

Daily life 481

Chapter 481 Early periods of the Order

"I don't know if Yang Qing explained to you the particulars more specifically with respect to Deng Chao and the Crystal Palm Jade Sect, but in case he has or hasn't, I think my take would help provide further clarity on the matter.." said Meng Chao.

"Would you all like something to drink?" asked Meng Chao as he took out a white porcelain teapot that was in the shape of a majestic crane.

Zhang Qingee shook her head sideways saying she was okay while Yang Qing hurriedly nodded and immediately grabbed the kettle from Meng Chao's hands to be the one to serve.

He looked like he was wary that Meng Chao would take back his offer.

Dai Chen on the other hand with one part embarrassed, and four parts hopeful asked if wine was available.

How often do you get to sample the wares of a peak domain expert, especially one at the highest court there is?

Someone of that stature was bound to have quality product, thus the duo thickened their faces and decided to take advantage of it.

With a light smile, Meng Chao took out a wine jar and poured Dai Chen some, who would have drunk it from the jar, given the chance.

With the duo each pleasantly consuming their refreshments, Meng Chao resumed his explanation.

Meng Chao looked at the trio with a nostalgic smile on his face.

"Back then when the Order had just started, I wanted to be an inquisitor more than I wanted to be a judge.

I liked how free it seemed at the time, I still do. You get to travel from place to place and see different things. You may have unimaginable encounters during your cases.

For example, you may stumble in the birth of a spectacular treasure, a ruin lost in the void for countless years suddenly makes an appearance, and some mysterious realm bursts into light revealing itself.

All these were coincidental occurrences I dreamt of encountering ever since I was little and embarked on my cultivation journey.

The thrill of exploring dangerous places, fighting powerful cultivators and testing your mettle against them, improving your cultivation by leaps and bounds all in a bid to see how the view is from the truly powerful.

I was always curious how the powerful saw the world and also the more powerful you are, the more places you can visit, for example exploring the bottom of the Millionsfold treasure ocean, dipping your toes in the never-ending fights in the Bestial Churning Sea, and visiting other perilous locations and maybe even other continents.

In a different life, I think I would have joined the Horizon Odyssey Guild.." Meng Chao passionately said.

His speech had inadvertently made Yang Qing almost choke on his tea.

"Does senior Meng Chao have a death wish? What's his fascination with all those death spots?"

No amount of treasure could get me to visit those places, even as a soul formation expert. What's there to see? Just another treasure I can buy with spirit stones if I'm lucky in some cultivation open market scale, as for fighting other cultivators to test my skills, I'd rather be a salted fish with a long life.."? thought Yang Qing, as he adjusted his seating position and pulled back a few more inches away from Meng Chao.

In the survival and adaptation classes, one of the instructors had said, that the closer you were to cultivators who attracted trouble, the more likely that stink would rub off on you even after you left them.

After hearing Meng Chao's speech, he was sure he was one such person. Yang Qing had taken great care all his life to ensure he had as few problems and dangers to deal with as possible, and if Meng Chao's death-seeking air infected him, he shuddered at the thought of how bad the troubles he would attract because of it, would be.

Better to be safe than sorry.

His movement, though, covert, was easily noticeable in such a large office with so few people. However, the people present chose to ignore it. Yang Qing already had a reputation for doing odd things, so certain things he did, were brushed off as Yang Qing being Yang Qing.

"So it wasn't a surprise when I joined the Order, I wanted to be an inquisitor. Back then there were no distinctions like there are now of special inquisitors, roaming inquisitors, and court-attached inquisitors as we have now.

It was just one type who did it all, though if I'm being honest, back then with the Order just starting out, every inquisitor could have been considered a special inquisitor, because all we did back then were executions and purges.

Come to think of it, there was no distinction between being a judge and inquisitor either since both were on the field all the time and when it came to the conduct of their duties, they were more or less similar.

Inquisitors made on-the-spot judgments at certain times, while judges conducted investigations of their own cases continually.

It wasn't as it is now, so we all needed to be out there to spread the name and build the reputation of the Order, and it wasn't received well, even by those who had come together and suggested its formation.

Everywhere we looked were enemies who were not afraid to attack be they from heretic organizations, or normal ones, back then they all had one thing in common, which was to stifle this new upstart organization that was trying to change how the continent had worked for millions and millions of years..."

Yang Qing and the rest had solemn expressions as they pictured how chaotic it must have been back then.

It wouldn't have been a stretch to say that back then it was basically the Order vs the entire continent, and back then, the Order didn't have a terrifying reputation as it does today, which was sufficient enough to deter some.

They had nothing to their name, and for them to have the reputation they have today, it must have come at an astronomical cost.

How many lives did they have to reap for them to have the reputation they have today? How did they manage to even survive and etch out a pathway that led to today, back then when their enemies were everywhere?

The three judges shuddered at the thought. Their eradicating a single Ice Emerald Sect had an impact on them, especially Yang Qing, but back then, how many Ice Emerald Sects did Meng Chao, Jia Bohai, and the rest have to deal with?

Dai Chen had been shaken by Lai Lei's injury, which hadn't even been that tragic since with the Medical Valley's means, Lai Lei was able to be restored, however, he was still affected by it even now, but back then, how many companions and close friends had Meng Chao seen gravely injured and even die? It was likely too many to count.

Chapter 482 Meng Chao's solemn advice

The trio had complicated emotions running through them as they imagined how harrowing and difficult it was back then. They felt that they took the current state of the Order for granted.

They would have a difficult case here and there that would show that things from back then were still prevalent even in their era, but those cases were not that many.

The easy cases they had, the ease with which they conducted, the infrastructures in place, and even the stable working environment, had all been purchased and paid for in the blood and suffering of the seniors before them, seniors like Meng Chao.

"You shouldn't feel guilty about it. We all knew what we were getting into back then, and had an idea of what it would cost, though the price far exceeded what some of us expected, despite being in it, we still decided to persevere and continue through it all, and I'm glad we did, and I'm sure those we lost would be glad too.

Their sacrifices were not in vain. You are the proof of it.." Meng Chao said as he eyed the three.

The trio didn't know what to say and did what they felt like doing, which was bow and offer their thanks for what they had.

Meng Chao accepted their thanks and went on with the story.

"Now that I think about it, it's a bit ironic. If it wasn't for the never-ending battles back then, we would not have grown as strong as we are now, or amassed that many resources in such a short amount of time.

Most people keep wondering and guessing the reasons behind our rapid growth when in essence it was because of them. If they didn't come at us as relentlessly as they did, creating a boiling pot that never stopped boiling, keeping us on edge, fighting for our lives every day, we wouldn't have burst through as fast as we did.

They were the catalyst for it all. I bet they would roll in their graves and vomit blood several times over if they knew it.." Meng Chao said with an amused smile.

Even though he seemed casual, Yang Qing, Dai Chen, and Zhang Qinggee could detect a chilliness in that smile, that sent shivers down their souls. Luckily, Meng Chao immediately reigned it in and that chilly stifling sensation radiating from him vanished in an instant.

