

EMPEROR 1241

Chapter 1241: Dragonhark Valley

Li Qiye gently shook his head in response: "No, I don't have the right merit law to pass down to you. A member of the Zhang must cultivate the Zhang Clan's law."

"But my clan's laws have been lost for a long time now." Zhang Baitu hesitated for a moment before speaking: "Even Dongting Lake might not have our laws. None of the ancestors said anything about it."

Li Qiye flatly replied: "Your Zhang Clan doesn't have them and the lake might not either, but Dragonhark Valley will."

"Dragonhark Valley?" Zhang Baitu was surprised: "Why would my clan's laws be at the valley?" He didn't understand the connection between the two entities.

"To be more exact, those laws exist in this place." With that, Li Qiye pointed at his head and said: "If you are able to be enlightened at the valley, you will obtain your clan's merit laws once more."

Zhang Baitu was dazed. Even though he was not good at cultivation, he was not a fool. With a slightly startled expression, he asked: "Young Noble, are you saying that my clan's laws came from the valley itself?"

"You can put it that way." Li Qiye nonchalantly spoke: "Your forefathers' bloodline is not the purest of human bloodlines, so your members can only cultivate the clan's laws. Through meditation and enlightenment at the valley, you will find what you desire."

Zhang Baitu looked distracted. He knew far less than Li Qiye about his own ancestors, but he didn't dare to ask why Li Qiye was aware of this.

"Can, can I do it?" He was lacking confidence after calming down.

He couldn't be blamed for this since failure had haunted him for years. The failure of his first attempt at cultivation had already shattered his confidence completely, leaving him unsure of himself.

Li Qiye stared at him and replied: "A calm heart is more important than anything else. During your meditation, stay calm and everything will flow naturally. You are the descendant of the Zhang Clan; if you can't do it, who can? Remember, your Zhang bloodline flows through you. This makes you different from everyone else."

After being encouraged by Li Qiye, Zhang Baitu could feel his blood beginning to stir.

"In this world, talent is not the most crucial thing, an unfaltering dao heart is much more important. After so many years, countless geniuses have failed, it's not just you. Even invincible Immortal Emperors have failed many times during their youth. No one can be unstoppable throughout their entire life. Only through failure will one understand their own lackings. Lessons and experiences can be gained from failure..." Li Qiye took his time encouraging and waking up Zhang Baitu.

The old man's eyes lit up. In a short period of time, he could feel the blood of the Zhang Clan channeling even faster. He was full of hope at this moment.

Eventually, he kneeled on the ground and gratefully said: "I will engrave your wise words into my mind and never forget them."

Li Qiye ordered: "Very good. Let us go to Dragonhark Valley then."

Zhang Baitu nodded. At this time, he was full of energy and felt that he was suddenly young again, just like the past when he began his arduous search for the first time.

Dragonhark Valley was located in the southern region of Dragonhark. The entire valley was huge with exquisite sceneries consisting of tall peaks, tranquil ravines, and many waterfalls...

There were many legends about this valley. One stated that the old giant dragon back then was enlightened in this valley and left behind an indelible mark.

Another stated that the demon dragon who went against the heavens and failed left its magical bones behind after dying. Some of these magical bones eventually turned into Dragonhark Valley.

No one knows if these two rumors were real or not. However, many people came to the valley in search for the grand dao from the legends, the legacy of a true dragon. Alas, despite their pursuit for the mysteries here, many left empty-handed.

Nevertheless, some claimed to have heard a dragon's roar coming from the valley. After going back, they eventually comprehended more of the dao. A few of them became experts and claimed that they had heard whispers of a true dragon granting them great wisdom.

No one had heard of someone being able to obtain the legacy of this true dragon or the legendary magical bones. Nevertheless, there were indeed tangible benefits present at the valley.

The two came to the entrance of the valley that resembled the gaping jaws of a dragon. Just this scene alone showed that the valley's reputation was more than just empty rumors.

The moment they entered, they could see that there was already a line of cultivators waiting. Some were sticking around to watch as well.

"Get in line, hurry up." An old man dressed in a light blue robe with a pointed hat was guarding this entrance.

"Ten Heavenly King Jades, an extremely fair price." The old man collected money while yelling: "Come, come, do not miss the one and only Dragonhark Valley in this world. Inside are true dragon bones, immortal draconic runes... As long as you are lucky enough, you will be able to obtain these mythical artifacts..."

"... Think about it, just ten Heavenly King Jades to trade for dragon bones and runes... What a generous trade!" The old man's voice was quite powerful: "With these artifacts, the next sea god could be you, the contemporary Immortal Emperor can't be anyone else but you, becoming a treefather is possible as well. Ten Heavenly King Jades to win a chance at becoming a sea god, proving your regal ascendance or transforming into a treefather. This is the best transaction you could ever have."

The old man kept on shouting like a street peddler while collecting all the jades.

“Are you serious?” A young first-timer heard this and had to ask: “Are there really true dragon bones and immortal draconic runes in there?”

“Hahaha, little fella, don’t listen to him.” An older cultivator laughed and explained: “He has always been shouting these words. Fifty years ago when I last came, he was saying the same thing.”

“You can’t put it like that.” The old man answered with a serious tone: “My reputation is as valuable as gold and is completely trustworthy. I guarantee in the name of my ancestors that there are indeed draconic bones and runes inside.”

“Stop! You told me the same thing fifty years ago and tricked me to come several times while giving you everything I had. In the end, did I leave with anything but empty hands?” The old cultivator retorted with disdain while feeling annoyed.

The old man didn’t become angry with his answer: “I can’t be blamed for this. It only shows that you did not research enough. Otherwise, after several entries, you should have been able to get lucky, find the artifacts, and embark on the heaven-defying path to becoming a sea god and marrying a goddess, that’s for sure. Come, come, come now. Ten Heavenly King Jades, this is an amazing deal.”

The old cultivator snorted and wasn’t tempted by the old man.

A skeptical cultivator remarked: “If there are truly draconic bones and runes inside, then how come you aren’t keeping them for your own use?”

The old man shook his head and said: “Fellow daoist, your perspective is too mundane. People say that the heavenly treasures of this world are meant for the destined. What kind of items are true dragon bones and immortal draconic runes? They are supreme immortal artifacts, so how can a lowly man like me obtain them? Because of this, I am leaving this opportunity to the fated ones.”

The skeptic had no response and kept quiet after hearing this.

“Plus, many experts benefitted from coming to Dragonhark Valley. When an overlord heard the sound of the rain in this place, he immediately became enlightened and soared to the heavens overnight. There was also a sea god who listened to the wind. In just one day, he created an invincible art, and from then on, he alone was unbeatable in this world...” The old man became quite excited as he blabbered on and on.

A cultivator quietly muttered under his breath: “How outrageous...”

Of course, the overlord and sea god mentioned by the old man were all exaggerations. However, it was undeniable that there had been masters in the valley who obtained great harvests by just listening to the sounds in the valley itself.

After his long boast, he told the skeptic from earlier: “Okay, do you want in or not? If not, then go to the side. People are all lining up behind you.”

This skeptic hesitated for a moment but still decided to pay to enter the valley.

In the line, Li Qiye cheerfully smiled at this old man. He enjoyed listening to him a lot.

When it was Li Qiye and Zhang Baitu's turn, Baitu only looked at Li Qiye since he couldn't take out so many refined jades.

"Two people so twenty Heavenly King Jades." The old man smiled at them.

No matter how one looked at them, neither Li Qiye or Zhang Baitu looked like people with money, so a human cultivator kindly reminded them: "Little brother, refined jades don't come easily, you are better off using them wisely."

"Little brat! It's fine if you don't want to come in, but you want to ruin my business as well? Do you want me to throw you into the Bonesea right now?!" The old man violently changed his tune right away after seeing this human wanting to interfere with his business.

Chapter 1242: Zhang Baitu's Dao Enlightenment

The human cultivator fled right away after being scolded by the old man. Throughout history, no one dared to offend Rainbow City. Rumor has it that even a contemporary sea god wouldn't test them.

Li Qiye smiled and handed the refined jades over.

The old man immediately beamed happily after getting the refined jades and said: "I wish you two luck in comprehending the supreme grand dao to reach the peak of this world."

Li Qiye grinned and looked at the old man and leisurely spoke: "You said earlier that there are draconic bones and runes in the valley. If I carelessly dig them up, do they all belong to me then?"

"Well." The old man's expression changed after hearing this but he still revealed a smile in the end: "Well, yes, of course."

Li Qiye saw his expression and started to laugh before patting his shoulder and said: "I'm just joking. I'll only take him to listen to the sounds here for dao enlightenment." With that, he brought Zhang Baitu into the valley.

The old man's smile froze as his body became stiff. He watched Li Qiye and Zhang Baitu disappear into the valley.

"I have to go too." Eventually, someone from the line spoke up, waking the old man up from his stupor. Just thinking about Li Qiye's grin left the old man frightened with chills running down his spine.

"Rascal, don't play with me." Eventually, the old man murmured in a low voice that only he could hear.

This was Zhang Baitu's first time coming to Dragonhark. Even though he knew about it beforehand, he didn't have enough money for the entry fee.

He curiously asked: "Does this place really have those mythical items?" In his eyes, Li Qiye was an expert at everything.

"You shouldn't think about these things." Li Qiye beamingly smiled in response: "Finding them is nice, but it's fine to be without them as well. They are not meant for you."

