chuyun quickly said: “I will do my best, just let me know what you need.”

Li Qiye responded: “Miss Ye is too polite. I only want you to help me send news to the Cleansing Incense Sect about my return.”

“This is simple.” Ye Chuyun replied: “I will let my disciples do so right away. However, Brother Li should know that we can’t send this news to the Cleansing Incense Sect right away. Our sect and yours are not connected by a dao portal. I’m afraid we need to use the Eastern Hundred Cities as a transit point and the Icy Feather Palace’s dao portal.”

Directly teleporting was the quickest way for cultivators to communicate, but this type of teleportation required the dao portals of the two sects to be connected. Only sects with great relationships would have such a thing.

There was another type of teleportation — blind teleportation. They would only know the approximate position and couldn't teleport accurately. This type of teleportation not only required a huge amount of refined jades, the chance for mistakes was high as well. It could even teleport someone to dangerous locations.

"No rush, as long as it is sent." Li Qiye nodded. He didn't intend on returning to the Grand Middle Territory for now. He had other plans at the Barren Earth that still needed to be carried out.

"We will definitely send the news for you." Ye Chuyun said: "May I ask how long you will be staying at the Barren Earth? If you are in no hurry and don't mind, then you can stay at my humble abode for a while. I still want to ask you for some pointers." Ye Chuyun was very forward with her intentions.

"Since Miss Ye has shown me such great hospitality, I will do as you ask." Li Qiye was not reserved. He looked at her and asked: "Have there been any big events at the Mortal Emperor World in these past few years?"

"Since Brother Li left, the Mortal Emperor World has been very peaceful." Ye Chuyun responded: "Your battle back then served as a warning to the rest of the world, so in these recent years, many sects here have only been training and training. Very few people caused trouble."

She was correct in this matter. The battle back at the Heavenly Dao Academy acted as a deterrent to the entire world, especially when the Realm God easily crushed the Brilliance Ancient Kingdom. Many lineages didn't even dare to breathe loudly afterward.

With a powerful existence like the Realm God around, anyone would need to think twice before causing trouble in the Mortal Emperor World.

Li Qiye only chuckled and didn't comment on the matters of past.

"Recently, the most sensational news is the Buddhist Funeral Plateau announcing that the Nalanda Temple and all the other temples under its jurisdiction were opening again to enlighten all the destined ones in the world." Ye Chuyun told Li Qiye what she knew. [1. Nalanda is a real place, a large buddhist monastery in India.]

"The plateau finally opened." Li Qiye narrowed his eyes upon hearing this.

"The Difficult Dao Era is over, so the Nalanda Temple wants to welcome the world."

"Countless cultivators go to the plateau each day. However, in recent years, several geniuses have been converted so people have been very careful when they go there, especially the younger generation." Ye Chuyun explained.

Li Qiye couldn't help but gaze at the far horizon and murmur: "Buddhist Funeral Plateau..."

It was one of the twelve burial grounds with many secrets within. Some of them were beyond human comprehension.

“Brother Li wants to go there?” Ye Chuyun asked after seeing his expression.

Li Qiye slightly shook his head: “No rush, it will not go anywhere. If the Nalanda Temple has opened again, they won’t close their doors so quickly. After I’m done with my business, it still won’t be too late to go there!”

“Will you need my assistance?” Ye Chuyun went straight to the point.

Li Qiye smiled: “I will definitely ask if I need help.”

“As long as you need it, just let me know and both the Pure Lotus School and I will try our best.”

Although Ye Chuyun was born in the prosperous southern land, as the ruler of the region, she was not long-winded at all.

Chapter 937: Inseparable

Li Qiye stayed back at the Pure Lotus School. Outside of refining his dao foundation, he used his time to meditate on the supreme mysteries in order to perfect the vessel of athanasia. He had a particular vision in his mind: once all three vessels were perfected, an entirely new framework would be formed.

Li Qiye knew that with regards to life creation alone, other people had gone much further than him.

However, no matter how powerful one might be on this path, they would have to pay a terrible price. This was a heaven-defying matter, a challenge to the high heavens.

Because of this, Li Qiye’s new idea was to rise against the heavens and surpass all things. Creating life alone was not enough. If this was his limit, then it would be over for him.

Due to this reason, he must make the vessels support each other instead of being independent existences, to form a new system that had never existed before, to reach an unprecedented height!

Thus, there was still a long way for Li Qiye to go. In his eyes, becoming Immortal Emperor was only the beginning.

During his stay, Ye Chuyun was not reserved at all. She directly asked him for help whenever she had questions on cultivation. She didn’t have the same meekness of southern women. She was frank yet graceful. More importantly, even as a Virtuous Paragon, she still consulted him with sincerity and modesty.

