

GREAT SAGE 671

### **Chapter 671 - The Spirit Turtle's Warning, the Arrival of Impending Doom**

On a black mountain littered with strange, jagged rocks, towering in the sky.

The five words "Mountain Manor of Myriad Beasts" filled an entire cliff that stretched over three hundred meters across.

The cliff was covered with vague, totemic carvings of various beasts. There were both regular beasts and birds, as well as divine birds and exotic beasts that only existed in legends.

Roar!

A roar filled with ferocity and fury shook up the mountains, making all the birds and beasts tremble.

An old man with ruffled hair who seemed as dignified as a male lion appeared on the edge of the cliff, gazing in the direction of the Green province.

"Who killed E Dan!?"

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The moment Li Qingshan killed E Dan, he suddenly felt a deep chill, and the spirit turtle gave off a strong omen of warning.

Even without divining through the spirit turtle, he could guess he had provoked an extremely terrifying figure by killing E Dan, and this figure was not someone he could contend with right now.

Master, Beast King!

He mulled over these two phrases before tossing it to the back of his mind. As his comprehension of the spirit turtle deepened, his omens of good and bad became more and more sensitive.

This was a form of impending doom, but it was not imminent. After the Beast King learned about E Dan's death and found out who the murderer was from Jia Zhen, he would need to travel from the Dragon province to the Green province. It would all take time. Within the killing intent, there was a small chance of survival. Since he could not defeat him, then couldn't he just run?

In short, if it were a blessing, then it was a blessing, but if it were a curse, it would be unavoidable. There was no need for him to fret.

Li Qingshan yawned and stretched, gazing at the blood-red swirl in the sky. He had no idea whether E Dan's soul had already joined the Asura realm, or if the beast soul had devoured it, completely vanishing from the surroundings.

He lowered his head and gazed at the greyish-black golden core in his hand. There was a faint, totemic image of a black wolf, giving off a feral and savage aura.

Stepping out of the Asura Field, he arrived in a place over five kilometers below the surface. A small river gurgled away in the darkness. Lolth laid on the banks of the river nearby, completely unclothed.

She seemed extremely feeble, but basically all of her wounds had already recovered. Only a streak of blood that had yet to recover remained on her waist. To a Daemon Commander with a powerful body like her, a wound like that was still not enough to claim her life, but it was still a heavy injury without a doubt. Even her scarlet lips had faded slightly.

Lolth gazed at him. "You've won again."

"Hehe, all thanks to you. Open up!"

Li Qingshan walked over and put his arm around her waist, taking out a part of banyan tree bark. Crushing it forcefully, milky-white tree sap oozed out, dripping into her mouth.

Very soon, she completely recovered from her wounds, and her lips recovered a lot of their colour too. She continued to stare at him with a strange gaze the entire time. In a daze, she kind of understood why the Golden Cicada Spirit King would regard him with special respect, even communicating with him as equals. There was something on him that was different from regular daemons, which allowed him to go from the measly Daemon General under her command to today.

Lolth recovered some daemon qi. Li Qingshan patted her cheek. "Alright, you can go back!"

Lolth suddenly wrapped her arms around his neck. "Haven't you forgotten something?"

"Huh?"

"You said you'd fuck me if you won. You've won now!" Lolth licked her lips and said with a deep, seductive voice.

Li Qingshan had entangled with Lolth numerous times in the past, but he had forced it every single time. She was unable to resist, so she went along with it reluctantly. This was the first time she had gone out of her way to propose sleeping together. He could not help but smile. This also meant she stopped trying to get revenge, completely accepting his existence.

It was nothing like love. It was only recognising and yielding to the strong at most. However, this was already enough for Li Qingshan. He held her chin and smiled. "Fortunately, you're not too stupid, or I'm afraid I'll really have to kill you one day! Wouldn't that be a waste?"

In the very beginning, the reason why he did not kill Lolth was because of the law that prevented daemons from killing one another. Afterwards, he did it for the sake of the Golden Cicada Spirit King. As for the intercourse that brought him the most joy, it instead was not the most important reason.

Whether it was women or female daemons, there were plenty of them in the world. No matter how lustful he was, there was no reason for him to stubbornly stick to a single one, let alone the fact that sex had never been his greatest pursuit.

Once he became even stronger, strong enough to ignore these various rules and laws, he might dismiss it with a smile and forget about it if she still looked at him with the same resentful gaze. Alternatively, he might change his mind, deciding to settle some old debts and cut her down.

"That day won't arrive." Lolth took the initiative, raising her head to kiss him on the lips.

Li Qingshan raised his hand to stop her. "I still have matters to attend to. You better go back and wait for my arrival. Oh right, don't forget to hide a little deeper. The storm still hasn't come to an end!"

After seeing off Lolth, Li Qingshan's smile faded, immediately returning to Moon Court lake. The rain continued to pour, and the waves continued to surge, but it was no longer as intense as before.

He saw the last few remaining formations still enveloping the Moon Court dwelling from the distance and stopped worrying. What he worried about the most was Jia Zhen returning and carrying out a massacre in the Moon Court dwelling.

Although he did not have any special attachments to the night roamers, he still cared very much about Ye Liusu and Ye Liubo. They had done well during this battle. If it were not for the two sneak attacks from the shadow, Jia Zhen would not have fled so quickly, and he would be rather troubled.

On the black altar, Ye Mingzhu continued to stand in the centre with her eyes shut. The shadow paced around her. Uncertain about the situation, she refused to disperse the Night Roaming God immediately.

The night roamers with weaker cultivations in the surroundings had already fainted. Even some of the second heavenly tribulation night roamers began to totter about.

Ye Mingzhu suddenly opened her eyes, gazing at the figure walking over between the mountains. The shadow merged into the darkness and appeared behind Li Qingshan, its sword poised to strike. Only when it saw he was Northmoon did it stop. Ye Mingzhu dropped to her knees in a hurry. "Master!"

The other night roamers saw his scarlet-haired, scarlet-pupiled figure and all beamed with joy, let alone Ye Liusu and Ye Liubo.

No matter what, the fate of the night roamers from this region of the world had already become linked with his. And, it was truly through him that they were liberated from Lolth's reign, allowing them to live under the stars.

Actually, the main reason was because Li Qingshan was too busy. He did not have enough time to oppress them. If he were as bored as Lolth, he probably could enjoy the decadent lifestyle of a ruler too. He just would not be as much of a deviant as her.

Li Qingshan nodded, smiling at Ye Liusu and Ye Liubo in commendation. "You've done well. Today, everyone here will be rewarded!" He walked over to the black altar and knocked it gently. The altar seemed to be carved out of a single block of obsidian, possessing a strange power.

Then he said to Ye Mingzhu, "You're almost going to break through to the second heavenly tribulation!"

"Yes, master."

"This is an Origin Spirit pill, which is used when humans undergo the second heavenly tribulation. I don't know whether it's effective on night roamers or not." Li Qingshan casually tossed the pill over, and Ye Mingzhu caught it. She was overjoyed. "Thank you for your reward, master. I want to ingest the pill right now."

Although she was a little exhausted after the battle, the power of the Night Roaming God lingered in her body, and her willpower had never been so powerful before. This was without a doubt a heaven-sent opportunity.

“Up to you.” Li Qingshan also wanted to witness the second heavenly tribulation so that he could make some preparations for his own upcoming tribulation.

Ye Mingzhu immediately ingested the Origin Spirit pill, crossing her legs and sitting down on the altar. The shadow that roamed around her gradually dispersed, and her own power flowed out, enveloping her surroundings.

With a thunderous rumble, lightning descended from above.

The night roamers all retreated to the small mountains in the surroundings. On the mountain with the best positioning, Li Qingshan smiled at Ye Liusu and Ye Liubo. “It has really been a while. You’ve done well this time, so what reward would you like?”

Ye Liubo grumbled, “I thought you already forgot about us, master. Others say they’re snowed under with work and could easily use a helper, but you have both a clone as a helper and your original body, yet you still don’t visit us! I don’t want any reward. I just want what you owe me.”

“What do I owe you?”

“Ah! Master, you actually forgot! I want a child!” Ye Liubo behaved like she was about to burst into tears.

“Alright, alright, alright. We’ll have one as soon as we get back.” Li Qingshan agreed readily, and only then did Ye Liubo light up with pleasure. She wrapped her arms around his waist firmly as if she was afraid he would run away.

Then Li Qingshan asked, “What about you, Liusu?”

“I would never ask for too much. I just want some of your affection, and I’ll be satisfied. Though, I do wonder which is easier when compared to making a child.”

Ye Liusu looked back and smiled, her twinkling eyes staring straight into his eyes.

Li Qingshan smiled. The elder sister was basically even more discontent than the younger sister. He lowered his head and kissed her gently.

“Sorry, I do indeed have a little too many matters to attend to. Although I killed one of them this time, his master is the Beast King from the Dragon province. He’ll probably come looking for trouble very soon, so I can’t stick around here just yet!”

Ye Liusu was very touched. She never expected him to explain to her so sincerely, or even apologise to her. With his strength, there was no need for him to take her feelings into consideration at all. She said tenderly, “You’ve already given me enough, yet I’m unable to help you with anything. However, I constantly worry about you. No matter what, all of me belongs to you!”

“Big sister?” Under Ye Liubo’s surprised gaze, Ye Liusu reddened and lowered her head.

Li Qingshan smiled. “Would you like a child too?”

“I just want you to think about me.”

Ye Liusu turned away and gazed into the valley. The crackling lightning constantly illuminated her face as she became rather worried. "Can mother undergo the tribulation successfully?"

Who knew how many years it had been since the night roamers in this region had a powerful existence that had undergone the second heavenly tribulation. The night roamers had always been killing one another. Once a genius like that appeared, the other clans would do everything that they could to kill them.

On top of that, there was the suppression from the Spider Queen. She only needed to utter a single word to achieve what the other clans could not, recalling them to Cobweb city and devouring them. Lastly, there were no wondrous pills like Origin Spirit pills. Facing the second heavenly tribulation using their power alone was not an easy feat.

"Don't worry. If she didn't have the confidence, she wouldn't have chosen to undergo the tribulation right now."

According to Li Qingshan's observations, the might of the second heavenly tribulation was not particularly terrifying. At the very least, he felt like it would not be a problem to him. Of course, the source of this confidence was his unbelievably tough body.

Ye Mingzhu was not as powerful as him, but she had been stuck at the bottleneck for numerous years, so she had developed an extremely thick and firm foundation. The Origin Spirit pill was merely a final push to her.

Sure enough, when the last bolt of lightning fell, Ye Mingzhu stood up on the black altar, overjoyed.

"Everyone retreat underground! No, come to my side!"

Li Qingshan immediately ordered loudly. He gazed in the direction of the Dragon province. His impending doom was here!

It had come so quickly!

## **Chapter 672 - The Beast King's Wrath, the Spirit Turtle Hides**

The rain stopped, but the clouds continued to cover the sky. In the eastern horizon, the pale glow of dawn peeked through the clouds. Before anyone had noticed, the dark night had passed and dawn had arrived.

The cool breeze made his scarlet hair flutter, still moist from the rain and mist. This was a comfortable early morning.

Li Qingshan stood on the tallest mountain in the Moon Court dwelling alone, gazing at the sky in the north solemnly as if he was waiting for something.

Suddenly, an aura appeared in the northern sky. Its brutal nature ripped apart the clouds, allowing sunlight to sprinkle down. It was still extremely far away, but the surging aura was already rather stifling.

After Jia Zhen fled, he immediately reported everything to Si Qing, who then passed it onto the Beast King. Having obtained his enemy's name and appearance, the Beast King set off immediately, rushing over from the Dragon province.

His orange, beast-like pupils locked onto the figure with fluttering, scarlet hair immediately. Seeing the two words on his horns, he became even more certain he had not found the wrong individual.

Bang! The air exploded and fierce winds howled, kicking up white ripples in the air.

The Beast King whistled over, landing in front of Li Qingshan. The entire island shook and countless structures collapsed.

Li Qingshan held his breath without taking a single step back, studying the "Beast King".

He seemed to be in his fifties and was extraordinarily tall and large. He had a tall and wide nose bridge, and his eyes shone with vigour. His mouth drooped downwards, truly possessing a huge, gaping mouth. He seemed like a lion. As they stared at one another, he truly did give off the dignity of a king among beasts. He did not hide his aura, fuming away like a volcano about to erupt, about to destroy everything.

Although he had technically defeated a "king" in the past, that took the strength of who knew how many people, taking advantage of the favourable climatic, geographical, and human conditions before finally shattering space and taking the life of the Corpse King.

Afterwards, Li Qingshan had estimated that under normal circumstances, if he faced the Corpse King alone, even when he had already become much stronger now, even when he had the Water God Seal for support, the only fate awaiting him in the end was certain death.

He only had a chance at surviving if he spotted him from afar and immediately turned around, flapped his wings, and fled. A great chasm of strength existed between the two realms of cultivation, which could not be made up for so easily. And, the Beast King before him was probably even stronger than the Corpse King.

