

Carefree 541

Chapter 541: Origin

"Is the thing behind the Door...finally going to mature?"

Fang Yuan stood before the Green Bronze Door, deep in thought.

Obviously, the change that the purple crystal had brought to the netherworld was only the beginning.

Tantai Moya's act which propagated the curses to the Outer World was only part of the process.

But right now, the end was here!

In other words, the contamination and transformation of the world had reached a threshold!

"So...this is why the harvesting this time was so violent?"

"To be able to alter the world using its own strength..."

"If it had succeeded, the world would be plunged into an abyss of fear and sink into the sea of hopelessness...but technically, this was achieved unconsciously by the forces at work...or there might not even have been any consciousness involved at all!"

"A power like that...is indeed interesting!"

As Fang Yuan brooded, he placed his palms on the Door.

The Green Bronze Door had the roughest of surfaces and a hard chill emanated from its body. The true horror was that the ghostly carvings were flocking towards Fang Yuan's hands with their fangs bared and bit down savagely on them.

Crack! Crack!

Deafening metallic screeches filled the air but Fang Yuan's hands were unscathed. If anything, they had become stronger.

"Curse...unleash!"

Right now, Fang Yuan's power bar was fully charged at 50 points. This meant that in this world, he was practically invincible!

Boom! Boom!

With all the Tantaïs, Daoist Sanmu and Master Kuhai watching, the Green Bronze Door thundered and began to crack.

Light!

Light rays began to spill out from behind the door through the widening gaps. It was as if heaven lay behind that Door!

Abruptly, the light rays retreated, as if there was a black hole behind the door that was swallowing them up.

Jingle!

The Door swung open and shut continuously. Fang Yuan had disappeared.

At this moment, the survivors could feel their hairs standing on end. They could sense the presence of an indescribable and extraordinary entity.

...

"This is...the world behind the Door?"

Around him was nothingness. Bright light filled his surroundings. There did not even seem to be a notion of a ground.

Fang Yuan was unperturbed and strolled about in the void with his hands behind his back.

"A world in the process of being born? The product of a catalysis? Interesting!"

Even the sages among the dream masters could only upgrade their prosperous lands to Hollows, which were far from being worlds themselves.

Right now, before Fang Yuan was a complete little world, albeit one that looked slightly weird.

In contrast with the light was the richness of the curse's power, which rolled about in the void towards the unnerved Fang Yuan.

"This sort of ever-changing dream elemental force, let's call it cursed energy. It is the origin of everything...the invincibility of ghosts, their ability to create doppelgängers, alter memories, manipulate space and time, tamper with cause and effect, killing people in dreamworlds etcetera. They all stemmed from this origin!"

Fang Yuan walked towards the place where the curse's power was the densest.

Around him, the rich curse energy spread outwards and forced him to slow down. The clothes on his body began to decay and fall apart, revealing his taut skin and muscular physique.

Such...great power!"

Burn marks began to appear on Fang Yuan's face. It was like he had suffered a terrible sunburn.

"This sort of power is definitely tied to the Demonic Heart Realm, but it isn't dream elemental force!"

Occupied with his thoughts, Fang Yuan continued to walk about until a black dot suddenly materialised before him.

A suffocating sensation came over Fang Yuan.

Using his Fiery Golden Eyes, Fang Yuan could see that there was a skeleton sitting cross-legged at about 100 metres ahead. An object that looked like a purple diamond was firmly grasped in its finger bones. Dream elemental force radiated outwards from it.

The radiated dream elemental force was then absorbed by the skeleton. When the energy was released once more, it had already become the strange curse energy!

"Power from a higher plane?"

As Fang Yuan looked on, he let out a sigh. This was the truth behind the cursing of the world!

"It is in this state now because it swallowed something it shouldn't have. Even if this world still had the will to survive, it would be helpless..."

"Fortunately...even if it is in another universe, it must surely have a source. It cannot come from nothing!"

Fang Yuan took a few more glances at the skeleton.

Even though he was seeing it for the first time, it gave him a feeling of familiarity.

"It's Tantai Muye!"

Fang Yuan fell silent again.

Back then, Tantai Muye had sensed that huge developments were underfoot in the netherworld and had forced his way in, breaking a taboo in the process.

His unthinking act was the direct cause of the subsequent series of disasters that ravaged the Outer World.

Had the skeleton converted the pure dream elemental force into cursed energy?

Fang Yuan was beginning to understand.

"Originally, this purple crystal belonged to the Demonic Heart Realm. But no matter how powerful it was, it could only be used as a tool...Tantai Muye's arrival was the missing puzzle piece! It was either through Tantai Muye's death or examination that the purple crystal gained the ability to spread fear and death...after all, it needed someone who understood fear in order to help it unleash the curse!"

"Your centuries of waiting is almost ended!"

Fang Yuan took a few big strides forward.

"But it's a pity that...you met me!"

Swoop!

Having finished speaking, Fang Yuan pounced like a leopard. He threw out a string of runes with each of his hands which blew open the void. The sound was deafening.

Buzz!

The skeleton shook slightly in the face of Fang Yuan's assault.

The purple diamond twinkled.

Bang!

Fang Yuan was thrown backwards at the speed of a cannonball.

Starting from his fingers, his body looked as though it was about to crumble.

It was the feeling of an egg being impacted by a stone. Fang Yuan felt a crushing pressure from above!

He fell hard to the ground and forced himself to quickly get to his feet.

"This is...this is but a stray source of power. How could it have done this?"

Having tested the waters and finding out more about the power source, Fang Yuan was enraged!

At the same time, he felt greedy.

The nature of such a power was threatening to destroy him!

Comparing the power of sages to it would yield a difference of that between the firefly and the sun. If dream elemental force was a cotton thread, this power would be on the level of steel wire!

"Truly...this is worthy of investigation!"

Fang Yuan laughed maniacally and strode forward.

Kaboom!

The area around the purple crystal began to glow up.

"Shuk shuk!"

The bright white lights and the cursed energy had disappeared completely.

All around Fang Yuan was the colour purple!

Purple light spilled out from the crystal like a waterfall and rushed over Fang Yuan's body.

This savage attack cut through Fang Yuan like a thousand knives and pain overwhelmed his senses. His flesh was disintegrating.

Painful!

Very painful!!

Even so, Fang Yuan did not show the slightest emotion and walked towards the skeleton determinedly.

90 metres! 50 metres!

Closer! Even closer!

The skin and flesh on Fang Yuan's face had peeled apart, revealing his facial bones underneath.

As he edged closer to the purple crystal, the purple light became even more blinding, which reduced him further into a skeletal form.

'If even my body is suffering in this way, Tantai Moya's should have been broken down completely...that his body is still in this state probably meant that the purple crystal had chosen it to become its host.'

'If even a person of my physical prowess cannot approach the crystal, the world would be doomed!'

Fang Yuan thought to himself as he walked on and left a trail of bloody footprints behind him.

It was through struggling that he managed to close in on the white skeleton. He stretched out both of his hands.

In the purple light, Fang Yuan had extended what seemed to be a pair of...white bone claws!

Fang Yuan had turned into a skeletal figure with golden light shining from his eye sockets.

"Triple curses, superimpose!"

Three Strange Level curses were unleashed upon the world, dimming the purple light emitting from the crystal slightly.

Seizing this opportunity, the white bone claws snatched over the purple crystal.

Whoosh!

The skeleton holding the purple crystal had turned into ash and vanished.

Fang Yuan paid no attention to that for he was focusing all his energy on conquering the purple crystal.

Sizzle!

The searing light and heat melted the bone claws such that they dripped onto the ground into a viscous liquid.

A purple band had encircled his arms and was coiling around his body.

"Such a ferocious power. Any form of resistance seems to be futile!"

In a blink, the purple light had climbed all over Fang Yuan's skeletal structure.

A golden light strobed in Fang Yuan's skull.

"This is the origin of all curses! The burden of a world? Spirit Sealing Body...the World's Will. Even though you have all but disappeared, you must help me. Seal it up!"

"Kaboom!"

A swirl appeared and began to devour the purple crystal.

Simultaneously, the purple light illuminating Fang Yuan's body was swallowed up.

After sealing up 4 evil spirits and 3 Strange Level curses, Fang Yuan's Spirit Sealing Body technique had advanced to a level that went beyond his expectations.

After all, such a spiritual body was not supposed to exist in this world. It was the World's Will that created this child of destiny! It was this world's last stand, with a mission to seal up the origin of curses!

Now, Fang Yuan was representing this world in the fight against the alien Demonic Heart power!

"What strong resistance...this has completely eclipsed the Strange Level!"

At this point, the purple crystal continued to emit a mysterious light and put up a violent resistance.

Fang Yuan felt like he was using a hemp rope to trap a fiendish dragon. He was expecting a terrible struggle to happen any moment now!

Chapter 542: Original Energy

Outside the Green Bronze Door.

Tantai Guijing, Daoist Sanmu and Master Kuhai stared at the Door with doubt in their eyes.

"The Door...is only a protective layer. The true core lies behind it?"

Tantai Guijing's eyes were open wide.

"Just this Door alone was enough to nearly wipe out the Tantai family..."

The more he found out, the more insignificant he felt in the grand scheme of things.

He felt a wave of panic too.

The Tantai strategies had always been targeted at the Green Bronze Door. Now, it was clear that even if the Door were to be destroyed, the Tantai family would not be safe. If anything, having to face that entity directly would plunge them into greater despair.

"Amituofu...I'm ashamed at myself for not being of any help..."

Master Kuhai shook his head sadly.

Even though the Green Bronze Door had closed and lowered its defences, no one was powerful enough to approach it.

This alone was enough for them to realise the huge disparity between their abilities and Fang Yuan's.

"It's been so long. What in the world could be happening in there?"

The Daoist Sanmu made use of his daoist techniques and divination skills, but he only ended up more confused than ever.

"I can't be sure..."

Tantai Guijing shook his head.

"With regards to that entity, the concept of Time would be of no concern. Years in the outside world might be the equivalent of a mere moment in there!"

Buzz!

Just as he spoke, the Green Bronze Door began to scream once more.

"Woowoo!"

The black chains slid off the Door and the two ghostly guards let out a whimper before they melted into a puddle of blood.

The carved figures of people crying tears of blood had adopted serene expressions on their faces and were beginning to fade.

"Amitufo...helping souls gain salvation is truly a noble deed!"

Master Kuhai pressed both his palms together and recited mantras at the top of his voice.

Crack! Crack!

Web-like cracks appeared on the Door and began to extend like cracks on ice. Then the Door exploded into pieces.

Another great black Door appeared in its place. It was like a rebirth.

Although this Door still carried with it the smell of death and silence, it was peaceful. It no longer displayed the intent to brutalise.

"This...this is the legendary Heaven's Gate!"

Tantai Guijing and Daoist Sanmu were awed.

"This is the mythical core of the world. Crossing it would lead to immortality and sagacity!"

At this point, a mysterious light emitted from the Door and cleansed the world.

Before the Tantai, the monk and the daoist knew it, they were transported out of the netherworld and back to the human world.

"This is...the human world!"

"We're...finally back!"

At that moment, all the Tantai were shedding tears of joy.

Tantai Guijing saw more.

"The curse...it's gone?"

The 20-year cycle had been a part of the Tantai bloodline for as long as they could remember. Now, it was finally gone forever.

"Could it be...that Tantai Mieming has succeeded?"

Tantai Juexin had a mixed look of disbelief and elation on his face.

"Everything wrong with the world...is right again?"

Daoist Sanmu and Master Kuhai looked astonishedly at each other.

"I did not think that our young Friend Fang Yuan was this formidable!"