Zhang Baitu quietly nodded. He naturally didn't have unrealistic expectations. In his eyes, being able to comprehend the Zhang merit laws was more than enough. As for the bones and runes, they were supreme items that he didn't dare to think about.

There were beautiful sceneries everywhere in this big valley with majestic cliffs, elegant springs, and a pleasant melody from the rustling leaves.

They saw cultivators in many places. Some were sitting on top of cliffs while huffing and puffing the energy of the clouds. Others were meditating below waterfalls to quietly listen to the sound of the water. There were also those sitting in the pine forest in order to comprehend the grand dao.

Even though ten Heavenly King Jades were a lot to many, experts from great powers were willing to try at least once. Who in this world didn't want to become enlightened in the dao?

Moreover, for those who had reached a bottleneck, they needed an opportunity to break through.

There were rumors that there were dragon roars or even the whispering of a true dragon in this valley. How could there be smoke without fire? Some experts had made these claims before while meditating in this place.

Because of this, many cultivators came here in hopes of getting lucky. Perhaps they would be able to experience the same type of adventures as well.

The duo crossed over the mountains and went deeper inside towards their destination.

"Young Noble, have you been here before?" Zhang Baitu asked after seeing how familiar Li Qiye was with this place. Li Qiye only responded with a mysterious grin.

Many of the cultivators they met didn't find anything, so they kept on changing their location.

"Eh, isn't that Hundred-Disciple?" A few cultivators recognized Zhang Baitu along the way. The majority of them were from the sects near Dongting Lake. [1. Baitu = Hundred-Disciple.]

Zhang Baitu had joined many sects without any results. Because of this, the cultivators near Dongting Lake all knew about him.

"Zhang Baitu, are you here to listen to the valley as well?" A cultivator shook his head and laughed: "In my opinion, you should be saving money to buy a coffin, that will save a lot of trouble. You have joined so many sects for no reason, do you think you will actually gain anything here at Dragonhark Valley?"

Another cultivator saw Li Qiye standing next to him and mocked: "Who would have thought that you, Zhang Baitu, would actually try to be exemplary one day and take in a disciple. Hey, child, finding a master is a lifelong event, so you can't be careless or you'll regret it for the rest of your life after finding the wrong master."

The majority of the people who recognized Zhang Baitu started with taunts or mocked Li Qiye. Of course, there were some who had good intentions and advised Li Qiye.

Zhang Baitu didn't respond to any of them and only followed right behind Li Qiye. He had grown used to these remarks and had heard much worse before.

After a while, in a more remote location, he whispered: "It is my fault for tarnishing your reputation, Young Noble."

Li Qiye waved his sleeve dismissively and insipidly commented: "There's no need to take to heart the words of mere ants."

Zhang Baitu didn't say anything else and continued to follow him.

Eventually, the two went into a thicket with fresh verdant leaves. When the breeze blew by, one could hear their fluttering rattle like a melody.

Li Qiye walked around before stopping in front of a dying tree. He carefully looked at this old tree and nodded: "Right here."

He then ordered Zhang Baitu: "Sit with your back against this tree and calm your mind. Block off your six senses to feel its rhythm. Remember, stay calm — this is the only way you will feel its existence."

Zhang Baitu solemnly shook his head and took a deep breath. He sat down firmly under this old tree with his back against it. He closed his eyes and shut off his six senses then began to feel it.

Li Qiye looked over him for a bit before quietly leaving. At the same time, he casually drew a circle around this thicket.

Zhang Baitu meditated in order to sense this old tree. However, moments passed by and there were no signs of change. In the beginning, he was able to keep calm, but he gradually lost his patience and his breathing turned rapid.

"Remember, it exists when your heart is calm. You are the descendant of the Zhang Clan, this is something you should have. Be patient and persevere." Li Qiye was watching everything from a distance.

His words were like a tranquilizing pill. The anxious Zhang Baitu slowly calmed down again with steady breaths. His quiet meditation began once more.

"Isn't that Zhang Baitu? Is he actually thinking about comprehending the dao?" Someone laughed while looking at Zhang Baitu meditating under the tree.

Another said with disdain: "He wants to understand the dao? Such wishful thinking."

Their companion sarcastically commented: "People say that one can only succeed after experiencing failures and learning from the lessons. Zhang Baitu had so many masters after joining numerous sects for nothing at all, so maybe he has accumulated enough experience. Come, let us see if he can comprehend anything."

Although some cultivators were dismissive of him, others were irritated by their own lack of progress, so they wanted to tease him to get rid of their bad mood. In their eyes, Zhang Baitu was only a piece of trash. They could humiliate him however they want.

"Don't cross the line." Li Qiye coldly spoke the moment these ill-willed cultivators approached his line.

These cultivators stopped and one of them laughed: "Oh? You must be Zhang Baitu's disciple. Hah, a foolish master can only produce an idiotic disciple. You think you can comprehend the dao here as well?"

Li Qiye ignored him and emotionlessly repeated: "Don't cross the line or face the consequences."

"Brat, who do you think you are?!" Li Qiye's attitude made a few younger cultivators with some status quite annoyed. They contemptuously spoke: "You think we'll listen to you? What are you going to do about it? Only an ant yet you still dare to shout in front of us! So what if we cross the line, are you gonna bite me? Oh wait, I forgot, a dog that bites will never bark."

With that, they headed towards Zhang Baitu.

Li Qiye didn't bat an eye. Instead, he performed a sweeping kick. These cultivators turned furious after seeing this, and one of the nobles said: "Naive fool!"

"Bang!" They couldn't even counter since they were kicked flying by Li Qiye. Blood spurted out along with many explosions; Li Qiye mercilessly sent them into many huge trees with blood spraying everywhere.

He then stared at them coldly and slowly walked over.

At this time, these pale cultivators were frightened. They wanted to crawl back up, especially the noble-looking one. He screamed: "You, don't come over here, don't come over here!"

Chapter 1243: Dragon Sound

"Ah—" In a short period of time, screams resounded left and right in these woods along with a series of bone-breaking noises.

At this time, Li Qiye was stomping on the legs of these cultivators. Their legs were crushed completely as they howled like slaughtered pigs. These shrill screams echoed across the thicket.

"Who is so ruthless?" The screams alarmed some of the nearby cultivators. They came with curiosity and saw Li Qiye's leg-breaking fest. Their eyes darted at each other and wondered just who this human kid was and why he dared to be so vicious.

Eventually, with a loud bang, Li Qiye stomped on the noble-looking youth and coldly glared at him.

The paled cultivator busily shouted: "Don't, don't do anything stupid. I, I am a disciple of the Wyvern Country, a great power in the Dragon Demon Sea. If, if you dare to kill me, my country will not treat it lightly."

"Ah!" His wrist was stomped by Li Qiye.

This Wyvern disciple and everyone else shut up. They knew that they had messed with the wrong guy. This fella was too ruthless.

Li Qiye only wanted to teach them a lesson. If he wanted to kill them, it would have been easier than crushing an ant.

“Boom!” Li Qiye kicked this disciple from Wyvern flying through many trees while shouting: “Scram, don’t let me see you again!”

These cultivators pissed their pants from fear. After hearing this, it was like they had been pardoned; they quickly rolled on the ground to get up and run away.

The disciple from Wyvern was from a great power and so couldn’t swallow his anger. After he flew far enough, he exclaimed: “Brat, leave, leave your name if you dare!”

Li Qiye gave him a side-eye and replied: “Li Qiye.”

After hearing this, the disciple faltered several steps backward in horror. He had just heard this name recently.

Many cultivators who were watching for fun were startled as well, especially those who heard the news from the Jade Sea, they became completely pale. One of them said: “He is the disciple of the Peacock Tree, the successor of that land. He, he helped the tree sacrifice a billion Teeming Fish, no wonder why he is so ruthless!”

News of the tree’s blood refinement had reached the Dragon Demon Sea. Of course, many believed that this was the masterpiece of the Peacock Tree while Li Qiye only acted as the tree controller. He became famous overnight due to the prestige that came with being an ancestral tree’s disciple.

A cultivator commented in horror: “Damn! He helped the Peacock Tree annihilate an entire race. This ancestral tree is definitely a monster, so being its disciple, he can’t be a kind person either; he’s definitely a little monster as well.”

The massacre of the Teeming Race, the most populous tribe in Heaven Spirit, had shocked countless people. This added to Li Qiye’s notoriety despite everyone assuming that he was only the treefather’s accomplice.

Just imagine, billions of lives were refined overnight. Anyone would quiver with weak knees after hearing this. As for the Wyvern disciple and his companions, needless to say, they turned and fled as far as they could. They didn’t dare to think about taking revenge any longer. Li Qiye’s fierce reputation had shattered their courage.

In a short period of time, the cultivators outside the thicket had ugly expressions. Many even chose to run away to avoid provoking this fierce person.

Li Qiye ignored them and leaned on a tree as he watched Zhang Baitu.

A long time had passed, yet there was still no changes with Zhang Baitu. Nevertheless, Li Qiye was confident in him because the Zhang had some ties with this place as well as Rainbow City. It was just that their descendants didn’t know about these secrets.

Minutes came and went, but Zhang Baitu remained motionless as if he didn’t gain anything.

Prior to this, very few would watch him meditate. After all, those who had heard of his name knew that his talents were completely insufficient since he was still a failure after joining so many sects. They thought that this was simply a waste of time.

However, after being aware of Li Qiye's great name, some became curious. Even though they didn't know why this fierce man was hanging around Zhang Baitu, they wanted to see if the old man could harvest anything.

