

## Daily life 701

### Chapter 701 Making Arrangements

Filled with a chipper spirit, Yang Qing decided to tease Administrator Mo Guang as they were leaving the transmission room.

"Is that regret I see in your eyes, Administrator Mo Guang? With all the trouble brewing around this place, you're wishing you could take back your words and go back, aren't you? Don't worry as long as you say the word, I will righteously undertake your cause and make sure you go back with me.." said Yang Qing as he pumped up his gait.

Administrator Mo Guang stared at Yang Qing for a brief moment before he solemnly answered,

"If you would please. I am not sure these old bones of mine would be able to handle all this.."

The duo, young and old, ended up laughing through the hallways of the branch.

"What are your plans for the next few days?" asked Mo Guang.

"Not much. I intend to relax a bit and make the most of my time here. I did see some decent fruits out there.."

"If it wasn't for the numerous undercurrents surrounding this place, i have to admit, of the many places I have been to, during my time as a rotational administrator, I like the environment around this range. There's something refreshing and relieving about it.."

"You've never been here?"

"No. Even though as rotational administrators we can move from place to place, it is around a certain sphere, for example, in my case, I was designated in the northern sphere of the continent. I would only be given a post outside that sphere if another sphere is understaffed and the rotational administrators assigned to that area are not enough.."

"Administrator Mo Guang, could I make a request?"

"Sure, branch chief.."

"Do you like eating?"

"A bit but not enough to be called an epicurist. Why?"

"I was hoping you could give me a list of the restaurants you felt served good dishes from the places you were stationed at, and the meals that stood out to you. If you don't mind.." Yang Qing humbly asked with a gluttonous glint flashing in his eyes.

"Sure, I will even add a few my companions told me about.." Administrator Mo Guan said with a light chuckle.

"Thank you!!!" Yang Qing said as he eagerly shook Administrator Mo Guang's hands.

After separating, Yang Qing called over Su Jinjing and Luo Meilie and broke the news to them about the new personnel that would be replacing them. He also revealed the finding he made via the sacred flame swan as he warned them to be cautious out there.

Even with the presence of gold eagle guard Ye Xun and the other members of the Order who were laying down the formation array, one could never be careful. Yang Qing himself couldn't completely guarantee his life in this range, let alone Luo Meili and Su Jinjing who were in the core formation realm.

"A complete overhaul huh.." Su Jinjing somberly said as she looked at the hills and the winding river around her.

"It's better for them. At least they could avoid feeling like they are being haunted by the ghosts of their comrades.." said Yang Qing.

"I don't think I would be able to come back either if something like that happened to me.." said Su Jinjing with a somber sigh, with Luo Meili and Yang Qing nodding along.

Trying to shake off the somber mood she had created, Su Jinjing asked,

"So, what's your plan Boss, for the next few days?"

"Some scavenging.." said Yang Qing with a greedy snicker.

"Earlier, when we separated as we were coming back, I stumbled onto a few fruits and honey that I think would make a great fruit wine. We could enjoy it to commemorate our stay here.." added Yang Qing with starry eyes as he imagined the taste of that wine.

Su Jinjing was at first ecstatic before she seemed hesitant, almost as if afraid to ask something.

Yang Qing could already tell what it was.

"There wasn't one.." he said with a sigh.

"I guess that's that. It's a pity, but at least Flowing Fist Sect and the two elders got out.."

"It is.." Yang Qing said.

Even though he felt pity for the destroyed Hua Clan, Xin Clan, and the Moon Essence Cauldron Sect, he wasn't as beat up about it, especially after his interaction with the spirits entombed at the graveyard torch.

The three organizations took a risk to try and improve themselves and it didn't pay out, and the cost of that risk was their annihilation. It was similar to those who explored mysterious realms and dangerous locations in the hopes of finding something that would be able to change their fortunes, only for the place to be terrifying beyond their capabilities and they end up losing their lives in the process.

The road of cultivation was paved with countless dangers, the three organizations just weren't lucky enough.

Yang Qing separated from the two inquisitors as each went their way. Yang Qing had asked them to meet on the third day to have their farewell celebration. He had planned to have it at Meifeng's alcove but he would have to seek Meifeng's permission first considering how ambivalent she was about such matters. She hated loneliness, but at the same time, she was extremely wary of unfamiliar people.

Yang Qing couldn't help but feel that the only reason they hit it off so easily had something to do with his yin-yang nature jade bones that gave him a great affinity with all sorts of plants ever since he acquired it, though now that he thought about, even before when he just began his journey into cultivating, he could somehow tell the feelings of the mortal rank herbs around their clan, not only them but even the animals too, especially that black dog that always looked at him with disdain, snickering every time his grandfather and his cohorts came up with a new body refinement recipe that they wanted to try on Yang Qing.

Yang Qing couldn't help but clench his teeth when that smug hateful dog appeared in his mind. At some point in time, it had disappeared before he had the time to get his vengeance on it.

"Maybe I could have its karma deduced and track it down.." Yang Qing pettily thought before he shook his head.

"It will cost too much.."

Unwilling to let the memory of the black dog sour his mood any further, Yang Qing made his way to the kitchen and made Shi Hai privy to the leaving party he was hoping to have so he could plan a sumptuous menu.

He encouraged Shi Hai to go wild with his imagination, he would have Mo Guang requisition the Order for any ingredients he wanted to use. For his final days here, he intended to milk as much as he could from the Order, it was the only time he would get to wantonly do so without fear of them getting back at him several times over.

He couldn't help but snicker in glee as he and Shi Hai discussed the menu and the ingredients he needed. It wasn't hard to get the young chef excited about working with limitless ingredients and at

some point in time, Yang Qing somehow forgot his petty scheme as his attention was completely absorbed by the potential dishes Shi Hai would make.

They spent close to three hours discussing it before Yang Qing hurriedly went to Administrator Mo Guang and gave him the list of ingredients that he was promised would be delivered by the end of the day through the transportation array in the transmission room.

With everything arranged, he called Meifeng, who as usual rattled endlessly about the things she, the spirit river melody skylark, the diamond beetle, and the crescent moon winged moth had been up to the past few days. Yang Qing patiently listened to her excited tales before finally she remembered to ask why he had called, and when he was coming by.

Yang Qing informed her that he was about to leave in a few days and hoped he could have the farewell party at her alcove. Few places could match the beauty and atmosphere of that place, especially after that mysterious figure made improvements to her pond. It had a perpetual refreshing calming coolness to it.

Meifeng was slightly hesitant at first, with Yang Qing not trying to cajole or guilt her into agreeing, he wanted it to be of her free will. Eventually, she agreed though she exhorted him to bring a lot of wine and the fried scallops he had the first time they met, to which Yang Qing readily agreed.

With all the particulars already done, Yang Qing headed to the secluded floor in the library to study the one thing that had been one of the reasons he agreed to come here in the first place, but did not have the time to study it.

#### Chapter 702 First Wage, Humble Station

The top floor of the library of the Deer Mountain Branch was empty save for three wooden pillars that had been carved with different types of wards. The pillars were made from kirin scale wood. Their white polished surfaces let out an auspicious light like the wood breathed in and out.

Above the pillars were three objects, two of them were scrolls, while the last was an ancient-looking broken part of a chime bell filled with old engravings and images of a flying moth around. It was gold rustic, with the engravings looking like they had been carved out of rust.

Both the chime bell and the two scrolls were covered in a mirage-looking translucent ball that was filled with countless runes that pulsed with the movement of energy from the pillars below them.

Yang Qing took out his token as he made his way to the pillar that had a broken part of a chime bell. That chimebell was his goal for coming here. The bell was one of the baits the crafty seniors of the Judicial Review Committee had used to lure him over to accept the job as the temporary branch chief of the Deer Mountain Range despite his reservations.

That gold-rusted chime bell part that looked like it was inches away from breaking down from its rust and what the vicissitudes of time had done to it contained a cultivation art that wasn't featured in the collections of the main library. It could only be found within this branch, no other copies existed.

The rarity itself was enough to stir Yang Qing's interest. Over the years he had collected a few oddities and trinkets around because of that reason alone. As long as something looked unique, weird, a one-of-a-kind object, he would instantly buy it without a second thought, regardless of whether it would be useful or not.

He always felt like a treasure hunter, finding a buried gem in a pile of rubble. Most of the time what he assumed was a rare find did turn out to be some trashy broken object but occasionally, though not often he would find something worthwhile like the weird clay tablet he had gifted Dean Zhu Lao which turned out to have a connection with one of the descendants of the ancients.