She knew better than anyone else that despite being a paragon, Li Qiye was much more powerful than her. Even a genius like Bing Yuxia was full of respect towards Li Qiye, so she had nothing to be arrogant about.

Li Qiye didn’t hold back either and solved all of her questions as well as pointed out her shortcomings.

After obtaining his guidance, Ye Chuyun had a new sense of enlightenment. Many things that she couldn’t understand before suddenly became clear.

“I can’t catch up to your understanding of the grand dao even if I try for the rest of my life.” She was absolutely convinced by his knowledge.

Li Qiye only smiled. He could even teach an Immortal Emperor, so this level of guidance was nothing special.

Li Qiye smilingly said: "It is only because you can also understand. If you give me an ox to teach, then even if I could spew out a deluge of heavenly lotuses with my words, it still wouldn't understand."

Ye Chuyun's talent was high. Although there was still a gap between her and Bing Yuxia, she had a heart with the characteristics of an orchid flower. This made up for her weaknesses. [1. Orchid is the symbol of perfection and elegance in Chinese culture.]

She chuckled after hearing this. The gentle smile made a gentle girl like her even more charming than before.

She became immersed in cultivation with Li Qiye's guidance and became his friend, an inseparable shadow.

This made the disciples in the school think that their school master had found a dao companion. Even the ancestors thought that Ye Chuyun had found her love. They specifically called for her and asked: "Child, when is your wedding?"

After hearing the ancestor, Ye Chuyun didn't know whether to laugh or cry. She realized that her ancestor misunderstood, so she smiled and shook her head: "Ancestor, I didn't say that I want to get married."

"I understand that you care for the sect, but you cannot let go of your own marriage as well. If you have someone you like and he is right for you, then just go marry him." This ancestor said: "Our school is different from the others, our school master can marry. We have no ambition to compete with the rest of the world, just living in peace is enough. The seniors in the sect don't want you to waste your chance just because of the sect."

Ye Chuyun didn't know how to respond after hearing this. News of her always being together with Li Qiye had long spread around the school. There was no disciple who didn't know about them. However, the truth was that nothing happened between them.

He told Ye Chuyun: "I have checked out the brat staying with you. He really isn't bad; he's not afraid of the world and has a firm dao heart — definitely an extraordinary character. If you like him, then marry him. The seniors in the sect all support you."

She laughed awkwardly before denying: "Ancestor, this is an impossible matter. Plus, even if I want to marry, Brother Li wouldn't be willing. There are so many beauties by his side and all of them are geniuses."

"You need to fight for your marriage. As long as you try, there will always be a chance." The ancestor spoke profoundly.

Ye Chuyun was at a loss for words. Eventually, she bade farewell to the ancestor as she didn't want to discuss this matter any longer because everyone had misunderstood her relationship with Li Qiye. Moreover, it was getting worse and worse. Nevertheless, she didn't try to clarify this misunderstanding. Li Qiye was too lazy to as well. Because of this, everyone assumed that they had truly become a couple.

Li Qiye was very content with his time here at the lotus school. There were no worries and every trivial detail was dealt with by Ye Chuyun. Their cultivation time together was very pure and untouched by the ravages of life. He enjoyed the days passing by like this.

Although both Ye Chuyun and Madam Zi Yan were gentle, there was a big difference between the two. Madam Zi Yan was as soft as water, like spring rain pouring down on Li Qiye's daily life. Meanwhile, Ye Chuyun was a surging stream that washed away his secular worries.

Ye Chuyun followed him and did not let anything interfere with his meditation. However, on one particular day, she had to interrupt him.

"There is a message, would you like to hear it?" She was worried that he would be distracted, so she wouldn't bother him with ordinary matters.

"What is it?" Li Qiye casually asked.

"Our disciples obtained some new information. Several days ago, an immortal river surged from the Godwar Mountain. I asked my ancestors before after hearing about it and found that this is something that has never happened before." She elaborated: "A couple of days ago, you expressed interest in going there, so I'm wondering if you want to go right now?"

In fact, she was actually hoping for him to stay at the Pure Lotus School. Their time together was very enjoyable.

"Immortal river? Elaborate." Li Qiye expressed some interest by narrowing his eyes.

"I don't know the exact details. The disciples said that it looks like a rising crown." She gently shook her head in response.

After hearing this, he immediately stood up and slowly spoke: "We'll go tomorrow."

"To the Godwar Mountain?" She asked.

Li Qiye shook his head: "No, we're not in a hurry to go there. We'll head for the Heavenguard Sect first."

"Heavenguard Sect." Ye Chuyun was surprised and said: "The Heavenguard Sect does not meet outsiders these days. I don't think they want to compete in this generation either."