"So per history, the Order started 1,000 years ago, so 100 years in, after its formation, things were just as bad and hard for us as it was when we began.

It was even more so because we had created tonnes of blood feuds in that 100 years inciting hatred and fear all around, so even fence-sitters back then rose up against us.

Cases never stopped, especially against those who showed a modicum of friendliness or cooperation towards us. It was during one of my rounds back then that I ended up stumbling across the Crystal Palm Jade Sect.

It had been a few hours before the three-day war kicked off. They had been blockaded at the time, and their territory, prosperous as it seemed, had been abandoned, not a soul in sight.

I don't know why even stopped that time. I knew how things were going to play out and I had seen it happen countless times before, and after a hundred years, I didn't think I had the stomach to bear witness to it.

An organization being surrounded by others and eradicated because of what it has, then those organizations soon turn on each other, resulting in more casualty and chaos, then one of them becomes the victor and ends with the spoil, or some shady third party who had orchestrated the whole thing, ends up with it, easily in the end..."

Meng Chao's gaze turned solemn as he eyed the three.

"I'd like to advise you three to be very careful with cultivators, especially those who have survived a couple of thousand years.

Those who managed to survive that long do so in part due to strength but another factor to consider is their mind.

Those who survive that long are by no means simple characters, whether they are in the core formation realm, palace realm, the domain realm, a king, a rogue cultivator, a sect disciple, an alchemist, or an assassin, none of them reached and lived that long by being simple-minded characters who have nothing but cultivation in their mind.

They are sharp, astute, and adaptable. Able to weave the world around them to ensure their survival.

There was once a core formation expert, who brewed an elaborate plan involving some rock he found from an excavated ruin. He was a former prince, and his kingdom got destroyed root and stem, down to

its citizens, leaving him as the sole survivor in an entire kingdom, and the culprit behind it was a clan that ended up having a feud with the kingdom over some trivial thing.

That clan had five palace realm experts at its helm, and that prince of the fallen kingdom had just been at the middle stages of the core formation realm.

However, that prince, who basically had nothing, was able to bring calamity to that clan through trickery that was so elaborate and well-made, that those palace realm cultivators died at the end along with their clan.

It's unknown how, but he triggered a beast tied that targeted that clan's grounds, which invited other powers in the area because within that beast tide, was a rare spirit beast, that could help peak palace realm experts reach the domain realm.

A blood bath consumed that area, that clan got buried, other powers got buried too in the chaos, and blood feuds were created that ended up spanning centuries after the fact. That prince died in that chaos too, but not before he made a declaration of what he did and why he did it.

Never belittle, never assume, always be alert and wary. A domain expert, even a soul formation expert may easily employ the same means as that prince against a weaker opponent despite having the ability to end it with their own hands.

Never assume just because they are powerful that they're beneath using subterfuge and other devious means to achieve their goals just because they're powerful.

The Crystal Jade Palm Sect was a victim of such a ploy. A sect with seven domain experts that had stood the test of time was upended in just three days through well-placed trickery.

The same could happen to us too, if we are not careful."

Chapter 483 The unravelling thread (1)

The trio slowly nodded planting Meng Chao's words in their hearts. They had a personal experience of some of what Meng Chao was talking about in the Ice Emerlad Sect's case.

They had suspected there was a mastermind behind them especially with the sudden upsurge in strength and the ability to refine those with special physiques, and when they fought the founder who by all accounts should have been dead, even in terms of lifespan, they became certain there was someone behind her.

However, despite expecting it, they were still caught by surprise when the mastermind turned out to be someone in the soul formation realm.

Whatever they needed the Ice Emerald Sect for, clearly they had the strength to do it themselves, evidenced by the fact that they had been able to paralyze Yang Qing and the rest and destroy a top-tier ascendant-grade treasure in the process without even their real body appearing.

But despite having such abilities, they decided to conduct their affairs via a proxy, the Ice Emerald Sect.

Whatever the case, those events coupled with Meng Chao's words were a real eye-opener for them. The southern continent was still as dangerous as ever.

"Good..." said Meng Chao in satisfaction at their reaction.

"Now, where was I, yes, so I ended up finding myself within the territory of the Crystal Palm Jade Sect, and after a little digging around, I found out the reason for it, which outwardly was the sect had found a saint grade treasure in their expedition to the Millionsfold Treasure Ocean.

Presumably, news got out, as it always weirdly does, and who did that news fall to? The sect and organizations that had a horrible relationship with them, which eventually led to them conveniently forming an alliance in the bid to take away the treasure and reduce the momentum with which the Crystal Palm Jade Sect was growing.

On paper and even when I heard it at the time, it was plausible since I had seen something similar situations happening all around countless times over, and it was indeed true that the sect had been growing at an alarming rate.

In under five thousand years, some no-name sect popped up and grew alarmingly to the point it had seven domain-level experts, with three of them standing out even against those at the same level.

Such a thing is bound to incite fear, envy, and eventually collusion and retaliation from organizations around. The same thing happened to the Order, and the same thing has happened to millions and millions of organizations around.

Some weathered through it and were able to establish themselves as a hegemon at the end of it that has existed to date, while others were unable to bear the weight of it, and got uprooted before they had a chance to grow to their fullest potential.

The Crystal Palm Jade Sect ended up falling under both categories in my book. On one hand, they were able to reach heights others couldn't on the other they had the potential to reach much higher, alas the opposition proved to be too strong..." Meng Chao said with a sigh.

His statement resonated with the three young judges. Over the years they had come across sects, clans, and other organizations with rich history that eventually waned and fell into obscurity, while some were shells of their former selves.

During Yang Qing's evaluations, the Clear Sword River Sect was one such thing. It was once powerful enough to have a few palace realm experts but eventually, it got beaten down to the point it only had an old man in the foundation realm as its member, and with his death, the name was soon to disappear in the river's of time with countless others.

It was humbling, how easily something that took over 10,000 years to build could disappear in a shorter timeframe, and in the case of the Crystal Palm Jade Sect, three days was all it took.

"So when I heard about the matter, I decided to pay witness to it. Despite sympathizing with the sect, I couldn't do anything about it. The Order was stretched thin, we had fires all over, and we already had plenty of enemies to boot, I couldn't go and add another at the time.

Back then I was sure the Crystal Palm Jade Sect wouldn't survive a day considering the lineup they were fighting against, but Deng Chao blew apart that assumption single-handedly when he made an appearance.

The silent tree of the sect whose presence was unassuming. He provides shade during peaceful times, and when the floods break, he is there to shelter the rest.

When he appeared, I found myself cheering for him as I thought to myself, maybe this time, this time things will turn different. The regular script will be upended, and greed won't win out.

Deng Chao appeared with thunderous might sending fear to his foes, and giving hope to his sect members.

The enemies that had put them on edge when the fight started, who were swollen with pride, quickly got humbled under his hand.

He destroyed countless and the siege on his sect turned into a one-sided affair with their enemies turning into the prey.