The Beast King studied "Northmoon" too. There were not a lot of people who could remain calm before his wrath. The aura he gave off was not powerful, nowhere close to the level that was enough to kill E Dan, which left him rather doubtful.

"You're the one who killed E Dan!" He growled like a lion.

"That's right," Li Qingshan said calmly.

"And yet you still remain here?"

"I need to see at the very least just what my enemy looks like, as well as confirm a few things."

"Well you've seen me now. Are you ready to die? I'll refine your soul into a beast soul!"

The Beast king took another step forward, and his colossal aura rushed over like a tsunami.

Li Qingshan smiled. "I won't be dying at your hands!"

Before he had even finished talking, a thick, boney hand grabbed him by the throat, so fast that he was unable to respond. A blur of the Beast King standing where he was still lingered in his eyes.

Li Qingshan muttered to himself, "Looks like others just can't be relied on. Only personal strength is true strength!"

Suddenly, his body began to pulse, like ripples on the surface of water. His figure twisted before completely shattering apart and vanishing.

This was merely the clone he had left here. He was nowhere near stupid enough to remain here with his true body and wait for the Beast King to come kill him. When he sensed the impending doom and realised the danger came from the north, he immediately made his decision, which was to flee!

Just like how fleeing could triumph over all, the true meaning of the spirit turtle was to avert and evade misfortune and disaster, hiding away from the world.

In simpler terms, he was simply holing up in his shell, preventing anyone from finding him. No matter how powerful the enemy was, they could not do anything to him.

He left his mirror clone here to see what the Beast King was like, and also to see the Dragon King of Ink Sea's response. There was no reason to say that only E Dan could kill Northmoon and Northmoon could not kill E Dan, or he would be killed off in vengeance.

As the king of the Green province daemons, the Dragon King of Ink Sea was also the protector of all daemons in name. If he simply allowed powerful human cultivators to kill the Daemon Commanders and Daemon Generals under him, then he would be abandoning his duty.

But in the end, the Dragon King of Ink Sea did not appear, which explained a lot of issues.

With how great of a disturbance it had been above Moon Court lake, it was impossible for the Dragon King of Ink Sea to have not heard about it. The Beast King had rushed over here from the Dragon province aggressively, while the Dragon King of Ink Sea who happened to be in the Green province had not made it in time. Perhaps he was incapable, or perhaps he was reluctant, but it only led to a single conclusion. He could not rely on the Dragon King of Ink Sea.

"Northmoon, no matter where you flee to, I'll kill you regardless and refine you into a beast soul!"

A roar dispersed the clouds. The Beast King threw a punch at the mountains beneath him.

Boom!

Black cracks spread out into the surroundings, and the entire island shattered, sinking into Moon Court lake. The dwelling had been completely destroyed.

Right now, Li Qingshan was making his way around in the depths underground. In order to cover his tracks, he did not even use his wings. Instead, he ran along the ground gracefully with a smile on his face. Sensing the weak tremors from the distance, the fine sand sprinkled down over him, and he concealed his aura even harder. He slowed down slightly and silently powered the spirit turtle's daemon core.

The only thing he was worried about was having his location pinpointed through divination. With the Beast King's identity and cultivation, he could definitely find an extremely powerful practitioner of divination. He had to carefully guard against this.

Fortunately, this aspect happened to be the spirit turtle's specialty. After eating the Fruit of Wisdom, he possessed a deeper comprehension of the usage of these powers, so he was not too worried. However, he did have to cast aside his identity as Northmoon temporarily.

Entering the pitch-black, complicated underground caves, he was like a spirit turtle gradually diving into the sea abyss. No one could find his traces anymore.

A small stream gurgled out from an inconspicuous cave in the Chain mountains.

Li Qingshan strode out of the pitch-black depths, already possessing black hair, black pupils, and a bronze face.

The sunlight shone resplendently, and all the vegetation was verdant. A figure in clothes even whiter than snow sat beside a small stream on a boulder nearby, gazing at him with a slight smile.

Her black hair draped down beside her beautiful face like a waterfall, reaching her waist and moving with the wind. Compared to her past valiance, she seemed more graceful and unrestrained right now, but it was very difficult to describe her with words like charming or effeminate, perhaps because she would always be so confident and composed, perhaps because she had never treated herself as a woman.

Li Qingshan shivered inside. He went up and clasped his hands. "Greetings, commander Gu!"

Gu Yanying said, "Little bro Qingshan, you've made quite the trouble this time."

Li Qingshan laid out his hands like he was powerless. "Circumstances."

Gu Yanying said, "I think you're finding great pleasure within it."

Li Qingshan smiled. "There's an old saying from my hometown. Life is like sexual assault. If you can't oppose it, then enjoy it!"

TL: Can't say I condone this.

Gu Yanying raised an eyebrow. "That doesn't sound like something the farmers from Crouching Ox village would say, and it's not like you're the one being assaulted. It's E Dan!"

Li Qingshan said, "Hopefully he enjoyed that final battle! Alright. You're not waiting here because you want to hear this from me, right?"

Gu Yanying raised two fingers. "Two matters. After you left, the king of the myriad beasts rushed underground and began massacring night roamers and daemons. The Dragon King of Ink Sea told him to return to the Dragon province."

"This old beast sure is obedient."

"Unless he wants to die in the Green province."

"The Dragon King of Ink Sea can kill him?"

Li Qingshan was mildly surprised. He had personally witnessed the Beast King's strength. After all, the higher the realm of cultivation was, the more difficult it was to kill one another. It was only possible to kill the Beast King with strength that completely surpassed him.

"I don't see why not."

"Mighty be my king!"



Li Qingshan could not help but reevaluate the strength of the Ten Daemon Kings. They had been crowned as the Ten Daemon Kings several thousand years ago. After another few millennia of accumulation, every single one of them was a terrifying, old monster.

Gu Yanying said, "The Dragon King of Ink Sea has already passed an order for Northmoon to visit the Ink Sea to see him!"

Li Qingshan asked, "Do you think Northmoon should go?"

"I don't think Northmoon should go."

"That's right. I'll just treat this like I never heard it."

Li Qingshan nodded with a smile. He would never entrust his personal safety to a powerful existence's mood, and he hated playing the role of some subject or subordinate the most. He had far too many secrets on him. He might not necessarily be able to fool the dragon king's eyes.

Of course, he could send his clone to the Ink sea, but something as rude as that would probably just infuriate the Dragon King of Ink Sea. Not every Daemon King was as gentle and forgiving as the Golden Cicada Spirit King and the Great Banyan Tree King. As a result, the best approach was to downright behave like he had never heard it in the first place.

Gu Yanying said, "Then there's still the second matter. Great Xia has a government office known as the Bureau of Astronomy. I know their supervisor. He's a muddle-headed old man, but also the most powerful naturalist from the school of Yin-yang across the nine provinces. The Bureau of Astronomy has an arcane treasure known as the Platform of Astronomy. It stands three meters tall, gathering yin and yang qi and the essence of the five elements, forged from meteorite. As long as the old man divines on there, he can basically find out about everything. Jia Zhen just happens to be on relatively good terms with him."

She brought up the problem that worried Li Qingshan the most in one fell swoop. He frowned and muttered, "The Bureau of Astronomy, the Platform of Astronomy!"

"The old man does not divine for others so easily, much less use the Platform of Astronomy carelessly. Just Jia Zhen alone really won't be enough to convince him. However, if you add in the Beast King, prince Si Qing, and the imperial clan's desire to retrieve the Asura Field, that's enough for him to pay a visit to the Platform of Astronomy and calculate a certain person's whereabouts."

"That's truly terrible."

"This is a Minor Formation of Five Elements Inversion. It can obscure the heavenly secrets. You cannot leave the vicinity of the formation within for at least the next three months. Combined with your own abilities, you should be able to get away. Oh right, entering the Asura Field will achieve a certain effect too."

Gu Yanying passed the formation to Li Qingshan.

Li Qingshan pondered silently for a moment. "Let's just say I bought this from you. We're in the clear now."

A formation that could obscure the strongest naturalist of the school of Yin-yang's divination was definitely invaluable, and what was even more precious was the information she had provided to warn him. If his position had been calculated while he was unaware, even his identity as Li Qingshan could very possibly be exposed.

"It's no different from lifting a finger for me. We had an agreement before, so of course I should watch your back a little. If you were finished off, who's supposed to complete the task you promised me?"

### **Chapter 673 - Gazing into the Distance**

Watching Gu Yanying vanish into the horizon, Li Qingshan contemplated a little longer before returning to the Qing Xiao dwelling. After several years of accumulation from the Eight Gates Formation of Golden Locks, the spiritual qi in the dwelling had become extremely dense. Perhaps it still paled in comparison to top-of-the-line cultivation dwellings, but it was still a great place to cultivate.

Only after casting down the Minor Formation of Five Elements Inversion and obscuring the heavenly secrets did Li Qingshan stop worrying. Afterwards, he entered the Asura Field, and the same lush rainforest and towering tree appeared before him.

"Master." Night roamers were currently busying about in the rainforest. When they saw Li Qingshan, they all bowed and greeted him.

A shadow drifted over, and Ye Mingzhu appeared before him. She was dressed in the traditional, black armour of night roamers, which was unable to hide her mature and charming body. However, her existence was as flimsy and blurry as a silhouette, giving off a dark and obscured aura. It was as if she could merge away into the darkness at any time.

"Congratulations." Li Qingshan smiled.

There were even more night roamers and daemons in the depths of the dense jungle. Ye Liusu and Ye Liubo sensed his aura and rushed over. Milliped climbed on a big tree, while Li'l Red and Li'l Blue soaked in a pond within the trees.

When the spirit turtle warned of the impending doom, Li Qingshan gathered all of the night roamers and moved them into the Asura Field. Afterwards, he left behind his clone. Meanwhile, his true body returned underground, moving as many of the night roamers and daemons he came across into the Asura Field as possible before the Beast King arrived.

With the Asura Field that stretched several hundred meters across, holding them was obviously not an issue. The only problem was the influence from the murderous will of the Asura realm. Regular night roamers and daemons could not resist it, making it very easy for them to enter a frenzy.

Even Li Qingshan, the master of the Asura Field, was unable to eliminate this influence, or the Asura Field would no longer be an Asura Field. However, there was a safe region, which was the land the Great Banyan Tree King's canopy enveloped. Under the Great Banyan Tree King's powers, even the powers of the Asura realm could not invade the place. The canopy that resembled a green cloud was large enough too.

All of the night roamers and daemons gathered beneath the tree, but they were afraid of getting too close to the tree trunk. Some rash daemons had already experienced the power of the sun vines.

“It’s all thanks to master’s gift!” Ye Mingzhu said politely.

Although she had successfully undergone the second heavenly tribulation, she still refused to show even the slightest rudeness to him. She had considered chasing him away and reclaiming the power over the night roamers once she underwent the heavenly tribulation successfully in the past, but ever since the battle above Moon Court lake, she had given up on this idea.

His strength was well beyond her expectations. He was not an opponent who could be defeated through assassination. Coupled with the fact that he had no actual interest in ruling the night roamers and that Ye Liusu was in power, she was technically in control as her mother, so there was no need to take this risk.

Ye Liusu said, “Master, I want to leave everything regarding the night roamers up to my mother and focus on cultivation for some time.”

“Alright. I’ve always said that you don’t need to spend too much time and energy on these miscellaneous matters. It also makes perfect sense for the strongest to rule. Ye Mingzhu, you can continue with your position as matriarch from today onwards and rule over the Night Roaming folk!”

“Thank you, master.” Ye Mingzhu was overjoyed inside. Her desire for power had already become embedded in her bones.

“How do you feel about this place?” Li Qingshan asked.

“It’s very good. According to the records, night roamers lived in forests like this before we ventured underground!”

Li Qingshan raised his head. The thick jungle that did not see the light of day seemed even darker under the shade of the banyan tree’s canopy, like night. It really did seem very suitable for night roamers to live in. As a result, he asked the Great Banyan Tree King from afar.

“Fellow, are there night roamers in the Mist province too?”

“There are a lot of them, and most of them live under my shade.”

The Great Banyan Tree King’s ancient voice left the night roamers astounded. They had already been left speechless when they saw such a large tree. They never thought the tree would actually be a conscious daemon. Even Ye Mingzhu widened her eyes.

Li Qingshan said, “This is one of the Ten Daemon Kings, the Great Banyan Tree King. Of course, this is merely one of his clones.”

“The Great Banyan Tree King!”

Who didn’t know about the renowned Ten Daemon Kings? In Ye Mingzhu’s eyes, the Dragon King of Ink Sea had always been a figure of legend. She never thought she would see a Daemon King in person today, which filled her with some reverence.

Then Li Qingshan asked, “I want to remove these sun vines so that they can live under your shade safely. Will that be fine, fellow?”