"They will meet me, I left something behind there." Li Qiye replied.

Ye Chuyun stared at him and softly spoke: "How about I go with you? If you don't find it appropriate, then I won't make things difficult."

She was as gentle as possible at this moment and exuded an indescribable charm with each of her actions.

Li Qiye met her gaze and nodded: "We'll go together then. After finishing with the Heavenguard Sect, I'll be going to the Godwar Mountain, then it is off to the Buddhist Funeral Plateau. You don't have much to see at the Godwar Mountain, but the plateau is definitely a place worth visiting. You will be able to benefit from the trip."

"I appreciate your guidance." Ye Chuyun grew happy and bowed in excitement.

Li Qiye gently stroked the hair flowing down her forehead and said: "This is not considered guidance but more that I fancy you. Your will to reach the dao is like flowing water, free yet persistent like the tranquil rain in spring. In the future, you won't become an Immortal Emperor, but you will still be a supreme expert."

"I'm very happy to hear your praise." She smiled as her brows lifted gracefully. She had a particular appeal to reach straight into the heart.

Li Qiye ordered: "Go get ready since you will need to leave for a long time."

Ye Chuyun didn't hesitate at all and began her preparations. She left the matters in the sect to the elders so that she could visit the Heavenguard Sect with Li Qiye.

On the next day, they embarked on their journey. Ye Chuyun didn't bring any disciples so as to not bother Li Qiye.

Southern Tang was also near the extreme southwest area of the Barren Earth while the Heavenguard Sect was in the southeast region, so the two of them headed east.

However, Li Qiye was not in a rush. Rather than taking one portal after another, they opted to take a boat to cross the mountain ranges.

Along the way, he stopped at some other places. They were all different; ancient capitals, mountains, rivers, divine peaks...

His expression kept on changing after stopping at these places; silence, sadness, dazed...

No matter the time or occasion, Ye Chuyun only quietly stood by his side and kept him company.

The Barren Earth had a different significance in Li Qiye's mind. If the Eastern Hundred Cities was memorable due to it being the origin of the human race, then the Barren Earth was a place he didn't want to think about.

However, at the same time, this was the place Li Qiye wanted to stop by the most.

[spoiler title='937 Teaser']Li Qiye stayed back at the Pure Lotus School. Outside of refining his dao foundation, he used that time to meditate on the supreme mysteries in order to perfect the vessel of athanasia. He had this particular vision in his mind. Once all three vessels were perfected, an entirely new framework would be formed.

Li Qiye knew that with regards to life creation alone, other people had gone much further than him.

However, no matter how powerful one might be on this path, they would have to pay a terrible price. This was a heaven-defying matter, a challenge to the high heavens.

Because of this, Li Qiye's new idea was to rise against the heavens and surpass all things. Creating life alone was not enough. If this was his limit, then it would be over for him.

Due to this reason, he must make the vessels support each other instead of being independent existences to form a new system that had never been there before, to reach an unprecedented height!

Chapter 938: Heavenguard Sect

Too much hot blood had been spilled at the Barren Earth. It could be said that all of the most tragic battles back then took place here.

Each time he visited this place, Li Qiye couldn't help but recall all of those souls. Sometimes, he wished that time would stop so that he could stay with these lost comrades!

While standing near the bank of a broken river, Li Qiye quietly listened to the moving current. Ye Chuyun stood beside him and held his hand for comfort.

Li Qiye looked at her then pointed at the broken area ahead: "Did you know that in a distant era, this place was piled with corpses? Without the bodies of those heroes, the nine worlds of today wouldn't exist."

"I don't know much about the battles in the past." Ye Chuyun held his hand and spoke: "But I do hope for you to keep on moving forward. Our ancestors worked hard so that their descendants could continue to tread forward. I am sad to see you feeling so down."

Li Qiye gently sighed while looking at the sceneries ahead. That war was far too cruel. Countless generals and soldiers in his strongest legion died on this land!

"Come, let us go to the Heavenguard Sect." Eventually, he shook his head and moved on.

Ye Chuyun continued to quietly accompany him as they headed eastbound. Sometimes, she would introduce the land to him, hoping to see him smile.

The Heavenguard Sect was a lineage whose fame had long since spread across the entire Mortal Emperor World. It had three emperors, thus its prestige was difficult to match.

In the Barren Earth, there were two sects with three emperors. One was the Heavenguard Sect while the other was the Mysterious Bamboo Mountain. If the mountain was a prosperous heritage, then the sect was on a downward slope. This was especially true for the recent few generations. The sect had been low-key for a long time now.

Nevertheless, its high status in this world was not only due to its number of emperors, but also due to its efforts!

