

Daily life 611

Chapter 611 Adler and Lady Gild

Yang Qing's calm voice sounded like a thunderclap in the young lady's mind.

Her pupils shrunk with clarity mixed in with dread showing in them.

After a bit of hesitation, she meekly said,

"You said you wanted to trade, i...i...I am not stealing, Am I?"

Her stuttering voice did little to make her case along with the eyes that were darting around looking at everything around the room but Yang Qing.

Yang Qing couldn't help but touch his face as he wondered if he was that scary.

Yang Qing shook his head with a slight chuckle at the awkward display from the young lady.

She was an absolute stunner that would bewitch the minds of many but currently, she was a bundle of nerves. Her face exhibited contrasting emotions. She had fear and excitement both trying to exert dominance over the other.

Yang Qing despite trying to hold it back couldn't help but laugh at the scene which inadvertently made the young lady flinch before she hesitantly looked up.

"How old are you?" asked Yang Qing when he noticed her almost naive innocent behavior.

The young lady plopped to the ground when Yang Qing removed his restriction.

Even falling she managed to make it look alluring.

The young lady pushed some of her pink hair that had covered her eyes during the fall to the side as she said,

"I am not quite sure.."

She twirled her hair with her finger seemingly in deep thought.

"I can't remember but I should be the same age as Adler. He used to come and hide here when he was a cub every time he angered Lady Gild.."

A strange twinkling appeared in her eyes followed by pearly laughter.

"Who are Adler and Lady Gild?" curiously asked Yang Qing.

From one of the names he had a guess, it might be the fire Adler bear but this Lady Gild was a complete mystery.

Also, he couldn't help but have a strange look when he saw the enchanting empress-looking lady before him. If she was the same age as the fire Adler bear then at the very least she was 10,000 years old.

He couldn't help but sigh at the absurd lifespans of spirit beasts and spiritual plants. They didn't have the same degree of adaptability and speed as humans did when it came to the improvement of their cultivation realms or versatility in the cultivation arts they could practice. Still, they were born with a few advantages of their own such as innate abilities and long lifespans.

"Adler is Adler and Lady Gild is Lady Gild.." answered the young lady with a matter-of-fact tone and a gaze that seemed to imply,

"How don't you know about them? Everybody at our level should know.."

Yang Qing put on a smile that wasn't a smile as he fought the urge to destroy the leaves in his hand out of spite.

"I am not from here so I haven't heard about them. Is Adler a fire adler bear?"

To stop the lady from giving him the look like he was some sort of an airhead, he decided to take a gander at who the Adler she mentioned might be.

The young lady looked at him strangely like she was trying to see through him and didn't believe him completely before she nodded as she said,

"There are not that many fire adler bears around here, at least, as far as I know, he is the only one not unless he went and found himself a wife and had a child.

But no, there is no way he would do that.."

The young lady shook her hands dismissively as she smiled.

"With that incorrigible behavior of his of lazying around all day doing nothing but eat empyrean wasp honey, sleep, and mock others endlessly, there's no way he'd go find a spouse let alone find one willing to tolerate him.

Even his master, despite Lady Gild's gentle personality, couldn't stand him and was pushed to maddening anger by him a lot, she even vomited blood a few times because of it.."

The young lady couldn't help but show a sympathetic look as she said this.

"She ended up leaving for parts unknown to calm her mind. It's been a few thousand years since she left. I don't have anyone to sing to me because of it, and adler stopped coming out as he used to when she left..."

A deep melancholic look appeared on her face as she sighed with sadness.

"I wonder if it's guilt or he has been asleep all this time.." she muttered as she put one of her slender jade hands below her chin in deep contemplation.

Yang Qing meanwhile had a deep look as thoughts constantly swirled in his mind.

The fire adler bear having a master wasn't something he expected as it wasn't something common among spirit beasts, though it has been seen here and there. But the only spirit beasts who usually exercised such a practice were those who had some interaction with humans and borrowed the custom from them and secondly more often than not they were usually powerful enough to not need to cannibalize a fellow spirit beast to grow their strength.

The quickest way for spirit beasts to improve their cultivation realm, especially in the lower realms was to cannibalize each other.

It was fast, the foundations were not shaky, and if one was to consider one drawback for growing their strength this way was the spirit beasts ran a risk of becoming frenzied the more they did it, but even then the issue could be easily remedied with a strong willpower, natural herbs that clear the mind and strengthen the spirit, or if the spirit beast only goes for the wisdom pearl that risk is eliminated.

Therefore spirit beasts usually saw each other as delectable and precious resources for rapidly growing their strength and would only stop doing so the more powerful they became because at that point their understanding of dao would be the only thing that would be able to push them forward.

Yang Qing couldn't help but wonder how powerful the fire adler bear master was. For him, it stood to reason at the very least she had reached the palace realm considering the bear's current realm and when she disappeared.

"How powerful was she?" Yang Qing finally asked.

"Very.." the young lady said with fervent worshipping eyes.

"No matter how strong Adler became, he would suffer the same flawless beating as he did when he was a cub.

A single flick would send him wailing for weeks.."

The young lady animatedly stood up as she did a finger flick with an excited expression as she envisioned herself pulling the same move on the bear.

"She could be at the domain realm.." muttered Yang Qing.

"Do you know what type of spirit beast she was?"

The young lady suddenly froze as she warily looked at Yang Qing.

"Why do you ask? is that the help you were talking about?"

Qi fluctuations appeared around her body and the tree at the back as the dark water rippled.

Even though she looked fearful, there was a staunch determination underneath.

"No, I was just curious since you were speaking so highly of her.." Yang Qing said with a wry smile when he saw her cautious look.

"Mister I'll say this upfront even if those leaves are precious and life-changing for me, I won't betray my friends for it.." the young lady staunchly said.

"I am sorry if my question offended you, and I assure you I am not asking you to betray anyone. You're free to refuse if you feel what I'm asking is too much. I won't take any offense.." Yang Qing gently said.

The young lady looked at him for a short while before her expression eased up and the fluctuations subsided.

"I don't know her form, I've only ever seen her in her human form which was filled with grace and gentle majesty.

No matter how much I try, I can't copy her essence.." she wistfully said as she used one of the clear marble rocks next to her to look at her image.

Yang Qing's gaze flickered slightly from her response.

Chapter 612 A protected irony

Yang Qing had to cough twice to draw the young lady's attention whose mind seemed to have drifted elsewhere.

"The thing I needed your help with is concerning them?" Yang Qing said as he used a water spell to create images of the obsidian couple, the two deacons of the Blue Soul Flame Crow Syndicate, the five family heads of the Deer Mountain Kingdom, the imperial secretary, the chancellor, the consorts and the princes and the royal palace realm guard he had met outside the assembly hall.

"Have you ever seen any one of them with your spores?" asked Yang Qing.

The young lady pulled herself up from the ground as she skipped over to analyze the images Yang Qing had formed with a child-like excitement shining in her eyes as she admired the exquisiteness of the images.

"Mister, can you teach me this? I am sure my illusions will become even more lifelike.."

Yang Qing almost coughed blood from being called mister.

How are you trying to act like the junior here? you are at least 5,000 times my age..

"The art is nothing much, when we are done here I will teach it to you.."

The young lady gingerly clapped her hands in excitement as she thanked Yang Qing with a clumsy daoist salute that she claimed the 'Lady Gild' had taught her.

She then leaned forward and examined each of the images before she finally replied,

"I've never seen them.."

"But you have, haven't you?" immediately answered Yang Qing which made the young lady flinch.

Though she tried to hide it, Yang Qing noticed a nigh imperceptible reaction when her gaze was on the elderly couple.

"Mister you are putting me in a tough spot," said the lady with a sigh.

"What is it that you're truly after? I can't answer without knowing. It's not me prying into your business but there are things I can say or can't say depending on your response as it touches on my affairs.."

Seeing her austere expression, Yang Qing sighed as he decided to reveal a little bit of his intentions.