Unfortunately, from this day onwards, no one would hear from Fang Yuan again.

In a blink, 30 years had gone by.

Time passed in the original world as per its original track, as if nothing out of the ordinary had ever happened before.

The widespread rumours of ghosts and curses were eventually proven to be fake.

The professional exorcists also found that the supernatural abilities that they had inherited or cultivated with great effort were leaving them. They became no different from the man on the street.

As more time passed, even within closed circles, talk of ghosts and curses became myths.

Only a select few knew that their world had once fallen into a bottomless abyss.

But the evil, fear, despair and struggle of days past were insignificant in the face of time's passage.

Years later, even the Tantai family had reintegrated into the masses. That person's name was gradually lost in history.

...

In the deepest recesses of the netherworld.

On a black piece of land, a mound appeared, then a hand.

"Whew..."

Fang Yuan exhaled and looked up at the quiet glimmering of the stars in the night sky.

"This is...the netherworld?"

He scanned his surroundings. The darkness of the environment made it a good resting place for spirits. It was a tranquil and forgotten place.

"This must be the true appearance of the netherworld. To think that the other world collapsed after the purple crystal was sealed up..."

Fang Yuan looked down at his naked torso.

A strange circular mark had appeared on his belly. The circle had a purple mark in the middle that it trapped.

"After a stalemate that dragged on for so long, I emerged victorious!"

Fang Yuan's mouth began to twitch and he broke out into heavy laughter.

That purple crystal was truly the highest form of energy in the Demonic Heart Realm. Sealing it had almost destroyed his body.

Nevertheless, he was not of this world and his stats had broken the scale. His regenerative abilities were stunning, which led to a stalemate. He had also been quietly aided by the World's Will, which had begun to awaken. After a protracted stalemate, he had finally managed to seal up the purple crystal.

Still, he had been seriously injured and found that he was not even able to move at all. Thus, he fell into a deep sleep.

When he had woken up, he had turned up right here.

"This was...truly a close shave. It's a good thing that I've reaped a great deal from this!"

Fang Yuan rubbed the mark on his body and received information from the Spirit Sealing Body.

"Original Energy?"

Cultivators who wanted to unlock the path towards supernormality had to begin by cultivating elemental force.

The martial artists had their own brand of elemental force, as did the spiritual knights. The same goes for the dream masters, who had dream elemental force!

Although dream elemental force was extraordinary, it was more similar than different with regards to elemental energy for they were both forms of energy that had been emitted from the origin of the world.

Original Energy was different. It was from the core, or even from a higher power!

It was the substance that held the laws of nature together. It was the essence of the world. It was everything!

Even though a small amount was left, it was enough to support the world. Not to mention that it continues to release lower forms of energy.

That purple crystal was Original Energy!

As long as it was still around, it would continue to give our dream elemental force. To Fang Yuan, this was an incredible thing.

"This does not tie in with the law of conservation of energy...wait a minute, the laws of nature are immutable...doesn't its existence prove that perpetuity is possible?"

Fang Yuan's eyes lit up.

If a perpetual motion machine could exist, then immortality was possible too!

Fang Yuan had finally come into contact with the edge of immortality.

"This trickle of Original Energy beats all of the energy that I have harvested from the core of worlds so far...they are all of inferior quality..."

Given Fang Yuan's experience in the harvesting of worlds, he could definitely tell the difference.

If energy from the other worlds could be seen as blood cells, then Original Energy was akin to the bone marrow!

It was able to create and change the world because Original Energy was the foundation for world creation!

"This energy is of the same level as the entity that stripped the path of dream masters in the Da Qian world!"

Fang Yuan's eyes gleamed brighter.

"The propagation of just a small amount of that energy led to the creation of strange curses and invincible ghosts...it can manipulate spacetime, cause and effect, dream worlds...because it is the origin and the end of everything. Thus, we can call it 'Original Energy'!"

If Fang Yuan could fully absorb the essence of this bit of Original Energy, he would undoubtedly be as powerful as the entity from the Demonic Heart Realm.

However, although he had given his all, Fang Yuan had only managed to seal this trickle of Original Energy. Even his Spirit Sealing Body had undergone some major changes.

Fang Yuan squinted and looked towards his stats board:

"Name: Fang Yuan (Tantai Mieming)

Essence: 100

Spirit: 100

Magic: 100

Profession: Exorcist

Technique: Exorcism (Peak), Pharmacy (Peak), Eagle Claw Grappling Technique (Peak)

Skill: [Medicine (Level 3)], [Botany (Level 6)], [Fiery Golden Eyes (Level 1)], [Spirit Sealing Body (???)]"

As he was focusing on the question marks on 'Spirit Sealing Body', they disappeared and gave way to a full description:

'The Spirit Sealing Body has been maxed out and has changed in nature. It has transformed into a new speciality — Body Seal! '

"Body Seal — Your physique can tolerate everything. Right now, it cannot be activated because it has sealed up Original Energy!"

"My skills have levelled up?"

Fang Yuan was silent for a moment.

"The evolution of Spirit Sealing Body into the Body Seal seems rather useless. Of course...this is because sealing up the Original Energy was a most horrifying experience. Also...I sense that the other 4 curses have been absorbed by the Original Energy!"

The Original Energy from the Demonic Heart Realm was overbearing, but Fang Yuan had no regrets.

After all, he had the source of these energy forms in his firm grasp.

Besides, the Purple Eye Realm was weak to begin with. If it had been the Da Quan world, it would definitely be more difficult to break its laws.

"When I recover fully, I will be able to challenge worlds!"

Fang Yuan clenched his fists and realised that he had never felt better.

The boundaries between the netherworld and the human world would no longer bother him. Just a thought and he would tear a hole in space and arrive in the human world.

He closed his eyes and extended the tendrils of his spiritual will. Suddenly, he felt a wave of desolation sweep over him.

"So...it's been 30 years?"

Chapter 543: Returning

The Da Qian World. Nine Extremes Mountain.

The Green Wood Sky Net Array sparkled. It was powerful yet calm at the same time.

Within the array, the Nine Extremes Mountain was covered in an abundance of greenery. Stalks of Yellow Grain Rice in the spiritual fields enjoyed rapid growth and brightened up the landscape.

As Liu Mengmei walked about in the fields, she suddenly felt a sense of tranquillity.

A human being's most basic needs were survival and reproduction. Survival would be ensured as long as one had shelter and food. In times of chaos, these were precious commodities.

People had begun to settle down comfortably on the Nine Extremes Mountain and there was no longer any talk of leaving.

"After this season's crop of Yellow Grain Rice is ready for the harvest, we would be more than self-sufficient. We would even be able to trade!"

Liu Mengmei did her calculations. Dream masters were more adept in agricultural techniques than one would expect them to be. They had to be, for they had to make preparations for their prosperous land and Hollow in the future.

From just a glance, she was able to estimate the yield of the fields. It was more than enough to fulfil her objectives.

"I have to say, the Yellow Grain Rice is quite an unorthodox crop..."

Meng Tian paced her from behind.

"The yield and growth rates of this plant are extremely high...Of course, nothing beats the Nine Extremes Rice cultivated by the mountain leader! 10 stones per mu is quite a shocking statistic!"

"I've heard that the mountain leader intends to spread the seeds of the Nine Extremes Rice plant all over the world. This would greatly benefit mankind!"

Meng Tian inquired expectantly.

"The Yellow Grain Rice may be great, but it is still the food of the dream masters. Can the average man afford to eat it?"

Liu Mengmei picked a flower and held it to her nose wistfully. As Fang Yuan's trusted subordinate, she knew things.

She knew that he had massive ambitions and had set his sights on the big picture. The little benefits brought about by a small trade like that was of no concern to him.

However, it would not hurt if he made use of the process of propagating the seeds to strengthen himself.

"Are you saying...that the Nine Extremes Mountain has been seeing an influx of refugees lately, as well as cultivators?"

Liu Mengmei raised a brow and suddenly had an idea.

"Having set up our temple in the Nine Extremes Mountain, we have to maintain the security of the region. The areas protected by the Green Wood Sky Net Array will keep them out, but there are other pieces of land that are available for settlement. We will only provide them with food and seeds if they recognise our authority and pledge allegiance to us..."

A large organisation would definitely have several subsidiaries. No matter how vulnerable and insignificant the mortals in the human establishments may seem, they provided the organisation with a constant supply of people and should not be discounted.

"Also...the Realm Alliance, Baize Mountain and other factions have traded with us before, but can't seem to stop putting on airs?"

Liu Mengmei laughed coldly.

"From today onwards, we will categorise our trade partners into tiers. A trade limit will be placed on reserved items and core products will only be made available to our most esteemed customers..."

All these were things that Fang Yuan had mentioned before, and Liu Mengmei merely reiterated them.

"The Dream Masters Alliance of the present day is virtually powerless and yet they continue to act tough! We need to assert our dominance over them!"

"Your wish is my command!"

Meng Tian nodded and bowed respectfully as he retreated.

"Sigh..."

Liu Mengmei was downhearted as she gazed at the Nine Extremes Mountain.

"The mountain leader...when will he finally come out of his closed-door cultivation?"

Suddenly, a noise came from the temple gates.

"Has Extreme Darkness returned?"

Liu Mengmei went over to receive the arrivals and saw that a group of people were indeed gathered at the temple gates.

"Sister Extreme Darkness...how did the deal go?"

She ran her fingers through her hair and approached them with a smile.

"It was alright..."

Extreme Darkness's face stiffened. On the Nine Mountains, Liu Mengmei was in charge of the agricultural affairs while she was in charge of security. Extreme Darkness also had the added responsibility of settling external dealings. However, Liu Mengmei seemed to have something against her and always tried to antagonise her.

"With the armed escort provided by the mountain leader as well as the protection of Ado's Demon Army, those small fries wouldn't dare to try anything funny."

Extreme Darkness rolled her eyes.

"What about you, Sister...still pining for the day the mountain leader comes out from his closed-door cultivation? Hehe..."

She had wanted to say more, but two rays of green light suddenly flew into their arms.

"The mountain leader has returned?"

Liu Mengmei was overcome with happiness and rushed towards the main hall without a second look at Extreme Darkness.

"Hmph! What a vixen!"

Extreme Darkness looked on as Liu Mengmei ran off into the distance and laughed. Then she paused for a moment before laughing even harder.

...

"What a dream!"

In the bathroom, Fang Yuan let the warm water cascade down his body as he stared at his reflection in the mirror. He was stunned.

"After passing through so many worlds, I sometimes wonder who I really am."

Fang Yuan rubbed his face.

The man in the mirror still retained his youthful looks and did not look a day past 30, yet he was already one of the most powerful men in Da Qian.

Still, the present Da Qian was a shadow of its former self.

Fang Yuan glanced at his belly.

A black mark with a purple spot in its middle had appeared there.

"All that I have gained in the Purple Eye Realm is here...why am I suddenly getting a sense of deja vu?"

He rubbed his tummy with a troubled expression on his face.

Saving a world was a phenomenal achievement. The energy from the core of worlds could potentially help him to break through to the 7th tier of the illusionary divine stage immediately!

But the Purple Eye Realm was a relatively small world. If it had been a larger and more ancient world, Fang Yuan would have joined the ranks of the sages by now.

Fang Yuan did not care for any more energy from the worlds though.

What mattered most to him was the Body Seal ability as well as the trickle of Original Energy that he had managed to seal up!

Thus, Fang Yuan had made use of the World's Will's desire to expel the Strange energies as well as utilise the gains he had made so as to send himself back to this world. He had even brought along with him the new Body Seal ability!

If there had not been a world-destroying calamity, how would the World's Will allow an outsider from another world to take on its heavenly mandate?