In the distant Ancient Ming Era, there was a legend. It stated that the Heavenguard Sect participated in many conquests and countless geniuses fell in those battles! It paid a heavy price after each war.

Keep in mind that the sect was extremely powerful since this was before the Emperors Era. Some people even calculated that it produced the highest amount of Godkings and True Gods. They even claimed that it was the strongest lineage with three Emperors in this world!

If it wasn't for their involvement in these incredible battles and losing many Godkings and geniuses, perhaps it would have surpassed the unequaled Soaring Immortal Sect!

It has been said that the Heavenguard was the pride of the human race, its protectors. Because of this, other imperial lineages were very respectful towards the Heavenguard Sect.

Li Qiye and Ye Chuyun finally arrived. They saw many majestic divine peaks. All of these peaks towered high into the sky as if they were the abodes of gods.

No matter who they might be, anyone would feel insignificant while standing outside and gazing at this sect from a distance, as if they were mere insects. The supreme momentum in the sect's ancestral ground made it seem like the stars were orbiting this location.

There was a monolith erected immediately outside of its entrance. There were no words carved on it, only the image of a crown that seemed as if it belonged to an Immortal Monarch of the nine heavens.

Li Qiye softly sighed while standing outside of the sect's entrance. He had finally returned to this place after so many years.

In those far-off days, every time he left this place, he was accompanied by the men of this sect on his expeditions. During the Ancient Ming Era, not many of them returned alive.

Thus, later on, he didn't want to return to this sect as he no longer wanted them to follow him. He didn't wish to see its disciples riding his war chariots!

In his eyes, the sect's sacrifices in that last battle during the Ancient Ming Era alone were a heavy price for it to shoulder. It had always supported him in his war against the Ancient Ming.

His legions clashed against the Ancient Ming time after time during the endless war. Many of his troops were from the Heavenguard Sect. He felt that the sect had paid its dues, so he no longer returned.

Back when Immortal Emperor Zhen Yu and Immortal Emperor Mu Tian were young and aspired for the apex, he had helped them many times. Nevertheless, he didn't set foot in this place during the Emperors Era and had always refused the two Emperors' continuous beseeching. [2. Zhen Yu is Hell Suppressing and Mu Tian is Heaven's Shepherd.]

While the two stood outside of the gate, a guard from the sect shook his head and told them: "Dao friends, please return. Our sect does not meet guests."

Li Qiye looked at him and said: "Yes, but I'm not a guest."

The disciple couldn't help but look at him again and asked: "May I ask for your name?"

Li Qiye didn't answer him. He told Ye Chuyun: "You settle down here. I will go meet them." With that, he went closer to the stone monolith and opened his mind. Two golden universal laws flew out and went straight into the monolith.

"Buzz!" The wordless monolith suddenly lit up with golden light.

"Clank!" The two universal laws actually turned into two words — Emperor. [3. This can be a bit confusing because it is two words in CN — 天子. I kept it as two instead of changing it to one because there were two universal laws forming two words. The second part is that this is not the traditional word or the common word that we use for "Emperor". Strictly speaking, this is more of a historical/political/cultural usage of "Emperor". It literally means Son of Heaven, which is what ancient kings were called in order to justify their claim to the throne. In terms of accuracy, I would use Son of Heaven rather than Emperor here, but Emperor fits the context better when translated into English with regards to the novel's plot.]

The word "Emperor" was dazzling with a majestic and carefree aura. Next, the word disappeared and the monolith opened. A golden crown emerged; it was also formed from the two universal laws.

Li Qiye took it and solemnly placed it atop his head. While being on top of his head, golden tassels emerged and dropped down in front of his face. He immediately began emitting an awe-inspiring aura that made it seem like he was an Immortal Monarch! [4. I do think the particular usage for Immortal Monarch sometimes in ED is not the cultivation title and is referring to a great deity, just like the Golden Immortal of the Great Firmament. This is a type of immortal in traditional daoist mythos — extremely powerful. Authors often used this as an expressive idiom; it has been used in ED before as well. This can lead to confusion in an English translation since it seems out of place in the beginning. Back to the Immortal Monarch’s case, yes, it could just be a general description of someone looking like a heavenly king. Just keep both possibilities in mind.]

Ye Chuyun was moved by Li Qiye’s current appearance. Anyone would be awestruck by him at this moment.

The disciples guarding that gate were shocked as well. This monolith had been standing here for so many years, but they never knew about this magical effect.

Li Qiye told the guards at the entrance: “Go, ring the bell, the Emperor has returned.”

“The Emperor has returned...” The disciples shook once in shock. They calmed down and quickly ran inside without questioning him.

Li Qiye wore his golden crown and headed inside the Heavenguard Sect! There was an unspeakable burden in his heart as he stepped into this all too familiar land.

