

### Chapter 641 - There's Daemon Qi

From Li Qingshan swinging his sword to charging into the great banyan tree with Hua Chenglu, his actions sounded complicated, but he actually completed all of them naturally and smoothly in a single stroke.

By the time the people in pursuit arrived before the great banyan tree, Li Qingshan had already vanished into the tree hole, while the dwarf was frozen midair, maintaining a defensive posture.

"Why didn't you stop him?"

Among the questions, everyone finally noticed his abnormality. His eyes were bulging as his mouth was half open, producing a puzzling sound. His body trembled gently as if he was doing everything he could to endure and hold back something.

"Hey, what's wrong with you?"

The scarred man frowned and patted him on the shoulder gently. The dwarf's eyes rolled up; he suddenly widened his mouth, letting out a twisted sound like someone had grabbed him by the neck. He who already seemed rather strange became especially frightening.

However, his frightening state only lasted for a second. There was a bang, not too soft or loud, and the dwarf exploded in the air, turning into a ball of bloody mist.

Everyone was stunned. Their gazes all gathered on the scarred man, as it seemed like his hand had killed the dwarf. The scarred man also stared at his hand, becoming stunned on the spot.

The slash that Li Qingshan unleashed did not produce an alarming disturbance, and only the dwarf truly experienced the terrifying sword intent it was hiding. No one expected the dwarf to die to the slash.

Before they could even return to their senses, countless strands of sword qi immediately pierced through the bloody mist and shot off in all directions, scattering everyone instantly.

The scarred man flew over thirty meters away before stabilising himself. His iron arms, which could even split open rock, were covered in bloody gashes. Some of them even reached his bones.

The others were struck by the sword qi too. Although they all possessed protective arcane and spiritual artifacts, it had happened right in their face, and they were stunned, so they were unable to activate them in time. The sword qi easily cut through their protective spiritual qi, leaving behind gashes on them.

The wounds were not life-threatening, but it was a heavy blow to their morale. They looked at one another, all frightened. Through a clash with Li Qingshan, one of their strongest, the dwarf, had been killed in a single strike. He died mysteriously, and almost everyone was injured in the process.

The dwarf was a rather eccentric figure, but they all recognised his strength as great. Let alone Foundation Establishment cultivators, he could protect himself to a certain degree even if he faced regular Golden Core cultivators. Despite raising his defences, he was still unable to avoid death.

If Li Qingshan used that move against them, who could have withstood it?

“Is he really a Foundation Establishment cultivator? He might be a Golden Core cultivator hiding his strength!” Someone questioned in surprise and bewilderment. He could not help but admit this guess was truly quite reasonable, but immediately, he was refuted. “Of course he’s a Foundation Establishment cultivator. If he were a Golden Core cultivator, he would have slaughtered us all without batting an eye. Why’d he still be hiding?”

“Then how is his attack so powerful?”

The person was rendered speechless. Someone else speculated. “The sword he was holding earlier was quite peculiar in design. Don’t tell me it’s an arcane treasure?” “That’s nonsense. How can a Foundation Establishment cultivator power an arcane treasure?” “Yeah, even Golden Core cultivators won’t be in possession of something like that!”

The large group of people discussed among themselves, unable to hide the worry on their faces. The mission they originally believed to be extremely easy had suddenly become so troublesome. It was unexpected.

The scarred man growled. “All of you, shut up! That strike of his seems like nothing special, but it must have come at an extremely great cost. He won’t be able to use it consecutively, or with just him and his sword, he would have slaughtered us all! Why would he still run?”

His guess was right. Li Qingshan’s slash did not possess so much power purely because of the sword qi. Otherwise, even if it had absorbed half of his spiritual qi, all he would achieve in the end would be sending the dwarf flying and leaving him heavily injured. He definitely would not be able to kill him in a single strike.

In that moment, he had used the ability of the Traitorous Demon sword and found a weak point. All of the sword qi whistled in through there and invaded his body like wildfire, ravaging everything madly. The dwarf mobilised his spiritual qi in an attempt to suppress it, but he encountered the same situation as Li Qingshan. Not only was he unable to suppress the sword qi, but the sword qi even absorbed his spiritual qi and constantly grew stronger.

As a result, the dwarf seized up in the air, desperately trying to maintain his body that was on the verge of collapse. The contact from the scarred man immediately broke the final bit of balance, and he was unable to suppress the sword qi any longer, so it all burst out of his body.

The sword qi had only become so powerful after absorbing the spiritual qi of two people. However, after absorbing the dwarf’s spiritual qi, it lost its strange ability to devour spiritual qi and grow stronger. Otherwise, at least another three or four of these cultivators would have died.

And, after slashing out, not only did Li Qingshan have to build up the sword qi again, but a lot of the demon heart that served as the pupil on the Traitorous Demon sword’s hilt had been depleted. However, the terrifying power from combining the Three Absolutes Calligraphy and the Traitorous Demon sword had already been demonstrated thoroughly, and both of these items had the possibility of growing stronger.

After hearing the scarred man's explanation, they were all well-versed in battle after all, so they found it to be extremely reasonable and composed themselves very quickly.

"Then what do we do now?"

"We wait! No matter where he comes out from, he'll be under attack from the sun vines first. We'll stop him from emerging, and he'll be dead for sure!"

"What if he never comes out?" "Yeah, with how disadvantageous the current situation is, I think we'd be better off avoiding him. We still need to collect the medals. We can't waste all of our time on him!"

"It won't be long before this battlefield vanishes. He'll be forcefully transported to a battlefield nearby. We'll be transported with him, and we'll be gathered together!"

The scarred man said. Si Qing had set this rule to increase the intensity of the battles.

Everyone smiled in understanding. They all felt that the rule his highness Si Qing set down was truly clever. If Li Qingshan discovered in the blink of an eye that the great banyan tree protecting him had vanished and was surrounded by them instead, just how would he react?

By then, before Li Qingshan could even swing his sword, their lethal strikes would have arrived already. It would be enough to kill him a few times over.

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"C'mon, let's take a look inside. It's best if you find somewhere safe and hide. I'll go finish them all off and come back for you!"

Li Qingshan strode off towards the depths of the cave. This was no longer just out of curiosity. Instead, he could sense extremely dense wood spiritual qi in the depths of the cave. The piece of bark he had obtained was already so great. If he dug out a piece of the pith, it might be even more nourishing.

And, he needed to rest up and recover his spiritual qi. He planned on nurturing the incomplete sword in his dantian with all of his spiritual qi and seeing what would happen.

"It's so dangerous, so why would you go out? Can't we just stay in here?" Hua Chenglu caught up to him in a hurry. She also understood that Li Qingshan would be facing a pincer attack once he set foot outside, which would involve extraordinary danger. And, the thought of staying behind in this pitch-black tree hole alone made her very uneasy.

"Didn't you see the rules of the competition? Many battlefields will vanish with each passing day. We'll be directly teleported to a nearby battlefield, and it's very likely for us to be gathered together. By then, I'll be fine, but you can't keep hiding in my arms!"

Li Qingshan said as he walked. Noticing how worry loomed over Hua Chenglu's beautiful face, he teased her again.

Hua Chenglu was in no mood to respond to his joke. She wanted to say, "We might not be so unlucky and all end up in the same battlefield." However, as the master of the Dragon Arena, Si Qing clearly would never give up unless Li Qingshan was dead, so perhaps they really might be so unlucky.

If she had not been with him, he might not necessarily have forcefully made his way through the sun vines and entered this tree hole. It was completely possible for him to directly escape. She stopped and lowered her head. "Sorry, big brother Li. I'm an encumbrance to you."

She vaguely understood that this was where the chasm between the strong and the weak lay. Even if the strong was not arrogant and the weak was willing to be close with them, they still walked in two different worlds. Once they encountered danger, it would be impossible for them to fight alongside one another. She suddenly felt rather sad.

"Don't say something so disheartening. What encumbrance? Even if I carry you in one hand and wield the sword in the other, I can still slaughter them all! Though, I was afraid of scaring you earlier, so I held back with my murderousness a little, letting them live a little longer."

Li Qingshan smiled, purposefully putting on an arrogant facade.

Hua Chenglu smiled. "I don't believe you!" She knew that Li Qingshan was very powerful, but there were almost twenty Foundation Establishment cultivators. Moreover, she had heard Hua Chengzan mention that these cultivators from the Dragon province were all extremely tough.

However, the sight that Li Qingshan described left her slightly excited for some reason. Weapons would be raining down from all directions as he held her against his chest, wielding his sword freely and quickly among the powerful enemies as she listened to his heartbeat fearlessly and stared at his face. She shook her head and dismissed these thoughts in a hurry.

What am I thinking about these for? He's already engaged to big sister Han. And even if he wasn't engaged, how could I...

Seeing her shake her head, Li Qingshan thought she did not believe him, so he smiled. "You've seen it for yourself. Didn't I already kill that dwarf while holding you?"

"Huh? You killed him?"

Hua Chenglu was astounded. All she saw was Li Qingshan swing his sword and the dwarf assume a defensive posture. She never thought he would die to that strike.

"That's why you don't need to worry. Let's go!" Li Qingshan patted her shoulder and made his way into the depths of the cave. He took a few steps before turning around and saying, "Oh right, there's something I forgot to say."

Hua Chenglu happened to be surprised by his strength. Seeing how serious he was, as if he had something important to tell her, she dismissed her thoughts in a hurry and asked, "What is it?"

Li Qingshan smiled. "Girl, you've developed very nicely!"

"Big brother Li!" Hua Chenglu crossed her arms before her chest, completely embarrassed.

"Haha, that's the last time!"

The two of them followed the tree hole that they had no idea what had carved it out and constantly advanced through the mountainous banyan tree. The tree hole did not lead directly towards the pith. Instead, it constantly twisted and turned.

A rustling sound suddenly appeared in the darkness. It was still very soft in the beginning, but the further they advanced, the louder it became. It was ear-splitting.

“Big brother Li, what is that sound?” Hua Chenglu frowned.

“We’ll know very soon!” Not only had Li Qingshan noticed this sound long ago, but he had also sensed the existence of a cluster of daemon qi. Si Qing’s Dragon Arena actually had daemons!

### **Chapter 642 - Burrowing Mites**

“Then let’s go quickly and take a look!” Hua Chenglu said curiously and excitedly.

“What, you’re not afraid anymore?” Li Qingshan asked in surprise.

“Hehe, aren’t you right next to me?” Hua Chenglu let out a toothy grin. Her teeth were pure-white, and her nose wrinkled slightly, still a little childish, tempting Li Qingshan very much to pinch her cheeks.

Li Qingshan recalled what happened when they met unexpectedly. Back then, she only seemed to be thirteen or fourteen. She had already left home, even using mechanical ships to flatten the Island of Cherishing Flowers. She could be regarded as possessing quite the adventuring spirit. As if he had remembered something, he suddenly smiled.

“Hey, what are you smiling for?” Hua Chenglu became ill at ease under his stare.

“I’m thinking about when we first met. In comparison, you were much more serious back then.” Li Qingshan smiled and waved his hand. A cloud rose up beneath their feet and lifted them up.

“I’ve already been like this- Ah!”

With a swish, the cloud took off, leaving behind a long, wispy trail.

Hua Chenglu let out a cry of surprise. Wind buffeted her face as she shot off into the darkness. She grabbed Li Qingshan’s hand before letting go again in a hurry. Her cries of surprise also turned into soft cheers of joy.

They did not fly for too long when the space around them suddenly opened up. They arrived in a spacious hole. Daemon qi filled the entire cavern, together with a deafening rustle. Li Qingshan understood what it was now. It was the sound of chewing.

A huge, white burrowing mite wriggled around as it bit into the banyan tree with large mouthfuls.

The tremendous daemon qi made Hua Chenglu’s breathing become a little forced. A dim, blue barrier of light wrapped around them, and only then did she ease up. She glanced at Li Qingshan gratefully and said.

“This tree sure is unlucky. It’s being eaten by insects and being strangled by vines.”

“Yeah. How unlucky, but what can I do?”