Yang Qing had always loved the feeling that came with unraveling mysteries from unexpected things. Lost knowledge, and skills that were hidden in some mundane rock, a sword skill hidden in some worn-out wooden sword, a broken artifact that has recordings of a long forgotten history, some scroll or book that has hidden something else within it, like let's say some long lost technique or clues that tie with other scrolls that lead to some grand treasure.

He had always been in love with the romance of demystifying things, finding hidden things in scraps, the unique finds. If he didn't have a high sense of self-preservation, Yang Qing felt in a different life he would have made a great explorer of the Horizon Odyssey Guild. Visiting ruins deciphering the hidden tales they left behind, spending years on end exploring all sorts of mysterious realms, venturing into dangerous places to see what secrets lay there but alas he couldn't. He would be too preoccupied with the paranoid thoughts of different ways he could die than enjoy the beauty of adventure.

His only option for satisfying that adventurous lust was visiting cultivation markets all over the continent and seeing if he could find some hidden mystery among the common goods being sold, a phoenix egg that was touted as a rotten egg. His heart would race at the thought that he might stumble onto something worthwhile. It was the reason he didn't like to go to auction houses.

Auction houses had skilled appraisers who would extrapolate a good's entire history and abilities, there was little or next to nothing to discover about what you bought. The buyer would know exactly what they were getting with every major point about the goods completely fleshed out by the appraisers.

Yang Qing never wanted that, he wanted his find to be a raw, jumbled mess with no heads or tails, something that would leave him spending countless hours trying to unravel its secrets. He didn't like being told what was there, which was why if he could help, he would not step foot in auction houses, well that and he was completely cheap.

He would lose an entire month's worth of wages in a moderate bidding war with the less profligate, let alone the loss he stood to have if he engaged in a heated bidding war with the moguls who used middle-grade spirit stones to wipe the dust off their robes and toss it away after.

Once upon a time, when he was just young and had gotten his first pay as an outer core court judge. He felt flush after receiving his 150 high-grade spirit stone pay. He had never touched such a sum before. He hyperventilated, cried in joy, screamed, worshipped his ancestors for a few hours for blessing him with talent, apologized to the Order for all he had thought and done, changed his walking style, and imagined the chaos he could do with such a sum.

He basically went crazy for the first few hours, and that insanity grew every time his eyes fell on those lustrous stones burning a hole in his storage ring. With such a sum, he genuinely felt he could buy a river, a mountain, and the entire stars above it in some place around the continent.

So the next time he had a few days off, Yang Qing decided he was going to go into the world and create a storm by flexing his financial might. He couldn't beat the Order, but he could definitely beat others out there with the tidy sum they gave him, so chest pumped up like a mighty beast, legs wide apart that they could reach from the east to the west of the continent, filled with momentum that reached the stars, carrying the aura of a dragon, shouldering heaven's mandate, Yang Qing made his way to one of the best auction houses he knew about.

He had 150 high-grade spirit stones, so of course he wasn't going to waste them in some nondescript auction house. That was like sending a dragon to destroy an ant hill, no, no, Yang Qing wanted to create as much commotion as he could. He wanted bards to make songs about him, and statues of him to be laid out all over different auction houses to strike fear and awe in all who came, and the only way he could do that was to visit the largest auction house hosted by the White Rose Pavilion.

He was humbled that day. His title as a member of the Order was what got him through the door that door, otherwise, he would not have been able to get in. Receiving entry was the worst thing that could have ever happened to him because once inside he realized the wealth he thought he had had the same worth as a fly on the wall.

Luckily the refreshments and entry were free of charge, otherwise, he wouldn't be able to afford anything in there which was something he soon came to realize. What he had slaved off for, for an entire month at the Order, no sleep, no spiritual qi, had no worth in there. Even his entire year's worth of wages couldn't make the first bid on the cheapest commodity in there. Never had he felt so poor, the lustrous spirit stones in his storage ring turned into dung. He ended up blacking out a few minutes in. His mind and heart couldn't take that beating and he had to be nursed to health by the staff.

He left that auction house, broken, a husk without a soul. The heavens had cast him aside. He learned something that day, which was the Order was cheap, and he needed to accept his station in life. He would never have awe-inspiring statues made out of him, he had to accept that he was but a humble scavenger and do what humble scavengers do, which is to scour around for scraps here and there, and maybe luck out and get a good find in the scrap.

When he started his humble life, he didn't expect to love it as he did, and now it was the better highlight of his pastime. His hands were itching for the next market meet he went to. What would he find? Useless junk or some priceless treasure..

His heart raced in excitement at the thought of it.

"With the amount I got for my ceremony, maybe I could try my hand at one bidding and erase my past shame....no, no, stick to your roots, Yang Qing..."

#### Chapter 703 Sight Within The Fragment

When the token came in contact with the pillar, white glyphs appeared from the base of the pillar and extended to the mirage bubble whose glyphs radiated with a soft gentle glow before the mirage finally popped like a bubble.

The anti-climatic display would mislead one into thinking the defense of the mirage bubble was weak, but Yang Qing knew it could defend against any measure that a middle-stage domain expert could think of.



The ward surrounding the pillars was part of the array that surrounded the entire floor which was the Kirin Guardian Veil Ward. It was a protection ward that not only protected the entire floor from being breached but it isolated the room from most searching means either by domain sense, karmic deduction, or artifacts with similar use.

Without the token, Yang Qing would not be able to even know of the existence of the floor.

Yang Qing eagerly stretched out his shaking hands toward the chime bell fragment and removed it from the wood pillar. The moment he did, the mirage-looking ward spread out from the pillar and surrounded the entire room like a veil. The veil prevented others from spying or getting into the room but it also prevented Yang Qing from leaving the area with any of the objects covered by the ward.

For the veil to be dispelled, he would have to return the fragment to its original position for the protective ward to kick in and the veil to be absorbed back into the mirage ward.

"It feels more like silk than metal.." Yang Qing said as he rubbed his fingers against the fragment. It was soft to the touch and had the same sensation as the silk produced by silkworms.

Yang Qing traced his fingers across the fragment while admiring every inch of it. Everything from the material to the design, to the engravings felt very to him. It was almost as if he could feel and smell the history contained within it.

Out of habit, he talked with it as if it were a living object. It was his process. It was something he developed from his years of scavenging, he would talk with his finds, purely in a superstitious sense in the hopes his communication would unlock something from them or it would make them more amiable to him making it easy for him to harvest something extra.

He wasn't sure if his ritual usually worked but he nonetheless faithfully maintained the tradition for years and he wasn't about to stop, especially with the advantages he got from verbalizing his thoughts during the communication. Hearing his thoughts helped him add more considerations to his thought process.

After he was done with his ritual came the main event. He split a sliver of his spiritual essence which he fused with the fragment. If it was an artifact he had gotten from an unproven source, interacting with it via his spiritual sense was something ill-advised due to the potential risks involved. Inserting your

spiritual sense into an unknown artifact left one vulnerable to attacks by opening the gateway via their spiritual essence, especially curse-based attacks.

One needed to thoroughly scan the artifact several times over for any visible or latent threats and booby traps and remove them carefully without damaging the artifact. It was a particularly laborious process, one that Yang Qing didn't enjoy but did nonetheless as he had heard countless tales of cultivators who tried to recklessly refine unknown treasures before scanning them for dangers. Some had their bodies possessed, others had their cultivation bases destroyed from such recklessness and Yang Qing wasn't about to be another cautionary tale.

With his spiritual sense serving as the unlock key for the fragment, Yang Qing felt his vision change. He was transported to a different realm. Within that realm, it was night, with a clear sky with countless stars woven through it, filling it with splendor.

On the ground, one thing stood out amid the darkness, it was a river, a river that looked to have been made from the dew drops of starlight. It had a gold-silver white radiance with a blue tone as its foundation.

One look at the river and Yang Qing could feel its grandeur and ethereal majesty. Yang Qing felt a sense of eternity within it. The past, the present, and the future are all recorded within the flow of that river that seemed to have no end or beginning.

Slightly above it, Yang Qing saw a golden string that wriggled with the ebbing and flowing of an ocean tide. More golden strings appeared from the river, emulating the movement of the first string and it wasn't long before there were a thousand of them whose movements matched before rhythmically weaving together to form a silver gold cocoon that had the tapestry of the stars above as its outer cocoon.

