

Emperor 4361

Chapter 4361: Who Needs Who?

“When you actually want to do business, come find me then.” Li Qiye wanted to finish the conversation.

A’jiao contemplated for a bit before answering: “You’re putting us in a tough position, this is straight robbery.”

“No, it is a fair transaction.” He smiled and said: “Tell me, has anything like this happened before in history?”

Her lips slightly parted but no words came out.

“No, it is unprecedented.” He said: “Its serious nature and consequences are beyond imagination. Is he himself fully aware? No, he does not, hence you being here.”

“Can’t argue with that.” She conceded due to his logic.

He chuckled and continued: “That’s why this is a fair transaction. In fact, it can’t be any fairer, not a robbery in the slightest.”

She sighed then stared at him to say: “But have you imagined when that day comes? What will you get out of it? What will the world get out of it? It’ll be a mess more than your imagination as well along with the destruction.”

“That’s one possibility.” He nodded: “And it might be worse than what you are describing as well. I also do not have a clear conclusion.”

He paused a bit before continuing: “Nonetheless, this isn’t a reason for me to help him. I am not affected by the outcome.”

“Is that so?” She asked: “Even if you don’t care about yourself, what about this world? You can consider this an experiment, a self-challenge for your power and dao heart. Sure, you’ll survive, but nothing will be left even if you can return triumphant one day. Everything here will be long gone. There must be a better compromise to keep this place going.”

“Let’s say that you have a better method, how can you be sure that this world will continue to exist after everything is over?” He disagreed: “No one else including him can change the result. The only thing different is the path. Everything will return to ashes in the end because this is an eternal law. We’re all but mere bubbles in the great maelstrom of time.”

“I...” She hesitated from responding because she was only the representative and couldn’t make all the decisions.

“Nothing has changed in history, he won’t be able to do so this time either. There is a clear line that can’t be broken even if one breaks the sky vault and becomes the new dao.” He continued.

She couldn’t respond because he was indeed telling the truth. She understood the intricacies and secrets at play here. Nonetheless, she still wanted to convince him because there was still a glimmer of hope with him on their side.

“Go back from whence you came.” He waved his hand.

As she was about to leave, she couldn't help but ask: “You don't want to know the secret behind all of this?”

“It would be a lie to say no.” He said: “But as long as I'm alive, I'm sure I'll see it. Mortal shells can't reach it but I'm an exception.”

“It'll be too late then.” She said.

“Still doesn't change anything. If I do participate, I might be the one going down and the result will still be the same for this world. This case applies to him dying as well.” He said: “That's why if you want my participation, give me what I want.”

“You believe that if your demand is met, you'll win?” She stared intensely at Li Qiye.

“No one can answer your question.” He smiled.

“Think about it carefully. If you make a decision one day, just say the word, I'll be around.” She pondered for a bit longer before giving up.

“I will agree whenever you meet my demand.” He said.

She sighed because she knew that words alone couldn't convince Li Qiye. She cupped her fist and turned around before disappearing from sight.

“A master.” The disciples standing far away caught a glimpse of her ability during her departure. Of course, they couldn't possibly imagine her true power.

After she was gone, the disciples came over. One of them half-jokingly asked: “Sect Master, was that our mistress just now?”

Despite her appearance, she had garnered their respect due to her perceived power.

“I'll throw you to the wolves if you keep gossiping.” Li Qiye gave them the side-eye.

“I'm just playing...” The one asking gulped and smiled wryly.

The group entered the City of Demons but they couldn't find a place to stay before being stopped for the third time.

It was a middle-aged serpent demon with other experts wearing a similar uniform.

He towered at three meters and had a human head with a snake body. His tail was long, the same for his tongue. It seemed that he could open his mouth and swallow the young ones from Little Diamond.

The group behind him were various demons - bull, tiger, treants... They were obviously powerful.

The youths trembled with fear after seeing the mighty demons. Any of these demons could wipe them out with a single hand wave, hence their trepidation.

“Sir, are you Young Noble Li?” The serpent demon cupped his fist towards Li Qiye.

The youths heaved a sigh of relief. These demons didn't seem to be aggressive.

“What is it?” Li Qiye smiled.

“I represent Dragon in welcoming you, Young Noble Li. Please stay at our sect.” The serpent demon explained.

At first, the youths were frightened after hearing that the demons were from Dragon. Alas, this seemed to be a friendly invitation.

“They must be Miss Jian’s clan members?” One of them whispered because Jian Qingzhu had invited them to the City of Demons before. This could be the men she ordered to welcome them.

“What an enthusiastic welcome from Dragon. How unexpected.” Li Qiye smiled.

“You’re too kind, Young Noble Li. Our master has prepared a feast for you in Dragon Platform to wash away the weariness from the long trip.” The serpent demon added.

Unlike the young ones, Wang Weiqiao noticed something and quietly told Li Qiye: “Master, the saintess is from Phoenix Ground.”

The young ones heard this and became startled. They thought that this group might not be under the saintess’ faction at all.

Chapter 4362: Malice

They were tense because the saintess was from the Jian Clan of Phoenix Ground. They didn’t know what the other two branches thought about this matter.