Li Qingshan’s eyes narrowed as his body tensed up, as that did not come from him, or the strange insect right before him. Instead, it sounded out from everywhere, echoing through this space. The voice was ancient and senile.

Li Qingshan composed himself very quickly and clasped his hands. "I'm Li Qingshan. Who are you sir? Please show yourself!"

The burrowing mite that had been focusing on eating the wood had been alarmed as well. It suddenly turned around. Actually, there was not much difference between the ends of its body at all. Only the vicious mouthparts distinguished the two ends, constantly opening and closing and flowing with transparent drool.

A primitive and cold murderousness assaulted Li Qingshan. The burrowing mite violently shrank up. This was the sign that came before an attack.

Li Qingshan had already made a judgement the moment he saw the burrowing mite.

A Daemon General, and a carapaced Daemon General that was relatively difficult to deal with. Only when it heard him did it respond, which meant its senses and intelligence were very weak. Although it had undergone the first heavenly tribulation, it probably could not even assume human form, so there was no need for him to take it too seriously.

The burrowing mite's shrunken body violently stretched out, and it sprayed a thick, green liquid from its mouthparts.

A wall of water rose up out of thin air, blocking the green liquid like a dam, but the green liquid ate a huge hole through it in the blink of an eye. However, having been impeded, the green liquid ran out of power and landed on the ground, creating a swathe of acidic, white smoke.

Li Qingshan said, "No wonder it can eat such tough wood!"

Seeing how the acid was useless, the burrowing mite directly lunged over, moving its countless legs together and hurtling over like a train.

Hua Chenglu felt like the huge insect had already arrived before her after blinking. She was unable to respond in time at all. She felt her waist tighten, flying over the colossal burrowing mite before landing safely on the ground.

Li Qingshan rested the Traitorous Demon sword on his shoulder and glanced backwards. Carapaced Daemon Generals truly possessed very powerful bodies. From such a short range, probably most Foundation Establishment cultivators would not be able to react to a single charge.

The burrowing mite missed and came to a screeching halt. A thin mark appeared down the centre of its colossal body, growing wider and wider from head to toe.

Against an attack riddled with openings like this, Li Qingshan did not have to use the evil eye at all. He only swung his sword casually and cut the mite in half.

However, the burrowing mite's daemon qi did not vanish. It did not even weaken by much, nor did any fluid flow out from the cut through its body. Instead, it constantly grew until it healed completely, turning into two smaller burrowing mites that turned around and charged over again.

"What a tenacious life force!" Hua Chenglu said in surprise.

“Interesting. This must be its second innate ability!” Li Qingshan lowered his head and smiled at Hua Chenglu in his arms. “Didn’t you miss it earlier? You can take a proper look this time! I’d like to see how many times I can cut it apart.”

Before Hua Chenglu could even reply, her body moved with his, and she saw a flurry before her eyes. All she saw was the sword flickering about, leaving behind sharp traces in her vision that did not disperse even after a long time.

The huge burrowing mites had been constantly cut in half, split into two, into four, and then into eight. They swarmed over as they clicked their mouthparts. In the blink of an eye, who knew how many burrowing mites filled their surroundings, becoming a sea of insects. Every single one was the size of a wild boar, constantly wriggling around as they continued to swarm over tirelessly.

After refining the new Three Absolutes Calligraphy, Li Qingshan gained a new understanding over the way of the sword it contained. Perhaps because of his constant cultivation, his ability to comprehend had become much better than the past. These burrowing mites were perfect for him to practise his swordsmanship, which he was prepared to use when slaughtering Si Qing’s lackeys once he left here.

Every single stroke he unleashed hid countless different forms, perhaps powerful and heavy or perhaps light and graceful. However, they all merged as one, hidden away in the stroke. These burrowing mites that did not know to dodge were the perfect targets.

As he held Hua Chenglu, he advanced and retreated in the swarming sea of insects like he was on a leisure stroll. He was at great ease, constantly splitting open the sea of insects. At this moment, he suddenly narrowed his eyes and saw a hedgehog-sized mite rapidly fleeing towards the cave.

These insects actually also know to run. Looks like survival is an instinct that all creatures possess!

Li Qingshan surged with azure light, violently charging through the sea of insects and grabbing the burrowing mite. He closed his hand around it violently, but he failed to crush it. Instead, it scattered as even more mites that were even smaller.

The countless burrowing mites behind him seemed to be alarmed at the same time, all lunging over. Bang! Bang! Bang! They all exploded as balls of acid in the air.

Li Qingshan let go of Hua Chenglu and the Traitorous Demon sword. Without even looking back, he pushed his left hand forwards while capturing a table-tennis-ball-sized mite in his right hand. He crushed it gently, and it revealed a milky-white daemon core. It constantly trembled around, wanting to escape.

Li Qingshan used the power of the spirit turtle and immediately suppressed it before tossing it into his hundred treasures pouch. The thousands of burrowing mites scattered immediately. The ancient voice rang out once again.

“Oh my, don’t let them escape, or they’ll keep chewing away!”

Li Qingshan thought of something. With a wave of his hand, a stream of water flew out, turning into thousands of ribbons that pinned down all of the burrowing mites on the spot.

“Fellow, are you... the Great Banyan Tree King?!”

**Chapter 643 - By Not Contending**

When Li Qingshan rampaged through the sea of insects, he devoted most of his attention to his surroundings so that he could locate the ancient voice when it rang out again.

However, he realised that the voice still originated from everywhere. It was not purposefully trying to hide its location. And, according to what it said, there was only a single answer.

The speaker was the great banyan tree, as well as the greatest Daemon King of the Mist province, the Great Banyan Tree King.

He could not help but feel some respect. In the past, when he investigated the Golden Cicada Spirit King, he had also seen some rough information regarding the Seventy-two Daemon Kings. The Great Banyan Tree King was the one with the longest lifespan. He was renowned for his longevity and wisdom.

Normally, the stronger a Daemon King was, the more the other races would fear him. However, the Great Banyan Tree King was revered by all races throughout the entirety of the Mist province. Demons obviously went without saying, but the rarest part of it all was whether it were the humans who viewed themselves as the legitimate race or the otherfolk that came in all shapes and sizes, they all revered him like their own ancestor. Some tribes even worshipped him as a god.

According to the historical records, when the founding emperor swept through the nine provinces, he had once visited the Mist province and sought guidance from the Great Banyan Tree King over how to govern the world, asking him about the way of administration used by ancient sages and lords of virtue.

A figure like him was no longer simply “powerful”. Li Qingshan dared not brush him aside either, but he never expected the voice to say, “I am indeed a banyan tree, but I am no Great Banyan Tree King.”

Li Qingshan said, “But in my knowledge, this banyan tree comes from the Great Banyan Tree King.”

“If you were to pluck a hair from yourself, could I call that hair you?”

When Hua Chenglu heard Li Qingshan mention the Great Banyan Tree King, she had already become speechless from surprise. To a Qi Practitioner, the Great Banyan Tree King of the Ten Daemon Kings was a figure that was who knew how realms away. The difference that existed between them could no longer be described as a chasm. Instead, it was truly an abyss.

She also noticed that Li Qingshan had already wrapped his arm around her waist before she knew it, pulling her closer. However, he gripped the Traitorous Demon sword firmly in his other hand as his eyes shone with interest. No matter who he was facing, he could not drop his guard, nor would he cover in fear. Even when he faced the legendary Great Banyan Tree King, he would still refer to him calmly as “fellow”.

Hua Chenglu’s heart softened and leaned against him gently with her beautiful figure that Li Qingshan had praised as “developed nicely”. She had actually already grown slightly accustomed to this. Hearing what the Great Banyan Tree King said, she could not help but think.

Despite how big this tree is, it’s actually only a hair to the Great Banyan Tree King. I’d really like to see for myself just what his main trunk in the Mist province is like.

Li Qingshan raised an eyebrow and smiled. “That’ll depend on how you put it. There are a myriad of horses in the world, with white horses only making up for a small number of them. Does that mean

white horses aren't horses? It might just be a hair, but it still contains all the information about me, so how can I say it's not me?"

"Hahahahaha!"

The ancient voice let out an extravagant laugh. The entire banyan tree shook gently as the branches and leaves swayed together. The people waiting for them outside looked at one another, clueless as to what was happening inside.

Hua Chenglu could sense that the entire space was shaking, subconsciously pressing a little closer to Li Qingshan. Li Qingshan cast a comforting gaze at her and said with his soul sense, "Don't worry. A hair still isn't enough to deal with me!"

Hua Chenglu's lips curled slightly. Just earlier he had said with assurance that a hair was the whole thing.

"That's reasonable. White horses are horses. I am the Great Banyan Tree King!" The laughter subsided, and the Great Banyan Tree King admitted to it somberly.

Li Qingshan asked, "May I ask what you require, fellow?"

"I'm older than you by ten thousand years, so surely I deserve to be called senior."

"Whatever you like, senior." Li Qingshan could not be bothered with bickering over these empty forms of courtesy, but he thought inside, Older than me by ten thousand years? If I were to cultivate at the same speed as you, I'd be done for.

"But, I still prefer fellow."

Li Qingshan curled his lip. "Old people sure are difficult to handle."

Hua Chenglu shot a glance at Li Qingshan in a hurry. That was the Great Banyan Tree King for heaven's sake. Even Si Qing would treat him with great respect. If he angered him, then that would be terrible.

"Old person? Hehe, young fellow, this old person wants you to help him out," said the Great Banyan Tree King.

"What is it?"

"Recently, the insects population in me has gotten a little out of control, so please clear them for me! Also, the vines around me have gotten a little too tight, so please find a way to loosen them a little. It would be even better if I could get some rain."

Li Qingshan was unable to understand what was going on. "With your ability, can't you deal with a few measly insects and vines yourself? Why would you need the help of someone else?"

"I'm a tree!"

What kind of answer was that? Li Qingshan corrected him. "The Great Banyan Tree King."

"If you drop the 'king', I'm actually just a great banyan tree. Have you ever seen a banyan tree catch insects by itself?"

Only with the Great Banyan Tree King's explanation did Li Qingshan understand that originally in the Mist province, a complete ecosystem revolved around the great banyan tree. If there were insects, then there were birds to eat the insects. Sun vines were vicious, but there were also creatures that could keep them at bay.

However, after Si Qing moved it into the Dragon Arena, the birds and beasts had obviously been either expelled or killed, and this ecological chain had been broken.

"Even if that makes sense, there's a saying where plucking a single hair can affect the entire body. Surely you can't just let someone dig you up, roots and all, while sitting on the side indifferently! If I hadn't come, wouldn't the insects have devoured you and the vines strangled you to death?"

The Great Banyan Tree King said with deep meaning, "If I were to fly into a rage over a single plucked hair, I wouldn't be able to grow until today. Moreover, travelling around can always make you more knowledgeable. If you hadn't come, I could just ask others for assistance. That kid Si Qing won't watch me wither to death either. The worst-case scenario is losing a hair, but if I can't even bear to part with a single hair, then I'll end up parting with my entire body."

Li Qingshan was taken aback. He muttered to himself, "By not contending, not even the world can contend with him."

TL: This comes from Chapter 22 of the Daodejing. It's similar to being invincible if you have no enemies, and having no enemies makes you invincible.

He vaguely understood that this was his way of survival. Although he already possessed the unbelievable power of kings, he still followed the principles of nature, living the way a tree would.

Even if people stripped his bark, even if the vines drained his tree sap, even if burrowing mites ate his body, he would not abuse his power. Instead, he would do his best and maintain the balance of nature, providing a home to creatures of all races. If any enemies were to attack him, these vines and insects would all fight for him.

This was different from yet also similar to the wisdom of the spirit turtle. He seemed vulnerable, refusing to fight back even when damaged, but this instead maintained his most optimal way of survival. Li Qingshan had only heard of people hating wolves and tigers, but never had he heard of anyone hating trees.

"Hmm? That's quite profound," the Great Banyan Tree King said.

