

## Daily life 571

### Chapter 571 Case against the Striding Falcon Sect (2)

Luo Meili handed Yang Qing a few talismans she was given by the inquisitor of the Green Sparrow Branch. Within those talismans was the recording talisman given to the disciple before him to record the happenings of the sect, while the others contained information surrounding the Striding Falcon Sect.

Yang Qing handed Luo Meili the talisman he had been given that had been given earlier by administrator Mo Guang which contained a summary version of events surrounding the case.

The young disciple who was left standing by himself nervously looked around as he kept his arms close to his body. Extreme nervousness and unease washed over him as he kept rubbing his sweaty palms on his robes in fear of dirtying the courtroom.

He still couldn't believe he was here or that he had actually followed through on something he and other countless outer sect disciples in the same circumstances as him had fantasized about.

The whole week from the moment he made contact with the Order to finally being here, all felt so surreal to him. In the past week, he even suspected he was hallucinating from some sort of illness borne from his draining daily routine.

Suspecting himself of having hallucinations wasn't some far-fetched notion as he had seen it happen countless times over to other outer sect disciples whose minds broke owing to the pressures, struggles, and torments they were subjected to. Their minds couldn't take it anymore and they just snapped.

Every time he left his shack, he would come across such instances, like today before he left the sect under the guise of completing a sect mission, he met one of the newer disciples who had cracked. He found said disciple paying respects to two blades of grass and from the conversation he heard in passing, it seemed like the disciple thought those blades of grass were his parents, and he was busy bragging to them how he would make a name for himself.

The young disciple left the place in a hurry lest he find himself sucked in. He could feel his mind was slowly sipping away too, which was what prompted him to risk reaching out to the Order despite how far away it was from his sect, or the risks involved.

Though he may not admit it outwardly and even to himself, when he decided to make the trip earlier in the week, his greatest hope wasn't that he would reach the Order and they would hear him out, but it was that some cultivator out there would find him an eyesore and put him out of his misery. He made the trip half hoping to die in transit and after he reached the branch and gave his report, some part of him entertained the earlier thought when he thought he would be going back to the place that taught him what a living hell was like. But luckily or unluckily someone from the branch served as his protector back and when today arrived the same was waiting for him.

"I really have lost it, if even now some part of me is still hoping to die by some bloodthirsty cultivator's blade.." he wryly thought to himself.

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It didn't take long for Yang Qing to go through the information contained in those talismans in its entirety. He had to admit the Green Sparrow Branch had done a thorough investigation of Striding Falcon Sect. Any information he could think of was contained there including those he couldn't.

Their history, the relationship between the higher-ups both within and outside the sect, any debts they have, secret partnerships especially among the elders and outside factions, down to even their hobbies, nothing was left out.

Just the information was enough for him to make a solid judgment on the case.

The sect itself was created 37,000 years ago by a rogue adventurer of the Horizon Odyssey Guild. The adventurer used all his accumulated merit points to redeem an incomplete blue-grade cultivation art from the repository of the guild, that cultivation art was the starry skies of the striding falcon. A cultivation art known for its agility and its practitioners use their bodies as weapons. It had excellent palm and claw arts that worked in tandem with the movement technique.

The founder wasn't particularly talented despite cultivating tirelessly he only ever reached the early stage of the core formation realm and with a red core at that. However, the reason despite a lacking talent he decided to go for a top-tier cultivation art that he would never even reach the emergent stage was because he had found a talented disciple during his adventures.

He and a few other friends from the guild decided to create the sect, though it was a sect, it felt more like a clan because of how close-knit they were when it started. The adventurers and the founder poured all they had into the founder's disciple. He was like their legacy, and that disciple's talent really shone as she reached the middle stages of the core formation realm when she was just twenty exceeding her master who even at 3,000 years old was still an early-stage core formation expert.

lightsnovel.com The found and the few friends he formed the sect with soon died with gratified smiles as when they left she had already reached the seventh stage of the core formation realm, and the sect they had just started as a house for her had grown into something they didn't expect and with her at the helm it was bound to reach greater heights.

Years passed as the sect slowly grew in fame and repute with her at the helm. She earned the title ' the graceful falcon' because of her skills with the cultivation art, and her looks and graceful temperament.

Eventually, she reached the quasi-palace stage. Things were looking up for the sect, she was about to become the first palace realm expert, and the sect gained a few more talents who had the same level of talent as her, and one of them was the retired supreme elder, Liu Kang.

The sect seemed like it would only continue rising, however, tragedy struck. The same fame that accompanied that disciple, was the same fame that doomed her. She drew countless suitors over the years however because of her abilities and reputation, none were too bothered when she rejected them all, until one, some lascivious prince of a rank 3 empire that wasn't too far from them.

That prince didn't handle rejection too well and eventually resorted to using underhanded means such as attempting to use the forces of the empire to kidnap her, which all ended in failure, and eventually, the prince got killed in the process which then drew the ire of the empire.

Since the disciple couldn't flee because the sect would be implicated, she sold all three-quarters of the treasures they had accumulated and used it to exchange for anything that could help her fight against the empire.

It wasn't easy to find places with the means of helping a quasi-palace stage expert gain a measure of abilities that would help her fight against three palace realm experts, but lucky for her, she did, and it was the one place that was the impetus for the sect coming up, the Horizon Odyssey Guild.

Chapter 572 Case against the Striding Falcon Sect (3)

The founder's disciple traded almost all of the treasures that they had in the sect, leaving the sect only with the barest amount with the incomplete blue-grade art the starry skies of the striding falcon. When that wasn't enough she redeemed the merit points that her founder's friends from the guild had left.

With all of that added up she was able to buy the palace path enlightenment pill. This was a top-tier blue-grade pill that was rumored to be able to temporarily boost a cultivator's realm to the palace stage, however, as wondrous as it sounded it had several restrictions. For one, it could only work on someone who was already at the peak of the core formation realm and had a rudimentary sense of their dao, and second, the boost was temporary. Rumor was it only worked for three hours.

After the effects of the pill subside, the user will be left paralyzed and unconscious for several months to a year. The severity of the side effects was usually dependent on the foundations of the consumer. The greater the foundations, the less severe and time needed to recuperate.

The palace path enlightenment pill worked by using the cultivator's own understanding of the dao as fuel to build a pseudo-palace realm within them using their own foundations. Since the palace realm wasn't the real thing its abilities paled to the real thing, however, since its base mechanism worked off of the foundation of the consumer, those with firm foundations were able to make the most out of it.

The founder's disciple who had solid foundations and a pseudo-gold core was one such person.