"I am sure you are aware of the fight that happened a week ago some fair distance away from here.."

"What of it?" the young lady warily asked.

"Some of my friends got injured badly during the fight and some died. I am trying to find out what happened and the information I have is too small for me to make anything of it, which is why I need your help.."

The young lady's expression suddenly shifted as turn cold.

"Are you from the Deer Mountain Kingdom?"

"I am not.." answered Yang Qing while he noted it seemed that the young lady didn't have the best impression of the kingdom.

The young lady stared at him for a bit before she answered,

"I know the two of them.." she said as she pointed at the elderly couple.

"Adler doesn't have a lot of friends but these two could be considered as one..

Can I ask you something?" she asked with a slight hesitation as complicated light flashed in her eyes.

"You can.."

" Are they dead?"

"They are not.."

A look of relief appeared on her face when Yang Qing gave his response.

"At least Adler won't go on a rampage. Despite his deplorable habits, he always seemed different whenever he talked about them and their daughter, especially their daughter. It was one of the few rare occasions that he acted maturely like a kind senior.

The face he made whenever he talked about their daughter...I am sure Lady Gild would have enjoyed seeing it.." said the young lady with a slight chuckle.

"That daughter....died.." said Yang Qing with a sigh.

"What?!" said the young lady as her expression turned livid.

"Was it the Deer Mountain Kingdom? After what they did back then, they have only survived because of Lady Gild's interventions. If not all those old monsters both the ones here and the others traveling around would have long destroyed their kingdom.

And now they dare do this?! Knowing his temperament and without Lady Gild to hold his leash, Adler is sure to go on a rampage and fight the entire kingdom to the death!!" the lady frantically said as she started walking around impatiently.

"It wasn't them.." said Yang Qing as he infused his voice with a charm that helped reduce the agitation on the young lady.

"Not them? then Who?"

"It's these two..." Yang Qing said as he pointed to the images of the two members of the Blue Soul Flame Crow Syndicate.

Yang Qing had no doubt that the portrayed images were more than likely fakes, and the two deacons had long changed their appearances by now.

His hope was they used those same appearances to conduct their investigations around the Deer Mountain Range, and maybe, just maybe, the spores of the parasitic purple flower spore sycamore tree caught sight of them at one point or another.

"Who are they?" asked the young lady as she stood close to the images trying to commit even the tiniest of freckles to memory.

Yang Qing went ahead and explained their background and that of the Blue Soul Flame Crow Syndicate along with the battle that happened after and the results.

"This is what you needed my help with?"

"Yes.."

"But I wasn't there, I don't know how much help I can be. I don't spread my spores so close to the territories of others to respect their space and avoid any misunderstandings that may arise from it.

And after Adler stopped coming over and Lady Glid went on her journey, I barely paid attention to what happened around me other than sourcing for a few corpses. I usually ignore the rest.."

"You may have not paid any particular attention but you may have noticed something you're not aware of.

These two clearly knew about the obsidian couple's daughter beforehand seeing how easily they killed her. They must have scouted her beforehand and made sufficient plans for them to pull it off as smoothly as they did.

Your spores may have picked up something, anything.

When Adler mentioned the daughter, did he ever mention anything special about her, something that stood out even against her parents?"

The young lady held her chin in deep contemplation as she tried to recall her interactions with the fire adler bear.

"Well he did mention how smart she was smarter than her obstinate father but then again Adler liked bad-mouthing everyone. I am sure that incorrigible bear has done the same to me.." she said as a vicious glint appeared in her eyes before it went back to normal.

"Though I do remember there was a time he came cheerier than usual with a smug expression on his face claiming how Lady Glid would praise him to no end.

He didn't explain much of what he did but I know it was tied to the couple and the daughter. No matter how much I pressed him he just smiled cockily trying to act all mysterious. I wished Lady Glid was there to beat his face in.." she said as she punched her hand over and over imagining the smug face of the fire adler bear.

Chapter 613 Growing clues

Seeing the young lady get heated up, Yang Qing decided to interrupt her by asking about the rest of the images he had created.

"Are you sure you've never seen any of them? It doesn't have to be around the territory of the obsidian couple it could be anywhere else..."

The young lady paused her imaginary beating of the adler bear and looked up. Seeing the imploring look on Yang Qing's face prompted her to look at the remaining images again despite having claimed she had never seen any of them.

After giving them a once over she shook her head as she said,

"I really haven't seen any of them before. Who are they?"

"They are from the Deer Mountain Kingdom and have some relation with the princes who died in the fight and the perished royal guards.

It was the Deer Mountain Kingdom who first noticed the traces of these two deacons. I was hoping maybe your spores caught one of them in the course of their investigation.."

Yang Qing decided to avoid saying he suspected them of colluding with the two deacons. The young lady already had a sour impression of the Deer Mountain Kingdom, he didn't want to add to it further, especially after discovering her deep relationship with the fire adler bear.

If he revealed his suspicions she would more than likely reveal them to the bear when he came by and from the character description she gave and the close relationship it had with the daughter of the obsidian serpents, there was no doubt it would instantly attack them.

Still unwilling to give up, Yang Qing decided to probe further.

"You may have not seen any of them specifically but have you seen any humans that resemble these five walking about?"

Yang Qing dispelled the other images only leaving the image of the five family heads.

"I have not seen anyone resembling him but the badger did say he once fought with someone that closely matches his description, though he seemed a bit older..." the young lady said as she pointed to the heroic-looking Zhang family head.

"Tha badger?" asked Yang Qing in befuddlement.

The more Yang Qing conversed with the young lady, the more Yang Qing felt that the compiled list given to him by Ye Xun about the 13 perilous zones seemed to be lacking.

The young lady had mentioned the old monsters being held back by the Lady Gild which Yang Qing assumed were some of the survivors from the tumultuous war back then.

If some of the spirit beasts involved back then had survived to date, they should be in the palace realm at the very least, but the list he was given didn't seem to contain a lot of them, it only had six of them, seven if he counted the mild natured mountain jade serpent.

Yang Qing increasingly felt there were spirit beasts who escaped the survey net and considering the survey was done by domain experts, it meant that more than likely they were not around when the survey was being done, like the unfathomable Lady Gild that the young lady clearly idolized.

"uhm... he is what you humans would call a fellow disciple of Adler. The Badger likes combat, obsessively so, at that. He likes finding strong opponents to duel with and that eventually led him to Lady Glid.

Sometimes I'm left wondering what goes on in his mind, well Adler too, but mostly him.." she said as she shook her head in exasperation.

"He failed to defeat Adler but somehow in his mind, he thought he could beat Lady Gild. He got slapped for all his efforts and was unconscious for four months as a result.

When he came to, he pestered Lady Gild to accept him as a disciple. Lady Gild didn't want to at first considering he was just as much of a headache as Adler was but the Badger was relentless and had a thick skin and eventually, she relented.

The two disciples immediately became close over shared beatings.."

"The person he fought, did he say who it was?" Yang Qing curiously asked.

"No, he never mentioned the name, he only said that person was one of the few humans he could find himself respecting because of the breadth of their spirit and abilities. Which was something considering Badger doesn't like humans that much.

Of course, even though he praised that human he still cursed him to no end afterward as he licked his wounds from the defeat he suffered from their yearly bouts.

Come to think of it, this last defeat was the last time I saw him. He left soon after for parts unknown to train himself..."

"How long has it been since he left?"

"Not long, about 70 years.." answered the young lady as a lonely look appeared on her face.

"I wonder if they will come back.." she said with a sigh.

A somber mood drowned the place without any of them speaking.

"I am sorry I didn't have much to share.." said the young lady as she tried to smile to wash away the loneliness.

"No, you've helped plenty enough.." answered Yang Qing with a polite smile.

The gaze of the young lady flickered as something seemed to come to her.

"I don't know if this will help but the Adler did mention there were a few areas he liked to go with the daughter of the obsidian serpents.

I don't know if she kept going there, but we are creatures of habit so maybe she still kept going to those places even after Adler stopped taking her.