Immediately when the cocoon was completed, it withered with a grand radiant light, and out of that light came a moth, a moth the size of Yang Qing's thumbs. The moth was unique in every which way. Its abdomen looked to have been carved out of the eternal radiant river, its wings adopted the cerulean color of the night sky above, and its head dotted with colorful stars.

With one look, Yang Qing could sense the vicissitudes of time within it, and with another, he could feel youthfulness.

As he was lost in wonder at what the moth was, he felt a voice transmitted from it. A clear, ethereal voice whose qualities were indistinctive.

The past, the present, and the future flow as one within me. I fly through its fabric as part of it and outside of it. With a flap of one of my wings, I see it all, the incoming dangers, the devastation, the tragedy that stretches its claws to the ends of the earth sparing nothing in sight, dragons capable of shattering the heavens with their roar weave reality with their claws, bodies immune to everything under the sun have fallen victim to it, phoenixes whose flames burn everything with one side and birth everything with the other, have fallen too, the child of the heavens kirin whose voice brings the majesty of the heavens have fallen to it, the kunpeng master of water and space, a world within itself has fallen victim to it..

But I, the unassuming speck, who lacks even the strength to break a blade of grass, have survived it. With the flap of my other wing, I see it, I see the thread, the thread that weaves through all the dangers of both the past, the present, and the future. Nothing is hidden from it, from the earth to the oceans, to the stars and the heavens above, it moves through like a guiding light amidst a swallowing darkness.

With the thread as my path, no dangers will catch me, even with the earth rupturing with everything within it or the heavens fall, I will see it all, and move through it all, even time, destiny, fate, will not deny my thread.. my thread will weave through it all.. the thread calamity finding cerulean moth of the ages will be a witness to it all.."

Chapter 704 Pity It Won't Be For My Sect

Yang Qing's gaze turned incredulous when he heard those words.

"The thread calamity finding cerulean moth.. I don't seem to have heard of such a spirit beast. From its tone, it may be of the same ilk as dragons and phoenixes; one of the descendants of the ancients.

Cannot break a blade of grass but can avoid calamities that even dragons can't evade. Its statement makes escaping sound so grandiose like its defying the will of the heavens.

The survivor is king in the end. If you can detect all the dangers from the past, present, and future, then even with lacking strength, I can see why it dares call itself the last witness. Nothing else matters as long as you live in the end.." muttered Yang Qing with an appreciative nod.

He felt the maxim spoken by what he assumed to be the thread calamity finding cerulean moth resonated with him. He may be a vain person who likes to show off his abilities a little bit here and there, but at the end of it, nothing matters to him more than ensuring his own life. When it came down to it, that was the only metric that he truly valued.

After the voice ended, the cerulean moth turned into motes of light that congealed to form the silhouette of a humanoid figure. Yang Qing couldn't see their features as it looked like an ephemeral ghostly figure but the figure had a rough outline that showed it was a female, who was slightly taller than him by a meter.

The figure had a slender build, even if she didn't have color, she had long hair that cascaded down her back reaching her knees. Yang Qing felt a solitary air coming from her along with a bearing that could only be seen by people who have shouldered a lot of responsibility. He could feel the burden of that weight radiating from her body even though he didn't know what it was she was carrying that it even translated to her silhouette.

He couldn't tell much about her age as she was no more than an indistinctive humanoid mist, but Yang Qing instinctively felt it was someone in her early forties, but whether that was her true age, Yang Qing had strong suspicions it wasn't considering the thread calamity finding cerulean moth from before.

"Her aura seems different from the moth...her origins may not be the same.." muttered Yang Qing as the female silhouette started walking on the river.

Just as Yang Qing was wondering why she had appeared, she spoke, her tone soft and low like the whispers of the moon. It was also filled with melancholy and an unbending will.

"At birth, before I knew even to walk or crawl, I already had enough strength to punch a hole through an adult bear, at two years I was already in the bronze body refining stage, at four I was in the gold body stage, and at six, I already had a diamond body, two years later I stepped into the qi refinement realm, and at thirteen I had already reached the thirteenth stage, the perfect circulation stage..

At fourteen I established a quasi-purple grade pillar and stepped into the foundation establishment member which led me to be the youngest to be admitted as a seed disciple of the Bright Lake Dawn sect in 60,000 years, and at sixteen I became the eleventh person since the sect was established to master the sect's core legacy, the tidal eternal dawn ascendance art to the emergent realm at below thirty years.

At nineteen I stepped into the core formation realm with a quasi-purple-grade core and at twenty-one my mastery of the tidal eternal dawn ascendance art reached the blooming phase, becoming one of five seed disciples who had reached that realm, while also being the youngest of the five.

At twenty-four I touched upon the mysterious truths hidden within the art and at twenty-six I used them to establish my dao road that I used to step into the palace realm.

At twenty-eight I was unrivaled among my seed-disciple peers and at forty-two my mastery of the tidal eternal dawn ascendance art reached perfection and was promoted to a core elder because of it.

I secluded myself for twenty years and when I came out, I became the youngest domain expert the Bright Lake Dawn Sect has seen in 110,000 years and was one of the 23 domain experts the sect had.

With my understanding of our core legacy art and my attainments, I nurtured 22 palace realm disciples by the time I was one hundred years old.

I ventured out for the next 100 years, traveling from the brutal bestial churning sea to the wonderous Millionsfold treasure ocean, to the treacherous green fog region while exploring ruins and mysterious realms in between.

With nothing but my hands, I carved a path and increased my renown around the continent, inspiring terror and awe, in both humans, spirit beasts, and spiritual plants. I was a boon to some and a never-ending nightmare to others.

With a flip of my palm, I reduced thousands of mountains into sand, and with another turn lakes, rivers, and seas were vaporized out of existence in but an instant. Mortals with no cultivation and domain experts were all equal beneath my might.

By the time, I returned to the sect, the continent didn't know me as an elder of the Bright Lake Dawn Sect but I had instead become the Divine Solaris Surge Fairy whose palms burned hotter than the sun.

To improve myself I mastered over a hundred blue-grade arts to perfection and created a couple myself. Slowly by slowly, I improved, I could feel it, I could feel my entire being transforming as I approached

that gate that I dare not have imagined I would reach. Countless failed to reach it after all, and some of them far more talented than I. But finally, after 2,380 years, I walked through those grand doors, those doors that no one in my sect, despite having been in existence for 800,000 years, no one had ever stepped through it, not even our second ancestor, someone whose talent and records remained unmatched ever since the sect was established. Someone who single-handedly propped the sect into a revered sect around the continent to the point that we could hold our heads high even against those with more history than us.

But even he, with all his splendor and talent, fell short of it. At 2,642 years, I stepped into the soul formation realm, a realm that stopped millions, millions of unparalleled geniuses, millions of sons and daughters of destiny.

When I stepped into that realm, I realized why, why it was so revered, why not many could step into it so easily. The world around you changes when you step into the soul-formation realm. Your perception of things gets a seismic shift.

You feel like everything before you reached the soul formation realm wasn't even real. Everything you see and experience before the soul formation realm is like being inside an egg, with the murmurings of the dao telling you what outside is like. You can imagine it, and you can sense a bit of what passes through the shell's membrane but ultimately you're not seeing or experiencing things for yourself, and reaching the soul formation realm is breaking out of that egg and seeing what is around you.

You gain access to a world that was right before you, but you never had the qualifications to communicate with it. Plucking the stars, bending space across millions of kilometers in but an instant, seeing the entire life of anything be it a rock or a person you can see its entire life's past present, and future with just a look, a body that is nigh indestructible to almost even to calamitous void power, a soul that can grasp everything under the sun in just under a second, grasping any art at the blue grade with just a thought and creating one just as easy.

Everything you could imagine and not imagine becomes possible within that realm and that possibility only grows endless as the river of time, the more you see the vastness of what is around you.

I became the next sect master and as the first soul formation expert to ever come out of the sect, I rose it with me. When an immortal gains ascendancy even their dogs and chickens ascend with them.

With my abilities as a soul formation expert, I paved a path for glory for my sect. Everything I was able to achieve was because of them, and when the time came for me to repay it, I did it several times over.

I simplified and improved every cultivation art we had, ensuring we had nothing that was below the blue grade, sourced countless treasures that were able to do the unimaginable such as even turning waste into a genius, and everything that I could do to lift my sect and ensure an eternal legacy, I did.

We were not a sovereign legacy and I wasn't sure I would be able to pull my sect that far, but I was going to do everything to ensure it was a possibility. My efforts were rewarded and 20,000 years later, another soul formation expert rose from within our midst, one whose talents weren't any less than the sacred creatures, or the dao children.