They turned from being surrounded by ten rank 2 sects to a power that was well on its way to destroying all of them including their sect grounds.

I was pleasantly surprised as they were trying to pull it off. Deng Chao was left to run amok, holding all the present enemies at bay, while the rest of the domain experts from the sect, went to the unguarded sect grounds of their attackers.

I even helped some sneak through the cordon.." said Meng Chao with an amused smile.

<nulli>"He really is a trouble harbinger," thought Yang Qing as he saw the smile Meng Chao had showing how clearly pleased he was with his interference back then.

From the records Yang Qing had read, the area was teeming with domain experts, chaos all around, cultivators on edge, and there Meng Chao was a lone domain expert, dipping his toe in like he didn't have enough trouble already.

"I was shocked when I heard that little plan of theirs had managed to destroy seven of the sects that had ganged up on them.

When the news arrived, it changed the trajectory of the battle. Those from the seven sects had their spirits crushed by the news, while those from the remaining three all fought with distracted attention possibly from worry that their sects would be next.

By the third day, things looked to be going the Crystal Jade Palm Sect's way as they dealt with fewer enemies, alas, we both had our joys crushed when a small team of five guests made an appearance with one of them being a quasi soul formation expert.

With their appearance, I wanted to leave then and there, but something urged me to stay. I had seen Deng Chao fight, and I thought maybe he could pull something even with the odds as they were.

I was even tempted to rope in the Chief Justice at the time, but he was preoccupied with other soul formation experts of the Order at the time. We couldn't spare any, not like now, where a few are always on standby ready to respond..."

Chapter 484 Unravelling The Thread (2)

"But..Deng Chao delivered but when he did, his sect members including his brothers had been butchered by the five guests.

It was pitiful, however, from start to end he was brilliant. I still can't forget that monolithic crystallized palm that fell from the heavens as if pouring its wrath upon the invaders.

The Crystal Palm Jade art, even among the gold-grade arts that we have, few are able to match the might it showed that day.

I think in that moment he had stepped beyond the stage of perfection when it came to the art and reached the final step, unity sentience. Something that can only be achieved with gold-grade and purple-grade art.

Just like its name, it means the art comes to life and resonates with the user, and in that moment Deng Chao had reached it and used it to raze the enemy along with his own sect ground.

It was truly an unforgettable sight, which was why after it had subsided, I came back, to find nothing but a gigantic palm-sized bottomless crater with destructive energies capable of killing an early-stage domain expert, filling in the area.

The enemy, the sect, and Deng Chao were all absent. I assumed them to be dead, and I don't maybe guilt or admiration for Deng Chao I decided to investigate them to chronicle the Crystal Palm Jade Sect so they don't end up forgotten and that they had a cultivator with a true spirit.

For that, I needed to properly dig into their pasts and follow that thread up to their end. I felt it was the least I could do as one of the few witnesses to the whole thing.

Progress was slow, pitifully so at the start because of how tumultuous and chaotic things were for us at the time, which prompted me to enlist Zhu Lao's, Ren Shu's, Shao An's, and Yu Long's help at the time.

The progress was still snail-paced even with their involvement but we still made some, which was how I ended up discovering that two people had survived that day; the quasi-soul formation expert, and one of the attackers from the sect that had besieged them.

The attacker immediately sought refuge with a rank 1 empire the Red Fire Abalone empire. At the time I had suspected that maybe the quasi-soul formation expert was from there, but that proved to be wrong.

That attacker ended up dying a few hundred years later from the injuries he had sustained from the fight, and the quasi-soul formation expert vanished like he had never existed.

But even with little to work with and help from Zhu Lao and the rest, I was able to recreate the history of the Crystal Palm Jade Sect, and eventually traced it back to its four founders one of which was the illusory Deng Chao.

I admired him more after discovering how he was. He never sought fame and was always there when his brothers and sect needed him.

Then when I started digging into him that's when i stumbled upon some bizarre happenings. His past seemed like it was blank before he met with the three sworn brothers he made and eventually founded the Crystal Palm Jade Sect.

Blanked-out pasts isn't exactly a bizarre thing, but it was that blank past and his art that eventually led me to Jiang Fu's dad, about 300 years later.

The crystallized palm art Deng Chao used was unique, and as I was digging into his past, I was always curious if there were people or places that had something similar to it. I did out of pure interest, really, but I ended up finding a group of individuals who exhibited something similar, though not on the same scale as Deng Chao's display of it. I think you should take a look at

An alchemist with jade hands and eyes who could traverse into any miasma-filled region, and harvest any poisonous material with nothing but their bare hands, a diamond body cultivator losing to a 10-year-old in a pure fist brawl, a crystallized jade beauty whose radiance during the full moon drove countless to madness.

Random people, random events with nothing similar except for the fact they had crystallized jade bodies, and their pasts had been erased at some point, and all of them died along with the organizations they belonged to at the time.

It wasn't hard to guess that they were targetted, and now with a line to follow I dug deeper to uncover their identities which led me to countless organizations lost in the river of time, with the history dating back tens of thousands of years, each destroyed because of one reason or another but in each of those organization they had a standout person with a jade body or essence.

As I pulled that thread it eventually led me to an inn owner by the name of Jiang Tao, Jiang Fu's father, and from him was that I finally heard about the spirit jade turtle Li family, a family that had made a contract with the Jade Turtle spirit beast from their founder's time which was over a million years ago..."

Meng Chao clasped his hands together as he eyed the three whose attention was firmly on him.

"You all know about physiques. You can acquire them through training, you can gain them through some fortuitous encounter that transforms your body, some are gifted by the Origin Dao itself and then there are those that are passed down by a bloodline, and more often than not those that fall under this

category are usually tied to some powerful creature be it a spirit beast or a spiritual plant, and the Li family was the same.

Their ancestor made a soul pact with the Spirit jade turtle. It's not a well-known creature due to its reclusive nature, but it is a standout spirit beast nonetheless, one with a two-generational gap to the ancients.

"I'll let Yang Qing explain to you two about them later.." Meng Chao said when he saw the puzzled looks of Dai Chen and Zhang Qinggee.

"But I guess it can't hurt to give you a picture. You have heard of dragons, phoenixes, vermilion birds, white tigers, and the like. Mythical races they liked to be called.."

The duo nodded.

"Well, the ancients could loosely be considered their parents or originators.."

The revelation was like a thunderclap to the duo as they widened their eyes. Just any of the mentioned beings was terrifying beyond measure, they shuddered to imagine what the ancients, their originator, how powerful were they?

"Now these mythical creatures, they also have descendants of their own. Dragons have flood dragons, the phoenix has the yuan bird, and the Ba She snake you fought before, though I suspect the one you fought had the thinnest of Ba She bloodline.

If you had fought one with a pure bloodline, the fight would have been much harder. The Ba She are descended from the taotie so in some respect they have their devouring ability, able to swallow all kinds of techniques and use them to nourish themselves or rebound the attack, giving them thorny defensive capabilities.