One thing was for certain as the clock ticked down, Zhang Baitu had reached a state of total calmness.

A while later, a crisp voice resounded next to Li Qiye: "Will Brother Zhang be able to do it?"

No one knows when Hong Yujiao appeared beside Li Qiye. She was quite worried while watching Zhang Baitu under the tree.

Li Qiye flatly said: "All of you know nothing about what kind of people your ancestors were and what they experienced. This is because you have no interest in them at all."

Hong Yujiao couldn't refute because she was indeed ignorant of them.

Hong Yujiao eventually spoke: "You are the successor of Peacock Land, a tree controller." After returning, she uncovered all of his information and understood his identity.

Li Qiye didn't answer and continued his watch.

"I misunderstood you before." She spoke after a moment of silence: "The Peacock Treefather has always been protecting the human race and is adored by many. You are its disciple, so I'm sure you weren't scheming against Dongting Lake."

Li Qiye chuckled after hearing this. It seemed that the misconception of him being related to the Peacock Tree had spread uncontrollably. However, he was too lazy to correct them.

"My father wants to meet you." She eventually revealed her goal.

Li Qiye laughed and replied: "What does he want to talk about? The Hundred-Saints Hall or what happened with the Ironscale School?"

"Most likely the business of the human race." She replied: "Peacock Land is the second largest haven for humans after the Exquisite Valley. Even though Dongting Lake isn't as large as Peacock Land, there are many things that can be done to mutual benefit."

"That's fine, if he wants to talk, tell him to come and see me." Li Qiye just smiled with a completely indifferent attitude.

She refrained from speaking. Li Qiye's words sounded like a command for her father, so she couldn't exactly tell him this.

"It's time." Li Qiye had been fixated on Zhang Baitu the whole time. His eyes flashed as he noticed something.

Hong Yujiao quickly turned to look at her senior brother as well. A buzzing emanated from Zhang Baitu's body as it lit up, emitting a frightening light.

The old tree behind him unexpectedly shook a little bit along with his body; it was as if they were touching something. The brilliance from his body increased as time went on, and the light slowly turned into rays.

The tree then stopped moving and a very faint sound came about. While listening to it carefully, one could vaguely hear the roar of a true dragon. The roar sounded as if it was saying something, but humans couldn't understand it.

"Is that really the sound of a dragon?" The cultivators outside the thicket were astonished.

"What? How is this possible? Zhang Baitu actually obtained a fortune?" Some of them couldn't believe this scene while murmuring to themselves.

They felt that this was simply impossible. Even though people said that dragon cries were present in the valley, only a very small number of masters were able to hear them. Others didn't have this privilege.

Thus, it was even more impossible for Zhang Baitu who was known to have rubbish talent. Continuously failing despite joining so many sects left others thinking of him as a being that was hopelessly stupid.

It would be daydreaming for someone like him to think about gaining enlightenment in Dragonhark Valley.

However, a strange visual phenomenon was occurring around him. The impossible was unraveling before the crowd.

"That's a dragon's cry?" Hong Yujiao became absent-minded as well. She didn't have much hope in Zhang Baitu either. It was not because she looked down on him, but because he indeed possessed some flaws in terms of cultivation.

"I think so." The cultivators outside were jolted. They quickly sat down and focused in order to listen. They wanted to understand what the dragon was saying to obtain this fortune.

Hong Yujiao attentively listened as well in order to comprehend the faint cries of the dragon.

Chapter 1244: Dao Breakthrough

With the passage of time, Zhang Baitu's body became increasingly luminous while the dragon sounds from the old tree became more sonorous. In the end, it was no longer a vague sound, it truly became the voice of a dragon.

"It really is a dragon's cry! The valley truly has them!" The voice of the dragon had alarmed many people. More and more came and were jolted by this sound.

Despite the rumors of its existence, few people had heard it before. Many had failed and given up in the past, but now, they were both ecstatic and somewhat afraid after hearing it.

In a short period of time, many cultivators began meditating right outside of this thicket and carefully listened to the profundities encompassed within these draconic sounds. By successfully doing so, perhaps they could understand the great mysteries of the supreme grand dao. From that, it might lead them to the path where the true dragon bones and immortal draconic runes awaited.

However, despite their best efforts, they couldn't understand it. Even Hong Yujiao was no exception.

As time passed, the light from Zhang Baitu's body gradually dimmed and the dragon's voice from the old tree became fainter until it disappeared completely.

Many listeners returned to the present after it disappeared. They received nothing out of it since they couldn't understand what it was saying or the mysteries within.

They, instead, stared at Zhang Baitu in disbelief, especially those who knew about him beforehand. This was an incredibly cruel joke.

He stood up before the crowd with a delighted expression. Without a doubt, he had quite a harvest. He walked to the front of Li Qiye and immediately prostrated to express his gratitude: "Thank you for guiding me from my past mistakes, this lowly one will never forget your kindness for the rest of my life."

Li Qiye nodded his head and accepted the grand gesture.

"Congratulations, Senior Brother. With today's enlightenment, your future potential is limitless." Hong Yujiao was happy for Zhang Baitu. By finally being able to take this step, he would surely have many amazing accomplishments later on.

"Sister, you are too kind. I only learned a little bit and can't be shameless enough to accept the praise of having limitless potential." Zhang Baitu was very modest in his response.

Nevertheless, he was still very excited because, in his eyes, only geniuses would be able to explore the grand dao. Ordinary cultivators wouldn't reach this level, let alone a stupid person like himself.

He couldn't even train regular merit laws, so he didn't dare to think about the impossibility that was exploring the grand dao. However, he felt as if his mind had been cleared. With his newfound wisdom, a grand dao was appearing right before him.

People stared at him in disbelief due to his past reputation of being an incurable fool. It was simply inconceivable that such a guy could have become enlightened from listening to the voice of a dragon.

"Let's go." Li Qiye told Zhang Baitu and turned to walk away.

The brother and sister quickly followed him out of the thicket.

Of course, this valley didn't only have dragon cries. It also contained other supreme immortal items, but Li Qiye naturally wouldn't search for them.

After they left, a bunch of cultivators immediately jumped into the thicket and competed for the spot below the old tree.

The first cultivator that got to the tree said: "I was here first, let me try to meditate."

"Why do you get to go first? Everyone here has paid, so if you want to meditate, the rest of us should be able to as well." Another immediately voiced his displeasure.

Very quickly, the scene became chaotic. Everyone wanted to sit under this old tree to meditate. They felt that if a fool like Zhang Baitu could hear a dragon's voice under the tree, then the rest of them would be able to gain much more than him.

The news of Zhang Baitu's enlightenment spread across the valley. Many people had thought that it was not worth spending money to enter the valley, but they were now tempted and immediately handed their jades over to jump inside. They didn't want to be one step slower than the others.

When Li Qiye got outside of the valley, he looked at the old man and leisurely smiled: "I heard that there is a treasure trove at Dragonwell, is that true?"

The old man's expression changed after hearing this. Li Qiye laughed in response: "Don't worry, I'm just messing with you. As for the treasure trove and dragon bones, they should be left for the destined ones." With that, he turned and left.

"I'll give you an eighty percent discount next time." The old man cheerfully smiled at Li Qiye who was walking away.

Li Qiye chuckled and didn't turn around to answer.

After they walked for a while, Hong Yujiao curiously asked: "Does Dragonhark really have dragon bones and runes?"

Li Qiye continued on while lightly answering: "Their existence isn't important since they are not destined to be yours. However, if you must know, just keep in mind that your Dongting Lake and Rainbow City have deep ties. The same goes for the Giant Dragon Kingdom. I hope that as the lake's descendants, you two won't forget about your ancestors and roots. One day, you might need to rely on Rainbow City."

"We have deep ties with Rainbow City and the Giant Dragon Kingdom?" Hong Yujiao was surprised.

Zhang Baitu felt the same way. He had never heard about this before and spoke with disbelief: "I heard that the Giant Dragon Kingdom doesn't actually exist since it is only part of the legends. No one has been there before."

Li Qiye stopped and turned to look at the two: "It looks like you descendants are becoming worse and worse since you don't even know your own roots. Just keep my words in mind. Aim higher than other people while maintaining your ambition and courage. Your clans chose to fight each other for power, but in the eyes of others, this is only a competition between ants. No one will care about the past glory of your ancestors."

The duo exchanged glances. They didn't completely understand what Li Qiye was referring to.

"Rely on each other during times of turmoil while maintaining great magnanimity towards all as well as your ancestors' great moral values. One day, you two will understand your roots and at that time, those existences up in the clouds will finally take note of you. That will be the day when you find out just how glorious your clans used to be!"

He gently sighed and left one final remark while looking at them: "This is all I can do. The future relies on juniors like the two of you to build."

Li Qiye didn't want to bother with Dongting Lake's power struggle back then, but right now, out of consideration for the ancestors from the Hong, Zhang and Xu Clans, Li Qiye couldn't help but ultimately guide them. Whether they would be able to figure it out and take the next step would be up to themselves.

They must be the ones to grasp their own destinies. Others could only show them the way.

The duo carefully contemplated Li Qiye's words. Even though they didn't understand them completely, they certainly memorized them.

They didn't go too far after leaving the valley when a young man came before them. He had an extraordinary presence and a bright glow. There was a pair of translucent jade-like horns that made him look quite fierce.