Our momentum was unstoppable and I thought to myself, surely there was nothing that could impede us. Even those who had deeper foundations and richer history than us had to think twice. I thought now I could wholeheartedly dive into the never-ending mysteries and profundities around me, and see how much I could grow, what heights I could reach.

My heart was lax, even if the heavens fell, I thought regardless of what happened to others, nothing would go beyond my abilities to guarantee a path of life for myself and the sect.

How arrogant and naive I had been... just because I tasted a little power as a soul formation expert, I thought myself indomitable. All throughout my life, I had always been unrivaled, and I assumed the soul formation realm would be the same, unaware of how deep the waters I had stepped into were, and the terrors they hid within it.

By the time, I realized it, it was too late. Everything I knew was shattered, my will which I thought would remain undaunted, was made brittle and collapsed. The continent quaked with fear for what we saw. An unbridled power that showed me what I knew was nothing but a drop in an entire ocean.

Before my end, I remembered about a creature, a creature that did not share in the reputation of those mythical creatures despite being a part of it, a creature so indistinctive that it would escape the minds of the perfect erudite. Untouched by fame, glory, time, fate, and destiny, acknowledged by none.

At that moment, I remembered, a memory I had long forgotten, despite it being the reason I lived to reach the heights I did. It was a memory of when I was a young child, drunk on my abilities, wandered too deep into the mountains, and ended up facing a foe my strength couldn't defeat, nature's wrath.

I don't know if it was the earth getting angry at my unbridled arrogance, wishing to teach me a lesson, but a long-dormant volcano exploded carrying with it the accumulated fury of the earth's core aiming to remind me I was but an insignificant component of it.

The heat it produced felt like the sun had exploded. No matter how much I ran, I couldn't escape it. That sensation of impending death, beckoning you to join it. The unbearable heat and the roars of the volcano that sounded like the roars of a primordial beast viciously ravaging your entire being, trying to cry but unable to as everything within me had melted away.

Choking, crying, trying to gasp at air that had been burned away, looking around and all I could see was flaming death and the earth opening its maw to swallow me. Armageddon had descended.

But in that mess, I saw it, that fragile crystal-like moth, a creature that looked so weak that even a strong breeze looked like it would take away its wings. But that creature, with grace and laxness, gently flew, without hurry or panic like all that happened was predetermined by it. Free and unbridled, it moved, I couldn't help but be so entranced by it, that even without meaning to, my body willed itself to follow it and before I knew it, I was out, with my life intact, but as for that creature whose presence seemed to abide and transcend all, I forgot it, only to remember it when I was at my last.

I, Yun Suifen, with all my attainments as the flames, with my last breath burn an incense in tribute to the thread calamity finding cerulean moth. This flame may not be as good as a guide as the cerulean moth, but I hope it will guide a path to life for you, just as I was,...

Pity it won't be for my sect.."

Chapter 705 Life Testament Legacy Art

When her final words left her lips, the silhouette disintegrated and merged with the gold and silver threads flowing within the river below.

From within it came an incantation and a title.

"Perpetual Cerulean Weaver's wisdom path to a lifeline.."

Yang Qing instantly knew it was the technique the lady called Yun Suifen had created which he presumed was towards the end of her life.



The incantation that came after explained the process of cultivating the art. If Yang Qing wondered if the lady had been a soul formation expert as she claimed, when he heard the incantation and felt the power and the depth of profundities contained within it, all doubts instantly vanished.

Just the opening mantra alone would require significant effort from him just to grasp the rudimentary aspects of the art, let alone, the progressive parts of the art which would only keep growing in complexity the further in one moved.

Yang Qing cleared his mind of any miscellaneous thoughts as he poured his full attention into following the guiding path of the cultivation art. He decided to first see what lay at the end before he started deciphering it. Sensing the art to the end would give him a general sense of what he was working with.

It took almost five hours before finally the incantation was done as it coalesced together to form the cocoon that had formed earlier.

Yang Qing couldn't help but sigh in admiration with a little perspiration forming on his forehead.

Even without putting in the effort to decipher it, just previewing the art left him exhausted. Even though he hadn't reached complete mental exhaustion, with the mental heaviness he felt, he knew he wasn't too far from it.

Yang Qing took out a few azure cloud berries which other than their excellent taste were great at staving off mental fatigue and restoring one's spiritual essence.

After a few minutes, Yang Qing felt his mind lighten and it didn't feel like his skull was compressing his brain.

"Earlier I thought she was just bragging, but that art.." Yang Qing couldn't help but pause and sigh in admiration as he recalled the perpetual cerulean weaver's wisdom path to a lifeline.

Yang Qing may have never heard of the thread calamity finding cerulean moth, but thanks to this art, he now had an idea of how truly wondrous its abilities are. The proclamation as the last witness didn't seem as farfetched.

"And to think, despite the art being incomplete, it is still this powerful.." Yang Qing said as his gaze filled with admiration and respect, fell on the cocoon.

Before coming here, the judicial review committee had already informed him that the art was an incomplete gold-grade art, but that statement had been grossly misleading. Yang Qing had interacted with a few gold-grade arts having cultivated a few himself like the phantom void steps, so he knew, how to tell a complete one from an incomplete one, and the art before him was complete, as complete as any gold-grade art could be.

It had already met the threshold of one. The sentient intent of the lady who appeared earlier was already proof of it. The art was complete, but it was indeed incomplete at the same time. Anyone who interacted with it could feel it, the last part of the art wasn't the real ending, there was something else that was supposed to be there, that would no doubt elevate the whole art.

However, that final part was missing, and it wasn't due to a lack of insight or not having the necessary accumulations to push it that far, and it also wasn't because the hosting conduit of the art was damaged.

No, all throughout the art, as Yang Qing allowed himself to be guided along, he could feel the life force of the creator slowly ebbing away with every incantation. She was not lacking in any way, her life more than likely ended before she could put in the final touch which made the art incomplete, but even without it, it was already complete, it's just that the final part, by Yang Qing's estimates, may have the potential of elevating it into a purple grade art.

Alas, the origin nature of the art ensured that it would more than likely forever remain in the state it was in. Completing it would be next to impossible as the art was born out of the lifeforce, experience, and attainments of a soul formation expert. Everything that was Yun Suifen was branded deeply into every fabric of the art. She was entrenched so deeply that she was the art, the ending of the art was what she saw, and it would be next to impossible for anyone else to extrapolate that ending, not unless they thought as her, lived as her, experienced as her.

Every inch of their lives needed to be a replication of what Yun Suifen's life was, and how it shaped them fundamentally, also needed to be the same. Completing the art basically needed another Yun Suifen.

Yang Qing had seen similar arts before, arts that served as the graves of their creators, whose entire life was entombed and entwined with them, such arts were called the life testament legacy art. Arts birthed from the life of their creator.

Life testament legacy arts could never be improved on, nor could they be duplicated because of their nature, forming one was extremely difficult as it needed a cultivator to literally pour out their entire life into creating it. Everything they are, everything they were would all be burned as fuel into the creation of the art, and their comprehension of mysterious truths and profundities needed to be high enough to draw the attention of the word to serve as their witness and give them their last rites.

But in exchange for the stringent demands, all life testament legacy arts at the bare minimum are at the blue grade, and the conduit through which they are stored remains indestructible to anyone below the soul formation realm.

The fragment before him might as well have been made from mundane materials, but from the moment the life testament legacy art of Yun Suifen was stored on it and received the cleansing of the world's energy, it became as resilient as a saint-grade artifact.

Yang Qing cupped his fist toward the river as he paid his respects to Yun Suifen, even if she wasn't there, he still acknowledged her.

After he was done, he immediately dived into comprehending the first parts of the art, which involved separating a sliver of his spiritual essence and weaving it together using his spiritual essence, and one memory as the materials to create a cerulean moth. Its methodology seemed somewhat similar to how one nurtures their artifact's spirit when it is young. The cultivator in question would share his/ her experience with the artifact spirit to help it grow, the concept was the same, except this time, there was no artifact spirit, but his spirit.

Within the perpetual cerulean weaver's wisdom path to life art was an explanation on how he would transform the sliver of spirit into a blank slate which was the first step before he fed it one of his memories that needed to tie to a particular emotion, as for what emotion it was, in the early phases it was left to the cultivator's prerogative.

Yang Qing soon forgot himself as he went about experimenting with the art.