And then there is the Spirit jade turtle, descended from the Ao tortoise, the tortoise large enough to support an entire world on its shell..."

Chapter 485 Fall of the spirit jade turtle Li family (1)

From the moment Meng Chao began his narration it has been one shocking statement after another. From the ancients and now to Jiang Fu possibly having some ties to them.

When a bit of it had sunk in, they couldn't help but worry about him. Cultivators have killed each other for less and for something as valuable as ancient ancestry in the mix the whole continent would be lining up to hunt him down if he did not have a strong background to rely on.

The cultivation world was pretty ruthless, especially, when it came to things that could shape a legacy, or improve one's strength which was why there were still fights to the death over treasures and the like.

When it came to such fights, the Order wasn't involved. They would only get involved if the fight extended to innocents who didn't have any stakes in the fight and were dragged in, but if the fight occurred between willing participants, then the Order would stay clear of it.

Other than treasures, those with certain physiques would get hunted down, especially if said physique was known to improve someone's cultivation base like the heart of a crystal heart-glazed user, which was known to increase the odds of a cultivator breaking through to the domain realm.

All around the continent, there were still cases of physique holders getting kidnapped and their bodies and bloodlines getting experimented on like a spiritual herb to see if one could exploit it for themselves. Physiques were no different from natural treasures to some.

They could now understand a bit of why Jiang Fu hid his name, a descendant bloodline of the Ao tortoise was something invaluable.

The Ao tortoise was rumored to be a massive creature that could support mountains, rivers, oceans, and continents on its back and it did not just stop there, some of the landscapes had the same amount of auspicious air, richness, and vitality that was seen in the cultivation grounds of Holy Lands.

It was a world in and of itself, and while they didn't know a lot about the spirit jade turtle, for it to have descended from the Ao, it had to have qualities that made it stand out from the rest and some of those qualities had to have some resemblance or closeness to the abilities of the Ao tortoise.

Luckily for them, they didn't have to wonder about its abilities because Meng Chao filled in their gaps in knowledge.

"When it comes to the Spirit jade turtle, one could consider it a creature of balance in terms of attack and defense. It is made entirely of spirit crystal jade, something considered to be the crystallization of purity, and tolerates no embellishment.

Embellishment here encompasses a wide array of things from poison, miasma, water, fire, attacks of all kinds, malice both in thought and words, and a wrong look, as long as it is anything that profanes the turtle, the spirit jade will react, offensively or defensively, which makes it immune to almost everything from poisons, to physical attacks to karmic attacks and curses since the spirit jade isolates it from everything.

Of course, the defense is limited to the strength of the spirit jade turtle itself, so if your power and understanding are higher than the spirit jade turtle, your attacks will reach it, but it could still choose to hide itself which was one of its strongest moves as it has the ability to isolate its karma and presence.

When it comes to attacks, its movements are fast, piercing, and all-encompassing. It has the ability to control light and variations of space since the Ao tortoise is rumored to be able to bend and mold space at will, which is how it is able to support continents, rivers, and mountains on its back.

The spirit jade turtle has some variations of that ability which is it's able to create whirlpools in space that could tear apart any defenses if you were unlucky enough to get swallowed by it. They could also disrupt space and prevent teleportation either in or out, so escape talismans and teleportation treasures are useless before it.

If you dare use it, they will malfunction and you'll end up in a distorted space filled with void chaotic energy.

The spirit jade turtle has a long list of abilities to ensure its survival almost anywhere. However, for all its abilities, it's reclusive in nature and likes to hide away and hibernate for years on end, which is why there is little information about it.

From the bit I've read about it, it dislikes confrontation and attention and much prefers solitude. It's that love for solitude that its numbers and presence are so low. It's rumored that one spirit jade turtle would be born every 50,000 years, making their numbers so pitifully few.

However, despite their nonconfrontational nature, once angered they will pursue you to the ends of the planet no matter the cost. They're as vengeful as they come if angered, and they do not discriminate. They would attack a dragon with the same fervor they would a pig, provided they were provoked sufficiently, and it would be fight to the death.

They're not be angered lightly.."

"I hope I never run into one.." Yang Qing fearfully thought as he imagined himself being chased by a vindictive turtle.

"What am I worried about anyway? It's not like I go around making trouble, besides from its solitary nature, and the way it likes to hide itself, spotting one would be very difficult, and even if I did, I'm not a troublemaker in the very least.

Yang Qing you worry too much.." he thought as he chuckled inwardly.

"Now one of those spirit jade turtles from what Jiang Fu's father told me at the time which was something passed down in their family happened to form an unlikely friendship with the ancestor of the clan, and that friendship devolved into a soul contract formation between the two.

The contract was mainly because the spirit jade turtle thought the Li ancestor had a pitiful lifespan, so it shared some with it.

He told me at birth spirit jade turtles are usually born with a lifespan of 70,000 years that increases astronomically with every jump in strength, something they got from being in the lineage of the Ao tortoise that is rumored to be immortal, though that's still unproven, but with how long the lifespans of these mythical creatures are rumored to be, I wouldn't be surprised..."

"Senior, haven't you said spirit jade turtles like solitude? How come it formed a friendship with a human? Moreso one deep enough that it was compelled to share its lifespan?" asked Zhang Qinggee.

"It's unknown how their friendship came about since their founder never shared it, however from the little bit I've been able to gather, though this is purely my own thoughts, I think spirit jade turtles are mercurial creatures who love and hate with the same extremes.

Once the founder became its friend, he reaped the rewards of it. Though that's purely my own thinking. Who knows what long-lived creatures like them think or see the world?" said Meng Chao with a smile as he thought of one such person within the Order, one of the quirkiest individuals he has ever come to know. Of course, when it came to quirkiness, the Order had its fair share of culprits, and there was even one in front of him.

He let out another chuckle as he shook his head.

"Anyhow, that's how the Li family wound up with the bloodline of the spirit jade turtle, which catapulted them to grow into a first-rate clan. They seemed to have adopted the same nature as the spirit jade turtle too, which I don't know if it was by design or an effect of having the bloodline of the spirit jade turtle.

Despite their increase in power, their territory was very small, about the size of a small city in a rank 5 kingdom, which they maintained even at their peak, which could be considered odd because they had a couple of soul formation experts at their peak.

However, they did end up creating three more side branch clans to avoid congestion, who set up territories of their own and observed the same modesty as the main clan.

From the accounts I heard, despite the smallness of their land, it was rich beyond measure in terms of resources, and spiritual qi, enough to rival the grounds of present-day holy lands. Such richness could have been the work of the spirit jade turtle contracted to their founder.

Thanks to its support, they survived hundreds of thousands of years, since their history dates back a million years ago, however, all that changed when their founder died. The founder managed to live close to 700,000 years despite only reaching the soul-adept stage of the soul formation realm.

Despite the contract elevating his aptitude and reforming his body, there were some things it couldn't change which were comprehension ability and aptitude. He excavated beyond what his talents could

give him, and thanks to the spirit jade turtle, he was able to reach heights he would likely have never even glimpsed were it not for it.