Maybe you might find a few clues there.." said the young lady after some thought.

"That's great! Thank you.." said Yang Qing with a lit-up expression.

However, his excitement was cut short when something unexpected happened.

The young lady approached Yang Qing and started sniffing him.

"You!..you...what are you doing?" Yang Qing's voice stammered as he pushed the lady back.

"You smell nice.." said the young lady with shining eyes.

"When you came I sensed a deep ethereal drawing scent coming from you and now it's even more distinctive, it even seems to dull the essence of the green flame leaves. I wonder why that is? what's that smell? I have never felt anything like it..." she curiously asked as she looked Yang Qing up and down.

Yang Qing hurriedly composed himself as he nonchalantly answered,

"It's nothing, maybe it's just me.."

"Don't try to sniff me again. It's not proper.." he hurriedly answered which drew a peal of laughter from the young lady.

"Fine.." she gently said.

Chapter 614 Unexpected guest

After recomposing himself, Yang Qing took out the flaming leaves and handed them to the young lady.

"This is yours, you deserve it, also you can have this. It should help with your pond. It's an azure pearlrose produced by a deepwater frost oyster. It should improve the yin essence of your pond.." Yang Qing said as he pulled out a small pearl that released an incandescent glow that was a mixture of pink and blue surrounded by a frosty glow.

The temperature in the cavern dropped tremendously when it appeared.

The young lady's eyes instantly lit up when she saw this.

"You're giving me this?" she asked in disbelief.

"Yes.." Yang Qing gently answered.

The young lady suddenly went on guard as she warily stared at Yang Qing while asking,

"What is it you want, mister? Lady Gild said humans never do anything for nothing. The green flaming leaves are already plenty.

Do you...do you...want to marry me? I am sorry mister but this body isn't real and is just a clone I built with my fruits. I can only maintain it within a 5-kilometer range of my main body.." said the woman as she pointed at the tree behind her.

Her demeanor suddenly changed as she turned shy with her head lowered as she said,

"but if you stay here, I could consider it and I heard from Lady Gild if I reach the domain realm my body can go further and if I reach the soul formation realm there is nowhere I can't travel.

I don't know how long it will take for me to reach the soul formation, but if you're willing to wait, I'll accept your proposal then.."

Her voice turned bashful and low toward the end.

From the moment Yang Qing walked within her territory she could feel a tantalizing scent she couldn't quite explain. It was mystical and all-encompassing like that of a mother tree from which all trees were birthed.

It was why despite her reservations, she found herself opening up and entertaining his questions. She felt a certain sense of affinity with him.

"Huh, what are you talking about?!" asked Yang Qing with a stupefied expression.

"You're not proposing?" asked the young lady with an innocent and dumbfounded expression.

"But Lady Gild said if a human gives you something expression they want to marry you.." she innocently added as she held her chin.

"What has Lady Gild been teaching you?! No, I am not asking you to marry me!!!!" Yang Qing said in exasperation as he hurriedly looked behind him for fear that someone might be eavesdropping on their conversation.

This was a misunderstanding he didn't want floating around. He would never live it down if such information got around.

The clone before him was a looker but in essence, she was a fruit. He could already imagine Kang Huilang's mocking face as he mocked him endlessly and mercilessly for proposing to a fruit.

Yang Qing forcibly wiped away the imagined memory as he calmed his breathing.

"If you feel you're profiting too much, then you can offer some of the fruits in exchange.." said Yang Qing with some wariness.

First sniffing, then proposal, he was worried about what this enchanting beauty before him might pull next.

"Fruits, you're sure it's enough?" dubiously asked the young lady.

"Yes, it's one of the reasons I came here. I have a friend that can make great wine with them.."

Rather than beat around the bush, Yang Qing decided to be upfront lest another misunderstanding occurs.

"If that's all you want, then you can have thirteen of the.." the young woman said with a look that said she didn't completely believe all Yang Qing wanted were just the fruits.

"It's not that I'm being stingy, the rest aren't ripe yet and I need a few of them to create clones, otherwise I would give them all to you.." she added, as if afraid Yang Qing would misunderstand her and take back the pearl.

The azure pearlblossom was something instrumental to her cultivation same as the green flame leaves. All her abilities especially the mind befuddling and illusory abilities were centered around yin energy.

At the bottom of the dark pond was a batch of yin essence midnight grass which supplied her with the much-needed yin energy for her cultivation and abilities. However, the level of yin energy contained in them had dwindled, and would continue to do so until she replenished them, and with her mobility issues her options were limited.

Her only means was if her spores managed to spot a corpse rich in yin energy and bring it back, but such creatures were rare even around the Deer Mountain Range.

The yin essence midnight grass was something Lady Gild had given her when she broke through to the core formation realm and 15,000 years have passed since then.

Over the years, the decreasing yin levels of the pond have been a growing concern for her especially with Lady Gild disappearing for almost 5,000 years, Adler sleeping or atoning for all the years she hasn't seen him around or Badger gone to strengthen himself. Her options for remedying the situation were limited but with the azure pearlose, those concerns were immediately dealt with.

She could sense that the yin energy within the pearl was capable of sustaining for at least a few thousand years and that was without taking the remaining yin essence midnight grass into account.

With an agreement reached, the young lady stretched out her hand and thirteen ripe red fruits with purple stripes appeared in her hand which she gave to Yang Qing who gave her the green leaves and the azure pearlose.

The young lady carefully placed the pearl into the dark pond which instantly transformed the dark pond's look. It was no longer an ink-black sky but now had a swirling blue-pink cluster within it. It felt like one was staring at the deep cosmos.

The current view of the pond coupled with the ethereal and majestic look of the parasitic purple flower spore sycamore tree created a mesmerizing view that one could only imagine. Yang Qing felt like he had been transported to a starlight dreamscape.

"Would you like to share a drink with me?" asked Yang Qing as he soaked in the view that gave him the urge to have wine and fried scallops.

"Sure.." answered the lady with an enchanting and mesmerizing smile as she pulled her hair back behind her ears.

Yang Qing couldn't help but admit that Lady Gild whom she copied was a beauty.

Yang Qing took out a bamboo jar that contained frostberry wine brewed by Yi Jie and poured both he and the young lady some while taking out a basket of crispy brown deep-fried scallops.

The duo toasted each other and each took a gulp.

"This is quite the sight. Drinking under such a sight makes the food and wine taste better.." Yang Qing said with an exuberated sigh.

"That it is.." said an unfamiliar voice that seemed to carry the echoes of eternity.

Yang Qing and the young lady hurriedly turned toward the source of that voice which was a middle-aged man with greying white temples, a simple robe, and a brown conical hat.

He looked like a simple farmer out on a stroll but that simple-looking man had reached both Yang Qing and the young lady without any of them sensing.

Yang Qing's pupils shrunk as he could detect nothing coming from the middle-aged man other than he was standing before him.

Chapter 615 Company under the resplendent view

Not sensing anything meant one of two things, either the middle-aged before him had no cultivation base or it was so high beyond Yang Qing's level of comprehension.

The fact that he was able to arrive next to him unnoticed, Yang Qing instantly eliminated the first option.

"It seems like my presence seems to have ruined the mood.." said the middle-aged man with a slight smile when he noticed the wary looks on both the young woman and Yang Qing.

"Not at all.." Yang Qing said with his countenance calming down.

"The fact that he reached this close without me sensing anything means if he wanted to, he could have killed me without me even noticing.

I might as well enjoy the wine and the scallops rather than worry about it. Was I cursed? Over the past month, I've met one scary individual over the other. I really need to have myself checked out for curses. This makes no sense.."

"Would you like to join us.." Yang Qing politely asked as he took out another cup and bamboo chopsticks.

The depths of the gaze of the middle-aged man flickered slightly with amusement when he saw how Yang Qing was able to switch effortlessly from wary to easygoing in a short amount of time.