In other words, Fang Yuan had baited the World's Will with an expected return and forced it to hand over the mandate!

Although the real son of heaven had died before he was even born, Fang Yuan knew that the key laid on the Body Seal ability. As long as one possessed that ability, he would receive the mandate of Heaven!

"Having received this ability, everything else pales in comparison!"

Fang Yuan laughed and looked at his stats board:

Name: Fang Yuan (Tantai Mieming)

Essence: 100

Spirit: 100

Magic: 50 (100)

Profession: ???

Cultivation: True Divine, Area Being, Illusionary Divine Stage (1st Tier)

Technique: Pangu Eagle Body, [8 Gates Sword Array (???)], [Elemental Spiritual Energy Cultivation Spell (Grade 5 (Completed))]

Skill: [Medicine (Level 3)], [Botany (Level 6)(Peak)], [Fiery Golden Eyes (Level 1)], [Body Seal (Ultimate form)]"

The Body Seal ability from the Purple Eye Realm was supposed to be formidable even in Da Qian.

However, even in its ultimate form, it merely shone with a dim light. It was obviously out of use.

"This is the price to pay for sealing up that bit of Original Energy!"

Fan Yuan put on his clothes and let out a sigh.

In truth, he did feel burdened by the small amount of Original Energy that he had sealed up in his body.

"I'm already on the right path...this bit of Original Energy is definitely of the same level as the entity that had stripped the path of dream masters in Da Qian. I will continue to move in this direction!"

Fang Yuan had a hungry look in his eyes.

In time to come, he would fully absorb the Original Energy and come into contact with that incredible realm.

"Although there were some hiccups along the way, I've already milked the experience for all that it was worth!"

After he had come out from his closed-door cultivation, he summoned a maid and found out that only a short time had passed. He then ordered his breakfast to be served and went to inspect his staff.

In the main hall.

Fang Yuan put down the jade bowl in his hand and peered at the 4 people who had entered.

"Hmm...what's the situation outside like?"

"Please rest assured, my lord. All is well. But we've been seeing an influx of refugees lately and some of them are interested in joining our organisation..."

Liu Mengmei was the first to report.

"Also...Baize Mountain was very satisfied with the last trade we made with them. They are keen in dealing with us further and are especially interested in the spiritual rice...the Realm Alliance has been lying low but our sources report that representatives of the Evil Divine Sect have approached them for a deal of some kind. I smell a plot..."

Extreme Darkness had memories of her previous life and was hence uncommonly wise.

"A plot...what do you think they could be plotting?"

Fang Yuan's interest was piqued.

"Probably to work more closely together and establish an alliance!"

Extreme Darkness giggled softly.

"Hmph...we dream masters are reviled figures these days. Why would they hasten their deaths by doing something so high profile?"

Liu Mengmei was unhappy with Extreme Darkness and tried to refute her claim.

"The dream masters can finally catch a breather because of the disaster brought about by the demon spirits... after all, dream elemental force is very effective against demon spirits. If we don't take this

opportunity to regain our strength, we will be wiped out when the other forces in Da Qian come around..."

Extreme Darkness stared incredulously at Liu Mengmei.

"Sister, do you not understand something so simple?"

"Alright!"

Fan Yuan waved a hand. With him in charge, no one dared to say another word.

"The two of you have contributed much to our organisation..."

Fang Yuan's voice was calm but his heart was far away, beyond the Green Wood Sky Net Array. He could feel the rolling fields of Green Elemental Grass and the happy vibes transmitted from around the world.

With all these, he could regain his level of cultivation even without dream-traversing and strengthen the foundations of Nine Extremes Mountain.

"You are too kind, my lord!"

The two ladies acknowledged Fang Yuan's praise humbly but their eyes sparkled with glee.

"Don't worry, you two will be rewarded...let's not talk about internal matters first. Extreme Darkness, you are in charge of our external dealings. What is the situation in the current world?"

After the chaos at the start, by now, the surviving powers of the land would have resurfaced.

Chapter 544: The Trend

"The current world situation?"

Extreme Darkness ran her fingers through her hair and smiled uncomfortably.

"Not too good!"

"It is to be expected that the world would descend into chaos following the occurrence of the Demon Spirit invasion. As the saying goes, 'tough people rise during tough times'. Truly powerful factions would take this opportunity to consolidate their strength."

Fang Yuan wrung his hands.

"Has there not been any reaction from anywhere in the world?"

In truth, there were many underlying forces in Da Qian. While the power of the dream masters was declining, the spiritual knights and martial artists were waiting in the wings to replace them.

If the full potential for conflict of the entire Da Qian empire was to be realised, it would shake up the world.

Even though the Imperial Court and the dream masters were weak, they were still capable of putting up a good fight.

"Do elaborate!"

Fang Yuan said curtly.

"Yes, my lord!"

Extreme Darkness signalled for someone to fetch a map and her clear voice reverberated about the room.

"...After the battle in the Jade Capital, the dream masters were dragged down from their altars while the Imperial Court was destroyed. It was a devastating blow indeed! The Demon Spirits had overrun all 99 regions of the Da Qian empire. The Jade Capital in the Middle Region was the worst hit! The regions around it are now deserted following the massacre of every living person! The whole area has become a playground for the Demon Spirits!"

She picked up a pen and traced the outline of the nine regions in the middle of the map.

"This area, once home Da Qian's greatest cities, is now a huge graveyard...casualties number hundreds of millions. There is nothing left to be said..."

"Beyond the 9 central regions, things are more complicated. Although they have also been affected by the invasion of the demon spirits, they are still accessible by the regional armies. However, a large number of Demon spirit troops remain stationed in the wilderness and attack the cities from time to time...the most famous incident involved Wu Yue and Zhang Jin, who had their entire army annihilated by the Demon spirit army and lost their lives..."

"I am not surprised!"

Fang Yuan clasped his hands together and nodded. These two people had been backed by dream masters and given that their backers had collapsed, they would have been dragged down from their horses by the martial artists and spiritual knights even if they hadn't been killed by the demon spirits.

Perhaps that was what happened.

"Following the fall of the dream masters, a few factions emerged to fill in the power vacuum. They scrambled to acquire territory in the name of protecting the masses. Some of them have also engaged the demon spirit army in a few skirmishes, which reinforced their legitimacy!"

Extreme Darkness continued.

"Overall, the world now can be split into 4 parts. Let's not talk about the lands taken over by the demon spirits. A Martial Alliance has emerged in the north, comprising all the sects in the area. The organisation has managed to gather several top Wu Zongs and is headed by a True Divine...the lands of the north are barren and sparsely populated. The Dream Masters Alliance had not bothered to interfere in northern affairs back in the day. The Martial Alliance is working towards realising the potential in the North..."

Extreme Darkness spoke of this matter with disdain.

After all, the Dream Masters Alliance had indeed left the place alone. They had thought that it was a sterile land with no valuable resources.

"The Martial Alliance of the North?"

Fang Yuan was silent for a moment. He had never heard of this organisation but the North reminded him of the Qin siblings of Dongyi County in the Sand Region.

They were chess pieces that he had planted in the early days. Fang Yuan wondered at how they were doing, having been left alone for so long.

Although the Qin family was an influential clan in Dongyi, they would be helpless in the face of such a catastrophe.

"Hmm, we have two subordinates planted in Sand Region's Dongyi County...send our people to check out how they're getting along. If they're fine, then let's leave it at that. If not, ask them if they intend to move elsewhere!"

Fang Yuan made an expansive arm gesture.

The Nine Extremes Mountain was located on the southeastern part of Da Qian. Coming here from the north was a journey of tens of thousands of miles. Also, with the Demon spirits running amok, a large-scale migration was suicidal! Even if it was a small group, it would be extremely chancy.

Whether the Qin siblings would or could come depended on their level of determination and fortune.

Regardless, Fang Yuan felt that sending people to check on them was already a great display of benevolence. He saw no need to fetch them over personally.

"Yes, my lord!"

Liu Mengmei bowed and shot a challenging look at Extreme Darkness.

"As for the west, with the Fan Region in the centre, is witnessing the rise of a faction known as the God Seeking Palace! There are many True Divines and True Elementals from the Imperial Court in there. It has also been rumoured that Qian Huanyi and the Superior Wu Zun has joined them. The local government is under their control, their influence extends to the surrounding regions and they have even managed to secure the loyalties of the local militias. As a result, they have become insufferably arrogant!"

Extreme Darkness could not be bothered to entertain Liu Mengmei and focused on reporting to Fang Yuan.

"God Seeking Palace?"

Fang Yuan was slightly bemused.

"This place would be a perfect match for an old man on the brink of death who only knows how to sing ditties all day long."

"On the brink of death?"

Extreme Darkness was stunned. Although the folks from the Imperial Court were advanced in years, they had many more years to live by virtue of their solid cultivation.

"Don't mind me, go on..."

Fang Yuan motioned for her to continue. He had become warier.

God seeking! Their aim was probably to purge the world of their enemies. The ministers and generals of Da Qian did hate the royal family, but their enmity with the dream masters ran deep too.

"In the east...there are several petty factions who vie with each other for hegemony. Many rise and fall within a short period of time. The Demon spirits have largely left the eastern lands alone because of their proximity to the seas and they are now hotbeds of anarchy. If our organisation does intend to expand, we can definitely consider going east!"

Extreme Darkness offered a suggestion.

"Hmm, are there any other spheres of influence in the world?"

Fang Yuan clicked his tongue in disbelief.

"The two organisations that we talked about have occupied several regions. They have a structured hierarchy, strict discipline among their personnel as well as capable people. But they are still regional powers..."

Extreme Darkness shook her head.

"Other than these, there are two alliances to note. They do not have headquarters and control scattered territory, but their collective power cannot be underestimated!"

"One of them...is the old Dream Masters Alliance?"

Fang Yuan fiddled with the cup in his hand.

"That's right...although the dream masters have fallen off their altar, we have excellent qualities. As long we work hard, we can trigger breakthroughs and regain power. We can also make use of the legacy of our forebears to become great again."

"No matter what, it's all in the past..."

A faint smile played on Fang Yuan's lips.

If he chose to publicise his deductions, it would probably cause an uproar among the dream masters.

He would keep his secret for a while longer.

"What about the other one?"

"The last one is a union of spiritual knights...the Heavenly Spirit Association!"

Extreme Darkness was surprised even as she talked about it.

"This organisation was around in the days when the dream masters were still in power. Their web of contacts extended throughout Da Qian and was based on communication between the spiritual knights. They were also involved in trading activities. After the invasion occurred and the dream masters fell, they decided to come out of the dark!"

Fang Yuan tilted his head slightly. In terms of skill, the spiritual knights were second only to the dream masters.

If there was any group of people who could challenge the leadership of the dream masters back in the day, it would be the spiritual knights.

After all, there were many things that martial arts could not achieve. Spiritual spells, on the other hand, could accomplish results that rivalled the dream masters. They could even take on part of the research work.

Fang Yuan sighed quietly and made a mental note about the Heavenly Spirit Association being the Da Qian version of a Magic Masters' Association.

'In this case, the northern Martial Alliance would be a Warriors' Alliance. What about the God Seeking Palace in the West? An alliance of assassins? An alliance of remnants of the empire?'

Fang Yuan examined the map again.

The Martial Alliance, God Seeking Palace and the scattered factions of the east formed a large triangle. In the middle was the Dream Masters Alliance and the Heavenly Spirit Association. The Nine Extremes Mountain sect was but a speck in their midst.

Of course, these human factions took up less than half of the lands on the map.

The rest of the map had sunk into the ocean of demon spirits.

Human establishments might be able to surface in the lands of the enemy, but they would never amount to anything significant.