Thus, if it wasn’t someone from the Jian, this feast might be anything but celebratory in nature. They instinctively touched their weapon regardless of how futile it would be.

“The three branches are all but the same, we’re all members of Dragon.” The serpent demon put on a friendly appearance.

Elder Hu whispered to Li Qiye: “Sect Master, the monarch is from Dragon Platform.”

There was no doubt that the sect master of Dragon would try to avenge his son and the fallen members of Dragon.

Moreover, he was also from Dragon Platform, one of the three main branches. It looked like this welcoming party wasn’t so friendly after all.

The youths from Little Diamond gazed intensely at the demons and unsheathed their weapons. Of course, this was only met with disdain from the demons.

Though there were several dozens of them, they were weaker than any junior in Dragon. One demon here could crush them like ants.

They understood this as well but even a fish on a chopping board would try to resist, let alone humans.

Li Qiye, on the contrary, remained calm and smiled: “No wonder why there’s a welcoming party already.”

"It is our responsibility to take care of weary guests." The serpent demon laughed amicably. Alas, when he opened his mouth, it made the youths tremble with fear since they felt like prey.

"We shouldn't go." Elder Hu found this situation to be unfavorable.

"You must, don't let our hospitality go to waste." The serpent demon insisted.

Elder Hu and the youths would want to try and flee right now. Alas, they needed to wait for Li Qiye's order.

"Wow, looks like you all insist on taking care of us." Li Qiye chuckled.

"Indeed, we come with full sincerity." The serpent demon chuckled. The rest of the demons in the back started laughing as well, trying to play the part of a good host.

Unfortunately, this only frightened the youths even more. They thought that they were sheep surrounded by tigers and serpents.

"Ca-can we not go?" One of them felt his knees buckling, not wanting to be eaten by the demons.

"Sect Master, let's leave." Another whispered to Li Qiye. Going with these demons was the same as entering the tiger's lair.

"You insist on holding a party for us?" Li Qiye asked the demons with a smile.

Those who recognized this smile would instantly know what was in store for the demons. It's just that the youths from Little Diamond have lost their composure and didn't know Li Qiye that well.

"We brothers have put a lot of effort into this, please don't let us down." The serpent demon seemed to enjoy laughing and showing off his gaping mouth.

One youth thought that these demons would have no qualm in killing them. After all, this was a desolate area and no one would know or care. They didn't find escaping humiliating either since they were from a small sect and their opponents were mighty.

"You're here already, no need to leave." A different demon approached the group, seemingly wanting to surround them.

Li Qiye still stood there with a smile on his face while the rest panicked.

"Do-don't come over here!" A youth couldn't help but shout.

"Why so nervous? We bear no malice." The serpent demon remained cordial but who knows what he was actually thinking.

"Serpent King, why is a great demon from Dragon Platform bullying a junior?" A calm voice interrupted in a forceful and penetrating manner.

Everyone turned around and saw another group of demons, one primarily consisting of bird demons - eagles, lightning birds...

The leader was a middle-aged man, handsome and well-dressed. One would think that he was a human if it wasn't for his resplendently golden bird tail. He also had golden claws instead of human feet.

Chapter 4363: Goldbird Monarch

There were four demon monarchs in Dragon, the most famous being Peacock Monarch. Some considered him the leader of the four. There was at least one monarch in each major branch with Dragon Platform having two.

Goldbird Monarch, the clan master of the Jian, was in control of Phoenix Ground.

Though he wasn't as talented as the world-renowned Peacock Monarch, he was not one to be trifled with.

The serpent demon's group became startled after seeing him. Though Peacock Monarch was in charge of Dragon currently, this didn't mean that Dragon Platform had absolute authority in the sect.

The serpent demon was only a top demon from the platform while Goldbird was the lord. The latter's status and influence were far superior.

In a sense, he was nothing more than an above-average disciple while standing before the monarch.

"Demon Monarch." They cupped their fist after seeing him.

Hidden competitions and conflicts were inevitable among the three major branches. Nonetheless, they were from the same sect and there were rules. Thus, they didn't dare to be disrespectful.

"Serpent King, why are you so enthusiastic with our clan's guests?" Goldbird had a serious and dignified demeanor. His eyes shot out sharp rays and instill fear into the lesser demons.

The youths from Little Diamond shuddered as well. Though he harbored zero malice towards them, his gaze still deterred them from looking straight at him.

"There's a misunderstanding, Demon Monarch." The serpent demon cupped his fist and apologized: "I was only contributing to the sect by readying a reception early, I didn't know that you would be here in person. Please forgive me."

Demons had a strong emphasis on bloodlines. Goldbird's bloodline belonged to a divine creature. Of course, it was extremely thin by this point. Nonetheless, it was enough to make lesser demons feel an instinctive fear.

"Leave, I won't argue with you." Goldbird waved dismissively and uttered coldly: "The monarchs have their own plans, there will be punishments for those who act on their own accord."

He made it clear that although there was a feud between Peacock Monarch and Li Qiye, this was their business. Any other disciple from Dragon interfering would face punishment.

"I understand, I understand." The serpent was glad to get off so easily. He bowed and wiped off the sweat on his forehead before running. The other demons fled as well.