The Palace Path enlightenment pill was a truly wonderful pill that could only be found within the walls of the Horizon Odyssey Guild. Its ingredients and how it even was created were completely unknown, except maybe to the guild itself, and despite the abilities or effects it created, unlike taboo arts, the users of the pill could easily survive its side effects.

If one were to draw a negative from it was, while it used the foundations of the user to work, the palace realm it builds was not a true one, because if it was, it would trigger a tribulation automatically. The palace realm built could be considered a tainted palace realm. This became a problem to the user since after the effects of the pills wore off, they would still have vivid and complete memories of how they formed the pseudo palace, which would be a form of corruption or veil for them as that memory would veer them off their true path.

Cultivators who had a high chance of reaching the palace realm may be rendered incapable of reaching the palace realm after consuming the pill. That road created by the pill becomes imprinted on their soul and becomes so real to them that they are unable to remember their real path which hinders their

progress forward. Removing that imprint requires considerable effort similar to the ones cultivators make to purge themselves of their internal demons.

This was why despite its wonderous effects, cultivators with any chance of reaching the palace realm would try to avoid the pill if they could as it had the potential of cutting off any chance they had of ever reaching the palace realm.

However despite the founder's disciple knowing this particular issue she still decided to take the pill because of the predicament she and her sect were in. She was the strongest member of the sect with only a quasi-palace realm strength when their enemy was an empire with three palace realm experts even though none of them had reached the middle stages.

With such odds stacked against her, she had little to no choice but to opt for the pill. With the effects of the pill already giving her the strength of a palace realm expert, she used every means she had to sneak into the royal palace of the empire and targetted the three palace realm experts of the empire of which one was the grandfather of the prince she had just killed.

Because of her foundations, she was able to kill one of the palace realm experts who had just broken through not too long ago, however, though she was successful, the attack which she had hoped would go as a silent assassination snowballed into a full frontal confrontation that alerted the remaining two palace realm experts in the end.

Encircled by the two left with no choice, she used a taboo art that fossilized the two palace realm experts. The art created a bone ash storm that swallowed everything within a 500-meter radius. Anything touched by a single speck of the ash would turn into dry clay. The ash also had a corrosive effect that would come into play once the subject had been fossilized. It worked on both the living and the nonliving, it did not differentiate between the one who cast the technique and the one who was cast on.

The two palace realm experts were immediately immobilized but not before one of them used a one last ditch effort to hack the founder's disciple's body in two as she was fossilizing.

The two palace realm experts immediately turned into statues though they were still alive, all the art did was render them immobile for a certain period of time. The taboo art was not able to kill them even with its corrosive abilities, however, it was able to incapacitate them for 370 years, which was the amount of time the art would remain active before it dissipated. This would give her sect enough time for them to escape.

News of what happened at the royal palace broke, spreading far and wide sending shockwaves to all who knew her, especially her sect, and her allies.

The founder had expected her sect would escape, but instead, they chose to use the time she provided to grow as strong as possible in order to avenge her.

When the time was almost up, one of her disciples, the retired supreme elder, Liu Kang managed to reach the palace realm. Though he managed to reach it, he ended up sacrificing his foundations to reach it that fast.

#### Chapter 573 Case against the Striding Falcon Sect (4)

With the 370 years almost up, he, the sect master at the time who had also been a disciple of the founder's disciple and was a quasi-palace stage expert, along with other elders, all charged towards the empire.

They were not alone in this, as some of the clans, merchant organizations, and other entities with a tie to them all threw their hat into the fight regardless of the consequences because of their admiration for the founder's disciple.

A wide-scale battle soon ensued as the Striding Falcon Sect aimed at not only getting rid of the remaining two palace realm experts but also destroying the entire Storm Cloud Empire. There was already an irreconcilable feud between the two at this point. One could not exist while the other lived.

City by city fell under the onslaught of the Striding Falcon Sect with the retired supreme elder leading the charge. Six months in, they finally reached the capital and a day later they were meters away from the palace itself.

The effect of the taboo art cast by the founder's disciple had not yet dissipated, so the team made up of the Striding Falcon Sect waited in silence until it did, and when it did, a thunderous blood bath washed the palace.

The two palace realm experts already weakened by the taboo art ended up getting killed after two months of relentless fighting. The retired supreme elder held off the two of them long enough for the sect master and the other allies to kill one of them and when that was done, he went on to kill the remaining one.

Despite their success, they paid a severe price for it. The sect master had his cultivation crippled in the attack, over a dozen high-ranking elders of the sect died along with the prominent figures of the clans and the organizations that had allied with them in the attack, and the retired supreme elder had also suffered grievous injuries of his own.

Even though they won, it was a pyrrhic victory at that. The Striding Falcon Sect used the resources of the Stormcloud Empire to rebuild themselves whilst also splitting up the spoils with the organizations that had joined them.

The alliance between them continued as those organizations sent their members to the Striding Falcon Sect to be disciples of the sect, especially since they now had a palace realm expert at the helm and despite the damage they suffered, with a palace realm expert and the resources they plundered from the Stormcloud Empire, they were bound to regain their vitality and rise to even greater heights.

Those organizations hoped to ride that momentum, and from the support they had given, the Striding Falcon Sect was all too glad to welcome them.

However, something slowly started developing within the sect, seeds of class. The descendants of those who were in the fight to oust the Stormcloud Empire felt they were superior and true disciples because of the sacrifices their seniors made in the fight in comparison to new disciples who had just gotten into the sect with no affiliations to any of those organizations.

They felt the new disciples were nothing but leeches eating off the laurels and the sacrifices their seniors made.

At first, that budding division wasn't considered a big deal and was even encouraged so the sect would have intense competition amongst its disciples, that way it would not stagnate, but slowly the chasm grew and that sentiment wasn't only shared by the juniors but also some of the senior figures both within the sect and their affiliated organizations.

Though the flames of a divided line were there with the sentiment growing day by day, it wasn't to an uncontrollable level because despite what the descendants of the alliance felt or even the progeny of the sect members who gave their lives in the attack against the Stormcloud Empire, the supreme elder Liu Kang though didn't interfere much acted as the anchor of sanity and cordiality between the two sides.

His presence gave room for the 'outside' disciples room to grow while the alliance faction didn't dare act too much out of bounds because of his presence. However, all that changed when he went into a death seclusion.

Without anyone to hold their reigns, the alliance faction that had a lot of members and more power grew and had a firm chokehold over the sect and its affairs. Their true disciple and true member sentiment pervaded throughout the sect with an even greater intensity. From what was written in the report, the affairs of the outer sect halls fell under the hands of a few disciples from the alliance faction with support from the core elders.