“Clangg—” A sonorous bell rang for miles and miles. Even the ancestors sleeping in the deepest depths of the sect could hear it.

“The bell! The Emperor is back!” These hibernating ancestors were woken up by the sound of the bell. One of them murmured in astonishment: “Is this real?!”

Li Qiye entered a temple and sat in the highest position before commanding the disciples: “Tell your ancestors or sect master to come see me.”

The guards were startled, but they didn’t dare to show any disrespect and quickly carried out the order.

A moment later, a middle-aged man hastily rushed in. After coming inside, he saw Li Qiye sitting in that place and was shocked. He carefully looked at Li Qiye, his gaze pausing on the golden crown above his head for a long time.

“All of you, leave.” After confirming his thoughts, the middle-aged man commanded the guards. All of them obeyed and left.

Li Qiye looked at this man. He was a pudgy fella who looked a bit like a shopkeeper in the mortal world.

However, do not be fooled by his obese appearance since he was very famous in the Barren Earth! He was the Heavenguard Sect Master with the title of Forheaven. He forcibly reached Virtuous Paragon during the Difficult Dao Era, causing his awe-inspiring prestige to echo far and wide.

Forheaven bowed towards Li Qiye and spoke with reverence: “May I ask for your name?”

“Emperor, Li Qiye!” Li Qiye emotionlessly spoke: “What is your purpose?”

“Protect the Emperor and guard the heaven’s prestige...” Forheaven quickly shouted and prostrated on the ground: “The sect did not greet Emperor’s return with the proper welcoming ceremony, this was my mistake.”

Li Qiye gently motioned with his hand and said: “There’s no need for the troublesome formalities of the past, we are not strangers.”

Forheaven stood up with great excitement. There was a legend in their sect stating that the mission of all future disciples was to wait for the Emperor’s return.

It was their purpose — to protect the Emperor and guard the heaven’s prestige! This creed had been passed down from generation to generation!

However, so many years had passed and the Emperor did not return. Although Immortal Emperor Zhen Yu and Immortal Emperor Mu Tian had news of the Emperor, he never came back.

The sect stayed hidden for many generations while awaiting their Emperor. Only with the presence of their Emperor could the Heavenguard truly be itself!

Chapter 939: Sect Master Forheaven

Sect Master Forheaven regained himself from his excitement and prostrated before Li Qiye: “The return of the Emperor shall be our sect’s glory...”

Li Qiye interrupted him by waving his sleeve: “Sect Master, I do not plan on staying here for long. There’s no need to speak about other things, the sect shall stay as it is and continue on its course. Nothing should change because of my return.”

“But Emperor...” Forheaven was stunned after hearing this, not knowing how to respond.

Li Qiye slowly spoke while looking at him: “Sect Master, I know you are thinking about many things right now, but what I bring to the Heavenguard Sect is not glory, only death!”

“For generations, our disciples have all been willing to fight for the Emperor. Death on the battlefield is our glory!” Forheaven emotionally spoke: “The Heavenguard exists for the Emperor. If we do not protect the Emperor, how can we continue to be the Heavenguard?!”

“I know.” Li Qiye gently sighed before replying with some weariness and forlorn: “I have never doubted the loyalty of the Heavenguard Sect. Until now, all of you have been absolutely devoted, but you have paid too much. Your sect was almost destroyed in the Ancient Ming War. It only recovered after the great struggles of the two Immortal Emperors, Zhen Yu and Mu Tian.”

Forheaven solemnly spoke: “We, the Heavenguard, are willing to serve the Emperor even if it costs all of our lives. This is the oath and ancestral teaching left behind by our progenitor, Immortal Emperor Qi Zhen!” [1. Qi Zhen = Truth Starter. Truth here is most likely dao related.]

Li Qiye shook his head and said: “No, you don’t understand. To be frank, Qi Zhen does not owe me, I owe Qi Zhen! Qi Zhen created the Heavenguard Sect back then after countless efforts! I do not wish to see the sect be destroyed by following me!”

“We...” Forheaven wanted to speak.

Li Qiye interrupted him with a wave: "I understand what your ancestors are thinking. I know that they want to come back under my banner. I understand it very well. However, ask your oldest ancestors, do they still remember the Azure Dragon Legion back then?"

Forheaven didn't know how to answer this.

Li Qiye sighed and said: "Even time is unable to erase some things. I understand the Heavenguard's loyalty towards me. For many millions of years, especially during the Ancient Ming period, your sect sacrificed too much. I was the one who brought them along to fight everywhere, but how many of them actually returned alive?"