Chapter 706 Cultivating The Perpetual Cerulean Weaver's Wisdom Path To A Lifeline, Cultivation Art

Yang Qing separated a sliver of his spiritual essence which though didn't affect him much as a whole due to his powerful soul, he still felt the tiniest of weariness kick in though it was negligible.

An ephemeral colorful light that was a mixture of multitudinous colors with green being the most prevalent appeared on his hands. That was the physical representation of his spiritual essence.

In a normal setting, it would have disappeared the second it appeared, but the chime bell fragment produced a gentle humming sound that created a force that helped the spiritual essence stay in place, and even give it a slightly solid feel to it.

The bell wasn't the only thing that seemed to aid in the endeavor as the Kirin scaled white wood from the pillars around the building released a bluish-white glow that seemed to soothe the split spiritual essence in place while the rest helped improve Yang Qing's concentration while constantly renewing and restoring his spirit, body, and mind.

Yang Qing realized clearly the Order had not chosen to use kirin-scaled wood just as a conduit for a gold-grade ward but also in part due to its properties that would aid in the comprehension of the art.

Yang Qing spent the next half an hour trying to erase everything within the sliver of spiritual essence and turn it into a blank slate. The process was laborious due to the delicate nature of the spiritual essence and the amount he had to get rid of before the spiritual essence was blank.

What he was doing was similar to rewinding time to when he was just born. Everything he had experienced in his life since, then; the highs the lows, the mundane moments, cultivation, his time at the Yang stronghold before they moved to the Order, and everything else that has happened since then up until this moment needed to be erased from that spiritual essence.

Halfway through the process, the spiritual essence dissipated, prompting Yang Qing to start over. Yang Qing felt like he was doing a complex and delicate surgery where one misstep even the slightest could result in a catastrophic outcome.

Yang Qing didn't immediately jump in to separate a sliver of spiritual essence. He paused briefly as he did calculations in his mind.

"I think I can do this 20 times at most before I start feeling the effects of the split.. that number would grow if I use blue ice soul healing grass, but even if it can restore my lost essence and renew my mind, the toll will still be there.

For now, let's settle with 15 to build my familiarity, after that, I could increase the number. Hopefully, there will be no need for that.." muttered Yang Qing.

With a working target in mind, Yang Qing soon split another sliver of his spiritual essence and delicately went on to cleanse it of everything it contained.

He faced failures just like the first time, and several times more after that, but with every failure, his execution of the art improved. His movements became less strained than they were and he was able to adapt to changes easily which helped increase his progress of the erasure.

It wasn't till the twelfth try did he finally erase every trace of his life's experience from the spiritual essence.

Yang Qing couldn't help but giggle maniacally at the spiritual essence in his hands. While his soul could still handle the process, Yang Qing wasn't sure how many failed tries he could handle before he snapped. The past few tries, he had come close, especially when the spiritual essence seemed to collapse when he was left with just a smidge of presence to erase.

Yang Qing felt a little bit emotional as he stared at the finger- sized ethereal crystal fog-like substance nestling on his palm. It exuded a docile, innocent, and pure aura. After a complete erasure, that was what was left. The colorful lights from before had disappeared, and its size had shrunk considerably. Before it was the size of a melon to the finger size it was now.

"Now it's to fill it with a memory that has some emotion to it...What should I go with.."Yang Qing muttered as he placed he cupped his chin in deep thought.

"My time at that mountain won't do, I'd rather forget them if I could..mmmh, the day I left, yes, now that is a good one.." Yang Qing excitedly thought as he recalled the relief, freedom, and joy he felt the day he left the torturous mountain he called home and left for the Order, unburdened by the fear of being thrown into a crazy experiment his grandfather and his cohorts had come up with, or hear his

father cry every time he was drunk while bad-mouthing his grandfather, threatening to go beat him up which he never seemed to do no matter how much Yang Qing tried to egg him on to do it.

"That should be a good one to start with.." he added as he used the process provided by the art on how to imbue the spiritual essence with his memory.

"Slow and steady.." muttered Yang Qing over and over as some meditation mantra that he was using to calm his excited nerves.

Following the instructions given, Yang Qing proceeded to imbue his chosen memory into the spiritual essence only for it to dissipate instantly upon contact with his crystalized memory.

"What happened?" Yang Qing said in shock as he stared wide-eyed at his now empty hand.

"What just happened?" he asked again in disbelief.

He made sure to be completely careful. Everything within him was tranquil and his movements measured, but the spiritual essence dissipated the instant the memory touched it.

Yang Qing unable to identify what went wrong, replayed the whole scenario in his mind with apt attention, analyzing every millisecond of his actions. After he was done, he went through the incantation, specifically focusing on the process of imbuing the memory into the spiritual essence.

He grew bewildered when he saw he had done as instructed. Unable to find out why it failed, he went through he studied the incantation again, this time from the beginning to see if there was anything he had overlooked.

A few minutes later there was a frown of confusion on his face, as he still didn't know what exactly he did wrong, at least with the earlier processes he could tell where he made the mistake in the erasure process and improve up on it in the next try, but on this one, he couldn't see it as it failed at the onset.

"I might as well try it again rather than aimlessly mulling it over.." Yang Qing said as he started the whole process over again by splitting a sliver of his spiritual essence and cleansing it.

Even with his earlier success, it still took considerable effort and time, for it to not end in failure. With a blank spiritual essence in his hand, Yang Qing followed the process of imbuelement again, this time even more focused and careful, to ensure even if it did end up in failure, he would know why.

But just like before, it failed yet again the instant his memory made contact with the spiritual essence and just like before he still didn't know why.

Chapter 707 Ten Years

"What am I doing wrong?" muttered Yang Qing in confusion.

He had done the whole process with careful attention, analyzing and controlling every minuscule detail of the described process.

He just couldn't understand where the problem was. There was no rhyme or reason as the whole process seemed to collapse at the onset and he didn't know why.

Unwilling to throw in the towel just yet, he spent the next couple of minutes replaying and analyzing every minute detail of the first two processes and correlating it with what he did to try and see if there was anything he might have overlooked.

He went through everything with a fine comb but still could not spot whatever mistake he had made.

"I have two more tries, whether I succeed or fail, fifteen tries is all I will do today.." said Yang Qing, using those words to control and firm himself.

If he didn't, he was afraid he would be completely consumed in exploring the art, and before he knew it a month would have passed by without him knowing. It was safer to set a deadline and work with it.

"There must be something I'm overlooking here, something with the memory or is it the spiritual essence?...should I alter its form into the cerulean moth, maybe that might enable it to absorb the memory easier..

But will that really work? It wasn't mentioned and for some reason, I have this nagging feeling, the reason I'm failing is something overt..."

Yang Qing mulled over countless ideas before he finally decided to try and alter the shape of the cleansed spiritual essence and try and see if the structure was the issue of the failure, if that didn't work, he had a couple of other ideas he wanted to try, but with only one more try left after this one, he could only choose one.

With a plan already set, Yang Qing meditated for half an hour to get himself in optimal condition before he began the process over again.

He split a sliver of his spiritual essence and went about cleansing it into a blank state. Though he still took some time to cleanse it completely, the process felt relatively easier after the previous two successes.

After he was done with the erasure, Yang Qing took a deep breath and regulated his breathing as he cautiously started molding the fragile-looking spiritual essence in his hands.

He didn't outrightly transform it into a butterfly as what he was doing was ad hoc. Changing the shape of his spiritual essence wasn't mentioned in the process and this was him just taking a shot in the dark to try and see if something would come of it, though, if he were being perfectly honest, he didn't feel like the odds of it succeeding were that high.

But with little to work with, he could only wing it and act on his guesses, and if it failed, at least he would have eliminated shape as a factor in the failure.

Molding his spiritual essence wasn't something unfamiliar to him, as most cultivators did it when leaving their spiritual imprints on something or when refining an artifact or treasure of some sort and even in the creation of talismans.

When it came to manipulating his spiritual essence, Yang Qing felt he had a fair bit of experience with it. After he broke through to the palace realm and decided to give himself a well-deserved break that landed him in trouble with Lei Weiyuan later, he spent the duration of that time playing around with talisman refinement.



Three months, for three months he was holed up eating, sleeping, giggling at the thought he had pulled one over Lei Weiyuan and experimenting with talismans. While he couldn't call himself a master talisman refiner, he had improved and gotten pretty good at it, and as a consequence, his skills, when it came to the manipulation of spiritual essence, had grown along with it, which was one of the prerequisites for talisman refinement.

Since Yang Qing couldn't outwardly tell how the spiritual essence in his hands differed from a regular spiritual essence, he used normal shapes such as circles, squares, and rectangles as a baseline to test its durability and malleability.