"I will have to shamelessly accept your kind offer.." answered the middle-aged man as he took a seat next to Yang Qing while accepting the wine and the chopsticks.

The young lady was left confused by the change of events. A few seconds ago she and Yang Qing were all panicking but now Yang Qing was acting like he and the middle-aged man were long-lost friends.

She threw covert glances at Yang Qing seemingly asking if he knew the intruder. Yang Qing's response was just a carefree smile as he casually picked up a deep-fried scallop.

Her gaze alternated between the duo before finally she decided to join them. If Yang Qing wasn't worried about the middle-aged man neither would she. Besides the presence of Yang Qing and the middle-aged man somehow made a part of her feel delighted. It had been a long time since she had company. After Lady Gild, Adler and the Badger went their ways, she languished in loneliness.

The century that she spent alone felt longer than the tens of thousands of years that she had been alive. She constantly lamented her inability to be mobile because if she did then she would be able to visit the fire adler bear and check in on him, annoy him a bit, or even roam outside like Lady Gild and the Badger.

But she was stuck and because of her weak main body, she couldn't risk forming new friendships.

"I will make the most of this, to make up for those dark years.." she said to herself as she gingerly walked over to where the middle-aged man and Yang Qing were.

"Mister, are you a farmer?" she excitedly asked as she took a big swig of her wine.

The conical hat the middle-aged man was wearing was something she had seen herb collectors and some qi refinement cultivators wear as they worked. Whenever she felt her loneliest she liked to watch them work via her spores.

"Doesn't she switch character a little too fast.." Yang Qing incredulously thought as he saw the young lady's shining eyes with no sense of the fear and wariness from before.

"Hahaha, a farmer? It's the first time I've ever been mistaken for one.." said the middle-aged man as he chuckled.

"So you're not?" asked the young lady as she leaned in closer to observe the middle-aged man's conical hat.

"But you have the same hat as the farmers I've seen. They all wear the same hat just like yours and I also feel like your aura resembles them somewhat.." she added as she pointed toward the middle-aged man's conical hat.

"What aura is that?" the middle-aged man asked with a slight smile.

"A simplistic one with.... what's the right word.." muttered the young lady as she ruminated over the right choice of word.

"A caretaker, yes, a caretaker.." she said with excitement.

The middle-aged man stroked his beard with one hand, with wine in the other as a nostalgic look appeared in his eyes.

"I am not a farmer, I just like wearing the hat, it reminds me of my parents. They were farmers and I always thought they looked cool with the conical hats.

I occasionally find myself with the urge to wear them now and then whenever I'm roaming about.." A nostalgic smile appeared on his face as he said that.

"Why didn't you want to become a farmer like your parents.." asked the young lady as she nibbled on the scallops.

"Well, I didn't seem to have the hand for it. Everything I touched seemed to disappear.." said the middle-aged man with a slight cough of embarrassment.

His reply drew an uproarious laughter from the young lady. Yang Qing who had been trying to stifle his laughter from the look the middle-aged man gave found himself laughing openly infected by the young lady's laughter.

"So what did you end up doing?" asked the young lady in between labored breaths and laughs.

"Well, your earlier guess wasn't wrong...I became a caretaker of sorts.." "Of people?" interjected the young woman.

"In part, yes.." freely answered the middle-aged man not off-put by the barrage of questions coming from the young woman.

It seemed like he rather enjoyed it and welcomed it even.

The young lady sighed as a forlorn look appeared on her.

"I knew someone special to me who is like that. For all the time I've known her, she has always been taking care of someone. Me, a few handfuls. I hope she's now at least enjoying herself wherever she is.."

Seeing her look Yang Qing guessed she was talking about Lady Gild.

"She sounds like an incredible person.." softly said the middle-aged man.

The young lady's mood was instantly uplifted by the middle-aged man's reply as she answered,

"She is! She is the best!"

Seeing her childlike excited face drew laughter from both Yang Qing and the middle-aged man which made her bow in slight embarrassment.

"Come to think of it, Yang Qing do you farm?" she excitedly asked when she remembered the green flame leaves in her hands.

She couldn't help but imagine Yang Qing having a celestial garden filled with all kinds of precious herbs

"Occasionally, but not often. I have... I am not sure I can call them friends but some steal from me, others mock me endlessly for my efforts, and others send me countless work that never seems to stop.." said Yang Qing with a mournful sigh as he recalled the shenanigans Ellie and the Celestial nesting weaver usually put him through.

The young lady's gaze turned sympathetic as she said,

"If they are that bad you can leave them and come farm here if you want... I have plenty of space and the land isn't bad.."

"Thank you, I will take you up on that offer sometime.."

A sense of warmth filled the area as the trio ate and drank sharing inane stories that didn't give too much.

After talking for a bit Yang Qing's curiosity got the better of him and decided to ask what the middle-aged man was doing in Deer Mountain Range.

He had hoped in the course of their conversation, the young lady would bring it up but either intentionally or coincidentally she never asked it.

Yang Qing swallowed his nervousness and asked,

"Senior what brings you to the Deer Mountain Range?" "Turns out that Vixen was pretending.." muttered Yang Qing when he saw the glint flash in the young woman's eyes after he asked the question. It turned out she had been waiting for him.

The middle-aged man swirled the wine in his hands which perfectly reflected its surroundings. The swirl was gentle, slow, and unassuming but it seemed like the entire continent could be captured within that swirl.

The middle-aged man took a small sip as he said,

"A long time ago I left something here to grow. It was so long ago that it escaped my mind, I only recalled it recently so I decided to come and check on its progress, and there was also a friend I made back then, I also wanted to see how she was doing but I didn't find her.."

"Mister, I thought you couldn't plant anything?" asked the young lady as she bent her head to the side in puzzlement.

"Well I am a farmer's son after all, it would be a shame if there wasn't one thing I could grow. After trying countless times I eventually found one thing I was good at growing.." he said with a triumphant smile.

The young lady completely swallowed by curiosity asked,

"What is it?!"

"Something special to me.." the middle-aged man enigmatically answered.

"Stingy, you're just like Adler, acting mysterious.." said the young lady with a soft pout for having her curiosity piqued only to be left hanging.

The middle-aged man's eyes darted to Yang Qing who looked like he had just seen a ghost. When his gaze fell on the middle-aged man, what he got was a meaningful smile.

The young lady who had been madly gulping her wine in frustration missed the interaction between the two as it only lasted a second before they went back to normal.

"What about you young friend?" asked the middle-aged man as he directed his question toward Yang Qing.

Yang Qing suppressed the tide of emotions flooding through him as he answered,

"My friends got injured recently. I am here to find out what happened to them and I somehow ended up here in the hopes of having some of the blanks I have, filled..."

"And have you filled them?"

"Some, with her help.." Yang Qing said as he pointed to the young lady still drowning cup after cup of the frostberry wine.

After hearing Yang Qing's statement she instantly raised her gait with a smug expression on her face.

Both shaking their heads, Yang Qing and the middle-aged man joined the young woman in drinking lest she finish everything.

Three hours quickly passed by with the trio talking, laughing, eating, and enjoying each other's company like they were long-lost friends surrounded by the beautiful landscape of the parasitic purple flower spore sycamore tree.

"It's time for me to say my goodbyes i have affairs I can't be away from for too long.

This has been truly enjoyable.." said the middle-aged man as he slowly stood up.

"It was.." said both Yang Qing and the young lady with genuine smiles on their faces.

"So I don't end up feeling like a mooch for not bringing anything please have this.." the middle-aged man said as he handed Yang Qing a wine gourd crafted of white wood that had a jade tree symbol on it.

"Don't drink it as is, it may be too powerful. You can have your friend who made the frostberry wine play around with a single drop. The drop should be enough to create a year's worth of supply.." added the middle-aged man.

Yang Qing's eyes couldn't help but widen as he took the gourd. Even though he couldn't tell the material it was made out of, he could feel a majestic worldly aura being released by it, as for its contents, what the middle-aged man said was enough to paint the picture of how powerful it was if just a single drop could last him a year.