The sect master did try to control the situation but his hands were tied as his faction was weaker by a fair margin compared to the alliance faction. It was mostly made up of the 'outside' disciples who managed to make something of themselves, but even then their influence was limited when compared to their opponents who had the backing of the alliance organizations who had considerable influences of their own especially when one considered they too got a share of the spoils of a rank 3 empire.

The sect master didn't dare act too out of turn in this, especially with the status of the retired supreme elder being unknown, he couldn't risk it.

The alliance faction was led by the grand elder, he was called Hu Miu, and was at the eleventh stage of the core formation realm, while the sect master called, Fang Wu, led the other with a peak stage core formation cultivation base.

Even though he had the highest cultivation base if the retired supreme elder wasn't put into consideration, he couldn't act. On a cumulative power level, his side was weaker when compared to the alliance faction and the organizations backing them, some had quasi palace stage experts which limited him on the things he could do despite being the sect master.

That passivity led to the present situation, and by the look of things, it would only get worse as long as the status of the supreme elder remained in limbo.

"A sect founded by rogues, those with no backing or background, is now discriminating against those very people..." Murmured Yang Qing with a sigh.



"Good morning, I take it you're outer sect disciple Ma Qi.." Yang Qing said as he turned to face the nervous stricken Ma Qi.

lightsNovel ?om "Ye..ees y....eeees I am, senior.."

"Just call me, Judge Yang Qing, and please have a seat.." Yang Qing said as he pointed to one of the chairs in the courtroom.

With the way Ma Qi's legs were shaking, he was worried they would give out.

Ma Qi seemed hesitant, and it was only under the guidance and gentle persuasion of Luo Meili did he agree to take the seat, and even then he was close to the edge.

"You're filing a suit against your sect for negligence and hoped to be let out of your discipleship with them. Is that correct?" gently asked Yang Qing.

"It is.." Ma Qi nervously said after a slight hesitation.

"Are there others who share the same sentiment?"

Ma Qi went silent for a while before he finally said,

"yes.."

"Okay then. Thank you for the information you collected via the recording talisman. Now all I will need from you is a vivid and concise account of your life and all you have seen and experienced as an outersect disciple of the Striding Falcon Sect from the moment you became an outersect disciple to now.

I will leave it to you to decide on the parts to share, though from time to time I may interrupt to ask a few questions for clarification. If that is okay with you.."

"It is.."

"Okay then, disciple Ma Qi, you can begin.." Yang Qing said with a gentle smile.

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The beaten down Ma Qi wanted to stand up and straighten his robes somewhat but his legs seemed to have failed him. He wasn't sure if it was the fatigue borne out of three years of working as a dog, or the extreme nervousness born from the situation but he couldn't move his legs no matter how much he tried. It was like he had been paralyzed from the waist below.

Just as he was about to fall into the never-ending abyss of panic, Yang Qing's voice saved him.

"There's no need to get up, saying it while seated is okay.." said Yang Qing.

What Ma Qi didn't know was it wasn't fear or fatigue that had stolen the strength from his legs but rather it was Yang Qing's doing. Yang Qing covertly used his presence to seat Ma Qi firmly in place.

The wood used on the seats around the courtroom was made from azure lotus wood which had cleansing properties on both the body and spirit.

When Ma Qi stepped into the courtroom Yang Qing conducted a quick scan of Ma Qi and discovered his body was filled with impurities. Some were from his diet and environment, while another part was pill poisoning. With limited time for cultivation, Ma Qi likely had barely enough time to properly refine the pills and potions he was given, and also based on how the Striding Falcon Sect treated their disciples, the pills and potions they got were likely to be substandard and filled with a lot of impurities.

Close contact with the azure lotus wood would help him cleanse his bodies of all the accumulated impurities and Ma Qi would be none the wiser about it.

Ma Qi who was ill at ease cleared his throat in preparation for giving his account.

"Thank you for the opportunity, judge Yang Qing," he said as he cupped his fists in gratitude.

"My name is Ma Qi and I joined the Striding Falcon Sect about three years ago. I was born in one of the little outskat villages spread about within their territory.

Our village was small and didn't know much about cultivation other than a few body refinement techniques. But even then, everyone still knew of the Striding Falcon Sect and looked up to them with awe, it didn't matter whether you were a small child or an old person, we all revered the sect because of the heroic tale of how they defeated the Stormcloud Empire to uphold the honor of their fallen sect master despite the odds that were stacked against them.

Almost everyone at one point or another dreamed of joining such a great sect.." Ma Qi said as he wryly smiled.

One could hear the sarcasm that was mixed in with bitterness and regret in his tone.

"I was not immune to such a sentiment either. Ever since my grandmother told me the story of how they stormed into the Empire fearlessly, something was ignited within me, a desire. A desire to be strong, fearless, and to do something worthwhile like those seniors did when they charged into the Stormcloud Empire to defend the honor of the sect master and the sect as a whole.

I could imagine myself being with them roaring with righteous anger swinging my sword for a worthy cause.

When young, we all see ourselves as dauntless heroes about to take the world by storm.."

Ma Qi went silent as his gaze turned indistinct like he was seeing the three-year-old Ma Qi who was jumping and running around their compound as he held the little iron sword his father had gifted him when he was three.

In his mind, at three, he was already creating legends. He had slain ferocious spirit beasts, and freed countless from their misery and he was cloaked in glory and honor to last him several lifetimes.

"Dauntless heroes, huh.." Yang Qing murmured to himself as he tried to recall if he had ever seen himself as one.

For as long as he can remember since when he was young, he had ever truly sought after one thing, a strong desire to survive, and the freedom to live.

From the moment he could make sense of his surroundings, all he saw was his broken father who constantly cursed his grandfather when he wasn't around as he filled Yang Qing and his brother with all these thoughts of rebellion. Then there were the crazy body refinement experiments that his grandfather and the crazy members of the Yang clan subjected him to. From the crazy training regimens that no three-year-old should do to the disgusting herb solutions he was bribed and threatened into drinking.

To him, all he wanted from that moment forth was to sleep and to eat what he wanted, and that sentiment has remained true to date.

As for being a hero and slaying fiendish creatures and making his name renowned, that was something he had never thought of even once. The closest he had come to it was imagining what phoenix eggs taste like, or dragon meat and even then he was too afraid to indulge in such thoughts.

