

## Daily life 271

### Chapter 271 Special Appearance

After his brief silent prayer and apology, Yang Qing straightened his robes out of a force of habit, completely ignoring the fact that he was wearing a saint-grade treasure.

What were the odds that a robe of such a caliber would have creases on it?

But it didn't matter, straightening of the robes was a long-standing tradition that has been observed for eons and eons, who was he to break away from such a well-respected tradition?

After he felt his robes were straightened enough, and his demeanor and air were suited to the moment, he decided to get along with it. He had decided he was going to keep it brief and to the point and as for the rough nature of what he was going to say, he decided to go with what he had trained himself to do over the years, especially to survive a mighty foe, like the Order.

"Bootlicking it is," Yang Qing murmured to himself as his gaze fell on the crowd.

"As many of you know, I didn't come from a well-off family, the results I have today would have not been possible had it not been for the intervention of the Order.

I wouldn't be the person I am today, had the Order not opened its doors to me and for that, I Yang Qing, I'm deeply grateful to have received a kindness and a grace that I did not deserve.

You clothed me, educated me, gave me a purpose I did not know I needed, I have had seniors who have constantly pushed me to be the best..." Yang Qing paused here as his gaze fell on old fiend Lei Weiyuan who had the same austere look he always had on, except for one thing, a light smile appeared briefly and disappeared just as fast.

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As this was going on, Yang Qing's mother, grandfather, and other elders of the Yang Clan were throwing death glares at him.

"Mai'er, you raised a fine son, alright. He really knows how to speak up for his family."

"Yang Fen you have failed as a grandfather, you old coot. Look at what your grandson is saying, making everyone think we raised him in some cave with no clothes, all his life,"

"At least I have a grandson up there, where's yours?" Yang Fen not willing to be outdone, threw a few of his words at the mocking elders.

"Wunlai, don't you dare move!" said Mai Ha to an early forties man seated next to her and Yang Gen.

He had a bookish aura to him, and a matching build too. He was slender and tall, and bore a facial similarity to both Yang Qing and Yang Gen. He was Yang Qing's and Yang Gen's father, Yang Wunlai.

Yang Wunlai sensing his wife's faint murderous intent, quickly sat down, with a sheepish smile on his face. This was the first time in a few years he had been close proximity to his father, and Yang Qing's grandfather, Yang Fen.

He had half a mind to miss the ceremony, but he knew he would suffer a far worse fate from his wife, than whatever he was afraid his father would do to him. But even if he agreed to come, he was still unnerved the whole time, especially after he was informed about his father's research with the reversion pill. He was dead set on avoiding his father for the rest of his life, or breakthrough to the palace realm soon.

"I'm sorry brother," Yang Gen whispered in an apologetic smile when he saw Yang Qing's mildly embarrassed look when his gaze fell on his family creating a ruckus. His grandfather was already pulling beards with the other elders, and his father looked like he was about to be elbow locked by his mother.

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"Can't they let me have a peaceful day for once, without creating a scene," Yang Qing thought as he saw the whole fiasco.

He decided to continue with his speech and pretend he didn't notice anything.

"I'm still young and immature and know despite my result no matter how glamorous they seem, there is still a lot to learn and I hope my seniors will continue to lend a hand and guide me on how to be a proper judge of the Order....,"

When he reached this point, his gaze conveniently fell on Hou Dehui, the inner domain court judge with star-shaped irises and five pupils on each eye. His gaze then immediately switched over to where Lin Guiren one of the founders of the Golden Bamboo Pavilion had sat. His hint couldn't have been louder.

Senior I leave the Golden Bamboo Pavilion to you. Your handsome junior needs your help

"I know being an outer palace court judge will not be easy and will come with its challenges and demands, but I will endeavor to commit myself wholly to ensuring the precepts of the Order and its guiding principles are observed.

To those who have come today, I am humbled and deeply thankful for your presence today, I will not forget it.

I wish you all good tidings in the days, months, and years to come, and may the Order see you through your darkest of times.

Thank you all," Yang Qing said as he performed a ninety-degree bow.

He remained in that position for almost ten breaths and then raised his head.

Immediately he did so, a gentle voice sounded,

"Yang Qing's promotion; acknowledged, approved, and commended. All the best, young one.

Little Ye, I leave the care of our friends to you. Su Liqiu will also be in attendance in my place. Well then, I'm off, take care,"

Everything within the area from the people to the sky, the ground, and even the spiritual qi seemed to vibrate with excitement the moment the voice appeared and went back to normal the moment it disappeared.

"The president is the president," Yang Qing thought to himself in admiration as he observed the impact just a voice left on the crowd.

The president of the Order, the leading figure in the whole organization but very few people have ever seen him. Only his gender was known, but everything else including his name was shrouded in mystery. Yang Qing at times wondered if there was a reason to it, or if it was purely a calculated move to create an unfathomable figure so steeped in mystery to keep the numerous organizations within the Southern Continent at bay.

Chapter 272 Teacher To The Domain Experts?

Even if he has never been seen, he does make an 'appearance' at every ceremony, like he did now. No matter if it was a student freshly graduated from the Institute about to start at the core formation courts or a judge being promoted to the domain courts, the president always sent a congratulatory and approval statement and his voice would always have the same effect on everything present, including even the inanimate objects.

The two elders of the two Holy Lands along with the disciples of their sects had widened eyes that were filled with shock from that brief experience, especially the two elders. It was one thing for the disciples to be affected by that voice, especially those in the palace realm. If they wanted to, they could do the same thing, but they were surprised to discover that they were also affected by that voice.

They were soul formation experts, the realm commonly accepted to be the peak realm within the whole Southern Continent, and to boot they were soul formation experts from Holy Lands which meant they were a cut above the rest even other soul formation experts, but they were as defenseless as the qi refinement guests when the voice hit them.

That reality of events sent shockwaves through their hearts. The higher one's realm was, the more one understood of such implications. To the qi refinement cultivator or even core formation cultivator, they'd easily brush it off and think it was an exciting experience, but to them, they saw things differently. The fact that the owner could trigger an excited state from them with just his voice within a short few seconds despite their many defenses, meant if the owner so wished, he could attack them without knowing, just as fast. Even with all their means, there was a chance they would die without knowing how, should that owner have decided to do it.

"Fellow Daoist Han, do you think their president has reached that realm?" asked Elder Luo Yong using the spiritual sense of a soul formation expert to transmit his voice.

At their level, they could transmit a decade's worth of content in just an instant using the spiritual sense of a soul formation expert.

"I don't know, but at the very least I know I have never felt this exposed, even in front of the Soul supreme masters within my sect. The Order really hid their fangs well, even their vice president here feels unfathomable," Elder Han Meng said with an air of seriousness in his tone.

"That they have," said Elder Luo Yong, with an unfathomable glint flashing in his eyes, as his gaze fell on the area the Order employees were seated.

"Daoist Han Meng, Daoist Luo Yong, would you like some sunflower seeds?" asked Vice President Mo Ye with an inviting smile.

At some point, a white bag filled with crispy golden brown sunflower seeds appeared in his hands.

"No need to be shy, they're excellent and are one of the best. One of our elders skilled in herbology personally cares for them. The sunflower they're produced from is watered using the dew of a 100,000-year-old purple firmament imperial oleander.

It's no saint-grade treasure, but its dew might as well be. Here try some, I promise you will not regret it," Vice President Mo Ye said as he pushed the bag to the both of them.

"It would be rude of me to refuse, after Daoist Mo Ye's generous offer," said Elder Luo Yong as he gracefully picked a few.

"I'll have to shamelessly accept your offer, Daoist Mo Ye, thank you," said Elder Han Meng as he picked a few.

Both their eyes lit up as they ate them.

"See, I told you it wouldn't disappoint," Vice President Mo Ye said as he chuckled.

That little action was observed by the rest of the guests since they were on the platform and because of their backgrounds and station they were the center of attention to the guests, even more than Yang Qing, who at best was considered an important sideshow in comparison to the soul formation experts from the Order along with the members of the two Holy Lands.

The three experts trading sunflower seeds seemed to have visibly lightened the atmosphere around the guests. A minute before, it was a bit stifled, especially with the gift-giving session coming up, but the action from Vice President Mo Ye seemed to have eased the air a bit.

