

Daily life 741

Chapter 741 Voices Of The Past (2)

Yang Qing's decision was pretty straightforward on his part. He knew himself all too well. With such a juicy pie in front of him, if he did not make his thoughts delineated, he would end up spending close to an hour debating what to read. Being spoilt for choice would leave him bogged down unable to decide what to start with which was why he had spent the better part of last night deciding on the Order he would follow through.

In more ways than one, the restrictions placed on his clearance had done him a huge favor. If he was given wanton access to the low-tier gold floor, he had doubts if he would even research into the matters concerning the Deer Mountain Kingdom and the strange happenings over there.

With the decision already in mind, he transmitted his choice to the Xuanwu on his shoulder. Although the form had changed, the Xuanwu was made from his library token. When he inserted his will into the Xuanwu and spoke the name Bi Xie Empire, a list appeared on his mind, though it was less of a list and more of just a single line with the name 'Bi Xie Empire History by Long Wan scholar of the Jade Leaf Academy.'

Yang Qing would be lying if he said he wasn't disappointed to find only one entry relating to the Bi Xie Empire. He was hoping for several books as every book written was written based on the perceptions of the author. Different people were bound to see different things even if they lived in the same place which was why he was hoping for more accounts.

"Is there one entry because there is little information about the Bi Xie Empire, or is this the only accounting I have access to.." wondered Yang Qing.

Before he went to the Deer Mountain Kingdom, he had never heard of the Bi Xie Empire despite being a history fanatic. Though in as much as he read countless and countless books, scrolls, and pieces of information that went back countless years, he knew there was so much he didn't know.

It was rather ironic at times that cultivators had longer lifespans than mortals and better memories, but they retained so little of their history and all that was because of how volatile a cultivator's world was. A person or an organization that has existed for 10,000 years could disappear in a flash, and all history of it would vanish along with it.

In the bloody history of the continent, how many sects, clans, empires, kingdoms, and other organizations that were huge in their heyday ended up being buried into obscurity, with all trace vanishing, sometimes deliberately and other times it's because it has happened so many times that people no longer keep track. The Clear Sword River Sect was one such example. It was once a renowned sect with palace realm experts, but now the one person who knew of its glorious history, died, with Yang Qing possibly being the last living witness to it.

Yang Qing pushing those morbid thoughts aside, called for the entry of Bi Xie Empire written by the Long Wan to be delivered to him.

The moment he did, he saw a golden flash of light appear on one of the hills-sized shelves. The golden light morphed into a golden robin that flew toward Yang Qing reaching him in a few seconds.

Yang Qing was still surrounded by the blue veil that had been produced by the Xuanwu to help him process information. While the Xuanwu didn't explicitly say it, he knew the veil also acted as a barrier to protect him against whatever dangers that were around him which was why he was told in not-so-subtle terms not to leave the carpet scroll.

When the gold robin reached the veil, it flew through it, transforming in the process. It transformed into a golden scroll that looked to have been made from a gold jade leaf. Yang Qing could feel the dense power of dao coursing through the leaf. With his hands slightly shaking he unrolled the leaf.

When he saw the title, Yang Qing felt like he had heard a voice come from the writing itself. He could feel the power and the breadth of the spirit contained in every syllable. He could now understand why the Xuanwu produced a glyph to help him, without it, he didn't know if his spirit would have been able to read without being fatigued from the enormous pressure it would be under.

Calming his heart and focusing his mind, Yang Qing pulled his gaze back on the gold jade leaf scroll.

"I, Long Wan was lauded as a genius that has appeared only once in a million years. I didn't lactate at birth for the mysteries of the Dao and the essence of the heaven and earth were my milk and nourishment. I only spoke when I was two, and when I did, 10,000 spirit beasts and plants danced with excitement at my words.

I was born with the brilliant dao-sight physique, and from the moment I opened my eyes and gazed upon the world I could see the mysteries that only those who have cultivated tirelessly to reach the palace realm could see. I could feel different Daos fawning, trying to get my attention promising countless prizes of ascendancy if accepted. 'Companion of the dao' so they called me, which later evolved to the sage and master of ten thousand Daos. .."

Yang Qing tore his eyes away from the scroll as an incredulous look appeared on his face.

"Did all those seniors from back then like to brag about themselves first before they broached the main topic.." he wondered as he recalled the interaction he had with the spiritual imprint of Yun Suifen, the sect master of the Bright Lake Dawn Sect who had created the legacy art within the chime bell stored at the Deer Mountain Branch.

She too began recounting her glorious achievements before she explained the concept of her art. He couldn't help but wonder if this was something common from back then.

"They must have really loved their face.." muttered Yang Qing as he brought his focus back to the scroll. Far be it for him to judge considering he was liable to do the same thing. He was even thinking of writing a few books adopting that same theme.

Who was he, to break away from the mold, thought Yang Qing with a shining look in his eyes.

Chapter 742 Voices Of The Past (3)

"At three I had already stepped in the foundation realm with purple grade pillars, and at seven I was already in the core formation realm with a purple core.

I could have broken through to the palace realm at eight, however, I spent the next five years deciding on which dao to use as my foundation for the palace realm. I already interacted with countless dao from birth and deciding which to use, ended up being harder than I thought, but after five years, I decided to take an unprecedented move and merged 20 Daos into one and used them to take that leap.

My seniors wanted me to use a superior grand dao as my foundation as it would help me travel further in my cultivation with it being the closest to the origin dao, but because of my physique I could already see it, all roads led to the same place. It didn't matter whether it was a superior grand dao, or a regular dao, if you follow the road to the end, they both lead to the same destination.

The twenty daos I chose were not necessarily weaker than any superior grand dao, and I could even argue that for me they were more powerful as they gave me more versatility and I was intimately more familiar with using them than I would have a superior grand dao, not that I couldn't, as I already had mastery with space, but ultimately, I felt more natural with those daos I grew with me from birth than I did the space dao and my judgment was proven right when I managed to hold my own against a middle stage palace realm expert after just breaking through to the palace realm.

To whoever reading this take heed, just because something has been assumed to be powerful, doesn't mean it would be powerful for you. Choose what is most like you, because ultimately pursuing the Dao is to be at one with ourselves. At least that is what I believe.

At nineteen I broke through to the domain realm with a paragon domain and at twenty-three I reached the absolute peak of it. ..."

Yang Qing couldn't help but suck in cold air when he read that. The scholar Long Wan turned out to be a more terrifying existence than the sect master of the Bright Lake Dawn Sect.

Even Yang Qing felt he paled in comparison if they were to compare feats. While he matched him in foundations, with him having a purple grade foundation pillars, and core in the core formation realm, the time he took was vastly different to Long Wan. He was twenty-three himself, and he was only at the third stage of the palace realm, and while that could be considered fast even by the standards of peak organizations such as holy lands, and the Order, ultimately it was nothing when compared to someone who at that same age had reached the peak of the domain realm and with a paragon domain at that.

Yang Qing could still remember the depiction of the domains at the dark valley, and the few that stood out to the point that just their representation itself would have taken his life had Lei Weiyuan not been there to help both him and Mao Yunru, with the latter even passing out despite being protected. While he still didn't know much about the domain realms and their divisions, that unique experience was enough to let him know paragon domains were special. As for what it entailed, he was told the information would only be provided to him once he reached the late stages of the palace realm.