"With those emotions growing inside of me, like most, I was dead set on joining the Striding Falcon Sect.

lightsNovel ?om Though our village did have a few cultivators, the highest-ranking cultivator was the village chief who was at the late stage of the qi refinement realm. In our family, my father had the highest cultivation base as a fourth-stage qi refinement cultivator.

He was the hunter of the village and everything I knew about the body refinement stage I learned it from him.

I was only able to reach the silver body refining stage thanks to his tireless efforts.

Things as they are right now maybe it wouldn't have been bad to remain in the village and be under his tutelage. Ignoring everything else, my state of mind would be better than the mess it is right now and I have no doubt my cultivation base would have been higher.

As things are I wish I could go back there so strongly, but I am ashamed to.." Ma Qi said as his eyes fluttered with deep sadness and a self-deprecating smile.

## Chapter 575 Case against the Striding Falcon Sect (6)

Ma Qi remained dazed for a brief moment before he shook his head free of the complex emotions flooding within him.

The previous week wasn't the first time he had done something impulsive. Over the three years on the worst of days in an otherwise period richly filled with horrible days, he had on more than one occasion gone back to his village but luckily reason took hold every time and he came back to the sect.

Deserting the sect was a punishable offence which depending on the type of desertion had the potential of even implicating one's loved ones.

lightsNovel.com Since he joined the sect, he had heard of a few disciples who escaped the sect and ran home, only to be caught a day later, along with their family who ended up suffering the same fate as the deserting disciple. Crippling of the cultivation base and imprisonment.

Ma Qi couldn't bear to subject his family or even the village to such torment. Him being the only one to bear the consequences was a comforting solace to him which oddly enough helped him feel like the hero he dreamed of being in his younger years.

"With the attainments I had with a silver body at 15 years, the village chief used whatever connections he had to find out when the entrance examination was happening and delivered me there himself.

He stayed through the test and was able to see me pass it, after which he left to deliver the news to my parents and the village. One of them had finally become a disciple of the great Striding Falcon Sect.."

The sarcasm was rife in his tone as he said that.

"Before we had the examination we were told those who passed the test depending on how they performed would receive different rewards, one of which was even having the chance of becoming a disciple of one of the elders and becoming an inner disciple from the get-go.

As for the rest, as long as you passed the test, you would receive a top tier orange grade cultivation art, there would be weekly lectures from some of the seasoned core disciples who were already in the core formation stage or at the peak of the foundation establishment and on occasion even if we were outer

sect disciples, one of the senior elders at the late stage of the core formation realm would hold a public lecture four times a year.

They made countless promises on how they would nurture us and all they asked of us was not to slack in our training so we can repay the sect for its efforts and help it reach greater heights.."

"The work that they made you do, did they elude to it at any point in time before you did the test or after you passed the entrance examination test?" Yang Qing asked as he interjected.

"They did say the sect worked on a meritocratic system where if we wanted to get more resources we would need to do missions on behalf of the sect. With every successfully completed mission, we would receive merit points that we would use to redeem cultivation resources from the resource hall.

They said it was a way of building a sense of belonging from the disciples towards the sect and also a way to stir us to work harder rather than remain stagnant and content with the bare minimum resources we would be getting.

With merit points, we could do anything even attend lectures of inner sect disciples despite being outer sect disciples, redeem them for artifacts and weapons that we would spend countless resources.

They painted this beautiful picture of the wondrous uses of the merit points, they even said it was possible for one to cultivate the core art of the sect, the starry skies of the striding falcon with sufficient merit points.

Thinking back now, that should have been a sign that they were hoodwinking us. Are core legacy arts so easily traded that merit points could work?" Ma Qi said as he shook his head.

Everything always seemed clearer in hindsight.

"Even if it was available through merit points, I doubt anyone could afford it, if a low-tier red-grade cultivation art with no combat abilities cost an arm and a tooth, I shudder to imagine how much the core legacy art would cost.

I could trade my life a million times and still barely cover half the cost.."

Yang Qing's eyes glowed with a strange light as he heard that statement.

"The top tier orange grade art that they promised, was it given for free or did you need merit points?"

"You could only receive it through merit points, though you could get it on credit. It was the only cultivation art you could receive it that way. You get the art and pay up the merit points you owe after..."

"What was the cost?"

Ma Qi smiled bitterly as he answered,

"50,000 merit points.."

Both Yang Qing and Luo Meili immediately raised their eyebrows in disbelief when they heard that. Even if they did not know the valuation of the merit system of the Striding Falcon Sect, that value seemed more than absurd.

At the Order for 1,000 merit points, you could redeem five incomplete blue-grade cultivation arts if you wanted, let alone the things you could do with 50,000 merit points. With such an amount, Yang Qing was able to buy the egg of the celestial nesting weaver, which was a spirit beast with a noble bloodline that did not lose out to dragons and phoenixes.

"Did they tell you that beforehand or did you discover it after the fact?"

"It was after we had joined.."

"Based on your merit system how hard is it to earn such an amount? From the statement you gave the Green Sparrow Branch, I read that you feed green emerald caterpillars. How many merit points do you earn from that?"

"You receive 10 merit points only if you do a perfect job on it. If you get injured as many do, 3 merit points are deducted for your medical care and an additional merit point is deducted for tainting the wood energy of the green emerald caterpillar with your blood..." Ma Qi grimly said.

"So it would take 100 years just to pay out the debt?" Yang Qing asked in disbelief.

"What happens if you don't?"

"You can't avoid it since you have to sign a soul contract to get that cultivation art. The contract has several stipulations in it that bind you from defaulting. It was the reason I refused the art and opted to get the low-tier red-grade meditation art that they said was for free.."

"Are there missions that pay well or ways to earn merit points that don't involve missions?"

"There are, but none of them are good.."

"Like?"

"Volunteering yourself as a guinea pig for the alchemy hall and being a test subject for their potion recipes and the other which is what most chose, sell yourself to the inner disciples that have a background which in my opinion is way worse than having your arm eaten by the green emerald caterpillar because once you do, you cease being a human.."

"For people who created the hell hole that we currently live in, how could going under them possibly end in anything good?"

"Seems like he went with the first option. Explains the level of pill poisoning in his body,"

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"Thank you for the clarification, you can continue where you left off.." said Yang Qing.

Ma Qi nodded as he continued with his testimony.



"So after we joined it was then we were informed of the merit points and how pivotal it would be to our growth the more we had.

They did say the sect was never short of missions only short of people to do them, so even when they informed us of the charges involved in the top tier orange grade art, most weren't wary of it.

From what I can guess based on the makeup of the outersect disciples back then, they knew their audience well.