"Daoist Han, Daoist Yong, I'm afraid the president will not be available later for our meeting, but other members of the Spirit Council along with myself and with the chancellor will be there, so I hope you don't mind making do with just us," said Vice president Mo Ye.

"Oh, the unfathomable Chancellor will be making an appearance?" asked Elder Luo Yong with genuine surprise in his tone.

"I heard most of your domain experts were once her students. Is that true?" he added

"Hahaha, surely that's not possible, rumors have a way of distorting the truth as you well know. While it is true some of the domain experts we have were once her students, the number isn't that high," said Vice President Mo Ye as he chewed on some more sunflower seeds.

"Having passed through the domain realm ourselves we know it's no easy feat reaching it. Training even one person to reach the domain realm shows how deep one's understanding of the Dao is and the ability to impart it to someone.

In my book, no matter the number of Domain realm cultivators she has trained, just the fact she has been able to, is worthy of my respect," said Elder Han Meng. He was never a talkative person but he was usually straightforward when it came to his likes and dislikes.

"I'm sure Chancellor Su Liqiu will appreciate your sentiments. She has always held the sword skills and discipline of the Radiant sword sect in high regard along with the heaven-defying alchemy skills of the Flowing Valley Sect. I know she will appreciate meeting with you both," said Vice President Mo Ye.

"We look forward to making her acquaintance," they both said.

"What an old fox," thought Elder Luo Yong.

The isn't high statement Vice President Mo Ye made was well open to interpretation.

As the trio was having this discussion, Chief Justice Lai Ning had already signaled the start of the final phase of the ceremony, the gift-giving stage.

Chapter 273 Gifts From The Two Holy Lands

"Senior Green Cocoon, is there any hidden overwhelming killing intent sent my way?' Yang Qing asked as he prepared himself.

The moment of truth had already arrived. The saint-grade artifacts he was clothed in, along with soul formation experts on the stage were all here for this moment. Chief Justice Lai Ning could be considered to be the only one who was purely here for his integral role in the ceremony and wasn't necessarily here for the protection of Yang Qing, even though having a powerhouse like him available wouldn't hurt Yang Qing's survival chances.

"There isn't any overly intense, it's just the normal kind. You're not well-liked are you?" asked Green Cocoon.

Yang Qing didn't quite know how to answer that question. While the Order did maintain balance and helped reduce the amount of chaos around the Southern Continent, not many cultivators looked at them in a favorable light, especially those whose interests were constantly being impeded by the Order.

There were those who liked, those who hated them, those who hated them then liked them and those who liked them then hated them, when they got on the wrong side of the Order.

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"Daoist Mo Ye, your young judge looks like he has some unique attributes, the Order really lucked out in getting him. His attributes would have been perfect for our sect," said Elder Luo Yong with a hint of envy in his tone.

Even though most of Yang Qing's attributes were shielded by both Blue Universe and Veiled Destiny, Elder Luo Yong managed to glean a few things here and there from his base attributes, and they were so close in proximity. He would have let his title as a soul formation expert and an elder of a Holy Land if he couldn't guess a few things or two about Yang Qing.

This time as he was communicating with Vice President Mo Ye, unlike before he didn't use his soul formation spiritual sense to communicate his words but instead used real words which the disciples next to them were all able to hear, even Yang Qing who was at the center of the podium.

The 21-year-old peak palace realm disciple of the Flowing Valley Sect along with the other saint leaf disciple all had looks of interest flash through their eyes when they heard Elder Luo Yong's statement.

Elder Luo Yong was one of the most prominent upcoming inner core elders within their sect. His words bore a lot of weight, especially to youngsters like them. Him praising Yang Qing made them reevaluate him a bit. Unlike the elder, they couldn't probe Yang Qing especially with him being clad in saint-grade artifacts. Everything about him was hidden from their senses. So when they met, other than knowing he was a palace realm expert and was a judge of the Order, they knew nothing else, even his realm was hidden from them.



"Thanks for your appreciation Elder Luo Yong, the Order always ensures to commit itself wholly towards the nurturing of our talents. It's the same for Yang Qing or any other member that crosses the doors of the Order and becomes its member," Vice President Mo Ye casually said, but one could detect the faint warning in his tone on Elder Luo Yong against having any ideas.

"I'm sorry for speaking out of turn, Daoist Mo Ye," Elder Luo Yong politely said as he cupped his fists in apology.

Luckily Elder Han Meng's intervening statement diffused the subtle tension.

"It seems the rest of the guests are waiting on us to kick start the next part of the ceremony. We shouldn't keep them waiting, Daoist Luo Yong," said Elder Han Meng as he stood up and walked over to Yang Qing.

Elder Luo Yong followed immediately after, but not before offering another apologetic bow toward Vice President Mo Ye, who nodded and offered a few words of acceptance and it not being a big deal.

Yang Qing's eyes shone with excitement when he saw the two elders make their way over. They could be considered the biggest cash cows in this place. Being elders of Holy Lands meant whatever they gifted him would not be shoddy at all, maybe it might even be able to cover the cost of holding on to Blue Universe and the rest for a few more hours after the end of the ceremony, with no fear that his funds would be drained and his treasures repossessed.

"I wonder what they will give me?" Yang Qing excitedly thought as outwardly he gave out the humblest look he could muster. No eunuch or servant could match his current demeanor.

"Young judge Yang Qing, please accept this little gift. It's not much since we don't hold much with us at the Radiant Sword Sect that doesn't contribute to our understanding of the sword dao. But nonetheless, this iron stalwart dream stone should be of some use to you, especially in the tempering of your will and techniques," Elder Han Meng said as he handed Yang Qing a rust brown looking stone that looked like just a mere breeze would cause its erosion.

"If you channel your spiritual essence into the stone, a piece of your will, will be replicated in an arena within the stone, and inside that arena, there will be a guardian made of iron. As far as I can tell, that guardian is skilled in all kinds of combat arts just like our friends from the battle palace, however, it

shows particular proficiency with the sword and spear, but its palm arts, fist arts, and movement arts are also decent.

Its cultivation realm will always match yours, and it seems to learn and adapt to your techniques every time you fight. There are occasions it might incorporate some of your techniques into its fighting style the more you fight with it, which makes it a thorny opponent and the perfect sparring partner. Sadly, the treasure itself, seems to have had its origin damaged, therefore the maximum level the guardian can reach is the first stage of the domain realm," said Elder Han Meng.

Yang Qing's heart was pounding with excitement. He already expected the figures from the Holy Lands to show the opulence of their sects but he didn't expect it to be this big. He could detect the tone of Elder Han Meng that was sincerely filled with lament like one would have over a broken toy.

"Just their scraps are this good?" wondered Yang Qing as he made a conscious effort not to compare himself to them.

"I am deeply grateful Elder Han Meng for your generous gift, this is more than I could have ever expected. I will treasure it greatly," Yang Qing said as he cupped his fist in gratitude with a slight bow as a show of respect.

Even if the treasure he was given had a damaged origin making its repair extremely troublesome, even in its damaged state, it could be considered a high tier ascendant grade treasure, especially with the learning attribute of the guardian, it meant Yang Qing could have a versatile opponent to train with any time he wished to and maybe he too would be able to learn the techniques of the guardian. If it could learn his techniques, he figured the reverse should be possible. Maybe it was one of the features of the stone.

The more Yang Qing thought about it, the more he felt the iron stalwart dream stone was a worthwhile treasure that no amount of spirit stones would be able to buy.

To Elder Han Meng it didn't seem like much, but to someone of Yang Qing's level, the harvests he could make from the stone would be endless, especially towards refining his techniques and also sharpening his battle sense, which was much-needed, especially with the nature of their occupation.

Elder Han Meng's gift could be considered the perfect gift for someone from the Order, especially a judge or an inquisitor, more so the latter.

Elder Han Meng wasn't a man of many words, he just nodded and returned back to his seat.

"Congratulations Judge Yang Qing, please accept this Mountain spring gourd," Elder Luo Yong said as he handed Yang Qing an earth-brown gourd that had the depiction of the mountain on it, along with a river that flowed from its peak to the bottom, forming a spring at the bottom of the gourd.

Yang Qing could see the river was really lifelike; its movement, the smell down to even the sound. This realism wasn't only reflected in his eyesight but even when he scanned it with his palace sense, he felt that mountain and river were very much real.