They were from Dragon Platform and believed that Li Qiye was the enemy. If they were to capture Li Qiye and hand him over Peacock Monarch first, it might be a notable contribution. Alas, they didn't expect Goldbird Monarch to interfere.

Goldbird was a senior and although the serpent was unwilling to give up, he still didn't dare to talk back.

After they were gone, Goldbird came over and bowed towards Li Qiye: "My name is Jian Mingyun. Please forgive me for my late reception, Young Noble."

The young ones from Little Diamond hurriedly returned the gesture even though it wasn't directed at them. After all, he was a behemoth in their eyes.

Even a regular cultivator in Dragon such as Deer King was a big shot to them, let alone Goldbird Monarch. Normally, they would never get the chance to meet this level of character. Moreover, they would need to be prostrating as well.

In this case, he was the first to show respect, hence the need to immediately bow back.

"It's not a big deal, and you've just saved them all." Li Qiye smiled.

The monarch's heart skipped a beat as he carefully analyzed Li Qiye. Alas, the guy looked harmless.

This didn't stop him from being careful. Though he was weaker than Peacock Monarch, he had ample knowledge and wisdom.

Unfortunately, this was not enough to see through Li Qiye. A while ago, his daughter sent him a letter before entering Dragon Citadel. She warned him that Li Qiye was unfathomable and he should exercise prudence.

As the saying goes - a father knows his daughter the best. He knew that her cultivation talents couldn't compare to the top geniuses in Sky Border. However, her insight and wisdom were second to none. Thus, he took her words very seriously.

"My daughter has mentioned your arrival. I would like to invite you to our humble abode, would that be alright?" He bowed his head while cupping his fist.

A sect master from a small sect might be frightened and prostrate right away after seeing this. Li Qiye, on the other hand, nodded and said: "That's fine, I do intend on visiting your three branches."

The monarch had a bad feeling about this. What did he mean by "visiting"? It sounded rather provocative given the sensitive relationship between Li Qiye and their sect master.

The monarch wasn't angry after hearing this. He just found Li Qiye's casual and confident demeanor puzzling. The guy seemed to have no problem being in enemies' territory, seemingly capable of taking down their great sect.

Elder Hu and the others were afraid. Their sect master spoke as if he wanted to cause trouble to the three branches. They were in the City of Demons. One wrong move might result in being surrounded by all three branches.

Fortunately, Goldbird Monarch and his men seemed friendly and didn't express any dissatisfaction.

They led Li Qiye's group into Phoenix Ground. The youths forgot about the perilous circumstances and became excited.

This was their first time visiting a great power, akin to country bumpkins visiting a major city.

Chapter 4364: Nine-tailed God

The City of Demons was second only to Dragon Citadel. However, it had no walls and spanned countless miles.

The buildings were spread out among the mountains, only connected by the occasional bridge. It resembled a frontier rather than an official city.

It was the home to numerous mortals and cultivators, the majority being members of Dragon. There were other sects here as well but they were vassal states of Dragon.

The ruling authority consisted of three branches - Dragon Platform, Phoenix Ground, and Tiger Pond. This was a complex relationship.

The three branches couldn't be considered as individual lineage. Each had numerous branches within them. The areas weren't perfectly divided into three regions either due to unclear and mixed borders.

Though there was a clear distinction, they still worked together when it came to important matters pertaining Dragon itself.

The Jian was the dragon head of Phoenix Ground. It didn't have full authority over the branch, only ample influence. The clan had an ancient history, one of the oldest in all of Dragon.

Their bloodline was mighty and had a lot to do with Feng Qi, hence their avian focus. Rumor has it that during the great battle between Feng Qi and Jiu Bian, her true blood fell down and blessed the animals below.

The forefather of the Jian was one of them - a bird receiving one drop of true blood and gaining a supreme evolution.

The history of this branch was far older than the clan itself. Nonetheless, the foundation of the clan allowed them to prosper in Phoenix Ground.

They had numerous top dao lords, one of whom being the distinguished Divine Luan Dao Lord. She stood out even among her peers.

After the dao lord, another notable cultivator was known as Sacred Luan. This great demon had boosted his bloodline to the limit, nearly changing the luan species to the mythical phoenix species.

This foundation and history helped the Jian survive and become the leader of Phoenix Ground.

Once the group entered Phoenix Ground, they were greeted by hot winds and desolate sceneries.

The land was barren and dried. The ground had numerous cracks, clearly devoid of water and vegetation. Upon closer inspection, one would see some strange outlines in the shape of feathers.

It seemed to have been scorched by unbelievable flames. Feathers dropped down from above and burned the land, leaving behind the outlines. Of course, this was only in the imagination. Who knows what had actually happened?

Farther away from this barren plot were green mountains, looking like an oasis in a desert. The verdant color spread like a peacock spreading its tail, fully enveloping the barren region.

"Welcome to Phoenix Ground." Goldbird Monarch introduced.

Li Qiye stared at the barren land first then the greener mountains; his eyes narrowed.

The young ones from Little Diamond were overwhelmed with curiosity and looked everywhere. They initially assumed that they would be in a prosperous city. This certainly wasn't the case.