"Some people can really make someone feel despair.." said Yang Qing with a bitter smile as his eyes focused on the name Long Wan.

He wondered how many in the entire history of the continent have ever replicated such a feat. A 100-year-old peak domain expert would already send the whole continent into a frenzy let alone a 23-year-old one.

"Long Wan.. If my memory serves correctly, the royal family of the Jade Leaf Empire is surnamed Chen, and among the other aristocratic clans, I don't think there was a Long family among them either. Who is Long Wan?" wondered Yang Qing.

However, when he couldn't place the name, he pushed the matter aside as he focused back on the leaf.

"However, even after ten years passed by I still couldn't find my path to the soul formation realm. It remained as elusive as ever, and despite many seniors helping me and sharing their personal experiences, that door didn't show any signs of appearing before me. Even after spending fifteen years cultivating beneath the ten thousand dao jade tree, I still couldn't sense my path to the soul formation realm.

When that didn't work I spent seven years reading countless experiences of other soul formation experts outside of the empire, and when that didn't help, I started creating and improving all manner of cultivation arts and techniques in the hopes that it would trigger something in me. I created over 100 blue-grade arts, 15 gold-grade arts, and one that was just at the cusp of reaching the purple grade, however, my long-

growing impatience and frustration stifled its evolution. One of my few regrets.

It was then when I was languishing in my frustration, that the royal librarian, Wang Fu, a person I grew to greatly admire helped me. Even though I had long exceeded him in terms of cultivation, his advice and insight are things I grew to value.

He didn't reveal to me some grand mystery or had some secret treasure or writing that suddenly drove me to enlightenment like the bard tales like to say. All he gave me was regular advice, something even with my insight, I had overlooked.

It is better to travel to a thousand places than to read a million books. The experiences the others shared with me while they might help, ultimately the help they could give was limited as it was based on someone else's life, not mine. What I needed was to make some of my own and not use other people's experiences as my own. A simple explanation, really, but one that I had overlooked. 55 years since I was born, not once have I ever stepped outside of the Jade Leaf Empire. The farthest I've moved was from my hometown to the capital, and that was only because the resources I needed were concentrated there, and the persuasion of my master, otherwise I would have never left.

Nothing could ever beat the beauty of the world of the countless daos I saw thanks to my physique, and because of it, anything outside of seemed lackluster to me, and I also needed to vie for resources because of the luxuries my talents afforded me.

At 55, I finally left the Jade Leaf Empire with brush and paper as my companion, and in the next forty five years, I ventured from north to south, east to west. Toured perilous zones, investigated ruins that told the stories of lost eras, ventured into grottos of all kinds, and saw sceneries so rich that I wept, and made friends with all kinds from humans, to spirit beasts, to golems to tree folk, I even gambled with a black tortoise once in a contest of the mastery of different daos, I lost to it, but it was a worthwhile and refreshing feeling nonetheless.

Senior Wang Fu was right, those sixteen years became one of my fondest years, and without even realizing it, the door I had worked so bitterly to discover appeared so smoothly during my travels and I became a soul formation expert. If it wasn't for the tribulation that appeared, I would not even have realized it.

I visited countless places, and many left an indelible mark on me, but there were a few that stood out to me prompting me to put them in pen and paper, one of them the Bi Xie Empire, the land of fortune and favor.."

Chapter 743 Voices Of The Past (4)

"When I visited it, it was as prosperous and as famous as the Jade Leaf Empire. A home to countless talents and experts. The reason I chose it as one of the places to visit was because I heard a bard once sing about it during my travels.

The Bi Xie Empire, the land so blessed with luck that even a beggar had a chance of leaping to the heavens as long as they walked in there, having as much wealth and fortune as a dragon emperor.

While I didn't believe the bard, I was intrigued because of their name and a few stories I had heard during my travels. My interaction and loss to the black tortoise left me intrigued about these mythical beings. Their natural aptitudes and affinity for the manipulation and application of dao stirred something within me.

At the Jade Leaf Empire, while there were some whose accumulations in the dao rivaled mine, they were far and few in between, not numbering more than four, and even then I always felt that given

enough time, I would exceed them. It was a future I grew to dread when I thought I would lack equals to delve into the mysteries of the dao with.

My hubris-filled fears were dispelled when I ventured out. I met cultivators whose understanding rivaled mine, with some even exceeding mine, with the latter group being small and primarily comprised of mythical creatures.

Losing is such a thing. Losing to the black tortoise, and almost dying at the hands of the three-legged golden toad, ignited something within me, that I came to know as excitement. While the better part of my travels for those sixteen years was just me pursuing rumors and sudden flashes of interest, the other part I was actively seeking out these beings, and it wasn't long before my sights were on the Bi Xie Empire.

I wondered if they had some connection to the Bi Xie. Their rumored fortune and good luck seemed to suggest it.

When I saw the Empire, the rumors of its absurd luck were proven to be true. Never have I seen in my life such a huge presence of the auspicious golden dragon of luck. Its ethereal presence was dense, filling the entire Empire. Seeing such a dense amount of luck, it became clear to me why so many cultivators at the cusp of a breakthrough all clamored to have their breakthroughs within the territory of the Bi Xie Empire.

It all made sense how the Bi Xie empire had managed to amass a fortune by providing a safe ground for breakthroughs. Such a huge amount of golden luck would definitely increase a cultivator's chance of a successful breakthrough, and even if they couldn't break through successfully, it could at least guarantee their life.

While I myself have never experienced the terror of tribulations with all my breakthroughs being awfully smooth, well the domain one was slightly stifling, but I got through it easily. It wasn't nearly as terrifying as my seniors made it to be but on my travels I got a clear picture on why it was so dreaded having seen some cultivators die to it, their bodies and souls lost to it.

A pitiful way to go, losing everything you sacrificed for

when you're just at the threshold. The Bi Xie empire made use

of that fear and made a fortune and connections out of it. I was

surprised when I saw the list of countless renowned figures

who owed them a favor because the Empire provided a spot for

one of their juniors.

From among the names, the sect master of the Sky

rendering sword sect was one of them. He sought a spot for his

youngest disciple who was about to break through to the

domain realm. At thirty she was ready for that attempt, not as

young as I was when I made that leap, but I could see why the

sect master didn't want to risk it and opted to increase her

odds by borrowing the help of the Bi Xie Empire.."

Yang Qing paused his reading as he furrowed his brows.

"Sky rendering sword sect? Who were they?" he wondered

before he dived back, hopefully the scroll held the answers.

Based on the tone of the author, Long Wan, it seemed like he held the Sky rendering sword sect in high esteem, so either it held the same power as the Jade Leaf Empire, and the Bi Xie Empire, or it was stronger than them, and if it was that meant the Sky rendering sword sect was at the level of holy land. But try as he may, Yang Qing had never heard of them, not even in rumors.

He had to admit, that the author, Long Wan had thoroughly drawn his curiosity. He couldn't help but wonder about his identity too. For such an illustrious figure, surely there had to be some mention of him in the history of the Jade Leaf Empire. Hopefully, the scroll would shed a light on it somewhat.

"The sect master's disciple passed her tribulation, with the empire gaining the friendship of the sect master of the Sky rendering sword sect, and his disciple too. It was pretty

ingenious really, as certain favors no amount of wealth could

buy.