"It may not compare to what Daoist Han Meng has given you, combat-wise, but I feel its nature is more compatible with you. The gourd is suffused with the Dao of water and the Dao of earth, which makes it a great comprehension tool for those practicing both these forms of Dao. It can also double up as a storage treasure and unlike normal storage rings, it can accommodate live specimens. As for its capacity, it's about the size of a mountain.

It's also a growing treasure. If you attune with it, you may very well help elevate its rank from a low-grade ascendant-grade treasure to a saint-grade treasure if you ever reach the soul formation realm. It also has a few other passive effects which you can discover on your own later. All the best with refining it," said Elder Luo Yong.

"With your talent and the support of the Order, I'm sure you will be able to do it," added Elder Luo Yong as he turned and went back to his seat.

Yang Qing was too blown away by the treasure to even formulate the right words. By the time he regained his senses, Elder Luo Yong was already at his seat, sharing sunflower seeds with Vice President Mo Ye and Elder Han Meng from the Radiant Sword Sect.

"The Holy Lands really are filthy rich," thought Yang Qing with an envious sigh. The moment he held the Mountain Spring gourd he intrinsically felt as long as he mastered the type of Dao of water and earth that was on it, he would improve his palace realm. The gourd's dao seemed more in line with his path, and as for the attunement, he felt Elder Luo Yong's statement was right on the mark.

Attunement was a cultivator's ability to harmonize with a particular treasure. This state only came into play if the treasure's rank was at the monarch grade and above, where it had some will and spirit of its own. The greater the degree of harmonization, the easier the refinement and also subsequent influence and connection a cultivator had over said treasure.

Yang Qing felt his Dao of vitality would have great synergy with the Mountain Spring gourd.

If the gift-giving ended there, Yang Qing felt it would already be worthwhile. The two gifts had already exceeded his expectations. He had half a mind to end it here and reduce any further risk, but his greedy curious heart wondered what other things he may get.

The allure of potential gifts was slowly eating away at this caution.

#### Chapter 274 Conclusion Of The Ceremony

Next in line to hand in their gifts were the rank 1 organizations and at the lead was the One thousand hall battle palace.

Ren Xin the Hall master of the Rapid spear hall walked forward, followed by Wei Liling and Liu Juan, the two legacy disciples that were in attendance. The rest of the disciples were left behind at their seats.

Wei Liling and Liu Juan being chosen as part of the procession of the One thousand hall battle palace, wasn't by accident but rather by design. In his time at the Battle Palace, Yang Qing had formed a connection with both of them, among the rest of the Battle Palace disciples. Their attendance was expected and even their coming forward with the Hall master Ren Xin was expected too.

"Congratulations Master Yang Qing. It seems it won't be long before you overtake us too," said Hall Master Ren Xin with a teasing smile on his face.

"Surely you jest Hall master Ren Xin. I doubt I'd be your match even if I was in the domain realm," said Yang Qing.

Every hall master was once a legacy battle palace disciple and for one to be considered for the hall master position, they had to be the best amongst the legacy battle palace disciples.

With such a reputation, few of those within his realm could match Hall master Ren Xin in combat, even among the domain experts from the Order.

The ones he thought stood a chance against him were maybe the special inquisitors, the top-tier roaming inquisitors, requiem guards who were in charge of guarding the region that held late-stage domain-level criminals and maybe the judges of the superior domain court like Meng Chao, and maybe a few deans from the institute who specialized in combat or someone like Zhu Lao.

"Maybe someone from the Shadow Hawks division might, but they don't specialize in direct confrontation, so it's highly doubtful," thought Yang Qing.

"Who knows, you just might. Getting a placement in the top 20 isn't an easy feat. But enough about that, Liu Juan told me you like tinkering around with cultivation arts, so I thought it best to give you that rather than give you something else that you might not necessarily like.

Here you can have this instead," said Hall Master Ren Xin as he handed Yang Qing a worn-out bamboo scroll.

Yang Qing could sense the vicissitude of time on it, along with an aura that could be sensed in cultivation arts that had reached the blue grade.

"The 108 steps of the wondering autumn leaves," Yang Qing muttered to himself as he read the worn-out title at the top.

He could sense a bit of the owner's will in that writing. He slowly traced down the writings on the scroll with his fingers and eyes closed, slowly sensing the intent behind the writing. With every syllable, Yang Qing couldn't help but marvel at the profoundness of the cultivation art stored within, however, that excitement was soon cut short when he felt the sensation cut off.

Yang Qing's brows furrowed slightly as he opened his eyes.

"As you have guessed, the technique is incomplete and based on our estimates, it was at least a low-tier gold-grade cultivation art. There are no records of it around the continent in any organization we know of.

We would have restored it, but we already have hundreds of thousands of techniques just like it waiting to be restored, so I decided rather than it gaining dust on the bookshelves at the palace, maybe you can make use of it.

It seems to be a technique that focuses on building up the basics of each level, its not an exaggeration to say we already have enough of such techniques to fill a mountain including our own that we have refined over the years, so it will be wasted with us.

I hope you can make the best use of it, and hopefully bring the full technique to Light," said Hall master Ren Xin as he patted Yang Qing on the shoulder with an encouraging glance.

"Don't you think you're thinking too highly of me there, Hall Master Ren Xin?" said Yang Qing with a rueful smile.

He has rebuilt some cultivation arts over the years and got many merit points within the Order as a result of it, but most of those cultivation arts were low grade most were red grade and the highest he had ever worked with a top-tier Orange grade cultivation art which he elevated to a low tier blue grade art and named it the Brilliant ray fist art which he later shared with Peng Zhen to use in the duration of his life and death duel with the students of the Institute for the next five years.

He has never improved a blue grade technique let alone a gold grade art. Someone like Dean Zhu Lao would more than likely be able to, but Yang Qing was still finding his legs in this area.

Though even if he thought that, he couldn't tear his eyes away from the cultivation art, and the excitement he had at potentially restoring the art, was evident for all to see.

"It seems Liu Juan was right. Best of luck with it, Master Yang Qing," said Hall Master Ren Xin.

"Liu Juan, you never struck me as the proactive type or that you even listened when we talked, you were always asleep half the time," said Yang Qing with a puzzled expression.

The Liu Juan he knew was always lethargic and wanted to expend the least amount of energy as possible. Even breathing and walking were a chore to him. He would always be caught sleeping openly or using silent meditation as another form of sleeping. While they could be considered friends, they never talked much, and mostly it was Yang Qing talking and him off-handedly making 'mmh' sounds with his eyes closed. The only time he ever seemed active was when Yang Qing was bragging about the nest of the Celestial nesting weaver.

He was surprised that such a person would go out of his way to tell the hall master the kind of gift he liked.

"Liling told me if you want something, you must give something in return. Yang Qing, you like the cultivation art right?" asked Liu Juan. His voice started off lay but towards the end, it had a bit of erupting energy in it.

"It is, and I am very grateful for it," Yang Qing slowly said with a foreboding suspicion in his heart as he saw a glint flash in Liu Juan's eyes.

"Great!!!! Can I have the nest in exchange?" said Liu Juan as he rushed Yang Qing before he even had time to react.

'I Knew it,'

"It wasn't you who gave me the gift but it was Hall Master Ren Xin. You can forget about weaseling your way into getting it. If you want it that bad, you only need to compensate me its current value along with the treasures I've spent on it over the years, including the emotional damage fee I endured because of that damage.

The rough estimate should be about 100 million high-grade spirit stones but on account of our friendship and also in acknowledgment of your efforts in helping me gain an incomplete gold-grade technique, I will deduct 10 million from the total, bringing the amount to 90 million high-grade spirit stones.

As long as you can cough up that amount, I will be glad to give you the nest, I'll even add in free delivery services," Yang Qing pompously said taking great comfort in Liu Juan's current dark look.

"You could have just said no, there was no need to be cruel about it," Liu Juan said with a downcast expression.

"Sister Liling you lied, I won't be sparring with you anymore," Liu Juan said to the red-haired lady beside Hall master Ren Xin. He didn't bother to stay behind and opted to go back to his seat with a listless demeanor to him.