None of us were from a well-to-do family or background as such not many of us have ever even laid eyes on an orange-grade cultivation art let alone one that was a top tier, so if told you would get to cultivate one from the onset and you'll have to do was take a debt of 50,000 merit points, not many would bat an eye.

And the way they painted the whole thing, they made it seem like within a month one would be able to clear that whole debt, which couldn't be any further from the truth.." Ma Qi said with a soft chuckle of derision.

"Did you have a mandatory set of missions you had to do in a day?" Yang Qing suddenly interjected.

"Officially the only mandatory one was feeding the green emerald caterpillar. Every outer sect disciple was required to do it at least six hours a day.

But with the way things were structured, you couldn't survive doing just one mission.." answered Ma Qi.

Yang Qing moved his hands to motion for him to continue.

"There are a few things I would like to make clear before I continue. First is that all the affairs of the outer sect disciples are run by the inner sect disciples from accommodation to pricing of merit points and its remuneration.

To date, because of my lowly station, I am not sure if this is done with the consent of the elders and the sect master, or if it is because those inner disciples have sway with those supposed to be in charge of the affairs of the outer sect disciples who give them the freedom to do whatever they wanted.

It's unclear if said arrangement is per the sect guidelines but considering how much those disciples get away with, it may very well be part of the guidelines that the affairs of the outer sect are handled by them..."

"Well noted disciple Ma Qi.."

Ma Qi nodded as he continued,

"So like I was saying everything is controlled by merit points from food to clothing to cultivation resources down to accommodations.

If you don't have merit points the living hell we already lived in would turn even grimmer, which was something we all discovered on the very first day.

We all went in thinking we would live in these lavish courtyards filled with dense spiritual qi and have access to cultivation facilities that we could never have imagined.

But all we got were run-down bamboo pole shacks with moldy grass. It had nothing but a broken clay cup, an earthenware bowl, and soot-filled kettle, and one mat that was to be shared by three people.

And when it came to the spiritual qi, it was sparse because of the disintegrating sulfur desert laceflower that were grown all over the place in a bid to decompose the wastes from the alchemy and artifact refinement works from the sect.

lightsnovel.com Next to our abode was the dumping ground of those wastes. Thanks to the presence of the disintegrating sulfur desert laceflower, the spiritual qi of the area naturally gravitates towards those flowers, the air is constantly hot and dry, and the whole accommodation constantly smells of rotten eggs because of them.

It's like we are living inside an active volcano day in and day out, doesn't matter whether it's during the night or the day, the conditions are the same because of those flowers.."

The disintegrating sulfur desert laceflower were considered environmental scavengers or purifiers. They worked mostly with plant and mineral-based materials and had little to no effects on animal or human corpses.

Just like their names, they disintegrated waste materials and refined them for their use thus preventing any accidents that may crop up from the long-term accumulation of wastes. In addition, the wastes they refined, the purified energy contained would be deposited on the petals of the flower. Those petals with said energy worked as spirit stones.

However, despite how convenient they were, most organizations didn't use them and opted to use alternative means of waste disposal.

The reason for that was mostly because of the side effects of having the disintegrating sulfur desert laceflower. They were greedy for spiritual qi so they ruined any chances of any other plant growing next to it not unless the other plant was strong enough to outdo it when it came to drawing spiritual qi, and the last two were the stench and the dry heat it subjected the area to.

No one would plant those flowers where there were living beings and would only use them in areas declared a dumping ground, where there would be little to no presence of other life.

"With merit points, you could get mortal-rank herbs and artifacts that would help you deal with the effects of the disintegrating sulfur desert laceflower. However, those artifacts and herbs worked only short term so you would need to keep gathering merit points as long as you remained there.

While there were permanent solutions, the cost was just as extravagant as the top-tier orange-grade art. You're better off acclimating yourself to the effects of the flower because even if you got it, it wouldn't be yours for long.

Earlier I mentioned there were two ways of accumulating a high number of merit points. In truth, those two ways are also the only way you can survive as an outerset disciple..."

Chapter 577 Deliberation and passing sentence (1)

"Merit points can't be stolen but the things you redeem them for can. The outer sect disciples who choose to become the lackeys of the inner sect disciples use their status no matter how lowly to mistreat their fellow outer sect disciples.

A slave of a king is higher in station than the chief guard of a commoner no matter how rich the commoner.

The same logic applied to them. Even though they were still outer sect disciples, their association with a particular inner sect disciple gave them an edge over the rest which they used as an outlet to vent their frustrations.

In some regard, they were even more cruel than the inner sect disciples themselves. Humiliating us wasn't enough they had to pit us against each other.

The factioned outer sect disciples would rob and intimidate those without into giving out whatever merit points they had or having them redeem them for something they wanted and if you didn't let's say I have seen my fair share of cautionary tales..."

"How so?"

"Though there have been no murders as of yet it doesn't mean there are no ways to put someone to the brink of death in a way that abides by the rules of the sect and one of them is through duels.

Disciples have various ways to handle disagreements and one of them is through supervised duels. Killing a fellow disciple during such a duel is forbidden but critically injuring them is accepted.

Weapons have no eyes so they say.." he sarcastically said.

"It's easy to manage what the outcome of such a duel will be if one disciple supported by an opulent disciple fights against a malnourished overexerted disciple who has only cultivated a low-tier red-grade meditation art that has no defensive or attacking abilities whatsoever and the icing on the cake is, the supervisor of said duel is a backer of one of the disciples having the duels.

After the duel whatever injuries you get, you deal with them yourself. If you're injured to the point you can't even reach the repository hall to redeem them, your only hope is maybe just maybe one of the outer sect disciples will have pity on you and share their potion with you.

But what are the odds of that happening? those disciples are barely getting by themselves, there's no way they'd have enough to help someone and even if they did, would they risk drawing the ire of the outer sect disciple with a backing and risk suffering the same fate?

We are told the outside world if you're without any roots to fall on is a ruthless place but I struggle to imagine if it could be any more ruthless than that place.

We barely have enough, constantly on guard against each other and those at the top. Every day is a constant battle and at the end of the day, we still lose.

Any sort of self-worth you hold as a cultivator down to even as a human is beaten out of you along with any civility from the first day you step through those walls.

Your only chance of survival is to either join one of those so-called chosen one factions and become their dog where your only reward is you get to torment those like you giving you some sort of illusion and relief that you're not a worm in the mud like the rest of them or become a test subject for the alchemy hall.