"Guardians of the human race and the Mortal Emperor World — these glories do not belong to me. They belong to those who fought and died on the battlefield, to those whose bones are buried in lands foreign to them!" Li Qiye lamented: "If your Heavenguard Sect has a candidate to become the Immortal Emperor, then I will strongly support them. To tell the truth, I do not wish to see you all following me on my conquest anymore."

Forheaven grew quiet after hearing this.

With that, Li Qiye looked at him and asked: "Which generation of disciple are you of Worldguard?"

"Dear Emperor, I am Master's direct disciple." Forheaven was still prostrating on the ground while shouting: "Master has told me of Emperor's magnificent deeds, I have always kept it in my heart..."

"Rise, your master has worked hard and contributed greatly." Li Qiye waved his hand and said: "As a True God, it really hasn't been easy for him to live until now."

Worldguard True God — there might not be a single person in this world who still remembers this name. However, he was a very frightening existence, someone capable of withstanding the long years. Not many were qualified to meet him, even within the Heavenguard Sect.

Although Forheaven was his disciple, the fact is that the true god rarely taught him anything. Forheaven was taught cultivation by a different ancestor of the sect.

Li Qiye emotionally sighed after hearing that his old friend was still around. Not many of his followers were still alive after so many years.

"Does Emperor want to meet my master?" Forheaven asked for the command.

"No." Li Qiye gently shook his head: "It will be hard to seal Worldguard again if he comes out. I don't have anything particularly important either, so there's no need to bother him." Li Qiye stared at Forheaven and continued: "This time, I came to get an item from you. Once I'm finished with it, I will return."

"What might that item be, Emperor?" Forheaven asked with haste.

Li Qiye slowly said: "I left something to Mu Tian back then. If I remember correctly, he left this thing behind the mountain."

"That thing..." Forheaven immediately knew what Li Qiye wanted. He hesitated for a moment while rubbing his palms nervously with a slightly embarrassed look.

“What, not convenient right now?” Li Qiye stared at him inquisitively.

Forheaven was put in a tough spot. He coughed and slowly said: “Emperor, umm, this, this item, we...”

He hesitated for quite a while and still didn’t utter the whole sentence. In fact, his scalp was tingling as well since he didn’t know what to say.

“What? You guys don’t want to?” Li Qiye stared at him with narrowed eyes.

“No, no, that is not our intention...” Forheaven was startled by Li Qiye’s expression. Others might be unaware, but he knew very clearly the type of existence that stood before him.

He hastily spoke: “Emperor, hmm, it is not that we are unwilling, but, but we have our own problem... We, we are only juniors, so we can’t be the ones to say it.”

Li Qiye waved his sleeve and said: “Speak, I shall pardon you.”

Forheaven was on pins and needles. He was very distressed at this moment; he finally understood why the ancestors didn’t want to come out and pushed him into this fire pit instead.

However, he had to face it. He smiled awkwardly and spoke: “Umm, this, this is how it goes, if Emperor doesn’t stay behind, or, if, if you come to take the item, then you will have to marry our Empress.” [2. Daughter of Heaven.]

“Empress? Since when did your sect have an Empress?” Li Qiye narrowed his eyes and stared at the sect master.

Forheaven was lamenting his fate in his mind. Why did he have to be the one to say this? Nevertheless, he braced himself: “This, this claim is a bit strange. It actually dates back to the generation of Forefather Mu Tian. Well, it didn’t appear before, but in this generation, we actually have an Empress of the righteous bloodline.”

Li Qiye slowly uttered towards Forheaven: “I don’t care for this Empress or whatever. Moreover, my business is not for someone else to decide. Sect Master Forheaven, you should know that I don’t need your approval to take that item away. I came today out of respect for everyone.”

“Emperor, please, please don’t misunderstand.” Forheaven was startled and quickly replied: “We, we didn’t mean it like that. We absolutely will not cause trouble for you, it’s just that we cannot breach our ancestral teachings either. Forefather Mu Tian left it behind and said that you yourself agreed to it.”

“I agreed to it? Since when did I agree to marry your Empress?” Li Qiye glared at the sect master.

“Emperor, we, we have the forefather’s personal letter, this isn’t just us making things up.” Forheaven was scared out of his mind. Those ancestors knew that something like this would happen, yet they still pushed him in. They truly had no honor!

“Fine, bring Mu Tian’s letter to me.” Li Qiye waved his sleeve. He truly couldn’t recall when he promised Mu Tian to marry this Empress.

Forheaven immediately went to get the forefather’s ancestral letter. After a while, he finally came back while respectfully holding a divine box with both hands.

Li Qiye took it and opened the box containing the letter. After flipping it over, a majestic and supreme Immortal Emperor aura poured out. There was no way to fake this kind of aura. It could only come from the inheritance of an Immortal Emperor.