"Yang Qing you bastard couldn't you just give him the nest?!!!!" Wei Liling who had been busy eyeing potential spar targets with excitement in her eyes turned livid when Liu Juan made his statement about canceling their sparring sessions.

She even charged to take a swing at Yang Qing, luckily Hall Master Ren Xin stepped in and forcefully dragged her away, creating a bit of a scene.

Yang Qing started getting strange looks from the crowd. The males gave him knowing looks, while the ladies had looks of disdain on their faces when they looked at him.

"What do they think I did?" Yang Qing wondered with a sheepish smile.

"Juan , Liling, you can come later at my abode, I will be hosting an after party there. Even if I can't give you the nest, you could try it when you are here, Juan," said Yang Qing .

His statement seemed to have brought life to the dead looking Liu Juan.

"Oh, and Liling, Huilang said there were cultivators in the battle palace who would never beat him even if they were one major realm apart, as much as it saddens me to say, you were one of the names mentioned."

Yang Qing decided to deflect Liling's wrath to someone else, and what better person than Kang Huilang.

"I know you're lying, but it's a good excuse as any to get my vengeance on him," Wei Liling said with a malevolent smile.



Kang Huilang had been in the midst of laughing when he detected a dangerous aura lock on him. He turned his head with a puzzled expression, only to see Wei Liling throwing a malevolent look his way and Yang Qing joyously smiling.

"What's with these two?" He wondered before he pushed the matter to the back of his mind and resumed what he was doing.

After the One thousand hall battle palace, the rest of the gift giving process went on smoothly and without incident.

#### Chapter 275 Potential Fall Of A Rank 3 Organization?

The gifts from the other rank 1 organizations were not too shoddy even in comparison to the One thousand hall battle palace. The gifts they offered were all varied each being a consummate specialty of their own organization.

Some gave out natural treasures that were prevalent in their territory, others gave out finished products such as alchemical pills and potions, others robes, and other artifacts with unique and varied capabilities.

No matter what it was, in terms of quality, the gifts they offered were all in the same standard, they were all in the top tier of the monarch grade. This could be considered very generous, if one considered a top tier monarch grade treasure was equivalent to a peak palace realm expert in terms of power attribute and in terms of equivalent monetary value a single top tier monarch grade artifact was at least 10 million high-grade spirit stones and if it were a rarity, then even spirit stones would not be enough.

Yang Qing was practically beaming as he received each of those gifts, and he soon lost himself to it and forgot the potential dangers of the current session of the ceremony.

After the rank 1 organizations, it was the rank 2 organizations' turn. Yang Qing both looked forward to it and felt a little uncomfortable. The part he was glad about was that about a third of the rank 2 organizations that had made an appearance for the ceremony were merchant organizations, and even if they were not, they could be considered large-scale dealers and suppliers to said merchant organizations.

Merchants were the best gift givers and when it came to the rank 1 organizations in attendance, sadly much to Yang Qing's disappointment there was not a single one in attendance, but when it came to the rank 2 organizations, he had counted at least six and one of the six could be considered to be one of the oldest and among the most powerful and widely spread among rank 2 merchant organizations, and in terms of scale it even rivaled some rank 1 merchant organizations. The only thing that held it back was the absence of a soul formation expert. That organization was the White rose pavilion. They dealt in everything and anything and from what Yang Qing heard, they had already had another branch in the northern continent.

Yang Qing always found it odd since the Northern Continent was quite a ways away from the Southern Continent. One would either have to cross the Celestial Ocean or the Millionsfold treasure ocean depending on which side of the continent they wanted to leave from, then cross the Sea of Dreams and finally the Blue Origin Ocean before they reached the Northern Continent.

Just a single ocean was fraught with many dangers without adding another two more into the mix. Yang Qing couldn't help but wonder why the White Rose Pavilion would open a branch all the way in the Northern Continent; a continent with the least interaction even when compared with the fractured Eastern Continent.

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The White Rose Pavilion didn't disappoint as they gave Yang Qing a rare pearl that had been bathed with the aura of a Kunpeng, a mythical ancient creature just like the dragon and the phoenix. Yang Qing could detect a dense water Dao in it along with a hint of the ethereal space Dao. In terms of value, it wasn't any less than the iron stalwart dream stone he got from Elder Han Meng of the radiant sword sect or the Mountain spring gourd he got from Elder Luo Yong of the Flowing Valley Sect.

Yang Qing sighed in admiration at the resource depths of the White Rose Pavilion, if they could match the Holy Lands in terms of their gifts. The other rank 2 merchant organizations were not too bad either with their gifts as some came with additional bonuses. The Golden Bamboo Pavilion went this route. In addition to giving Yang Qing a top-tier monarch-grade treasure, they also gave him an all-access pass to all businesses under the pavilion including their subsidiaries. Yang Qing could get anything he wished at a 70% discounted rate, no matter what it was, the discount was universal across all businesses and commodities that had the Golden Bamboo Pavilion.

Yang Qing felt rather awkward accepting it since he knew it was a sort of appeasement gift from one of the founders Lin Guiren on behalf of his son and the incident he had with Yang Qing.

Yang Qing begrudgingly accepted the gift since it would be an additional slap to the founder's face if he rejected his gifts in front of all the guests around, but he made things clear that should his son be found to have broken some of the guiding principles of the Order, then gift or no gift, the punishment that was due to his son, would not change one iota.

Having said all he should have, Yang Qing accepted the gift conscience free, though he still had Blue Universe and Veiled Destiny check the treasure thoroughly to ensure there were no hidden dangers to them. He knew there was no way someone of Lin Guiren's caliber would be that careless or direct with their plans, but one couldn't be too careful, especially not after what Feng Lei, the Assistant Director of the Special Inquisitors told him about one of their founders, Liang Zian, another one of the founders of the Golden Bamboo Pavilion.

After the Golden Bamboo Pavilion, came the Maple Leaf Manor, which was extremely generous as they gave Yang Qing over a dozen top-tier monarch-grade potions, that had been made by a blue-grade alchemist. Yang Qing couldn't help but give their founder Yan Meifeng a once over after she presented her gift. Her gesture which seemed out of character showed there was really something going on between her and Lin Guiren.

Yang Qing remembered one of the notes in Zhong Quan's case of the Earthvine restaurant did mention the Golden Bamboo Pavilion had been focusing on a grand matter over the past few years. Yang Qing increasingly felt the matter had more likely to do with the Maple Leaf Manor.

The rest of the interaction with the other rank 2 organizations went on smoothly, Yang Qing even took advantage of the situation to ask about Zou Yi's and Zou Liqin's grandfather when the delegate sent from the Zou family came to give their gift.

To Yang Qing's delight, the twin's grandfather had been doing okay and the new leader even reduced the sentence he was to serve by half, in honor of his son, the twin's father.

The twins were not in attendance at the ceremony, as Yang Qing had them train up a bit before the entrance examination in a few days' time. As for the information he had just gotten, Yang Qing decided he would tell them later at his party since they would be in attendance.

'Some good news may motivate them to try harder in the test', he thought.

Other than the awkward moment with the Golden Bamboo Pavilion, the rest of the process proceeded smoothly with no sudden attacks, and as far as surprises go, he did get one when the King of the White Baobab Kingdom handed him a normal egg as a gift saying the newcomer in his kingdom told him Yang Qing said he laughed scrambled eggs and thought gifting an egg was rather fitting.

Yang Qing knew the King was just getting back at him for the rock he gave him as a gift when their roles were reversed during the celebration of the anniversary of his kingdom.

Yang Qing stored the matter in his heart. Ten years wasn't late for a gentleman to get his revenge. Yang Qing was no gentleman, he would be getting his revenge during his party.

...

A few familiar faces came by in the gift-giving process such as the King of the Summerfield kingdom, the head of logistics of the Wind Gliding mercenaries, Zhong Quan of the Earthvine restaurant who apologized profusely for his restaurant turning Yang Qing. When it came to apologies he wasn't the only one, since the Emperor of the Red Maple Empire did the same on behalf of his grandfather who was caught along with the son of the founder of the Golden Bamboo Pavilion.

Yang Qing graciously accepted their apologies and said it was water under the bridge. That statement however was only true for one party and that was the Zhong Quan. When it came to the Red Maple Empire, the Emperor's grandfather had already been put under investigation to see if he may have been complicit in any crimes related to Lin Duyi, the son of the Lin Guiren, if he was, then he would have to bear the same punishment as him, whatever they may be.