"As for you, in thanks for the view and conversation, you can have this.."

The middle gently raised one of his hands and seemed to be pulling down something. A gentle-looking pure white mist descended from the skies above into the man's hand. It felt like he had plucked the radiance of the moon.

Both Yang Qing's and the young lady's pupils constricted as they detected a dense pure yin energy within that mist.

The azure pearlrose floated out of the pond into the middle-aged man's hands. With a wave of his hand, the swirling mist of pure yin energy descended from the skies and was poured into the pearl. The pearl's color instantly changed from blue-pink to pure white color. It looked like a miniaturized moon releasing its incandescent glow and a gentle refreshing cool energy.

"It seems like it won't be able to contain it.." muttered the middle-aged man after small cracks started appearing on the pearl. He gently rubbed his index finger on the pearl and the cracks disappeared. A vast aura instantly appeared around the pearl as the white mist weaved together into an ancient-looking edict that seemed to carry the might of the heavens.

Within seconds all the pure yin mist from the skies was swallowed by the pearl that had a crystal clear look. An object of absolute purity. It looked like it had been fashioned from a teardrop of the purest being.

"I hope the next time we meet the radiance of your tree will shine even brighter. Until next time, young friends.."

The pearl gently floated into the pond instantly transforming it into a crystal clear pond that had an ethereal air about it.

Yang Qing and the young woman were both gobsmacked by what they had just seen that they didn't even notice the middle-aged man fading from view.

He left just as he came in, without notice.

Chapter 616 Zones of space

It took a few seconds before Yang Qing and the young lady could process all they had seen towards the end of their makeshift party.

"I knew he had to be powerful but this..." Yang Qing couldn't help but smile ruefully when his gaze fell on the crystal clear pond that let out an ethereal white glow that cleansed their souls.

The yin energy it released was one of the purest energies he had ever sensed. With the energy to support her, the parasitic purple flower spore sycamore tree was likely to reach unfathomable heights.

Even lesser dragon spirit veins rich in yin energy didn't have as much or as pure yin energy yet the middle-aged man easily plucked something that many would kill for so effortlessly out of thin air.

As for the azure pearlrose he had given the young lady, it was originally a low-tier monarch-grade artifact but whatever the middle-aged man had done to it had transformed it completely.

It now produced fluctuations that belonged to at least a middle-grade ascendant-grade artifact and the source of that transformation was that grand unfathomable edict at the center of it.

Yang Qing could detect its unfathomable power. It was too much for him to grasp anything as it seemed to contain the heavenly secrets.

After a few seconds, the edict disappeared into the pearl completely along with the energy undulations it was releasing.

Without the unfathomable vast aura of the edict surrounding it, the azure pearlrose looked no different from the garden-variety pearl that any fisherman could acquire.

Even the dense yin energy seemed like it could fill the whole Deer Mountain Range because of how vast it was, mellowed out, and in its place was a gentle, cool, and refreshing mist.

Yang Qing instantly understood it was by design from the middle-aged man. The parasitic purple flower spore sycamore tree would be swarmed by greedy cultivators if the unfathomable and boundless presence from before remained on the pearl. Such a presence would likely invite calamity for her but with its presence subdued no one would be the wiser. Even Yang Qing despite being so close to it, the pearl seemed completely normal even when scanning it with his spiritual sense, there was nothing that stood out.

The pearl's true radiance had been completely masked out.

"A lucky encounter capable of overturning your entire life. A casual interaction has completely changed the trajectory of her life. With the pearl's help her reaching the domain realm isn't an impossibility." muttered Yang Qing as his gaze fell on the still-stupefied young lady who gently cupped the water from the crystal pond.

"Yang Qing I'm not dreaming, right?" said the young lady with a voice of disbelief.

The water seemed to dissolve into her body causing changes to her clone and main body as it did. The purple flowers that were originally deep purple with a dark pink luster now seemed lighter. Everything from the flowers to the leaves to the branches and stem of the tree had an almost white shine to them.

The purple shading of the flowers grew lighter with a white crystalline shade to them that refracted the glow of the moon and the stars above them creating a mystical ethereal charm from the parasitic purple flower spore sycamore tree.

The regions from which the fruits had been plucked instantly had new immature fruits forming them which despite their immaturity seemed much more vibrant than the other mature fruits.

Yang Qing could detect a continuous transformation happening to the parasitic purple flower spore sycamore tree. She was experiencing a cleansing baptism and evolution by the energy coming from the azure pearlose.

"It seems congratulations are in order.." Yang Qing cheerfully said to the young lady whose shock seemed to increasingly grow by the second.

"Who was that person? Was he an immortal?" With the monumental changes happening to her, she felt only an immortal could pull off such a feat.

"I don't know if immortals exist, but if there were, I feel he would fit that description.." Yang Qing said with a sigh as he remembered the wild guess he made when he heard the middle-aged man mention growing something in the Deer Mountain Range.

The meaningful glance he gave him suggested that Yang Qing's guess may have been right on the money.

"With the abilities he showed, him being the person that was using the egg of a Bifang Niao to raise and refine a sword doesn't seem that far-fetched.

A farmer of swords.." muttered Yang Qing as he shook his head with a wry smile.

"What's that?"

"Nothing.." ...

"A body of yin and yang. Who would have expected you to have such talents? No wonder there is a lot of unrest and tension going around.

They must all be feeling your momentum that is about to bury them whole. Yang Qing, I wonder how many more like you are there in the Order.."

High above the skies surrounding the Deer Mountain Range was the middle-aged man who had just shared drinks and fried scallops with Yang Qing and the clone of the parasitic purple flower spore sycamore tree.

His gaze seemed to penetrate the clouds surrounding him, the thick foliage, up to where Yang Qing and the young lady were seated discussing something by the pond, unaware that they were within the sights of the middle-aged man.

"Seems like the Order has already discovered the Origin jade nexus locks. Their progress really is astounding. That boundless sword qi I sensed before, I wonder if it came from one of them. From what I know the president isn't a sword user so if it was from them, it could only be someone below him.

How many dragons are you hiding?" muttered the middle-aged man with the same simple smile however within the depth of his eyes blazed a fighting intent capable of tearing a whole galaxy asunder.

"The visit was much more entertaining than I expected. The sword isn't that far off, twenty years, the embryo should be completely perfected.

I can't wait to see what it becomes in the end..." His gaze moved from Yang Qing and the young woman to a different location that was shrouded in mist that had complex glyphs within the mist and at the center was an egg releasing divine-like flames that were pouring into a sword handle above it.

Despite being bathed in flames so hot that they burned the space around it, the sword handle remained standing without so much as a char mark. It released a hum that carried the weight of the heavens quelling the flames coming from the egg below it.

The middle-aged man nodded in satisfaction when he heard the hum whose might was capable of shattering the minds of even late-stage domain experts. Luckily the glyphs around contained the power within that sword hum so only someone at his level would be able to hear it.

His gaze then moved a fair distance away to one of the rivers surrounding the Deer Mountain Range.

"It seems like the mystic gilded carp completely transformed from the treasure bone I left here as payment for the dragon vein I drained for the sword.

Considering I can detect the traces on another spirit beast, mmh two of them, it seems she didn't need the complete thing to complete the transformation.

I wonder what heights she has reached by now..."

The middle-aged man waved his hand and the space was cleanly sliced apart like a hot knife through butter revealing the dark grey void energy within it.

The middle-aged man casually walked in through the torn space without a care in the world despite the calamitous energy contained within it. Just a single wisp of the dark grey void energy was capable of destroying the body of a peak domain stage cultivator within seconds if they were careless enough to be tainted by it but the middle-aged man walked calmly with his hands behind his back unafraid like he was sightseeing.

The void energy would fade away immediately upon coming within a meter of him. No sooner had he walked in, than a monstrous eel the size of a whole kingdom appeared surrounded by void lightning and calamitous power capable of destroying anyone below the soul-formation realm both body and soul in an instance with just its presence.