"What happened here? Why is there scorched earth?" One of them asked quietly.

The cultivators from Phoenix Ground certainly had the power to change geographic properties. Having this barren entrance didn't seem right, whether it be from an aesthetic or practical standpoint.

"It is eternal." The monarch heard the hushed voice and answered: "The demon god said that this land was burned by immortal flames. Regular people like us can't do anything about it."

"The demon god? The legendary Nine-tailed God?" Wang Weiqiao became startled.

"Yes." The monarch nodded.

Even Elder Hu had heard of this title before so he spoke with respect: "Such a mighty being."

"Who is it?" A youth asked.

"A great and invincible demon with a mythical bloodline. He once entered Evil Flame Ridge and stole the special flame there. Rumor has it that he fought evenly with Three Truths Dao Lord." Elder Hu solemnly said.

"?!" The youths were astounded right away after hearing the legendary feats. Despite their insufficient knowledge, they have heard of Evil Flame Ridge and Three Truths Dao Lord before.

The former was one of the seven forbidden zones yet this demon still stole something from there?

Three Truths Dao Lord was a powerful cultivator with daoist roots. Thus, he hated and hunted evil.

Nine-tailed God was obviously a demon. Since they lived in the same generation, they naturally hated each other despite a lack of a real feud.

Nine-tailed God didn't follow the righteous path while Three Truths specialized in hunting evil. Conflicts between them were inevitable.

Ultimately, it was impressive for anyone to contend against a dao lord so the youths gasped in admiration.

"The demon god was a supreme ancestor from Phoenix Ground." Elder Hu added.

The monarch disagreed and shook his head: "The great ancestor is respected by all three branches, not just our branch."

This was indeed the truth. The demon had entered all three branches during his youth to hone his craft. Thus, he was part of them all.

"Can you tell me more about Divine Luan Dao Lord? This great being is from your branch, right?" Elder Hu knew a few legends.

"Not quite either." The monarch shook his head again.

Chapter 4365: Scorched Earth

Divine Luan was the second dao lord of Dragon, debuting after Myriad Eyes Dao Lord.

“She is the dao lord of Dragon, not just our clan alone. She is from Phoenix Ground, however.” Goldbird explained.

The dao lord wasn't a member of the Jian but still had strong ties with them from a bloodline perspective.

“I see, thank you.” Elder Hu cupped his fist.

Being able to speak with the monarch was an honor for the members of Little Diamond. This would have been impossible in the past; they wouldn't have been able to get close. The new change was all because of Li Qiye.

Li Qiye crouched down and scooped up a handful of soil. There was an outline of a feather, looking vivid and quite animated. He thought about it for a moment before letting it go down the gaps between his fingers.

‘Still a way to go.’ He thought to himself after sensing the nearly-indiscernible power.

Others couldn't sense it but he could read its profundities and beats. He shook his head, realizing that it was only one step away. Alas, it fell at the last hurdle.

“Is there a problem, Young Noble?” Goldbird became curious: “Our ancestors said that there was a great battle here. Unbeatable immortal flames reduced the land into this state.”

“It wasn't an inferno, only a few feathers burning the entire thing.” Li Qiye revealed.

“A few feathers?” Elder Hu found this astonishing.

This applied to the monarch as well. He took a deep breath and asked: “Really?”

The wise sages including Divine Luan Dao Lord and Nine-tailed God had talked about this issue before. They wrote down that a top flame incinerated the area. Because of this flame's incredible power, the land couldn't heal after many eras. Not a single blade of grass could grow.

Now, Li Qiye said that it was only because of a few feathers. This was even more astounding.

“You disagree?” Li Qiye stared at him.

For some reason, the monarch actually believed Li Qiye because there were random outlines of feathers. It would make sense if these feathers fell down and started burning, leaving their mark behind afterward.

He was a powerful demon with a prestigious bloodline. Alas, his feathers couldn't have done the same damage. The owner must have been insanely mighty.

“So they fell during the great battle?” He murmured.

There weren't that many details regarding the fight between Feng Qi and Jiu Bian. Phoenix Ground itself lacked information. Nonetheless, they still believed that they inherited these bloodlines.

“So whom do these feathers belong to?” Elder Hu became curious.

“Hmm...” The monarch couldn’t answer.

Feng Qi was the youngest dao lord. She was mysterious and the world knew very little about her. This was doubly the case for Jiu Bian.

“Feng Qi.” Li Qiye responded.

“Feng Qi?” The monarch said softly. Rumor has it that their bloodline came from Feng Qi but verification remained impossible.

“What about Jiu Bian? A demon as well?” Elder Hu asked again.

“No one can answer this question.” The monarch said this because it has been an everlasting mystery.

“Legend points towards the tiger demon species or some other immortal beasts. Could be a human too, but our city believes that Tiger Pond has inherited Jiu Bian’s bloodline.” The monarch smiled wryly.

There was no solid proof of Tiger Pond inheriting this bloodline. However, they believed it and this was a widespread notion at the time.

Either way, they weren’t descendants from these two entities and had only been affected by the remnant blood.