If you do, then you're protected somewhat. The alchemy hall does after all want their subjects to be as healthy as possible so they can endure whatever it is that they give them for as long as possible until that is of course your body can no longer take it and you get thrown out back into the wild to be eaten by the wolves you were escaping from.

Judge, it's been a long time since I've felt like a human let alone a cultivator.." Ma Qi said as his voice trembled with tears forming in his eyes.

"I'm not asking for much from the Order other than please help me have a chance to be human again.." he pleaded as he bowed his head.

Yang Qing couldn't help but sigh as he reaffirmed himself that he had made the right choice in joining the Order. The reason he had avoided any other option was precisely because of these reasons.

No matter how much talent you have, as long as you didn't have backing in such places, your talent would get easily buried.

He couldn't help but wonder how many talents got destroyed over the years thanks to cases just like the one of the Striding Falcon Sect.

"Are all of the outer sect disciples treated this way? or are there exceptions?" asked Yang Qing.

"Pardon?" Ma Qi asked not quite understanding the question.

"Earlier you said you needed to have an exceptional showing during the test to be made an inner sect disciple.

That means only a few people meet the criterion for it. Among those taking the test the ones that don't meet the requirement surely there must be some with connections. Those disciples are they treated the same as those without.."

Ma Qi looked confused by the question some more before he said,

"There is no way those with connections will take the test. The entrance examinations are only for those verified to not have any background. Anyone with a connection gets an automatic entry to the sect.."  
said Ma Qi with a tone that seemed to imply that isn't this how things are handled everywhere.

If you have connections why would you jump in the mud with everyone else? He felt it was something common everywhere. Even in the village such a thing was seen. Would he barter something valuable so that his father would give him the blood and flesh of the spirit beasts he hunted? No, he would get it for free as his son, and he had priority even over the village chief no matter how precious a resource he bartered for it, his father would give him priority and he didn't have to do anything for it.

Having a connection was the ultimate ticket, it didn't matter how much talent you had. In the three years, there were a few disciples who had a talent that even the blind could see they were talented, but didn't they suffer the same torment as them? Of course, there were a few who couldn't swallow it and tried to retaliate but ultimately the hammer of connection and background rained on them bashed their teeth in and now they no longer had any problem swallowing the humiliation.

"What do you want Ma Qi, what is the ideal scenario for you?" asked Yang Qing.

"I just want to be let go and go back home without fear of retaliation from the sect. Otherwise, I'd rather get eaten by the green emerald caterpillar.." Ma Qi desperately said.

"Are there others who share the same sentiment and resolve as you?"

lightsnovel.com Ma Qi paused for a moment before he answered,

"Yes.."

"Thank you for the testimony that you have given. That coupled with the recording you gave is sufficient for me to make a ruling on the matter.

If you don't would you accompany me to your sect to deliver the sentence?" Yang Qing gently asked.

"Me?" Ma Qi hesitantly asked as his body shook slightly.

The thought of going back terrified him. It was one thing to testify in secret but it was another to do it in public.

"Don't worry I will be there with you so there's nothing to worry about. Besides, even if the entire sect decides to turn against you, even without the Order at my back I can guarantee your life against them even if the supreme elder came out of seclusion.

They would be unable to touch even one single strand of your hair.." Yang Qing calmly said.

Ma Qi was stupefied by the statement as his gaze and mouth widened while looking at Yang Qing who looked normal, a little carefree and slovenly, but he now radiated an unfathomable power that Ma Qi didn't think was possible to come from a human.

He found himself absentmindedly answering okay.

"Meili would you like to join me?"

"Sure.."

Chapter 578 Deliberating and passing the sentence (2)

"Could you grab Ellie, we'll be flying with her. I'll meet you out there. There's something I need to arrange with the committee first.."

"Okay.." Luo Meili answered as she went over to stabilize Ma Qi whose legs felt wobbly as he stood up.

His cheeks reddened when he saw Luo Meili help him up. After the shock of being close to an outstanding beauty had dimmed down a bit, Ma Qi was shocked to discover that the sores and pains that had constantly assailed his body along with a sense of fatigue that extended down to his soul seemed like they had been exorcised from his body.

He no longer felt that deathly tiredness, the sense of heaviness that even blinking his eyes seemed laborious, the movement of his qi was no longer sluggish. His qi felt light and vibrant, unlike the muddy deep swampy sensation he felt every time he tried to circulate his cultivation art.

His skin seemed a little rosy even though it still had some paleness and wrinkles to it owing to malnutrition, it was no longer a scaly ashy mess.

lightsNovel.com But the biggest surprise to him was the scent. He no longer smelt like a corpse submerged in rotten eggs. There was a woody sandalwood scent wafting out of his body now.

"What's wrong?" Luo Meili softly asked when she saw Ma Qi suddenly pause his steps and start to sniff himself with tears welling up in his eyes.



"Nothing.." Ma Qi said as a gratified smile appeared on his face as he turned back with an eye on gratitude as his gaze fell on the seat he had sat on and finally Yang Qing.

After they left, Yang Qing took out his map which he used to trace the Striding Falcon Sect's location.

"There you are. Now which of your neighbors is of the same rank as you and with a decent reputation?" Yang Qing muttered as he moved his index finger around the map.

"Mmh, 70,000 kilometers north of them is the 10,000 Mountain Crucible Manor; to the east 83,000 kilometers away is the Spirit Frost Well Forging Pavilion;

To the west is the Cerulean Saber Sect no, not them from what I read they seem to have an unconfirmed relationship with the Stormcloud Empire, if they voted on this, it's bound to bring up issues.

So who else can we use around here?" Yang Qing muttered as he rubbed his chin while his hand moved a bit further from the blue-colored dot on the map that highlighted the Cerulean Saber Sect.

"You will do, the Three Warden Mirrors Sect. I hope they pick these ascetic maidens, as for the last one, I think I will go with the Silver Rain Spear Sect to the south of them," said Yang Qing as he drew a circle on the four mentioned names i.e. Mountain Crucible Manor, Spirit Frost Well Forging Pavilion, Three Warden Mirrors Sect and lastly the Silver Rain Spear Sect.

"These four should be acceptable..." he added with a satisfied look on his face as he made a call to the Judicial Review Committee.

"Calling twice on the same day Judge Yang Qing, what is it?" Xi Si's voice immediately sounded from the other end.

"It's not like that senior Xi Si.." Yang Qing answered with a nervous laugh.

"As you're well aware there was a case sent here from the Green Sparrow Branch concerning an outer sect disciple of the Striding Falcon Sect who was filing a case against his sect for negligence, mistreatment, and misrepresentation.