When he died, the spirit jade turtle left the clan. Its bond was with the founder and not his descendants and it had no qualms about leaving them or any obligation to watch over them.

Chapter 486 Fall of the spirit jade turtle Li family (2)

However, even with its absence, the Li family was still powerful as it still had four soul formation experts at the helm who had more talent than their founder, a deep foundation established over hundreds of thousands of years, and had the bloodline of the spirit jade turtle which gave them some of its abilities, spirit jade body was one.

But without the founder, and the spirit jade turtle, as with most long-established organizations, rifts here and there appeared with factions, each vying for hegemony of the clan. Something about bloodline purity came about, and those with low spirit jade turtle bloodline were evicted from the main clan to the branches bringing about a sense of alienation and discrimination.

Fathers abandoned sons because of it, and wives abandoned daughters while there were those who resented the clan for separating them like that.

That rift created an opening, and slowly by slowly they were chewed away by enemies left right, and center, some found their identities but no longer existed, but others hid themselves well.

Eventually, the spirit jade turtle Li family, a family that had survived a million years, was eradicated 16,000 years ago. The four soul formation experts they had before had already died at that point, however, owing to their resources and bloodline, they still managed to create another one who had a talent that dwarfed all the others, however, she was killed immediately after breaking through, and without a soul formation expert, they were quickly swept away.

The attack moved from the main clan and even went to the side branches. There were a few survivors here and there, and Jiang Fu's father was one of them.

Jiang Fu's part of the Li family was a side branch, and they had survived thanks to the efforts of a friend of their grandmother. He was a young chancellor of a certain empire at the time but is now retired, he saved them due to a promise he made to their grandmother, that he would look after her family in case something happened to her.

Something did happen to her, and the chancellor kept his promise. That chancellor retired, and is now the owner of the Thousands Flavors Restaurant..."

Yang Qing and the trio were wide-eyed when they heard that bit.

"As for why the spirit jade turtle Li family was targetted, you all took spirit beast ecology at the institute right?" asked Meng Chao.

The trio nodded as an answer that they did.

"Then you know spirit beasts don't just cannibalize each other for the sake of it or for territory or hegemony. Yes, the latter two could be factors, but usually, they do it with the sole purpose of improving and strengthening themselves and the targets they choose aren't random.

It's usually ones that are able to enhance their own bloodline for example a water typhoon lizard will likely target a cerulean kingfisher that has a lower cultivation base than it would a thunderhead mockingbird with a strong cultivation base, not unless the latter has a wisdom pearl.

Spirit beasts target those of similar attributes and consume them to improve on what they have. That is usually the case, however, there are exceptions where symbiotic partnerships appear where they each makeup for what the other needs or lacks.

The snapping willow tree is one such example, which houses the scarlet hummingbird, the withering weevil, the black verdant porcupine, and the grey fog tree frog, which cooperate not only to ensure their own safety but even in terms of cultivation they form a cycling exchange between the five of them.

Then there is another relation that is a mix of the two, cannibalistic and cooperative, where spirit beasts attack other spirit beasts to consume them or use them as a panacea to quell the negative aspects of their own attributes, like the rainbow mist toad in your possession that needs something with a purifying ability to help quell the toxins in its own body from running rampant.

It can either consume a spirit beast with a gentle purifying nature which will help strengthen its body to the toxins or cultivate next to a treasure with similar properties..."

Yang Qing nodded at this since this was the same measure he had employed for Bolin's training. He had him cultivate next to a hundred moon-cleansing hawthorn flower to help him balance his body before it was overrun by poison.

"The reason I mention this is because the same thing applies to mythical creatures. They will devour each other to improve themselves when their attributes align, or use each other to fix a flaw.

While I'm not sure who massacred the spirit jade turtle Li family, I can tell their motives which definitely fall under the two reasons I mentioned as to why spirit beasts would target each other.

The one thing the Li family had of value more than anything else, so enticing that one would risk fighting against soul formation experts, is the spirit jade turtle bloodline.

And who would be so determined to do that? it's those with a lot to gain from it like let's say an organization similar to the Li family that has some bloodline of a mythical creature on the same level as the spirit jade turtle, who need its bloodline because they either share overlaps in attributes, or they need its bloodline to quell the negative side effects of their own bloodline or it could even be at the behest of a mythical creature that is injured that needs the blood of the spirit jade turtle to heal.

And such a thing might be much more tantalizing to them than some saint-grade treasure. This is why I strongly believe the Crystal Palm Jade Sect was attacked because of Deng Chao's background rather than the treasure, and based on the display I saw of him, I'm willing to bet he is from the main branch due to how dense the spirit jade was on him.

The culprits are still hidden, but using the spirit jade turtle bloodline as the motive puts them out in the open.

The list of suspects capable of pulling what they did off, while also standing to gain the most from it, is really small, and over the years I've been narrowing it, and now it's just three.."

The ears of the trio immediately perked up, especially Zhang Qinggee's.

"I can't tell you yet, since each one is more terrifying than the next, but when I do have something concrete I will make sure to inform you.

As for Jiang Fu's current state, I had someone watch over him as he breaks through who discovered some cultivators stalking him.

Clearly, they're waiting for him to break through to the palace realm and kidnap him after, but they're just mercenaries, who had their memories altered and have no idea of who gave them the job..."

"Isn't it dangerous, and how did they discover about him?" asked Zhang Qinggee.

"I can promise you we have taken every measure to ensure his safety. Jiang Fu is like a son to us, who we have seen grow. We wouldn't risk his life like that.

As for how they found out, like I said Jiang Fu is safe, Li Fu is another thing. They seem to have the means to track the Li bloodline, and while we can block it, it's more prudent if we let things be and catch all who came.

Jiang Fu can't live his life as a prisoner, locking away Li Fu, he needs his life, and his name back, and if it's any consolation he was the one who suggested using himself as bait in this. But I can promise you, I have my chief inquisitor watching him, and Zhu Lao and the rest have sent their representatives as well, along with having a saint-grade artifact in his abode as a fail-safe and instant teleportation runes that could work even with the interference of a soul formation expert.."

Zhang Qinggee went silent, with worry still on her face.

"It will be okay Qingge. It's what Jiang Fu wants.." Yang Qing said with a gentle tone.

"Sorry.." Zhang Qinggee said in a low tone to Meng Chao.

Meng Chao had known Jiang Fu far longer than she had and had more likely been protecting him in all that time, even going as far as having him close by at the Thousand Flavors Restaurant, was likely his doing.

She felt sorry for letting worry cloud her judgment.

"It's okay. I'll keep you all appraised, but it will take time since I also need to make preparations of my own.

One way or another I need to resolve it myself, but these are opponents who can kill soul formation experts.

With my realm as it is, I would not be able to do much just like back then.." a flash of regret passed through his eyes as he said this.

"I will be going into seclusion to reach the soul formation realm from today. By my estimates, it should take six months to a year at most. At that time, my inquisitor Bo Gen will inform you of any changes that may happen or you can seek out Dean Zhu Lao, Ren Shu, Yu Long, or Shao An, they're also closely monitoring the situation.