“I see, both are potentially demons.” Elder Hu murmured. Regardless of the truth, the group has learned a lot so far.

“You have a nest here.” Li Qiye suddenly brought this up.

“... You’re aware of it, Young Noble?” The monarch hesitated for a bit before admitting.

Although this wasn’t a heavily-guarded secret, not that many knew about it. The sect master of Little Diamond, in particular, shouldn’t be privy to this level of information.

“Obviously.” Li Qiye said: “Since we’re here already, I want to see it.”

“I see...” The monarch didn’t know how to respond.

The nest or roost of their Phoenix Ground was rather important. Only those recognized by their ancestors could enter.

Alas, Li Qiye was an outsider so this was an unreasonable request.

Chapter 4366: I Insist

“Young Noble, I’m afraid there is a misunderstanding. The roost is not open to outsiders.” Goldbird Monarch responded with a serious tone.

This was the polite response. Anyone else would have been answered with criticism.

After all, no one would open an important location of their sect to an outsider. It had to be someone special.

Li Qiye was only the sect master from a tiny sect, utterly insignificant. This request could have ended with death. A big shot might just slap this ignorant sect master and crush him.

Goldbird didn't do anything because Li Qiye was considered an esteemed guest.

Meanwhile, Elder Hu started panicking because Li Qiye's request was rather disrespectful.

"I'm not asking, I'm telling you ahead of time because you seem to be smart." Li Qiye nonchalantly said.

Listeners became slack-jawed as a result. Even the monarch couldn't believe Li Qiye's imperious attitude.

Given his speech and mannerism, anyone could see that he didn't give a damn about Phoenix Ground. He acted as a great master talking to a nobody and his warning was out of kindness.

This was indeed the truth but no one viewed it this way. They attributed it to him being arrogant and ignorant.

Although the monarch believed that Li Qiye was special due to his daughter's warning, this went beyond that. It was difficult for someone of his status to endure the perceived contempt.

Anyone else would become furious. As a demon monarch, he had already put away his pride to come and greet this sect master. On the other hand, there was a clear lack of reciprocation. The guy acted as if he was a mere ant.

"Ridiculous!" A demon standing next to him lost his cool and shouted: "The roost isn't the place for you to do as you please!"

In fact, this demon held back greatly out of respect for the monarch. He thought about just slapping Li Qiye.

The monarch took a deep breath and waved his hand to calm the raging crowd and himself. This was a testament to his patience and amicable personality.

"Young Noble Li, this is not because of you, it's just that the roost isn't open. Even our disciples aren't allowed to enter." He repeated.

"Oh? What does that have to do with me?" Li Qiye continued.

This only served to further infuriate the demons.

"Young Noble, it sounds as if you wish to trespass!" The monarch had a hard time keeping his composure.

"I'm afraid you can't stop me." Li Qiye smiled.

"You! Such impudence!" Another demon furiously shouted.

Li Qiye insisted on trespassing at an important location in their sect. This was too much to handle. The monarch himself was an experienced combatant and had dominated numerous battlefields.

He didn't appreciate being treated in this manner as he spoke sternly: "Young Noble, this isn't a joke. If you choose to trespass, you'll be injured since blades do not have eyes. I won't be able to help you then."

He sincerely warned Li Qiye because experts and ancestors from Phoenix Ground would show no mercy.

"Yes, blades do not have eyes. I advise you all to not try to stop me but if you do, prepare extra coffins. I will be nice and leave your corpses intact." Li Qiye nodded.

"I've had enough!" The demons behind the monarch either grasped or unsheathed their weapons.

Li Qiye didn't seem to notice their aggression and stood there calmly. As for his allies, they were nervous.

It was so friendly earlier but now, weapons have been raised.

The monarch became livid at this point, nearly raising his voice at Li Qiye. Nonetheless, his daughter's warning echoed in his mind so he endured.

"Why are you so confident, Young Noble?" He asked.

Breaking into the roost was a serious matter yet Li Qiye made it clear that he didn't mind an all-out battle against Phoenix Ground.

"Did you think I came here to negotiate?" Li Qiye stared at him.

Li Qiye was gazing at him as if he was a pitiful idiot. This was a new experience for him but this time around, his anger subsided. This question illuminated the circumstances - Li Qiye didn't come to Dragon to negotiate.

Chapter 4367: Goldbird's Ruminations

Li Qiye's comment made Goldbird think about the circumstances.

Dragon had lost many experts along with their sect master's son in Myriad Sect Mountain. Though Li Qiye didn't personally kill them, he definitely played a role. This was especially true for the destruction of Peacock Monarch's divine intent.

Any of the three reasons listed above was enough for Dragon to pursue the matter. On the surface, this seemed like a fight between an elephant and an ant.

Normally, the "ant" would start begging for mercy or even trying to commit suicide in order to save his sect. This time, the ant actually came to their territory despite the animosity and hatred. Moreover, he brought his fellow members with him as well.

Though Jian Qingzhu had invited him, she couldn't guarantee his safety. He should know this full well too.

Therefore, coming to Dragon was akin to jumping off a cliff or entering a tiger's lair. Nonetheless, the guy was here right now.