He grew happy the moment he saw Hong Yujiao and quickly walked forward to enthusiastically greet them: "Young Sister, we meet again." [1. The sister for this one is for family friends.]

"Young Noble Shangguan, long time no see." Hong Yujiao nodded her head in a polite manner that wasn't overly welcoming yet not too distant at the same time.

The youth enthusiastically asked Hong Yujiao: "I heard that you wanted to go to Rainbow City. That's great, how about we go together to Dragonhark Valley?"

She gently shook her head in response: "Thank you, but I was summoned by my seniors and must return to the sect."

The youth became disappointed after hearing this. His eyes then darted over towards Li Qiye.

Since the beginning, he didn't care for Li Qiye, but after seeing Li Qiye's face, his eyes narrowed and he coldly stared at him: "You are Li Qiye, the successor of Peacock Land?"

"So what?" Li Qiye glanced at him in response.

The youth coldly said: "It's very good that you have admitted it. You are the one who harmed disciples from my Wyvern Country."

So it turned out that this youth was the Wyvern Crown Prince, Shangguan Feilong. He had recently heard of Li Qiye since his fellow disciples were beaten by him. He wanted to settle the score with Li Qiye.

Li Qiye indifferently replied: "Maybe."

"Remember that this isn't your Peacock Land. This is the Dragon Demon Sea, not a place for you to act presumptuously." Shangguan Feilong coldly said: "You need to give our country a proper answer for hurting our disciples."

"Young Noble Shangguan, your disciples were at fault." Hong Yujiao slowly spoke: "They provoked Young Noble Li which resulted in them being injured. They can only blame themselves for their lack of skill."

At this time, Hong Yujiao stood up for Li Qiye.

Chapter 1245: Dragonwell City

After hearing Hong Yujiao, Shangguan Feilong darted his eyes at Li Qiye. Despite being unwilling, he still scowled and said: "Our disciples were incapable, and out of consideration for Young Sister Hong, I won't pursue this any further. But Li, you better control yourself, this is the territory of us sea demons!"

Without a doubt, this was a direct threat towards Li Qiye.

Li Qiye only smiled and didn't really care. He had no intention of taking action against cultivators of Feilong's level unless they were asking to die.

Feilong glared at Li Qiye one last time before cupping his fists at Hong Yujiao: “Young Sis, I have met my big sister, she says that she also wants to see Uncle. Wait for us after the birthday celebration of the Jian Ancestor, we will visit your house and see Uncle then.”

Hong Yujiao chose to be quiet instead of answering.

After Feilong left, Zhang Baitu worriedly looked at her and said: “Junior Sister, it looks like his big sister is coming to ask for an engagement. He must be feeling quite confident this time.”

Eventually, Hong Yujiao answered: “I won’t marry so easily.”

“It won’t be that simple.” Despite not staying at Dongting Lake, Zhang Baitu still knew a few things, resulting in his worries: “I heard that the Wyvern Country has always wanted a human with a great bloodline to help pass on their own. People say that Feilong’s bloodline is very powerful, the best of the younger generation with the exception of his sister.”

“I also heard that they wanted to become in-laws with the Exquisite Valley. Unfortunately for them, the valley refused right away.” Zhang Baitu continued: “Sister, your bloodline is the most exceptional in our lake, so the Wyvern Country won’t give up that easily. Plus, with his sister coming in person, they will also have the backing of the Roaring Conch, giving them ample leverage.”

“Hmph, so what if Shangguan Feiyan is back?” Hong Yujiao snorted: “Can they really force this marriage?!”

Zhang Baitu could only sigh. There was no point in worrying about it since he wasn’t strong enough to do anything.

Regardless of her tough posturing, she still reminded Li Qiye: “Young Noble Li, there’s no need to worry about this Shangguan Feilong. However, his sister, Shuangguan Feiyan, warrants some caution. She comes from the Roaring Conch and is doted on by its ancestors. People say that there is a possibility of her marrying the Seashield Prince to become the mistress of the Roaring Conch...”

“... Sometimes, taking a step back is the right way to go about things. You don’t need to go head-on against the Wyvern Country.” She warned him with good intent: “After all, the Roaring Conch is very powerful at the Dragon Demon Sea. They can even order the sea demons around the world.”

So it turns out that Shangguan Feilong came from Wyvern, a great power in this sea region. Of course, the thing they were most proud about was not the true dragon bloodline coursing through their veins, it was Shangguan Feiyan who was able to join the Roaring Conch and become one of the youngest God-Monarchs.

Li Qiye responded to these warnings with a smile. Hong Yujiao sighed because she understood that her words went in one ear and out the other.

After leaving the valley, she also wanted to return to Dongting Lake in order to report to her father. Before leaving, she respectfully said her goodbyes: “I’ll go report to my father about this. Hopefully, you will meet him at least once.”

Li Qiye insipidly responded: “Tell him to come meet me at Dragonwell.”

After she left, Li Qiye told Zhang Baitu: "Go back and clean up your belongings, we'll be going to Dragonwell."

Zhang Baitu nodded. At this time, he would obey any command from Li Qiye.

After packing his stuff, he followed Li Qiye to Dragonwell. This was the second stop of Rainbow City. There was only one way to go from Dragonhark to Dragonwell, and that was to ride the rainbow fish.

Just like Dragonhark, no one knew where Dragonwell was located, they only knew that these fish were the only method of transportation linking all the cities together. At the very least, no one had heard of someone being able to go from one city to another using a different method.

The duo arrived at the ferry again and found that there was already a long line. It was still an ordinary old man collecting money at the entrance.

He had a light blue robe with an indifferent expression. He stared at the cultivators as if all of them owed him money.

When it was Li Qiye's turn, Li Qiye said: "To Dragonwell."

The old man glanced at the two and pointed at Zhang Baitu: "You, one Provisional Palace Jade."

Zhang Baitu was surprised and stammered: "It, it has always been free for me at Rainbow City. Rainbow Island to Dragonhark was free for me just earlier."

Zhang Baitu didn't really know why it had always been free for him. Maybe that particular old man knew that he didn't have enough money to pay. Nevertheless, always paying no fee left him a bit embarrassed since he wasn't the type who relished taking advantage of others.

"One Provisional Palace Jade." The old man ignored him then reached out his hand towards Li Qiye and coldly demanded: "You, one thousand Virtuous Paragon Jades."

"That's outrageous!" Zhang Baitu was scared silly: "It didn't cost us that much to come here from Rainbow Island."

"Pay if you want to go. If not, then scram already!" The old man angrily shouted, leaving no room for negotiation.

Zhang Baitu glanced at Li Qiye. This old man clearly wanted to play them, especially Li Qiye.

Li Qiye only smiled with a carefree attitude as he handed a black pouch over to the old man.

The old man put the pouch away without looking at the contents before whistling for two rainbow fish.

"How much will you charge me to go to the city in the clouds?" Li Qiye smiled at the old man.

The old man didn't bat an eye as he replied with the same emotionless expression: "Who knows."

"Money is not a problem." Li Qiye leisurely pressed on: "I will have to go up there eventually, so take out your abacus to calculate how much it will cost."

The cold old man didn't want to answer, so he didn't make a single sound.

After sitting on the fish, Li Qiye added in a serious tone: “Since I have to visit it either way, I hope the rainbow fish will take me there at that time, okay?”

The old man remained quiet. At this time, the fish were spewing bubbles. They floated along the bubbles and disappeared right away.

When Li Qiye and Zhang Baitu regained their vision, they were in a different city. This was the second stop of Rainbow City — Dragonwell.

According to the legends, Dragonwell hid unparalleled treasures that remained veiled from the public eye.

After they disembarked the fish, Zhang Baitu curiously asked: “Young Noble, what kind of city is above the clouds?”

He knew that Rainbow City consisted of Dragonhark, Dragonwell, and Dragonspring, but he had never heard of a city above the clouds, people never mentioned it.

“You don’t need to know, so don’t ask.” Li Qiye gently shook his head: “If, one day, the people up there notice you, then you will naturally learn about them. Just keep trying, the future is still full of opportunities.”

Zhang Baitu didn’t ask again. He breathed deeply and nodded.

“Stay at the Rainbow Pavilion branch.” Li Qiye casually handed some jades to Zhang Baitu before leaving.

Zhang Baitu watched him leave without asking where he wanted to go and headed for the inn right afterward.

Li Qiye walked along the long street with his heart slightly jumping. Something seemed to be affecting him as unwanted memories resurfaced in his mind.

He took his time walking to the end of the street. An old mansion appeared before him. Its age didn’t affect its majestic aura, as if there was an overlord presiding over the estate.

A wooden plaque with the word “Jian” could be found hanging at the entrance. It was written in an archaic style that contained infinite prestige.

The Jian Clan of Rainbow City was a legendary existence. Despite its low profile, people still viewed it with awe and respect.

Rumor has it that the Jian Clan were the only outsiders who were allowed to stay long-term at Rainbow City. This was the only stopping place for humans in the entire city.

Rainbow City was vast. Many powerful lineages, such as the Seven Martial Pavilion and the Roaring Conch, wanted to establish their own strongholds or divisions in this place.

However, regardless of how strong they were, even when their sea gods were still alive, they couldn’t get into Rainbow City. These powerful lineages didn’t dare to act recklessly here without permission from the city.

Chapter 1246: Jian Clan

The Jian Clan had established their lineage in Rainbow City a very long time ago. They had a pivotal position in this place, similar to their position in the Dragon Demon Sea and all of Heaven Spirit.