“Fuck, this brat Mu Tian actually dared to trick me!” Li Qiye couldn’t keep from cursing after reading the letter.

At the same time, Forheaven down below was quivering in fear. He was afraid of Li Qiye becoming angry. This was the agreement between their Emperor and Immortal Emperor. Juniors like them could only be trapped in distress in this matter.

Of course, the one suffering the most was him, unlike the hiding ancestors who were using him!

Li Qiye sat down on his chair and casually threw the letter back into the box with a wry smile. All along, he had been the one to deceive and fool others, but now, he had been duped by Immortal Emperor Mu Tian!

Back then, Immortal Emperor Mu Tian tried to persuade him to come back to the Heavenguard. However, Li Qiye didn’t do so and only agreed to accept one request from the emperor. He didn’t expect for something like this to be the request.

“Emperor, about this...” Forheaven hesitated for a long time before mustering the courage to say: “About this matter, what do you, you...” [3. "You" is respectful here; someone would use this “you” to refer to an elderly man or the patriarch/high-ranking member of a clan/government respectfully.]

Li Qiye exasperatedly sighed at this entrapment set up by Immortal Emperor Mu Tian.

“If that Mu Tian brat was still here, I would beat him to death!” Li Qiye said: “I was the one who taught him about tricking people, yet he actually used it against me!”

“That, that is our forefather’s business, it has nothing to do with us juniors...” Forheaven quickly denied their involvement. He didn’t want to suffer the wrath of the Emperor.

Chapter 940: Su Zhen

Li Qiye sat there in silence. Although he didn’t say anything about marrying this Empress, this hole that Immortal Emperor Mu Tian had intentionally dug for him came to the same end.

“Emperor, so, what do you think about this matter? What do you want to do?” Forheaven courageously asked despite his nervousness.

Li Qiye looked at the sect master and said: “My words are worth a thousand gold. If I have agreed, then so be it! I will marry her!”

Forheaven couldn’t help but let out a long sigh of relief after hearing this. He wiped away the cold sweat dripping down his forehead. If the Emperor didn’t agree, then there was nothing that they could do since no one knew what exactly had happened back then.

Moreover, they were merely disciples, unqualified to demand or force the Emperor to do something.

“However, the position of Heavenly Empress does not belong to her.” Li Qiye gently shook his head: “If she is willing, I can give her the position of a concubine.”

“...” The sect master didn’t know what to do. This wasn’t something that he could take command of, so he didn’t know what to say in this situation.

“I accept!” During Forheaven’s moment of loss, a sweet and clear voice came about as someone walked inside.

Forheaven was scared out of his mind after seeing this intruder and quickly stopped her: “Su Zhen, you, you shouldn’t have come in here!”

The intruder spoke: “Sect Master, this is the biggest event in my life, I have the right to know.” Just her pleasant voice alone was an indescribable pleasure. It was enough to make others think that she was a beauty. The clearness in her soft voice was very relaxing.

“Let her in.” Li Qiye told the sect master who was stopping the girl: “That’s right, this is an important event in her life, she has the right to take charge of it.”

Forheaven had to let the girl inside. He felt a flinch in his stomach because he was afraid the Emperor would become angry after seeing her face.

The girl walked to the front of Li Qiye and looked straight at him. She was very bold and lacked hesitation despite knowing his identity.

Li Qiye observed the girl before him. She wore a completely white outfit with a jade hanging on her waist. It was a very simple style, yet it gave her a noble air since she was the one wearing it.

One could still see her perfect curves beneath the loose silk dress. It could not hide her supple body. She was thin and tall with long brows and straight shoulders. It could be said that one would be hardpressed to point out a flaw in this girl’s figure.

From just her figure, it was more than apparent that this was a supreme beauty.

The only thing that remained a mystery was her facial features. She had a silk veil, revealing only her bright and watery eyes!

“Heavenguard disciple, Su Zhen greets the Emperor.” She bowed before him with her pleasing voice that would make minds of others drift.

Li Qiye slowly spoke: “Take off your veil so that I can see.”

Forheaven’s heart was hanging on a thread after hearing Li Qiye’s words. He almost said something, but he bit his tongue.

Su Zhen obeyed and slowly took off her veil before looking straight at Li Qiye.

Anyone would think that she was a great beauty after hearing her voice and seeing her figure. However, after seeing her face, they would gasp or even involuntarily scream out in fear.

Her face was disproportionate to her figure. The proportions of her facial features were perfect. However, there were many strange, runic lines growing on her face. They resembled wrinkles, but they weren't actually wrinkles. It was as if she had suffered the most terrifying curse in this world.

It was frankly hideous and caused people to shiver without being cold. No one would want to take a second glance at Su Zhen's face.