Goldbird could tell that he wasn't a fool or crazy. Thus, he should have enough sense to never come to Dragon. The only explanation was that he had a strong backer or that he didn't fear their sect.

Where was this confidence coming from? This was the monarch's main question.

After a while, he spoke: "Young Noble, your great treasures are indeed enviable."

His daughter had told him about the treasures obtained by Li Qiye. Thus, he speculated that this was the reason for his arrogance.

He discretely reminded Li Qiye that treasures alone weren't enough. His sect also had top treasures because they had dao lords and top masters in the past.

"Do you think I need those treasures?" To which Li Qiye responded.

Once again, the monarch felt as if he was being viewed as an idiot by Li Qiye. It was rather frustrating and infuriating. Alas, his daughter's words echoed again and he remained calm.

If Li Qiye was telling the truth, then what's the right answer?

Being aware that the mountain is infested with tigers yet still climbs. It couldn't be mere blustering and most importantly, why the roost?

He came to their city and didn't talk about the feud with their sect master. His main target seemed to be the roost in the first place.

"I'm afraid it is not up to me, Young Noble. The roost has monumental significance to our sect." He eventually gave up and smiled wryly.

He wasn't lying either. Though he had plenty of authority, this was not something he could decide on his own.

"I'm merely letting you know because being smart can be a blessing. Those who aren't smart, on the other hand..." Li Qiye paused for a moment before continuing: "You and your daughter are a rare breed. Don't die a stupid death now."

This left the monarch speechless while the rest of the demons wanted to attack. Alas, they wanted to wait for an order.

He eventually took a deep breath and said: "Young Noble, I will make an exception and start a conference with the elder. I'll advocate for you to enter but I do not guarantee success. I can only try my best, what do you think?" He then stared at Li Qiye with sincerity, something no other demon monarchs could.

"I can see why your daughter is wise now." Li Qiye nodded approvingly: "But still missing a little bit. Dragon would be better off with you as the sect master."

"You're too funny, Young Noble." The monarch smiled wryly: "Peacock Monarch is a brilliant genius. Though we are from the same generation, we are merely riding his coattails. I lack decisiveness and cultivation talent compared to him."

He admitted his inferiority without any qualm. In reality, few in all of Sky Border from that generation could compare to Peacock Monarch. He was strong enough to fight the slumbering ancestors now.

Thus, it was natural for him to become the sect master. The elders all agreed as well. Goldbird wasn't jealous at all because Peacock lived up to his potential.

"Cultivation and leadership are two different matters." Li Qiye said: "A sect can rise with a genius but the opposite can happen as well. Disasters often go hand in hand with geniuses."

"I see..." Goldbird carefully digested the comment.

Li Qiye didn't say anything else and moved forward.

Chapter 4368: Phoenix Ground

Only the entrance of Phoenix Ground was barren. The internal region had no lack of spirit energy and life.

Fish and birds enjoyed the verdant mountain ranges, spirit springs, and waterfalls. The buildings present didn't destroy the pristine appearance. Mortals would believe that this was the blessed home of immortals.

This was the home to many species of birds. The ones considered rare somewhere else were common here.

One could see the various branches right beneath the phoenix bloodlines. This was an avian paradise.

Most attributed this to Feng Qi's blood. Her spirit energy bathed the land and made it prosper. More bird species came because they found it harmonious and were blessed as a result. Thus, numerous top bird demons appeared during subsequent eras.

The most illustrious was the Jian Clan - a stout pillar of Phoenix Ground. Their bloodline was considered prestigious, nearing the level of the legendary phoenix. One must bring up Divine Luan Dao lord when talking about this topic. She was closely related to the Jian and rumor has it that she had the real phoenix bloodline.

Of course, there were other great powers and races in Phoenix Ground. Nonetheless, demons were the clear majority, especially bird demons.

Elder Hu and the young ones were preoccupied with the sceneries around them - water springs surging into the air, rare birds playing in the sky, the magnificent peaks...

Even Elder Hu had never seen such a paradise before. The young ones were even more impressed. Only Li Qiye remained indifferent.

The presence of Li Qiye and his allies was noted by the disciples of Phoenix Ground.

"Who is that? The demon monarch personally greeted him." A disciple found this puzzling because the group reassembled country bumpkins.

Only big shots had the privilege of being welcomed by their demon monarch, not these weak cultivators.

"I think they're from a sect named Little Diamond or whatever." A knowledgeable peer said.

"Never heard of them." The first disciple responded. This wasn't surprising since Southern Desolace probably had a hundred thousand sects similar to Little Diamond.

"Why is the monarch going so far for this tiny sect?" Someone else questioned.

People asked around and eventually, someone had an answer: "I heard that they're the lady's friends. She's not here so the monarch is welcoming them instead."

An older disciple murmured: "The lady is too kind, she's willing to befriend everyone."

"Wait, it's not that simple. I just got back from Dragon Citadel and heard something else." A talented senior brother joined in.

"What did you hear, Senior Brother Sky Eagle?" A crowd formed around him.

The older disciple stared at Li Qiye's group and said: "I believe the sect master has stated his intent to kill them, an official decree."

"This tiny sect, why?" All eyes were on the group.