In addition, a few noble families from the Red Maple Empire had been put into investigation too, such as the Mo family, which had a notorious reputation within Purple City.

The Red Maple Empire had a real chance of losing a palace realm expert and peak-level faction, all in one instance. As for the resulting consequences, they would have to bear it themselves.

After an hour, the gift-giving ceremony ended without a fuss much to Yang Qing's delight. Yang Qing couldn't help but wonder if his earlier display or the presence of figures from two Holy Lands served as a deterrent for any attack.

He hoped it was the former, which would add further light to his amazing bearing when he bragged later.

Vice President Mo Ye closed off the ceremony with a few words before he, the spirit council elders, Chief Justice Lai Ning, along with the elders of the two Holy Lands disappeared, leaving behind Assistant Director Feng Lei, Assistant Director Jun Pei, and the vice chancellor behind.

The disciples from both Holy Lands were left behind and Yang Qing was forced to invite the two palace realm disciples from both sects, back to his abode for the after-party. As for the remaining two domain disciples, they were hosted by a few of the young domain experts from the Order.

The guests had all dispersed after a dozen minutes, and the once booming valley had returned to its original tranquil silence.

However, in that field there were now five people; Assistant Director Feng Lei, Assistant Director Jun Pei, Vice Chancellor Wu Ling, Yang Qing, and Shao An, the Vice Warden of the Requiem.

A moment later another person appeared. He had on pure red robes. He was short and had eyes that resembled an owl's.

"Yang Qing you played your role well, with this they won't be none the wiser," said Assistant Director Feng Lei as they all stared at the same spot where there was a black blob.

Chapter 276 Deal Behind The Flames (1)

"I'll leave this to you," said Assistant Director Feng Lei to the short owl-eyed man in red robes.

Yang Qing assumed he was part of the Special Inquisitors too because he wore similar-looking robes to Assistant Director Feng Lei.

The man took out a small cauldron that was about the size of a palm. It was in the shape of a golden toad with Daoist inscriptions all over.

The short owl-eyed man rapidly formed a few complex skills and the cauldron produced a grey mist from the mouth which swallowed the black blob.

The moment the black blob was absorbed, every inscription within the cauldron lit up immediately after the short special Inquisitor began putting herb after herb into that cauldron.

When he started Yang Qing recognized a couple of them such as the golden light night shade, red worm eucalyptus leaves, yin dew jasper tree, and the like. These were all top-tier monarch-grade herbs.

But as time went by and more herbs were poured into the cauldron, Yang Qing struggled to identify them all he could tell was their rank. A bit were at the monarch grade but the bulk were at the ascendant grade and they all had diverse attributes. Some were complementary and others were contradictory.

The contradictory ones made Yang Qing take a gulp of nervousness as he took a step back in fear of a cauldron explosion. Considering the number of ascendant-grade herbs that were thrown in there, should a cauldron explosion happen, being the weakest member present, he would be the one to get hit first.

However, the explosion he waited to appear, didn't happen. There wasn't even a fizzle sound for that matter to show at least something had happened.

"Is my alchemy that bad? Shouldn't there be an explosion or something? I'll take even black smoke. This is so underwhelming," Yang Qing didn't know why but he felt a little disappointed there was no explosion despite being wary of it moments before.

"If you're waiting for an explosion, you wouldn't find one. Inquisitor Xu Ling is one of the finest gold grade alchemist and healer at the Order.

Some of the high-level techniques and potion recipes you practiced at the institute were invented by him," said Vice Chancellor Wu Ling as his eyes narrowed on the cauldron with shining interest in his eyes.

Yang Qing couldn't help but throw quick glances at the short owl-eyed inquisitor by the name of Xu Ling. Being both a gold-grade alchemist and gold-grade healer was no easy feat despite the two professions having overlaps.

Not all healers were great alchemists and not all alchemists were great healers there were only two professions which almost always meant as long you were skilled in one area you would be proficient in the other. Almost every herbology expert was a skilled alchemist and almost every poison expert was a skilled healer no matter how twisted the path. But alchemy and healing had deviations and being equally good at both of them to the rank of gold grade meant Special Inquisitor Xu Ling went beyond talented.

Yang Qing couldn't help but wonder which potion recipes and techniques were his. Back during his overzealous years when he was taking almost every subject, he could think of, alchemy was one of them, especially after all the potential money one could make from it, Yang Qing was only all too eager to try his hand at it.

Even though he didn't end up sucking at it, alchemy proved to be too demanding for him with everything he was juggling around, so Yang Qing had to drop it. Nevertheless, the classes he undertook left him in awe of the Institute's depth when it came to alchemy.

In the midst of Yang Qing getting lost in his thoughts, the short owl-eyed inquisitor dropped the last ingredient which looked like a beating heart.

Yang Qing may have been clueless about all the other ingredients but this one he knew. It was the core of a horizon-drawing crown tree. In terms of grade, it was in the low tier of the ascendant grade. However, the core was just as rare as top-tier ascendant-grade treasures since a horizon-drawing core tree needed over 500,000 years to form. It could only be formed by a horizon-drawing crown tree that was growing underneath a lesser dragon vein, and the area also had to be dense in the wood Dao. Only under such conditions could a core form. The core had a range of uses some of which were cleansing a body and reforming a destroyed body as long a sliver of will and blood was left of the person. The body formed will be based on the aptitude of the cultivator and his/her affinity.

Having a heart of the horizon drawing crown tree was like having another life.

Yang Qing wasn't surprised that it was being used at the moment, unlike the other ingredients he saw being thrown in. Some even seemed to be poisonous herbs.

"Seems like you have outdone yourself against, Xu Ling?" said Assistant Jun Pei with her gaze seemingly seeing through the grey mist around the cauldron.

"It isn't much, I just got lucky I had prior experience with a few members in a similar position," said Xu Ling.

The cauldron violently shook as the Daoist inscriptions flickered with an intense light accompanied by a loud rumbling within the cauldron. This went on for almost a minute before it finally settle down.

The grey mist receded and in its place was something that looked like a soft round brown object that had veins on it. It pulsed with every millisecond, and with every pulse the object would wriggle and increase in size.

Small red cuticles appeared on the object, followed by tiny appendages, then an eye that grew to two, followed by the ears and then a mouth. The round object rapidly grew in size and what was indistinct moments ago turned into a defined newborn baby who seemed to mature with every minute.

Yang Qing marveled at the transformation taking place before him more so when he knew the state of that figure from an hour or two ago.

....

One hour forty-five minutes ago, in the square of the Star blooming mist valley,

"Judge, can we strike a deal?"

"What kind of deal are you hoping for?"



"I'm not delusional enough to ask for complete freedom, especially in the circumstances I am in, but I at least hope I can keep my life, free from torture,"

"Well, I'll have to ask my seniors first,"

"It's okay, I can wait, and thanks to your flames I don't have to worry much about my 'colleagues,..."

"It's okay, we can make a deal with him. In fact, the current circumstances works well in our favor. The Scarlet blood ghost hands syndicate will be none the wiser. However, to really sell it, his body will have to be destroyed in the process so his master can think all avenues tracing back to him will have been cut short and any other person he may have close ties with.

If he worries about his body just tell him, we can help him reform it just like we did for his junior brother, however, he will have to show sincerity in the information he divulges."

"Thanks, I will do so, Assistant Director Feng Lei."

Chapter 277 Deal Behind The Flames (2)

"My senior has agreed to the deal, however, there are a few things you need to know beforehand. For you to have any real value to us, two things must happen first; one is your death in front of everyone and the other is the value of the information you're willing to share,"

"My death?!"

"Yes, Gui Shiren of the Scarlet blood ghost hands syndicate needs to die publicly and it needs to be authentic too. Your body will be destroyed in the process, but don't worry my senior will protect a sliver of your soul and blood essence to help reform your body later, just like they did for Dong Yanlin.

However, you are a palace realm expert, the cost of reforming your body will be much higher than his. For us to go that far in addition to excusing you from torture, you need to ensure you are worth that expense.