Even without the legendary Bi Xie, with the

resourcefulness shown, I could see why the empire prospered

so.

I grew intrigued about the Empire the more I explored it.

It had its sense of uniqueness, one of them being the absence

of sects. While the Jade Leaf Empire limited the number of

sects within its territories, there were at least a hundred or so,

with some of them even having soul formation experts.

However, they did have some ties with the royal family, but

when it came to the Bi Xie empire, there was none at all.

At first, I had thought the lack of sects was due to some

suppression or banishment by the Empire itself, but as it turned

out, it was the empire's prosperity that denied their

existence..."

Chapter 744 Voices Of The Past (5)

"The Bi Xie Empire just like ours is filled with countless spots filled generously with the dao from spirit veins to treasured grounds and natural treasures. While most were in the control of the royal family and the other aristocratic families, some remained without owners and grew into uncharted areas filled with all manner of wild and rare resources that thrived in that solitude where a system of its own was established.

I managed to sneak into one, though it was rude of me I admit, but I couldn't believe my eyes at the wealth of resources I saw just laying there unclaimed. Resources that would drive the majority of the world to greedy madness just lay there. I couldn't believe it. There was radiant star fruit, an ascendant-grade fruit that can help a cultivator establish firm foundations and directly leap from a mortal to the peak of the core formation realm in a single day,

The dao enlightenment midnight rose which just the leaves can help a cultivator touch on the mysteries of the dao irrespective of their talent or their comprehension levels. A flower like this would definitely make those at the peak of the palace realm go mad with envy as it could deepen their foundations in preparation for a breakthrough to the domain realm.

Hundreds of profound purple sky metal lodes whose quality would make the hands of any gold-grade blacksmith itch with great anticipation, green jade fires, and amber earth flames that would be the delight of any alchemist and herbalist worth their salt.

I could not believe how such a place remained occupied, up until I went to several more unclaimed areas, and found out they were just as rich. I was even half tempted to claim one for myself. I came to realize how grossly I had underestimated its wealth, it was to the point that it even moved my heart, me, a person who once thought himself unmoved by anything other than the profundities of the dao. Even ascetic monks would feel their hearts waver from such a sight of absurd opulence.

Filled with the question, why, just why weren't there sects established here, when they could use the wealth here to establish foundations that would last a lifetime, roaming around, I finally found the answer.

Bi Xie Empire, an Empire beloved so much by its citizens, that not even a single one in over 100,000 years ever considered joining a sect, all opting to either join something in service of the empire or take care of their families.

The sects never had a chance as no one would join them. The foundation of a sect, fundamentally to its core, was the inheritance of wills. Finding those who would inherit your teachings and identity. When there was no one to pass the torch to, would you still call yourself a sect, or were you just some massive cultivation abode, belonging to a party of one?

Despite the royal family trying to speak on behalf of some of the sects that wanted to start up, no one joined. With so much territory not being used, the empire ended up starting thousands of academies all over its territory that taught all manner of subjects from things related to cultivation to the mundane, and those who wished to open up sects were employed within those academies. It was a clever idea, as the citizens were much more receptive to the academies. Anyone from commoners to aristocrats could attend them and with the wealth of the Empire, they need not pay anything, not that the citizens struggled. In my whole time there, I don't think I ever saw a beggar within its territory.

On a whim, I ended up joining one academy, albeit temporarily, and I have to say I enjoyed it more than I expected. Imparting wisdom and my insights into diamonds in the rough, and seeing what would come of it was a feeling to me, the same as when I started traveling or delved into the mysteries of the dao.

With my insights, it wasn't long before I caught the sights of the higher-ups of the royal family, who offered me a post in one of their most prestigious academies in which the Emperor's brother was the head. Ordinarily, I would have refused, as Uncle Wang had warned me to be careful of getting entangled in nobles' schemes wherever I traveled, but my curiosity about whether the Empire had any association with the Bi Xie got the best of me.

As an outsider, I thought it would be hard for me to find out, and my cultivation base, though profound was nothing in the eyes of the empire that had thousands and thousands of peak-stage domain experts. The only way of finding the answers I needed was to join the Bi Xie Empyrean Chronicles Academy and maybe befriend some of the nobles, and royals who taught and learned there, in the hopes that they would share such information.

With my deep understanding of the dao and accumulations, I managed to join as one of the deans. Joining the academy, I got a clear look at the foundations of the empire, which gave me three saint-grade treasures for just accepting the post, and countless other resources..."

"T.hreee...three? he said three?" muttered Yang Qing in shock as he reread the scroll over and over to confirm he wasn't hallucinating.

"It's three.." he added in disbelief after confirming what he read was indeed so.

"What golden luck did this empire have to be able to casually give out three saint-grade treasures to someone who isn't even from there.." Yang Qing said as he gritted his teeth in envy.

He stayed dazed for a short while before his look turned bitter and resentful as he looked around them.

"Why can't they be like them?" he softly said before he continued with some sense of apprehension, afraid that the author would mention other outlandish things he received during his tenure as dean in that academy.

Chapter 745 Voices Of The Past (6)

Yang Qing took a few deep breaths to calm himself as he exorcised the treasonous and envious thoughts that were welling up within him.

Once his heart and mind were clear, Yang Qing hesitantly poured his concentration back into the scroll.

"I was taken aback by the level of generosity and had even thought of rejecting the treasures, but they were saint-grade treasures, only a lunatic would refuse..."

Yang Qing nodded agreeably as he read that sentence, nodding his head a few more times with staunch conviction. After getting the feel of the wonderous might of saint-grade treasures during his promotion ceremony, he has been daydreaming about getting one of his own. One could even say it had easily wormed its way into one of his life's ambitions along with living safely and long. He would not trust anyone who said they could refuse saint-grade treasures.

"Pretentious murderous hypocrites.." he thought to himself with a snort before delving back into the scroll.

"For the next eight years, I stayed at the academy as its dean and trained countless talents, some with even enough talent to rival mine..."

Ever since I opened my eyes, and felt the warm inviting currents of the flow of dao, got nurtured, nourished, and interacted with it, I was inexplicably influenced by its sense of purity, which was why when it came to the impartation of knowledge and understanding, I never held back on it.

Other than the arts and techniques I received from the Jade Leaf Empire, I shared all I knew with students of the Academy. All my insights, accumulations, experiences, the arts that I created over the years, and some of the legacies I found in the unexplored ruins, I shared it all without reservation much to the surprise of most, especially my colleagues who were not citizens of the Bi Xie Empire.

Most of them held back in their impartation, which I didn't fault them for, but to me, out of the dao were we birthed, and into the dao will we go when our time comes. Hoarding wisdom serves no purpose other than to shackle one's spirit, mind, and heart.

By not sharing, you're inadvertently admitting you're afraid, afraid that you're inferior to the other person, that if they learn what you know, their exploits will further outshine yours. That fear will burrow into your heart and mind and slowly eat away at you, stifling any progress and heights you could have ever reached

The dao is free-flowing and endless, we can never exhaust it, it is better to share and see how much we can travel and explore in that never-ending mystery. I've always been excited to see the countless forms and interpretations others make with it, even rudimentary ones because I get to see and experience something special from it.