"The Dream Masters must be feeling so indignant."

Fang Yuan felt a wave of pity of them.

"They were once the most formidable organisation in Da Qian. Now, they have fallen quite far behind and might even be on the brink of destruction! I'd love to see the look on the sages' faces..."

If the Dream Masters Alliance descended into internal conflict once more, they would end up no better than the petty factions on the eastern coast.

"Looking at where the Nine Extreme Mountains are, the North is too far, the West is too cold and is currently being hampered by the demon spirits..."

Fang Yuan looked at the map.

"If we go to the middle we'll never return...seems like we can only expand towards the east?"

"Technically speaking, as long as we destroy the demon spirits wave after wave and settle the issue of the rations, we can expand anywhere we want..."

Extreme Darkness replied and smiled bitterly.

By now, the Demon Spirit army had swept across half of Da Qian like winter, causing all living beings to cower in fear of them.

Every other faction was retracting their forces and making plans to get through the dark times. Only Fang Yuan was thinking of expanding his territory.

"No matter what, being prepared is half the battle won!"

Fang Yuan gave a mysterious smile.

He was confident in his botany skills.

The entire Da Qian empire had crumbled in the face of the demon spirit invasion because of adaptability issues and the fact that the dream masters were not powerful enough.

However, following the propagation of the Green Elemental Grass, the world could finally begin to fight back.

Thus, Fang Yuan could take this opportunity to make some revolutionary moves!

Fang Yuan shut his eyes momentarily and he could smell change in the air. He giggled silently.

Chapter 545: An Old Friend

Fan Region, God Seeking Palace.

A layer of fog circled the above the mountain cliff. Qian Huanyi sat cross-legged and controlled his breathing, resembling a deity in heaven.

A flash appeared and Superior Wu Zun arrived with his hands behind his back, as though he had descended from above. "How's it?"

"I feel the same way too!"

Qian Huanyi composed himself. "The disturbed elemental energy and dream elemental force is beginning to settle down. It seems like the world is on the verge of recovery."

Both of them were among the best in their respective professions and had once been blessed by the realm's will before. Even after losing their positions, their senses were still as good.

"If that is so... The heavenly will is beginning to take action!"

Superior Wu Zun was elated.

"Even though the heavenly will is recovering, it is unlikely that the both of us will receive the blessings of the heavens once again! Are you still thinking of it?"

Qian Huanyi looked towards Superior Wu Zun and shook his head.

The both of them were blessed by the heavens previously because they had the support of the Imperial Court and the heavenly will felt that there was a need to keep the dream master sages under control.

Both conditions had to be satisfied. Now that Da Qian and the dream masters were severely injured, there was no longer a need for the heavenly will to bless and strengthen them.

"Hmph... It is always not wise to rely on others, for these benefits are only temporal, even if the entity we are relying on is the heavens!"

Superior Wu Zun scoffed. "After being blessed, both of us are as powerful as sages. However, at that point in time, our breakthroughs as martial artists and spiritual knights were restricted... Now that the restriction is lifted, we are free. Hehe..."

No matter what, the foundations of Da Qian would allow it to support the birth of countless sages!

Even Superior Wu Zun and Qian Huanyi had the possibility of becoming a sage!

Now that everything was settling down, they were tempted to try. Otherwise, they wouldn't have joined the God Seeking Palace.

"Among the energies of the realm, although dream elemental force is still the most powerful, it is unable to affect the other forms of elemental force. This is the time for martial arts and spiritual spells to become more powerful... Soon, we will be able to control our armies and attack the demon spirits."

As long as there was fair competition, these organisations were not the least afraid of the demon spirits.

After all, they were not stupid and were beginning to learn about the habits of the demons spirits.

"Naturally! Even as of now, there are only a few demon generals who can fight against us. I am already intending to test my skills on them!"

Superior Wu Zun clenched his fists and cracked his knuckles.

"It would be best if we can take them under control. However, these demons spirits are too cunning, and especially so for the demon generals. They have countless clones of themselves and it is almost impossible to wipe out every single clone of theirs....."

Qian Huanyi's eyes glistened.

He had a different plan from Superior Wu Zun.

'Now that the realm is recovering, I should follow the heavenly trend. It will be favourable if I am able to achieve a breakthrough and become a sage. Otherwise, it is also fine if I am able to unify the lands and rule over them, thereby allowing the heavens to bless me once more!'

Martial artists were all about brute force and overpowering others, while Spiritual knights were more sensitive to the environment, trying their best to be one with the realm. To Qian Huanyi, there was no difference in achieving a breakthrough or receiving blessings from the heavenly will.

Of course, he felt no need to tell Superior Wu Zun about his plans.

"Only..."

He changed the topic of discussion. "The realm is recovering very quickly! There must be something fishy going on. We have to check it out!"

They would be speechless if all of this was heaven's work. However, if it was the doing of someone, then that person would be competing with them to get the blessings of the heavenly will. This would put them at a disadvantage and they would never allow for that to happen!

"Hmmm, I find this weird too. Don't worry, the God Seeking Palace has already sent people to investigate!"

Superior Wu Zun scoffed. "These people don't seem to trust me though..."

"This is normal..." Qian Huanyi looked down. "Although they claim that they are serving us, they are merely using us as a deterrent factor. After all, it was a fact that we were once rather close to the Head of the Hidden Dragon Guards! However, it wouldn't matter... Everyone is plotting against each other, and we shall see who will have the last laugh."

...

In the heart of Da Qian, the Guang Region.

Tens of thousands of Demon Spirits resembled a black ocean as they surrounded a particular mountain.

"Leader, there is... There is the arrival of 8 Demon Generals, and even the 3-tailed Scorpion Lion is among them!"

In the ancestral hall, an elder reported the news, flustered.

"The Guangming Sect... have survived the oppression from the dream masters, and yet we cannot survive this?"

The leader of the sect, a True Elemental spiritual knight, seemed disheartened.

"Our location is not favourable. We are too close to the core of the demon army..."

"It's useless to say all this now. Gather reinforcements! After all, we are members of the Heavenly Spirit Association!"

"Heavenly Spirit Association? I don't think help will come in time... First of all, it will take time for us to get help. Secondly, all the members of the association have their own troubles to deal with! Who would be willing to help us?"

...

The elders were engaged in a heated discussion.

"Forget it!"

Finally, the leader made the decision. "Request aid from all our allies. We shall guard this place with our lives. On a separate note, how's the migration of the sect going?"

"Ever since the invasion, we have been already been making progress. We are now at the last stage!

All of them were not fools and could already predict the gloomy future, which explained their advanced preparations. "We have already made arrangements with the Martial Alliance in the North and the God

Seeking Palace in the West. Of course, the focus is still on the East! However, although the invasion of demon spirits is not so intense there, they have their own troubles. We..."

An elder hesitated and his intentions were obvious.

Everyone would want to survive and would not sacrifice themselves at the expense of a certain ideal! Furthermore, in these troubled times, organisations would still require combat power!

"Do everyone have the same sentiment?"

The leader looked towards the few elders. "You're right, we need people to take charge there. The few of you can leave... I shall guard the mountain, even if it means I have to die!"

There were already at such a stage and yet, the leader of the sect was still resolute.

"Leader..."

The few elders exchanged looks and were speechless as they took their leave.

After three days.

In a bright glow, the entire mountain disintegrated into dust and even the army of demon spirits was severely injured.

From afar, a few demon generals observed the scene.

"A human True Elemental has sacrificed himself and his entire sect..."

"Agusi is such a poor thing. Too bad he was unlucky to have led the army."

"Nevertheless, he has many magical clones and all of them have the potential to assume his main body. Death doesn't really matter to him..."

These demon spirits would have numerous magical clones. Some of them were snakes, while others were in the form of humans with octopus tentacles, but all of them were equally weird and unnatural.

"I feel that something is not right!"

Suddenly, a huge black silhouette as large as a mountain appeared.

It had the form of a black lion and had three scorpion tails coming out from its back. However, it had the head of a human.

"Greetings, Three-Tailed Master! You were saying..."

With its appearance, all the demon generals bowed down in respect.

"This world has increased its resistance against us... Although this is inevitable, it has come too quickly..."

The 3-Tailed Scorpion Lion roared and spat out a mouthful of grass from its mouth. "I've done my investigations and found this!"

"Eh?"

The demon generals gathered around and were all in shock. "This grass can indeed stabilise the natural elemental energy in the surroundings. Although it is harmless against us, it is putting us at a disadvantage, for it will strengthen them! Could this be a natural retaliation from the world?"

Although these demon generals were not evolved from demon spirits, they were as mature and were full of experience and cultivation, making them similar to humans.

"These type of grass have propagated quickly throughout the world and we cannot stop it in time. However, judging from how it had appeared, this seems like the work of man and not nature!"

The 3-tailed Scorpion Lion heaved a puff of white smoke which formed the map of Da Qian, before marking out a certain point on the map. "From the way the grass is spreading, it seems like the source must be among these few regions... In the future, they will be the ones leading the resistance against us. We must destroy them!"

"I agree!"

"Agreed!"

"This world will belong to us sooner or later! It belongs to the chaotic order!"

The demon generals agreed in unison and quickly came to a decision.

A new wave of demon spirits expansion had begun...

...

Nine Extremes Mountain.

Fang Yuan crossed his legs and started to explore the techniques of a dream master.

"To speak the truth, the dream master dao is extraordinary. Regardless if it is the 8 Gates Sword Array or any other paths, the final destination will be the same. One will be able to create beings and become a creator with power!"

After a few trades with the Dream Masters Alliance and understanding the information and secret techniques delivered from them, Fang Yuan began to grasp a new understanding of the dream master dao at an unprecedented rate.

"The only thing is... The foundation to all these is not sturdy enough!"

Initially, dream masters relied on dream elemental force and everything seemed lofty and unreliable. This was why the dream dao could be robbed off from Da Qian so easily.

Now, Fang Yuan felt that even the purest form of dream elemental force from the Demonic Heart Realm could not satisfy his needs.

Anyone who would encounter Original Energy would agree with Fang Yuan.

"It's a pity... If I were to use my Body Seal technique, I will bring trouble... I should not attract too much attention!"

Fang Yuan had to admit the fact that if not for his Body Seal ability, he would never dare to think of harnessing Original Energy.

"I can only use Original Energy as my goal in order to strengthen the foundations of dream masters."

Fang Yuan started to seem depressed. "I did not manage to fully explore it the previous time. Must I really explore another world? Where should I go? Everything in the vicinity has been affected by the Demonic Heart Realm and have become unpredictable..."

He felt that only he could have helped the Purple Eye Realm. If other normal dream masters had dream-traversed to the Purple Eye Realm, they would only die there. Even sages would be toyed with by the curses in the realm and would not have the chance to even encounter Original Energy!

"I should remain low-profile and explore a few other worlds to further improve the foundations of the dream dao..."

Fang Yuan felt troubled. It's a pity that Da Qian had shifted, resulting in all the initial coordinates of other realms to become useless... Considering my current cultivation level, I will still need to put in a lot of effort to locate the coordinates of other realms..."

"Mountain leader!"

At this point in time, after Liu Mengmei had obtained permission, she entered the room and seemed worried. "Outside... There's someone claiming to be your friend's sister, and she's here to see you!"

Chapter 546: News

"Sisters?"

Fang Yuan was slightly confused but recovered himself when he saw them.

"It's you two!"

"Greetings to the mountain leader of Nine Extremes Mountain from Ye Shuhua and Ye Shumin!"

The older Ye Sister smiled at Fang Yuan stiffly and bowed.

"Please take us in on account of our friendship!"