So are you worth our efforts Gui Shiren? If you're not, then we will just have to settle for your senior sister who we have a certain level of confidence on the cover she is using,"

"The Order really is as ruthless as any dark organization. I don't know if what I have can be considered worth it, but I have been a member of the syndicate for almost 4,000 years. While I cannot share the location of the main headquarters since a curse was placed on every member who is not a blood finger, that erases all memory of the location, I can tell you everything that I have accumulated in those 4,000 years.

The core details, such as our core cultivation techniques and special missions have curses attached to them that prevent me from disclosing them, however, unlike the location of the main headquarters, the memories pertaining to those information haven't been erased. The curse prevents me from revealing that information to someone other than the controllers.

I will need the Order's help to dispel it. Other than that, there are other things I can freely disclose, such as the organizations I have personally recruited to act as the eyes and ears of the syndicate, commissions I've taken over the years and the identities of those who ordered them, other syndicate members I have interacted with over the past 4,000 years. While I may not know their current covers, I do know enough of their habits to help extrapolate that information.

And lastly, I once learned something about the syndicate, I don't know what, but it was important enough for me to seal my memory in a memory white bloodstone and have it held in the vaults of the Dragon Meadow. I don't know what is in it, but I thought it important to erase 10 years of my memory including every karma related to it, and the only reason I know that I even had such a thing was thanks to the Dragon Meadow,"

"How did you afford to have it stored there?! especially with their costs? Are you the illegitimate child of your founder or something?"

"The capital for surviving long as a syndicate member is your connections, especially when you don't have much strength. I'm not as gifted as my senior sister when it comes to cultivation, but I know how to relate to people well, which eventually led me to a contact with the Meadow. Even though they were only a low-level figure, they did help me arrange it, as for how it was done, I have no clue as that part was erased too.

So, is that enough to show my sincerity?"

"Considering the Dragon Meadow is involved, it at least shows you have something valuable there, and adding the rest, I think we have ourselves a deal, Gui Shiren.

I don't think I need to tell you this, since you clearly have more experience in deception and subterfuge, but to erase all suspicions on you, you have to go all out and hold nothing back. You can clearly feel the gap between us. Please use every trick you have, and fight as though you genuinely want a glorious victory that ends in death, otherwise, your fellow members may be able to tell if you are pretending, especially if its someone intimately familiar with your fighting habits,"

"That was my plan from the very start...Though Judge, why do I feel, you just want an excuse to use your artifacts,"

"It's all nonsense, I have no such thoughts,"

"Why do you have that gleeful excited smile then?"

"Excitement at seeing a lost soul reform,"

"And the blazing battle intent,"

"Selling my character, I have to do my part as well,"

"You sure have an answer for everything. You could make an excellent syndicate member,"

"Do you want to recruit me like your junior brother, Dong Yanlin?"

"Under different circumstances, maybe."

...

In just ten minutes the newborn had matured into a 20-year-old youth with dark hair that had tinges of blue along with ocean blue eyes. The face had a devilish handsomeness to it.

"How does your new body feel, Gui Shiren?" asked Yang Qing as he tossed a robe over to the naked youth.

"Surprising, to say the least. It's been so long since I've been at the syndicate, that I've long forgotten what my original look was like before I got into the syndicate," said Gui Shiren with a rueful smile.

He gently clenched and unclenched his hand, and then proceeded to slowly examine the rest of his body with a nostalgic look on his face not believing it was his body.

"As agreed, you will now have to share everything you know, including details on your master and disciples. Everything about them will need to be shared including the other things you promised," said Yang Qing as he closely monitored Gui Shiren.

"I have no qualms about it, I'll reveal all I can as long as its information I have," said Gui Shiren with a smile which Yang Qing felt had freedom and carefreeness to it, which Yang Qing found rather odd since he would be a resident of the Requiem from this moment forth, which was why Shao An was here in addition to having regular visits to the offices of the Special Inquisitors, for his daily debriefs.

The only good thing was he would be spared from torture. As for the ease with which Gui Shiren agreed to betray his master and senior sister, Yang Qing wasn't all top surprised by it. Gui Shiren was a syndicate member, the organization didn't necessarily recruit altruistic people or zealots who believed in the cause. They were all self-serving people, who wouldn't hesitate to backstab each other if it meant furthering their own gains or saving their own skin.

The only reason the syndicate has survived for so long was the ruthlessness and thoroughness they put into maintaining anonymity and closing the lines leading to each other, which was why all people present didn't hold too much regard that they would get a treasure trove of information from Gui Shiren, that was actually actionable. Maybe what he knew may have turned obsolete by now. But the information stored in the Dragon Meadow was another case.

They held out hope there might be something there, all because the name Dragon Meadow was attached to it.

## Chapter 278 Dragon Meadow

Yang Qing still couldn't believe that Gui Shiren had a connection with the mysterious Dragon Meadow.

The Dragon Meadow was an organization with unfathomable origins even to the Order and it wasn't only them but to the other Holy Lands too.

The Dragon Meadow was an organization shrouded in mystery. It could be considered a bank or a treasure vault of some sort. For a fee, you could store whatever you wanted with them.

However, what constituted a fee was always up to interpretation by them. It could range from something such as a copper coin, your produce from the farm, to sentimental things such as a wooden sword you trained with as a kid, or to extravagant things such as ascendant to saint grade treasures, or family heirlooms or your core cultivation art, well-guarded secret to some or a trade-in service.

Whatever they decided would be the cost was always up to them and it was never up to debate or bargain. In exchange for payment, whatever you store with them has a 100% guarantee of safety within the terms of the contract.

You could be a qi refinement cultivator that has something stored with them, as long as it was within the Meadow's grounds, not even the Holy Lands could get their hands on it.

The Dragon Meadow could be considered to be one of the oldest organizations within the Southern Continent. Its existence seems to be even longer than the two Holy lands. For as long as one could remember the Dragon Meadow has always been there and it is still unknown exactly for how long.

Yang Qing even heard this crazy rumor that Dragon Meadow also existed in the Western and Eastern Continents, and was just as unfathomable and had a widespread reputation as it did on the Southern Continent.

Yang Qing shuddered to think about what it meant for an organization to have such a reputation across three different continents. This was something even the Radiant sword sect and the Flowing Valley Sect couldn't do even as Holy Lands. At best, they could only exert their influence within the Southern

Continent and not one party had complete dominance over the other. Even when the Myriad Beasts Sect was destroyed, it needed the two Holy Lands to work together along with a bulk of the top-ranking organizations within the Southern Continent.

While the Holy Lands may be respected if they visited other continents, it wasn't to the level where they could establish firm footholds in those continents, which if the rumor was true, was what the Dragon Meadow had done.

Because of that, no one knew whether to call them a Holy Land or something else. The two Holy Lands or any other Holy Land recorded from within the Southern Continent, none had ever tried to test their limits, however, there have been a few soul formation experts, domain experts, and a couple of dark organizations that did try to rob them. However, it's unknown where it is even located, and those that did manage to sneak their way to their headquarters with nefarious intentions were never heard from again.

Yang Qing once caught a few of his seniors throwing bets on how many soul formation experts have disappeared in the Meadow. The number he heard them throwing around left him shell-shocked. The most conservative estimate of the bunch had his guess at 5,000 soul formation experts.

That number was incomprehensible to Yang Qing since as far as he knew, he wasn't sure that the Order even had a third of that number lying around.

Were the seniors' guesses based on truth? Or were they fooling around?

No matter the answer, what was undeniably true was if you wanted something safeguarded in the whole continent, there was no one better than the Dragon Meadow.

The Meadow despite presumably having unfathomable strength has never concerned itself with dominancy or exerting its influence or strength within the continent. Other than its storage services, it never concerned itself with anything else. Even when the Southern Continent was at the brink of destruction a couple of times, or when it pushed its wars to the point that foreign sects and organization almost snuck their fangs in, the Dragon Meadow never showed itself or made its stance clear.

It was like it could care less what happened to the Southern Continent. As long as no one breached or infringed on its operations, they were indifferent to everyone and everything else. It was this attitude

that made most cultivators trust their possessions with them. They were less likely to be betrayed by an organization that could care less if the world burned as long as its bottom line was maintained.

The Dragon Meadow had agents all around, but unless they revealed themselves to you, you would never know who they are or find a way of gaining the services of the Meadow. There seemed to be no criteria by which they chose their clientele. You could find saints, heretics, cripples, and geniuses within their list of clients. It seemed to follow no rhyme or reason. The fact that a syndicate member like Gui Shiren who had likely slaughtered a hundred thousand or two, was able to gain their services, showed character or even cultivation aptitude had nothing to do with it.