It was the one thing I appreciated about the Jade Leaf Empire. While they didn't have academies like the Bi Xie Empire, the royal family never held back in allowing others to cultivate beneath the ten thousand dao jade tree, be it commoner or noble, as long as they displayed sufficient talent worthy of the recognition of the jade tree, they would get the opportunity. It was how I, who came from a common birth managed to reach the heights that I reached in a short period. The Empire never held back.

I think if an academy like the Bi Xie Empyrean Chronicle was set in the Jade Leaf Empire, even if we can't compete fully in resources, with the ten thousand dao jade leaf tree as its foundation and the spirit of the Empire, it is bound to do better than this one. It wouldn't be a bad idea to set up one there.

Because of my work, the Bi Xie Empire thought me selfless as some reincarnated sage when in truth I was anything but selfless. All that I did was to further my self-

interests and curiosities about how many mysteries of the Dao I would get to see through the lives of those students, but I wasn't going to admit that to them because I finally got the chance I was looking for when I first took the job.

I managed to become close with some of the leading figures of the empire, one of them being the Emperor's brother. I found a kindred spirit in him, as he too was a soul that loved delving into the mysteries of the grand dao, and we managed to strike a friendship and even became sworn brothers as a result.

It was from him that I learned the history of the empire, the one that only those who were there at the start knew of. The founder of the Empire, the Wang family patriarch, in his youth he had been forcibly conscripted when his kingdom formerly called the White Mulberry Kingdom went to war with a cult called the purgatory black tiger cult, which sought to destroy the kingdom after the crown prince had killed the cult's holy child over a fight over some treasure.

I didn't know of the cult, but from what the Emperor's brother told me, they were pretty nefarious, and the kingdom and the cult were always at odds with each other like water and fire and the death of their holy child was just the spark needed to trigger an all-out war.

The cult had a skill called the purgatory flames of damnation whose flames never stopped burning as long as there were corpses around. It used negative feelings such as despair, resentment, bitterness, rage, and desperation as fuel along with the baleful energy released from corpses.

The flames had terrifying abilities such as corrupting and contaminating the spiritual qi with its energy poisoning those within its sphere of influence. It could also trap the souls of those who fell to it, and use their dying wails to destroy the souls and minds of others, and it could even forcibly reanimate the corpses for a brief while to cause corpse explosions that were as terrifying as a cultivator self-destructing.

Hearing those effects, it wasn't strange that the longer the battle between the two sides went on, the worse things got for the White Mulberry Kingdom, who only managed to hold on because of their famed White Mulberry Tree that had a purifying ability that could slightly contain the purgatory flames of damnation...

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"In their desperation to try and contain the abilities of the flame, the kingdom forcibly conscripted commoners and taught them a corpse-purifying art that worked with the leaves of the White Mulberry Kingdom.

With the art, they could purge the negative energy around the battlefield and the corpses thus reducing the fuel needed for the purgatory flame art. The art was made in haste, so it wasn't that powerful, and it was more like trying to put out a wild flame with a drop of water.

Corpses were gathered in specific spots around the kingdom, and the ritual purifiers, so they called them will be sent to those areas, to purge the corruptive energy from those corpses. The leaves of the White Mulberry Tree though afforded them protection, it wasn't enough as many fell victim to those corruptive energies, in the most egregious of deaths, with some being eaten alive by the compatriots who had lost their minds to those energies.

The lifespan of the ritual purifiers was no more than two months, however, the Wang Patriarch managed to overturn it, by surviving 150 years, and in the end, he became the only survivor in the entire White Mulberry Kingdom after its destruction by the Purgatory black tiger cult, who also left that war a little worse for wears.

The Wang Patriarch didn't have any special physique or talent or some special cultivation art, but he had a stubborn and conscientious heart that led to his survival. At his designated spot, which was almost an entire town, there were two statues that he liked to sleep under whenever he felt overdrawn from his purifying activities, or when his body and mind just couldn't keep up.

He would go to the two statues, and no matter how tired, or broken his body was, he always ensured he cleaned the statues and a few meters around it, to the extent of overdrawing himself when he used the purifying art he was taught to purify the area despite the location not having any corpse.

Countless years later when his descendants asked him why he did it, his response was those statues provided a place for him to sleep, it was the least he could do to repay the favor.

At the time, he had no idea that the two statues were special, and his actions were driven by a sense of responsibility and propriety more than anything else.

Every day no matter how exhausted or how broken his body was, not once did he ever miss tidying up the statues, and unbeknownst to him the statues repaid him in kind, it was just at the time he was too weak and preoccupied to notice it.

When he got sent to that burial site, those sent were about a thousand, and after three days that number was reduced to eight hundred, and a month later, that number went down four hundred, and by the time two months were up, only less than a hundred were left, and when it hit the fifth month only the Wang family patriarch was left.

He hadn't realized it at the time, but his daily routine of cleaning up the statues had inadvertently given him a lifeline. Those two unassuming statues outside some long ruined tea house had kept him alive.

Every time he went to clean them, they would reciprocate in kind by cleaning his body, soul, spirit, and mind by cleansing him of the corruption of the burial site. I couldn't help but laugh when the emperor's brother told me it took their patriarch close to thirty years before he realized there was something strange with those statues and even then, he didn't know exactly what was special with them, only that they seemed to make his body and mind lighter and full of purifying energy, much purer than the leaf of the White Mulberry Tree.

It was only after the leaf he had been given finally gave in to the corrupting miasma and malevolent energy of the burial site did he finally discover some of the special features of the two statues and the effects it had on him.

He was already in the foundation establishment realm at the time, with a mediocre foundation of red-grade pillars, however, whenever he used the purifying art he had been given, his ability to cleanse the corruption was much higher than when he used the leaf of the white mulberry tree, and the strain on his body and mind also seemed to decrease.

His efficiency increased and could work for longer hours, however, he still ensured that every day at the appointed time he went back to clean the area around those statues.

Slowly by slowly his body got transformed to a point that it was even obvious to him that he had changed. With time he no longer needed the basic purifying art he was given to purge the malevolent energy or purify the corpses, just releasing his internal qi was enough. His internal qi had transformed into a golden white qi which seemed to be able to restrain the malevolent energy, corrupting miasma, toxic plagues, and other dangers common to the area.

Alone, he purified the site, block by block, still maintaining a habitual schedule of purging during the day, and at night he cleaned the statues before he rested. Twenty more years quickly flew by with his foundation pillars getting transformed in the process. They had changed from the red grade to a variant of gold white that matched his qi and even his ability to comprehend things had transformed.

Over the years his body had been strengthened to the point that he could directly handle the corpses without fear of being corrupted by its energy. It was then that he started looking through those corpses for anything of value such as storage rings, cultivation arts, talismans, anything that of value.

It was as a result of those searches that he discovered even his comprehension seemed to have been elevated. Even though they were mostly low grade, with nothing at the blue grade level, he ended up mastering countless arts and techniques and in the process, he even ended up gaining palm intent, something that would have been entirely impossible for him as he even struggled to reach the blooming phase with red grade arts.

Gradually he started filling the deficiencies and foundational gaps he had in his cultivation and at some point as luck would have it, he ended up stumbling onto a blue-grade cultivation art that he practised religiously, and in eight years he broke through to the core formation realm. In all his years, he said, that was one of the happiest moments in his entire life. It felt like a rebirth to him.