"It's been long since I've eaten a thunderdrift eel. If you don't want to end up on the other end of my skewer sticks, scram, you can go show off to someone else.."

The middle-aged man spoke in a soft and unhurried manner with no change in his expression or demeanor. He was still as easygoing as he was when he stepped into the void.

However, his voice seemed to carry an inviolable power that instantly diced apart the eel which used up all its strength to flee the area before its entire body was sliced to dust.

The middle-aged man didn't bother with it as he went his way. Beneath his feet, the void energy coalesced together to form a path that the middle-aged man followed to a path unknown.

The space he had cleanly sliced apart instantly sealed itself shielding those of the Deer Mountain Range from the horrors of the sixth zone which was the deepest recess of space that contained taboo power, calamitous energy, and monstrous beings capable of killing even an early-stage soul formation expert easily if they wandered in carelessly.

Space was folded and had six zones to it with the first zone being moderately safe despite it still being dangerous to those in the domain realm.

The higher up the zones one moved, the more the dangers and also the more power one would need to tear through them.

Peak domain experts couldn't tear past the second zone nor would they wish to even if they could.

The deepest recess of space hid countless and unfathomable dangers; ancient whisperings that could erode your soul, unassuming energies capable of disintegrating your body in an instant, powerful creatures like the thunderdrift eel capable of shuttling through the different levels, whose presence alone would make those below the soul formation realm to explode into mist.

Unless one could guarantee their safety no one would dare venture into the deepest recess of space despite it hiding countless opportunities for cultivation that had the power to transform a carp into a dragon.

Despite the alluring benefits, few would take the risk even soul formation experts because of the high degree of fatality within it.

You would not know how you died in there. Only those who had reached a certain threshold could walk in there as they pleased like the middle-aged man with some even picking spots for meditation and contemplation as the traces of special types of Dao and mysterious truths could be sensed the deeper in

space one was, along with the benefits brought on by being enveloped by void energy as it made one more and more sensitive to the space dao provided they could withstand it.

Yang Qing and the rest within the Deer Mountain Range went about their activities unaware of the terror that had opened up above them for a second.

Chapter 617 Rebirth

"Meifeng, do you even need the leaves? What that senior has given you should do a much better job than them.." said Yang Qing as he pointed at the green flame leaves tightly clutched by the young lady as she used her other free hand to play around with the water at the pond.

Amid their conversation after the middle-aged man left, the young lady revealed that her name was Meifeng which was something bestowed upon her by Lady Gild on the night she gained spirituality and full sentience.

It was a breezy night that day hence the name 'Meifeng' to mean beautiful wind.

"Do you want it back?" Meifeng fearfully said as she took a few steps back while tightly clutching at the green flame leaves.

"I thought you said it was now mine. Yang Qing are you going back on your word? I thought we were friends.." she added with tears welling up at the rim of her eyes with a look that said,

I can't believe you would betray me like that

Yang Qing couldn't help but rub his nose in embarrassment when he saw her look.

"No, I am not taking it back. It's just that the yin energy in the pond can do much more than the green flame leaves can for you.

I was just curious why you still seemed interested in them.."

Meifeng looked warily at Yang Qing afraid that he would suddenly charge at her and take back the leaves.

She looked at him for a short while before she finally said,

"I like the green flame leaves and it's not incompatible with the water. Who would let go of a good thing just because they had a better thing? They would keep them both.." she said with a matter-of-fact tone accompanied by a smug smile.

"I bet it's the same with you. That senior gave you a jar of wine that is likely to be of a higher quality than the frostberry wine. Does that mean you won't be drinking the frostberry wine anymore or any other wine that you may have that isn't to the level of the wine that the senior gave you.."

"Fair enough.." said Yang Qing with a defeated smile.

"Then let me help you refine it completely. Even though the green flame tree leaves have the effects of purifying and strengthening your body, ultimately your natures are a bit contrasting to one another, much of the effects would dissipate if you tried it yourself.

I can help you maximize its use with my affinity with both yin and yang energies.." added Yang Qing.

Meifeng narrowed her eyes in suspicion.

"You're sure this is not just some trick to get the green flame leaves back?"

"No, it's not.." Yang Qing answered with a wry smile.

His response didn't like it convinced Meifeng much so he was prompted to take out a bunch of green flame leaves from his storage ring.

"I already have plenty more, so I really don't need those back.."

Meifeng jaws hung loose and her eyes widened in shock when she saw the piling green flame leaves in Yang Qing's hands.

The reason she was wary of Yang Qing in the first place from the moment he showed her the green flame leaves and his willingness to trade with it was because of how precious it was.

She may have not interacted with many treasures before but because of her origin as a spiritual plant, she could intrinsically feel how special the green flames were.

Lady Gild had given her a lot of resources to nurture her over the years but none of them ever came close to the special resonance she felt with the green flame leaves.

If the leaves were able to trigger such a sensation from her it meant they were precious. The more precious something was, the rarer it usually was.

She figured a few moments ago Yang Qing wanted to ask back the leaves for that exact reason, but it turned out, her guess was completely off the mark.

"How could he have so many?" she wondered in disbelief.

Despite herself, she found her mouth moving on its own as it said,

"Could I have more?"

She hurriedly closed her mouth immediately after as she cautiously eyed Yang Qing's reaction with slight embarrassment on her face.

"While I would like to give you more, I wouldn't advise it. It will create an imbalance in you and even negatively impact some of your abilities.

The amount I gave you is enough. It's the maximum that your body can handle.." Yang Qing gently said as he put away the pile of leaves he had taken out.

"I know.." said Meifeng with a low embarrassed voice. Though she said that, Yang Qing saw the look of greedy regret flash in her eyes.

Not bothering to call her out for it as he would likely react the same way were he in her shoes, he went on to help her refine the green flame leaves.

Lunar Heart Lotus Flame

A white flaming lotus appeared on Yang Qing's hand. The flaming lotus released an ethereal, cool, and peaceful air that instantly stirred the soul of the parasitic purple flower spore sycamore tree.

The clone body closed her eyes with a relaxing tranquil look on her face while her main body swayed its leaves to the flickering motion of the flames.

An unexpected reaction occurred as the pond water rippled and white mist moved toward the white flaming lotus almost as if it was attracted by something.

Yang Qing was slightly surprised by the movement but he immediately concentrated as he made use of the mist to amplify the abilities of the Lunar Heart Lotus Flame which was a yin-based flame capable of refining and restoring the soul.

He usually used it at the Medical Valley to deal with soul-based injuries or mental exhaustion.

He intended to use the flames to help meld the green flame leaves into a wholly compatible nature with the parasitic purple flower spore sycamore tree that had a natural affinity toward yin energy.

The green flame leaves were swallowed by the white-flaming lotus that spun around creating a gentle blend of green and white flames.

The combined flames then floated toward the parasitic purple flower spore sycamore tree and instantly engulfed its whole body.

It looked like a flaming tree of green and white.

Yang Qing blended the nature of the green flame leaves into the tree using the white flames as a conduit.

The body of the parasitic purple flower sycamore tree was repetitively cleansed and strengthened using the two flames.

The process went on for almost an hour before it was finally completed. The green flames disappeared by themselves after the green flame leaves had been completely refined while the white flame disappeared when Yang Qing canceled out the Lunar Heart Lotus Flame technique.

The parasitic purple flower spore sycamore tree looked like it had experienced a complete transformation.

Everything within it now had a delicate vibrancy to it. Its stem and branches had a light green crystalline glow to them, while the leaves and the flowers had the quality of their colors shine with a gentle ephemeral luster that had an added charm to them.

The brushing of the leaves released a faint calming lullaby capable of inducing a sense of relaxation and sleep in all who heard it or set their eyes on it.

Chapter 618 New companions for the sycamore tree

The clone also seemed to have experienced a transformation as her body seemed more lively with a jade-like complexion. Meifeng now had a sort of gentleness to her beauty.