“I’m just a tree. You don’t have to ask what I think. However, their roots have already become interwoven with mine, so removing them by the roots won’t be easy.”

“Then let me try!”

Li Qingshan smiled confidently and took a step forward. His body swelled to over sixty meters tall, and the sun vines coiled around him madly. He simply stood there without moving, allowing them to entangle around him. In the blink of an eye, the golden sun vines completely swallowed him. Every single sun vine siphoned away his daemon qi desperate.

The Spirit Turtle Suppresses the Seas!

Li Qingshan immediately suppressed all of his daemon qi, like an icebound ocean. For a moment, the sun vines were unable to suck it away either.

Tremors of the Ox Demon!

Li Qingshan converted his daemon qi into the power of tremors and released it around him. Instinctively, the sun vines absorbed all of the power of tremors, sparing not even a sliver.

Li Qingshan was unfazed. He continued to release the power of tremors endless and gradually. Soon, the sun vines began to fluctuate as if they had reached a certain limit. Suddenly, they burst apart, reduced to shreds. The dim, golden fluid within the vines splattered into the surroundings like a rainstorm.

The spiritual qi within the fluid was extremely dense. Li Qingshan exhaled deeply. He felt like he had just been baptised. All of his exhaustion from the battle had vanished. He was glowing with energy.

Under the spiritual rain, the surrounding rainforest grew madly. The night roamers and daemons all leapt onto the canopy, enjoying this shower from above.

Because of their instincts to absorb, even the thinnest roots of the sun vines buried deep within the earth had been shaken apart, completely removed by the roots. Perhaps there would be a day when they would regrow, but it would probably take a very, very long time.

Under Ye Mingzhu’s lead, the night roamers began building houses and dwelling among the twisted roots under the great banyan tree.

Li Qingshan stood on the great banyan tree and gazed at the night roamers busying about below before gazing at the distant boundary of the Asura Field. He could not help but sigh a little with emotion. In the past, he could only sleep in the cowshed. Just how cramped had that been? Now, he possessed private territory that spanned several hundred kilometers. It truly did feel like an entire lifetime had passed.

However, the weariness of the past was not worth lamenting over, as even now, he had yet to understand how great of a figure the black ox that had spent over a decade with him was.

I await for you beyond the Nine Heavens, for the time when you stand beside me.

He raised his head. Was the Asura realm high up and distant? Beyond the Nine Heavens was probably a place even higher up and even more distant!

Don’t lower your head to anyone, to anything. You have once ridden on my back!

This saying had been engraved in his heart.

He took out the reed flute he had not touched in a very long time and placed it by his lips, playing it rather ineptly. The melody that was not exactly pleasant drifted with the wind.

The Great Banyan Tree King listened along quietly. He had heard much pleasant, beautiful music in the past, but never had he heard a flute like that.

That was the great ambition to climb out of the well and see the world, the dream to turn into a star!

#### **Chapter 674 - The Heavenly Tribulation Descends Once More, the Forgotten Pearl of the Ocean (One)**

By the time the sound of the flute came to an end, the sky had already darkened. After undergoing another evolution and breakthrough, the blood-red swirl in the sky of the Asura Field gradually dispersed, revealing the faint, red sky. It waited for the next battle to the death.

Li Qingshan was about to leave the Asura Field and enter secluded cultivation so that he could break through to Golden Core. Suddenly, he felt a scorching gaze land on him from far below.

Ye Mingzhu found a suitable place to consolidate her cultivation, while Ye Liusu led everyone to rebuild their homes. Everyone had their jobs. They would only raise their heads from time to time and gaze at the depths of the canopy.

Only Ye Liubo sat on a branch with her legs crossed, staring straight at him. She had been listening closely to the flute, like it was music from immortals. That was better described as reverence towards a god than feelings of love.

Li Qingshan smiled, leaping down from the great banyan tree. He flapped his phoenix wings gently and produced a beautiful arc, gliding over the rainforest and scooping her up, flying off to the mountains in the distance.

“Looks like it’s time for me to uphold my promise.” Li Qingshan lowered his head and smiled at her in his arms.

“Master!” Ye Liubo exclaimed excitedly, hanging onto him firmly.

“You better just call me by my name!”

“But I prefer master.”

“Up to you.”

Ye Liusu watched as he flew away from the great banyan tree and the rainforest. She felt a little bitter inside, but also happy for Ye Liubo. In the end, she instead felt relieved. When she listened to his flute earlier, she felt just how distant they were, and they would only grow more distant. He would never belong to a single woman.

Wind whistled past her ears. Ye Liubo understood the strangeness of this world, but in his arms, never had she felt so at peace. She also felt indescribable joy. Nothing had even happened yet, but her eyes had already drifted away slightly.

They flew through the desert that was experiencing a sandstorm where the asura were currently fighting. Several asura were fighting against one another for the sake of their status. When they saw Li Qingshan fly past, they all stopped swinging their weapons and stood sternly. That battle had already demonstrated to them who the indisputable ruler of this place was.

Li Qingshan saluted them with a smile, only to see the asura greet him back with the same salute, making him shake his head with a smile helplessly. He continued on his way and only came to a stop in front of the snow mountain. He landed softly at the foot of the mountain. He could see the lake in the distance from here.

“Do you like it here?”

“I do.” Ye Liubo bit her lip, and her breathing began rather ragged. Her body began to heat up.

Li Qingshan placed her on the pure-white ground and gently caressed her face before sliding down with his fingers. Her armour shattered open silently, and her voluptuous breasts leapt out, jiggling slightly. He continued downwards, and her thigh guards shattered too.

Her beautiful body was on full display before him, only leaving behind a pair of long boots. The beautiful patterns special to night roamers eased up, and her dark-blue skin formed an extremely distinct contrast against the snowy ground.

Ye Liubo looked at him eagerly and helplessly like a lamb about to be slaughtered. She murmured, “Master.”

Towards this cute “pet” who offered everything she had up to him without holding back at all, Li Qingshan was instead not in much of a hurry. He teased her patiently out of interest. His index finger slid between her breasts and reached her delicate belly button, poking it gently.

Ye Liusu trembled all over and let out a pleasant moan. Her round thighs overlapped, rubbing against one another gently. Even Li Qingshan had never expected her to be aroused so easily, so he teasingly said, “How lewd!”

Ye Liubo furrowed her brows and grumbled, “It’s all because of you, master...”

“Don’t talk back!”

Li Qingshan smiled as he poked her pouting lips with his index finger before immediately sinking into warmth. She raised her head and sucked on the finger as her soft, smooth tongue rolled over, licking and sucking away like she was tasting some delicacy. Her eyes were blurred and filled with joy, both passionate and careful, like the most devoted fanatic trying to please her god.

Li Qingshan felt his lust being ignited and the caressing became more passionate. He fiddled around with a mound of softness as he extended a hand beneath her, only to discover it was even moister than her mouth. All he heard was an elated moan. “Master!” It was filled with desire.

As a result, Li Qingshan stopped hesitating and approached her.

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Before the joy from making love had even dispersed, he had already returned to the dark centre of the mountain. Li Qingshan shook his head and took in a deep breath before lighting some incense, taking a shower, changing his clothes, and calming the mind. He made the most abundant preparations.

Sitting down with his legs crossed, he closed his eyes. Everything that had happened recently—from the Exhibition Matches of the Nine Prefectures to killing E Dan, everything including the battles, the conversations, the hatred, the gratitude, the hostility, the kindness, and so on—flashed across his eyes, containing everyone and all the matters involved.

Fury and joy, helplessness and desire surged through him at the same time. His eyes gradually became as calm as water, making everything settle down. Perhaps because he had eaten the Fruit of Wisdom, his mind became especially clear.

In the end, all the people and matters faded away. Only the spiritual qi bobbed up and down in his sea of qi. It was only inches away, yet it seemed as deep and vast as the ocean.

The time was right. It was about time for him to take this step.

He took out an Origin Spirit pill, ingested it, and refined it.

A strange feeling dispersed through his body. The sea of qi that had originally been peaceful suddenly began to surge restlessly. At the same time, his sea of consciousness began to surge as well as if it wanted to expand even further away, yet also like it wanted to contract into an Ocean pearl.

The sensations conflicted as polar opposites, yet they were also extremely harmonious, allowing Li Qingshan to see the existence of that gate.

He silently practised the Arts of the Boundless Ocean. He was in no hurry to break through. He silently comprehended the effects of the Origin Spirit pill, as well as the true essence of the ocean.

A while later, the effects faded away, and the first Origin Spirit pill had been wasted away like that. Even Golden Core cultivators would find that rather wasteful, but he simply took out a second Origin Spirit pill calmly. However, he did not ingest it immediately. Instead, he sat there quietly, allowing time to pass by.

Suddenly, a mysterious power activated the Minor Formation of Five Elements Inversion, making it operate away at full strength. However, even the wondrous formation could not block the probing of the power. It gradually passed through the fate that was as chaotic as a maze, going straight for him.

He held his breath and waited, making the spirit turtle dive into the sea abyss and hole up in its shell, entering a world of its own. After passing through the formation, the power became rather feeble. It searched around for quite a while longer, but it was unable to grasp anything, so it returned fruitlessly.

In the Dragon province, the Platform of Astronomy glowed faintly. Its surroundings were engraved with the celestial bodies and their passage through time. On the very top was a large eight trigrams diagram, and in the centre sat a healthy old man in graceful clothes with a special astronomic hat on his head.

A while later, the old man opened his eyes. They were completely black without any irises, but they were clear like a tranquil pond. The sky full of stars was reflected in them. He murmured to himself, "A difficult person to find. Yeah, the Minor Formation of Five Elements Inversion."

If he had to find him by divination, it was not exactly impossible. At the very least, he could determine his location, but he would have to pay a corresponding price. The dead damned disciple of the Beast King was still nowhere near enough for him to do that. If Si Qing himself had died, then that was more like it.

“I might not be able to find you, but does that mean I can’t find the Minor Formation of Five Elements Inversion?”

The sky full of stars in the old man’s eyes flashed. As a formation that specially blocked divination, the Minor Formation of Five Elements Inversion did not have any abilities to defend or trap enemies. It was not a common formation, and it fetched for quite a price. There were not a lot of people who possessed one.

To a powerful naturalist from the school of Yin-yang like him, a defensive measure like this was also a lead and an opening.

A while later, a figure appeared before his eyes, going from blurry to clear. It was Gu Yanying. She smiled back at him, clasped her hands and bowed.

This girl. The old man shook his head and made his way off the Platform of Astronomy. The moment he left the Platform of Astronomy, he suddenly hunched over from his tall, straight posture, and his clear eyes became turbid. Even the ruddiness on his face faded away, growing many wrinkled and gullies on his face out of nowhere. He placed his hands behind his back and slowly walked over, like a mortal.

The Beast King, Si Qing, and Jia Zhen were currently waiting beneath the Platform of Astronomy. When they saw the old man, even the Beast King lowered his head and bowed, “Sir supervisor, how are the results?”

“Can’t find him.” The old man glanced at them. Suddenly, a sliver of surprise flashed through his eyes. In that moment, the power of the Platform of Astronomy had yet to completely disperse. However, he remained unfazed, turning around and leaving, but he walked very slowly, so the Beast King caught up to him with a single step. “You should be able to find where he is at the very least, right? I don’t want anything else. I just want to know where his true body is hiding.”

“I can’t find him means I can’t find him.” The old man waved his hand.

The three of them were very taken aback. They understood the old man’s abilities very well, let alone the fact that he had even used an arcane treasure like the Platform of Astronomy. Logically speaking, he should have even been able to calculate that wretched daemon Northmoon’s time of birth, the eight characters of his horoscope, his identity, and his origins, so why was he unable to calculate his location?

For this divination, the Beast King had paid a huge price, only to receive a result like this, so how could he accept it? He frowned, and his dignified face seemed even more threatening, but before this old man, his furious temper was completely useless.

The old man stopped and looked back. His turbid eyes cleared up like before. “Oh right, I have a word of advice for the three of you.”

The three of them dared not ignore him. They all listened closely.



The old man did not say some profound prophecy. "Some matters in the world seem unresolved despite being already resolved, so it would be better to just leave them unresolved."

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At this moment, Li Qingshan ate the second Origin Spirit pill. He still did not use it to breakthrough, choosing to observe quietly instead. Afterwards, he ate a third one and a fourth one. When he reached the fifth Origin Spirit pill, over a month had already passed.

He checked the fifth Origin Spirit pill in his hand and stowed it away before continuing to meditate until the effects of the fourth Origin Spirit pill completely faded away. Afterwards, he devoted himself to practising the Arts of the Boundless Ocean until he could circulate through the first to the sixth layer at will, without any irregularities. It took him almost another two months.

He used the Origin Spirit pill to find the existence of this gate, but he did not plan on breaking through with the Origin Spirit pill. Finally, with his own power, he reached this step, so it was obviously much more difficult.