Fang Yuan had gotten acquainted with these two ladies back in the Changli Hollow. They had continued to keep in touch, with the sisters helping Fang Yuan to acquire the Nine Smelting Technique other resources.

Fang Yuan blinked and the memories came flooding in. He sighed thoughtfully.

In fact, the Ye Sisters were even more surprised.

"It's only been a few years since he entered the Realm Alliance and he has already achieved so much?"

Ye Shuhua gazed at Fang Yuan.

"If you would protect us in these dark times...we will no longer have anything to worry about..."

She decided to put aside the last vestiges of her ego.

"Protect you?"

Fang Yuan was silent for a moment.

"Why not go to the Realm Alliance?"

"You must be joking, mountain leader..."

Ye Shuhua smiled sadly.

"In the Realm Alliance, there are many who hope to take advantage of us...besides, after all these major occurrences, our network of contacts have dwindled greatly..."

'Seems like the Realm Alliance holds great danger for them. Has their last backer fallen as well?

This was to be expected after the savage battle of the Jade Capital!

It was incredible that the Ye sisters could survive till today and even manage to make their way to the Nine Extreme Mountain.

"I thought...we had agreed previously that we no longer owed each other anything?"

Fang Yuan's mental faculty was still very much in control even in the face of feminine beauty. He looked at Ye Shuhua.

"You must be prepared to pay a price if I chose to protect you, for I will potentially have to challenge the Realm Alliance as a result."

"How can you still fear the Realm Alliance with your level of prowess?"

Seeing that Fang Yuan remained unmoved, Ye Shuhua could not help but feel dejected. She realised that he would not give in unless an offer was made.

"After such an upheaval, we no longer have anything left. However, we have recently heard a piece of news that the Realm Alliance, Baize Mountain and the Evil Divine Sect have decided to form the Dream Masters Alliance with these three organisations heading it. The dream masters under their charge must follow their orders or die otherwise...how much is this piece of news worth?"

"It is not uncommon for an organisation to assert its authority by using violence..."

Fang Yuan shook his head.

"You will have to do better!"

"There's something else...do you know why The Ancient One, the grand sage of the Realm Alliance, is content with mediocrity and has not made any attempt to accomplish anything?"

"You have aroused my interest!"

The Ancient One was a scheming fellow. He possessed the cultivation of a spiritual knight and had attained the level of a higher being, yet he was secretive to the extreme.

The fact that he was lying low during a time of upheaval such as this did not make sense at all.

Unless he was conserving his energy and preparing for a large-scale operation!

"The Ancient One has been concealing himself because he has set his sights elsewhere...Fang Yuan, have you heard of the Ancient Realm? Where sages attain the highest level of consciousness?"

Ye Shuhua had a complex look on her features. Revealing this information would set her up against the sages.

Although there was probably only one True Elemental spiritual knight among the sages of the Realm Alliance, they had a powerful reputation that intimidated her.

"Oh? Go on!"

Fang Yuan was excited. He had designs on the Ancient Realm, even though the Heavenly energy of that world would be too strong for him to overcome. It was probably time for another try, now that Da Qian's coordinates were shifting.

"Ever since there had been changes in the Ancient Realm, the sages have been trying to access it. They were making progress until the battle of the Jade Capital happened, which forced them to start over. Thus, their plans were delayed!"

Ye Shuhua had wanted to incite a conflict between Fang Yuan and the Realm Alliance. This might make him more willing to protect them.

Fang Yuan believed her.

Among the dream masters in this world, only a few knew that Da Qian was shifting. This fact reinforced Ye Shuhua's credibility.

"How did you come to know about these secrets?"

The Ancient One making plans to conquer the Ancient Realm was not earth-shattering news, but the details would not be made available to every common member of the Realm Alliance.

"The Ye family is one of the founding families. Our family inheritance contains much valuable information..."

Ye Shuhua offered a rough explanation.

"If that's the case, you can pledge allegiance to the sage directly. No one would dare to cross the two of you by virtue of your status."

Fang Yuan asked them sceptically.

He was not a paranoid man but it always paid to be careful.

"Hmph...if only we could even see the sage. The only person we got to see was a disciple of the sage and he was a wastrel. He had hidden away during the battle of the Jade Capital and only emerged after to deal with us in the hope of gaining wealth and our bodies. We were not going to let him have his way!"

Ye Shumin answered angrily.

"Hehe...I see!"

Fang Yuan seemed to be expecting this answer, which made the Ye sisters blush.

"Alright, since you two have approached me for help, I can at least guarantee you temporary respite. We'll talk about the rest after I conduct my own investigations..."

Fang Yuan had made his decision. He then asked the sisters a final question casually.

"How far is the Ancient One into his research?"

"He has already figured out the time travelling problem for the dream masters to the Ancient Realm and has almost completed his calculations of the coordinates!"

"Tsk ts...no wonder the Dream Masters Alliance is ranked among the 5 Grand Organisations. Even after they had been dealt such a huge blow, the sages did not give up on their research and are now back on track."

Fang Yuan sighed repeatedly but was not surprised.

After all, the Realm Alliance was more knowledgeable than he was.

Besides, they had more than enough time to recover. After all, Fang Yuan himself had gone to and returned from the Ancient Realm in this span of time.

"What a pity...if it wasn't for the internal conflict within the Evil Divine Sect and if Baize Mountain hadn't gone under attack, the sages might have been able to pool their resources together and break new grounds in research!"

Fang Yuan waved his guests away. He had said his piece.

Liu Mengmei understood and immediately took the Ye Sisters to their lodgings.

"The Ancient Realm..."

Fang Yuan sighed.

That feeling that he had experienced the split moment before he left was one of a kind! He had felt like he was one with the realm.

'I've worked hard to gain the approval of the realm. I can't let the Ancient One harvest the realm's energy before I do..."

Fang Yuan was somewhat emotionally attached to the world.

For one, the Ancient Realm reminded him of the Former Qin era in his memories. On the other hand, it had accepted him.

The world had treated him as one of its own. This was a privilege that did not extend to visitors or intruders.

In other words, Fang Yuan saw the Ancient Realm as his right. Now that there was another hunter in the shadows, it was no wonder that Fang Yuan had become restless.

"Just as well. The Dream Realm has collapsed, leaving the Dream Alliance with no choice but to set up a temporary headquarters in the real world...I have to check it out..."

Fang Yuan was very interested in the dream-traversing techniques devised by the Ancient One for spiritual knights and the coordinates of the Ancient Realm indeed.

...

The Ye Sisters had made up their minds to break away from the Realm Alliance and were willing to tell him anything. They had also tried to egg him on to teach the disciple of the sage a lesson. But what they did not know was that Fang Yuan was targeting the Ancient One himself.

'The Ancient One is a tough nut to crack. Seeking him out would be an unpredictable endeavour. I might as well challenge him to a fight to the death!"

A plan was forming in Fang Yuan's mind.

Even the Lord Demon Killing Divine Pen of the Source Seeking Sect had been killed by him. He did not mind killing again.

If Fang Yuan had not been severely injured during his time in the Jade Capital, he would have massacred all of the sages!

After all, they would potentially become his enemies in the future! How could he let them off?

'The Realm Alliance isn't like the Baize Mountain and the Evil Divine Sect. It didn't use to have a headquarters, is loosely organised and does not have a strong defence system. It would be easy to deal with them!'

Fang Yuan had become bloodthirsty.

"The Realm Alliance's makeshift headquarters is at the Heavenly Eye Lake at Jin Region...although it is two regions away, the journey is manageable albeit troublesome..."

Fang Yuan's mind was made up and he passed down some orders to his staff before setting off.

"Every time this happens, I'll miss those flying beasts...so much for the Divine Lotus Cult being one of the 5 Grand Organisations. They can't even deploy flying spiritual beasts!"

Fang Yuan grumbled as he bashed his way through the forest.

He was not being fair to the Divine Lotus Cult. After all, they did not specialise in raising and training spiritual beasts.

Besides, even if there were flying beasts, then they would be deployed to the Jade Capital as transportation and die horrible deaths in the process.

All the high-levelled dream masters had already taken away all the items in the headquarters. Although Fang Yuan had taken all of the techniques along with him, Liu Mengmei had told him that it will take time to train the flying spiritual beasts!

The flying spiritual beasts of the Divine Lotus Cult were not simple creatures. Their fighting prowess could rival even dream masters of the Illusionary Divine stage.

"Hmm...it'll take time to convert my knowledge of the Divine Lotus Cult's techniques into practical power..."

Fang Yuan sighed. He had made his move too late.

"Hmm?"

A disturbance ahead had caught his attention. It was the violent oscillation of a wave.

"This vibration...it feels familiar."

Fang Yuan had wanted to ignore it but the sense of familiarity intrigued him. He followed the signs of the disturbance and found himself on the edge of a battlefield.

Chapter 547: The Black Roc Beast

This battlefield was seeing quite a bit of action.

There was a magnificent beast the size of a small mountain. It looked like a creature from the legends.

On its back was an inn-like building. It was, in fact, the Black Roc Beast that Fang Yuan had ridden on once before.

However, the Black Roc Beast now was in a terrible state. One of its wings was broken and it was unable to fly away. It could only thrash about on the ground as it defended itself against a large group of armed men.

"Black Roc! You won't escape this time!"

"If you surrender now, we might let you keep your wretched life!"

...

Profane taunts and jeers filled the air.

"Pui!"

Black Roc's exasperated voice floated out from the inn.

"I'd rather die than fall into your dirty little hands!"

'It's really him!'

Fang Yuan smiled lightly as he had recognised the voice of the specialised provider of long-distance flights.

'Although the most powerful man surrounding the Black Roc Beast was but a low-level Elemental Opening spiritual knight, the Beast was outnumbered and Black Roc's status as a former master of the

illusionary divine stage was of no help. It was all thanks to the resistance of the Black Roc Beast that they were still alive!

However, the Black Roc Beast was a flight carrier, not a war animal.

Still, it made use of the sheer size of its body to keep the bunch of spiritual knights and Wu Zong on their toes. They all scurried about like terrified rats.

"It's a pity that the Black Roc Beast has injured its wing or it would have escaped easily! But now, it is defending itself on the ground and will surely be overrun in time. There is something about the bird though..."

Fang Yuan shook his head as he saw the attackers rush up the back of the Black Roc Beast and into the inn.

Size equates to strength but would lead to clumsy movements. Now that the attackers had taken their chances, the Black Roc Beast was rendered helpless and could not oppose them.

"Wood of the heavens, wooden dragon! Go!"

The leader of the spiritual knights recited a magical formula which caused green light to surge from his body. Vines surfaced from the ground and twisted around each other to form a colossal green dragon that smashed its tail towards the inn.

"Crash!"

A deafening sound rang out as the windows of the inn were broken into pieces. Wooden splinters flew up into the air and large cracks swam across the walls. Still, the inn held on as it was protected by an array.

"Haha... Black Roc, let's see what other cards you have up your sleeve!"

The spiritual knights were gleeful instead of feeling frustrated. They knew that their opponent had nearly reached the end of his line. The leader signalled for his underlings to lunge forward.

"Charge! Tear this crappy inn down to the ground!"

"Xue Jing, you are too much!"

Black Roc's fat physique appeared at the door to the Inn, his dark face clouded with anger.

"We have no beef with each other. Why are you forcing me to a corner?"

"The dream masters are scourges of the world and deserve to be eliminated!"

Xu Jing waved a hand.

"Back when you dream masters wielded power, we were treated like scum. We will now return the favour ten times over. This is the karmic cycle. If you have any grievances, you will have to take them to the grave!"

"So you think you can do whatever you want as long as you are powerful?"