"Thank you, Yang Qing.." Meifeng said with a heartfelt bow.

She could feel how enormous the changes in her body were. Her vitality seemed to have experienced an enormous boost, and her ability to absorb and refine the yin energy from the pond below seemed to have been improved.

Her mental sea of consciousness seemed to have grown in size and when it came to her clone she felt she had an improved level of control on it. Her clone always felt like something she controlled with puppet strings and it always put a strain on her to do intricate things with it, but now she felt she could control it with much more ease just like her spores.

"Th.a..nk you, truly.." she added with chalked-up emotions.

She was unable to hold back her tears. When the day started she never expected it to end up this way. She expected it to go as it always had which was with her wallowing in loneliness and nostalgia of the days past, dreading the passing of time.

But today she laughed, she talked, she ate, she drank, she had company over, and now she even experienced a monumental change in her life.

Her dream of exploring outside of the sphere of her spores wasn't an impossibility now. She could visit adler, and maybe they could even go on an adventure like the ones Lady Gild always told them, and all this was thanks to the green-haired youth before him and the mysterious middle-aged man.

"You're welcome.." softly said Yang Qing as brought over their wine cups.

He poured the last of the remaining frostberry wine into the two cups.

"You're about to leave?" asked Meifeng with a melancholic smile.

"I am.."

"Will you visit again?" Meifeng asked with hopeful eyes.

"Yes, I will.."

Meifeng's eyes instantly lit up with joy however Yang Qing's next words instantly drowned them.

"But it will only be for a month because after that I will have to leave.." said Yang Qing with a sigh when he saw her despondent look.

"Can't you stay?"

"I can't, but if I get the time, I will definitely pass by. Also, I have a few friends, they can keep you company when I am not around..."

When he was conversing with her he suddenly remembered those creatures at the territory of the Clear Sword River Sect that experienced a transformation thanks to the sudden resonance he had with the area prompting some of them to experience evolutions.

If he let them be, they would be taken by someone in his absence as they were currently too weak to defend themselves, but with the parasitic purple flower spore sycamore tree's help, Yang Qing wouldn't have to worry too much about them.

"What friends?"

After experiencing the joys of company, Meifeng wasn't too eager to go to her old lifestyle of solitude. She was willing to entertain even strangers despite her wary personality and meekness.

Yang Qing went on to explain about the creatures that had evolved from being soaked in his universal spiritual qi.

Of the evolved creatures, he already had an idea of which ones he would bring over. The moth with crystal clear wings that had a crescent moon symbol on each wing was a must. The moth had a gentle yin energy and would profit immensely if it stayed here where the yin energy was so dense.

It also had the effect of purifying and strengthening one's soul which would benefit the sycamore tree.

The other two he would bring over would be the beetle with a diamond carapace that had immense speed and sensitivity to magnetic fluctuations and miasma levels.

The parasitic purple flower spore sycamore tree had a weak main body, but if the beetle grew strong enough, it could help her address that problem.

The last creature to bring would be the skylark whose melodious tune created the image of a river that has spirit calming properties and can increase the duration of one's meditation.

The sycamore tree and the skylark would benefit immensely from each other considering they both specialized in vivid illusions.

The ones he would leave out were the oak tree whose leaves produced green-blue dew that replenished and revitalized the body and spiritual qi, the azalea surrounded by aurora lights which increases the purity of the spiritual qi of an area, the sparrow with gold orange feathers that had a restraining effect on corpse related malevolent energies like corpse qi and miasma, and lastly the firefly with a verdant green light that had the aura of vitality which boosted the growth of the plants around it.

Of the four, the oak tree and the azalea couldn't be moved, while the sparrow had a yang nature that wouldn't blend well with the conditions of the cavern that was rich in yin energy as for the firefly he intended to let it be there and see what happens, eventually, he would maybe give it to Ma Yuan when he went to the Summerfield kingdom.

Meifeng's sour mood instantly improved as she tried to squeeze every single detail about her new companions from Yang Qing with glittering eyes.

Even when the time for Yang Qing to leave came, she wasn't as low as she should have been. In part, it was because of the excitement of having new companions and the other was because Yang Qing promised to come over the next day and every day after that until his month as branch chief was over.

The instant he left the cavern, he was met by a worried-looking Yen Xu and a man who looked to be in his early forties and had black robes with a red claw symbol on the sleeves.

"Where have you been?" asked Yen Xu as she hurriedly scanned Yang Qing's body all over.

Chapter 619 Origin of the wine gourd

On seeing the worried look on Yen Xun who was usually calm and composed, Yang Qing asked,

"What's wrong? Did something happen?"

After confirming nothing was wrong with Yang Qing's body and nodding to the slender, tall man next to her, Yen Xu said,

"A few hours ago the location containing the egg of the bifang niao and that sword I told you about suddenly vanished.

We couldn't sense the area at all. There was even someone from the spirit council present but they could not detect where it went.

I then got information that you had left the branch and when I searched for you all over, I couldn't find a trace of your aura.

It only reappeared now when you left that cavern. Don't tell me there is an illusory treasure in there that is able to mask your presence.

But that's not right, I didn't detect anything like that when I surveyed the area. Do you remember noting anything like it when we were here, Xiang He?" said Yen Xu as she addressed the man next to her.

"No, this area had nothing capable of shielding itself against our domain sense. If it did we would have never noticed the parasitic purple flower spore sycamore tree.." answered the man.

From his robes, Yang Qing guessed he was the special inquisitor who was investigating the blue soul flame crow syndicate case and had done the survey of the Deer Mountain Range with Ye Xun.

"The change likely has to do with why that gorge suddenly disappeared without a trace.." he added as his gaze fell on Yang Qing.

"Did you experience or see anything out of the ordinary, Judge Yang Qing?" asked Xiang He.

"I did, but maybe we can continue the conversation at the branch?" said Yang Qing.

The duo nodded as Yen Xun covered Yang Qing with her domain space which she used to carry him back to the branch.

In just a few breaths they were already at the branch and in the branch chief's office.

Yang Qing as a dutiful host and junior poured the two, snow ginseng teas before he recounted his interaction with the middle-aged man, the abilities he showed, his suspicions about him being the owner of the sword that was being refined by the flames produced from the egg of the bifang niao before he finally showed them the wine jar given by him.

The information Yang Qing was shocking to the two, as Yang Qing expected however, their shock seemed to have experienced a dramatic increase when he pulled out the wine gourd.

"He gave you that?!" asked Special Inquisitor Xiang He with clear agitation in his tone.

"He did... you know what this is, seniors?" asked Yang Qing when he noticed their reactions.

Their reactions were that of people who clearly knew what the white wood was.

After calming himself, Xiang He said,

"That is the empyrean world jade tree. One could consider it the king among jade trees with the ten thousand dao leaf jade tree of the Jade Leaf Empire being the emperor of the known jade trees..."

Xiang He paused as he took a sip of his ginseng tea, still slightly shaken by the wine gourd in Yang Qing's hands.

Yang Qing looked puzzledly at the wine gourd with waves of excitement washing his body. He could detect a unique energy coming from the gourd from the moment he came in contact with it, so he

figured the material had to be pretty unique considering it was unfamiliar to him despite the trove of information about spiritual herbs and plants he had consumed at the Order.

He had no doubt the material had to be unique but even then, he didn't expect it to be at the level of something titled a jade tree king.

Jade trees were rare and each had unique properties that made it stand out among millions of other spiritual plants, and for one to stand out even amongst its kind, how special was it?

"The empyrean jade tree can form multiple realms within its body, with each realm having its a complete system with complete laws that is no different from the real world.

It's like a blend of a mysterious realm and a grotto. It's the absolute perfection of both of them and there is even a rumor if one's talent in comprehension were high enough one could have a chance of grasping the traces of origin dao by cultivating inside one of its powerful realms.

It's unknown if the rumor is true but if it is, then it's no less powerful than the ten thousand dao leaf jade tree that is rumored to have been birthed by the aura of the origin dao.."