His cultivation base rapidly grew after that along with his insights, and after three years despite working alone, he had already purified half the gravesite, which contained tens of millions of corpses. No new people had been sent during that time, which he more than welcomed as it meant more loot for him to discover, and the more he purified the area, the stronger he seemed to become, which was how in just three years despite having freshly broken through to the core formation realm, he had already reached the middle stages.

It was when he reached the late stages of the core formation realm that a lethal fortuitous opportunity befell him..."

Chapter 747 Voices Of The Past (8)

Lured by the mysteries of the scroll, Yang Qing gulped as his eyes glistened with excitement and anxiousness about what happened next.

"The burial sites were some distance from the frontlines and the locations chosen were those that held little value to either the White Mulberry Kingdom or the Purgatory black tiger cult.

To ensure they had a lot of volunteers along with the forcibly conscripted, the royal family of the White Mulberry Kingdom promised purifiers would be exempt from fighting on the front lines and the locations would be protected from the war.

From the way the Wang patriarch described it, the war back then even at the earlier stages was truly horrific, especially with the torturous arts of the cult. As the war continued, citizens were left to fend for themselves with the kingdom only stepping in when the dead reached a certain number, and even then they only stepped in to take care of the corpses.

Living under such dire straits those who didn't lose their lives, ended up losing their minds under the constant barrage of horrific circumstances they were subjected to. The members of the cult were brutal in the way they dealt with them which prompted some to defect to their sides, and when the kingdom got their hands on the traitors, they dealt with them in the same level of brutality shown by the Cult to deter others from collaborating.

Whichever way it went, it did not end well for the common citizens. Everywhere they turned to, a horrific ending awaited them, that was until the burial sites came into fruition. The kingdom promised them they would be protected as long as they undertook the task, and the more volunteers they had, the faster the war would end. While most could care less about the latter, the former struck a chord with them, with the Wang family Patriarch being one of them.

When the war started, out of a sense of patriotism and the passion of youth, he volunteered to join the war efforts at the borders. He was orphaned from a young age, so he had no mental encumbrances in making the choice and even hoped to use the battle to gain favor with some of the higher-ups and maybe improve his cultivation.

However, whatever sense of loyalty and ambitions he had were quickly eroded in the first three years after the war started, when he saw firsthand of its brutality. The purgatory black tigers were true to their name and reputation. They knew how to break the spirits and minds of any seasoned cultivator. The Wang patriarch had seen his fair share of horrific acts as a cultivator, but the Purgatory black tiger cult had redefined what truly horrifying was. However, what threw him completely over the edge wasn't their means but the treatment of those like him received. Those with no backing or a high enough cultivation base that gave them a voice.

For those three years, he had seen thousands and thousands of his compatriots die, and it wasn't because they had been outclassed but because the 'noble' ones, those belonging to the major families saw them nothing more as meat shields meant to be used and discarded as needed.

When he volunteered, he had already resolved himself that there was a chance he would lose his life in the process, and he was okay with it if it would ensure the protection of someone else. However, the way they were treated, he did not want to die that way, a contemptible death brought by those from his own side than the enemy. That was a death he couldn't abide by, and therefore, when the opportunity presented itself, he fled the frontlines, despite the ruthless consequences that befell deserters.

He spent the next few years living in alleys, and locations that had suffered destruction and desolation, and then when volunteers were sought for the burial sites, it gave him the perfect hiding place and one that was moderately safe. The events of the war opened his eyes to how self-serving those at the top of the White Mulberry Kingdom were, so he felt those grave sites would be protected slightly only to prevent the cult from gaining more ground on them. Those nobles would do anything to save their skins, so he joined up, and either because of desperation, those who were taking in volunteers didn't even question why a foundation establishment cultivator wasn't at the frontlines and was instead volunteering at a grave site.

The years that followed at the grave site were as he had hoped, the grave site suffered few attacks with those attacks happening only in the first few months. There was a complex array placed at the gravesite meant to isolate it from others on the outside and there were also guards assigned outside of the sites. The few attacks that came, the Wang Patriarch only knew they were there because of the tremors that came from the clash, and even then it didn't affect the gravesite much, with the array isolating them.

And after the first few months, after a year, there was never an attack on the place. What had been just a hiding place for him, turned into a boon. He was alone, away from the fire and not being used as a meat shield, and thanks to the effects of the two statues, his strength was improving by leaps and bounds.

To him, being at the grave site was a fortuitous encounter, especially after the effects of the corpse miasma and other malevolent energies stopped affecting his body, and his cultivation started improving. He had vowed to not step a single foot outside of the place. He did not need to leave the area. It was secluded, and he could grow his strength without surrendering himself to unknown dangers. It was like he was in paradise.

Years passed by without incident that at some point he had even forgotten there was a war happening outside, but he was soon reminded of it when four intruders walked into the gravesite.

Three of those intruders were from the cult and the fourth one was someone he would have never guessed he would see walking calmly with three cultivators from the cult, not when the whole thing started because of him. The fourth person turned out to be the very same crown prince whose actions had triggered the war when he supposedly killed the holy son of the Purgatory black tiger cult.

Seeing him came as a shock to the Wang Patriarch, and what shook him even further was the fact that the Crown Prince had always been a member of the cult and was, in fact, their true holy son, and the personal disciple of their cult leader who had been rumored to be a peak palace stage expert.

Though the experience he had at the frontlines left him with a jaded outlook on the leadership of the White Mulberry Kingdom, he never expected that one of them would be a bonafide member of the cult whose evil deeds were known far and wide. The whole war had been built on an elaborate scheme spanning countless years between the cult leader of the Purgatory black tiger cult and the crown prince. The cult leader had been looking for a way to reach the domain realm which eventually led him to the White Mulberry Tree. The tree had been the foundation of the growth of the White Mulberry Kingdom. It had gained sentience and possessed the abilities of a palace realm expert. It had wonderful abilities and uses one of which was its ability to improve the quality of the spiritual qi of an area to match that of a mature dragon spirit vein. Using it, the kingdom had nurtured about a dozen palace realm experts. Its leaves and branches also had cleansing features that worked well against poison, miasma, and all sorts of evil energies including even heart and mental demons, which was how they had managed to hold back against the cult despite the cult having more overall strength than them when it came to their experts.

It turned out that the cult leader had discovered a technique that he could use to reach the domain realm. The technique involved using their core art the purgatory flames of damnation to corrupt the entirety of the White Mulberry tree, through the use of an array, the twelve cardinal web of armageddon. Just like its name, the array was fixed in twelve points, and those twelve points would each gather the purgatory flames of damnation whose might would then be combined to corrupt the White Mulberry tree into the Black plague tree of avarice which the cult leader would then refine and use to break through to the domain realm.

The Wang Patriarch was bombarded with shock after shock when the crown prince admitted to having been the one who suggested to the kingdom the creation of the burial sites, which in fact were the nodes of the array and the reason why they came was that they had detected an anomaly with it.

For the array to work, each of the twelve points needed to reach a certain level of miasma and corpse energy, and if one was short, the array would not operate. The gravesite the Wang Patriarch had been

on had already reached its quota thirty years prior, so they stopped paying it heed as they focused on the other places that all finally reached the required levels a few days ago.