They were even more significant for the human race. As the only human lineage capable of staying in Rainbow City, the clan had done many favors for the human race.

Even though the disciples from this clan rarely showed themselves outside of the city, they had always been very reasonable. No one has ever looked down on the Jian Clan, whether they be the charming spirit's four branches or the treant's Golden Isle as well as the sea demon's Roaring Conch and Seven Martial Pavilion. Whenever their ancestors visited Dragonwell, they would go visit the Jian Clan as well.

In the Heaven Spirit World, whenever the Jian Clan got involved, the parties would always show them some consideration.

The origin of the Jian Clan remained unknown. Outsiders didn't know what kind of lineage they were. The only thing known was that they were humans that were closely related to Rainbow City. This was not only a low-key clan but also one shrouded in mysteries.

Many of the great powers, especially the behemoths, had traceable backgrounds. Their ancestors were either sea gods, treefathers, or Immortal Emperors. The weakest among their ancestors would be unstoppable Godkings, and tales of their ancestors would be sung in the contemporary.

This was not the case for the Jian ancestors. The clan was just as mysterious as the Giant Dragon Mountain Range. It seemed that the clan suddenly appeared overnight. What was even stranger was that they established a stronghold in Rainbow City very quickly.

While standing on the street and looking into the Jian Clan that was just inches away, Li Qiye felt an indescribable emotion. For him, the Jian Clan was also a home. Many of his footprints and memories were left in this place. However, he didn't want to go inside right now.

"The heavens is too unreachable, there is nothing bad about being a trapped ant in this world." A lass once whispered this to him.

Whenever he stood before these gates, these words would echo in his mind. There was nothing in this world that could hinder his path or make him stop. Alas, this sentence haunted his mind and made him feel quite uncomfortable.

Resting was impossible for him, at least not in this lifetime. For many, starting a family and having children was not difficult, but this was a life unattainable for Li Qiye.

He sighed in disappointment and murmured: "I can't do that. I will never be an ant that submits to the world. I am the bloodstained hand that will slay to the very end, death is my companion and blood makes up my bed!"

Through the ages, some wished that he would continue on while others hoped that he could rest. Alas, these people eventually left the world. No one could persevere with him on this endless fight.

There was a little shop along the path. It sold snacks and lighter dishes with only a few tables. It wasn't early in the day anymore, but the old stove in the shop still let off curling steam and smoke.

His heart slightly jolted after seeing the shop. He didn't enter the Jian Clan and instead quietly sat down at a table.

There was only one gray-haired old man working as both the waiter and the cook. His apron looked dated; it had been exposed to smoke for an incredible amount of time, yet it was still clean.

The old man quickly came and asked after Li Qiye sat down: "Sir, what would you like?"

Li Qiye blurted out without thinking: "One bowl of boiled tofu." This was an all too familiar answer. He gently sighed again when his mind returned.

"Okay, coming right up." The old man was very agile and immediately cooked some for him.

"Boiled tofu..." Li Qiye smiled wryly. Back then, he had tasted this dish countless times at this very shop. This was a style that originated from the Mortal Emperor World and was next to impossible to forget.

At that time, there were two little girls who also enjoyed eating here. In the faint steam, these two were always at odds. Who would have thought that one of them would eventually become an invincible empress?

It didn't take long before the old man presented the bowl before Li Qiye. Its warmth thawed his cold heart. He began eating each piece of slippery and tender tofu as the familiar taste melted in his mouth.

"This boiled tofu is a delicacy in this world. No one will ever get tired of eating it." Li Qiye had to comment.

The old man revealed a simple smile and responded: "Sir, please don't laugh, but this dish in my shop is a peerless recipe that originated from the Mortal Emperor World. It has been passed down in my home from one generation to another without fail."

Li Qiye faintly smiled and continued to take his time eating. Of course, he knew where this craft came from more than anyone else.

While savoring the familiar taste in his mouth in this mist-filled shop, it seemed that he had returned to those early years.

In the hazy mist, he could see the two competitive little girls again. One had eyes full of wisdom while the other had a resolute glare.

He suddenly saw the intelligent girl sitting there, quietly eating tofu with him. She didn't utter a single word, but all that needed to be said had been told.

Eventually, everything disappeared into the rising steam from the hot bowl of tofu. The two girls destined to become the empress and the wise one dispersed.

Everything was in the past; both the empress and the wise goddess had turned to smoke. He was the only one left after the long years.

A while later, he looked up and noticed the Jian Clan was decorated with lanterns and flowers. He asked the old man with an indifferent tone: "Is there a celebration at the Jian Clan?"

“Sir, haven’t you heard?” The old man answered: “The 8,000th birthday of the Jian Grandfather is coming up, everyone from all over the seas are coming to wish him happy birthday.” [1. This is one of those polite appellations with multiple meanings. It is a respectful way to call an old man the (old) leader of a house. It doesn’t have to be blood-related.]

“Jian Grandfather?” Li Qiye glanced at the house and casually asked: “What is his name?”

This made it a bit difficult for the old man. He chuckled and replied: “Sir, did you make your dao debut recently? You don’t know the name of Grandfather? I am only a junior so I don’t dare to say his name.”

“A name is just that.” Li Qiye flatly replied: “As long as your heart holds respect, there’s no need to adhere to such rigid formalities.”

The old man hesitated for a moment before answering: “Grandfather is called Jian Longwei. His Venerableness has led the Jian Clan for several thousand years and is loved by all.”

“Longwei, I see.” Li Qiye lightly said after hearing the name: “It isn’t easy for a Jian disciple to have such a name. It can’t be given at birth.” [2. Longwei = Dragon Protector. A name matters a lot in China, so cool name = cool character, most of the time.]

The old man looked at Li Qiye in astonishment but refrained from commenting.

Jian Longwei was a name full of clout in Heaven Spirit. He was the current master of the Jian Clan and had been in charge for several thousand years. His status was equal to a supreme Godking.

His 8,000th birthday was almost here. At that time, many big shots from all over the world would come to Dragonwell to give him their blessings.

Of course, there was another meaning to his name. Just like Li Qiye said, it wasn’t a name that could be bestowed upon birth.

While Li Qiye continued to eat his tofu, a youth came out of the Jian Clan and sat down in the shop as well.

This youth was very handsome in his violet robe. One could see his bulging muscles underneath them as they exuded a robust feel. However, his strength was not that of a brute but rather a refined type of power.

The youth spoke with a smile: “Uncle, boiled tofu again. I love this dish of yours.”

“Okay, coming up.” The old man smiled and got busy again.

He then brought a bowl for the youth. The fella wasn’t reserved at all and dug in right away. It only took him three to five bites to finish the entire bowl.

After heaving a satisfying belch, he finally noticed Li Qiye inside the shop.

Chapter 1247: Jian Xiaotie

While watching Li Qiye’s unhurried manner of eating, the youth couldn’t help but praise: “Brother, you really know how to savor the delicious flavors. The boiled tofu here is really just too good, but I finish way too fast; I’m just a cow chewing on the peony.” [1. Idiom meaning a person is unable to appreciate

a delicacy or something more exquisite while they're having it. An English equivalent is casting pearls before swine.]

"A peony-chewing cow is also a type of happiness." Li Qiye chuckled while looking at the youth. [2. He is saying ignorance is bliss here.]

The youth gave a hearty laugh in response: "Brother, you are quite funny. My name is Jian Xiaotie, what is yours?"

Jiao Xiaotie was a famous name across the Dragon Demon Sea. He was the clan's young successor.

"Li Qiye." Li Qiye answered flatly and continued eating.

After hearing the name, Jian Xiaotie was quite surprised and immediately stood up while cupping his fists: "Brother Li, the successor of Peacock Land, your prestigious name has been spread far and wide recently."

"You mean my notoriety?" Li Qiye couldn't help but smile freely.

The youth chuckled and replied: "Notoriety is cool too. The Peacock Treefather's supreme resolution and your unrelenting ways are admirable."

Li Qiye kept smiling. To him, it wasn't a big deal if the world continued to think that the blood ceremony was the treefather's idea.

"It is quite rare to meet another human outside of our clan in Rainbow City, let alone the successor of Peacock Land." Jian Xiaotie was very excited: "Brother Li, why not come and visit our clan? Our Grandfather's birthday celebration is in a few more days. At that time, I will take you to see him. He likes young prodigies the most."

For the younger generation in Heaven Spirit, meeting Jian Longwei was a great honor since he was a very famous Godking in the present times.

Li Qiye only smiled and didn't comment any further. Nevertheless, Jian Xiaotie's enthusiasm didn't diminish. He quickly handed an invitation card over and said in a serious manner: "This little brother is sincerely inviting you to our Grandfather's birthday celebration."

As the main successor, Jian Xiaotie was responsible for preparing his ancestor's feast. However, he only personally gave invitations to big shots.

Jian Xiaotie handing one over to Li Qiye himself was enough to show his sincerity.

Li Qiye smiled and accepted the invitation. He finished eating his tofu and paid the bill. He looked at the Jian Clan one last time and softly sighed before leaving.

Jian Xiaotie watched Li Qiye's departing back and enthusiastically shouted at him: "Brother Li, you must attend!"

After Li Qiye was long gone, the old man in the shop spoke: "That person is not simple at all."

Having said that, a flash appeared in his eyes. He no longer looked like an ordinary shopkeeper.