Black Roc took note of Xu Jing's words and he smiled deviously as the men advanced up the back of his Black Roc Beast.

"In that case...all of you shall die! Beastie!"

"Chirp!"

The Black Roc Beast, previously looking spent, suddenly let out a thunderous caw that threatened to split the skies.

A blood-red glow covered the Black Roc Beast's body and the texture of its tough feathers became soft like mud. The huge bird was swallowing up the attackers through its skin.

The reddish light illuminated the terrified faces of the Wu Zongs.

"Haha...did you think that my last line of defence was simply the array I placed on the Inn? My real weapon is the Black Roc Beast!"

Black Roc laughed devilishly.

"You are all going to become food for my Black Roc Beast."

As the attackers were melted away by the reddish light, the Black Roc Beast let out a satisfied call. The Black Roc was happy as well.

His Black Roc Beast had undergone an evolution earlier and had developed several bizarre abilities as a result.

The reddish glow was a protective layer around the Black Roc Beast's body that broke through defences and struck fear into hearts. It created swirls on the surface of its body that sucked in any live being that came into contact with it.

After this discovery, Black Roc put in much effort into training his beast secretly and turned it into his trump card.

Now that this ability of his beast was activated, Black Roc saw for himself how effective it really was.

"It's a pity that Beastie's ability requires prolonged contact on its body before it can be activated, or I wouldn't have to try so hard to lure the attackers up its back to the inn..."

Black Roc spat out a mouthful of blood and began to clear up the mess.

"Sigh...the Da Qian now is no longer the Da Qian of old. Perhaps I should move elsewhere. There will definitely be a place in the world for me to settle down in!"

Fang Yuan had watched the entire proceedings with much interest.

In a short time, the tables had turned. Black Roc had played his cards well and had put on a great act to crush his enemies.

"Who's there?"

Black Roc called out cautiously and looked towards where Fang Yuan was hidden in the bushes.

"An old friend!"

Fang Yuan emerged from his hiding place and leapt up onto the back of the Black Roc Beast smoothly with his hands behind his back.

The reddish glow was activated once more but it surrounded Fang Yuan to no effect.

"Black Roc hereby greets Your Excellency!"

Black Roc had found this person familiar upon first sight but decided to kneel down all the same.

This person was immune to the special ability of the Black Roc Beast, which definitely meant that he was powerful!

The ferociousness on Black Roc's face was replaced by reverence and watchfulness. He could not help but become worried that this person was another member of the anti-dream master faction. It was also a cause for concern that Black Roc could not remember where he had seen this man before even though he had a nagging sense of familiarity.

"An old friend?"

This young man with a confident grin carried himself with the airs of a grandmaster who had established a name for himself.

'I can't help but feel like I've met him before!"

After sifting through his memories, Black Roc finally had an inkling.

"You are...the fellow from the Realm Alliance?"

"That's right. My name is Fang Yuan!"

Fang Yuan replied beaming.

"What?"

The Black Roc had become wide-eyed.

"You are that True Divine from the Realm Alliance?"

Black Roc was actually aware of much more regarding Fang Yuan.

For one, Fang Yuan had played a major role in the battle of the Jade Capital that had routed the dream masters. It was even rumoured that he had killed two sages by himself! He was supposed to be a formidable character, a living demon-king!

Of course, Black Roc had always taken these rumours with a pinch of salt and only half-believed them.

After all, the sages were the elites among dream masters.

Still, as Black Roc gazed at the unfathomable Fang Yuan, he found that he had become more convinced of Fang Yuan's prowess.

"Are you afraid of me?"

Fang Yuan's smile widened.

"I am a lowly person and cannot help but tremble in the presence of such a great man..."

Black Roc tried his best to smile. He had years of experience entertaining guests in his inn and his smile was a convincing one.

Black Roc had given up on all his potential schemes upon learning that Fang Yuan was a True Divine. He had also calmed down for he did not think that Fang Yuan, being a dream master as well, would make things difficult for him.

'Wait...this Fang Yuan has no care in the world. He had dared to kill even sages. What am I to him?'

Black Roc could feel the bitterness in his heart threatening to overwhelm him.

'This must be the worst day of my life. Not only did I have to fend off a whole army of armed men, but I also have to deal with this devil now!'

"Right, who were those men?"

Fang Yuan asked casually.

"You're talking about Xue Jing. He was the leader of a nearby sect. He had recruited many people recently and was a rising force in the region..."

Black Roc grimaced indignantly.

"Even though he claimed to be affiliated with the Heavenly Spirit Association, who could verify that? He had taken the opportunity to ambush me. My poor Black Roc Beast..."

"Enough of that...if you hadn't let the Black Roc Beast pretend that its wing was injured, the men wouldn't have climbed onto its back."

Fang Yuan rolled his eyes.

"Also...you are a bold man for having built the inn on such a precarious spot!"

Even though the Black Roc Beast did not mean anything to him, Fang Yuan got goosebumps thinking about how he had spent nights on the back of such an erratic creature. There were so many ways things could have gone wrong!

"Hehe..."

Black Roc chuckled as beads of perspiration lined his forehead.

"Alright, I had only come to investigate the commotion and have no intention of taking revenge for those people!"

Fang Yuan was serious now.

"It's just as well that I am heading over to the Heavenly Eye Lake in the Jin Region. You can fetch me there!"

It was a command. Fang Yuan did not think that Black Roc would dare to refuse him.

Fang Yuan was right.

"Heavenly Eye Lake in Jin Region? No problem, we shall set off at once!"

Black Roc agreed readily and slapped the Black Roc Beast on its back.

"Chirp!"

The colossal bird flapped its wings. A reddish glow fell over the injury on its wing and it began to heal immediately.

'An ability that absorbs life force and saves it for self-regeneration...not bad at all!"

Fang Yuan nodded in approval and watched the world rush by as the Black Roc Beast shot up into the skies.

"It isn't every day that I get to meet a dream master. Go prepare some dishes and we shall have a good chat over a meal!"

Fang Yuan did not bother to stand on ceremony.

"No problem!"

Black Roc gave his trademark beam. He was an expert in the art of hospitality and had prepared an entire table's worth of premium dishes in no time. Fang Yuan began to dig in with relish.

"You are a good cook, fatty!"

Fang Yuan said with a wink between mouthfuls of food.

"Are you interested in coming to the Nine Extremes Mountain to become my cook?"

"Nine Extremes Mountain?!"

Black Roc was taken aback.

"So what they say true...Your Excellency is the master of Nine Extremes Mountain!"

"That's right...tell me, what do they say about me?"

Fang Yuan toyed with the wine cup in his hands.

"Do tell...I won't bite!"

Chapter 548: Escape

"The things they say about you?"

Black Roc's smile stiffened.

"About that...I'm not sure. All I've heard is that Your Excellency's mastery of martial arts and dream dao is matchless. A prodigy that only turns up once every few thousand years!"

"Is that so?"

Fang Yuan stared at him, eyes twinkling.

He was in fact very much aware of his own reputation. He had killed sages, which was an act of taboo as a dream master. He had also made a name for himself as a martial artist, which gave people a sense that he had been punching above his weight.

The martial artists, on the other hand, were jealous of his spectacular achievements in the dream dao.

Fang Yuan had virtually offended everyone and had thus achieved widespread notoriety.

Fang Yuan had not made things difficult for Black Roc though.

Black Roc was once a master of the illusionary divine stage but after his foundations had been destroyed, years of cultivation had all gone down the drain. He was left with only the cultivation of a dream-building master. It was a very long fall down indeed and his plight evoked sympathy.

This was the current state of most dream masters.

Unless they had a backer or switched to another discipline, they would have a very low chance of survival.

'Actually...the amount of dream elemental energy within Black Roc's body has not changed. It just lacks the direction of the dao, which is why Black Roc has been unable to utilise its full power...his current skill level is similar to that of an illusionist.'

Fang Yuan threw a glance at the Black Roc Beast and knew that if the creature had not been raised by Black Roc since young, he would not be able to control it given his current abilities.

"Mountain leader, if you don't mind, I am willing to pledge my allegiance to you!"

Black Roc was nervous as Fang Yuan eyed him calmly.

He would be an idiot if he did not choose to join Fang Yuan's ranks.

Back in the days when he was still in possession of his previous levels of cultivation, he could afford to become a lone ranger. But now, he would be courting death if he did not manage to find a backer for himself.

"Hmm...fly to Nine Extremes Mountains after you drop me off at the Heavenly Eye Lake and my men will receive you!"

Fang Yuan took out a jade token.

Fate had arranged their meeting and Fang Yuan did not mind helping a friend in need.

"I have travelled across the 99 regions and do know a thing or two about the world..."

Black Roc was eager to display his loyalty.

"Could I be of any help to Your Excellency?"

"You?"

Fang Yuan shot a glance at him and shook his head.

"No need...you may leave after you drop me off. I don't want to be held back!"

The location of the temporary headquarters of the Realm Alliance remained a secret. Dream masters of Black Roc's level would never be able to access it. Black Roc would never have thought that Fang Yuan was targeting the headquarters of one of the 5 Grand Organisations!

Even though the dream masters were weakened, it was still an unthinkable venture!

Nevertheless, Black Roc was a clever man and knew that given Fang Yuan's status, the fact that he was dealing with this matter personally meant that it was a pressing issue indeed. Thus, he dropped the matter entirely when Fang Yuan said that he did not require help. Fang Yuan was impressed with Black Roc's situational awareness.

...

The Heavenly Eye Lake had its vast waters enveloped in a fog. The waters were deep and fathomless. It was one of the Great Lakes of the Jin Region.

The headquarters of the Realm Alliance was hidden within. It was like looking for a needle in a haystack and there was no way that outsiders could trace it. Even the Black Roc felt lost when he had dropped Fang Yuan off.

The Heavenly Eye Lake had not been known to have any treasures. Why did the great Fang Yuan choose to come here?

But he understood the need for secrecy and knew better than to question Fang Yuan's decisions. He was not looking for trouble after all and left immediately.

"What a huge lake..."

Fang Yuan boarded a little canoe, which cut smoothly across the water without the aid of the wind.

"I would've gotten lost if the Ye sisters had not given me a specific address...what kind of story can I cook up for my purpose for this visit?"

After all, he was once a member of the Realm Alliance.

Even though the Realm Alliance has treated him harshly, it was not unreasonable for an organisation to haze newcomers.

Fang Yuan had killed two sages and if he orchestrated another massacre over here, his traitorous name would spread further and wider.

"Forget it, I shall conceal my identity and focus on eliminating the Ancient One...the world is in such a big mess. The demise of a True Elemental spiritual knight would not be unexpected. No one would suspect a thing."

This was the main reason why he had taken Black Roc under his wing. He had placed a tracker on Black Roc. No harm would befall him if he followed Fang Yuan's orders and flew back to Nine Extremes Mountain. Otherwise, Fang Yuan would see to his execution.

Having decided to kill anyone who gave him away, Fang Yuan could not be bothered to put on a disguise.

The operation was supposed to be undertaken secretly anyway. In the event he was discovered, he would fight! There was nothing to hide.

The best outcome was for Fang Yuan to find out where exactly the Ancient One was conducting his closed-door cultivation. He would then kill his target and escape immediately.

If he was harder to kill or had several lines of defence, then Fang Yuan would have no choice but to reveal himself.

There was nothing personal about this. It was just inevitable that they would cross paths.

The Ancient One wanted to utilise the power of the Ancient Realm to become one with the dao again. Fang Yuan, on the other hand, wanted to harvest the energy of the Realm to boost his own abilities. Their objectives were in conflict with each other and their conflict could only be settled in a death match.