The crown prince had been put in charge of the operation of the array, while the higher-ups of the cult focused on draining the reserves of the kingdom with the cult leader primarily focusing his efforts on the Mulberry Tree to wear it out so that the corruption would go smoothly. However, just as they thought victory was in sight, the array failed because one node's ratio had been halved. Out of urgency, the crown prince came to investigate the matter personally, with a few cult members who could be spared with all the others locked in a stalemate with the kingdom.

The Wang Patriarch's presence in the area and his diligent efforts over the years came as just as a surprise to the crown prince as his collusion had been to him. The crown prince could have never expected a single person to cleanse half the burial site alone. When he came, he had thought it was some trump card of the White Mulberry tree that had been activated, or his father's the emperor, which was how he mistakenly assumed the Wang Patriarch had been his father's hidden card.

Following that thought, he tried to get the Wang Patriarch on his side with countless treasures and opportunities. Pretty standard move for these sorts of things, however, there was one thing the crown prince offered him that never left the patriarch's mind even after thousands of years had passed by. It was that siding with him would give him a ticket to ascendancy, one that he could never imagine, and it was the reason he had sided with the cult. The surety with which he spoke and the passionate belief he held, was something the Wang Patriarch could never quite forget.

He had always wondered why the crown prince chose to fall in league with the cult. Even though the cult was slightly more powerful than the White Mulberry Kingdom, it wasn't by much, not to the point that it would tempt someone fated to inherit the White Mulberry Kingdom. His allegiance to them never made sense to him.

The Wang Patriarch refused their offer openly. At the time he fancied his chances against them. He was a late-stage core formation expert, while the crown prince was at the peak stage of the core formation realm while the other three cult members were all in the late stages same as him.

Even though he was outnumbered, he felt his chances were better, especially with the transformation the statues had brought to his body, foundations, and comprehension.

He had been dying to find opponents to test his abilities on, and the crown prince and the cult members became them. The Emperor's brother said their patriarch would redden in shame whenever he was

asked for details about the fight, with outbursts here and there. His children and grandchildren received a few beatings here and there whenever they asked him about it till it became a taboo question.

What he did reveal was it turned out the two statues had bestowed him with two abilities, one was the ability to ward, cleanse, and purify evil, and the other he discovered thanks to the fight, and was what kept him alive in the end, it was the ability to absorb the essence of evil and convert it to treasure, which I guess meant strength.

Thanks to it, he managed to survive, and in a short five years after that, he even stepped onto the palace realm and it was at that point that he managed to discern some of the mysteries behind the two statues. After his body was continuously transformed by it, when he broke through to the palace realm it was like some hidden knowledge about them was unlocked about them. Despite not knowing what the two statues were with his limited knowledge, after he broke through, he knew what they were based on. One of them was the Tian Lu, symbol of wealth and it was from it that he got the ability to convert evil essence into treasure, while the other statue was the Bi Xie, the ward of all evil and bringer of luck.

Chapter 748 Voices Of The Past (9)

Yang Qing paused as he held his chin in contemplation while muttering the names Tian Lu and Bi Xie. Both were the same species except one was male and the other was female. The Tian Lu was the male, and the Bi Xie was female, and both were the Pi Xiu race which over time most dubbed as Bi Xie despite the Bi Xie being the female version of the Pi Xiu.

"Does this mean there were two mythical beings in there.." muttered Yang Qing as he resumed reading.

"After he broke through the palace realm, the Wang Patriarch spent most of his time cultivating next to the statues which helped him deepen his understanding of his newfound abilities, and the transformation of his body still continued, as he developed dragon-like scales over his body that were as tough as a middle tier monarch grade defensive artifact.

Though he reduced the amount of time he spent purifying the site, with his increased strength and abilities, the little time he did give to it per day he did more than he did when he was in the core formation realm. With his two abilities and his cultivation base as a palace realm cultivator, he gained thousands of kilometers of grounds with just a few hours of work. He absorbed and refined the miasma and other baleful essences in the area to grow his strength and when he reached his body's limit, he would use his cleansing abilities to purge the area, and in less than two years, he had already completely cleansed the site.

From this, even though he never revealed the glory details of what happened in his fight against the crown prince and the rest, I can guess he must have defeated them and quite possibly killed all of them in the process, because if he didn't then there was no way he would have remained in that location, not when the crown prince revealed that the location was very crucial to the plans of the Purgatory black tiger cult.

Maybe it wasn't even him that defeated them and may have been the statues doing which was why he was always so embarrassed whenever he was asked about how the fight went.

After he finished cleansing the area it completely transformed from the gloom and doom it was into an area of tranquility and sanctity. He spent two more years consolidating his understanding as he set up a new formation around the area. As it turns out the Wang Patriarch's greatest talents lay in formations. With the cultivation benefits provided by the statues, one of them was increased comprehension and the other was providing a tranquil mind.

With both combinations, the Wang Patriarch ended up having an epiphany which led to the creation of a formation blueprint which he named the twilight sanctuary array which to date guards the royal palace. I felt its remnant aura when I was invited to the palace a few times, and just the little fluctuation revealed how profound it was.

It could borrow the force of the sun, the moon, the stars, and the earth to power and strengthen itself without the need to use other materials, just the inscription of the array itself was enough.

When I saw it, I could hardly believe it had been created by someone with no training or guidance on it. That it was all his doing. The Wang Patriarch must have been quite the talent. Though the Twilight Sanctuary array not using secondary and primary materials may be a good thing, I can't help but feel it is somewhat vulnerable as it demands extreme perfection on the inscriptions to display its abilities, any flaw, and its power plummets considerably. It requires continual monitoring and care by someone with a deep enough understanding of its structure which may leave one vulnerable whenever that person isn't there.

Luckily the Wang patriarch seemed to have thought about it as he left various measures in place to address the issue one of which was creating an entire legacy on the array which had been imbued with his will to ensure the right successor was chosen which somehow ended up being the way the Emperor of the Bi Xie empire was chosen. Those who could completely master the array and gain the approval of their founder would become the Emperor.

After he created the array, and set it up, it seemed like he couldn't carry the two statues with him, which was why he made the array in the first place. After everything was set up, he left for the next grave site. When he left he was already a third-stage palace realm expert and even though he still couldn't face off with the cult leader, and a few of the high elders who were known middle to late-stage palace realm experts, with his abilities that seemed to be a natural bane to theirs, he could at least guarantee his life.

He thus made his way to the burial site that was closest to him where he found a few lackeys of the cult standing guard. They were only at the core formation realm, so he made quick work of them, and as for the isolation array covering those sites, discounting his talent in formation arrays, they could hardly keep out someone that was at the palace realm. There was no way the White Mulberry Kingdom would set up 12 blue-grade arrays. It did not have enough resources to expend it that way, not when they were fighting tooth and nail just to survive. And since the sites were the birth child of the traitorous crown prince, of course, he would make them deliberately weak so his true compatriots could monitor the situation inside easily.

Just like he did at the place he called home for over 30 years, the Wang Patriarch purified and purged the area of its accumulated malevolent energies and corpse miasma. In a few short months, he had completely cleansed the area, and after that, he went back to the statues, cleaned the area around them along with the statues as he used to, cultivated for a month before he made his way to the next burial site.