But he was in no hurry. He meditated patiently for another two months. It sounded like an extremely lengthy period of time, but it was like a moment as he cultivated. It was as if he was submerged in a dream. Eventually, dawn arrived one day. He opened his eyes, waking up from the dream. The surging spirit qi began to gather in his sea of qi, condensing into an Ocean pearl.

At the same time, the furious roar of lightning rang out by his ears.

Li Qingshan smiled.

### **Chapter 675 - The Heavenly Tribulation Descends Once More, the Forgotten Pearl of the Ocean (Two)**

Li Qingshan leapt up and rushed out of the mountain to receive the first bolt of lightning that descended from the sky.

Boom!

The scorching-white lightning immediately struck Li Qingshan, which filled him with a strange numbness. Even the depths of his soul trembled gently, shocked by the terrifying might of the world. Only afterwards did he feel deep pain.

These were lethal bolts of lightning, as well as the greatest test the obscure heavens put forth for creatures who refused to accept their current shape. It was a heaven-sent opportunity to rise up and break through.

The baptism of lightning rapidly depleted the spiritual qi in his sea of qi, but it removed the impurities at the same time, making the spiritual qi merge back together in a completely new way.

Unlike the first heavenly tribulation, tribulation clouds amassed in the horizon, countless times greater in both presence and pressure, hanging low above the Chain mountains. Bolts of lightning crackled in the clouds, continuing to build up without striking down. Under its rampaging surface hid the profound truths of the world.

The world flashed. The bolts of tribulation lighting were like the divine hammer of nature, striking down viciously on a piece of stubborn metal. If he could withstand this tempering process, then his will would become even better forged, but if he could not, then the only fate awaiting him would be obliteration.

Under the intense pain, Li Qingshan's thoughts instead became extremely clear and calm. If most cultivators could undergo the first heavenly tribulation without facing too much danger, then the danger of the second heavenly tribulation would be multiplied. Who knew how many cultivators had died to this step.

But he felt no fear. Through practising the Nine Transformations of the Demonic and Divine, both his mental willpower and physical body had become extremely tough, reaching a level that far exceeded other Foundation Establishment cultivators. If he still could not survive the tribulation, then he well and truly deserved to die.

At the same time, Ru Xin sat in the Jade Melting cauldron and practised the Heavenly Tome of Cloud Furnace she had obtained from Chu Tian. Refining herself like a pill was not an easy feat, but she did not even frown. Completely bare, she was like a beauty carved from white jade.

As a cultivator's foundation, the cultivation method was even more powerful than she originally believed it to be. She had undergone overwhelming changes in less than half a year of practising it, and her cultivation broke through to mid Foundation Establishment.

Apart from the cultivation method, her startling talent played a role too. The rare arcane artifact alchemy cauldron, the Jade Melting cauldron, played a vital role too. Compared to everything she had gained, the pain during cultivation was truly nothing.

Suddenly, she heard the rumbling of thunder. It possessed the might of the world, such that even her formations were unable to obstruct it.

Don't tell me?

Ru Xin thought and stopped cultivating, putting on a set of clothes and making her way out of the dwelling. She spotted the figure currently contending with the heavenly lightning and experienced indescribable shock.

Although she knew his actual strength had already surpassed regular Golden Core cultivators a long time ago, strength alone could not make up for certain differences in cultivation and comprehension. By taking this step, he would reach a whole new realm and become a supreme genius of the cultivation community of the Green province.

The rumbling of thunder merged together like an endless roar, swallowing him whole.

Even Ru Xin was unable to stare right at it. She thought, It's no wonder many cultivators die to the second heavenly tribulation. It really does come with great danger, but I don't need to worry about him. I practise the Heavenly Tome of Cloud Furnace, so I have a pretty good chance too.

The radiance from the lightning reached a certain limit, and there was a rumble in Li Qingshan's body. Spiritual qi gathered towards a certain point, forming a revolving, perfectly-round and azure pearl. It radiated with an aura that was vast and deep like the ocean.

The second heavenly tribulation—broken through! The Ocean pearl—condensed!

The clouds dispersed; the azure blue of the sky and the sunlight poured through.

He spread his arms and let out a bellow. The mountains answered back with echoes.

Suddenly, he raised his head and smiled at Ru Xin in the distance. In that moment, all the sunlight gathered on his face, making him seem extremely glorious. Having gone through dangers and hardship, he had finally taken another step forward.

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“Congratulations on not being struck to death by lightning!”

After tidying himself up a little, Li Qingshan arrived in Ru Xin’s dwelling. Ru Xin served up tea and smiled gracefully.

“Even if you die, I won’t die. Oh yeah, you’ve changed quite a bit too!”

Li Qingshan studied Ru Xin up and down. Her skin had always been extremely fair and smooth, but now it began to shine with a jade-like gloss, which made her seem a little less lively and more transcendental.

Ru Xin hid nothing. She told him the entire story.

“The Heavenly Tome of Cloud Furnace. I didn’t think this kid would have a use like this. Please don’t tell me you’ll actually turn into a rock in the future, or what would be the point in that?”

Li Qingshan extended a finger and prodded Ru Xin’s cheek gently. Fortunately, it was still warm, soft skin.

“Move your dog paws,” Ru Xin said unflinchingly.

“Heh, if I were to capture him right now and give him a beating, do you think it’s possible to obtain even more useful things from him?”

Li Qingshan took it a step further, going from prodding to pinching, even extending his other hand over and pinching her other cheek. He pulled them to the sides, and her face that could be described as alluringly beautiful became rather strange, which made him laugh.

Right when Ru Xin was about to fly into a rage, he let go. “Here, that’s the Water God Seal I promised, but it’s best if you use it when it’s still under my control. If its aura leaks out, or it mobilises the spiritual qi from the rivers and lakes, there might be great trouble!”

The Water God Seal with a texture that seemed like it was surrounded in dragons and snakes shone with an azure light, possessing powerful spiritual qi. However, Li Qingshan could clearly sense that during this period, someone was stealing from him, using another Water God Seal to wantonly devour his water territory.

Normally, he would not even have to visit in person. He only needed to power the Water God Seal and repel them. However, he knew with a bit of thought that this was definitely a trap the enemy had set down to lure him out, a so-called plan. Right now, even using the Water God Seal to gather spiritual qi for cultivation came with the risk of being exposed.

As a result, he completely tossed this to the back of his mind. He had only managed to unite all the lakes and rivers across the Ruyi commandery through the divine powers of the spirit turtle.

The founding emperor had forged most of the Water God Seals into the nine cauldrons, so even as a liberal estimate, it would be impressive if the other Water God Seal could even hold a tenth of the amount he had refined. Whether it was through large gulps or small nibbles, it would take them a few years at the very least before they could threaten his position as a water god, so he could let them run free for now. There would be plenty of time for them to cry in the future.

“Since there’s trouble, then you better be a little more careful. It’s fine if the Beast King rips you apart. Just don’t drag me into it.” Ru Xin rubbed her cheeks and said in resentment, “All of the pills I owe you are gone.”

In the past, Li Qingshan had brought many spiritual herbs he had collected from underground to her for refinement. She refined most of them into pills and split them with Li Qingshan, but a small quantity still remained. Perhaps because she had no time to refine them, or perhaps she could not gather the other corresponding spiritual herbs, it was a final payment that had yet to be settled.

“If you hadn’t mentioned it, I’d forgotten about it already. I might have prince Si Qing as a huge creditor and I’m not lacking those items, but you still have to pay off your debts. Why don’t you just pay it off with your body? You can experience what “fun in bed” means too before you turn into a rock.”

Ru Xin smiled. “I have four words to say!”

“Out of my mind?”

“Go fuck your grandfather!”

Li Qingshan laughed aloud. The Water God Seal flew out of his hand and produced two mist-like streaks of blue light, enveloping them. They both absorbed spiritual qi quietly and fell silent.

Time passed by as they stared at one another. A while later, Ru Xin closed her eyes. Li Qingshan smiled and closed his eyes too, gazing at the Ocean pearl he had just condensed in his body as it spun away. It swallowed the water spiritual qi that flowed in greedily. Then it was refined and converted into his own powers. It was like a bottomless hole.

The spiritual qi the Golden Core realm requires sure is frightening. If I didn’t have the Water God Seal and I had to ingest pills and absorb spiritual qi to cultivate, the time I spend would definitely be calculated in years. Once the spirit turtle breaks through to the fifth layer, the water spiritual qi required will definitely become astronomical. I really can’t go without the Water God Seal as my foundation.

Ru Xin opened her eyes again and stared at his face before closing them once more.

In the blink of an eye, several more days passed by. Just like how there was no concept of time to those isolated from the world, cultivation could always make people forget about the flow of time very easily. It felt like no different from a nap or a daydream.

Li Qingshan consolidated his cultivation at Golden Core, and at the same time, he comprehended the various changes that came with the second heavenly tribulation.

A breakthrough in his cultivation could not directly strengthen him by much. It would only temper his soul and body again, making his soul sense even stronger. After all, Northmoon who cultivated the Nine Transformations of the Demonic and Divine was far too powerful. The most important function of the Ocean pearl was helping him recover some of his daemon qi when it mattered.

However, crossing through this great boundary was of utmost importance, whether he was human or daemon. The higher his cultivation, the closer he was to the supreme principles of the world. No matter how many cultivation methods and wondrous abilities there were, their final objective was to make the heavenly tribulations descend again and again.

As if he had broken through a shackle, the ox demon, tiger demon, and spirit turtle that had come to a halt began to slowly grow in strength again. He gained a new understanding over the usage of his innate abilities too. Once he completely familiarised himself with this new understanding, it would give him a greater chance of victory against his opponents like Jia Zhen and Si Qing.

Ru Xin opened her eyes as well, which were filled with the exhaustion and delight that followed cultivation.

“You seem to be in quite the rush to increase your cultivation lately!”

Li Qingshan had noticed something amiss a long time ago. In the past, Ru Xin had never asked him to borrow the Water God Seal for cultivation. Although she had given it to him, Li Qingshan had gone through countless risks and dangers so that it could reach the current level. They were good friends, but she would never go out of her way to ask anything from him, let alone something as important as that.

“I remember a few grievances of the past, and I want to bring them to an end sooner.”

“What grievances? Let’s hear them!”

“It’s got nothing to do with you.” Ru Xin declined immediately.

Li Qingshan fell silent. He let out a sigh and placed his hand on her shoulder. “If you die, I’ll be sad.” Although they had agreed to not probe into each other’s secrets, it was unavoidable that they got to know each other more and more.

“Qingshan!” Ru Xin was touched. “Move your dog paws!”

### **Chapter 676 - A Rumor? A Lie? The Flower of Water and Fire That Does Not Exist**

“Are you schizophrenic?” The corner of Li Qingshan’s mouth twitched as he let go. Her touched expression only seemed to serve as a set-up for the foul words she spouted so that she could achieve enough of an impact.

“What’s schizophrenia?” As if something dirty had touched her, Ru Xin patted her shoulder a few times.

Li Qingshan gave a rough explanation and Ru Xin was taken aback. She said, “So I’m sick in the head too!”

“And quite sick too!”

“Oh right, there’s something good I have to tell you.”

“What?”

All Li Qingshan could do was follow along with how she changed the topic. After all, everyone had their secrets, which had nothing to do with the depth of their relationship. It was like how he would never tell anyone he was a transmigrator. If he insisted on finding out, it would instead be rude.

“The imperial court has dismissed Si Qing as the Marquis of Ruyi. He’s even gone to the provincial lord’s estate in South Hub city to apologise. He didn’t even hold the position for a month. He’s probably the marquis with the shortest reign in history.”

“He asked for it. During that month, it was like he had waged a war against the daemons. The strength of the entire cultivation community of the Ruyi commandery plummeted. Even if the imperial court can keep him around, the provincial lord won’t. Then who’s taking over the position of Marquis of Ruyi?”

Although Li Qingshan had guessed this possibility, he could not help but rile up with vigour when he heard it. Si Qing and Jia Zhen would probably hatch schemes to make trouble for him with each passing day they spent in the Ruyi commandery. But speaking of which, who was the one devouring his territory? Surely it was not the new Marquis of Ruyi, and surely he was not some other prince!

“They returned it to the Jiang family. A son of Jiang Fu is holding the position, but he’s only a Foundation Establishment cultivator. Commander Gu and great general Han are assisting him.”

“Great general Han!”

“Yeah, your old father-in-law came back. He has undergone the second heavenly tribulation too and taken on the position of great general.”

Li Qingshan let out a sigh of relief. If that were the case, the Han family had basically reconsolidated their position in the Ruyi commandery. Coupled with Gu Yanying, the two most authoritative people in the Ruyi commandery were on good terms with him. No one could make trouble for him anymore.

As a result, he could temporarily settle down and cultivate. He could live together with Han Qiongzhi, he could enter the Asura Field and engage in some procreation with Ye Liubo, or he could go underground and harass the Spider Queen. Once the Painting Tomb opened, he could go exploring. Life had never been so comfortable.