Li Qingshan released Hua Chenglu and folded his hands. "Alright, I'm willing to help you out, fellow!"

He was already convinced that the Great Banyan Tree King had no ill intentions. He could even put up with the insects that devoured its body all this time, refusing to use his powers to purge them, so what ill intentions could he have towards them?

He also found the Great Banyan Tree King's wisdom and knowledge very admirable. This was just like how people would always rise up and revolt, fighting with their lives on the line when facing an oppressive thug who wielded a dangerous weapon. On the other hand, if they faced a gentle, wise old man with a cane, they would bend over and ask for guidance, possessing the absolute power to win people over.

As for Li Qingshan, the thing he paid the most attention to was a clear account of his debts of kindness and grievances. Since he had eaten his bark and drunken his tree sap, he obviously should pay him back. He could also obtain the burrowing mites' daemon cores, so it could be described as guaranteed benefit. Before he knew it, he had naturally become a part of this ecosystem.

If the Daemon King of the Green province was this Great Banyan Tree King and not the Dragon King of Ink Sea, he definitely would have gotten along with him much better.

#### **Chapter 644 - Tempted by a Gift**

The Great Banyan Tree King smiled. "If you can do what I asked, I have a small gift for you."

Li Qingshan's eyes lit up. A small gift from the Great Banyan Tree King probably was not something useless. Although he knew it was not particularly likely, it would be nice if he could receive another phoenix feather.

"Then let me thank you ahead of time. Though, how am I supposed to find the insects hiding in the bark?"

The banyan tree's bark was even tougher than rock, and it was filled with dense spiritual qi, making it difficult for soul sense to penetrate.

"You don't have to worry. I'll lead the way for you."

The wall to Li Qingshan's right suddenly twisted into a door opening, leading towards the burrowing mites.

"I've never seen a banyan tree do that!" Li Qingshan joked, basically replying to what the Great Banyan Tree King had said, Have you ever seen a banyan tree catch insects by itself?

"I'm the Great Banyan Tree King!"

Li Qingshan smiled softly. It was impossible to live and thrive without principles, but it would be no different if they stuck to the principles rigidly without any flexibility. All was impermanent. All was for the sake of better survival.

"Can you make this hole a little bigger?" Li Qingshan saw the hole, except it was less than a meter wide. If he had been a regular person incapable of flight, he would probably be forced to crawl on his knees.

"Kid, don't be so picky!" the Great Banyan Tree King said. Clearly, making holes in his own body was not enjoyable.

All Li Qingshan could say to Hua Chenglu was, "Chenglu, just stay here and wait for me! I'll come back for you once I deal with the insects, but I might also go straight outside. I'll have senior tree king tell you when the time comes."

"Big brother Li... I think I can squeeze in." Hua Chenglu pouted. She did not want to be left behind here alone.

"Fine then! You better not say your big brother Li is taking advantage of you then." Li Qingshan spread his arms with a smile. With a red face, all Hua Chenglu could do was deliver herself into his arms,

wrapping her hands around his waist. She muttered to herself in a self-comforting manner. "This isn't the first time anyway."

A faint fragrance filled Li Qingshan's nose, as if it had combined the fragrance of a thousand flowers. He had once caught this smell on Hua Chengzan, so it must have been connected to their cultivation method.

He was unable to pay close attention during the battle earlier, but right now, her waist felt so thin and gentle that he would wrap his hand around it with ease, while her chest was full and firm. She was indeed a flower in bloom, ready to be plucked. He lowered his head and smiled. "It really is nice."

"Let's get going!" Hua Chenglu glowed red, afraid to raise her head and look at him. All she could do was urge him to go.

"Alright!"

Li Qingshan saw how embarrassed she was and stopped teasing her. He casually shoved the burrowing mites he had nailed to death into his hundred treasures pouch. They were still a Daemon General after all, and they had eaten a lot of the banyan tree, so they were teeming with spiritual energy. If he discarded them, it would be quite the pity.

Or in other words, they seemed disgusting, but they were filled with protein, providing many nutrients. He could still feed them to Milliped if nothing worked out.

He leapt into the long passageway. Azure ebbs of water surged in the surroundings. Compared to flying, it was better described as sliding through the tunnel. The path was not a straight line. Sometimes, they would suddenly enter a hole an insect burrowed, swerving around and changing directions.

Hua Chenglu did not feel anything during the battle earlier, but now that they focused on travelling, there was nothing that could distract her. A masculine smell constantly invaded her nose, while his hands on her waist and back gradually seemed to become scorching, passing through her thin clothes with a burning sensation.

She could not help but try to pull a little further away from him, but during a sharp turn, she could not control herself and pressed against him firmly again. It was as if he was constantly pressing and touching her breasts, except it was not with his hands. Her face became utterly flushed.

In the blink of an eye, they arrived in another cavern.

A white burrowing mite even slightly larger than the one before currently munched away.

Li Qingshan lifted up the Traitorous Demon sword. The demon heart in the hilt produced a ring of light, and he slashed out with a flash. A huge gash appeared in the burrowing mite, and before it could even respond, Li Qingshan had already rushed into the wound with the flash of his sword, scooping out his hand before leaping out again. He held another daemon core in his hand, directly suppressing it with the powers of the spirit turtle.

Having lost its daemon core, the burrowing mite directly went from a Daemon General to a regular daemonic beast. Its body shrank rapidly, reaching the size of a grown man in the end. Right when it was

about to flee, a wave of blue light surged and enveloped the burrowing mite, crackling as it turned into ice and giving off white, cold mist.

The Ice Seal technique!

Li Qingshan did not practise frigid spiritual qi like the Ice Couple palace, but it was still a piece of cake for him to deal with a daemonic beast with this technique. He wanted to shove it into his hundred treasures pouch, but he failed.

As it turned out, the burrowing mite had been frozen, but it was not dead. As a result, Li Qingshan took out a delicately-crafted bug pouch and placed it in there. He did not know how to refine gu and insects, but a live insect that had once cultivated to Daemon General should have been worth quite a lot! He could always feed it to Milliped if nothing worked out.

Li Qingshan said loudly, "Next one!"

"Your sword is very interesting."

The Great Banyan Tree King never expected him to kill a burrowing mite so easily. He also noticed the peculiarity with the Traitorous Demon sword.

This is a demonic sword, but only demonfolk should be able to use demonic swords. Is he a demonfolk in hiding? And, the power he uses to instantly suppress the daemon core is even more out of the ordinary.

Li Qingshan smiled. "If I don't have the tools, why'd I accept the job?"

If he were a regular Foundation Establishment cultivator, just finding a way to kill these burrowing mites would be a problem. Even if they defeated them after much difficulty, it would still be very difficult to kill them if countless burrowing mites swarmed over together. With the Traitorous Demon sword in hand, Li Qingshan could find the daemon core in a single glance, and then he could suppress it with the spirit turtle's power, which made it seem extremely easy.

However, the Great Banyan Tree King understood extremely well that as the fundamental source of power for daemons, daemon cores were not some weak point. As a matter of fact, they could be described as a strong point. When it mattered, they could even be wielded like how humans controlled artifacts to attack the enemy. They could only be directly suppressed if the enemy were an entire cultivation realm higher, and it still would not be suppressed so easily.

It's no wonder I vaguely sensed a slight change in the heavenly secrets when Si Qing dug me up from the Mist province in the past. Sure enough, I've met someone interesting. This child is anyone but ordinary. It's fate for me to meet him.

The Great Banyan Tree King thought as he opened up another path.

"Are you alright? Do you want to stay here and rest up?"

Li Qingshan sensed that Hua Chenglu's breathing had become rather uneven, her heart was beating much faster, and even her body temperature had risen by a few degrees. It was not like he was an innocent young man who had no experience with women. He could obviously guess that perhaps it had something to do with him, which made him smile slightly.

Her clothes were woven from precious spiritual silk. It seemed stiff, but it was actually extremely light. By embracing each other so closely, he could basically imagine an outline of her figure.

Hua Chenglu bit her lip and shook her head gently. She did not want to stay here alone, and if she did separate from him right now, she would basically be admitting she was experiencing this strange feeling.

Li Qingshan smiled at her futile attempt to cover up how she felt and set off again. He could not help but admit that holding her in his arms truly was a nice feeling. He teased her again in a very irritating way. "You better not blame me if I flatten them!"

It made Hua Chenglu, who was already embarrassed out of her mind, a little crazy. Didn't you say a friend's sister is off limits? All men are damn sex fiends! None of them are up to any good! Even if you flatten them, it's none of your business!

She stared at Li Qingshan while gritting her teeth, like a cat with its hair standing on end, which made Li Qingshan laugh aloud. As he killed along the way, he was truly invincible, taking down the insects wherever he passed by.

There were only seven that had reached Daemon General, as well as a few hundred regular daemons. There were even more daemoniac beasts that were weaker, basically in the thousands.

Li Qingshan did not stop at all, but it still took him seventeen or eighteen hours before he froze all the burrowing mites and stuffed them into his bug pouch. He checked the time, and the twenty-four hours were almost up, or a whole day in other words. The battlefield would vanish very soon.

He had benefited quite a lot with this trip, and he had fulfilled his original objective. Although he did not stop for a single moment, he primarily used up his mental energy and the energy in the Traitorous Demon sword's demon heart. His spiritual qi had been slowly recovering the entire time, and his dantian was already full now.

The sword qi of the incomplete sword had become even stronger, having absorbed a total of seventy percent of his spiritual qi. However, after passing fifty percent, its absorption rate slowed down the more it absorbed. It would probably take him more than a few days to nurture the sword qi with all the spiritual qi he had.

And, he had only achieved this in the great banyan tree, where spiritual qi was denser than any place of cultivation. It was no wonder that there were a total of seven burrowing mites that managed to reach Daemon General despite being carapaced daemons that cultivated slowly. Seventy percent was enough to kill people anyway, so there was no need for him to seek perfection.

Li Qingshan stopped and folded his hands. "Fellow, it's about time. I'm going to be leaving soon!"

Then, Li Qingshan said to Hua Chenglu in his arms, "Chenglu, just stay here for a while. I'll go lead those people to another battlefield! They've guarded this place for such a long time, so there probably aren't any other cultivators left in this battlefield. When you get transported, you'll probably be alone, so there shouldn't be much danger. However, you still have to be prepared. Don't hold back with your talismans."

"Ah- alright!"

Hua Chenglu only returned to her senses after being momentarily lost, answering him but still clinging firmly to his waist. She had spent almost an entire day in this posture, hanging off him like a koala and accompanying him in his battles throughout the banyan tree.

She did not find it boring at all. As a matter of fact, she did not even notice the passage of time. Between the battles, Li Qingshan would tease her from time to time, while she gradually became accustomed to her position, no longer feeling so nervous and bashful anymore. She recovered some of her usual cleverness and fought back without backing down, leaving Li Qingshan stumped many times.

However, there was one time when she was a little vicious, and Li Qingshan casually smacked her across her perky bottom. This was an unconscious habit he had developed during the time he spent with Han Qiongzhi, Lolth, Ye Liubo, and his other women. Afterwards, he felt like he had gone a little too far. They embraced each other firmly only because of the circumstances, while the small talk and teasing was all joking around. However, he was definitely acting indecently with that smack.

He apologised in a hurry. Hua Chenglu clutched her bottom as if a bolt had struck her out of the blue. Then she completely flew into a rage. She threw a fuss about how she wanted to get off him immediately. Li Qingshan was in the wrong, but how could he let go of her at a time like this? His repeated apologies were useless, so he simply stopped talking. It was not like he could take the smack back.

It was also at this moment that his clone arrived in the commandery city. As he gazed at the battle in the sky, Li Qingshan was shocked inside. Si Qing was taking on so many Golden Core cultivators alone without losing the upper hand. He truly deserved his title of the eleventh prince. As a result, he devoted all of his attention to his clone, studying and observing the techniques and abilities his great enemy used attentively.

Hua Chenglu also fumed silently, no longer hugging him. She only allowed him to hold her like a large child. This lasted for over an hour before she finally wrapped her arms around him again, pressing her face against his chest.