Yang Qing let out a soft smile of relief when he saw it effortlessly transforming into different shapes without dissipating. After a slight pause, he moved on to complex shapes, till finally when he saw it was malleable he finally weaved into the shape of the cerulean moth.

"Now is the time of the moment of truth.." said Yang Qing as he exhaled, letting out turbid air.

Just like before, he calmed his heart, centered his attention on the memory he wanted to use, and gently and carefully poured it into his moth-shaped spiritual essence. His palace sense was deployed to its maximum enveloping that spiritual essence and its interaction with his memory.

Yang Qing couldn't help when he detected the signs of dissipation when the memory came into contact with the essence. Even though outwardly it looked okay, via his palace sense he could already see it had failed, and a millisecond later it did.

"Shape doesn't seem to be the issue.." Yang Qing said with a slight sigh of frustration.

"Now for the last try...What do I go with?"

Yang Qing's brow contorted together with almost ten minutes passing by without him moving before finally he let out a sigh of exasperation followed by a stretch of his body as he said,

"The lazy carefree route it is.. If it works, it works, if it doesn't, well that's it. I have a lot of time to play around with it when I go back.. I still have a party to go to."

As he said that, Yang Qing breathed in and out, exhaling his fatigue and frustration from within his body as he welcomed a cleansing of relief.

Yang Qing took a seat and began the process over again. He split his spiritual essence and swiftly moved on to cleansing it of its entire makeup. He wasn't sure if it was because of how at ease he was with the thought of the part spurring him on or the carefree relief brought by him not attaching much importance to whether it succeeded or not as it was his last attempt nonetheless, but the process was much much smoother than the previous four times.

After the cleansing was complete, Yang Qing didn't waste a second as he moved on to the next step. At this point, he was even hoping it would fail so he would go see if the ingredients he had told Administrator Mo Guang to procure had arrived.

Still wearing the same carefree demeanor, he channeled his emotions as he did before, only this time, he wasn't wearing the look of some monk who was as still as an unperturbed lake, this time emotions were showing on his face as he closed his eyes.

On his face, one could see glee, relief, fear, excitement, and anticipation. Yang Qing didn't open his eyes, as he channeled his emotions into the crystal-clear spiritual essence. The spiritual essence shivered like it was about to dissipate like last time, however, this time, Yang Qing's hand produced a blue mist filled with motes of light like little starlights that seemed to quell the excitement of the spiritual essence, and slowly permeated into it, transforming its look into an ocean blue color with tiny motes of lights.

Yang Qing's eyes were still closed, almost as if his mind was in another realm while the spiritual essence in his palm was completely transformed and looked like a tiny patch of ocean that reflected the sky on its surface. When the last of the blue mist dissolved into it, it contorted like clay being molded, and transformed, from its formless shape, into a delicate blue-

colored moth.

With its form complete, it started flying around excitedly as it left a blue mist-colored trail as that exuded an aura of freedom.

Without even looking up, Yang Qing could already tell he had succeeded. He slowly opened his eyes with a smile, meeting the excited blue-colored moth that dashed straight at him, heading straight for his nose before making a beeline for his hair where it did circles, turns, and twists.

Yang Qing couldn't help but chuckle as he sensed its rambunctious nature and its purity. He stretched his right index finger and as if on cue the blue moth flew from above his head toward the stretched-out index finger and perched itself on top of it.

"So that was what I was missing.." muttered Yang Qing as he admired the crystal blue moth gently flapping its wings. Within its wings, he could see an image of a younger version of himself. Chubby cheeks, innocence written all over with a hint of mischief, curiosity, excitement, fear, and expectation.

"I can't believe it's been 10 years since then.." Yang Qing wistfully said with a nostalgic sigh escaping his lips as he took in the image of him at thirteen years old when he had left home, with a rush of countless emotions flooding through him as he imagined what lay next for him.

"Things may have not gone exactly as I envisioned, but it's more than what we hoped for little Yang Qing.." he said with a smile.

"Ten years from now, I wonder what that Yang Qing will tell me.." he added as he saw the crystal blue moth flap its wings, fly above him to the roof above, and disappear.

#### Chapter 708 Acknowledgement Of The Dao

Even after the disappearance of the crystal blue moth, Yang Qing remained seated as he soaked in the memory of the experiences he had from the moment he stepped off the clan's mountain.

He remained motionless for almost an hour before he finally woke up from his reminiscent state.

"I am glad I took that step.." Yang Qing said as he stood up, as he placed his hand on his heart sensing the slight change within it. It felt lighter and clearer.

"Bright Lake Dawn Sect, Yun Suifen...junior Yang Qing, pays my respects to you...You must have been an illustrious figure during your time.." said Yang Qing with deep admiration.

Cultivating the art she created he realized how deep her breadth of insight and accumulation had been.

The reason he failed every time he tried to imbue his memory into the blank spiritual essence, those few times, was he kept dissociating himself from his memory every time he tried to act calm and collected. Every time he did so there was a dissonance between him and his memory.

He was separating himself from his memory every time he did so, forgetting what a memory was. A memory was a personal imprint that carried his experience and the emotions that came with that experience, which was why every time someone recalled something, even if it happened years ago, they would feel the emotions associated with that memory despite the time that had passed by.

When Yang Qing left his home he was anything but calm, and him trying to act calm as he poured his memory into the spiritual essence made it impure as it lacked the emotion he had from back then, making it no more than a static recording, hence the failures.

When Yang Qing decided to let himself get absorbed into the memory, it was him just going with the flow to see where it led. He wasn't sure it would work and of the ideas he had on hand, this was the easiest to execute which was why he chose it.

With success in imbuing his memory into the spiritual essence, the next step would be to imbue two more memories into the spiritual essence, and he would keep increasing the memories he imbued by two, with every growing success until he reached one hundred, after which he would blend and refine all those memories into one component.

The preliminary phase of the art was for him to imbue as many memories as he could into the spiritual essence, which would in turn strengthen it and enable it to survive for much longer, and after that would come the nurturing phase which required an assiduous attitude due to how arduous the process would be.

Despite the effort required, Yang Qing was excited to explore it and see the heights he would reach. He also felt the deeper he delved into the art, as his proficiency grew, he would end up experiencing benefits to other aspects of his cultivation, especially when it came to tempering his heart and mind. One of the driving forces of the art seemed to be introspection. The culmination of the art was built upon the summation of one's experiences.

Yang Qing stretched his hands and back with a gleeful smile as he dusted off his robes out of habit despite his robes having self-cleaning arrays and the room being absent of even a speck of dust.

After Yang Qing was sure everything in his grooming was okay, he went by the pillar that contained the fragment of the chime bell and dislodged his token via a set of clicks and patterns that seemed to have lifted the seal placed on it.

The moment the token was in his hand, the glyph-filled veil that had isolated the floor from the outside world receded as it compressed together to form a ward of protection around the chime bell.

Yang Qing cast a brief lingering gaze on the chime bell fragment before he turned to leave the room. Today was likely going to be the last day he would ever be in the room. He had spent close to sixteen hours cultivating the Perpetual Cerulean Weaver's wisdom path to a lifeline, he now had a little over 30 hours as the Branch Chief of the Deer Mountain Branch, and of those hours at least 24 hours were already spoken for. The farewell party would last a full day, even longer if Shi Hai already had all he needed.

"Am I getting more and more emotional with age?" said Yang Qing with a wry smile as he felt out of sorts as he was leaving.

When he ran away back then, neither was he nostalgic or melancholic. He felt like a prisoner who had just been given his release, but now, when it hit him he would be leaving, he had a bittersweet feeling about it.

Though his thoughts about being a branch chief had still not changed, he had a worthwhile experience as a branch chief despite the unpleasant experiences here and there, especially in his interaction with the different parties of the Deer Mountain Range, from the loyal imperial secretary to the steadfast king, to the mercurial aristocrats, to the spirit beasts that inhabited such as Gu Xing, Meifeng and the Mountain Jade Serpent, and experiencing the splendor of a graveyard torch.

He had unique experiences that he would never have had, had he not come here, which created a lingering sentiment from him towards the place.

With a departing sigh, he left the top floor in search of Administrator Mo Guang to follow up on the progress he had made. When he found him, Yang Qing couldn't help but bow to the veteran's abilities.

Everything within the list he and Shi Hai had come up with had already been sourced, and Mo Guang had even added a few more that were not on the list but were a great addition nonetheless.