Jian Xiaotie smilingly said: "Senior Uncle, he is the successor of Peacock Land, a tree controller. Of course he is not simple; otherwise, he wouldn't have been chosen by an invincible treefather. Him being in charge of Peacock Land is beneficial to the human race since they will have another sanctuary in Heaven Spirit."

"No, Xiaotie, that's not what I meant." The old man shook his head: "He said something that no outsiders should know: that our Grandfather's name was not given at birth. No one should know this outside of people from the Giant Dragon Kingdom! However, he is definitely not from there."

"Did he really say that?" Jian Xiaotie was startled as well.

His eyes became quite profound, indicating he was an incredible master. The old man gently shook his head as he slowly revealed: "Grandfather is renowned across the world and everyone knows his name. However, outsiders definitely can't know that his name was bestowed to him later on."

"That's not possible." Jian Xiaotie replied: "Our clan absolutely wouldn't tell this to outsiders. The brothers from the Giant Dragon Kingdom don't mingle with outsiders either — their ancestors are very strict about this. Our clan and their clan, even the most naughty little dragons wouldn't let this secret out."

"That's why I said this person is not simple. He definitely knows something, he didn't only come here to eat my boiled tofu." The old man became quite cautious.

"Maybe the Peacock Treefather told him." Jian Xiaotie mused: "The treefather was definitely invincible when he was alive so he might know some of our secrets. After all, Li Qiye is still the Peacock Tree Controller."

"I'm afraid it isn't that simple." The old man lightly shook his head again: "Even the treefather might not have known our secrets. After all, he died long ago. I'm not sure such knowledge can be passed down either."

Jian Xiaotie pondered for a moment before replying: "Uncle, even if he didn't only come here to eat, it doesn't mean that he has malicious intentions. Our Jian Clan has always been friendly with rest of the human race."

The old man spoke: "It is better to be careful. If anything happens during Grandfather's celebration, then we would be letting Grandfather down as useless juniors."

"I will be careful." Jian Xiaotie nodded earnestly.

After leaving the little shop, Li Qiye headed for the Rainbow Pavilion. In fact, the old man and Jian Xiaotie were overthinking things; he really did only go to eat the boiled tofu. He had no intention to do anything to the Jian Clan.

Li Qiye took out the invitation and murmured: "Maybe I should go take a look. It will be our last meeting, there might not be another chance in the future..."

After entering the inn, he found that Zhang Baitu had already taken care of everything.

"You have just learned a dao, so stay here for now and carefully ponder it." Li Qiye ordered: "After a few more days, I will take you to the Jian Clan. It will be good for you to get to know the disciples there."

“Young Noble, you want to attend the Jian Grandfather’s birthday?” Zhang Baitu was surprised to hear this. Normally, a nobody like him wouldn’t be qualified to attend a celebration of this level.

“Yes, it will be good to broaden your horizons.” Li Qiye insipidly said: “Your three clans have deep ties with the Jian Clan. However, some unfilial descendants dragged down Dongting Lake, so the Jian Clan wanted nothing to do with you all.”

Li Qiye glanced at Zhang Baitu and continued: “Remember this, as a descendant of the Zhang Clan, cultivation is only one aspect, you need to maintain a certain state of mind as well. Remember, if you want to be accepted by others, cultivation alone won’t be enough. You need to have the same resolution as your ancestors. Otherwise, it would be throwing away their past glory and shaming their reputation.”

“This lowly one will continue to work towards your goals. I won’t let you down.” Zhang Baitu kneeled and answered respectfully.

Li Qiye nodded quietly.

While these two were staying at the inn, Dragonwell became even more lively. Its streets could only be described as being occupied by a sea of people.

This was because Jian Longwei’s 8,000th birthday was coming up. Many great powers from all corners of the world sent their important characters to give him their blessings.

His pivotal status and the respect he garnered from all the races in Heaven Spirit was not only because he was the leader of the Jian Clan, he was also a Godking. Some even say that he was at the incredible Celestial Godking level.

Great lineages such as Gu Chun’s four branches, the Seven Martial Pavilion, and the Swiftdao Holy Ground all sent people as well. A few guests garnered a lot of attention. For example, Shangguan Feiyan from the Roaring Conch and Gongsun Meiyu from the Profound Sea Dynasty. People couldn’t turn their eyes away.

Today, both of these supreme beauties with deep friendships came together. Their appearance at the birthday celebration in Dragonwell created a very pretty scene when they walked together.

The public praised them as magnificent head-turners. Shangguan Feiyan was very famous at the Dragon Demon Sea for being a genius of the Roaring Conch. Needless to say more about Gongsun Meiyu, she was the Profound Monarch’s concubine. Her charm seeped deep into the bones.

The crowd started cheering when they presented their gifts.

“Miss Shangguan represents the Roaring Conch in gifting a Phoenix Conch in honor of the Grandfather.” A disciple responsible for accepting gifts accepted the item and recorded it down.

“Miss Gongsun represents the God-Monarch in gifting a Longevity Seadeer in honor of the Grandfather.” After hearing the announcement from this disciple, many in the audience marveled.

“The Phoenix Conch and Longevity Seadeer are both exceedingly rare treasures.” Some were quite envious of the two gifts.

They felt that only behemoths like the Roaring Conch and Profound Sea Dynasty would be able to afford such gifts.

“Thank you for the generous presents.” Jian Xiaotie personally received the two girls.

Chapter 1248: Hong Tianzhu

While Li Qiye was still at the Rainbow Pavilion, Zhang Baitu was striking while the iron was hot in order to comprehend the grand dao he saw earlier.

Of course, Li Qiye was not in a rush to attend the birthday celebration. It was not his main purpose for coming here.

Hong Yujiao came as well. Her father was with her, along with some disciples from the lake. He was the current master of the lake, Hong Tianzhu. [1. Tianzhu = Celestial/Heavenly Pillar.]

Despite his domineering name, he was not a tall or muscular man. White hair could already be found on his head. Despite his humble stature, he gave off a shrewd and capable feeling instead of looking like a pushover.

“Young Noble Li, this is my father.” Hong Yujiao introduced him to Li Qiye.

Li Qiye was sitting in the lobby and only nodded. He didn’t bother to stand up after seeing Hong Tianzhu. Hong Tianzhu cupped his fists and said: “Virtuous Nephew, your fame is thunderous. It is a type of fate to be able to see you today.”

At this time, Hong Yujiao left with the other disciples because she knew her father wanted to talk to Li Qiye.

However, before she could leave, Li Qiye interrupted: “Yujiao, stay behind. You need to listen as well.”

She was slightly dazed and looked over at her father before deciding to stay behind.

In just a moment, only the three of them were left in the lobby.

After everyone sat down, Li Qiye looked at Hong Tianzhu and spoke: “I heard Yujiao say that you wanted to meet me to talk about something. What is it about?”

Hong Tianzhu carefully took a glimpse at Li Qiye again. The guy was sitting there imperiously as if he was guarding the entire world. Anyone would feel an uncomfortable vibe after seeing Li Qiye’s attitude. After all, he was only a junior, yet he was so arrogant. Not too many would appreciate this kind of gesture.

“There’s no need to think too much.” Li Qiye broke the silence: “Don’t think that I would give you more consideration just because you are the current master of Dongting Lake. I granted you this audience not because of how strong your lake is, but purely because of the blessing of your ancestors. I’m here to give Dongting Lake a chance.”

Such words would drive many people away in exasperation. After all, Hong Tianzhu was the leader of an entire region. He enjoyed a great status with his position, but today, someone told him that this meeting

was only out of respect for his ancestors. This was simply demeaning and humiliating. No one would like to hear such words.

Hong Tianzhu's expression slightly shifted after hearing Li Qiye. It would be a lie to say that he was unaffected by these claims. However, as an experienced leader, he didn't become angry and feel the need to defend his prestige.

"Young Noble Li, I respect your status and your character." Even Hong Yujiao had to defend her father: "But please, show some respect to us and our Dongting Lake."

Her displeasure was warranted. He might as well be pointing straight at her father's face and criticizing him. As his daughter, she naturally had to uphold his dignity.

"Yujiao, the fact that I am sitting right here is showing respect to both you two and your Dongting Lake!" Li Qiye opened his eyes wider. A brilliance instantly blossomed like the flashing of a star. The world floated around his divine throne that loomed above the nine heavens.

He glared at her and slowly uttered: "You think I would bother to correct some randoms on the street and give them a chance at a fortune?"

Hong Yujiao was shaken when Li Qiye glared at her like this. Even though he was only sitting there, she felt an immense pressure, rendering her breathless and giving her the urge to prostrate before him. This was a very strange feeling.

She heaved a sigh of relief once he took his eyes away. The suppressive atmosphere slowly dispersed and she woke up from this trance.

She couldn't believe it. This Li Qiye ahead looked even younger than her. Despite his ordinary appearance, he could actually instill a primal fear in her, like an eternal existence.

Hong Tianzhu took a deep breath and subdued his displeasure. He cupped his fists again and said: "Virtuous Nephew, the truth is that I did come here today with a particular topic in mind."

Li Qiye flatly replied: "Go ahead."

Hong Tianzhu paused for a moment before speaking: "You are the disciple of the Peacock Treefather, the current successor of Peacock Land. My Dongting Lake wishes to formalize a pact with your land."

Li Qiye slightly raised his eyebrows and asked: "A pact?"

Hong Tianzhu elaborated: "With your consent, we will send disciples to Peacock Land to start a training garrison so that they can become accustomed to the mainland. This will also deepen the friendship between our two lands. Of course, you can also send disciples to my Dongting Lake so that they can train and get used to the sea as well."