Although he was battle-hungry in nature, an opponent he could not kill was far too annoying. As his cultivation increased, Si Qing’s threat to him would become smaller and smaller. With his identity as a prince, even if the Dragon King of Ink Sea wanted to kill him, he would have to reconsider, but Li Qingshan firmly believed that it was not that he would be sparing him, but rather the time was still not right.

Li Qingshan talked a little longer with Ru Xin and suddenly remembered something. He asked, “Oh right, have you heard about the Flower of Water and Fire?”

“The Flower of Water and Fire?” Ru Xin’s expression immediately became rather strange.

“Legend has it that in the depths of the South sea, when volcanoes erupt, water and fire merge...”

“You don’t have to say anymore. I know about it.”

Before Li Qingshan could even finish, Ru Xin interrupted him. He beamed inside. "So you have heard about it. Do you know where I can find it?"

Ru Xin shook her head. "There's no need to look for it."

"There's no need?"

"Because it's fake!" Ru Xin said firmly.

Legends were only called legends when they were truly indistinguishable between real and fake, yet she was actually so certain it was fake, which left Li Qingshan very surprised. "The Great Banyan Tree King told me this in person. He's spent ten thousand years in the Mist province."

"But that doesn't mean he knows everything. I'd advise you to save the effort. This legend is a lie!"

Ru Xin's gaze drifted away as if she was gazing at an extremely distant place. The legendary Flower of Water and Fire did represent the peace between the two races, but there was a following part to this legend. If the Flower of Water and Fire bloomed regularly without withering away, then it would bring an extremely great disaster to the two races.

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In the Hawkwolf Guard of the prefectural city of Clear River, the bronze hawk spread its wings, overlooking and guarding this city.

However, the entrance seemed rather deserted. This was obviously because of Si Qing's sins. If it were not for the fact that a part of the Hawkwolf guards were not disciples of the academy, or they were away carrying out missions and had not taken part in the Exhibition Matches of the Nine Prefectures, then the office probably could not even function properly anymore.

In a room on the top floor, Hua Chenglu was currently buried under official business. In the past, she lacked the ability to deal with these matters, but after undergoing Wisdom Imbuement, she became extremely proficient.

Suddenly, she heard a few thumps outside the window and turned around in surprise, only to see a familiar figure standing outside the window with a resplendent smile across his face.

"Big brother Li, you've emerged from seclusion!"

Hua Chenglu was overjoyed, hurrying over to open the window and let Li Qingshan in.

All Li Qingshan saw was Hua Chenglu dressed in the uniform of a Scarlet Wolf commander, which made her seem valiant and much more mature. "Congratulations, you've been promoted!"

"Subordinate Hua Chenglu greets the commander!"

Hua Chenglu clasped her hands with a smile. Being able to work alongside him brought her joy, but the only issue was this big brother commander rarely spent any time in the office.

Li Qingshan said seriously, "Just like what they say, work is not tiring when there are both sexes. I should have switched you in for my assistant a long time ago, and maybe I would have paid a few more visits here."

“Then if you don’t come in the future, I’ll never accept it!”

Hua Chenglu pouted slightly. No matter how mature she became, she could not help but behave like a girl in front of this man who had occupied her thoughts day and night for the past few months. The moment she spoke, she also realised she was behaving a little too familiar with him, and she blushed slightly, which made her seem extremely charming.

She made Li Qingshan’s heart skip a beat. Li Qingshan grinned. “I’ll do what I can. Where’s your brother?”

“My brother broke through to mid Foundation Establishment and was promoted to White Wolf guard. He’s gone to the Ruyi commandery.”

As soon as Hua Chengzan was mentioned, Hua Chenglu recovered some calmness. She could not help but remember what Hua Chengzan had said to her that time after they had returned to the Ruyi commandery. He was vague, but it was very clear what he was trying to say. He wanted her to maintain her distance from Li Qingshan. He was not a man that she could rein in.

Li Qingshan sighed with a smile. “He’s finally gotten what he wants!” The hopeless romantic Hua Chengzan had finally gotten a little closer to his dream lover.

With this brought up, Hua Chenglu’s expression became rather mixed. “My brother... Oh right, commander Gu said to contact her immediately if you emerged.”

“Yeah. That’s what I was planning on doing too.”

After leaving the Chain mountains, Li Qingshan’s first stop was here so that he could contact Gu Yanying. Her identity and status was high enough to know a lot of secrets. He wanted to ask her who was stealing his water territory.

Hua Chenglu watched as Li Qingshan stepped into the room for contacting the Ruyi commandery Hawkwolf Guard, and she sank into her thoughts. She felt like Li Qingshan’s aura had changed slightly once again with his appearance this time, but she was unable to put these differences into words.

Suddenly, a thought sprang up in her head, Don’t tell me big brother Li has broken through to Golden Core? She soon shook her head, feeling that it was impossible. Golden Core was not that easy to break through to. Although he had bragged he could reach Golden Core before the age of thirty, a few years still existed before he reached thirty! Only by thinking like that would she find the distance between them not too far apart.

Li Qingshan had erased his aura, which was not something she could see through. A while later, Li Qingshan walked out of the room with a thoughtful expression.

He received a piece of good news from Gu Yanying. The imperial clan had paid off Si Qing’s debt in whole, which was in a sumeru ring with Gu Yanying. She could pass it onto him at any time.

This was obviously fantastic news, but Gu Yanying also warned him that it would be for the best if he did not expose his cultivation right now.



This matter had already caused some discontent among those higher up, but they would not go as far as to lower themselves to deal with a mere Foundation Establishment cultivator. However, if he exposed his current cultivation, he would definitely shock the world and become the centre of attention.

Gu Yanying's original message was, "If you don't want to be transferred to the Mist province as a White Hawk commander, then you better maintain the current situation obediently!"

This was what Li Qingshan wanted as well. He wanted a period of peace. The title of "genius" never held any significance to him anyway. However, Gu Yanying's next words left him surprised. Those that were claiming his water territory were not human, but daemon. They wanted to use this method to force out Northmoon and then pass the Dragon King of Ink Sea's order to him so that he would have to go to the Ink sea and present himself before the dragon king.

Once he received the order properly, then he would immediately lose his place with the Dragon King of Ink Sea and the Daemon race of the Green province if he dared to brush it aside or turn it down. There was no reason needed. To rulers, disobedient subordinates deserved death.

Li Qingshan originally thought he could find an opportunity and use his clone to kill them if they were not some powerful figure. Fortunately, he had not done that. He was still reluctant to directly face the Dragon King of Ink Sea. That was much more troublesome than the Beast King. He could just make the existence known as Northmoon disappear for a period of time!

Hua Chenglu asked in concern, "What's the matter?"

"Nothing. I'll return to the academy first. Oh right, I'll visit you regularly in the future." Li Qingshan flew off.

Hua Chenglu grumbled, "What visit me regularly? This isn't the Parlour of Clouds and Rain!"

.....

In the room beneath Benevolence island, Chu Tian laid on a cold, jade bed quietly. The jade bed gave off white mist, which obscured his naked figure. Originally, his appearance was nothing special at all, but he was much more slender now, seeming slightly thin, but it matched his elegant bearing perfectly. The only pity was probably his overly-common facial appearance.

By the side of the jade bed was a crane-shaped censer, which spat out a wisp of smoke. It curled around Chu Tian's surroundings like it was alive, giving off a heavy fragrance, allowing his body to relax. His skeletal frame seemed to loosen up joint by joint, lying on the bed limply. Even his mind drifted away.

A white figure walked over to the jade bed and extended her hands. She took out a sharp knife only a few inches long and said, "Are you ready? I'm going to begin."

The indiscernible voice seemed to come from a faraway place. Through the cold mist and smoke, Chu Tian saw Ru Xin's face and used his last bit of strength to nod slowly before his mind rapidly sank away.

Li Qingshan walked in through the passageway, standing with Hua Ci. He had left the Chain mountains with Ru Xin and knew she was giving Chu Tian a face-lift, so he obviously had to come take a look. All he saw was Ru Xin concentrating her attention as she slid the blade in her hand across Chu Tian's face easily, carrying out the surgery in an orderly manner.

Hua Ci suddenly shot a glance at Li Qingshan and made his way out of the room. Li Qingshan followed along, rather confused.

### **Chapter 677 - Ru Xin as Forgiveness, Chu Tian's New Face**

Arriving outside, Hua Ci thanked Li Qingshan first. However, even when this small, dark old man expressed his thanks, he did not seem particularly enthusiastic, which made Li Qingshan feel like he was always rather cold.

Hua Ci organised his words. “‘Ru Xin’ was not her original name.”

“Really? Then her original name is...” Li Qingshan’s interest was piqued. He had always found this name rather special. He had never heard of someone with the surname “Ru” before.

“Her original name is not important. I’ll be honest with you. I gave her the name ‘Ru Xin’. Together, they read as forgiveness.”

rú xīn)

“Forgiveness! Forgive who?”

“Forgive herself. I originally thought she could already let go. I originally thought she could already let go and serve as a doctor in the Green province, but ever since the Exhibition Matches of the Nine Prefectures...”

Hua Ci lamented, his face filled with worry.

“Why have you suddenly told me this, senior?”

“If she decides to go to the Mist province one day, you must stop her!”

Hua Ci’s eyes shone, which gave Li Qingshan the feeling of an old man passing on his will so that someone could take care of his child. Li Qingshan thought, He isn’t as cold as he seems on the surface either.

“If something happens to her, I obviously won’t just sit by. But, why forgive? Since she can’t find relief, I’ll just help her kill who she wants to kill!”

Li Qingshan’s flat words were filled with confidence and resolve that resisted change.

Hua Ci reevaluated Li Qingshan, shaking his head with a bitter smile.

Li Qingshan wanted to ask about Ru Xin’s past, but Hua Ci refused to tell him. “You better get her to tell you herself!”

.....

Chu Tian woke up. He opened his eyes, only to discover he was in the same, pitch-black, underground room. He sat up on the jade bed and touched his face, which was wrapped in white bandages.

“Did it work?”

“It failed. Congratulations, your face has now been destroyed. You better not remove these bandages in the future, just in case you cause displeasure to anyone that sees you.” Ru Xin sat to the side.

“You’re joking again, fellow.” Chu Tian could sense the changes on his face. The skin had completely merged together.

Li Qingshan said curiously, “Take it off and show us how you look.”

During the time Chu Tian spent unconscious, Hua Ci carried out the follow-up treatment, so the injuries on his face had already recovered. Removing the bandages, he revealed a pretty face. His eyes twinkled like stars, his nose stood tall, and his eyebrows were long and slender. Apart from being slightly pale, he was a standard handsome man.

Coupled with the change in his bearing after recovering his memories, he bore absolutely no resemblance to Chu Tia anymore.

“How shameless!” Li Qingshan grinned. He had actually made himself so handsome. Li Qingshan became even more sincerely convinced about Ru Xin’s face-lifts.

Chu Tian picked up a mirror and took a look. He clasped his hands at Ru Xin first. “Thank you for your assistance, fellow.” Then he smiled at Li Qingshan. “This is what I looked like in my past life. It has nothing to do with handsomeness or ugliness. From today onwards, I am no longer Chu Tian!”

.....

On Cloudwisp island, the bamboo forest rustled. It had been lively for a time, but ever since the disaster of the Exhibition Matches of the Nine Prefectures, it recovered its cheerlessness, which left the school leader, Liu Chuanfeng, constantly lamenting. However, he was already fortunate enough to survive. All he could do was look forward to the upcoming entrance examination and accept some talented disciples.

But it did not come without at least some benefit. The schools of Novels in the eight other prefectures sustained losses far more severe than them. A good few of them were even downright annihilated, destroying their legacy. There was no longer a single prefecture left that could fight over the control of the Cloudwisp association with them.

As a result, Sun Fubai expanded the Cloudwisp association across the entire Ruyi commandery with ease, establishing branches in each prefecture. The foundation of the school of Novels immediately multiplied by over nine times over, and their cultivation speed reached a whole new level.

Liu Chuanfeng was currently working on writing a new novel. Suddenly, he sensed a familiar aura approaching him, and he set aside his brush. Sure enough, a tall, large figure strode over.

After facing the second heavenly tribulation, Li Qingshan’s Divine Talisman of Great Creation had completely evolved too, reaching a whole new realm. And, the power in the Divine Talisman of Great Creation constantly piled up, which he knew was probably due to Sun Fubai’s efforts. This feeling where he did not have to spend much time or effort cultivating and could constantly grow stronger was quite nice.

The news of Li Qingshan's emergence broke out and everyone visited Cloudwisp island to thank him, but they missed him altogether. Li Qingshan had already left the Clear River prefecture, flying to the commandery city of Ruyi. He arrived at the entrance of the great general's estate and saw Han Anjun after letting the guards pass on the message. Han Anjun now possessed a much sterner aura. As he stood there alone, he gave off the bearing of an army.