Xiang He shook his head in disbelief as he added,

"I can't believe someone used its wood to make a wine gourd, and they even gifted it away..."

One could hear the bitterness in his tone, as for Yang Qing, now that he heard the origins of the wood, his heart started racing faster.

Just who had he shared drinks with?

A tree with ties to the Origin Dao. The Origin Dao was the mother of all Daos, he/ she who mastered it, mastered them all.

It was said if immortality was real, then the Origin Dao was the key. However, even if most knew of it, no one has ever been recorded as having mastered it.

Even the Jade Leaf Empire where the famous ten thousand dao leaf jade tree grew didn't have anyone who had sensed traces of it despite the tree being rumored to have been birthed from the aura of the Origin Dao.

What was known and confirmed was the tree had ten thousand Daos with each Dao emblazoned on one leaf, but when it came to the Origin Dao there was nothing.

"I am holding something so precious? Then what about the wine stored in there? an immortal's wine, divine wine, world wine. How would it taste?"

Yang Qing instantly started feeling faint as his head started spinning. He thought Meifeng had been the one to have profited the most from the encounter, but it turns out he was the real beneficiary of the whole meeting.

Yang Qing instantly clutched the wine gourd afraid someone would pop out of thin air and snatch it away.

If something like that were to happen, the heart demon he would form after was something that he felt the auspicious wood grove tree would not help him out of.

The two domain experts smiled when they saw Yang Qing's excessive reaction seemingly reading his thoughts which left Yang Qing rubbing his nose in embarrassment, though he didn't let go of the wine gourd.

After hearing its origins he would be a fool to let it out of his sight. He even had thoughts of having it stored at the Dragon Meadows.

The Order wasn't safe, he was friends with those who would potentially mug him if they knew about it. Dai Chen the wine hound was at the very top.

"Whoever gave you that, their origins are not simple. The spirit council, the vice presidents, and maybe even the president will have to be informed of this.." said Ye Xun with a sigh.

Laying down an array that covered the whole range would have to be altered now. The Order despite its fame couldn't act recklessly.

How powerful was someone who gifted out wine gourds made out of empyrean world jade tree like it was nothing?

If that person was connected with the sword as Yang Qing suspected, they had to be cautious with their conduct, or at the very least let those at the top know, maybe one of them might have an idea as to the identity of the middle-aged man.

Xiang He nodded in agreement to Ye Xun's suggestion as both of them left soon after to relay the information Yang Qing had shared with them, along with the discovery of the wine gourd to the spirit council member already in the area.

Whatever happened next would be up to them.

Chapter 620 Unexpected benefits

After Ye Xun and Xiang He had left, Yang Qing sat in complete silence as he reflected on the day's events, especially the things that happened towards the end of the day.

His eyes kept inadvertently falling on the wine gourd he was still embracing tightly.

Yang Qing stared at the cork intently before ultimately shaking his head as he decided against opening it and seeing its contents.

He decided if he was going to open it, it would be in the comfort of his abode and he also wanted to see the celestial nesting weaver's reaction when it saw the gourd.

Despite its nasty personality and incorrigible behavior of treating Yang Qing like its man slave and sucking him dry of any valuable resources any chance it got, it had a great eye for treasures.

Yang Qing even suspected that talent was an innate ability. He couldn't help but snicker to himself as he pictured its reaction when it saw the wine gourd that was made from empyrean world jade tree wood. It was sure to shed all its feathers. Yang Qing couldn't wait to torment it endlessly with the wine gourd before he hopefully had the gourd sent to the Dragons Meadow, but not before he had sampled the contents of the gourd.

A gluttonous glint flashed in his eyes as he looked at the wine gourd before ultimately putting it away.

Yang Qing then decided to meditate to wash away the weariness of the day. Reading the memories of the crystal spring tree and transmitting a cultivation art to it, along with his interaction with the middle-aged man and seeing his world-defying abilities up close along with helping the parasitic purple flower spore sycamore tree completely refine the green flame trees had sapped him of strength both mentally and physically.

He needed a rest. He was afraid if he slept it would go beyond just a day and therefore opted to meditate which would renew him faster than sleep could.

He still had a lot of things to do like investigate the clues given to him by the parasitic purple flower spore sycamore tree on the locations where the daughter of the obsidian serpents regularly frequented with the fire adler bear when she was young.

There may be something left there that could help his investigation, and he thought when the obsidian serpent couple came back he could try and have a conversation with them in the hopes of finding out what the fire adler bear did for them back then.

"Speaking of the fire adler bear, I need to warn the Deer Mountain Kingdom about it and its relationship with the obsidian couple especially the daughter, and also its relationship with Meifeng.

If they were to do something untoward then the fear they have of the bear attacking them may really come to pass not to mention she also had the interaction with the middle-aged man forming a karmic bond.." muttered Yang Qing with a sigh.

"I have one too.." he added.

Even though they interacted briefly, he already considered Meifeng a friend considering how sincere she was.

Rather than hide it, Yang Qing decided he would be open with the Deer Mountain Kingdom about his friendship with her which should more or less ensure her protection against them.

However, something was gnawing at him about the whole reveal.

If the Deer Mountain Kingdom had a traitor as he suspected, then revealing he was already friends with Meifeng would put a target on her back.

What if the traitor fed that information to the Blue Soul Flame Crow Syndicate? It wasn't a stretch to think that the syndicate may retaliate against her in their bid to get back at the Order, though Yang Qing suspected the chance of that happening was slim.

With the chaos that they had created, they were sure to avoid the area.

Ultimately Yang Qing decided he would inform the king and the head of the Zhang family about his relationship with Meifeng and also its relationship with the fire adler bear and the mysterious Lady Gild.

He decided to inform the two because the Zhang family seemed to have an honorable reputation if they could even garner the admiration of a spirit beast, then it had to be good. The fact that they knew the Badger was also a factor in why Yang Qing chose to reveal the information to them.

They would understand how much of a precarious position the Deer Mountain Kingdom was in if they realized the Badger they had interacted with had a master who slapped it unconscious for four months.

And if by chance the information leaked, then his suspect list would be the king and the Zhang family.

After deciding on his next steps, Yang Qing took out a few spirit-calming incense sticks and started meditating. A few seconds in, he had a bold thought and decided to put out the incense sticks and take out the wine gourd.

Even if it was just a piece of wood and wasn't the real thing, Yang Qing figured the wine gourd had to still have some effects of the empyrean world jade tree. Maybe he would receive some unexpected benefits from cultivating with it in hand.

His guess proved to be true as his mind and thoughts instantly cleared up as he felt a cool and refreshing feeling envelop his entire body.

In just an instant he was already in deep meditation. He ended up coming out of the meditation eight hours later with his body and mind completely renewed.

He even felt like his mental sea of consciousness had expanded slightly and his control of his body seemed to have grown slightly. The leap in growth was negligible, but it was still something considering that was the effect of one night's meditation.

His eyes shone in excitement when it fell on the wine gourd before he ultimately put it away and made his way to the kitchen for his breakfast.

Su Jinjing and Lu Mei had already left for the branch's outpost which was the location where cultivators could bring in their complaints. If there were any cases to be heard, it would be from there.

The branch was covered in isolation and illusory arrays, so finding its location was difficult not unless the Order explicitly gave it to you, and in the Deer Mountain Range, only the Deer Mountain Kingdom was afforded that courtesy, the rest all had to visit the outpost.

Yang Qing had expected to meet Xiang He and Ye Xun after he woke up from his meditation, but when he didn't see them he figured they must still be handling the matter concerning the middle-aged man.

After he finished his meal, Yang Qing called the Imperial Secretary and had him arrange for the Zhang family head and the king to visit him at their convenience but he insisted on it being soon.

The imperial secretary wanted to come on their behalf because of the precarious position the kingdom was in but at Yang Qing's insistence on the matter being too sensitive he eventually relented and said he would inform them.

With that taken care of Yang Qing resumed his investigation of the battle.