Hopefully, by the time I come out, we will have something to work with, which will finally give me the chance to give reprieve to Little Fu, Deng Chao, and other Li family survivors who may still be there, and lay this 900-year ghost case to rest..."

Chapter 487 Realizing one's insignificance

"All we can do now is wait as we wish Jiang Fu a smooth breakthrough to the palace realm, hopefully soon. I have rather missed his tea.." Meng Chao said musingly with a smile.

"I have, too.."

"Me too.."

"Me too. He can't get here fast enough..."

The mood lightened with light smiles all around.

The trio were still slightly shaken by the information Meng Chao had revealed to them.

Yang Qing wasn't immune to the surprise even if he had a bit of prior knowledge. All he had been expecting was maybe Deng Chao and Jiang Fu were part of some clan that wasn't around anymore, having fallen for obvious reasons.

However, just like most, he thought the Crystal Palm Jade Sect had been destroyed because of the saint-grade treasure Deng Chao had found in the Millionsfold treasure ocean.

A saint-grade treasure was a saint-grade treasure, it didn't matter whether you were from a Holy Land or some impoverished sect or clan, you would covet one the moment you laid your eyes on it.

One could establish a long-lasting dynasty as long as one had one, more so if one got an offensive or defensive-based treasure. Deng Chao had survived precisely because of that saint-grade treasure, that not only saved his life but it has also continuously nourished and anchored his soul. If he were in the soul formation realm, his soul could easily exist outside his body with no repercussions, but as a quasi-soul formation expert, there were risks to that, and eventually, his soul would dissipate without a body.

However, 900 years passed since his sect was destroyed, but he was still alive and well, and it was thanks to the efforts of the saint-grade treasure he had on hand.

But as it turned out, his guess was off, and it was because of his million-year heritage with the Li family. Surviving that long was nothing to scoff at, nor was it something easily achievable, yet they had done it.

Who knew how many storms they had weathered in that time period? Though with the facts at hand, there was no doubt the Spirit jade turtle was a huge reason for it, because when it disappeared they didn't last that long, though internal division had likely been key to their demise.

Still, the whole information was a shocker to Yang Qing nonetheless and whoever the mastermind was behind their demise, they were clearly beyond the abilities of three palace realm cultivators.

They could destroy a rank 2 organization in three days and were able to capitalize on the division of the Li family and its eventual destruction. This was a clan that had a history that was likely longer than the two present-day Holy Lands in Radiant Sword Sect, and Flowing Valley Sect.

The fact that they were able to bring down such an ancient clan meant they were not in the least, in terms of resources, reach, and cunning since even someone as lofty as Meng Chao couldn't decipher their identity even now.

Today's event was the second time in the week the trio had realized their own limitations in the larger scheme of things. Even with the Order's backing, there were things they could not be involved in, only their seniors could, and for this case, it was even more so, since it involved powerful figures from the Order in the likes of Meng Chao and Dean Zhu Lao, and still their investigation was slow.

That spoke volumes of the opponent they were dealing with because of those two, one was a paragon domain user which Yang Qing still didn't know what that meant, and the other could break apart and remodel cultivation techniques with the same ease as breathing. Yet one felt the need to break through to the soul formation first before proceeding further despite his already terrifying abilities.

Yang Qing could still remember how terrified he had been when exposed to the depiction of the paragon domain realms in the dark valley. While he didn't know which one was Meng Chao's, the fact that he was known to have one, was enough. Though Yang Qing had heard he was a sword user, of the few paragon domains he was exposed to there was one in particular he felt likely belonged to Meng Chao, the one that was so tyrannical that it almost killed him the instant it appeared, had it known be for the swift intervention of Lei Weiyuan.

The one with the mountain of swords could very well be his, thought Yang Qing.

The trio exchanged a few more words with Meng Chao before they got up to leave. As they were passing through the door, Yang Qing suddenly turned back to Meng Chao as he asked a question that had been ruminating on his mind since he stepped into the hallways of the domain courts.

"Uhm, senior Meng Chao, pardon my insolence, but could I ask something?"

"What is it?" asked Meng Chao with a raised brow at Yang Qing's current obsequious look.

He looked like a child asking for permission to play after being caught in a mistake a few days prior. There was that sense of unease in him.

Yang Qing took a deep breath before he asked his question.

"Are the domain courts usually this empty?"

Meng Chao was taken aback by the question as he blankly stared at Yang Qing before he dryly laughed.

"Figured you would ask that.." he said with a knowing look which drove Yang Qing to embarrassment as he awkwardly scratched the back of his head.

"Well, one doesn't get many cases when they get into the domain courts. Organizations with domain experts are much more reserved. They have much more to lose in comparison to the lower organizations, so they are very careful in their overall conduct.

Besides, mostly when they get in conflict, they resolve it themselves, and when it comes to fiendish cultivators, those at the domain level are much more cunning and resourceful in their conduct.

They are more than capable of covering their tracks, which is how organizations like the Scarlet Blood Ghost Hand Syndicate, and the remnants of the Dark Helminth Ghosts have been able to evade us.

They are extremely careful, and usually leave fewer clues unlike 500 years ago going back when they were much more direct.."

Chapter 488 Domain court system

Yang Qing's eyes lit up like a baby's when he heard that. He looked like he could have blinded the whole room, if tears didn't well up in his eyes, to dim the light up.

"Good, good.." he muttered over and over, with a growing smile that was filled with relief.

"I'm on the right track," he thought as he clenched his fists with renewed motivation.

"How many cases do you usually handle per year?" he asked.

"Well it's never the same, but when you start at the outer domain courts, the cases are usually about 15 or less, and that number shrinks the further up one moves. In my current post, for those who make it here, the case is usually one or two at most a year, and certain years may pass by without one..."

Yang Qing's smile grew wider and his eyes turned crescent-shaped, with little tear drops falling out.

"So you're free for the year?" he eagerly asked.

"Well, yes in one aspect one can say that,? though because of how few cases reach here, we do conduct other duties.."

Yang Qing's eyes instantly bulged open, seemingly saying which other duties?

Meng Chao simply shook his head with a light laugh as he continued with his explanation.

"The Order is still severely undermanned, so we take up some of that load, though it's purely by choice, and not a mandate of our duties as judges.

For example, you can choose to assist the shadow hawks, who you have all heard of by now.."

The trio nodded.

"Well, we help them in gathering information about different parts of the continents, specifically information relating to power distribution and structure of the organizations around.

The rewards for evaluations become less enticing to higher-ranked organizations when compared to the lower ones, so they don't bother doing it.

We have countless rank 3 organizations and within that lot, there is a sufficient number that already have the qualifications to be promoted to rank 2 but very few choose to do so and instead hide their status, as a bid to hide themselves from us or from their competitors.

While they are within their rights to do so since the evaluations are entirely voluntary, for our own sakes we need to have a clear grasp of the distribution of power.