I have already made my judgment on the case which is in his favor, let me send the recordings and my rulings on the matter.." Yang Qing said as he formed a few seals that triggered a reaction from his gold eagle medallion that formed a dazzling golden light that fell on a few recording talismans.

A few moments later the talismans disappeared.

"Received.." answered Xi Si.

"The ruling is sound, we find no problems with it.." answered Jia Bohai who had been next to Xi Si.

"The reason you're calling is because of the cultivation ethics charter and the impartiality ruling?" added Jia Bohai.

"Yes, senior.."

"Who have you decided on?"

"10,000 Mountain Mortar Manor, the Spirit Fire Well Forging Pavilion, the Three Wardens Mirrors Sect, and the Silver Rain Spear Sect.."

"Good choices, in terms of wide-known respect and reputation you won't find anyone better. Jiang Chen, do you know if the sect master of the Three Wardens Mirrors Sect has come out of seclusion?"

"About 360 years ago you had passed by there right?"

"I had when I went to congratulate little Zhan Jue on her breakthrough. I can't believe that little crybaby who was even afraid of weird-looking clouds would grow up to be a palace realm expert and one of the leading figures of a renowned sect like the Three Wardens Mirrors.."

"They grow up so fast.."

"That they do. Let me call her and confirm if their sect master has come out of seclusion. She should be close to coming out right about now from what I heard back then, but even if she's still in seclusion, their grand elder Bai Lan, that child can stand in.

She's just as respected as the sect master both within and outside the sect.."

"You do that...Yang Qing please wait a moment as Jiang Chen confirms the status of the sect master of the Three Wardens Mirrors Sect.

As for the remaining three, there should not be any issues with them. We will contact them immediately and send them the relevant materials. Once they have made their ruling we will send it to you.

Please standby.."

"Thank you, seniors," Yang Qing said as he leaned back on his chair.

"I hope they vote in support so there is no public backlash from this.." Yang Qing muttered with slight worry in his tone.

Granting Ma Qi his plea was treading on muddy waters for the Order. Things that touched on the internal affairs of sects and other organization was something the Order trod lightly on.

It was a touchy subject, to begin with as the Order would be imposing its will onto how the sect should conduct its affairs.

Their presence was already considered a thorn in many organizations' eyes and that was when they were preventing mass casualties or handled cases with fiendish cultivators, they still suffered infamy for it.

One could imagine the backlash they would suffer if they interfered directly with how a certain organization operated internally.

A lot of the malcontent and the hate they received over the years was borne out of it as a result to try and control the issue, a bunch of supporting guidelines were created. One of them was the Cultivation Ethics Charter, while the other was Alliance Cooperation Accord.

Chapter 579 Deliberating and passing the sentence (3)

The Cultivation Ethics Charter was considered a common moral law that all the organizations around the Southern Continent adhered to, kind of like how the mortals had their moral laws that were the same across countless regions despite having different cultures for example filial piety to one's parents.

The cultivation world had something similar. The Cultivation Ethics Charter was created out of it. It was a charter that highlighted the ethical responsibilities of cultivators by emphasizing qualities such as candor, honor, and integrity to name a few.

Of course, the irony of the charter wasn't lost on the world considering the brutality of the cultivation world.

However, regardless of how things were, the charter was still needed as it was a form of an anchor for their humanity, otherwise, without it, they would be no different from the fiendish cultivator.

The Charter was more like a defense or proof that they were different from them, a moral high ground so to speak.

Different leaders from sect leaders to clan leaders, to merchant leaders, to manor leaders and other organizations, down to rogue leaders of considerable repute came together and created a list of practices that established the moral bottom line cultivators shouldn't cross or even the entity itself.

Based on the testimony given by Ma Qi and the recording he made, Yang Qing knew for a fact, that the Striding Falcon Sect had violated some of those clauses.

lightsnovel.com Just from that fact alone, he could pass the sentence and enforce it without invoking the second guiding principle, the Alliance Cooperation Accord. However, the Striding Falcon Sect were sneaky in their conduct, even if they violated some of the clauses in the Cultivation Ethics Charter, they

were not direct about it, and the ones that they were direct were considered negligible. They were not strong enough to trigger the intervention of the Order to interfere in their internal affairs.

For example, the planting of the disintegrating sulfur desert laceflower next to the abodes of the outer sect disciples could be considered a soft violation of their living standards because in terms of negative effects, all it did was make the air hot and the place smelly but in exchange, one could argue it made the area safer due to its decomposing abilities.

Yang Qing wouldn't be able to directly interfere just from that. The indirect violations were the more egregious ones but the sect was sly in the way they violated them. The outer sect disciples were given the illusion of choice, and even the mistreatment they suffered was within the bounds of the regulations of the sect.

For example, using supervised duels to send a message, or using the top tier orange grade art as a tool to ensure the outer sect disciples end up in servitude that lasts a century.

Though Yang Qing could still use the indirect acts as evidence for enforcing his sentence, those at the Striding Falcon Sect would use the situation and paint themselves as victims of the Order as they labeled and vilified them as tyrants.

With the current reputation of the Order, it wouldn't take much for the statement to be taken as true. There was already a spark slowly gaining momentum on how the Order were tyrants looking to place the entire continent under its thumb and lord over them. Yang Qing wasn't about to give the Striding Falcon Sect the chance to add more teeth to the widespread roaring rumor.

This was why he opted to trigger the Alliance Cooperation Accords. With it, he could send the case to four neutral organizations with considerable reputations and of the same rank as the culprit, in this case, it would be organizations that were at rank 3, same as the Striding Falcon Sect.

Once the four reviewed the case they would vote on whether they agree or disagree with the judge's ruling. Those in disagreement could outline their reasons and their suggestion for a replacement sentence.

The ruling went by a majority vote, of which the judge's sentence also counted as one, so in Yang Qing's case he only needed two of the four organizations to agree with him for him to enact his ruling, though

even if he lost, he could still follow through with it if he felt strongly that his choice was the right one, or he could compromise and take the suggestions of the four parties.

Later during sentencing, the results of the ruling would be publicized throughout the continent, along with the recorded opinion of the four members regardless of whether their votes support the judge or not.

It was an act of transparency by the Order and also a preventive measure so things don't get misconstrued.

Yang Qing waited for about twenty minutes before the members of the Judicial Review Committee finally sent their response from their end.

"Luckily the sect master of the Three Warden Mirrors Sect already came out of seclusion about three years ago.

She has already given her ruling on the matter along with the heads of the other three. You should be receiving their recordings shortly.."