Just like that, a year went by, and by that time, he had cleansed 7 burial sites already. It was in that year that he discovered the travesty caused by the war. Countless cities had been ravaged by the war and not a single soul was left alive in them. Corpses littered the streets, along with the deep sentiments of dread, and desperation they left behind. Because of the state of those cities, other than burial sites, the Wang Patriarch went about purifying those locations every time he came across them.

At one point he had thought that maybe some villages were spared the tragedy, only to find that not one remained standing, with some even having traces of some sacrificial ritual conducted within them. A few more years went by with his increasing workload, of him, purifying each area he came across on his way to the burial site.

He had once thought of joining the White Mulberry Kingdom and had even gone to the capital which was the center of the thing, however, seeing the scale of the battle being waged there he realized his abilities were too low to participate, but the other reason was at that point only the major families and the royal family were alive. Everyone else was dead, with some more than likely used as fodder by them.

The Wang Patriarch cared very little about what happened to them. They and the cult could destroy each other for all he cared, the best he could do for them was clean the kingdom a corpse at a time and if in the end, he was strong enough, he would clean both those nobles and the cult. It was the best reprieve he thought to give to the wailing spirits of the dead, who even in their death knew no peace.

The emperor's brother may have not mentioned it explicitly but I think that was the moment the Bi Xie empire was birthed.

Chapter 749 Voices Of The Past (10)

"He continued cleansing the entire kingdom, while the rest continued warring. His actions seemed to have tipped the balance all so ever slightly toward the White Mulberry Kingdom. The Wang patriarch's actions had inadvertently provided a breathing room for the White Mulberry tree. No longer being bogged down by the corruption that had engulfed the majority of the kingdom, it had breathing space to restrain the cult leader of the Purgatory Black Tiger, making the stalemate even firmer with both sides equally locked.

The cult grew desperate when they realized the changes that had happened to the kingdom which increased the desperation in their attacks, and the kingdom responded in kind. Despite a balance being there, it rapidly devolved into a pyrrhic war with both sides no longer holding anything in reserve. At that time, the Wang Patriarch had already cleansed and purified the entire kingdom, bar the capital, which he saved for last. He bided his time and spent it in seclusion at the two statues, and he only left when he reached the middle stages of the palace realm. The war had already reached its zenith and was almost drawing its conclusion with its last participants being the cult leader, the white mulberry tree, and some old fossil of the White Mulberry Kingdom whom the Wang Patriarch didn't even recognize.

The emperor, the other nobles, and the higher-ups of the Purgatory black tiger cult had already died at that point. The Wang patriarch secretly intervened in the battle by feeding his spiritual qi into the areas the White Mulberry Tree had spread its roots. His qi seemed to boost its abilities so that it was able to contain the cult leader despite him being marginally stronger than both it and the old fossil.

Eventually, the old fossil was killed but not before he triggered a sacrificial seal that amplified the abilities of the White Mulberry Tree long enough for it to fatally injure the cult leader whilst sealing him in place, which had been the cue the Wang Patriarch had been waiting for as he jumped in to deliver the finishing blow.

He would have died in the attack had the tree not sacrificed itself in the end to shield him from the dying attack of the cult leader. Even though he survived he ended up unconscious for almost three months with grievous injuries which would have ended up permanently disabling him had the tree not

poured its essence into him for those months, but with the tree already injured from the war, and using its essence, it ended up dying a few days later after the Wang Patriarch had regained consciousness.

He spent the next few months treating his injuries while purging the capital of any remaining corpse energy and malevolence before he returned to the statues inscribing the twilight sanctuary array throughout the kingdom to protect it against the vultures who might try to fish in troubled waters. In his words, he didn't cleanse the kingdom just for someone else to benefit from it.

After he arrived at the statues, he ended up secluding himself for 30 years, with countless rumors spreading about the White Mulberry Kingdom on how its destruction was brought by an emissary of heaven sent to punish them. The entire land was rumored to be under the curse of the heavens.

The rumor was no doubt a ploy meant to deter others thus reducing competition for dividing it. Several parties that neighbored the kingdom tried to get in, however, the Twilight sanctuary arrays built at strategic points kept them out of the kingdom long enough till the Wang Patriarch came out of his seclusion as a fully-fledged domain expert, claiming the entirety of the White Mulberry Kingdom as his territory.

He welcomed vagrants, the unwanted, and the displaced into his territory, giving them a chance for a fresh start, and slowly by slowly the Bi Xie Empire came to be, with its capital moved to where the two statues lay. He enforced a tradition on his family that is retained to date which is his descendants more so those at the top were required to clean the statues as he did.

The emperor does so now, and his brother does too as per his admission and the various princes and princesses also.

Sadly, though the real Bi Xie was not part of the empire, I did get to see the two statues briefly, and though I may never have seen one for reference, everything within me felt the two statues carried the true aura of the Pi Xiu race. If I were to guess, the materials comprising it had something that belonged to Tian Lu and Bi Xie, or the two statues had been baptized with their essence at some point, one thing was true, the statues were unique, as unique as the ten thousand dao jade leaf.

It may have not been the real thing, but the story behind it was well worth the time I spent in the Bi Xie empire. The empire seemed different in my eyes because of it, which made me wonder if our founding Emperor had such an illustrious story or if I could have such a story in my own life. I never held much ambitions other than delving into the mysteries of Dao, and while I still hold no ambitions of being

someone like an emperor, heading up an academy like the one here may not be bad, the Limitless Dao Pursuit Academy. Who knows just like the Wang Patriarch, I may end up creating something special.."

Yang Qing put down the leaf scroll as he sighed to himself. It didn't matter whether it was the past or now, founders of anything were truly a special breed.

"The president must be like them.." muttered Yang Qing as he thought about the illustrious and elusive president of the Order.

"Long Wan...I don't think there is an Academy in Jade Leaf Empire going by Limitless Dao Pursuit Academy. Did he change his mind about starting one or did it end up going by another name...something like the Jade Leaf Academy.." Yang Qing mulled with his gaze shining like he discovered some huge secret.

Chapter 750 Similar capital

??Following his trail of thought, Yang Qing willed his thoughts to the Xuanwu.

"History of the Jade Leaf Academy.."

A moment later fourteen lights flew to him. Some were scrolls, others were books, a few tablets, and one tree trunk that had been hollowed with writing on its hollowed-out interior.

Yang Qing stared wide-eyed as he didn't expect to get anything. He had been told his clearance was restricted to matters concerned with the Deer Mountain Range. With eagerness, he quickly went for the tree trunk. The more bizarre-looking one was bound to contain the juiciest of information.

However, twenty minutes later he had a dejected look on his face as he put away the last scroll.

"Figures they would be so thorough..." muttered Yang Qing with a look like he had just swallowed a fly.

None of the scrolls, books, tablets, or the tree trunk contained what he was looking for. He had hoped he would find information about the founder in there somewhere, but he found no hint or mention of the founder.

While the information recorded in those fourteen instruments was pretty in-depth, ultimately, it lacked what he truly wanted to find out, and as he read through them, he realized they all came from the low-tier blue grade level, which was his original clearance level.