As for the real requirements...No one knew.

Yang Qing couldn't help but fantasize about being a storage holder of the Dragon Meadow.

If it was a week ago, he wouldn't have entertained the thought. He had nothing but less than 10 middle-grade spirit stones to his name, but now, he could very well rival the wealth of a rank 4 clan with the number of gifts he had accumulated in the ceremony.

"Maybe I could splurge a little in the auction houses instead of trying my luck in the blind markets," thought Yang Qing before he dismissed those thoughts away. He still liked the idea of getting good finds for a steal price, and the mystery of it all, wondering whether you got a mundane object such as a rock or something special, like the tablet he gifted Dean Zhu Lao during his welcome party.

...

Gui Shiren was given the breakdown of his future by both Vice Warden Shao An and Assistant Director Feng Lei. Whatever information he had on him would have to wait for a couple of weeks to months, which was the estimated time Assistant Director Feng Lei had given on breaking the curses placed on him safely.

The safety part of the equation sadly had nothing to do with Gui Shiren's well-being but rather the anonymity part. Insidious curses like the ones the Scarlet blood ghost hands syndicate used, had a lot of hidden mechanisms in them, one of which was alerts that were embedded in the curse. Those alerts would inform the one who placed them there, that their curse has been broken. Some even went as far as disclosing the identity of the person whose curse was broken.

If such a situation happened, then the syndicate would know Gui Shiren's death was a ruse, and whatever element of surprise they had would go with it or the syndicate could even capitalize on such information and set traps of their own. Such a scenario has happened on more than one occasion in the years that the Order has been targeting the Syndicate. Their curses were some of the most intricate the Order has ever come across, and the stronger the party was, the stronger and more refined the curse since they knew more and would present a great risk to the syndicate if they were caught.

The reason the ninth blood finger had not divulged anything over the years despite being in the custody of the Order, other than his mental resilience, the major reason was the high-level curse placed on him. The level of skill involved in placing the curse showed how gifted the creator was along with the top grade of their technique.

Luckily after intense study, the special inquisitors in assistance with the requiem guards, discovered that such a high-level curse had a restriction in terms of material and also the strength of the cultivator it was placed on. It required ascendant-grade materials along with a saint-grade material as the anchor, and the cultivator it was placed on needed to be in the domain realm at least, so they were not swallowed whole by the curse. With such a criterion, only the blood fingers could fulfill it.

While Gui Shiren's curse was likely to be more sophisticated than Dong Yanlin's since the latter was weaker, the strength of the curse still had some degree of maneuverability to it. Assistant Director Feng Lei had some confidence in finding a workaround in a few months and from what Yang Qing heard, he had even enlisted Dean Zhu Lao's help as an assistant, which was why Vice Chancellor Wu Ling was present. He needed to sign off on it as his boss.

#### Chapter 279 Fond Memories

After the particulars had been finished, Gui Shiren left with Assistant Director Feng Lei, Xu Ling the short owl-eyed special inquisitor who restored his body, Vice Chancellor Wu Ling who tagged along with them out of a clear fascination with the technique Xu Ling had performed, and lastly Vice Warden Shao An.

Only Yang Qing and Assistant Director Jun Pei were left behind.

"So, do you want to hand them in now, or you'll bring them later at your own convenience?"



I'm okay with whichever option you choose, I know you can already afford it," said Assistant Director Jun Pei with a teasing smile.

Yang Qing couldn't help but grimace at her 'kind' suggestion.

It's been a long while since he had felt this confident and free, and he had an inkling, the uncountable treasures burning a hole in his storage ring had something to do with it.

Was he willing to risk his current transformation and rebirth; the sense of security that came from knowing he could eat a whole mountain for a whole year and still not make a dent in his finances, all for a chance of looking cool with saint-grade treasures at his party?

Of course, he was. Treasures come and go, but donning saint-grade artifacts, looking cool, and rubbing them in everyone's faces, was eternal.

This was why Yang Qing had no regrets when he said,

"Assistant Director Jun Pei, I think I'll hold onto them for the maximum allowed time up until the point before you have to send guards to reclaim them back.

I remember you saying you will send Special Inquisitors at the three-hour mark, I'll hold onto them for two hours and the fine you mentioned was 120,000 high-grade spirit stones if my memory serves me correctly...Right, Assistant Director Jun Pei?" asked Yang Qing as he recollected the gut-wrenching introduction he was given yesterday when he picked up the three saint-grade treasures.

"It is," said Assistant Director Jun Pei with an amused smile on her face.

"Please accept this as my payment for the ensuing fine," said Yang Qing as he handed over the gifts offered by the Golden Bamboo Pavilion, the Maple Leaf Manor, and the Red Maple Empire. He added a few other treasures that he knew he wouldn't make the most of to the pile, to add up their value to 120,000 high-grade spirit stones.

"This should be enough, right?" asked Yang Qing with a slightly pained expression. He had no regrets about disposing of the gifts from the Golden Bamboo Pavilion and their cohorts, all for the sake of gaining bragging rights with the saint-grade artifacts.

However, even if he knew it was for a good cause and he wouldn't have enjoyed their gifts much anyway, it still hurt when he imagined the things he could eat with 120,000 high-grade spirit stones, along with the blind market finds.

But it had to be done.

"It's more than okay. If you bring it back within that time, I'll even give you a 10% discount since you were so forthcoming," said Assistant Director Jun Pei.

"Don't be late, little judge, though some part of me hopes you do," added Assistant Director Jun Pei as she disappeared from the spot leaving Yang Qing behind.

"Is she some sadist," muttered Yang Qing with a wary expression.

However, a glow immediately appeared on his face when he imagined all the bragging he was going to do with Blue Universe, Veiled Destiny, and Green Cocoon.

"Seniors I hope it's okay?"

Yang Qing suddenly remembered he had not consulted the other half of the equation in this matter. If they refused him, in addition to the embarrassment and disappointment from not doing all he had planned, he worried he wouldn't get a refund back.

The Order were the biggest money grubbers he knew. They never delayed when it came to collecting fines and penalties and whatever dues they were owed, but when it came to reconciliation and refunds, they dragged their feet and on certain occasions, they would ignore it altogether.

Yang Qing was all too familiar with their ways, and to him, it always seemed like he was the only one who knew that side of them.

"I don't mind. I think it would be a nice break from the mountain we always stay at," said Blue Universe.

"There were some interesting kids I saw today. I'd like to read their karma," said Veiled Destiny with a mildly excited tone.

"I'm going to sleep," said the last member of the trio, Green Cocoon.

Yang Qing was practically beaming after gaining all their approval. He conveniently decided Green Cocoon's answer was tacit approval since it didn't matter where she slept.

Yang Qing rushed to his abode at the fastest speed he could. His friends from both the Order and the guests who had come for his ceremony were already at his abode.

He could see Kang Huilang being hounded by Wei Liling, Liu Juan seemed to be pleading with the celestial nesting weaver to gain entry into the nest and by the look of things he was being fleeced of everything he was worth by the greedy bird, staff from the Thousand flavors restaurant were with Feng Xin along with King of the White Baobab kingdom heavily discussing something. Yang Qing couldn't wait to join in on such an important discussion, his stomach even seemed to be in agreement with his sentiments.

Mao Yunru, her friends, other inquisitors, his judge friends, Cai Ying, and the rest of his institute friends were in attendance, the Zou siblings were there along with his brother and sister-in-law. His abode which looked like a vast stretch of wild lands, now seemed congested because of how packed it was.

Yang Qing even managed to see the two palace realm disciples from the Radiant Sword Sect and the Flowing Valley Sect mingling with the crowd. The bulk of those present were from the Order, who were geniuses in their own right, even enough to stand out at both these holy lands, so their interaction wasn't strained, and the two disciples couldn't put on airs since there were already more than five people within the crowd who matched them in talent, like Zhang Qingge for example, who was tightly clutching Yu Huifang's robe as she looked around with a shy look and eyes that had a mix of curiosity, excitement, and awkward anxiousness.