Forheaven couldn't bear to look either. He was not afraid of looking at her face, it was just that he didn't want to see her being hurt.

He gently sighed as he knew that this day would come. It was a bit too unreasonable to make the Emperor marry a disciple from their sect. No one would want to marry someone like Su Zhen, let alone the supreme Emperor.

She calmly spoke: "If Emperor does not want to marry Su Zhen, then I won't blame you. I was fated to be the Empress from birth. I was born to be yours and I shall die as yours!" Su Zhen was not self-conscious at all after revealing her face.

"Emperor, she is not to be blamed. She was born with that face." Forheaven quickly spoke: "The runes on her face are permanent. We can't remove them, we..."

Li Qiye gently waved his sleeve to interrupt Forheaven. He stared seriously at the runic lines on her face before speaking: "What type of person have I not seen after so many eras? For me, beauty of the flesh is meaningless — unable to reach the apex. Being pretty or not is not important to me."

"Emperor is saying..." Forheaven couldn't help but become happy after hearing this.

Li Qiye gazed at Su Zhen and slowly announced: "My promise can be carried out at any time. If I promised Mu Tian, then I shall do it! If you are willing, then I can marry you, but the position of my wife is not for you! This is not because of your looks. I'm afraid no one in this world can be my wife. I can give you two options: one, be my concubine, two, be my confidant. You already know a lot about me, so you are qualified to stay by my side!"

"I agree!" Su Zhen didn't need to think at all: "No matter what they may be, I am ready to follow your orders!"

"Very good." Li Qiye nodded and signaled to her: "Come here, let me see your face."

She stepped forward without any embarrassment or unnaturalness; she was still as calm as before.

They were only inches apart. Li Qiye gently caressed her face and felt her smooth skin. He kept on touching it for a while.

Su Zhen comfortably stood there without saying anything. She had an indescribable serenity and grace ingrained in her.

Forheaven stood there with bated breath. He didn't dare to comment either.

"Impossible." After feeling her face many times, Li Qiye was startled. He spoke: "This is impossible, you have the bloodline of Qi Zhen's direct branch!"

“Emperor actually noticed it too.” Forheaven added with surprise: “You are right, she is our progenitor’s descendant.”

“No.” Li Qiye waved his hand dismissively: “I know full well whether or not Qi Zhen has descendants. If Qi Zhen did, then this bloodline would have been passed down from long ago.”

“What did Mu Tian do back then?!” Li Qiye thought of another possibility and asked while glaring at Forheaven.

“I, I, really don’t know about this matter.” Forheaven explained: “Forefather Mu Tian didn’t tell his juniors about the details. Even my master doesn’t have a clear understanding.”

“I only heard that Su Zhen’s branch appeared in Heavenguard after Forefather Mu Tian’s generation. He was the one who specified that this branch were the descendants of the progenitor. However, a bloodline like Su Zhen’s only appeared in this generation, and she is the only one.” Forheaven told Li Qiye everything that he knew.

Li Qiye contemplated for a moment after hearing this. If this was indeed Immortal Emperor Qi Zhen’s bloodline, then there was another possibility!

Li Qiye looked back at Su Zhen and slowly spoke: “To be precise, you have the bloodline of Qi Zhen, but you are not Qi Zhen’s descendant.”

With that, he stared at the runic lines on her face and continued: “No matter how you think of your face, there’s no need to feel inferior. It should be said that you should be proud instead, this is an honor! It is extremely rare for something like this to happen to your branch! This is a very valuable sign within your bloodline.”

“What are we? Are we still human?” Su Zhen couldn’t help but ask.

In fact, Forheaven curiously stared at Li Qiye as well. Although everyone knew that Immortal Emperor Qi Zhen was their progenitor, the emperor had always been a mystery. No one knew the emperor’s background or even their gender.

In fact, it had been said that Immortal Emperor Qi Zhen was the emperor who stayed in this world the shortest. Rumor has it that after becoming emperor, Qi Zhen disappeared right away.

No one knew the specific details of this, not even the Worldguard True God.

“Well, you don’t need to know for now.” Li Qiye shook his head: “If you keep working hard, I will tell you the secret one day.”

Su Zhen couldn’t help but ask: “What is the criteria for this eventual ‘one day’?”

“The day when you reach atavism.” Li Qiye gently touched her face again and said: “Remember, this is not a burden or a reason for low self-esteem. These lines are not ugly, you have yet to know the reason for its existence. The secrets inside are beyond your imagination.”

[spoiler title='940 Teaser']Li Qiye sat there in silence. Although he didn’t say anything about marrying this Empress, this hole that Immortal Emperor Mu Tian had intentionally dug for him came to the same result.

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