By now, the dust from the great battle finally settled. Li Qingshan returned to his main body and discovered that her anger had dissipated. Right when he was about to say something to relieve the atmosphere, Hua Chenglu let out a gentle sigh and said first.

“Big brother Li, I know you didn’t do it on purpose. You’ve helped me and saved me again and again, so I shouldn’t be so stubborn. But you already have big sister Han, yet you still provoke me like this. I can’t help but get angry. My cultivation might be very low, but I’m not a woman that anyone can flirt around with.”

If I weren’t engaged to Qiongzhi already, would she be a little less angry? Heh, I better stop getting ahead of myself! Li Qingshan thought. He smiled. “As long as you’re not angry anymore. As they say, elder brothers are like fathers. You can treat me as teaching you a lesson in your father’s place.”

“Even my father has never hit me, and you were clearly in the wrong, so what gives you the right to teach me a lesson!?” Hua Chenglu fumed. You were clearly in the wrong. I’ve gone so far to forgive you, yet you still act like you have reason on your side?

“At worst, you can just hit me back. Women sure are petty.”

“Bah! Who wants to hit you back? It’s not like I’m your mother!” Hua Chenglu was unable to hold back her smile. Sigh, why do I cultivate so slowly? Back then, he was clearly around the same as me, and I’m much younger than him too!

This clever, beautiful, and endowed daughter of an aristocratic family had always been someone that everyone admired, yet when she spent time with Li Qingshan, she felt a little inferior inside. The cultivation community was one that revered the strong. Cultivation was the most important standard of evaluation, or even the only standard of evaluation most of the time.

In order to prompt their disciples and descendants to work hard on cultivation, clans and sects would even establish this notion firmly within their minds. Starting with Qi Practitioners, they had to call those a layer higher senior brother or sister, bowing when they saw them, let alone a talented, peak Foundation Establishment genius like Li Qingshan. He was someone who was enveloped in an invisible halo. Hua Chenglu was deeply affected by this mentality, which also made her even more afraid to take Li Qingshan lightly.

After going through this incident, Li Qingshan no longer dared to talk and act so recklessly anymore. He would definitely think before he spoke. He had always been someone who did whatever he wanted. If there were flowers to be plucked, then have them plucked. If the Ye Liubo and Ye Liusu sisters truly wanted to do it with him, he probably would not turn them down.

However, he would not go out of his way and intentionally chase after women either. Hua Chenglu was an absolute beauty, one that could interest all men, but in terms of enchantment and appeal, she was nowhere close to great sect master Qiu. Even with Qiu Haitang, he did not look back and long for her after helping her settle down, all because his greatest pursuit was not about love.

There had only ever been one woman who gave him an urge like that, but she had dumped a bucket of cold water over him, making him completely give up on that thought.

Hua Chenglu noticed the difference in his tone and was slightly touched. As it seems, he really does care about my feelings.

Li Qingshan casually asked her about some things regarding the Hawkwolf Guard and Hua Chengzan. Hua Chenglu answered them one by one before asking him a few things too. However, their lives were far too distant from each other, and their thought processes were worlds apart, so there was not much they could talk about.

Li Qingshan was not an eloquent person who knew how to please women, only somewhat capable of making some snide remarks and joking around indecently. As a result, they could not go too deeply into each topic, and the atmosphere was not as lively as before.

He could not be bothered with finding things to talk about either, devoting a little more attention to his clone so that he could observe what was happening outside. He wanted to see whether he had an opportunity to steal the Dragon Arena and drive A’qing mad with anger. Just the thought of Si Qing’s expression after losing the Dragon Arena left him utterly delighted.

Seeing how Li Qingshan had suddenly fallen silent and sunken into his thoughts, sniggering to himself, Hua Chenglu asked, “Big brother Li, what are you laughing about?”

“Ah, nothing!” Li Qingshan was caught off-guard. Of course, he could not say he was looking for a way to piss off his highness Si Qing.

Hua Chenglu felt like their relationship seemed to have become much more distant, which made her a little sad again.

“You’re brushing me aside!”

Li Qingshan smiled. “How could I? I’m afraid I’ll make you mad if I talk.”

Hua Chenglu said, “Am I really that irritable?”

“Then you better guarantee you won’t get mad again if I talk!”

“I can’t guarantee that!”

“Then how can I speak carelessly and offend great young miss Hua?”

“Stop trying to patronize me! As long as you don’t grope around, I’m not that petty of a person.”

Li Qingshan sniggered. “It was quite a nice sensation. I wonder who will be fortunate enough in the future.”

As it turned out, he was recalling the feeling of her bottom earlier when he sank into his thoughts, while his laughter was a naked laugh of perversion. Hua Chenglu ground her teeth. “Anyone but you!” Her grumbling voice and Li Qingshan’s laughter echoed through the deep, dark caves.

By the time Hua Chenglu returned to her senses, the journey had already come to an end. She was unable to describe whether it was long or short, just that she had never spent such a long time together with a man before in her life, let alone with such close contact. They were so close that they seemed to become joined. Separating now actually made her feel lost.

As she listened to him, all she could think about was whether he would be in any danger alone, and she could not help but think of the worst-case scenario. If he accidentally slipped up, what if he were killed? Afterwards, she began to panic over her own imagination, so she asked loudly.

“Senior tree king, my big brother Li has helped you clear so many insects. Now that he’s in danger, how can you just turn a blind eye to it?”

The Great Banyan Tree King’s ancient voice boomed out, “Don’t fret. Li Qingshan, you agreed to do three things for me. You’ve only done one right now, and you plan on leaving already?”

Li Qingshan said, “It’s not that I can’t stand by my word. It’s just that time isn’t permitting. Even if I don’t leave right now, I’ll be forcefully transported to another battlefield a little later, and I’ll be in trouble by then.”

“That kid Si Qing might be the owner of the Dragon Arena, but he doesn’t have power over everything in this Dragon Arena. If you want to stay behind, you can obviously stay behind.”

Li Qingshan’s eyes lit up. Although he was only “a hair”, a king was still a king. As a result, he began laughing. “Really? Why do I feel like Si Qing has opened his door to trouble by moving you in here, senior? Though, I really do want to kill them all!”

"I might as well tell you a little. Si Qing has specially asked me for the gift I'm going to give you, but I never agreed to it!"

"Alright, I'm tempted." Li Qingshan understood that some precious things could not be exchanged for no matter how many spiritual stones were offered. "Chenglu, what do you think?"

Hua Chenglu nodded firmly. The journey had yet to end...

### **Chapter 645 - Yielding**

The black dragon swam through the sky, maneuvering between the streaks of light, sometimes rising and sometimes falling, sometimes expanding and sometimes shrinking. It made the attacks from the encirclement of Golden Core cultivators miss. Meanwhile, the black dragon brandished its teeth and claws, rampaging around madly like a wolf among a flock of sheep. There were many sheep, but with only their hoofs and horns, they were unable to achieve anything decisive even though they could cause some damage to the wolf.

The black dragon suddenly opened its mouth, revealing its rows of dagger-like teeth. It spat out a black smoke that enveloped a Golden Core cultivator. The cultivator was originally protected by his clothes, so he was not too concerned, but his clothes rapidly turned black, losing their powers. He retreated in a hurry out of fright, flying over five kilometers away instantly.

The cultivators gradually became shocked, How is he so powerful?

He practises the imperial clan's Black Dragon Emperor classic. It's more powerful than any of our cultivation methods.

Emperor level cultivation methods truly are extraordinary.

Sure enough, Si Qing was prepared when he challenged us. He's clearly using us to assert his dominance. We've been fooled.

The cultivators all considered retreating. If it were not for the fact that their disciples and descendants were still trapped in the Dragon Arena by Si Qing, they probably would have fled already.

"Prince Si Qing, do you truly plan on falling out with the entire cultivation community of the Ruyi commandery? You can't defeat us today, and we can't defeat you either. Why don't we just settle this peacefully and stop here!"

The cultivators could see that Si Qing was impressive, so they all stopped underestimating him, becoming deeply worried instead. Gathered here today, perhaps they did not fear Si Qing, but once they separated, they would be in trouble if Si Qing suddenly wanted to settle their debt afterwards. And, there were still the unfathomable Jia Zhen and E Dan who had yet to fight.

There was nothing they could do given the current circumstances. So what if they were Golden Core cultivators? If they met even stronger existences, they would still be forced to lower their heads and yield.

Although the battle continued, the battle intent and killing intent provided to the Dragon Arena diminished drastically. Si Qing frowned. This battle had been completely dissatisfying. He coiled up and

said viciously, "You really are a bunch of trash. Are you thinking of running now? Do you really think I can't kill you?"

If it weren't for the sake of collecting battle intent and the fact that I don't want to reveal my trump card so early on, I would have crushed the trash you are a long time ago.

Just like how Northmoon was unable to slaughter the Daemon Commanders in the past, Si Qing could not do that either. Asserting his dominance through battle was one matter, but it would be an entirely different matter if Golden Core cultivators actually died here.

Golden Core cultivators were not nobodies. Just the death of any single one of them would be major news, and the Great Xia empire would be forced to make a response.

Under these circumstances, it was easy for Si Qing to maneuver about skillfully and remain invincible, but ripping apart the limbs of these Golden Core cultivators and smashing them all like what Northmoon had done to the Daemon Commanders was very difficult to achieve.

He thought, The strong should be able to do whatever they want, yet they're bound by these rules and laws, allowing these weak trash to make a constant ruckus. If I ascend to the throne one day, I'll definitely turn the world back to normal.

The cultivators all looked at one another. None of them answered Si Qing. Whether it was calling them trash or saying he could kill them, he could ramble by himself!

Clap! Clap! Clap!

Gu Yanying clapped her hands three times and smiled. "A'qing, you should be lenient where you can. You can watch your mouth a little too. Everyone, since you've all witnessed each other's abilities, then please hear me out. It's best to bury the hatchet!"

Si Qing found the battle to be rather dissatisfying, but he still managed to achieve his original objective, which was making all the sect cultivators succumb to him and collect enough battle intent and killing intent. If he kept fighting, it would bring no benefit, so he went with what Gu Yanying said.

"Since Yanying has already spoken up, I'll leave this matter be today. I just wanted them all to understand that the Ruyi commandery still belongs to Great Xia and that they aren't the ones in charge of the cultivation community!" Si Qing reverted back to human form and went off in a huff.

No matter how discontent the Golden Core cultivators were, all they could do was make use of the current situation to get out of the battle. They all flew back to the Soaring Cloud terrace. Their faces were all worried. Originally, they thought it was finally their turn to come into power in the Ruyi commandery ever since the hundred schools suffered a heavy blow from the battle of Burial Mound mountain. Never did they think that a few people who were even more vicious would take their place, which instead made the situation worse than in the past.

Li Qingshan hid his mirror clone in a dark place and thought, What a pity. These sect cultivators sure are cowardly. He was only too anxious to see the Golden Core cultivators and Si Qing fight until they were both heavily injured, which would allow him to swoop in and steal the Dragon Arena. However, he also understood that even if Gu Yanying had not stepped in to mediate, this battle would not have continued.

Suddenly, he felt Gu Yanying's gaze drift over gently. Although she had only glanced past him, Li Qingshan knew she had discovered him. This bird woman's eyes sure are potent!

Gu Yanying glanced at the cluster of darkness hidden within an alleyway in the commandery city again. It had already vanished. From beginning to end, only she had noticed the existence of the darkness, and only she had managed to see that the darkness had not left. Instead, it entered the Dragon Arena through the huge shadow it had cast under the sun.

She smiled. Things were becoming more and more interesting.

The Dragon Arena rapidly shrank and arrived before Si Qing again. He sent his soul sense inside, checking on Li Qingshan's whereabouts first. He looked through it, but he actually failed to sense Li Qingshan, which surprised him. Don't tell me he escaped while I was distracted! That's impossible!

He immediately recalled there was only one place where he was unable to sense anything in the Dragon arena. He focused his attention on the rainforest battlefield where the Great Banyan Tree King resided, and sure enough, he saw the scarred man and the others surrounding the banyan tree.