However, after seeing Li Qingshan, he mellowed significantly, thanking him first. If it were not for Li Qingshan, it was basically certain that Han Tieyi would have lost his life in the Asura Field. This was a great kindness he had shown to both him and the Han family.

Li Qingshan smiled without minding it. "We're all family, so do you have to be polite? Seeing how you're safe and sound and have faced the second heavenly tribulation is truly delightful, father-in-law. I'll need you to take good care of me in the future."

"Hmph, you're studying under the Unraging monk, so why would you need my care?" Han Anjun said as he took out a brocade box from his hundred treasures pouch and passed it to Li Qingshan.

Li Qingshan opened it and took a look, only to discover an Origin Spirit pill sitting inside. He passed it back to Han Anjun. "You better save it for Tieyi! I don't need it. Just don't say those unpleasant things in front of Qiongzhi again and make her unhappy."

Han Anjun did not keep insisting. He knew Li Qingshan had won a speechlessly tremendous pile of resources from prince Si Qing, and he also knew Li Qingshan had given Han Qiongzhi a five-year Virtue Accumulation pill for cultivation, which was worth no less than an Origin Spirit pill. If he truly wanted to pay him back in full, it would be impossible.

"I'm her father. There are some things I must say. Whether she listens or not is up to her. I'm not going to keep gabbling endlessly," Han Anjun said. Suddenly, he noticed that something was amiss. He stared at Li Qingshan, and his heart skipped a beat. He asked in some disbelief, "You've undergone the second heavenly tribulation?"

Li Qingshan only used some regular methods to erase his aura and not the powers of the spirit turtle. It was obviously not an issue to fool Foundation Establishment cultivators, and Golden Core cultivators would miss it too if they did not check carefully. However, if they did study him carefully, they would notice what was wrong.

"So you've noticed it, but please keep this secret for me. I can't divulge it for now."

Even with Han Anjun's unswerving willpower, he could not help but let out a long sigh. He had trained arduously for years, cultivating day and night. He faced countless dangerous trials in the Asura Field before finally taking this step, only to discover that this kid had already caught up in the blink of an eye. He was even showing signs of overtaking him. He could no longer be simply described as a "genius".

Li Qingshan left the great general's estate, but he did not see Han Qiongzhi. As it turned out, she was currently in secluded cultivation, trying to refine and absorb all the effects of the Virtue Accumulation pill. It would take her quite some time.

Before long, the entrance examination of the Clear River prefecture began again. Li Qingshan saw a familiar, handsome face among the disciples who partook in the tests this time. He shone brilliantly, even more dazzling than Chu Tian in the past.

### **Chapter 678 - Coming to a Stop, Having a Think**

“Chu Tian is already dead. From today onwards, I’m called Lin Xuan. Please don’t call me by the wrong name when you see me again in the future.”

Under the resplendent sunlight, Li Qingshan’s mind drifted off for a moment. He recalled the final words the man called Chu Tian said in the underground room.

Was Lin Xuan a name he came up with? Or was it his original name? He did not know. All he knew was this time, Qian Rongzhi would be in trouble. This would be an enemy even more terrifying than the likes of Si Qing and Jia Zhen.

All the school leaders gathered in one room, gazing at a rippling surface of water. Because that wretched daemon Northmoon had taken away the Watermirror disc that they originally used, the water mirror they used to observe the new disciples was obviously something the one most skilled with water element techniques among them created, Li Qingshan.

Li Qingshan leaned on the window sill and gazed at the rippling Lake of Dragons and Snakes lazily. It had truly been quite some time since he last enjoyed some peace like this. He felt like every single bone in his body had been separated, allowing him to relax.

Actually, he did not spend this time idling around. He paid a visit to the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga and reported to the Unraging monk his current cultivation. Even the Unraging monk was amazed by his terrifying cultivation speed, but the only pity he found was he had condensed an Ocean pearl and not a buddhist ?arīra.

Afterwards, the Unraging monk gave him permission to enter the seventh floor of the Demon Suppression hall. He advanced steadily, and after a bitter battle, he finally made it to the seventh Demon Suppression statue and comprehended the seventh part of the Demon Suppression Statuary. He had only achieved this because he could freely demonify now, disguising himself as a demon so the other demonfolk would not attack him together.

As a result, he took a step further with his cultivation, and his demon heart became more and more resplendent. After demonifying, he could take on mid or even late Golden Core cultivators. However, he did not manage to see the person he wanted to see the most, Xiao An. He only heard that she was cultivating arduously in the Bodhi courtyard, refusing to speak with anyone. People said she was practising meditative silence, but the Unraging monk said she simply did not want to talk to anyone.

With quite a lot of reluctance, Li Qingshan left the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga. Before he left, the Unraging monk warned him. “You’re both going too fast. It’s about time for you to come to a stop and have a think.”

After thinking about it, he agreed with the Unraging monk sincerely. It had only taken him around a decade to go from a youth who knew absolutely nothing and practised both daemon and human cultivation methods to his current level, while Xiao An was basically no different, having gone from a

little ghost afraid of wind and light to now, where she could butcher Corpse Commanders like butchering pigs.

No matter how outstandingly talented they were, they required a certain amount of time for accumulation and consolidation. Powerful cultivators were not created overnight. This was why brother ox had given him ten thousand years.

It might have been possible to merge the powers of the phoenix and spirit turtle, but he spent far too little energy and effort into it. He constantly thought he could deal with this one day and his cultivation would advance abruptly, but as it seemed now, it was not that simple. Since there were no shortcuts up the mountain, he would just climb up slowly!

Right now, he sat lazily in the room while his mirror clone was deep underground, bathing in the magma and enduring the pain of being incinerated with fire. He was on the verge of collapsing at all times, so he had to constantly send daemon qi over to repair his clone. Only then could he sustain the clone.

After undergoing the second heavenly tribulation, his comprehension of the principles of the world and the mysteries of nature grew deeper. He gradually found certain ways he could merge fire and water together, no longer clueless and at a loss as for what to do like in the past.

“Qingshan, once this ends, let’s go for a few drinks in the Parlour of Clouds and Rain,” Wei Yangsheng said suddenly. Although he was not exactly trying to curry favour and fawn over Li Qingshan just yet, he did show deep reverence.

Actually, while Li Qingshan had been unconcerned, he had always been a point of focus to everyone. Even Han Tiewei who was as cold and staunch as metal viewed him in a completely different light after the hints from Han Anjun. The only person who did not treat him seriously was the leader of the school of Medicine, Ru Xin, or at least that was how it seemed.

“Sure. The Sect of Clouds and Rain still hasn’t been shut down?” Li Qingshan agreed happily. He was not some ascetic. If there was an opportunity to drink fine alcohol liberally, why would he turn it down?

“Even upon death, a centipede does not keel over, let alone something as large as a sect. Though, they do seem to be facing quite a few issues lately. They’ve lost their backbone after all. Qingshan, why don’t you just take over?” Liu Zhangqing continued the conversation with a smile and suggested to Li Qingshan.

After granny You’s death and Qiu Haitang’s disappearance, the Sect of Clouds and Rain became leaderless. Not only were they fragmenting from the inside, but they faced numerous dangers from the outside too, becoming the target of many organisations.

Liu Zhangqing originally wanted to use this opportunity to swallow it up, but upon further consideration, he gave up on that idea. Li Qingshan had taken on great risks to help Qiu Haitang escape, yet the benefits all fell to him in the end. If it led to any misgivings between them, then it would not be worth it at all. Through his identity as the prefect, he maintained the current situation of the Parlour of Clouds and Rain, preventing it from dispersing while preventing anyone from claiming it.

“Me? Let me consider it!” Li Qingshan originally wanted to say, Why would I want that? However, he soon remembered that this did belong to Qiu Haitang’s sect after all. If he had the opportunity in the future, returning it to Qiu Haitang was a good idea.

The various tests were carried out in an orderly manner. In the end, the handsome young man known as Lin Xuan passed through the tests with ease and joined the school of Daoism, becoming a daoist priest, which brought great pity to the leader of the school of Confucianism, Wei Yangsheng, as well as much confusion to many people. Ever since Juechengzi died, the school of Daoism never had a proper leader. It completely relied on their primary disciple and a few professors to maintain the situation and pass on their daoist techniques. No one could make the decision to give him any additional benefits, while Wei Yangsheng had put forward rather impressive conditions.

However, Li Qingshan understood that he had probably chosen the school of Daoism to avoid any special attention from a particular person. He would probably become the leader of the school of Daoism soon. Not only did he have a powerful cultivation method and cultivation experience, but Ru Xin had even agreed to provide him with sufficient resources for cultivation in exchange for detailed guidance over the Daoist Arts of Cloud Furnace and the Heavenly Tome of Cloud Furnace.

Li Qingshan could already see the rise of a new star.

Liu Chuanfeng sighed. “If only this child joined my school of Novels.”

“You better stop dreaming, junior brother. The school of Novels might be much stronger compared to the past, but true geniuses still won’t take this path.” For this entrance examination, Sun Fubai had specially hurried back, accepting over a dozen disciples for the school of Novels.

Li Qingshan said, “If that bastard Zhou Tong hadn’t gone so far, I would have never ended up in the school of Novels either.”

Sun Fubai smiled. “This was fate as well as great luck for us. I’ll definitely do everything I can to not leave you disappointed, Qingshan. I’ll tell you in detail when we get back, but the school of Novels also has brilliant prospects!”

Returning to Cloudwisp island with the new disciples, the three of them said some words of encouragement, explained a few rules of the school of Novels, and allowed them to stroll around before they returned to the bamboo loft to discuss official business.

Out of the dozen or so new disciples, the oldest was already twenty, while the youngest was only nine. After the three of them left, everyone let out a sigh of relief. The pressure from Foundation Establishment cultivators was far too great. Even just the aura they gave off unintentionally was enough for them to hold their breaths.

The young man who was the oldest said excitedly, “It really is him!”

The youngest, the nine year old child, tilted his head in confusion. “Who?”

“The one who spoke at the end. The one with the largest stature. That’s senior uncle Li Qingshan! Haven’t you heard of him?” The young man stifled his voice, basically amazed by how he had not heard of Li Qingshan before.

“Of course I’ve heard of him! He’s the Scarlet Hawk commander of the Clear River prefecture. Originally, he was a cowherd, but after around a decade of cultivation, he defeated a whole group of Foundation Establishment cultivators from the school of Novels during the Exhibition Matches of the Nine Prefectures! He’s already close to breaking through to Golden Core, and he’s not even thirty yet! He’s the most outstanding genius of our Clear River prefecture- no, the entire Ruyi commandery!” a young girl said immediately.

The young girl was so proud that it seemed like she was describing these feats as her own. Her eyes were filled with admiration.

The young man sighed. “Sigh, I don’t want anything else. I’d be happy if I can establish a foundation before the age of thirty.” The others all showed admiration and anticipation too, becoming filled with confidence over their future lives in the school of Novels. The power of role models was endless.

Although Li Qingshan was still a fair bit off from his goal of shaking up the world with his name, shaking up the Ruyi commandery with his name was no longer an issue. Before he knew it, he was already becoming something like a legend.

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In the bamboo loft, the three of them sat together. Li Qingshan picked up a tea cup and said to Sun Fubai, “Fubai, it’s been tough on you. Please accept my toast of tea instead of alcohol!”

Liu Chuanfeng picked up his cup too, thanking Sun Fubai. If he had not rushed about outside, the Cloudwisp association would have never achieved its current accomplishments.

Sun Fubai replied with a smile, “My junior brother and I should be the ones to thank you. Qingshan, do you happen to have any money on you?”

“Money? You mean spiritual stones?”

Sun Fubai shook his head with a bitter smile. “No, just money. Gold and silver.”

Originally, golden and silver were basically no different from scrap metal to cultivators at their level. However, when he tried to expand the Cloudwisp association and carry out Li Qingshan’s plan to organise private institutions throughout the Ruyi commandery and teach the children of poor families how to read so that he could pave the foundation of the school of Novels, he discovered that they were truly short on money.

Across the expansive territory of the Ruyi commandery, just building these private institutions would probably take hundreds of million taels of gold and silver. Coupled with recruitment and the fees to maintain the operations, it was an astronomical sum, and he would earn no money from these operations either.

Sun Fubai had plenty of ways to gather money. He already had many salterns and gold mines under his control, which all poured with profits. However, if he insisted on carrying out a grand plan like this, there was still quite a large gap he had to make up for.

After hearing Sun Fubai’s explanation, Liu Chuanfeng said, “Since we don’t have money, then we can just develop slowly. Why do we have to be in such a rush?”



Sun Fubai shook his head. "But that's far too wasteful. It's just like if we have an empty plot of land. The more seeds we plant now, the more we can harvest in the future. Each year we miss is a year of harvest lost, so the more we invest right now, the better it will be."