Even though Dongting Lake was huge, its actual landmass was far smaller than Peacock Land. There were more lakes than anything else here. Meanwhile, Peacock Land was one of the biggest continents in not just the Jade Sea, but the entire Heaven Spirit World. There was a reason why it was considered such a great haven for the human race.

However, despite its great size, Peacock Land has never allowed outsiders to be stationed within its territory. No one dared to challenge the Peacock Treefather's authority in this regard either.

"There are not many humans in Heaven Spirit. Our Dongting Lake and your Peacock Land are two of the biggest strongholds of our race. You should know that if we cooperate with each other, it will not only be beneficial for our lands, but also for the entire human race." He finished his suggestion.

"I am actually not an acrimonious person." Li Qiye said with an indifferent tone: "But you yourself should be laughing at how ridiculous your statement is. Your clans have been vying for power all this time, scheming for all kinds of positions. Don't you think its funny when your lake talks about the interests of the human race?"

"You can't even tolerate and accept your own people, what is this talk about helping others?!" He coldly stared at Hong Tianzhu after stating this.

Hong Tianzhu's face turned red to the point of being slightly ugly after hearing this.

"Young Noble Li, you are speaking out of line." Hong Yujiao once more interjected on her father's behalf.

Li Qiye shifted his glare to her and responded: "Your Dongting Lake needs to reflect on this issue. Go back and tell those old geezers there what I have said today. I initially didn't want to talk about this kind of nonsense as it's not even worth a fart in my eyes!"

His glare was chilling at this moment: "However, I will give your lake a chance out of respect for your ancestors. Go back and tell those old bones that if they don't wake up, I will personally take action!"

Hong Tianzhu rose from his seat and lowered his voice: "Young Noble Li, your words are too condescending. My lake will take care of our own business. If you do not wish to befriend us, then forget it. Goodbye."

"Sit down!" The glint in Li Qiye's eyes bloomed. An oppressive atmosphere came from his eyes; it was as if they could annihilate eternity itself. Hong Tianzhu seemed to be imprisoned by gods from the glare.

He involuntarily sat back down with a bang as if a hand of god had directly pushed him down.

"You still don't understand." Li Qiye continued his scolding: "Do you really think the phrase 'protected by the wise sages of the Hundred-Saints Hall' is merely empty words? When was the last time you all visited and worshiped the souls of your ancestors?"

"The wise sages of the Hundred-Saints Hall?" He couldn't come up with an answer right away, but he knew of this particular phrase.

"Forget it." Li Qiye gently sighed: "I am too lazy to care about you all. If you want to work together with Peacock Land, I will show you the way by writing a letter to Kong Qinru of the Exquisite Valley. She will make the necessary arrangements for you."

"The Exquisite Valley Lord?" Hong Tianzhu was taken aback.

He didn't know the relationship between Li Qiye and Kong Qinru. In theory, Li Qiye was the successor of Peacock Land, so he should be in charge of this business.

“Go, Qinru will assist you.” Li Qiye gently waved his sleeve.

He was tired of this problem with Dongting Lake. Only his love for their ancestors kept him involved.

Hong Tianzhu hesitated and asked: “Well, will the Exquisite Valley agree to assist us in this matter?” He felt that he by himself was not enough to deal with the valley.

Li Qiye couldn't help but look at him and ask: “Don't tell me you haven't been communicating with the Exquisite Valley?”

“Well...” Hong Tianzhu rubbed his palms together awkwardly and replied: “Our Dongting Lake do have some dealings with the Exquisite Valley, but, but it is only by chance most of the time.”

He became a bit embarrassed at this point and didn't know what else to say.

Chapter 1249: Contract

Li Qiye noticed Hong Tianzhu's awkward demeanor and flatly said: “I understand now. You no longer have the contract from back then! It was written by the ancestors from the Zhang Clan, so their withdrawal cut off the alliance between you and the Exquisite Valley!”

“How do you know that?!” Hong Tianzhu was shocked to hear this. This was a story so ancient that even their lake had almost forgotten about it.

Hong Tianzhu wouldn't have recalled this matter if Li Qiye didn't bring up working together with the Exquisite Valley. Even juniors from the lake didn't know about this contract, let alone outsiders.

Li Qiye didn't answer his question directly: “After severing this contract, your lake's descendants didn't have the ability to form another one. In the end, the valley stopped caring about your lake.”

Hong Tianzhu's old face became a bit hot. He coughed and said: “I, I won't deny that. Dongting Lake is indeed inferior compared to the past. We descendants have not done well, so the lake isn't strong like before. This inevitably made others underestimate us.”

Hong Tianzhu sighed after saying this. Suddenly, he felt as if he was one generation below Li Qiye in the hierarchy.

Li Qiye sighed as well and stared at Hong Tianzhu. He couldn't give up on him, so he pointed the way for him: “The valley didn't ignore you because of the decline. Even though the Zhang ancestors were the ones who signed the contract, the Hong and Xu ancestors were most likely involved in passing it down as well.”

“Take a moment to reflect on what your lake has become. The clans are distancing themselves from each other, and all of you have long forgotten the teachings of your ancestors. Today, one clan will be on top, tomorrow, another will take its place. Everything has become such a mess with a total failure to comply with your legacy's own teachings.”

Li Qiye paused before continuing: “With this abandonment, your sect has become chaotic. All of its energy and resources are consumed by internal conflicts, do you feel that your lake can still be powerful under these conditions?”

Hong Tianzhu was a bit tongue-tied after hearing this.

“The lake was built upon the labor of all three clans. Without this system that was fortified by an agreement, your group is nothing more than a bunch of stray dogs competing for a piece of meat! Think about it, the continuous changes in leadership in such a capricious manner rendered the entire system useless. Do you think the valley would want to be involved with your lake under these circumstances? Each of your clans has their own agenda while lacking the will to carry out a strategy that will benefit the entire lake as a whole.”

“I...” Hong Tianzhu didn’t know how to respond.

Li Qiye gently sighed: “It is not impossible to form an alliance with the Exquisite Valley. The descendants of your clans need to sit down. Let go of what should be abandoned, do what must be done, follow your lineage’s old teachings and become a solidary whole once more. Repent and more opportunities shall arise.”

“Well...” Hong Tianzhu hesitated. He didn’t know why Li Qiye knew so many things about them, but he was taking Li Qiye much more seriously.

He eventually said: “Young Noble, this isn’t that simple. Even if I want to reform the union, the other ancestors might not necessarily agree. Moreover, the clans themselves might not be willing to follow the ancestral teachings again.”

Hong Tianzhu’s remark was not unreasonable. After all, who would be willing to give up their power after being in charge? This was simply asking for the impossible.

No one could withstand the temptation of power. This was precisely the reason why several generations later, the lake abandoned their teachings and contended over resources and authority. This led to the chaos in the lake and, not long after this, many long-term agreements could no longer be sustained.

Li Qiye nonchalantly replied: “Let the souls of your ancestors decide in accordance with their ironclad teachings. Kill those who dare to disobey without showing mercy.”

Hong Tianzhu was dazed after hearing this. It sounded like a joke, but he didn’t dare to say it.

The souls of the ancestors were an intangible and spiritual matter. It was only a way of commemorating the ancestors and their glorious achievements.

It was impossible to seek these spirits and ask for their arbitration. Who would listen to such an ethereal idea?

“It seems like you all don’t even know what you have lost.” Li Qiye shook his head and said: “After abandoning your union and contract, even the ancestors have been forgotten. It’s no wonder why the valley looks down on your lake. It has thrown away all of its ancestors’ prestige and even the most precious inheritance they left behind. Why would the valley care about you?”

“You think that the Hundred-Saints Hall is storing treasures, right?” Li Qiye coldly stared at Hong Tianzhu.

Hong Tianzhu became quite embarrassed. Some of their ancestors did think that the hall stored treasures. Some of them had even tried to open it to no avail.

Li Qiye felt a bit helpless at these descendants and told Hong Tianzhu: "Then let me ask you, has your lake been worshipping the souls of the ancestors and the lake itself?"

"Well..." Hong Tianzhu coughed awkwardly and couldn't say anything for a long time.

The frustrated Li Qiye shook his head and said: "I don't know what to say regarding your stupidity. If I was your ancestor, I would surely strangle you group of fools with only power in your eyes!"

"Do you actually think that you have been able to defend Dongting Lake because it has a superb defensive terrain with your insignificant strength? Don't you know how important this treasure ground is? Your ancestors expended countless efforts in order to obtain it. In the Dragon Demon Sea, all of the great lineages like the Seven Martial Pavilion, the Roaring Conch, and the Dream Empyrean could easily destroy the lake whenever they want!"

He went on to say: "Do you think defending the lake is to your group's credit? To put it bluntly, the Dream Empyrean's Meng Zhentian can easily annihilate you all by himself, so why is it that none of them have maneuvered against the lake? Is it because of your few contemporary ancestors? Haha, in the eyes of others, these ancestors are no different from insects.

"The real reason why your lake has survived till now is due to the souls of your ancestors protecting everyone. Because of them, your enemies do not dare to act recklessly! Without their protection, within this Dragon Demon Sea where the sea demons reign supreme, you ants would have been treated like fat pieces of meat and torn asunder by a group of bloodthirsty sharks!"

He snorted sarcastically as he finished his monologue: "But today, you have forgotten about their souls! To actually not be performing the lake ceremony as well as worshipping your ancestors... how ridiculous!"