Li Qingshan, do you think there's nothing I can do to you just by hiding in the tree? Si Qing sneered inside. However, he would not be breaking the rules he set in the beginning. He would patiently wait for the twenty-four hours to pass.

Suddenly, he noticed that two people were missing. One was Zhu Lie, while the other was the dwarf.

Si Qing found Zhu Lie's whereabouts very soon. He was currently fighting against a woman in white in the lake battlefield. The woman's cultivation was not exactly high, but her control over water was masterful. She was even more nimble in water than fish. Although Zhu Lie was powerful, he was unable to do anything to her for the moment, but as it seemed, killing her was merely a matter of time.

How dare this barbarian defy my orders and not hunt down Li Qingshan. Once the competition ends, I'll teach him a good lesson again.

However, no matter how Si Long looked around, he was unable to find the dwarf. Don't tell me he's entered the great banyan tree with Li Qingshan? Or is he dead already?

Although he could immediately get an answer by contacting his subordinates, he could not be bothered with something like that. In his eyes, Li Qingshan was already a dead man. As for the dwarf, if he were dead, then he was dead. He was a cowardly piece of trash anyway.

Then he checked the situation in the other battlefields and smiled in satisfaction. Just like he had originally planned, the fighting and killing gradually intensified.

The cultivators, in particular the Qi Practitioners, were currently under the influence of the Dragon Arena. Their attacks were becoming vicious, but this was merely the beginning. He was slightly excited. After saving up and being patient for so long, he would be succeeding very soon.

Finally, he waited until the twenty-four hours had passed. He immediately controlled the Dragon Arena to move everyone in the rainforest battlefield to a nearby battlefield, but his smile soon stiffened, and his eyes narrowed. What's going on!?

**Chapter 646 - Imbuement of Wisdom, Three Days of Foundation Establishment (One)**

The scarred man's group had made their preparations. They first unleashed a large formation and enveloped everyone inside. Their arcane artifacts all shone with light from powerful techniques that were charged up and ready to go. They were only waiting for Li Qingshan to appear so that they could deal a lethal blow.

The landscape around them twisted and changed, going from a rainforest to a desert. The sun blazed, and the air became arid, both restraining Li Qingshan's water element techniques and preventing him from escaping.

However, when they had prepared everything, Li Qingshan did not appear. They all looked at one another, clueless as to what went wrong.

"Sir tree king, why must you interfere with the operation of my Dragon Arena and keep Li Qingshan there?"

Si Qing's voice echoed through the entire rainforest with a questioning tone.

The rainforest was originally his proudest battlefield. The great banyan tree could provide many extremely-valuable resources, but it was still one of the Ten Daemon Kings after all. Although he followed the way of nature and stood aloof from the world, Si Qing could not be too rude to him.

"I've said already. I'm not some Great Banyan Tree King, and you don't need to call me sir. I want to keep this little friend of mine around for a few days so that he can help me clear out the insects and vines on me. I'll send him out afterwards."

"Senior, you're my guest here, so I will definitely carry out my role as the host and leave you as satisfied as possible with anything you require. Please let out Li Qingshan, senior, and I'll be able to help you out."

After transplanting a branch of the Great Banyan Tree King into the Dragon Arena, Si Qing had once apologised to him politely before even accepting him as his master. However, the Great Banyan Tree King completely ignored him. Then Si Qing asked for a certain item, and he was obviously turned down as well. He was utterly furious, but he could not turn against him either, so he let these burrowing mites that multiplied rapidly and had lost their natural predators be, wanting to make the Great Banyan Tree King suffer a little. He never expected to give Li Qingshan an opportunity instead.

"It's nothing big, so I dare not trouble your highness."

The Great Banyan Tree King spoke with the same gentle tone the entire time, but it gave off a feeling like he would not be changing his mind, turning down Si Qing without being too rude or too polite. Si Qing cursed inside, This old coot!

Against a king, even the most good-mannered king, Si Qing was powerless. All he could do was take a step back. "May I ask how many days you require?"

"Three days at the least, five days at the most."

"Alright, I hope you can keep your word, senior! If five days pass and you still don't let him out, then... then he can stay in there for the rest of his life!"

Si Qing realised that if the Great Banyan Tree King truly insisted on protecting Li Qingshan, there was not a lot he could do. After all, he could not rip out this great banyan tree, dig out Li Qingshan and butcher him, even though he was completely capable of something that.

The Great Banyan Tree King would not even have to look for revenge if that happened. As long as the news made it out, the Great Xia empire would immediately punish him, the eleventh prince, and give an explanation to the Great Banyan Tree King. Kings the founding emperor conferred could not be offended by anyone. Defying and offending superiors was a great crime.

Si Qing was gloomy inside. His joy from making the Golden Core cultivators succumb to him vanished completely. He secretly made up his mind to overcome the third heavenly tribulation as soon as possible and reach the realm of kings.

The conversation between Si Qing and the Great Banyan Tree King reached the pitch-black tree hole. Li Qingshan and Hua Chenglu exchanged glances and smiled.

Li Qingshan said, "Thank you for protecting me, fellow!"

"Looks like your grievance with Si Qing runs very deep. I can protect you for five days, but I won't be able to protect you on the sixth day. By then, you'll still have to find a way to deal with it yourself."

The Great Banyan Tree King felt this child was extraordinary, so he tried testing him with that, guessing he would probably ask for his help. Never did he expect Li Qingshan to smile deeply. "My path of survival is a little different from yours. All I seek is following my heart and killing to my satisfaction. The more enemies the better!"

"Aggression leads to easy failure."

"Passivity leads to vulnerability!"

The Great Banyan Tree King began laughing again. His laughter subsided, and he asked, "Are you prepared to complete the second task?"

Li Qingshan nodded. "I'm skilled with water element techniques, so summoning some spiritual rain is no problem. However, the sun vines are vicious, and they can absorb techniques and spiritual qi. May I ask how am I supposed to kill them?"

If he could not contain the sun vines first, the sun vines would absorb probably most of the spiritual rain. Despite his strength as a Foundation Establishment cultivator, he was rather helpless against these strange, twisted vines.

The Great Banyan Tree King said, "This will require the lassie beside you."

"Her?" "Me?!" Hua Chenglu widened her eyes. She was unable to imagine why the Great Banyan Tree King well beyond her reach would require help from a measly Qi Practitioner like her. Li Qingshan was rather confused too. This girl might be very cute, but probably even the thinnest sun vines could kill her.

"Is your cultivation method called Method of Springtime Bloom?"

"It is. How do you know, senior?"

The Method of Springtime Bloom was a secret method passed down through the Hua family. It was an extremely special wood element cultivation method, gathering the essence of a hundred flowers to practise. Although it could not charm or enchant people, it could multiply the practitioner's charm, allowing them to possess the beauty and fragrance of a hundred flowers. This was why the clan had many handsome men and beautiful women. They were renowned for this even among the aristocratic clans.

"Not only do I know, but I even thoroughly understand the entire cultivation method. I even know that fellow Qingshan's cultivation method is called the Arts of the Boundless Ocean, which comes from the late Ocean sect. However, this sect did not exist for a very long time, and no one from it ever visited the Mist province, so this is all I know about it."

With his lifespan that had already lasted ten millennia so far, the cultivation methods that the Great Banyan Tree King knew were basically as vast as the open sea. His knowledge was so extensive that no one could match him.

Li Qingshan thought of something. The greatest problem he faced with the Arts of the Boundless Ocean was that he had no master to give him guidance. He could only rely on himself to fumble around. Although he had managed to reach the sixth layer with his exceptional talent, the Great Banyan Tree King would definitely be able to give him some good suggestions with his knowledge and wisdom.

He took out the jade slips to the Arts of the Boundless Ocean and Ocean Brawling. "If you'd like to, you're more than welcome to look through them. If you could give me some guidance, I'll be filled with gratitude." He felt an invisible power pass through his body, and the jade slips in his hand flashed.

"Oh, this cultivation method really is a little interesting. Your cultivation hasn't deviated from it, but you are still lacking some comprehension. Let me look through it carefully, and then I'll tell you in detail. Let's get down to business first. Sun vines are not aggressive only during one special time, which is when they bloom."

Hua Chenglu immediately understood what the Great Banyan Tree King's objective was. The Method of Springtime Bloom possessed the ability to impel flowers to bloom. "But with my cultivation, I won't be able to impel such large sun vines at all!"

"If your cultivation is insufficient, then you can just increase it. I can make you break through to Foundation Establishment within three days, but you'll have to pay a small price."

With that, not only did Hua Chenglu become stunned, but even Li Qingshan was taken aback. Hua Chenglu was only an eighth layer Qi Practitioner right now. She did not cultivate slowly, but it definitely was not fast either. She was not a genius like Hua Chengzan. At this rate, it would take her another decade at the very least before she established a foundation successfully.

Casually imbuing her with a little of the Great Banyan Tree King's wood spiritual qi could allow her cultivation to advance drastically and remould her body, but breakthroughs also required personal comprehension. Sufficient resources was not enough. Growing up, she had never lacked pills or resources either.

If it had not been the Great Banyan Tree King who said that, the two of them definitely would have treated it as a great boast.

“What price? But I have nothing on me!”

“Have you heard of the Wisdom Imbuement technique before?”

### **Chapter 647 - Imbuement of Wisdom, Three Days of Foundation Establishment (Two)**

Hua Chenglu shook her head. “I haven’t.”

“‘Wisdom Imbuement’ is a special technique created by buddhism. It can directly imbue someone else’s mind with your comprehension of the buddhist dharma. No matter how sinful that person has been, they will cast aside evil, embrace good, and be converted to buddhism once they undergo the imbuement. Or, no matter how thick in the head they are, they will be completely awakened and advance valiantly on the path of cultivation! To turn the wicked into the good, to turn the ignorant into the wise, is known as wisdom imbuement.”

“To think there’s actually such a wonderful technique in the world! In other words, all I have to do is undergo the wisdom imbuement, and I’ll be able to break through with ease! May I ask what I need to do?”

Hua Chenglu’s eyes shone brightly. She did not have bad talent, but her ability to comprehend was a little lacking. After all, not everyone was a genius.

“You don’t have to do anything at all.”

“But didn’t you say I had to pay a small price?”

“Chenglu, I’d advise you to not go forward with this wisdom imbuement!”

Li Qingshan listened to the Great Banyan Tree King’s explanation and felt that something was amiss. No matter how he thought of it, wasn’t this so-called “brainwashing”? And it was actual brainwashing.

“Why?” Hua Chenglu looked at Li Qingshan with a frown. She was confused.

“If you completely accept someone else’s ideas, are you still you? Is there still a point no matter how powerful and clever you become?”

“That’s right, this is the so-called price I speak of. The reason why this strange technique is not widespread is because it’s been deemed forbidden by buddhism. The monk who created this technique also died of madness!”

“Madness!” Hua Chenglu was startled and frightened.

The Great Banyan Tree King told them a story from the past patiently. Several thousand years ago, there was a virtuous, eminent monk in the Lightning province in the west, known as the Jade Wisdom Chan Master. He often felt pity over how people could not comprehend his exquisite buddhist dharma. He read about broadly and contemplated for an entire decade before finally coming up with this special technique.

He first tried it on the most ignorant and stubborn disciple in the monastery. Sure enough, the disciple lived up to his expectations. In a single night, he understood all the buddhist classics in the monastery

thoroughly and could even recite them backwards. Even the smartest disciple in the monastery paled in comparison to him. His cultivation advanced drastically too.

As a result, all of the disciples in the monastery scrambled over excitedly, asking the Jade Wisdom Chan Master to use the technique on them, so the Jade Wisdom Chan Master imbued all the disciples in the monastery with wisdom despite the toll it took on him. As a result, every single disciple became sagacious and kindhearted, and the Jade Wisdom Chan Master also believed he had grasped the ultimate way to bring salvation to all, leaving him glad and proud.