So shameful as it is for me to admit, we sneak around different organizations every year to help fill in the gaps.."

Yang Qing looked at Meng Chao suspiciously. Even though he said it was shameful to admit, Yang Qing felt Meng Chao seemed pleased by it opposite of his words.

"Other than that, we can partner with special inquisitors when they are handling certain cases, and at other times, we help the logistics hall with various matters, specifically one tied to various treasure grounds the Order has, also in refilling its coffers with treasures from all over the continent.

Basically, we scour forbidden grounds for treasures and cultivation materials at the behest of the Order..."

"You said all these are voluntary, right? The Order doesn't fine someone or use sneaky means to make someone do them?" Yang Qing fearfully asked.

He was now seriously rethinking his career choice; the Medicine Valley was looking to be a viable option now.

The thing he had strived to avoid turns out he had been barrelling straight towards it, thinking he was avoiding it.

He had no adventurous bone in him, not unless the adventure was within the grounds of the Order, or if he was armed to the teeth with saint-grade treasures like he was in his promotion ceremony, and had 100 means of surviving worst-case scenarios like reforming his body from a single drop of blood, saliva, blade of grass, whatever form it took he hoped he had a fail-safe measure of recreating his body instantaneously in case it was destroyed.

If he was armed from head to toe with powerful saint-grade treasures like a universal robe, veiled destiny, and the green cocoon, and a surefire way of recreating his body, then he could single-handedly

charge into the Holy Lands, scour the continent for the grounds of infamous organizations like the Scarlet blood ghost hands syndicate and rob them of their treasures and food, and even leave a note smugly saying he was the one who did it, and they can find him in the deepest parts of the Millionsfold treasure ocean if they wanted revenge.

He wasn't a modest person in the least, but his lacking cultivation base and high sense of self-preservation made him one, but left to his own devices, Yang Qing would create world-shaking mischief given a chance.

But until he felt strong enough to gallivant around, he had no intentions of leaving the protection of the Order, especially, if he had a choice on the matter. If it was part of his mandated duty, sure, but if not, he would sleep cozily in his nest, sponging off the Order whilst secretly complaining about them.

"Yes, it's purely voluntary. Other than the cases, whatever you spend your free time doing, it's up to you but the Order generously rewards you for your efforts. Plus, if one wants to get into the Spirit Council, one needs such merits as one of the qualifications to gain consideration for entry"

"Many thanks for the reminder senior Meng Chao but I am but a simple person with simple pleasures. The scales of the Spirit Council are too high for the likes of me." Yang Qing humbly said.

"Well for you, you could help the Medicine Valley, I'm sure you could get many merit points through that, and you have a knack for modifying cultivation arts like Zhu Lao, that could be another.."? said Meng Chao, clearly aware of Yang Qing's cowardly nature.

It was a well-known open secret around the Order, much as the person himself may be unaware, it was well known, same as his secret battle with the Order desperately trying to one-up them.

"Then I, Yang Qing, should the time come, will devote my all with my meager efforts to further the growth of the Order, to pay back even a tiny little bit of all they have given me.." he piously said with a righteous air about him.

Meng Chao, Dai Chen, and Zhang Qingge could only ruefully smile at Yang Qing's words. They knew well enough that the person in question wasn't that selfless.

After the brief interlude, they left.

Meng Chao sighed slightly after they left. He had left out something in his explanation.

"They don't need to know that, though I think on some level they can guess. As cheeky as he might be, he is intuitive. It must have crossed his mind for him to ask it.." Meng Chao said as he leaned back on the backrest of his seat.

The cases in the domain courts were few because of the various factors he had mentioned, but there was one other factor he had avoided mentioning because of what they had just encountered.

...

Outside the court building.

"The cases that reach here huh...Senior Meng Chao is kind, the same as the others..." Yang Qing smiled bitterly as he muttered this before his smile turned to one of gratification.

"I'm glad I chose to come here.."

Both Dai Chen and Zhang Qingge nodded, echoing his sentiments.

Chapter 489 Speculations of the trio

?

The trio decided to head to their abodes in Blue Peak. On the journey over, Yang Qing took the time provided by the walkover to explain to the duo what the ancients were.

"I can't believe such terrifying beings exist.." Dai Chen said with a sigh after Yang Qing completed his explanation.

"I wonder how many of them are there? And could they.." Zhang Qingee cautiously looked around her as she motioned for the two to bend closer before she said,

"Could they too have parents like.."

Her statement made a chill run down the spines of Dai Chen and Yang Qing.

They shuddered at the thought of it.

"Everything has a balance in the world as part of an order. Even if they did have parents, maybe they were normal, unlike them or the ancients are like natural treasures that require the involvement of the world's origin Dao for them to be created, the same thing could apply to the ancients, same as how natural physiques appear..." Yang Qing said.

"With their absurdly long lifespans, I wonder which realms they have reached? If one was given a million-year lifespan, even with a trashy cultivation talent, at the very least reaching the soul formation realm.." said Dai Chen

"Trashy cultivation talent ..huh... Dai, are you taking a dig at the talent of Jiang Fu's ancestor?" Yang Qing teasingly said drawing an awkward smile from him.

"It is scary to imagine it. Dean Zhu Lao told me the green fog swamp was created as a result of one move made by one of them, which destroyed a peak sect that was at the same level as a holy land.

I don't know if that particular ancient was strong even when compared to other ancients but the fact that they could create something like the green fog swamp sect means their realms at the very least I don't believe a soul formation expert can do that.

That particular ancient has more than likely reached the realm above it.." Yang Qing gravely said.

His expression was shared by the two.

As a peak-level organization, they were privy to information that wasn't available to most within the continent, which was in relation to the cultivation realms.

As far as the general populace was concerned, the highest peak one could ever reach in cultivation was the soul formation realm, more specifically the soul supreme stage.

Yang Qing didn't know much about the soul supreme realm, but for clarity so that they could have a general sense of it, they were told a bit about their basic abilities.

When it came to lifespans when one reached the soul supreme realm, the soul's aging process changed qualitatively.

It's like time reaches a penultimate point before stillness for a soul supreme expert. The concept of aging almost loses bearing for them since five thousand years could pass by but those years were recorded as five minutes had passed by where their souls were concerned.

The whole lifespan of a peak core formation expert could be summed up as just five minutes beneath the gaze of a soul supreme expert.

Yang Qing even sometimes wondered if it was even possible for them to exhaust their lifespan. They didn't need a body to live, a wisp of their soul was enough to reform them in an instant. He didn't know if there were immortals or if immortality was possible but the soul supreme cultivators were the closest to it.

Other than their absurd lifespans, came their base abilities that could send shivers down Yang Qing's spine and the rest who had been present when they were being taught the particulars of a soul supreme expert.

Usually the further up one goes, the larger the gap between different realms but also between the minor stages between the same realm but they were not completely absurd.

A body refinement cultivator could escape from a qi refinement cultivator in a fight. Their odds of escape were high, however, that was only to those at the silver stage and below, the same logic didn't apply to those with a gold body, diamond body, or the peerless jade body, especially, the latter two.