Li Qingshan rummaged through his hundred treasures pouch and found a lot of silver notes and gold sycees. They were worth tens of thousand taels of silver.

"Then I'm not going to hold back. If only we had more."

Li Qingshan contemplated and said, "Regular sects won't save up too much gold and silver, but that doesn't mean there aren't exceptions. The Parlours of Clouds and Rain accept customers from far and wide, and most of them are just regular people who use gold and silver. The Sect of Clouds and Rain should be quite wealthy!"

Li Qingshan told them about Liu Zhangqing's suggestion, and Sun Fubai said immediately, "That's a good idea. A single Parlour of Clouds and Rain is worth even more than ten money houses!"

"Alright then. I'll go put in a word with prefect Liu," Li Qingshan said. It had been quite some time since he last saw Qiu Haitang. He wondered how she was doing right now.

### **Chapter 679 - Love, Lies, and Change**

In the depths of the serene lake, water rippled over Qiu Haitang's head. She sat up without moving. She had long eyelashes, a delicate, slightly-perky nose, rosy lips, and a head full of dark hair that flowed down like a waterfall, reaching down to her waist. She was charming and pretty.

A while later, she opened her eyes and let out a gloomy sigh. Before she knew it, she had already remained beneath the lake for a lengthy period. She had never remained in secluded cultivation for so long; it was as if the world had forgotten her.

Of course, only a single person knew she was here, but that person had clearly already thrown her to the back of his mind. These damned, heartless men!

She had established a foundation many years ago, so she was well-grounded. After switching to the Heart Dyeing Art of Rouge, she had already broken through to late Foundation Establishment with granny You's Rouge Heart. However, she had not refined it completely, so she was still a fair bit off from peak Foundation Establishment.

Taking that step and condensing her own Rouge Heart was anything but easy. She did not have an Origin Spirit pill. Breaking through with her strength alone was far too difficult. She stood up and paced around the dwelling.

If her cultivation had not progressed rapidly, she virtually would have doubted whether she could actually stay here for so long. Although she had grown tired of the noise and business, she only discovered after so much solitude that living alone was not easy either.

She swept her dark hair behind her ears. Although she was a cultivator, her meaning of life, her reason of persistence, was definitely not just cultivation. She could not allow her beauty to silently wither away in the long river of time. All of her cultivation was for the sake of finding a man she loved before using the Lovesickness Dyes the Thread Red secret technique on him.

Since human nature was fickle, then she would use a red thread to restrain it, to bind them together. Who would that be?

At first, she thought of Hua Chengzan, but she immediately dismissed him with a smile. Although she had once loved him to the point where she had even cast aside her dignity, she had yet to become so insistent. If they had no interest, then what was the point of love that was purely maintained through a technique!

Afterwards, the face with a devilish smile and scarlet hair like fire appeared before her eyes. She murmured, "Northmoon... you bastard!"

Thump! Thump! Thump!

At this moment, a series of knocking sounds rang out overhead. Qiu Haitang raised her head and saw a familiar, smiling face above the crystal ceiling.

"Northmoon!"

Li Qingshan entered the dwelling at the bottom of the lake. It had not changed much compared to when he left. Although a few pieces of basic furniture had been laid out, it was still as spacious and bland as a prison. It was worlds apart from her extravagant, magnificent dwelling of the past.

It probably hasn't been easy for her to stay here for so long!

Seeing Qiu Haitang again, Li Qingshan could not help himself as his heart skipped a beat. Right now, she wore a set of plain and neat clothes, which gave her a sense of unadorned beauty. Already with a snow-white complexion, her skin now seemed glowing, perhaps due to staying in the gloomy depths of the lake for too long. She sat there naturally and gracefully as she gazed over with a pair of lovely and elegant eyes. At the same time, she gave off an indescribable sense of wondrous charm.

To Qiu Haitang, he had changed quite a bit too. He had lost some of his fragrance, becoming much calmer and quieter. The way he looked at her brought her great satisfaction. However, when she recalled their intimacy in the past, it was as vivid as yesterday. Her mind began to ripple as she struggled to compose herself.

She remained unfazed on the surface, serving up some tea; she acted polite, courteous but distant. She was blaming him for cold-shouldering her for all this time.

Li Qingshan asked, "You're close to facing the second heavenly tribulation, right?"

"Yes." Qiu Haitang kept her talking at a bare minimum.

"Here." Li Qingshan tossed a brocade box to her.

Qiu Haitang accepted the brocade box, opened it, and took a look. She exclaimed softly, "An Origin Spirit pill."

Li Qingshan placed his hands into his sleeves and left as soon as he turned around, leaving behind the cup of tea, completely untouched and curling with steam.

“Wait! Are you just leaving like this?” Qiu Haitang never thought he would leave without even batting an eye, without even the slightest hesitance, which left her slightly frantic.

“What else am I supposed to do? You don’t seem like you want to talk to me.”

Li Qingshan turned around and said. If other people treated him negatively, he would not go out of his way to put up with them. Of course, if he used force, Qiu Haitang obviously would not stand a chance against him, but it was not like he was some sex fiend. There was no need for him to come here specially for something like that.

“You really are cold and heartless!” Qiu Haitang said furiously.

His disrespectful and indifferent attitude immediately infuriated her.

Li Qingshan smiled. “If the heavens had a heart, if the heavens had emotions, they too would grow old. You’re a cultivator after all. Looking at your talent, you better spend a little less time thinking about those matters of love and undergo the second heavenly tribulation sooner.”

“Go! Don’t come back!” Qiu Haitang threw the Origin Spirit pill back forcefully.

“Don’t tell me you’re blaming me for never visiting you?” Li Qingshan caught the Origin Spirit pill. With a flash, he arrived behind her and brought his arm around her waist, speaking into her ears.

“I don’t even care about that. Let me go!” Qiu Haitang snorted coldly and put up a forceful struggle.

Li Qingshan could feel her voluptuous bottom rubbing around, but when he lowered his head, all that met him was a jiggling, snow-white gully.

“Then I’ll give a simple explanation for myself. I cultivated for a while, fought against Si Qing and his cronies twice, and killed E Dan. Recently, his master has been trying to hunt me down. Have you heard of his master before? He’s some Beast King from the Mountain Manor of Myriad Beasts in the Dragon province. He’s really strong.”

He said it with great ease, but it was soul-stirring to Qiu Haitang. E Dan was not that easy to kill, let alone some “Beast King”. To a Foundation Establishment cultivator, that was a powerful figure from legends. She would definitely be done for if someone like him hunted her down.

As she cultivated in peace in the secretive dwelling he had built for her, he had instead gained some terrifying, formidable enemies because of her, facing danger and fighting for his life outside. He had always been doing things for her silently. Originally, he could do whatever he wanted, but he never asked for anything from her.

To her, his coldness and heartlessness immediately turned into silent responsibility, which left her feeling extremely sorry.

“I didn’t know... I should have thought of this a long time ago. After killing so many of his disciples, E Dan would have never just left this matter be. It’s truly fantastic that you’re fine.”

“That’s not exactly good news to you. My enemies are your enemies. After all, everyone knows that you’re my ‘woman’.”

Li Qingshan lifted up Qiu Haitang's chin; she raised her head and met his eyes. She understood he had become angry because of how coldly she treated him, which left her smiling.

"If it weren't for you, I'd be dead already. This might just be my fate."

Qiu Haitang sighed gently, feeling a hint of helplessness, but there was not much sorrow. A layer of hazy mist enveloped her eyes, making her seem even more enchanting.

"I don't believe in fate or whatever it is. It all lies in your own hands at the end of the day!"

Li Qingshan shoved the Origin Spirit pill into her hand and let go of her rather reluctantly. If he continued like that, he could not guarantee he would not do anything to her. Seeing her this time, he did not want to offend her too much for some reason, probably because he was not drunk!

"Can you tell me about what happened outside in detail?" Qiu Haitang turned around. She yearned to know what he had gone through.

"Alright!"

As a result, Li Qingshan explained what Northmon had been through. He could not help but include some lies in between, filling in some blanks and embellishing some holes. The fakest parts all had to do with Qiu Haitang, like "I had always been thinking about you then!" or "Ever since I learnt that bastard E Dan had disrespected you, he became a target that I had to kill. Even if I would provoke some Beast King, that still did not faze me."

That was the type of person he was. If Qiu Haitang wanted to be distant with him, then he would not even bother with saying an extra word to her, but if she admitted to her mistakes, he was willing to say some good things and coax her. He had to admit this was rather difficult. As Li Qingshan said those things, even he himself felt a little unnatural. His acting ability was well below average.

Qiu Haitang was a clever woman who was extremely skilled at reading faces and tones, so she should have been able to see through clumsy lies with a single glance. However, she said, "I don't believe any of it." while smiling bashfully. Towards the end, her eyes even shone with extraordinary splendour, becoming extremely touched. The tender feelings in her eyes rapidly strengthened.

She allowed Li Qingshan to understand why they all said female cultivators had the heaviest tribulations of attachments, which was why they should not become involved in those matters without good reason. As he watched her show her joy from the bottom of her heart, he found that she was basically glowing, radiating with incomparable, enchanting charm. As a result, his sugared words gradually became smoother, to a point where even he himself almost believed them to be true.

Yeah, back then, I might have actually been thinking about her. I had just been interrupted by that bastard E Dan's strange howl, which was why I had to kill him first!

At a time like this, his hands were very well-behaved, only holding her hands and rubbing them gently, as admiring her flowing beauty right now and appreciating the tender feelings flowing through her eyes brought him enjoyment that even surpassed his carnal desires. Her bashful smiles, her concern, her flirtatious grumbling was all as enchanting as it could get. If he took advantage of her right now, he would instead ruin this beauty.

Smiles oozed out of Qiu Haitang's eyes. "You really told him to call you A'yue!"

"Yeah. I called him A'qing, and there was A'dan and A'zhen too. You really should have seen their expressions back then."

"You're evil all the way through." Qiu Haitang giggled to her heart's content. "Why don't I call you A'yue from now on too?"

"Then I'll call you A'tang?" "Don't, that sounds horrible. You can just call me by my name."

As a result, Li Qingshan said tenderly, "Haitang."

"Oh, that's sickly." Qiu Haitang frowned, but her heart trembled in a strange, pleasant manner, making her cheeks blush.

"Si Qing arranged so many women for you, so why didn't you touch them? Or are you lying to me?"

"I swear to the heavens that this is absolutely true. It's only because when I compare them to my Haitang, they're like fireflies to the moon. They really can't interest me."

"Since when did I become your woman?"

"Didn't you accept fate already?"

"You're the one who said it all lies in your own hands at the end of the day."

"I take that back."

"Hehe, it's already too late."

Of course, there were many holes in his story. Over such a long time, if he had truly yearned for her day and night, could he really not make some time to come and see her?

However, she had automatically overlooked all of this. Even if she thought of it, she would only think that not only did he have to cultivate outside, but he also had to face powerful enemies. As such, he could not allow himself to be distracted. He did not want to drag her into misfortune either. If she blamed him for something like this, then she would basically be an ignorant woman who had no idea how priorities worked.

She was not stupid, just overly infatuated. Hua Chengzan had never said these things to her, while she looked down on other men. For a woman who had always desired love, this was actually the first time she had heard these sugared words in her life. No matter how clever and sharp she was, she would still be a little dazed.

This did not necessarily mean a few sugared words could fool her, or it would have never been Li Qingshan to be the one to say them to her. He had always helped her out, so his concern for her was not fake. It had touched her heart a long time ago, planting a seed in her heart. These words were merely an opportunity to make the seed sprout.

Li Qingshan thought that if he could see data like levels of affection right now, her level of affection for him would have definitely swelled up by a huge chunk. Sure enough, unsung heroes were not the way to

go. Suffering in silence was simply stupid. He had suffered what he needed to suffer, and he had broken the silence he needed to break. Achieving these results smoothly was perfectly natural.

Towards the end, her gaze obviously became filled with tenderness and concern, basically enough to make his heart melt. As she gently and bashfully referred to him as “A’yue”, even half of his tiger bones melted away.

When it was time to part, Qiu Haitang was reluctant. Li Qingshan suddenly asked, “Haitang, do you have money?”

Up until now, if a modern person had heard what he had just said, they would definitely treat this as some column in a magazine to swindle people out of their money through love.

“Things like silver notes.”

Li Qingshan gave a further explanation. He vaguely remembered that when he gave her granny You’s hundred treasures pouch, there were a lot of silver notes in there. Back then, he did not care about them at all. He only remembered them through Sun Fubai’s reminder.

“I do.”

Qiu Haitang would have never imagined that the original reason why he had come to find her was for silver notes that were mostly useless to cultivators, but even with all these silver notes, they would have never been able to purchase an Origin Spirit pill.

Li Qingshan said, “I have some uses for them.”