Jiang Chen had only just said that when the gold eagle medallion in Yang Qing's hand shimmered four silver cuboid objects with complex runes flew out of it.

"I've received it seniors.." Yang Qing said with a bout of unease welling up inside of him as he held those four talismans.

He was just from eliminating one sect and now he was in the storm of another. He was a bit unnerved by it, though this instance paled in comparison to the matter of the Ice Emerald Sect.

Just as Yang Qing was lost in thought, his medallion shimmered again as a white shell that looked to have been made of the scales of some beast appeared out of it.

"It's an ascendant-grade artifact that works similar to the deer horn that the vice president gave you, except this one can't break formations.

However, it can transmit information audio or visual around a 500,000-kilometer radius of it and it ignores noise canceling arrays and any other barriers that are at the blue grade and below.

Use it to transmit the results, oh and Yen Xu will go with you for expediency. The branch can't be left empty and the royalty of Deer Mountain Kingdom should just be about to invite you over...

Take care, Yang Qing.."

"Take care, Seniors, and thank you for your assistance.."

After the call had ended Yang Qing had a slight frown as he wondered what the royalty of the Deer Mountain Kingdom could possibly want with him.

However, he immediately pushed those thoughts behind him and inserted his spiritual essence into the four talismans. The information contained within them was the most important at the moment.

Less than half a minute later he was already done going through them. Yen Xu seemed to have anticipated it as she appeared just as he was done.

"Let's go.." she said as she unceremoniously held him by his hands and they disappeared from the courtroom like a gust of wind.

Chapter 580 Deliberating And Passing The Sentence (4)

After experiencing transportation through the domain space of a domain expert when he visited the domain peak, Yang Qing wasn't as unnerved by it when he was in Yen Xu's domain space, however, the same couldn't be said for Luo Meili or Ma Qi especially the latter who was dumbfounded at the happenings around him.

"What a fast transportation artifact.." he absentmindedly muttered to himself as he admired the rapidly changing landscape around him.

Luo Meili and Yang Qing exchanged looks with each other and tacitly decided against correcting Ma Qi.

If he learned this wasn't some artifact but the machinations of a cultivator how shaken would he be?

"Old man Lei might be more powerful than Senior Yen Xu.." Yang Qing thought to himself as he sensed the subtle differences between this domain space and the one from Lei Weiyuan.

Even though he didn't know the cultivation base of Yen Xu or even Lei Weiyuan's, the feel of their domain spaces was a clear indicator to Yang Qing that Lei Weiyuan was a notch higher than Yen Xu.

Even though Yang Qing already guessed his nemesis might have a high cultivation base, he was still shocked nonetheless when faced with clear-cut evidence.

A domain space was like a miniaturized world born of a domain expert's domain sense. The more natural or complete it felt, the more powerful the domain expert was, or at least the deeper the understanding of the Dao and its connection with the world.

When Yang Qing was in Lei Weiyuan's domain space with Mao Yunru, he couldn't tell Lei Weiyuan's domain space apart from the real world. The domain space and the real world felt one and the same but when it came to Yen Xu's even though it still felt intrinsically connected to the real world, occasionally Yang Qing could feel a dissonance, fluctuations here and there that reminded him he was in a domain space.

"I wonder when I will reach this level?" Yang Qing enviously wondered as his gaze fell longingly to the scene outside.

When he reached that realm while he would not necessarily be considered an ultimate powerhouse, the list of things that could threaten his life would shrink considerably and there were also the seals of his physique to look forward to.

As Yang Qing was lost in his thoughts, it didn't take too long before he heard Yen Xu's voice informing him they had arrived.



"Meili, how much time has passed by? Couldn't be more than twenty-five minutes since we left, right?" Yang Qing asked in slight surprise.

"About twenty-one minutes.." answered Luo Meili sounding equally as surprised.

Their shock was understandable as they had covered a 300,000-kilometer journey in less than half an hour, something that would have taken them at least three times that had they taken Ellie.

"Can I even successfully run away from a domain expert if they want me dead?" fearfully wondered Yang Qing before his look turned wary when he remembered there was a certain domain father who may or may not hold a grudge against him for imprisoning his only son.

"I wonder how the investigation of the case is going, the branch chief of the Yellow County Branch should be in the final stages.." Yang Qing muttered to himself as he turned to face Ma Qi.

He had expected Ma Qi to have the same awed look he had on the trip over, but when he looked over, what he saw was a Ma Qi who was pale, shaking all over, with a look fraught with fear. I think you should take a look at [lightsnovel.com](http://lightsnovel.com)

"Ma Qi, we are here.." Yang Qing gently said as he patted his back and infused a bit of his qi into his body which helped calm him down.

"Sorry about that. I embarrassed myself in front of you.." Ma Qi said with a weak smile as he tried to clench his trembling hands.

Yang Qing didn't say much as there was nothing he could say or do that would undo the three years Ma Qi had experienced.

Those years had left an indelible mark on him and it would need a saint-grade treasure like the auspicious wood grove tree to help him overcome fast enough, but without it, Ma Qi dealing with all he has endured will depend on him and time.

Nothing Yang Qing could say or do right now would be able to instantly rid him of all the damage and trauma he had experienced throughout his three years. He could heal the body in a single breath, but when it came to the mind no healing spell would be able to instantly rid him of all he had seen, endured, and experienced in those three years.

All Yang Qing could do was end the growth of his current nightmare and give him an opportunity to address the heart and mental demons that had likely grown in him during those three years.

As for whether he would be able to rid himself of them, ultimately only he could give the answer to that.

"Are you ready?" Yang Qing asked Ma Qi once he saw he had somewhat recollected himself.

"I am.." Ma Qi said as he took a deep breath.

Yen Xu had already used her domain space to hide herself as she used to help both Luo Meili and Ma Qi to float in the air.

Ma Qi was too wound up to notice it at first. It was only after he had calmed down a bit did he realize he was floating in the air which terrified him at first as he flung his arms all over in fear that he would fall over.

"Don't worry you won't fall. The artifact that got us here is still active and keeping you afloat.." Yang Qing casually said.

Ma Qi's fear slowly subsided though he still kept looking below him with eyes that were mixed in with amazement and fear.

Yang Qing ignored him as he moved about a hundred meters from them. They were currently about 300 meters above the sect.

Yang Qing could detect a low-tier blue-grade formation covering the sect, though it was mostly concentrated in the core region of the sect while the rest of it was covered with a dozen top-tier orange-grade formations superimposed on each other.

"Things are as bad as described.." Yang Qing muttered to himself as he conducted a brief scan of the areas covered with the orange-grade formations.