"Isn't killing them as easy as pie? Why did the sect master need to give a decree?" Another said with disdain.

"How strange, I'm wondering why the monarch is welcoming them to our place. It can't be right." Another older disciple said.

They were a part of Dragon. If their sect master wanted to kill someone, they should certainly assist him to show solidarity.

"I'm sure there's a reason." Another interjected.

"It won't be long until everyone knows about it." Sky Eagle said.

The youths from Little Diamond eventually noticed that they were under the spotlight and became nervous.

The disciples from Phoenix Ground were once unreachable existences. Now, they were all over the place like cabbages. This was a strange shift for the youths.

"Don't go anywhere without permission, watch your words as well." Elder Hu ordered. He never expected to be in this situation before. He could see that some of the crowd were not friendly. Causing trouble in the enemy territory could result in a swift death.

The monarch enthusiastically carried out his task and wasn't just all talk. He led the group around all of Phoenix Ground and introduced the various notable places.

Li Qiye had a smile while listening to the introductions of the towering peaks and winding rivers. However, he stopped after coming across a particular cliff.

Ahead was a bottomless abyss engulfed in clouds and fogs. Standing on this cliff was akin to standing amidst the clouds.

One could barely see floating islands, platforms, and peaks. They were incomplete, clearly damaged by something in the past.

This place could have been a continent once. Alas, something shattered it and left it in this unstable state.

Li Qiye took a deep breath and released his divine intent for a scouting mission.

“What is this place?” The young ones focused on the bottomless abyss.

“Ravaged Land.” The monarch introduced: “This is the largest region of the entire city, taking up more than half. The three branches are built around it.”

“Did a shocking war happen here?” Wang Weiqiao asked while staring at the fog.

“Yes, this should be the place where the battle between Feng Qi and Jiu Bian took place. According to the legend, this place was beautiful and magnificent once. Now, this is all that’s left.”

“Can people descend? How deep is it?” Elder Hu inquired.

Chapter 4369: I Want It

Ravaged Land was the center of the city. Alas, due to its broken and unstable nature, it was impossible to build on top of it.

“Descending is possible but it depends on luck and ability.” Goldbird Monarch honestly answered. He stared at the abyss and added: “No one really knows what is below. Coming down is possible but one might not be able to get to the bottom. There are unknown dangers too.”

The disciples of the three branches have explored this area across the eras. Nonetheless, only a few could actually descend.

Top geniuses and ancient ancestors couldn’t reach the bottom due to the sheer length. They went exceedingly far and still only see fog beneath.

Of course, some recklessly jumped down and threw cautions to the wind. The majority of this group either died or went missing.

“A mysterious place like this definitely has a treasury waiting.” A youth from Little Diamond fantasized.

The monarch told the truth: “I’m not sure about a treasury, but there are definitely fortunes in Ravaged Land. However, it requires coming down and returning alive. Otherwise, we can only watch and sigh.”

“So has anyone done it before?” Weiqiao asked.

“It has been a long time but the last person to benefit from it was Nine-tailed Ancestor.” The monarch paused for a bit before nodding.

“Nine-tailed God!” Everyone has heard of this title before, even the smaller sects because they were under the jurisdiction of Dragon and Tiger’s Roar.

This was a being rivaling Three Truths Dao Lord, a true behemoth of Dragon and the strongest ancestor in Dragon right now but no one knew if the demon god was still alive.

“Your progenitor took something from there.” Li Qiye casually remarked. [1]

“!” The monarch was shocked as he blurted: “Ho-how do you know?!”

“I sensed it.” Li Qiye elaborated: “He tore space apart and entered. He took something out only to leave it in the city.”

The monarch stood there, seemingly struck by lightning. This was a top secret written down on an ancient scroll only privy to a few. How could this outsider know about it?

“Do you know where it is?” Li Qiye asked.

“The progenitor had sealed it in Dragon Platform.” The monarch hesitated but eventually answered.

For some reason, he found himself unable to conceal anything before Li Qiye’s gaze. Lying was useless.

Elder Hu and the youths didn’t dare to interject since the atmosphere suddenly became serious again. They knew that this item must be awfully important since it came from Space Dragon Emperor and he found it necessary to seal it.

“I want it.” Li Qiye demanded again.

“No way!” The monarch didn’t hesitate this time.

Space Dragon Emperor was the progenitor of their sect. Anything left behind by him was an heirloom to be worshipped by future generations. Even the big shots from their sect couldn’t take it, let alone an outsider.

“Once again, I’m not negotiating.” Li Qiye said.

The monarch had no words to describe his current emotion. Perhaps only anger fitted this situation due to the unreasonable demand.

“Young Noble, this isn’t a joke. We can negotiate the matter of the roost but this ancestral heirloom pertains to our honor. We will fight to the very last man before handing it over.” The monarch took it very seriously and told the truth.

Those from Little Diamond didn’t dare to breathe loudly. They agreed that Li Qiye was being unreasonable right now, demanding someone else’s heirloom in their own territory.