'The Ancient One is a shrewd man. He knew that the Da Qian of today is not a good place to live in...he had begun to grow and expand his farmlands so that he can surprise everyone with his progress one day!

After the sky turned dark, Fang Yuan put on white robes and came to one of the islands on the lake.

On first sight, the island was no different from the rest. However, upon closer inspection, one could see buildings and spots of light lining the shore like stars in the night sky.

"The array set up over here...it's the Nine Skies Heaven and Earth Array. Although a superb and profound array, the person who set up the array did not have sufficient cultivation, resulting in the array not being able to keep higher beings out..."

Fang Yuan saw a ray of light and shook his head. He broke out into a laugh and wriggled his way through the array.

The protective arrays of Baize Mountain and the Evil Divine Sect were set up personally by the sages and maintained by many 7th tier masters of the illusionary divine stage. Those arrays would hold in the face of all sorts of disasters.

The Realm Alliance, however, was not as organised and was not housed in a fixed location.

Their array was a hastily set up one and was thus unable to unleash its full power despite its exquisite potential.

Fang Yuan could pass through the boundaries of the array as and when he liked.

"The Ancient One would be located at the core of the array. It would not be so easy to get to him!"

Fang Yuan turned himself into a spectre and walked about within the array. The patrolling guards did not manage to detect him at all. Slowly but surely, Fang Yuan moved closer to the heart of the island.

"The Dream Masters Alliance is planning a large-scale operation. It is currently gathering all the dream masters and consolidating all its resources. I doubt the Ancient One would want to miss this opportunity. I wonder what his choice would be."

Fang Yuan's level of cultivation was at the True Divine stage, making him one of the most powerful men alive. He had a 30% chance of succeeding in an invasion via brute force. Fang Yuan scanned his surroundings and locked onto a target.

"Is the Ancient One in that hall?"

An old bronze hall stood alone a short distance away. Closely woven runes formed chains that surrounded the building, which emitted a bright light.

This was an array that could block out higher beings!

"Whoosh!"

Fang Yuan's gaze hardened as he turned into a blast of wind and rushed into the array.

"Sizzle!"

This was the toughest part of the array and now that Fang Yuan had barged into it, a chain reaction went off.

The entire array was now an enraged beast and began to roar. Lines of runes floated out and encircled Fang Yuan.

"Kaboom!"

There was a jolt in the void and a great weight came crashing down on Fang Yuan's shoulders. The gravitational force in Fang Yuan's surroundings had increased by 9 times!

If it was not for Fang Yuan's invulnerable physical condition, he would have died a horrible death.

"Nice try..."

Fang Yuan exhaled nonchalantly. The attack had barely taken anything out of him.

"Crack!"

The rune chain around his body shattered into pieces. It was as if they had been used to hold a ferocious tiger, who had broken free after a token struggle.

"Who goes there?"

"Who dares to break into the headquarters of the Realm Alliance?"

"Where's the patrolling team? The elders must be alerted immediately!"

...

Fang Yuan's actions had launched the whole island into an upheaval.

Fang Yuan had already begun his assault and came before the bronze hall. He clenched his fists and threw out a heavy punch.

"Bang!"

The two great doors were blown apart, revealing an empty chamber.

Within the silent and mysterious hall, arrays and rituals were set up all over the place. An armillary sphere was placed in the middle and gave off a blinding light.

The Ancient One stood before the sphere and looked over at Fang Yuan with a stunned expression.

"It's you!"

A steely determination suddenly came over his face. The Ancient One bit down on his tongue and spat out a mouthful of blood on the sphere.

"Rotate!"

"Buzz!"

A ray of light sped up towards the heavens and tore open the dark skies.

"Hmm?"

In a flash, Fang Yuan had come to the side of the Ancient One and pressed a hand to his forehead.

"His physical form is lifeless now? How resolute of him!"

Fang Yuan was impressed by the Ancient One's cold decisiveness.

Upon seeing Fang Yuan, the Ancient One knew that he was going die today. Even with the entire Realm Alliance behind him, there was no escaping Fang Yuan given his abilities.

Thus, the Ancient One had sent his true aura through the armillary sphere and into a portal.

The dream-traversing of a dream master only involved a little of their true aura so that they would keep their physical form in the event they met with any harm. The Ancient One, however, had gone all in.

"In other words...the Ancient One had become a new time traveller! Travelling to the Ancient Realm?"

Fang Yuan rolled his eyes.

It was obvious that the Ancient One had not planned to do that at first. Fang Yuan's entrance into the hall was the triggering factor.

"When did I become such an abhorred figure?"

Fang Yuan rubbed his cheeks gingerly. His mere appearance had scared a sage into running away. Fang Yuan was speechless and slightly proud of himself.

Truly, if the Ancient One had been any slower, Fang Yuan would have destroyed the very core of his being!

Chapter 549: The Armillary Sphere

"Did someone break into Star Hall?"

"It was probably a higher being, a Martial True Divine or a True Elemental Spiritual knight!"

The island had descended into chaos as the all the dream masters in the Realm Alliance were activated.

In the past, a True Divine or True Elemental spiritual knight would not be too hard to for the dream masters to deal with.

For example, the Elder Smelter dared to challenge the Venerable Longhu all those years ago because of his latent power.

However, times had changed!

"Bang!"

In the midst of all the commotion, a deafening sound rang out from the bronze hall.

A gaping hole had been torn into the rear wall of the bronze hall. A dark shadowy figure had sped out at a blistering speed and there was no way anyone else could keep up.

Of course, it was not like they wanted to or dared to chase after the shadowy figure either.

"Given that he had broken through the Realm Alliance array, could this True Divine be targeting a sage?"

The few remaining elders streamed into Star Hall and saw that the armillary sphere in the middle of the chamber had disappeared. A large hole lay in the place where it had once stood.

Beside the hole lay a dried up corpse. It was that of an old man and the elders could see from the clothes it was wearing that it was the Ancient One!

"The Ancient One...is dead?"

A dream master fell to the floor in a daze.

The dream masters being swept off from their altar was already a huge blow. Now that their foremost sage had fallen, the implications were unthinkable.

"Pass down orders from the elders' council. This hall is to be sealed up! No news is to be leaked out!"

"Not even a word!"

An elder who had recently been promoted sucked in a breath of cold air. He turned around with a stern look.

"What we're looking at right now is the shell that the great sage left behind. The great sage has gone to dream-traverse through the three thousand worlds!"

"Yes! That's right!"

The other elders looked at each other furtively. They knew that if news of this matter got out, the Realm Alliance would fall apart.

"Also...who's the murderer?"

The elder bent down to examine the Ancient One's corpse suspiciously.

"Not many people in the world could make it past the array placed on or perimeters. There are only a few left after eliminating those who have retreated..."

He then thought to himself:

'Unfortunately...whoever it is, the Realm Alliance is not in the position to offend him.'

"Elder Song, what do you suggest we do? We are all behind you!"

The core leaders among the dream masters exchanged a look with each other and agreed unanimously.

"Excellent. The most important thing we should do right now is to stay united!"

Elder Song's eyes gleamed.

"We shall spend this time on consolidation and keeping to ourselves. If this piece of news were to leak out, Baize Mountain and the Evil Divine Sect would take the chance to wipe us out!"

Being on different parts of the hierarchy would beget different perspectives.

To others, halting the Realm Alliance's expansion of influence might be a bad move but Elder Song saw this as an opportunity.

As long as he could reinforce his personal authority and gather all the forces of the Realm Alliance to his side, he would become a hegemon in his own right!

Even if he could not do that, wielding some degree of power in the Realm Alliance would ensure that he was well-regarded no matter whom he chose to ally with in the future!

If necessary, he would use the entire Realm Alliance as his bargaining chip.

He had learnt a great many things from having clawed his way up from the bottom!

...

"No one actually bothered to chase after me. The Realm Alliance has reached a new low..."

Fang Yuan had reached the shores of the island and boarded the little canoe unhurriedly. He did not know what to feel as the lights of the island faded into the distance.

The Realm Alliance was loosely organised and relied on the Ancient One together with his team of 7th Tier Illusionary Divine dream masters to maintain order.

The Ancient One had held on to his power despite everything by virtue of his coolheadedness and his status as a True Divine spiritual knight. He was a wily man indeed.

With their stabilising figure gone, it was inevitable that the Realm Alliance was going to fall into disarray.

"My failure to kill the Ancient One will lead to many more problems in the future!"

Fang Yuan decided to stop over at one of the deserted islands, where he found a cave to settle down in. He then took out a few crystals to illuminate his dark surroundings.

Immediately after, he produced the Mountain River Pearl and tilted it gently.

"Kaboom!"

The world around Fang Yuan began to tremble as a simple looking armillary sphere fell to the ground with a dull thud.

This armillary sphere had a bronze base and many runes were inscribed on it with intricacy and precision. There were three large rotating bands held together by a golden bearing.

"Heaven and Earth will define spatial dimensions..."

Fang Yuan muttered to himself as he ran his fingers along the armillary sphere.

"The three rotating bands represent the three-dimensional world...the golden bearing is the long river of time that connects the past to the present...is this what the Realm Alliance had in mind when they designed the armillary sphere?"

Fang Yuan had many achievements and becoming one of the great academics of his age was one of them. Now that Fang Yuan got to examine the latest product of the Realm Alliance's research, he realised that it reinforced the accuracy of much of his knowledge. It was a beneficial experience for him.

"This armillary sphere serves as a calculator of realm coordinates...through deduction, we can obtain the coordinates of the worlds beyond Da Qian!"

Fang Yuan thought for a moment before placing his hand on the machine and exerting elemental energy on it.

"The Da Qian world has shifted, thus rendering all the calculated coordinates useless. Even the Dream Master Astral Projection Technique had been compromised. But the Ancient One had managed to devise an alternative in such a short time!"

With the sturdy injection of dream elemental energy, the whole armillary sphere began to glow up in a multitude of colours.

"The Ye sisters had made an error though...the Realm Alliance had not created a new method for spiritual knights to dream-traverse. They still have to use dream elemental energy as well as rely on specialised equipment..."

As Fang Yuan stood thinking, the armillary sphere came to a halt. A dark gap had opened up in thin air where dim spots of light could be seen from within.

Fang Yuan also felt a sense of closeness and belonging.

"This feeling of familiarity can't be wrong. It must be the Ancient Realm!"

Lights had begun to dance in Fang Yuan's eyes but he held back from travelling immediately.

"This is the last coordinate that was set on the armillary sphere. It seems that the Ancient One's intended destination was the Ancient Realm...he managed to secure access to the realm because he had gambled on it using his life essence. It was also because the arrays in Star Hall aided his efforts..."

Fang Yuan could not match the Ancient One in terms of resources but Fang Yuan had his own strengths too.

His level of cultivation was unaffected and he could simply make use of the traditional method of dream traversing as long as he had the correct coordinates.

"But...the Heavenly Eye Lake has been seeing quite a lot of action lately. This entire place is within the territorial confines of the Realm Alliance. After causing such a huge commotion, there would probably be a thorough search conducted in the nearby islands. Wouldn't I be looking for trouble then?"

Thus, it was still necessary to find a suitable place in which he could settle his physical body.

Fang Yuan did not even consider Nine Extremes Mountain an ideal location.

Although the defences there were strong, it was a place that was not difficult to locate! It was a place that could capitulate if one had the resolve and resources to make it happen!

"When a true BOSS goes into closed-door cultivation, he does not tell anyone nor stay at his old quarters. Otherwise, this might give others a chance to prey on him...many have died from their carelessness regarding this issue throughout history."

Fang Yuan laughed coldly.

He knew that he probably would not be too concerned if he came out of his closed-door cultivation to find that Nine Extreme Mountain had been destroyed.