A good friend happened to visit, so the Jade Wisdom Chan Master demonstrated his achievements. Never did he expect his friend to sigh upon seeing the situation in the monastery. "You've mistaken, monk! If you use this technique, is there still any difference between buddhism and the demonic?" After he said that, he left the monastery.

The Jade Wisdom Chan Master thought his friend was envious of him, so he was rather unhappy, but he did not take him too seriously either. This continued until the assembly of dharma that they held each month. Almost a hundred disciples sat together in the large hall, but they all spoke like they had been cast from the same mould. Even their expressions and tones were basically the same.

An assembly of dharma was originally supposed to involve a staunch and intense debate, but it had become peaceful all of a sudden, without the slightest dispute. It was like a lifeless pond of stagnant water. Even the young acolytes, only eight or nine years old, behaved like they were old men. The Jade Wisdom Chan Master seemed to see a hundred Jade Wisdom Chan Masters muttering to himself. He gradually became horrified, but it was already too late for regret.

The Wisdom Imbuement technique was different from other techniques. Once it was used, it was very difficult to reverse. As a result, on one stormy night, the Jade Wisdom Chan Master shouted madly, "I'll kill you all! I'll kill you all!" He committed suicide.

Such a horrifying story made Hua Chenglu pale. She did not want to become a "Jade Wisdom Chan Master". Sure enough, there was no free lunch in the world. Shortcuts did not come so easily.

The Great Banyan Tree King smiled. "Lassie, you don't have to be so afraid. There is no good and bad. It only becomes a problem when you go too far. There is no good and bad with cultivation methods either. As long as I limit myself, you won't become someone else."

"When I carry out the imbuement, I will do my best to only pass onto you my comprehension of the Method of Springtime Bloom so that your ability to comprehend is strengthened. And, I'll limit it to Foundation Establishment to minimize the influence on your character, but paying a small price will still be unavoidable. These are the pros and cons, so consider it yourself!"

With the Great Banyan Tree King's ten millenniums of wisdom and comprehension, it would not be merely Foundation Establishment if he imbued Hua Chenglu all of a sudden. She would even have her foundation to condense a Golden Core, but Hua Chenglu would be completely swallowed up as a person too. However, if he limited himself, it would reduce both the benefits and the detriments. Although there would still be an influence, it could not twist and erase Hua Chenglu's thoughts completely.

To Li Qingshan, he could not accept even the slightest twist in his thoughts. Even though he admired the Great Banyan Tree King's way of survival very much, he had still rebuked rudely with "passivity leads to

vulnerability” when he was taught the lesson of “aggression leads to easy failure”. No matter how great yours is, it’s still yours. I have my own persistence!

Hua Chenglu hesitated. She lowered her head and thought for a while before raising her head again. “I’ll do it!”

“Chenglu.” Li Qingshan pressed down on her shoulder with a frown.

“Big brother Li, if you don’t complete the three tasks, you won’t be able to receive senior’s gift! You can just treat this as me paying you back for saving my life!” Hua Chenglu let out a toothy grin, at ease and beautiful.

“You can forget about that! I haven’t reached the point where I value a gift more than you just yet!” Li Qingshan said flatly. Making a young girl sacrifice herself for him was something his dignity could not allow. He wanted to say that, but he knew she would stick to her decision even more firmly if he did, so he smiled again. “Compared to some gift, I still think letting me spend some intimate time with you is a little more enticing, Chenglu.”

Hua Chenglu shot a glance at him and raised her chin. “Don’t even think about it!” She burst out laughing. “I’m kidding! I’m nowhere near that great. Big brother Li, you’re a genius. You don’t know the difficulty that we mortals face when we cultivate. Apart from you, probably no one can go completely without being tempted by changing a little in exchange for the multitude of benefits, like saving a decade or even two decades’ worth of time, an immeasurable amount of pills, an increase in cultivation, and so on.”

Li Qingshan said sternly, “This is not a laughing matter. You have to consider it carefully.”

Hua Chenglu shook her head gently. “I don’t need to consider it anymore. If I still don’t make any progress with my cultivation, I’ll probably have to obey my father and be married off to the descendant of another aristocratic clan in a few years’ time.”

Li Qingshan said, “You have your elder brother, and you also have your big brother Li. Probably no one can force you into anything. You can slowly choose someone you like.”

Hua Chenglu pressed her hands against her chest. “It’s not against my will. This is my responsibility. My father and brother doted on me while I was growing up, basically granting me whatever I want. This is a form of awareness that I’ve possessed long ago! Not to mention, whether you like someone or not is not reliable either. Even if you like them today, you might not like them in the future. Being arranged for marriage is still more practical.”

Li Qingshan seemed to see the serious, little Hua Chenglu from all those years ago again. He rubbed her head. “You’re so young, yet you’re already so pragmatic. You don’t even have a hint of your elder brother’s passion!”

Hua Chenglu grabbed his large hand and removed it forcefully. “You’re groping around again. Hmph, I’m not stupid like my elder brother. As long as I establish a foundation successfully, I won’t have to worry about the marriage anymore. I’ll stay unmarried for my entire life and copy Gu Yanying. I’ll make you damned men die from envy.”

A Foundation Establishment cultivator in their early twenties, whether they were male or female, would all be geniuses their clans treasured. They had quite a lot of autonomy over matters big and small. Unless she was completely willing, she would not become a tool for marriage. Different cultivations were directly connected to the identities and statuses of cultivators, or even the fate of their lives.

Li Qingshan smiled. "That works too, just in case you make me jealous. Though, if you change your mind one day, don't forget about your big brother Li. It's just like what they say, gotta keep the good stuff between us!"

Hua Chenglu called out, "Don't- even- think- about- it!" She changed the topic. "Though, if there are any more interesting adventures like this, you have to call me along. I won't drag you down anymore."

Li Qingshan shook his head in an exaggerated manner. "By then, I'll already be a Golden Core cultivator. I'll probably still be forced with one hand."

"Then I'll have to trouble you with freeing up a hand to carry me." Hua Chenglu blushed slightly. Her eyes were filled with anticipation. I want to see even more sights. I want to be respected by you and everyone else. I don't want it to be that one day, when I see Zijian again, I can no longer be her friend!

There was nothing more Li Qingshan could say. "Since this is your choice, all I can do is support you!"

Hua Chenglu raised her head and said, "Senior tree king, I've already decided. May I ask how I undergo the Wisdom Imbuement?"

"Come on in!"

Another hole suddenly appeared in the wooden hall, leading straight to the centre of the banyan tree. Li Qingshan had been circling around the centre the entire time as he hunted down the burrowing mites. Although the insects had managed to riddle the bark with holes, the pith was even sturdier, so they could not eat it.

Hua Chenglu took in a deep breath and glanced at Li Qingshan. Right when she was about to enter the hole, Li Qingshan arrived beside her and said, "Fellow, you planned all of this, didn't you?"

The Great Banyan Tree King said, "This is fate. The heavens delivered you before me."

Li Qingshan glanced at the tree hole. "Then can I come in and take a look?" Although he trusted the Great Banyan Tree King's moral character, he had to be cautious no matter what. If he turned him down, perhaps he would make Hua Chenglu reconsider.

"Sure."

"The hole is far too small. Let me in first..." Hua Chenglu was rather troubled. The hole was even smaller than the tree holes they travelled through earlier. Before she had even finished speaking, Li Qingshan pulled her firmly into his arms with a smile. "Don't worry, we can just squeeze together a little!" Afterwards, he leapt into the tree hole with her.

"You're almost squeezing me to death!"

A while later, Hua Chenglu pushed Li Qingshan away viciously. Her entire body ached. With his great strength, he seemed like he was trying to knead her into his body.

“Don’t act so spoiled. You almost squeezed me to death too.”

Li Qingshan casually responded and gazed at this strange opening. It was shaped like an upside-down bowl, around the size of a living room. This was the very centre of the great banyan tree. The spiritual qi in here was so thick that it almost seemed to materialise. He felt refreshed from simply taking a breath.

“Lassie, come to the centre and relax your mind and body.” The Great Banyan Tree King’s voice became even grander.

Hua Chenglu stood in the centre. Verdant aerial roots grew from the surroundings, coiling around her limbs softly and pressing against her major acupoints with precision. Another dozen or so pressed against the acupoints on her head. Her legs were lifted from the ground, hovering in the air.

The base of all the aerial roots lit up with dark green light at the same time, moving along the roots and reaching Hua Chenglu’s acupoints. She shuddered all over as extremely pure wood spiritual qi was channeled into her body. At the same time, vast and complex information entered her mind.

### **Chapter 648 - Imbuement of Wisdom, Three Days of Foundation Establishment (Three)**

Hua Chenglu let out a soft groan, filled with both pain she did not want to bear and indescribable joy. Extremely pure wood spiritual qi rushed into her body, immediately dispersing and replacing the true qi she had built up over a decade of arduous cultivation. Afterwards, it merged with her body strand by strand, circulating according to the Method of Springtime Bloom.

The first layer, the second layer... In the blink of an eye, her cultivation was elevated to the eighth layer of Qi Practitioner again. Then it advanced forward until she reached the ninth before getting to the tenth layer of Qi Practitioner! All of the meridians in her body were opened and connected by the spiritual qi, which also happened to be countless times more pure and powerful than the true qi she had originally cultivated, welling up and filling her sea of qi in her dantian.

Even though the great banyan tree was only a hair to the Great Banyan Tree King, and the spiritual qi he had channeled into Hua Chenglu was a hair’s hair, it was so great to a measly Qi Practitioner that she struggled to endure this gift.

Originally, this would have been the limit. Perhaps the Great Banyan Tree King could purge her body of impurities and let her make minor breakthroughs as a Qi Practitioner, but he could not forcefully make her break through a major realm. It would still require her own cultivation and comprehension, but who knew how long that would take.

“Lassie, clear your mind and guard it. Don’t forget who you are!”

Suddenly, the Great Banyan Tree King’s voice rang out in her head, the complete opposite from his request earlier for her to relax earlier. Hua Chenglu recovered a sliver of clarity from the great joy of her breakthrough and thought to herself, I’m Hua Chenglu!

The vast, complex information erupted violently. In the past, she seemed to be trapped in a dark maze, constantly fumbling around and looking for a way out for the sake of her path of survival and path of cultivation.

In that moment, the tall walls of the maze suddenly collapsed. Blazing, white light flooded in. The haze and darkness that troubled her ceased to exist. Even her body seemed to have vanished, only leaving behind her soul, rapidly expanding in the light.

She was like someone who had spent their entire lives blind, deaf, and mentally disabled suddenly able to see, hear, and think clearly. It felt like thousands of years had passed, yet also like only an instant had passed. She was completely submerged in great joy and thought for some reason, So this is the paradise mentioned by buddhism!

“Don’t forget who you are!” The Great Banyan Tree King’s ancient voice rang out again. Hua Chenglu remembered the story about the Jade Wisdom Chan Master and was slightly surprised inside. Afterwards, she actually asked herself in some confusion, Who am I?

She was called Hua Chenglu, but that was only a name. Something had vanished, something had changed, and something had appeared out of nowhere, completely merging with her and now inseparable.

But without a doubt, she had become stronger, whether it was her mind or her body, but she also seemed to miss a lot of things. If a child could become as mature as an adult overnight, they would miss out on the innocence of childhood and the rashness of youth. The child perhaps would never be able to understand what price they had paid. There would only be an additional blank in their memories.

The aerial roots returned into the tree and Hua Chenglu drifted down like a gentle flower petal.

Boom!

Lightning emerged from nowhere, baptising all creatures that wanted to remould themselves.

Hua Chenglu did not panic at all. She spread her arms and welcomed the lightning.

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Ru Xin was a little annoyed. As soon as she entered the Dragon Arena, she immediately went off to meet up with Liu Zhangqing and everyone else, but she ran into an unwelcome guest along the way, a man wielding a fiery-red trident who burned violently—Zhu Lie.