When one reached such a stage, anybody in the qi refinement realm from the first all the way to the twelfth stage, could forget about threatening their life, provided they didn't have the same foundations as them in the body refining realm.

Someone with a peerless jade physique could fight toe to toe with a peak-stage qi refinement cultivator.

Foundations matter at that level which helps bridge the gap. Those same foundations also play a part in the next realms. Someone with sturdy foundations and at the peak of the qi refinement realm could survive trading blows with someone with an early-stage foundation establishment cultivator, and if said cultivator has the lowest grades, the white pillars, even a middle stage could suffer a loss against someone at the level of Yang Qing in terms of foundation.

Then when you move up, though foundations still play a part in cross-realm fighting, it gets much harder. A peak foundation establishment cultivator with purple-grade pillars could exchange a few blows with someone at the early stage of the core formation realm but winning was out the window, and when it reached the gap between core formation and palace realm, cross-realm fights were impossible.

Sturdy foundations meant nothing, since those who can reach the palace realm and above have sturdy foundations themselves. Then came the gaps between minor realms. At the qi refinement realm, foundation establishment realm, and core formation realm, the gaps between the early, middle, and late stages were not that distinctive.

When one reached the palace realm that's when there would be gaps between minor realms which was why Yang Qing and the rest were forced to team up against the founder of the Ice Emerald Sect who had been at the sixth stage of the palace realm.

However, they were able to pull it off, but when you reached the domain realm, things became harder, and the gap between someone at the first stage and someone at the fifth stage of the domain realm was a huge gulf.

With such a gap, you either run at the first instant or find ten other domain experts at the early stage to force a draw against the fifth-stage domain expert.

Chapter 490 Recalling the earlier question

The gap widens further between a cultivator at the eighth stage of the domain realm with someone at the ninth stage even if they seem to be just one level apart. That gap was wider than a first-stage domain expert and a sixth-stage domain expert.

Ten eighth-stage domain experts would likely have half of them die before they forced an injury from the ninth-stage domain expert. Of course, Yang Qing did hear there were exceptions, there were specific individuals who could bridge that gap because of their domain, but even then all they could do was force a draw or perish along with the cultivator.

However, such an advantage was completely absent in the soul formation realm. There was nothing like exceptions within that realm. No special physique, or cultivation art mastery advantage could help one bridge the gap between a soul beginner and a soul adept. Every minor improvement was likely breaking through to a new realm which was why it was the only realm that triggered tribulation lightning with every minor realm break through unlike the others, and the gap in strength was evidence.

A soul beginner soul formation expert could massacre a hundred peak domain experts in ten breaths, however, someone that powerful would not survive a single breath beneath the casual strike of a soul adept expert, and from what they were told, soul adept experts could easily kill ten soul beginner experts with the same ease and time, and that gap grew more absurd till you reached the soul supreme level.

At that level, there was a saying, "All are dust beneath the supreme".

It did not matter whether you were a seasoned soul master or a mortal with no cultivation base, in front of a soul supreme cultivator, you both had the same level of resistance and the same chance of survival, which was none.

Cultivation art mastery, saint grade treasures, numbers, foundation, distance; all of them were obsolete when it was a soul supreme expert you were facing. A whole continent could be singlehandedly slaughtered by them within a day if all it had were cultivators beneath the soul supreme level.

They could kill with a single thought.

Yang Qing and other students were horrified when they heard that, and Yang Qing had another reason to never leave the confines of the Order, but then another bombshell got dropped, which was there was a realm above them, and those who reached it, terrifying couldn't even begin to describe them.

They were beneath none, and above all. They could pluck stars from the skies if they so wished, which earned them the moniker, 'Emperors'.

There was little information about it, other than what was recorded in ancient scrolls, so other than the name Emperor, Yang Qing and the rest were not told anything else.

The large populace had no idea such a realm even existed even among rank 2 organizations not unless their history matched that of the Spirit jade turtle Li family, which spanned a million years, and even among the rank 1 organizations, the same thing applied, only those with deep and long-standing foundations had that information.

Yang Qing at the time, wondered how the Order that was only 1,000 years old even had such information, not unless they were acquainted with those whose history dated back millions of years.

After he had interacted with Green Cocoon who the Blue Universe said had existed for at least 500,000 years, he could now see how the Order could have such information and there was something he suspected, which was more hope than suspect, he felt there was a chance, maybe the Order had someone who had reached that level.

Maybe the enigmatic president, and maybe just maybe even the Chancellor of the institute. Of course that was just wishful thinking on his part, since with how hard it was to progress the higher one up moved through the cultivation realm, especially when it came to the lightning tribulations, how hard would it be to reach that realm?

He felt aptitude and other things that mattered lost relevance as a measure of reaching that realm, otherwise it would not be as unheard of as it was, and now he suspected the ancients could very well have reached it, and that guess had a high chance of being true, which terrified him.

If a soul supreme expert could do the things they could do, what about someone above that? Maybe they could even know if you so much as thought of them.

Yang Qing's pupils froze when his thoughts reached this far, which only spiraled from there to other scary scenarios that fueled his fears.

He soon lost himself to his imaginations and the ensuing fears that came out of it, that he didn't realize when he reached his abode, alone. Dai Chen and Zhang Qingge had left at some point.

"This world is scarier than I thought it to be.." he muttered to himself as he slowly made his way to the nest of the celestial nesting weaver to meditate.

He could still feel the spirit-calming effects of the brook of clarity, so he decided to capitalize on it and meditate. Recent events highlighted how weak he was, and the interaction with Meng Chao further intensified it, which fueled his drive to try and improve.

"Even if I'm an ant, I want to be a stronger ant with the ability to cheat death.." he fiercely thought to himself.

"I wonder if it's possible to get their absurd lifespans. At the time I didn't think much about it but Green Cocoon's question at the time was odd.

What is vitality? There was also that strange thing she said at the beginning.." Yang Qing ruminated on his interaction that day before he shook his head in defeat.

"Such thoughts are too far ahead of me when I still have the peerless jade physique to deal with. Mmh, maybe I can check in on Grandpa and the rest tomorrow.." Yang Qing mused as he proceeded to empty his mind and begun meditating on the profundities of the Universal duality indulgent of the myriad worlds cultivation art.

He managed to meditate on it for almost three hours before he stopped. The effects of the brook of clarity had worn out one hour earlier, and he had been able to concentrate for almost an hour before his mind started getting distracted from the popping images of the Ice Emerald Sect.

When he felt those intrusive thoughts sneak in, he cut short his meditation and decided to try and get some sleep, though that plan was interfered with by the celestial nesting weaver which like always had a gifted skill of pushing his buttons. A small fight like always ensued between the two, though the celestial

nesting weaver was mostly at the receiving end of the beating, while it fought back with venomous words.

Ironically after the short bout, Yang Qing ended up having the same peaceful sleep he always had before the events of the Ice Emerald Sect.