Yang Qing silently took everything in before he loudly yelled,

"GUYS, YOUR AMAZING SAINT HAS ARRIVED, LET THE PARTY BEGIN!!"

Yells and scornful remarks were immediately flung by Yang Qing's way which then devolved into launching cultivation spells and weapons.

Yang Qing welcomed it all with a smug smile, he even wished they would amp up their intensity, otherwise how else would he show off 'his saint-grade artifacts'? He taunted and mocked them endlessly to rile them up which was a decision he came to regret later when he handed the artifacts in 2 hours later and the party was still ongoing. But for now, he was going to make memories.

Laughter, yells, and cheers filled the place. Years later when a massive tragedy struck, Yang Qing would look fondly at this memory and feeling of this moment. That point in time when everything seemed peaceful, joyful, and perfect before it all got decimated in something the Order both predicted but also never saw coming. Some of the faces here, he would never get to see, after that tragedy.

Chapter 280 Induction To The Outer Palace Court (1)

The two-hour time limit for returning the robe came up and Yang Qing quickly excused himself and headed to the Internal Logistics Department, to avoid even more dire circumstances and lose everything he had earned up to the current point.

Despite only spending a few hours with the three saint-grade treasures, Yang Qing developed a special bond with the three of them like he had spent all his life with them.

They felt like his seniors who had guided him and had been with him from his childhood. Blue Universe was the well-informed senior who liked to share bits and pieces of his acquired wisdom here and there. Yang Qing felt he could grow his skills in cultivation art dissection if he spent more time with him.

There must have been a reason Dean Zhu Lao kept begging him and the rest to come to the Institute.

Veiled Destiny seemed like the dependable senior who knew which path suited you. Ones that will help you grow and ones that you should avoid. Even though Blue Universe was technically in charge of the overall defense of Yang Qing, Veiled Destiny's presence added a more comforting feeling to him, in

terms of his overall well-being, like there would be nothing that could evade its detection, even the deep insidious schemes.

And when it came to Green Cocoon, even if he had minimal interaction with her, owing to her poor communication skills, he felt deeply connected to her, almost familial like she was his ancestor, calmly sitting in her rocking chair, half asleep watching the younger generation of her lineage laugh about and run.

Other than looking cool, the other reason he chose to pay the exorbitant fines was he didn't want to separate from them yet. But all good things come to an end.

Yang Qing said his goodbyes to the spirits of the three saint-grade artifacts. He did try sneaking a plea of seeing them again, which he didn't have any hope for but he was surprised when he heard the three of them agree to it, to the point they were willing to speak up for him to gain special access to the mountain they stayed at. However, the approval process would have to go through the spirit council or the agreement of two of the three vice presidents.

Yang Qing could only hope the three saint-grade treasures held some sway over any of the two groups.

After saying his goodbyes, he immediately left to return back to his party. The green flowered babirusa had already been revealed by Feng Xin and they had a few skilled chefs from the Thousand Flavors restaurant working on it. Yang Qing didn't want to risk missing out on it, if he was being perfectly honest, that pork was the biggest highlight of the party even more than him.

When he got back, he received a beating, which luckily healed up because of his cockroach-like vitality. The party went all the way till dawn, and the guests along with the other members of the Order slowly dispersed, albeit there were those who didn't seem to want to leave such as Liu Juan who after sampling the luxury that was in the nest of the Celestial nesting weaver didn't want to leave at all. He had to be forcibly dragged away by Hall master Ren Xin when Wei Liling failed to get through to him.

....

Yang Qing smiled with a sigh as he admired himself with his new dark gold palace court robes that had a rhombus symbol at the back with the numeral (I) inscribed on it to show he was a judge of the outer core palace court.

Although the robe fell short when compared to Blue Universe, it still had its own charm, and the best of all, it was his forever. He still remembered the conversation he had with Blue Universe the previous day when they briefly discussed nurturing the spirit of his robe. If he chose to do so, he would not receive another robe when he got promoted to the domain courts. He would have to stick with his current robes.

After interacting with Blue Universe, Yang Qing was a bit more partial to taking the leap though he still held his reservations because of the potential quality of the robe for the domain courts. If he agreed to nurture the spirit of his current robe, he would be losing out on it.

But now, the moment he put on the robe, and sensed its wholesome brilliance, Yang Qing felt he might as well go all in. If he needed anything extra that the robe couldn't provide when he was in the domain realm, he could use his merit points to acquire it. Even if the Order was stingy, it had mountains and mountains of treasures. As long as you could afford it, you could get almost anything from them.

"The assimilation will have to wait until my schedule frees up a bit," thought Yang Qing as he straightened his robes once more before he left for the Administration hall for his induction into the outer palace court.

Even though he already had a rough idea as to his new roles and responsibilities from his interaction with Dai Chen and Zhang Qingge who were already both outer palace court judges, the process could not be skipped.

....

"Good morning Yang Qing, my name is Shi Tian and I will be guiding you today into your new role as an outer palace court judge.

First congratulations on your promotion," said Shi Tian.

Shi Tian was a slender young man with short black hair and a charming appearance. He seemed like an easy-to-get-along-with person, unlike Song Guan from the standard regulatory committee who was in charge of guiding and preparing Yang Qing for his ceremony.

Shi Tian looked to be in his mid-thirties and from what Yang Qing could tell, he seemed to have a cultivation base that was at the second stage of the palace realm.

"His rank may not be low in the department," thought Yang Qing.

The administration hall was one of the few departments within the Order that didn't have a cultivation base requirement when giving out the job. The bulk of their workers were in the core formation realm, as for those in a higher realm like in the palace realm, they were either sub-heads, or they dealt with sensitive matters within the Order. For example, to work in the internal logistics department one had to be at the peak of the core formation realm at the very least.

"Thank you for your warm wishes Shi Tian, I highly appreciate it," said Yang Qing as he offered a thankful smile.

"Well then, let's begin. Unlike the induction done for the ceremony, we don't have to move around as much. We can get it done all here, for the most part, though there are a few parts related to your new role that you will have to personally visit the concerned department for further details.

I'm pretty sure you may have an idea on some of them, such as the Requiem," said Shi Tian.

Yang Qing nodded back in acknowledgment. He did find out about visiting the Requiem from Dai Chen, which was why he decided to take advantage of the opportunity at Dean Zhu Lao's ceremony to strike up a conversation with Vice Warden Shao An, which went rather well since the Vice Warden offered to personally guide him when the moment came.

Shi Tian took out a few scrolls and unfurled one of them and handed it over to Yang Qing.

"In here you will find a detailed guideline of your role and responsibilities and you will also find your payment package, which from what I heard, is something you are really invested in," said Shi Tian with a light chuckle.

Yang Qing reflexively nodded like a newborn chick as his eyes rapidly skimmed through the scroll to find the area that highlighted what his current salary would be, which he didn't have to do since Shi Tian dutifully went on and gave him the rundown of the amount.

"Your remuneration package as an outer palace court judge will be:

A monthly payment of 20,000 high-grade spirit stones per month. The 20,000 is the basic pay which has an increase if the evaluation score of your cases and duties is graded as good. With that grade, you get an added bonus of 10,000 high-grade spirit stones, and if it's excellent you receive a 20,000 high-grade spirit stones bonus, and if it's graded as exemplary then you receive a 50,000 high-grade spirit stone bonus in addition to your 20,000-basic pay.

You will receive blue-grade potions and pills whose equivalent value in spirit stones is 500,000 high-grade spirit stones.

Your chamber will also be receiving a monthly stipend of 100 monarch-grade herbs or natural treasures of your choosing. Reselling them is strictly forbidden, should you be found doing so, your allotted amount will be halved for the duration you will be an outer palace court judge.

And lastly, you will also be receiving an annual discretionary fund of 40,000,000 high-grade spirit stones. The amount is to cater for the payment of all commissions you may issue in the fulfillment of your role as an outer palace court judge.

That amount will not be given out as a lump sum but will instead be disbursed on a quarterly basis and clear records of the spending needs to be kept. If the sum is proved to have been spent correctly with minimal abuse, then the limit could be raised...

Judge? Judge? Judge? Judge Yang Qing, are you listening?" Shi Tian paused halfway into his explanation when he saw Yang Qing have what looked to be seizures accompanied by an uncontrollable frantic laugh which later moved to Yang Qing kissing the scroll.