With unconcealed excitement, Yang Qing rushed toward the kitchen where he found Shi Hai cooking up a storm, taking no prisoners with the ingredients. An intoxicating fragrance filled the whole kitchen with every dish that was being produced radiated with a presence that made it seem like it was being prepared for an immortal feast as Shi Hai moved with the grace of an immortal.

Yang Qing stood there with a dumbfounded expression as he saw the sight before him when he came to, he couldn't help but sigh as he sensed the energy within the kitchen.

He could hear the ingredients rejoice, while the aroma that pervaded the area had the aura of the heavens and the earth. His gaze finally fell on the young chef who was at the center of it, around him he could feel a stirring of the dao being molded and melded into everything he did.

"Shi Hai has found his path, the dao has acknowledged him .." he muttered as he saw the golden auspicious that surrounded Shi Hai and everything he touched. It was ethereal, majestic yet gentle and all-encompassing.

#### Chapter 709 What's With Her?

Yang Qing watched Shi Hao silently in admiration as a little envy welled up in him when he imagined the amount of luck the king of the White Baobab Kingdom had. Though the Kingdom already had other cooks who had already touched up on the dao of cooking, they did not number more than the fingers on one's hands, and every cook was unique.

Painters, cooks, tea brewers, wine brewers, and musicians, usually in the early phases of their cultivation the improvements they made were through cultivation, while the occupation they chose had little to no impact in the beginning, though Yang Qing knew painting was a bit different, as it strengthened the cultivator's soul and tempered their hearts in the beginning, so it did provide some added advantages in the early phases, but for the rest, if the cultivators wanted to improve their cultivation base, they could only do it in the normal fashion which was to master their chosen cultivation art and use its profundities to absorb and refine spiritual qi.

However, if they wanted to pursue their occupation and use it as the foundation to improve themselves, the moment they reached the core formation realm, they could no longer use the cultivation techniques they had been using earlier, they could only improve their cultivation base through their professions, which was the only way they would be able to sense and maybe even gain the approval of the dao associated with their profession and use it to establish their path to the palace realm.

From the core formation realm, they could only rely on themselves, even though they could seek guidance and use the insight of their peers to help them, ultimately walking that step was up to them, the insights would only give them a sense of what to look out for, but parting that fog was up to them, and the process was usually unique to the individual.

For example in the White Baobab Kingdom, there were already a few chefs who had already stumbled onto the path of the cooking dao, the explanations they gave on how they stumble onto it were unique to them, for example, one stumbled onto it as she was processing a chalcedony scaled bass. The chalcedony scaled bass was one of the tastiest fish one could ever have, every single part of its body was a prized treasure and would usually go for at least 100 high-grade spirit stones. However, it was notorious for being highly strenuous to process and even cook, one slight misstep and the chalcedony-scaled bass would melt away as though it was thawed ice.

That particular cook spent close to three months without sleeping or stepping away as she processed the bass and somehow in that tense situation she stumbled onto the doors of the cooking dao. Another stumbled onto that pathway when he was cooking porridge for his expectant wife.

No one process was the same, and even the gravity of the scenarios were different, some were tense while others were light-hearted. The only commonality among the different experiences was one had to be cooking, as long as you kept cooking, wholeheartedly at that, the dao of cooking may be triggered. There was no structured guideline on how to guarantee it, you only had to cook and Shi Hao had triggered his.

Yang Qing's smile widened as he imagined the thought of what Shi Hai's meals would taste like. Before, his meals were already top-tier, but now with cooking dao involved, the experience would be pushed multiple levels higher kind of like Jiang Fu's famous oolong tea which left someone transported to another realm every time they took a sip.

Just like every cook had a unique experience with their cooking dao, the meals they made doused with that cooking dao provided a unique experience to whoever ate it. The cooking dao within those dishes made everything about it cater to the consumer's wild imagination. Some would feel like they have tasted heaven, while others would feel like they had tasted that one meal someone close to them once made for them but could never find that taste replicated anywhere else.

Afraid his presence would interfere with Shi Hai, Yang Qing left to one of the peaks which he was going to use to brew some wine using the bulk of the fruits and honey he had collected around the Deer Mountain Range.

While he wasn't an expert at it like Yi Jie, he knew enough to dabble in it, and for good measure, he had plans to add a tiny drop of the wine he had been given by that mysterious figure who joined him and Meifeng in their makeshift party. The figure he suspected was using the flames produced by a Bifang Niao to temper his sword. Considering the figure's means and abilities, the wine was anything but simple. Even if his skills in wine-making proved lacking, the wine he was given would no doubt make up for it.

Giggling with excitement, Yang Qing quickly made his way up the peak as he called over Haishi and Bolin for company as he brewed the wine.

A couple of hours passed by before he was finally done with his brew.

"These should be enough.." muttered Yang Qing with an excited smile as he put on the lid on the last remaining vat, he had made three in total, and though he didn't sample it and just used his palace sense to ensure it was okay, on a visceral level he could already tell it was bound to be spectacular, especially after adding the tiny drop of the mysterious wine to the four vats. The proof of this was the two spirit beasts who couldn't hide their greedy gazes as they watched Yang Qing store away the last vat.

Once he was done, Yang Qing made his way to the former territory of the Clear Sword River Sect, to invite the mountain jade serpent and the verdant firefly to see if they wanted to join him for the party. The former refused as he wasn't used to crowds, even amongst fellow spirit beasts, and was completely consumed by the atmosphere of the area, he didn't want to leave it even for a second, and as for the verdant firefly, Yang Qing could sense the conflicting within it when he made the offer. On one hand, it wanted to follow him, on the other it felt torn about leaving the plants growing around unattended.

Yang Qing eventually decided to let it stay, as for the aurora azalea, and the spiritual restoration oak tree, they couldn't move even if they wanted to. The only way to do so was if they stepped onto the palace realm where they would have esoteric means of venturing outside even if their main bodies were rooted in place.

Once he was done, he visited Gu Xing to extend his invitation. He had half expected her to refuse and was surprised when she agreed.



As he was leaving, on a whim Yang Qing decided he might as well try to invite the stoic gold eagle guard Ye Xun. Her social skills aside, she had helped him more than once without complaint, Yang Qing hoped he could return the favor with some good wine.

Yang Qing couldn't help but shake his head with a smile when he received a "mmmh" as a reply before she disconnected her communication talisman.

"That was a 'mmh' yes right?" he wondered out loud.

He didn't pay the matter any more heed as he would know whether it was a yes or no when the time came. She already knew where Meifeng's alcove was which saved him from the dilemma of having to confirm whether it was a yes or no.

With all the preliminary arrangements made, he paid a visit to Meifeng to calm her tense nerves with some rice wine and crab cakes and left for the branch.

By the time he came back, Shi Hai had already completed all the dishes with tears in his eyes as he sensed the gains he had made in the process. He could be considered to have finally embarked on the path to being a true world cook now. He couldn't help but rush toward Yang Qing and thank him profusely with tears in his eyes, and promise Yang Qing a lifetime's worth of free meals, which Yang Qing would definitely collect. He wasn't hypocritical enough to refuse. His conscience wouldn't allow him to.

With everything in place, the whole band assembled in place; Mo Guang, Su Jinjing, Bolin, Haishi, Ellie, Shi Hai, and Yang Qing, all gathered atop Ellie's back and left for Meifeng's place. Yang Qing had Gu Xing meet them when they were halfway through the trip. Her pristine sacred look was enough to turn some eyes, especially from Shi Hua who didn't blink even for a second.

As for rest, Luo Meili and Su Jinjing other than the small surprise of seeing a sacred flame swan in the flesh, weren't affected too greatly, while Mo Guang was calm wearing the genial elderly smile he always had, Haishi and Bolin were reserved when they sensed her aura, and for Ellie, she was behaved exactly the way Yang Qing had expected her to. She was smug, disdainful, and a little combative.

Yang Qing couldn't help but sigh at this as he wondered where she got such a nasty personality from.

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Ellie's intrusive thoughts

[This damn Yang Qing, did he invite the whole range? How many mouths are these?! The food won't be enough! He has always been so undependable, a disgrace to gluttons. What glutton invites more people? And he has the nerve to beat me up every time I pick a few hatchlings from his pond now and then... he is so unreliable...Wait till we get back, mmph..]

...

Yang Qing who had been sighing at Ellie's behavior couldn't help but look perplexed when he saw her give him a look that was a mixture of aggrievement, disappointment, disdain, and vindictiveness.