Ru Xin did not want to fight anyway, while Zhu Lie happened to be following Si Qing’s orders, heading towards the forest of stone to unite with everyone so that they could kill Li Qingshan. He was not particularly happy with carrying out the order and would much rather find another opportunity for a battle to the death with Li Qingshan, but he did not have much choice as a captive.

On the mirror-like surface of the lake, these two people who rushed off towards different places brushed past one another.

Ru Xin sighed. Fire devourers had always been good at fighting, and the flames they unleashed possessed startling power. This guy was much more difficult to handle compared to regular late Foundation Establishment cultivators.

A streak of fire suddenly sped over, blocking her path. Zhu Lie furrowed his brows as the flames in his eyes leapt around, staring into Ru Xin’s eyes.

She was exceptionally beautiful, which made him confirm her face did not exist in her memories. He was not tempted by her charm either. Instead, he experienced a strange feeling. This woman made him feel an intense sensation of loathing. The loathing was almost instinctual, tempting him to relieve himself by killing her.

However, he considered his current situation, how he probably would feel the same no matter which human cultivator he saw. If it were only this sense of loathing, he would have never gone out of his way to turn around and rush back. The loathing also contained an indescribable sense of familiarity. It was like he had run into an acquaintance in a place far from home.

This feeling was so novel and special that it was unforgettable. In his memory, he had only experienced this feeling once before, so he asked.

“Have we met somewhere before?”

“I’ve never been to an uncivilised place like the Mist province. You may have mistaken me for someone else.”

Ru Xin smiled and gazed at Zhu Lie. She was doing her best to search her memories, but she found nothing. She had seen far too many fire devourers. After all these years, all that remained in her memories were furious balls of fire and twisted, raging faces.

Zhu Lie no longer said anything more. He suddenly struck out with his trident, blazing with fire as it shot towards Ru Xin like a meteor. Since you won’t admit it, I’ll kill you and see! This was how fire devourers handled things.

Before death, people will always divulge many secrets. If they still refuse to confess their secrets, then they can just take the secret with them to the afterlife! It is not like killing a measly early Foundation Establishment cultivator would take much time anyway.

Ru Xin was already prepared. In the moment Zhu Lie raised his trident, she directly plunged into the water. These damned fire devourers!

The trident missed. The scorching flames illuminated the surface of the lake as white mist rose up. Ru Xin’s voice rang out from beneath the water, “I heard a fire devourer was serving Si Qing as a dog, going around biting people under his orders. Don’t tell me that’s you!”

“Shut up!” Zhu Lie thrust the trident viciously towards the origins of the voice. With a boom, the surface of the lake was split open. Under the invading flames, a white figure flashed past, but it slid to one side gracefully the moment the flames were about to reach it.

“I’ve heard that among the otherfolk, Fire Devouring folk have the shortest temper. They’re all proper men with violent natures who would rather die than submit. Looks like rumors really aren’t reliable. As it turns out, you swagger around on your high horse when you’re matched up against those weaker than you and you suck up to those stronger than you. I’ve heard that Si Qing has quite the liking towards men, tsksk!”

Ru Xin hit Zhu Lie’s sore spot. His flames immediately surged ten meters into the air.

“Very impressive. You’ve infuriated me. Do you know that the more angry fire devourers are, the stronger their flames become?”

“Tsk!” Ru Xin dove deep into the water.

Zhu Lie originally thought he could finish off Ru Xin in a few moves, but he discovered she was even more slippery than Li Qingshan, completely avoiding a direct confrontation with him and swimming around like a fish in the water. No matter how violent his flames were, she would always be able to grasp their weak points ingeniously and nullify his attacks wave after wave. It was as if she knew all of his abilities, moves, and even method of battle like the palm of her hand.

He clearly possessed a crushing advantage, yet he was unable to triumph over her immediately, which made him even more suspicious. Between the attacks, Ru Xin’s sneers and remarks would constantly ring out from the bottom of the water, agitating him so much that he roared out. He could no longer care about Si Qing’s orders anymore. His attacks became even more violent, refusing to give up until he killed her.

Ru Xin ran into danger again and again. If it were not for all the talismans she had accumulated, she would have come close to losing her life many times. She pursed her lips firmly, and her expression did not change at all, like a jade statue.

The constantly-invading flames, the ceaseless running, and the endless rainforest. These memories that she had already forgotten suddenly became clear once again. The blood continued to drip, without fading in colour at all. The pain was still so vivid like it was yesterday. Flames reignited in the depths of her eyes.

After fighting for another hour, Zhu Lie grasped the opportunity and lunged down, thrusting his trident towards Ru Xin’s back. Ru Xin suddenly turned around, and a smile stretched across her face. It was completely different from her usual, gentle expression. It was as flagrant as fire and filled with aggression.

A strange, hideous figure suddenly appeared behind him. It was a strange humanoid wrapped in bandages. The white bandages were soaked in blood and pus, making them lose their original, pure-white colour. The body exposed between the gaps was festering and rotten, covered in disgusting nodules. Some parts were only skin and bones as if even the flesh had been scraped away, while other parts were completely swollen, extremely foul and repulsive.

It went up to receive Zhu Lie as soon as it appeared. Zhu Lie frowned slightly. He was wrapped in flames and dressed in sturdy armour. Even regular weapons would struggle to harm him, so he was confident he could block any attack. How could he give up on his opportunity to kill her over a mere figure?

The hideous figure moved with alarming speed, passing through the flames and armour silently and lunging into Zhu Lie’s body.

Zhu Lie experienced an ominous feeling. His body stiffened, and his trident paused for a moment. Ru Xin used this opportunity to evade.

Zhu Lie touched his chest and discovered that apart from stiffening up in the very beginning, he felt nothing else. That was all the figure seemed to be capable of. As it turned out, it was merely a bluff. She had almost gotten him.

However, as time went on, he began feeling uncomfortable all over. In the beginning, it was only a small discomfort. His body felt hot and cold and slightly itchy, and he could not control the flames as freely as before. Afterwards, his head began to spin. Eventually, it became filled with pain like it was about to explode. Red rashes appeared all over his body, so itchy that he almost could not help but scratch them.

He mobilised the flames desperately, wanting to dispel the uncomfortable feeling, but it was completely useless. Although his attacks were still vicious and he possessed the upper hand firmly, he no longer posed a lethal threat to Ru Xin.

“What did you do to me?” Zhu Lie bellowed furiously, having lost his previous might already. His neck swelled up and bulged.

Ru Xin smiled. “Sir, you’re sick, but fortunately, you’re quite lucky. I’m a doctor!”

### **Chapter 649 - The Flower That Balances Water and Fire**

Even the school of Music could use their zithers to injure people, so the school of Medicine also possessed ways to protect themselves. Among the books of the school of Medicine, there was a way to refine plague ghosts.

“Plague ghosts” were not evil spirits. It was like how the “gods of plagues” in the legends were actually gods that dispelled diseases.

Plague ghosts feasted on diseases, accumulating them in their bodies. Once they reached a certain level, they could throw themselves at the enemy. Because they were immaterial like ghosts, barely anything could stop them from delivering the nasty diseases into the enemy’s body.

However, the bodies of cultivators had always been extremely tough, and a body like Zhu Lie’s was among the top of the list. Regular diseases were unable to affect him much at all.

Only by devouring a tremendous amount of diseases could they determine victory or defeat, which also meant the cultivator had to spend large amounts of time treating and curing mortals.

The plague ghost Ru Xin refined had only reached its current level through accumulation during the years of war in the Clear River prefecture. During the war, pestilence was widespread, allowing her to gather countless diseases.

As a result, while plague ghosts were powerful, there were not a lot of medical disciples that chose to refine them. The world had been at peace for too long. No one was willing to spend time on something like this.

And once the cultivator became somewhat accomplished with the plague ghost, it would be even more terrifying than potent poison. Toxins could always be purged, but diseases would constantly grow and spread. For each moment that passed without treatment, the situation would worsen.

Zhu Lie was unable to hold back the discomfort in his lungs, covering his mouth and coughing violently. When he checked his hand, he found it covered in blood. He could feel the condition of his body

constantly worsen like a structure termites had eaten away, about to collapse at any time. Vicious determination filled his mind.

I'm probably under the effect of this woman's gu. As long as I kill her, the gu will obviously vanish. Even if I can't achieve that, I'll still pull her down with me!

Ru Xin seemed to have been expecting this the entire time. She pulled far away and called out, "You can stop dreaming. Even if you kill me, your sickness won't improve. Instead, it'll erupt instantly and kill you on the spot. In the Mist province's language, it's death gu!"

The Mist province was an undeveloped land. There were many vicious and mysterious ways to refine gu, and death gu was the most fiendish among them all. They could only be activated by sacrificing the user's life, taking down the enemy and perishing with them.

"So you have been to the Mist province. Who are you exactly?" Zhu Lie no longer looked down on her at all. His eyes were filled with deep fear.

"That's not for you to worry about. I just want to ask you, do you want to return to the Mist province?" Ru Xin's eyes shone brightly, her expression and mannerisms vastly different from before. Even Li Qingshan who knew her extremely well had never seen this side of her. The battle seemed to reignite something inside her that had been laying in silence for all this time.

Zhu Lie said nothing. Fire devourers were full of valour and vigour. If he were to die on a battlefield, he would definitely go ahead with it fearlessly, but the situation right now was a little different. Si Qing had subdued him at first before Li Qingshan defeated him. His will to embrace death had already been mostly eroded away. The diseases and pain he suffered from were rapidly worsening. He could not help but experience an urge to live on.

"So what if I do?"

"If you do, then I'll stabilise your diseases? But you need to cooperate with me for the treatment. You'll obey me for ten days."

After a moment of thought, Zhu Lie finally lowered his head and said, "Alright!"

As soon as he said that, he felt the pain on him recede like the tide, but Ru Xin had merely suppressed the diseases, embedding them in his organs, brain, and marrow. Once they erupted, they would completely tear Zhu Lie apart.

"What do you want me to do?" Zhu Lie originally thought Ru Xin wanted him to help her collect medals, but he never expected Ru Xin to say, "I want you to tell me about the local customs and practices of the Mist province. I heard the main base of the fire devourers in the Mist province is on Fire Melt mountain. Where are you from?"

When Ru Xin asked this question, her expression became even stranger. She licked her lips subconsciously. A desire she was unable to suppress burned and spread through her like a nefarious fire.

"Fire Melt mountain is the holy grounds of my race. It's not a place where anyone can stay. Normally, we only gather there during the holy war!" Zhu Lie could only answer truthfully.

The holy war!

Ru Xin's eyes flashed. Fire devourers were violent and frequently waged war against other races, but only when they fought the Merfolk of the South sea would they call it a "holy war". Moreover, every holy war would involve the strength of the entire race, fighting devastating battles to no end.

"When was the most recent holy war?"

The two of them followed up each other promptly in the conversation. It even seemed like they had already buried the hatchet if viewed from the eyes of others. However, Ru Xin maintained a certain distance from Zhu Lie the entire time, asking him about the Mist province with great patience.

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When the final bolt of lightning vanished, Hua Chenglu opened her eyes and released her soul sense, sensing that the entire world had changed. It looked completely different in her eyes.

This was both from her comprehension of breaking through a major realm of cultivation, as well as the effects of the Wisdom Imbuement. The influence of the latter was probably even deeper than the former.

"Congratulations, Chenglu!"

Li Qingshan went up to receive her with a smile. He felt a little strange inside. In his eyes, Hua Chenglu had changed drastically. Her beauty and figure were already almost perfect, but she was still lacking a little in terms of bearing. Let alone Gu Yanying, she probably even paled in comparison to the venomous Qian Rongzhi. No matter whether he liked or hated them, it was all a distinct sign that only appeared through undergoing trials and ordeals.

Right now, Hua Chenglu overflowed with a gentle and touching aura, like morning dew resting on a flower petal, producing a rainbow under the sunlight. She had already begun exhibiting peerless beauty.

Of course, this was only his first impression. As for any more specific changes, even Li Qingshan was unable to put it into words. He thought, Hopefully this isn't a bad thing!

Hua Chenglu called out "big brother Li" with a giggle before meditating and adjusting her condition. She recovered her spiritual qi very soon before asking, "How long has passed already?"