“When that happens, is Dragon not doomed? What’s the point of trying so hard over an heirloom?” Li Qiye chuckled and went on: “That heirloom would be mine afterward anyway, so why not hand it over in the first place? Why must you implicate the lives of your sect members and walk the path of destruction? If Space Dragon Emperor is still alive, he might just stomp all of you unfilial children to death.”

“Well...” The monarch had a hard time answering. The logic was sound. If the outcome was the same either way, why not hand over the heirloom first to protect Dragon?

“That depends on if you have the ability to do so, Young Noble. Dragon is not weak, we have millions of disciples...” He composed himself and retorted.

He didn't think that Li Qiye alone could take down one of the strongest lineages in Southern Desolace. It was nothing more than daydreaming. In fact, he should be thanking them if they were to show mercy.

"I'm aware but even if you have billions of disciples, I can still easily annihilate you. The only reason why I'm not doing so is sentimental."

Others would have burst out in laughter after hearing Li Qiye. However, the monarch didn't say anything because he thought that the guy was actually being candid.

Chapter 4370: Tough Position

The monarch was stuck in quite a predicament. This was beyond his station as well.

All disciples in Dragon would risk their lives defending the sacred heirloom of their progenitor. Thus, if he were to ask the ancestors about handing the item over, what would be the result?

The ancestors would kill him before Li Qiye. This was no different from being traitorous and disrespectful to the progenitor. These serious offenses were punishable by death. Even his clan members could be implicated.

Thus, there was no way the monarch would ever agree. Nonetheless, he still had a strange feeling of being convinced by Li Qiye's words. He felt that Li Qiye could grab the ancestral heirloom without being stopped while killing everyone in his way.

This included all of Dragon. They could fight to the very last man and fail to stop Li Qiye. He didn't understand why he had this silly feeling and thought that he had gone crazy. Others would certainly think so.

This was a battle between an ant and an elephant. A nobody like Li Qiye stood no chance. However, the more the conversation went on, he understood why his daughter paid such close attention to Li Qiye. There was something inscrutable about him.

"This is beyond me, Young Noble." He then earnestly answered: "I hope that the feud between you and my sect will resolve."

"This isn't a feud. A feud requires the two sides to be relatively even in strength. In this case, I can erase the other party with a hand wave akin to removing some cobwebs." Li Qiye smiled and shook his head.

"..." The monarch couldn't believe that Li Qiye had just compared Dragon to cobwebs. Nonetheless, the essence was true. A one-sided contest couldn't be considered a feud.

"Putting your ancestors aside, I will give you more time since I like you and your daughter. Otherwise, they might call me a bully." Li Qiye smiled.

The monarch felt his insanity grew proportionally to Li Qiye's displayed arrogance.

"Young Noble, please stay put first." He suggested: "Do give us time so I can go talk to the elders regarding the roost. The outcome aside, I will try my very best."

He indeed took Li Qiye very seriously and decided to work hard.

“I’ve become quite soft in the face of sincerity.” Li Qiye shook his head: “I will give you time but remember, my patience has a limit.”

“I understand, I will hurry.” The monarch said while feeling relieved within for some reason.

Though Li Qiye’s reason was both rude and outrageous, he still treated Li Qiye as an esteemed guest. The group enjoyed the treatment usually seen for sect masters of great powers.

Of course, some members of Dragon were unhappy with this. After all, the Jian wasn’t the only one in charge. They criticized the monarch for treating a bunch of nobodies so well but he simply ignored them.

Elder Hu and the young ones thought that they were dreaming after seeing their accommodations.

Previously, they weren’t qualified to even enter Phoenix Ground. Even the relatively-unknown expert cultivators would need to sleep at the base. It was an honor to be enjoying this privilege, enough for them to brag before the smaller sects for a lifetime.

Only Li Qiye didn’t care and only chuckled after seeing the impressed youths.

In fact, the monarch purposely did this in order to see Li Qiye’s reaction. The guy’s nonchalant attitude towards wealth and luxury made him even more careful.

However, he himself couldn’t decide everything in Phoenix Ground. On the second day, some came asking for trouble.

Loud commotion and fighting noises happened outside the door, prompting Li Qiye to frown.

“Boom!” He went outside and saw his allies being pushed back by a single punch.

They had formed a formation to fight, back to back. Elder Hu and Wang Weiqiao were included as well.

Their opponent was an exceptional disciple from Phoenix Ground. Others called him “Senior Brother Sky Eagle”.

He was strong indeed. He spread his wings and just one punch was enough to break the formation. Rays came from the wings and stung the group.

“Retreat!” Weiqiao ordered, aware that they were outmatched.

Their defeat was expected. Sky Eagle was a genius from a behemoth. He alone could destroy a small sect since he was far stronger than Deer King.

“Why are you leaving? The senior brother only wants to spar.” A few disciples from Phoenix Ground blocked their path and forced them back into the range of the senior brother’s sword rays.

They didn’t want to kill the group, only humiliate them. After all, these guys didn’t deserve the highest treatment. They had to teach them how to tuck their tail between their legs and know their place.

Sky Eagle, on the other hand, had just returned from the capital and knew the sect master’s intent. This was his reason for being here.

In the case of success, he would be noted by the elders, perhaps even becoming a prime target for grooming.