As a result, Qiu Haitang took out all the silver notes in her possession, which was much more than what Li Qingshan originally expected. She had served as the sect master of the Sect of Clouds and Rain for all this time, having managed the earnings of the Parlour of Clouds and Rain across all these years. Granny You obviously would not care much about the money, so she allowed her to hold onto it.

Before he left, Li Qingshan said, “Haitang, don’t ingest the Origin Spirit pill in a hurry. If you fail the tribulation, I’ll be sad!” That was not a lie.

“Yeah, I will be careful.” Never had Qiu Haitang been so docile. Then she said rather bashfully, “If you aren’t busy in the future... be sure to come and visit!”

“I will.” Li Qingshan smiled, pecking her gently on the lips before leaving gracefully.

Qiu Haitang stood there stiffly, touching her lips. The gentle kiss had touched her much, much more than any of the ways he had taken advantage of her in the past.

Only a while later did she return to her senses. She spread her arms and twirled around on the spot, feeling extremely happy. Her steps became light too. Sunlight seemed to be pouring into this gloomy dwelling at the bottom of the lake.

Calming herself down after quite the difficulty, she began looking forward to the next time they would meet. She gazed at the Origin Spirit pill in her hand. She had to step up with her cultivation. Regardless of what he said, she believed there was fate involved.

Li Qingshan left the lake, but he wondered whether he had actually handled the matters correctly earlier. However, he threw these thoughts to the back of his mind very soon. Right and wrong had never been so easy to distinguish in the world. He had already done it, so there was nothing to regret over.

He passed these silver notes to Sun Fubai before attending a banquet at the Parlour of Clouds and Rain at night, formally claiming the Sect of Clouds and Rain as his, which gave him a source of wealth. The hundred-year plan of the school of Novels unfolded grandly. To Li Qingshan, this was not something particularly important. The Divine Talisman of Great Creation did not hold any great significance. As a matter of fact, it could be regarded as the least significant path among his many paths of cultivation. However, it truly affected the lives of millions.

Li Qingshan's life suddenly became peaceful, but certain things were changing, even unbeknownst to him.

### **Chapter 680 - Returning to the Hometown (One)**

Time passed by in a hurry. Winter went and spring came, summer departed and autumn arrived. Time advanced along at an unprecedentedly steady pace.

The unceasing autumn rain created thousands of ripples on the clamorous harbour of the prefectural city of Clear River, but even that was unable to put out the lively atmosphere. A dragon ship docked in the rippling river water, with a man standing on the very front of the ship. At first glance, he only seemed like a regular farmer. Having endured the wind and rain, his skin was tanned and rough. However, only with a closer glance would it be possible to notice the shining light in his dark eyes.

The ship would be travelling against the flow. Li Long gazed in the direction where the Clear river meandered off to and experienced a multitude of thoughts.

It had already been over a decade since he left his hometown. Even during times of celebration, he had not returned; it was not because he did not want to return, but because there was always endless farmwork. There were crops that were about to ripen waiting to be harvested, and the fields and gardens basically needed watering every single day.

The Clear River prefecture had been through several disasters, but it did free up many plots of land filled with spiritual qi. A few destroyed sects still had their medicinal gardens, which required disciples of the school of Agriculture to tend to. He basically did not have any time to spare at all. This was a rare opportunity for cultivation to him.

Under these circumstances, making him spend the time to travel thousands of kilometers to visit home once was basically impossible. All he could do was regularly ask people to send some silver notes home so that he could live up to his role as a filial son.

Right now, his face was tanned and thin, and his clothes were old and worn-out. He seemed like a lump of soil that had just been dug out from the earth, reeking with a rustic aura. As such, even when the rain got a little heavier and he returned to the cabin, everyone around him would maintain their distance from him.

Many years ago, he had left the Crouching Ox village and taken on a master in Qingyang city to study so that he could avoid this fate as a farmer, but at the end of the day, he had become a farmer through and

through, which was truly rather funny. However, the leader of the school of Agriculture, earth elder Huang, had praised his appearance as the “Framework of Earth and Wood”, describing him as a genius of the school of Agriculture. He told him he was planning on passing the position of school leader to him.

It was exactly because of all of his efforts that his cultivation managed to advance rapidly, going from a lowly member of the jianghu to the primary disciple of the school of Agriculture, a tenth layer Qi Practitioner, in just over a decade. Originally, he planned on cultivating arduously for another few years and attempting to break through to Foundation Establishment in a single stroke.

A letter was delivered to Qingyang city from Crouching Ox village. Then it reached the headquarters of the Iron Fist school in the prefectural city through the network of the Iron Fist school before finally reaching his hands. Only after learning about his father’s death from sickness did he gather his belongings in a hurry and set off on the path to return to his hometown.

Before he set off, apart from entrusting a large piece of land to his junior brothers to look after, he specially paid a visit to a certain person, which happened to be the only one who shared the same hometown as him, Li Qingshan. He asked him whether he wanted to pass on a message, or if there was anything else he would like him to do.

It took Li Qingshan quite a while to think back and recall a person called “village head Li”. Then he told Li Long he was sorry for his loss. He did not show much sorrow either. So many years had passed already. The death of a mortal who was neither his family nor his acquaintance and had even offended him in the past was obviously unable to make him feel anything. He had never liked posing around.

Li Long did not blame him either. During the years he spent away from home, he had only achieved his current cultivation because of the selfless assistance Li Qingshan had provided at several crucial times. Even though Li Qingshan had already become so powerful, he still treated him like an equal.

Even to him, the old face gradually showed signs of blurring with each passing day. Only when he heard about the death did it suddenly clear up, but he did not feel particularly sad either.

In the end, Li Qingshan did not have any message for him to pass on, which was to Li Long’s expectations. Ever since he cut off his relationship with his elder brother and sister-in-law, his connection with the Crouching Ox village had become almost non-existent.

This man had been different since young. Only when the witch filled him to the brim with purging water did he become a little more normal, but he still disliked playing with other children his age. If he had any spare time, he would go to Crouching Ox hill to let his ox graze and to play his flute. He seemed unsociable, eccentric, and unfriendly, which made everyone view him as an outsider. Although they did not directly reject him, they were not particularly attached to him either.

Only many years later did Li Long suddenly realise how many of his peculiarities served as prior signs to his miraculous rise later on.

The ship lifted the anchor and travelled against the flow. The prefectural city of Clear River gradually moved off into the distance. Li Long set off on his journey home.



The ship passed through Jiaping city. This city that the rock demon had once decimated had now recovered its vitality. It was said that even the Hawkwolf Guard on the mountain had been reestablished.

The ship continued onwards. Only when it reached the harbour he had initially set off from did he disembark and take out a seal, summoning a fine steed. This was the mount he had purchased for the sake of rushing around everywhere. He traveled for another day, and a familiar section of ancient city walls appeared in the distance. Suddenly, he realised that his hometown was not as distant as he originally imagined it to be.

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In front of the Iron Fist school, two burly men in black robes stood together with the pair of dignified stone lions, guarding the entrance. The passers-by all avoided them from afar.

The man on the left looked at the sky and grumbled, "When it starts raining, it really never ends. Achool! We sure are unlucky to stand guard in such weather!"

The man on the right shook his body. "It's still better than summer. Just by standing there for an hour, you look like you just crawled out from a lake. Who can we blame for the fact that we joined the school too late and our martial arts are horrible? Let's go find a brothel later and have a good drink so that we can get all warm and toasty."

"Once I become an innate master, I'll spend every night in a brothel."

"Just by you?"

"What's wrong with me? Li Qingshan was even worse off than us in the past! He couldn't even afford to visit a brothel! I've heard now that all the brothels in the Clear River prefecture belong to him. And that Li Long. Before, he belonged to our Iron Fist school, but it's said that he's already several dozen layers into the innate realm now!"

"The innate realm only has ten layers. Where'd you get these several dozen layers from?"

As they spoke, a tanned, thin man stood right at the entrance. His gaze drifted around. As he gazed at this familiar entrance, he was filled with countless laments.

It was exactly because Qingyang city was relatively remote and near the Boundless mountains, right between the range of two daemon forces, that it was not particularly affected during the war with the daemons.

"Who are you?"

"You country bumpkin, the Iron Fist school isn't a place that you can check out. Stop looking around. Get out of here!"

"My name is Li Long, a disciple under school master Liu Hong. Please pass this on quickly!"

Li Long did not recognise these two doorkeepers and knew that they were new disciples accepted after he had left. They sure were imposing by standing there, but their martial arts had not even reached the

second or third-rate. They could only scare some common people. Otherwise, they would not have been told to watch the entrance.

“You said you’re Li Long?”

The two burly men widened their eyes. They had never met him, but they knew this name all too well. That was a powerful figure who had emerged from their Iron Fist school in Qingyang city, a great master several dozen layers into the innate realm. The Iron Lion Liu Hong would brag about him every time he drank.

However, from the way this person was dressed, he did not resemble the legendary “Li Long” at all. He clearly looked like he had just returned from the fields!

However, the two did not dare to brush him aside. They knew that certain masters of the jianghu liked to pose around, so they immediately passed the message up. A while later, a dignified, middle-aged man in brocade robes walked out swiftly, but he was not Liu Hong. When he saw Li Long, he was taken aback, going up and grabbing his hands. “Junior brother, it really is you!”

“Senior brother Wang Lei.” Li Long recognised this person too.

As it turned out, the Iron Lion Liu Hong had already passed the position of school master to his first disciple, Wang Lei. He had left the city and retired.

Wang Lei patted Li Long’s shoulder and demonstrated sorrow. “Junior brother, I’m sorry for your loss. Uncle had reached a very advanced age...” He said a few comforting words, but Li Long could obviously tell there was not much sincerity at all. It was only for the sake of courtesy.

Li Long said, “Life and death are decreed by fate.”

Wang Lei passed orders, sending people to invite over Liu Hong, who had retired to outside the city. At the same time, he gathered all the disciples of the Iron Fist school, making them line up all the way from the screen wall inside to the entrance of the main hall.

“Junior brother, please!” Wang Lei extended his hand and walked at the front, showing off his status as the school master. He specially emphasised the words “junior brother”, basically to remind him he was still his “senior brother”.

Their relationship had never been particularly amicable. Over a decade ago, Wang Lei had regularly been dissatisfied with the special treatment Liu Hong showed Li Long. Only after assuming the position of school master did this gradually stop annoying him. Now that he saw Li Long’s dishevelled appearance, he could not help but feel rather delighted. He explained to Li Long the changes that had happened after he left the Iron Fist school, telling him how he led the good men of the Iron Fist school to realise his ambitions, placing the entire Qingyang city under his control.

Out of the four original organisations, Li Qingshan had personally destroyed two of them. The Drawn Reins village had always been isolated from the world, becoming even more so after Huang Binghu had left. The Iron Fist school became the only organisation left in Qingyang city. As the school leader, Wang Lei obviously had great power and prestige, able to rally almost everyone at his call. Even the district magistrate had to watch out for him, and he had whole groups of women in his harem.

He thought, Compared to being some cultivator outside, you probably don't even have it as easy or delightful as me as I serve as the local despot of Qingyang city.

All Li Long could do was nod. In the past, Qingyang city had once seemed like the entire world to him, but now, it was merely a tiny city lying in an inconspicuous corner. There were no fertile fields, rich with spiritual qi, either. If Liu Hong were not here, he basically would not be interested in stopping here at all.

The two of them sat in the central hall. Wang Lei asked with a smile, "Junior brother, you haven't married and had any children during all the years you spent outside? What do you do normally?"

"There's too much farmwork to do, so where am I supposed to find the time to get married and have children?" Li Long said. There had been a disciple of the school of Music who had been interested in him in the past, but he had absolutely no time to spend on anything else apart from farmwork, so nothing happened in the end.

Wang Lei raised an eyebrow in surprise. "Farmwork!? Cultivators still have to tend to the fields?"

Li Long smiled. "I'm a disciple of the school of Agriculture, so how can't I tend to the fields?"

Wang Lei frowned and shook his head firmly. "Then what's the point of cultivation?"

"I also found it boring in the beginning, but after a while, you start to find it pretty interesting," said Li Long. He toiled in the fields, watching the fruit and vegetables ripen and the spiritual herbs grow. The whole time, the earth and the plants paid him back, allowing his cultivation to rapidly progress. It was an indescribable sense of joy.

Wang Lei curled his lip, unable to understand him. He felt that Li Long was probably just being stubborn.

In his eyes, farmers were only slightly better than beggars. He would rather die than spend a decade toiling in the fields. Sure enough, it was like being a large fish in a small pond compared to being a small fish in a large pond. As the imposing, majestic master of the Iron Fist school, he was obviously the large fish in the small pond, countless times better off than Li Long, the small fish in the large pond that happened to be the cultivating community.

PS: Yesterday, I wrote five thousand characters and deleted three thousand of them, leaving behind two thousand. I might not even end up using them, so sorry about that. However, this process is actually quite interesting. I'm a little further away from typing away mindlessly and just a little bit closer to writing.