Li Qingshan said, "Two and a half days!"

"Then we better hurry up and begin!" Hua Chenglu said that as she entered the hole, leaving the centre of the tree.

Unable to take advantage of her, Li Qingshan rubbed his nose and said to the Great Banyan Tree King, "This girl originally had some interest in me, but after what you've done, she's completely lost interest! How are you going to compensate me?"

He had not idled around during the past two days either. He constantly asked the Great Banyan Tree King questions about cultivation, and they got to know each other. They joked around quite a lot. As for whether Hua Chenglu was interested in him or not, he did not actually care very much.

"Thoughts are unpredictable. How can you be certain whether it was intentional or not from a single glance?"

“Then thank you for all the guidance during these days, fellow!” Li Qingshan smiled. The Great Banyan Tree King’s understanding of the Arts of the Boundless Ocean allowed him to benefit tremendously. He was now a little more confident about condensing an Ocean pearl and breakthrough through to Golden Core.

Of course, he did not forget to ask about the problem of merging water and fire either. The Great Banyan Tree King told him a few ways, but these ways could clearly only balance out regular fire and water, unable to balance out the spirit turtle and the phoenix. Li Qingshan was afraid to say too much. However, a legend that the Great Banyan Tree King mentioned piqued Li Qingshan’s interest.

“Legend has it that in a place where fire burns in the depths of the ocean, a strange flower will bloom the moment the flames erupt before immediately withering away. It’s born with balanced fire and water spiritual qi, and it’s a symbol of peace between Merfolk and Fire Devouring folk. Perhaps it also symbolises that their peace is as brief as the flower’s bloom.”

### **Chapter 650 - The Fruit of Wisdom**

In the deep-blue sky, wisps of clouds appeared out of thin air, rapidly expanding and joining together. They barely managed to cover up the great banyan tree’s cloud-like canopy, but unlike regular clouds, they seemed a little unnatural.

Li Qingshan sat down with his legs crossed in a tree hole near the canopy. He chanted something softly as he devoted all of his attention to casting a technique. Even with his ability to control water, using the Spiritual Rain technique over such a large area was not an easy feat. He required the accompanying incantations.

The spiritual qi in his dantian receded like the tide as the cloud constantly grew thicker. Sunlight was unable to pass through anymore, and it obviously went from white to black. Rain filled with spiritual qi constantly accumulated; it was like a sponge filled with water, waiting for a satisfying rainstorm.

As for Hua Chenglu, she arrived at the very bottom of the great banyan tree. The roots of the great banyan tree and the sun vines twisted and entangled with one another. Very soon, she found a suitable location and pressed her hands against the roots of the sun vines, using the Method of Springtime Bloom to produce a rainbow-like glow from her hands.

The sun vines that resembled dragons in size trembled under this small force. With their instinct to absorb spiritual qi, they accepted all of this power, and the trembling constantly intensified.

Basically no technique could harm mature sun vines, but the objective of this power was not to attack but to impel. Like how people immune to poison were still vulnerable to aphrodisiacs, blooming and fruiting as plants ran deep within their instincts.

Hua Chenglu’s spiritual qi was completely drained very soon. Immediately, an aerial root wrapped around her, channeling pure wood spiritual qi into her body.

The sun vines developed flower buds first. A while later, golden sun flowers bloomed resplendently. The glow they produced was as radiant as the sun.

The Great Banyan Tree King said, “Alright, I feel much looser now. Thank you! The nectar from the sun vine flowers is very precious to you, so go collect some!”

Hua Chenglu eased up and smiled. Ever since she entered the Great Banyan Tree King, she finally saw light again. It had only been a few days, but it felt like an entire lifetime.

Li Qingshan also received the Great Banyan Tree King's message. His chanting stopped, and with a swoosh, the "sponge" in the air seemed to be violently wringed out. Rain poured down, sprinkling on every leaf before flowing down along the bark. The sun vine flowers bloomed even more resplendently under the dark rain.

Li Qingshan arrived outside the tree hole. He saw Hua Chenglu busying about from flower to flower like a butterfly. The Great Banyan Tree King's voice rang out in his ears again, "Come take your gift!"

Li Qingshan arrived in the canopy under the Great Banyan Tree King's instructions. The branches and leaves weaved together, reducing his visibility to three meters. The branches swayed gently, and the foliage all gave way, paving a path.

Li Qingshan arrived at the end of the path and saw a pitiful little flower on a thick branch. It seemed to be composed of thousands of fluffy stamens, white in the centre and fading to red on the edges. It did not stand out very much, completely unable to compare with the Great Banyan Tree King's colossal body or the huge, resplendent sun vine flowers.

"Is this the gift?"

"Don't rush, don't rush!"

Time seemed to speed up. The colour of the tiny flower deepened before turning into a tiny fruit that went from green to yellow.

Of course, it still did not stand out very much.

"Pick it quick," the Great Banyan Tree King said, urging him. His voice sounded rather lethargic.

Li Qingshan extended his hand and picked the fruit. He fiddled with it in his hand. "Thank you, fellow, but is this fruit edible?"

He checked it with his soul sense, but he did not sense much spiritual qi inside. Instead, it gathered another type of power, which was a powerful will similar to soul sense. He had absolutely no idea what it was for.

"Li Qingshan, give me the fruit in your hand, and I'll forget about all the grievances between us!"

Si Qing's voice suddenly rang out from the sky, and it sounded a little urgent. When he saw the banyan tree bloom and fruit, even his eyes widened. The Fruit of Wisdom!

He had once requested the Great Banyan Tree King submissively exactly for this Fruit of Wisdom. The Great Banyan Tree King had always been known for his wisdom. The fruit he produced could not allow cultivation to advance drastically and skyrocket, but it did contain a crystallisation of the Great Banyan Tree King's wisdom, able to unlock the wisdom and ability to comprehend within people.

This was different from the brainwashing and instillment of the Wisdom Imbuement technique. Instead, it was enlightenment and development, similar to the "A Blow and a Shout" from buddhism. The effects of this blow would vary. If regular people received it, their minds would clear up a little at most. It might

not even have any other effects. However, it had wondrous effects on cultivators whose cultivation had halted due to a bottleneck.

In order to undergo the third heavenly tribulation and reach the realm of kings, Si Qing obviously needed a Fruit of Wisdom very much, but the Great Banyan Tree King denied his request. The mental effort and energy required to produce a Fruit of Wisdom was even more than performing Wisdom Imbuement ten times.

Li Qingshan had only killed a few burrowing mites and cast a technique, yet he received such a generous reward, which made Si Qing even more envious.

Hearing Si Qing's words, Li Qingshan obviously understood that this was something good, so he immediately shoved it into his mouth and chewed away. The taste was much more sour and astringent than he imagined it to be, but as soon as he thought of Si Qing's ugly expression, his mood immediately took a turn for the better. He leaned against the branch and ate happily.

Si Qing's expression did become as ugly as he imagined it to be. After Li Qingshan provoked him time and time again, he had already run out of patience. Li Qingshan was only a measly Foundation Establishment cultivator, yet he used Gu Yanying as his backing to behave so arrogantly.

"Li Qingshan, you will definitely die!"

"Heh, just the bunch of trash under you are capable of something like that?"

Li Qingshan spat out a seed with a smile before blanking out slightly. It was like a flash of inspiration had crossed through his mind. The inspiration was like an invisible string, threading together a lot of the disorderly information in his head.

However, if he were to describe the effects in detail, he would truly be stumped. His cultivation had not grown at all, and his soul sense had not strengthened either. However, the questions regarding the Arts of the Boundless Ocean he had asked the Great Banyan Tree King during the past few days suddenly became clear. Originally, he only listened to the Great Banyan Tree King and memorised his words so that he could slowly digest it in the future, but right now, he had understood some new things.

Apart from the Arts of the Boundless Ocean, the other cultivation methods, as well as the usage of moves in battle and minor details in life all underwent some indescribable changes. No matter what he thought of, he felt it was different from the past. It was as if he was looking at these problems from a new light and perspective. It was a very special and very novel feeling.

The Great Banyan Tree King said, "Others can teach you knowledge, but they can't teach you wisdom. Although the fruit is known as the Fruit of Wisdom, you still need to search for true wisdom yourself. I believe there will be a day when you stand before me again, even wiser and stronger than now."

"Of course. You're a good person- no, you're a good tree. Thank you for helping me, but there will be a day in the future when you will also need my help."

Li Qingshan said seriously. He had benefited quite a lot from this trip. Just Si Qing's behaviour demonstrated the value of the banyan fruit. It was probably greater compensation than what he deserved; it was like how even the debt of a single meal must be returned, and the grievance of a hostile glare must be resolved.

A puny Foundation Establishment cultivator was saying to a Daemon King who had reigned as a king for millennia, "You will also need my help." This was definitely as arrogant as he could be in the eyes of others. They would definitely mock him. "With the Great Banyan Tree King's identity, who knows how many people are willing to help him out. What gives a kid like you the right to say that?"

However, the Great Banyan Tree King would not brush aside this wild boast. Instead, his mysterious feeling became even more intense. Like how the Golden Cicada Spirit King firmly believed the Chant of Deva-Nāga would appear on Xiao An, this was not divination, but a form of gut feeling that people who had reached the realm of kings like them possessed.

"Though by then, it won't be as simple as killing some insects and watering some plants."

"Just as I wished. Perhaps we might even get the chance to venture outside this well and take a look together in the future!"

"That's very similar to something an old friend of mine said."

Li Qingshan thought of something. The Golden Cicada Spirit King and the Great Banyan Tree King must have known one another. Their temperament and nature were probably different from the other Daemon Kings.

According to a book he had read, there were plenty of ruthless and cruel Daemon Kings, with not a lot that were easy to get along with. It was probably a rarity for Daemon Kings to be as gentle as them. The Great Banyan Tree King upheld the path of nature, while the Golden Cicada Spirit King had always practised buddhism. To be able to meet them was truly a blessing.

However, he could not seek confirmation right now. A fragrance assaulted him from behind. Hua Chenglu heard Si Qing's voice and rushed over. "Big brother Li, are you alright?"

Li Qingshan smiled at her before suddenly looking back. Peering through the rain and gazing at the end of the rainforest, over a dozen black specks appeared. Si Qing had already become all too eager to have him killed, so he directly transported his lackeys over here.

Li Qingsha basically felt the same. Hua Chenglu wanted to say something else.

Li Qingshan leapt out into the rain. The sky full of spiritual rain that continued to fall was pulled and guided along, condensing towards him and chasing after him. It was as if he had unfolded open a huge pair of water wings, soaring into the horizon.

Everyone's eyes in the scarred man's group shone viciously. They unleashed various attacks that collided together. The distance of less than ten kilometers was basically reduced to nothing in the blink of an eye.

In that moment, the rainforest vanished.

Hua Chenglu held her breath, only to discover that Li Qingshan and Si Qing's lackeys had all vanished from the battlefield. She cried out, "Big brother Li!"

The Great Banyan Tree King said, "You still can't help him right now, so just stay here for a few more days!"

Hua Chenglu nodded firmly as if she had made up her mind about something. She flew towards the sun vine flowers that bloomed resplendently.

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As each question was met with an answer, time passed by slowly. Zhu Lie was very cooperative, basically telling her everything he knew, but he did not yield. Fire devourers never yielded to anyone, whether it was her or Si Qing. He was waiting for an opportunity.

He understood the rules of the competition extremely well. The lake battlefield would vanish very soon, and everyone would be transported elsewhere. By then, it would be the optimal opportunity for him to kill her. He refused to believe the technique this woman full of falsehoods had used on him was death gu. Even if it were, he had to take a gamble, as he had already remembered where he had once seen her.

He calculated silently. There were still fifteen minutes remaining before the transportation...

Ru Xin suddenly fell silent. She smiled. "Time sure waits for no one! I once swore that I would butcher all fire devours. Hehe, that's really some innocent talk of a child. My happy childhood is gone forever, but you can count as the first!"