Hong Tianzhu stood there murmuring to himself: "The souls of the ancestors...?"

Li Qiye gently shook his head again with frustration: "You can't be thinking that their souls are just an intangible concept?"

Hong Tianzhu smiled wryly and had no response again. Hong Yujiao, sitting to the side, couldn't comment either because she didn't know about the souls of the ancestors. As for the teachings and contract, she wasn't privy to them either. Many of the current elders in the lake didn't want to mention them.

Of course, it was their direct ancestors who chose to abandon these rules in favor of power; they naturally wouldn't want to bring it up again.

Hong Tianzhu mustered up his courage and asked after some musing: "Young Noble, if we were to let the souls of the ancestors make the decision, how do we go about it?"

"Do you really have the determination?" Li Qiye looked at him and said: "Right now, your Hong Clan has a lot of power at the lake and the Xu also have several docks, right? The poorest among the clans is the Zhang, they don't even have a place to stay despite the lake being so large."

Hong Tianzhu didn't know too much about the power struggle back then either, but he had heard a few things about it. Even though the Zhang ancestors lost, they still had one dock remaining out of the

eighteen. However, these ancestors were furious at that time and chose to leave Dongting Lake. The rest of them then divided the Zhang Clan's assets; this wasn't a proud event at all.

Li Qiye nonchalantly looked at him and said: "Will your Hong Clan be willing to give up your power and resources?"

Hong Tianzhu eventually answered: "I don't know what the ancestors will say, but you are right, our lake is indeed in disarray due to the power struggles. We only do what we want, so many of our covenants and pacts with others can't be implemented. If this keeps up, the lake will be even more fragmented and become weaker."

"I understand after listening to you today." He gently sighed: "We must be the ones to reshape the order of the lake. Otherwise, no one will respect us."

As the master of the lake, he understood that many of their current agreements couldn't be carried out at all.

Chapter 1250: Marriage Proposal

Li Qiye watched over Hong Tianzhu for a bit before speaking: "Very well, if you are truly sincere, then it will be for the best. I will give your lake one last chance; if you can't seize it, then you are on your own in the future."

Hong Tianzhu became excited and quickly bowed: "Thank you, Young Noble."

Even though he knew neither what Li Qiye was capable of or about the souls of the ancestors, his intuition was telling him that this was a once-in-a-million-years opportunity for their lake. If they were to miss it, then they would truly be on the verge of a real decline.

Hong Yujiao was also confused at this moment. They didn't know who this man was, but she felt an unfathomable aura from him. When he sat there, it seemed as if he was the master of all. Both she and her father felt their statuses lowered while he would remain the same for all eternity.

Li Qiye asked Hong Tianzhu: "Did you come to Dragonwell to celebrate the Jian Clan's birthday?"

Hong Tianzhu quickly answered: "Young Noble, you are correct. Our lake was invited for the 8,000th birthday, so we came to give the Jian Grandfather our blessings."

"Very well, we'll go together then. Having an audience with the Grandfather will be good." Li Qiye gently nodded: "As for whether you can build a friendship with the Jian Clan in the future or not, that will depend on your own fortune."

"Meet the Grandfather?" Hong Tianzhu was both excited and nervous. Even though their lake did have some ties with the Jian Clan, it was a very shallow relationship.

To a large extent, the only reason they were invited to this celebration was most likely because they were also humans.

Their lake was not qualified to see the Grandfather alone. This was something left to behemoths like the Seven Martial Pavilion and Roaring Conch.

How could he not be shocked by this development? It was truly a good opportunity for Dongting Lake.

“Your Highness, please stop, our master is in a meeting.” The voice of a disciple from the lake came from outside.

But before this disciple could finish, the person had already barged inside. The intruder was the Wyvern Crown Prince, Shangguan Feilong.

The disciple outside couldn’t exactly stop him, so they were at an impasse.

Hong Tianzhu and Hong Yujiao were surprised to see this sudden intrusion and slightly frowned.

After coming inside, Shangguan Feilong felt annoyed when he saw Li Qiye and snorted. However, he didn’t push it further and decided to ignore Li Qiye. He cupped his fist towards the other two and said: “Uncle, Sister, please excuse my rude interruption, I was simply too anxious.”

The deed was done, so despite feeling unhappy, Hong Tianzhu managed to ask: “Nephew, is there an important event?”

Shangguan Feilong was visually happy. He bowed and carefully spoke: “My big sis wants to invite you to the Jian Clan to talk about the marriage between Sister and me.”

“What marriage?” Hong Yujiao’s expression shifted.

Hong Tianzhu grimaced as well and said: “Nephew, this joke is going too far. It is too early to talk about marriage.”

“Uncle, it isn’t early.” Shangguan Feilong gloated: “My big sis has sent messages to the ancestors of the lake, and they have agreed. Moreover, our marriage will be administered by the Seashield Prince.”

Both the father and daughter were alarmed upon hearing this sudden development. They couldn’t react in time.

“The ancestors of the lake have high hopes for this marriage and wish for it to happen soon.” The happy youth spoke: “My big sis heard that Uncle was staying at Dragonwell, so she told me to come and invite you to the Jian Clan to discuss things further.”

Hong Tianzhu raised his brows and asked in a serious manner: “When did the ancestors agree to this?”

“Just a while ago.” Shangguan Feilong was all smiles: “Sister and I are a perfect match. This marriage is a match made in heaven—”

Hong Yujiao coldly interrupted him: “I’ll be in charge of my own marriage, the ancestors don’t need to worry about it.”

Hong Yujiao was quite dissatisfied with the ancestors from the lake suddenly deciding her marriage for her.

Hong Tianzhu felt the same way, evident by his grimace. He understood why the ancestors agreed so quickly. To a large extent, it was due to Feilong’s older sister, Shangguan Feiyan.

She was one of the most excellent geniuses of the Roaring Conch. Plus, there had been rumors of her marrying her senior brother, the Seashield Prince, to become the future mistress of that sect.

If the lake could form this marriage pact with the Wyvern Country, they would also be able to suck up to the Roaring Conch. It would be very beneficial to have such a strong backing.

However, he was not happy about this marriage. His daughter had the most excellent bloodline among the lake's younger generation. He naturally didn't want their Hong Clan's best bloodline to go to a foreign race.

Shangguan Feilong quickly responded to Hong Yujiao: "Sister, we are childhood friends. You have the best bloodline while I will inherit the Wyvern Country. Our children will be dragons and phoenixes among men, they could even inherit the true dragon's bloodline from my forefathers..."

"Since when did the Wyvern Country have a true dragon's bloodline?" A very blunt voice interrupted Feilong. Li Qiye coldly commented: "A little snake crawling up from the seabed dares to claim to be a true dragon?!"

Li Qiye didn't show Feilong any respect: "The Wyvern Country is nothing. How can it be qualified to marry a daughter from the Hong Clan? When the ancestors from the Hong Clan lorded over the world, your forefather was only a little snake at the bottom of the ocean!"

"You!" Feilong's expression became quite unsightly after the hurtful words. He furiously pointed at Li Qiye and spat: "Li, don't think you're all that because you're the Peacock Tree's disciple. It can only be invincible at Peacock Land and will never be able to leave! Without its protection, you are nothing and can be killed at any time!"

Li Qiye was too lazy to give him another glance. He stood up and told Hong Yujiao: "Your marriage is for you to decide. Those geezers from the lake are hopelessly stupid; in order to gain a backing, they are willing to give up their best bloodline to a foreign race as a cauldron! Truly a bunch of idiots."

"If you want to marry, then do it. If you don't, then you don't have to worry about anyone forcing you! Just let me know and I shall deal with them. These other races are not qualified to marry the excellent bloodline of the Hong Clan!" Having said that, he walked towards the door.

Feilong was enraged by Li Qiye and shouted: "Motherfucker, I dare you to say that again!"

Li Qiye ignored him and left the lobby.

Hong Tianzhu quickly consoled him: "Nephew, a marriage is a happy event, but it is also very important. Wait until I come back and talk to the ancestors to figure things out, then I'll meet your sister. Of course, I'll probably see her at the birthday celebration anyway."

"Uncle, after this feast, my sister will be going back to the Roaring Conch. She wants to arrange the marriage before leaving." Feilong had to ignore Li Qiye and replied to Hong Tianzhu: "If this can be done, she can also invite the Seashield Prince to preside over our wedding."

"I understand your eagerness as well as Miss Shangguan's line of thought." Hong Tianzhu was conflicted. The ancestors didn't bother talking to him before deciding his daughter's marriage.

He continued to appease Feilong: "Don't worry, I will give your sister a definite answer before she leaves."

It took a while before Tianzhu managed to calm Feilong down and send him away.

"The ancestors are too unreasonable. How can they make a decision about my marriage like this!" Hong Yujiao expressed her dissatisfaction after Feilong's departure.

Hong Tianzhu sighed and insipidly said: "Do you still not see it? There is only one reason why the ancestors from our Hong and Xu Clans could reach an agreement in such a short amount of time. Even though we have a lot of power in the lake right now, several of our Hong ancestors are near the end of their lifespans. If they die, then the Xu Clan will have a chance to close the gap. The Roaring Conch is the most powerful lineage right now with a great amount of divine medicine. If I'm not mistaken, the ancestors must have reached an agreement with Shangguan Feiyan; they want to use this marriage to trade for some medicine!"

He sighed helplessly after coming to this conclusion.