Sighing in defeat, he willed the fourteen objects to return whence they came. He had no intention of wasting what little time he had left in reading things he already had access to, no matter how intriguing the information was. With his guess that Long Wan may have been the founder of the Jade Leaf Academy, he became interested in the Academy, considering if he didn't make it to the Order, being a student of the Academy may have been the next best thing for him, and he had a feeling had his family's old friend, Alchemist Ma Bo who was a guest teacher at the Academy, had he been there when he was leaving, he would have left with him for the Academy instead of coming to the Order.

Reading the backstory of the Bi Xie Empire from the perspective of Long Wan made him curious about the academy, and even though he didn't have proof of it, he felt strongly that there was a chance he was the founder of the Jade Leaf Academy. While confirming that guess wouldn't add much to his life, Yang Qing always felt a sense of fulfillment when he filled the gaps in certain parts of history. His whole fascination with completing broken cultivation arts, and researching lost ruins, languages, and techniques was born out of that interest, but ultimately no matter how much he wanted to unveil the history of the Jade Leaf Academy, his access was ultimately limited and he needed to make the most of it.

After a regretful sigh, Yang Qing focused back as he closed his eyes to process everything he had just read, as he gathered his thoughts. About ten minutes passed by before he finally opened his eyes which flashed with a thirst for answers.

He took out a parchment and a smooth luminescent colored charcoal from his storage ring. He slowly drew out a large circle that filled the entire parchment and then proceeded to make tiny symbolic drawings along with some highlighted writing that accompanied them. For example, in one part of the parchment, he drew a few mountains and winding streams and a courtyard in the middle of it with a symbol of an eagle at the center. Slightly above the courtyard, he wrote the words 'Deer Mountain Branch'.

Yang Qing paused and held his chin as he admired the drawing with deep satisfaction. While his drawing paled in comparison to a seasoned master who had stepped on the dao of painting, if he was compared to the rest, even mundane expert artists, he was sure his skills wouldn't lose out to them. His drawings did lack the vitality of a drawing done by a dao painter, however, it was still vivid with deep clarity on the details which was in part due to his skills, and the other was the luminescent charcoal which helped make the colors of the drawing feel lifelike. One could see the veins of the rocks that made up the

mountain, a reflection of light on the streams and rivers that winded in between and around the mountains, and the luster of the gold eagle symbol.

After one more satisfied nod, Yang Qing continued his drawings. Inch by inch, the parchment was filled with a variety of drawings and a label next to them. Far west, there was an azalea, blue oak, and a massive python sleeping beneath verdant grassland, and above the drawing was the label 'clear sword river sect', a little bit to the southeast, there was a drawing of a beautiful sycamore tree with purple flowers with a lady with an innocent look holding a fruit in one of her hands, and she looked to be singing as she was flanked by a lark, a moth, and a massive beetle. Next to that drawing, he wrote the words, 'Meifeng's lair'.

Yang Qing started by drawing all the places he visited and passed during his time at the Deer Mountain Range, quickly filling out the map. Any place he visited, he drew, whether it was the sacred graveyard torch where he met the sacred flame swan, Gu Xing, to the battleground where Hao Da and the rest fought against the obsidian serpents, down to the locations he had been given by Meifeng on where the fire adler bear had taken the daughter of the obsidian serpent couple to help refine her body, in preparation for her to inherit the treasure bone of a flood dragon.

After he was done with those areas, he finally finished with the territory of the Deer Mountain Kingdom, which he spent a considerable time with as he tried to recall every single detail he saw on his trip over. After ten minutes, he was done. He demarcated an outline that showed the entire territory of the Deer Mountain Kingdom. Within that demarcation, a lot of areas were left blank, with Yang Qing only drawing the route he took to the capital.

On the capital drawing, he drew enough to bring out the charm of the city as he saw it before he finished with the palace, which he only drew how it looked on the outside before his eyes narrowed as he drew two creatures that he seemed to have overlooked up to this point as he was making the drawing.

"Could they be the same?" he muttered as his gaze narrowed on the two creatures. Both creatures had the body of a lion and the head of a dragon, accompanied by a dragon's tail. One of them had a single horn that stretched backward and a pair of wings on its shoulders that looked like they were made of swirling clouds, with both wings closed. The other creature had two horns that stretched out backward but had no wings.

The two creatures were part of the Pi Xiu race, with the single- horned and winged one being the male of the species, the Tian Lu, and the double-horned one with no wings being the Bi Xie.

The drawings Yang Qing made were not based on the description given by Long Wan but were instead based on the two statues he saw outside the palace. Just outside the capital, the two statues had inadvertently drawn Yang Qing's eyes, not because they had anything that made them stand out, in fact, it was quite the opposite actually. They looked quite worn with cracks, and chips here and there, with their features not as distinctive. Yang Qing had felt it was odd for the two statues to be left hanging around at the entrance of the palace despite its beat-up state.

At the time he had thought there was more to them than met the eye, but after scanning them, he didn't detect anything and assumed they had been kept for sentimental purposes maybe, which was when the Imperial Secretary He Shan had admitted to such. The statues were kept because of their endurance and hardness. No matter how much chaos and destruction the kingdom faced, somehow the statues always remained intact since the kingdom started. As a result, the first king of the Deer Mountain Kingdom decided to keep the two statues around out of an endearing sentiment on their ability to withstand hard times which was what he hoped for his kingdom, and every king that succeeded him continued to keep them around to echo his sentiments.

Yang Qing closed his eyes as he tried to recall every sensation he had when he was next to those statues to try and see if there was something he may have overlooked. A few minutes later he shook his head, as his gaze fell on the drawing of the statues.

"Could it have been dormant? If it is the same as the two statues that supported the rise of the Bi Xie Empire, then maybe the ritual of cleaning needed to be upheld which clearly the Deer Mountain Kingdom didn't do. Maybe that is why it seemed no different than regular statues when I was there.." muttered Yang Qing as he held his chin in deep contemplation.

Though the two statues were kept around the palace, possibly as a superstitious symbol for good luck, there were signs of neglect on them from the state they were in, and the accumulation of grime on them. Other than placing them at the entrance for symbolism, they were not cared for the same way the Wang Patriarch, did. But that was under the assumption that the two statues were similar to the one that transformed the fate of the Wang Patriarch. Yang Qing didn't feel it was wrong to hold a little reservation about them being the same ones, after all, Bi Xie and Tian Lu statues were pretty common as most people used them symbolically to bring good fortunes to their homes, businesses, and personal lives.

Yang Qing then went on to draw web-like lines that spanned across the entire parchment, seemingly connecting the entire boundaries and at the center of the parchment he wrote the words 'Bi Xie Empire'

"If their territory spanned the entire range, it would certainly explain why it is far richer than any rank 3 territory. The mature dragon veins, its ability to support a sacred graveyard, that grotto, and all the other mysterious happenings around it..even if it's not the same as what Senior Long Wan described about the Empire, there's no denying that the range is unique..it even drew the attention of that mysterious figure.

If my guess is right, then quite possibly, the capital of the Deer Mountain Kingdom and the capital of the Bi Xie Empire should be the same.." muttered Yang Qing as he traced a line to the royal capital of the Deer Mountain Kingdom which he circled.

"With the abilities and foundations described, how did such a behemoth figure even fall in the first place?" said Yang Qing as he drew a few question mark signs next to the words 'Bi Xie Empire' while adding a few more words next to it 'Sky rendering sword sect' and a few question marks next to it, while below he wrote 'ascendancy?'