"What's with her?" he wondered before he decided to push those matters to the back of his head. He had more matters to focus on rather than trying to think about what ran through Ellie's mind. He had long given up on her.

The journey over was smooth, with the company engaging in small talk to try and lighten the mood and ease the unfamiliarity with each other. Yang Qing was about the only commonality with all present, except when it came to Administrator Mo Guang. He was the only one who had a close relationship with Shi Hai, Gu Xing, Luo Mieli, and the rest, so he served as a bridge between the groups tying them together. As for Mo Guang, he was an old fox familiar with making conversation even amongst strangers.

It wasn't long before they arrived at Meifeng's alcove.

"Is this really the same place?" asked Gu Xing with a slightly surprised look as she detected the slight pure yin energy that was leaking from the alcove.

Even if it was just a sliver, she could feel the vastness and the purity contained within it.

"It's the same place, it's just that something happened recently that transformed it.." said Yang Qing as he lept off Ellie's back and informed Meifeng of their arrival via his palace sense.

"She seems utterly terrified.." thought Yang Qing as he heard the muffled stammered reply from Meifeng that was a mixture of words and yelps.

Once inside, the crowd couldn't help but marvel at the beauty within it. Meifeng's flowers and fruits and even the tree as a whole looked more majestic and resplendent, as it radiated a sense of cool refreshing gentleness that matched the pond below it that filled the area with a refreshing coolness that relaxed the mind.

"Little bud?" Gu Xing inadvertently muttered in surprise as she struggled to reconcile her memory of what had been here with what she was seeing. The little sapling she had left, was now all grown, bearing the beauty and majesty of the heavens.

"Meifeng will you keep hiding there, or will you come to say hi?" said Yang Qing with a teasing smile toward Meifeng whose human clone had been hiding behind her trunk, sneaking a glance from behind it as she tightly clutched the diamond beetle in her bosom, which seemed to be trying to wrestle free.

Yang Qing's voice startled her, which gave the diamond beetle the chance to flee, as it rushed toward Yang Qing with the serenity melody river skylark and the crescent-winged moth having already beaten it in reaching Yang Qing. The trio swarmed Yang Qing as they circled him with clear joy, as the serenity melody river skylark even took liberties nesting on Yang Qing's head as it chirped in joyous melody, while the crescent winged moth circled his ear releasing white mist and the diamond beetle choosing to settle on one of his shoulders with a satisfied expression on his face.

"Traitors! I thought we were in this together.." said Meifeng with a low aggrieved tone as she wearily stepped out from behind the trunk with her shy gaze falling on her guests.

Seeing how utterly petrified she was, Yang Qing walked over and helped her along as he made the introductions.

Chapter 710 How Weak Willed Are You?

Bolin and Haishi needed no introductions, as for Ellie, Yang Qing couldn't be bothered with her, the less most knew about her the better.

Meifeng responded in small murmurs to the introductions, her nervousness clear to all. The introduction ended with Gu Xing who still seemed as dazed as she was when they came in.

"What's up with her? Why is she looking at me that way?" asked Meifeng using her palace sense to communicate with Yang Qing.

From the moment they arrived, Gu Xing had been staring intently at her with her eyes flashing with countless emotions that made Meifeng nervous and perplexed as she sensed a tinge of regret within those emotions.

She couldn't make heads or tails of why she would receive such a look from Gu Xing. As far as she could remember she had never interacted with her. Gu Xing had a distinctive aura about her that made it impossible for one to forget ever meeting them, no matter how much time passed.

"She is friends with Lady Gild, and also the guardian of the graveyard located in this range.." answered Yang Qing drawing a surprised yelp from Meifeng, who was unable to hide her emotions from the revelation as she stared wide-eyed at Gu Xing.

"Really?" she asked in disbelief.

"Yes, really. You really don't know her?" asked Yang Qing.

When he met Gu Xing and mentioned Meifeng, she instantly knew her origin from her interaction with the Lady Gild, and from the way she described it, she had even met Meifeng at some point.

"Maybe she came before Meifeng unlocked her spirit.." thought Yang Qing.

"I don't know her. I would have remembered her if I did, though there is something slightly familiar about her. Maybe its Lady Gild's aura.." said Meifeng as she slowly grew bolder in her scrutiny of Gu Xing, who was equally staring at her with apt attention.

The interaction between the two was like that of a parent and their child, where the child has not seen the parent for a long time and has even forgotten what they look like but from the moment their sight

on them they could sense a familiarity that they couldn't quite explain, while the parent is in surprise at how much the child has changed in their absence.

"You two should talk while we arrange everything. You could both share stories about Lady Gild, and you could even ask her to tell you tales of Adler when he was a cub.." said Yang Qing, trying to stir Meifeng on.

His tactic seemed to have worked as he could see her eyes lighten at the idea. With how much she idolized Lady Gild, Yang Qing was more or less certain that she would be pumped at the thought of hearing and trading her own stories about her.

Yang Qing used the brief momentary pause as Meifeng was lost in her thoughts of the potential stories she would hear, to inform Gu Xing of the plan to have her catch up with Meifeng, which she was all too glad to do.

The duo left a second later when Gu Xing asked Meifeng softly if there was somewhere they could talk in private, to which Meifeng led her behind the trunk she had been hiding from when they came. She was still a bundle of nerves as she almost slipped a few times, but the excitement of hearing about Lady Gild and potentially embarrassing stories about the fire adler bear spurred her on.

With the duo leaving, Yang Qing and the rest went about helping Shi Hai spread about the dishes he had made, while Shi Hai himself started working on a few more dishes that he couldn't do so until the day of the party to avoid loss of flavors.

Low-height tables, futons, and a few utensils were spread about before the group started grouping the dishes from snacks such as panfried dumplings and the like; to meat and poultry; to vegetables and egg dishes like ma po tofu and stewed wintermelon; to cold dishes like winterforest mushroom in chili oil; to seafood and aquatic foods; to soups and finally wines and teas.

Other than the wine and tea, everything else had been Shi Hai's doing. Even covered, one could sense the boundless flavor contained within the pots because of the cooking dao that coated them.

As they were arranging the various dishes around the alcove, Shi Hai had already started a small fire using cinnamon flake wood and a few other precious woods that he would use to add flavor to the meat he was about to barbecue over them.

With the flame already underway, he took out three goats from his storage ring. Their size was that of regular goats, but there were a few things in their makeup that set them apart from regular goats, one of them being their coat which looked to have been made of cinderling ash, and the red-orange crystal-

like horns on their heads that looked to have been made from lava.

The goats in question were volcanic crystal ash goats that survived in areas filled with dense fire element energy. Volcanic crystal ash goats were highly valued in the cooking and epicurism community because of the flavor of their meat. Even without doing anything to it which included cooking it, the meat was filled with boundless flavors that would bring even the hardest of men to tears from just a single bite. And also ironically, for a creature that grew in hardy areas, it had the most tender flesh.

Shi Hai's eyes gleamed with excitement as he started skinning it, working his way through processing the three goats. Every single part of the goat was delectable even the hide itself and Shi Hai was going to give those ingredients the respect they deserved. As a cook, there was nothing more shameful than destroying an ingredient.

Once he was done processing them, he ground a few spices and herbs which he meticulously slathered over them before finally, he began grilling them over the incandescent fire he had going.

The moment the meat made contact with the flame and a sizzling sound was produced, gulps could be heard all around from both men and beast with two voices being especially louder than the rest. It did not matter whether you were a glutton, or an occasional eater, even if an immortal was to descend when hit with the tantalizing aroma of the volcanic crystal ash goat, they would gulp just the same.

"How is Shi Hai restraining himself?" wondered Yang Qing as he wearily looked in the direction of Shi Hai who was expertly flipping the meat over as he carefully brushed them with a few sauces here and there, along with one or two condiments.

It had taken a lot of willpower for Yang Qing to not rush over there, and were he the one grilling it, he would have long taken a bite or seventy the instant it was above the flames. Shi Hai being able to remain unmoved and focused was his testament as a seasoned cook.

"Stop moving, will you?" said Yang Qing in irritation as he sat down suppressing something below him that was constantly fidgeting about.

While he knew he was weak against that smell, he knew someone else whose restraint was even weaker than his, so the instant he saw Shi Hai was about to start grilling, he went over to said person, and gently shielded them from themselves. It was the least Yang Qing could do, everything else aside, he had cared for that person ever since they were small.

"Ellie, if you don't stop moving, you won't get a share.. How weak-willed are you?" he said as he shot a disdainful glance at the bird below him whilst wiping his drooling mouth with his sleeves.