As long as there were people around him, he would be able to rally them to his side.

"The Ancient One actually dared to make such a gamble. Could it be that he had made a new discovery?"

The Ancient One had left Fang Yuan fuming at his actions.

There was nothing wrong with dream masters engaging in dream-traversing but the Ancient One had betrayed Da Qian with his actions!

Heaven's Will would punish him in due course!

To some extent, Fang Yuan had forced the Ancient One to make that gamble. However, Fang Yuan had a feeling that the Ancient One had already been entertaining the thought of it for a while. Fang Yuan merely provided the decisive push.

"To be honest, I can't say that it was a wrong decision..."

Fang Yuan let out a long sigh.

The Da Qian world had undoubtedly moved towards the Demonic Heart Realm. Fang Yuan had already done his best by growing Green Elemental Grass all over the place.

The Purple Eye Realm had been salvaged from the world-ending crisis but there was no guarantee that there would not be a second time.

As long as the source in the Demonic Heart Realm continued to exist, there was no running away!

"Da Qian has been tainted by the Demonic Heart elemental energy and can no longer break free. However, there is still hope for the Ancient Realm! Especially...since the Ancient One had lost his sage title and became a True Elemental spiritual knight. He has nothing to lose."

"He had taken this opportunity to escape Da Qian and the influence of the Demonic Heart Realm. He also managed to harvest some of the Ancient Realm's energy. Who knows, he might even regain his sagacity."

Fang Yuan had grasped the Ancient One's plan and found it to be sound. It was a rather impressive attempt to start anew.

No matter how powerful the higher beings or sages were, they would abandon ship if the ship they were on met with a mishap.

"To think that I had forced the Ancient One to strengthen his resolve."

Fang Yuan had mixed feelings about this.

The fact that the Ancient One was willing to gamble probably meant that there was a good chance that he might succeed. He had given his everything to the Ancient Realm and had won its favour as a result. The Ancient Realm now treated him the same way it treated Fang Yuan.

They were on level ground now.

Their progress in the Ancient Realm would reflect their true abilities.

It went without saying that Fang Yuan did not fear the Ancient One at all.

The Ancient One was not even Fang Yuan's match back in Da Qian, much less in the Ancient Realm.

The key was to be quick!

It was a race against the clock. The goal was to prevent the other party from harvesting the world's energy by seeking out his physical body and destroying it first!

Without hesitation, Fang Yuan kept the armillary sphere before disappearing into the night.

Chapter 550: The Last Witch

The Ancient Realm.

The feeling he got arriving at this place was very different from the last.

The world's defences were sturdy and had solidified into a tough wall that rejected all foreign visitors.

'The dream masters might be resourceful but they will find it extremely difficult to gain access to this world!'

Fang Yuan's willpower manifested into frost flowers that floated downwards in the air. His thoughts ran wild.

He had long been accepted by this world, which was akin to having a green card that allowed him to come and go without resistance.

'The Ancient One probably wouldn't be in the best state right now...of course, his gamble involved the abandonment of Da Qian in exchange for the Ancient Realm's acceptance.'

'The other dream masters could only hope to achieve this by paying a most painful price!'

'The last time I was here, there was a big war fought between the Xia Tribe and the Jiuli Tribe. Both sides suffered huge losses - the Xia capital sank while the Jiuli Tribe was vanquished...I wonder what the world is like today. Do the tribes of Fang Mountain still exist?'

The speed of cogitation was alarming.

In a blink, Fang Yuan's consciousness had fallen instinctively into another body.

"My head hurts!"

Fang Yuan flipped himself over and climbed out from a pile of corpses. He shook his head.

His last memory was that of numerous flags against the sky and blood and steel on the battlefield.

"Jie...is that the name of the body I've taken over?"

As the last bit of his consciousness adapted to this body, Fang Yuan stood up with a slightly heavy heart.

Bodies lay on the ground for as far as the eye could see and the ground ran red with blood. The setting sun cast shadows of a broken war chariot decorated by a half-burnt flag. The symbol on it was barely visible—a black swallow!

"Cuckoo! Cuckoo!"

Countless of crows circled overhead, delighted by the ghastly feast beneath them.

Dogs and jackals convened on the ground, their eyes darting about. They were uninvited guests.

"This war isn't over yet!"

Fang Yuan picked up a spear and looked at the bronze blade as he drew his own conclusions.

In this era, bronze was an essential resource in production and war. No matter how powerful the faction was, they would not be as wasteful as to leave their weapons lying around, not even the broken ones!

Unless...the war had not ended and this was only one of the battlefields!

"Bronze? Fine iron?"

Fang Yuan could see bronze swords and iron swords lying about. He shook his head.

"Seems like not much time had passed since the last time. At least iron hasn't made bronze obsolete yet!"

Regardless of whose body he had taken over, Fang Yuan had no intention of staying on. He took a cloak off one of the corpses and pulled it over himself. After Fang Yuan had retrieved a fine iron sword lying inside the chariot for himself, he quickly left the battlefield.

Fang Yuan's tall and muscular physique, coupled with the fact that he was armed, deterred the teeth-baring jackals from messing with him. Besides, there was more than enough food lying around.

"We have to find a place to settle down...also...although this body was only knocked unconscious, it has many little wounds that require medical attention!"

Fang Yuan rubbed his temples.

At this moment, pieces of memories, as well as some dregs of feelings, assailed his senses. He had no desire to fight on.

"The most important thing is to figure out the context of the war and which side this body belonged to. Otherwise, I might die without knowing anything..."

Fang Yuan walked away from the battlefield with a smile playing on his lips.

"Will intelligent species, no matter where and when, never be free from the shadows of war?"

...

This battlefield was located in the middle of a valley. As Fang Yuan walked deeper into the mountains, he felt much more at ease.

Although the area was teeming with venomous snakes and ferocious animals, there was no way a conventional army would be able to advance so deep in. His safety was largely assured.

As for small-scale forces, Fang Yuan would be able to dispatch them with no trouble.

"Splash!"

Fang Yuan had come across a gurgling stream and began to wipe the blood stains off himself. He was thinking more clearly now and worked to organise the memories of this body that he was in.

"Jie--a citizen of Shangyi, was part of a force tasked to invade Dongyi..."

Fang Yuan had accessed the most important information regarding his body's identity.

"Shang Dynasty? According to Jie's memories, Shangyi was a large city. Its founders were of godly blood. Later, Shang managed to defeat the last leader of Xia and claimed supremacy over all the tribes and cities in the land. Thus, it became the Shang Dynasty..."

Fang Yuan looked slightly confused.

"The Shang came after the Xia? Followed by a revolution led by King Wu? Wait a minute, among the 800 cities, there seemed to be one called Zhou..."

Fang Yuan could feel the weight of history bearing down on him.

"I wonder where the Ancient One ended up. He won't recover his powers so quickly and would be planning his next move while concealed in the shadows."

Fang Yuan became solemn as he thought about his target.

"He has no idea that I'd be following so close behind. This is the best chance to catch him unaware!"

The Ancient One had abandoned his old physical form so as to keep his life. He had thrown himself completely into the Ancient Realm and would never return.

He had only done it because he was confident that Fang Yuan would not dare to match his bet.

After all, even if Fang Yuan had acquired the armillary sphere as well as the coordinates of the Ancient Realm, he had to inject the entirety of his true aura like the Ancient One into the realm in order to avoid facing rejection.

Any rational dream master would never do that!

Hence, the Ancient One thought that he had lots of time to scheme behind the scenes.

However, what the Ancient One did not know was that Fang Yuan had long gained the approval of the Ancient Realm and was able to access the world without any trouble.

Both of them were now shrouded in darkness. Now they had to see who would emerge before the other.

"The War of Dongyi..."

Fang Yuan lapped up some of the mountain spring water as more memories surfaced in his head.

The Shang had ruled the world for 500 years at this point and bubbles of unrest were beginning to form. A new Shang King had just ascended to the throne and was a hero of the times.

The Yi in the southeast had revolted and the King had sent out his troops to deal with the turbulence.

Jie had lived in Shangyi at the time of the call-up to war.

Unfortunately, a flying rock had hit him on the back of his head on the very first battle of the war and he had keeled over.

If Fang Yuan had not dream-traversed to take control of his senses, he would have been dead.

"Strictly speaking, Jie has a rather good constitution!"

Fang Yuan examined his reflection in the stream. It was that of a tanned young man with thick brows and large eyes. A brown cloak was draped over his muscular body.

What struck Fang Yuan most was the golden glint of light in his eyes.

"The blood of the witches is active in this world. It is its world after all..."

In actual fact, most of the higher-level bloodlines are intertwined with the soul. This gives rise to the possession of special abilities that are non-transferable, not even through blood transfusions or body switching.

Their true auras had been marked!

Thus, in the Purple Eye Realm, the Tantai family was unable to get rid of their curse through the possessor technique.

In this world, although Fang Yuan had a different physical form, the blood of witches continued to define his being.

"That's right!"

Fang Yuan cracked his knuckles.

"With this bloodline, I'll grow more rapidly than the other humans. I'll be able to strengthen my abilities and revive the divine technique of the witches."

Fang Yuan glanced at his stats board:

Name: Fang Yuan

Essence: 1.5 (100)

Spirit: 0.9 (100)

Magic: 5.0 (100)

Profession: ???

Cultivation: ???

Technique: ???

Skill: [Medicine (Level 3)], [Botany (Level 6)(Peak)], [Fiery Golden Eyes (Level 1)], [Body Seal (Ultimate form)]"

"Hmm? Even the Body Seal is here?"

Fang Yuan was slightly confused and looked at his belly.

A black mark with a shining purple spot in the middle of it had appeared.

"Is this the real thing...or is it an illusion?"

Fang Yuan shook his head and removed his doubts.

The Body Seal carried with it the original energy of the Demonic Heart. As with distinguished bloodlines, it was intertwined with his true aura.

This meant that if the seal broke one day and unleashed the Original Energy, Fang Yuan would never be able to escape its wrath even if he possessed another body.

No matter how many physical forms he took, he would die immediately with no exceptions!

All his methods of self-preservation would be rendered useless.

"Unless..."

Fang Yuan thought hard and had an idea.

"This sort of energy has a power that transcends the laws of nature! Is it an absolute truth? What kind of concept is this?"

Fang Yuan was deep in thought for a moment before his ears suddenly pricked up. He picked up a stone and threw it outwards with all his strength.

"Crack!"

The stone whistled through the air and landed deep into the bushes.

It had hit a dark figure at the back of its head and it collapsed onto the ground. Fang Yuan pulled it up by its ear.

"I was just thinking about dinner and here it is."

This unfortunate fellow was a grey rabbit. Its life was over the moment it had encountered Fang Yuan. Fang Yuan cut its throat to drain its blood and skinned it before he roasted it over on a spit.

"There are a few cultivation methods in the Ancient Realm. It is not a good idea to tap on the methods of the Xia Tribe because they carry with them the marks of the other worlds. Hence, my only viable path is probably to use the witch path."

After he had eaten his fill, Fang Yuan sat cross-legged and took in a deep breath.

The blood of witches coursing through his veins was amazing. It was actually gaining strength.

"After all, this is truly the blood of the witches. I will have to carry on their legacy..."

Although the Jiuli Tribe in the Ancient Realm had gone extinct, their bloodline, albeit diluted, lives on. Hence, most of the tribes carried Jiuli blood in their bodies to some extent.

From a cultural aspect, their civilisation had been assimilated. The tribe had been annihilated.

Now, Fang Yuan, who carried the blood of the witches as well as the weight of their legacy, was the last witch of this world!