

Daily life 811

Chapter 811 Retirement

Yang Qing couldn't but sigh in exasperation as he languidly made his way to his abode.

"Why does time always seem to fly on the last day of your vacation.."

Drinking with Dai Chen flew by so fast and it was already just a few minutes to sunrise by the time he was headed to his abode. Officially his vacation was over. When it started he never thought it would end so fast. Thirty days felt like an eternity to him, but that eternity sort of transformed into an instant.

It seemed like it was just the other day he was touring around the continent atop the bluefin ferry and now he was about to resume his daily routine of being worked to the bone. He could feel his soul and bones start lamenting as they faintly crumbled under the overbearing pressure of what awaited him.

"Maybe I should just retire, or ask the seniors at the Judicial Review Committee to employ me to take care of the courtyard there.." thought Yang Qing as he let out another sigh of resignation whilst enviously thinking what it would be like to lead a carefree retired life like those seniors at the committee.

Every time he went to see them, they were either drinking tea, gambling, playing go, trimming a bonsai plant, enjoying biscuits, or soaking in the sun.

When would he get to loaf around like that? He had no intention of waiting till he was old and grey.

"I am already in the palace courts. It's not as carefree as I expected it to be, but the cases are not that many. I will just continue rising up the ladder with my workload reducing in the process.

It won't be long before working and being in retirement will be no different from one another, except for the former, the stingy Order will still have to pay me in respect to my title at the time. I might as well just leach off them instead of retiring. It's the best form of vengeance I can give them for exploiting me so ruthlessly all this time.."

When he finished that thought, Yang Qing began laughing manically as he pictured his coffers filled for doing absolutely nothing.

The Order did allow one to retire, but they needed to achieve a certain level of merit points. Retiring did not mean one could leave the Order. It was less strict than a sect, but in some regards, the Order was no different from one, especially when it came to membership. Once one joined, it was for life, even after they retired, they were still part of the Order, and in case of emergencies, should the need arise, they could be called upon by the Order.

Administrator Mo Guang at the Deer Mountain Range Branch was a clear example. He was already retired, but with the accident that happened at the branch which left it inoperable due to a lack of personnel, as the available veteran, he was requested to volunteer to temporarily step into the role of administrator of the branch whilst also supporting Yang Qing who was an absolute novice as a branch chief.

It wasn't just Mo Guang, when he was a student, some of the classes Yang Qing had, were taught by retirees who stepped in when the Instructor in charge of the subject was absent for one reason or the other. Usually, their absence was cultivation-

related from a sudden epiphany, breaking through, or just heavily engaged in some research they were doing and were at a crucial point. In such cases, one of the retirees would be called upon to fill in.

Considering the huge number of merit points one required for their retirement to be approved, every single retiree was a treasure trove of wisdom born out of their rich experience. Being stand-in instructors was the best role for them.

As for why the Order would allow retirements despite being severely undermanned, it was to prevent an implosion from within its ranks. Considering the nature of their world and how ruthless it was, being a member of the Order was anything but easy. It takes a lot from someone and sometimes the cost becomes too much for one to carry.

For the Order, rather than take the risk of what might happen if more was added to those people than they could bear, they offer respite to them as an option. Even when one retires, the Order still continues to support them with resources, albeit the value is decreased from what they got whilst they were still in service. However, even reduced, it is still more than plentiful to wholesomely their growth at every level of their cultivation base.

It was one of the few things Yang Qing rather admired about them. One of his backup plans was to jump into retirement if he saw the caseloads were not as few as he imagined as he moved up the ladder but before he considered it, he wanted to squeeze as much as he could from them to have a good nest egg.

He had a good life to maintain and a few thieving parasites in Ellie and the Celestial Nesting Weaver to support, if he was not careful, those two would bleed them dry. It wasn't would, they would definitely bleed him dry and when it came to the two at least Ellie would try and be sneaky about it, but when it came to the Celestial nesting weaver, it would gloatingly do it in the open and even mock him for it as it carved him up to his last penny.

Yang Qing could feel his blood boiling at the thought of it. If he wanted to retire comfortably, he could only do it after he had stepped into the outer domain courts at least. At that stage, whatever his earnings were aside, he would be in the domain realm, even retired, he would have a lot of other avenues for earning such as taking a small dive in the Millionsfold Treasure Ocean and scooping out a few valuables here and there that would live him and his parasites set for life.

Yang Qing found himself chuckling as he shook his head,

"It's still too early to think about these things. I need to focus on surviving my first case back, from the way Yu Gen and Xia Ting reacted when I asked them about it, It looks like it will be a handful...Huh, is that? I must be losing it.."

Chapter 812 Presence in the first case back

Yang Qing rubbed his eyes when he saw a blurry silhouette at the corner leading to his abode, that sort of resembled Lei Weiyuan's figure.

"What was in that wine for it to reproduce my worst fears.." Yang Qing said as he laughed bitterly.

"Don't worry Old fiend Lei, I know it's been a month since I did our curse-dispelling morning ritual, not to worry, starting today I will make sure to resume it in honest. The four-year tradition will be maintained.." he added as he bowed solemnly to what he assumed was a specter of Lei Weiyuan born out of his fear of the person, and the fact that he would probably see him today after not being in the courtroom for close to three months.

Yang Qing went on to pat the shoulders of the 'specter' only to freeze halfway when he made solid contact with it. Whatever wine he had in his system was instantly evaporated as he shakily adjusted his gaze like he had just seen a ghost, meeting eye to eye with those silver eyes. Those silver eyes that always seemed to see through everything he did.

"Old Le.. Le...Lei, is that you?" he asked shakily.

"Glad to see you enjoyed your vacation well.." Lei Weiyuan said with a calm demeanor that always made Yang Qing feel like he was waiting for a guillotine to fall on him.

"Why are you like that?" Yang Qing hastily asked, fear being rapidly amplified and produced in every part of his body as he pointed to the silhouette of Lei Weiyuan which seemed to be made of mist which was why Yang Qing automatically assumed he was hallucinating in the first place.

"Oh, this? I was casually testing out a cultivation art Dean Zhu Lao came up with for reproducing imprints from a single thought in places we have not marked but have visited. I'm still not too familiar with it, hence the look.." Lei Weiyuan casually said.

"A thought imprint?" Yang Qing asked with widened eyes.

Imprints operated similarly to talismans except unlike talismans, they contained the spiritual will of the user, it was like a clone of the user, except an imprint contained a small fraction of the user's abilities, and they needed a medium as an anchor. The medium needed to be something that was at the monarch grade at least and if the medium got damaged, the imprint would disappear.

But from the way Lei Weiyuan described the thought imprint he was experimenting with, it did not seem to have a medium, with the only point of contact being places he had visited.

"You don't need a medium?" incredulously asked Yang Qing.

"No, not really, the 'prints' I leave at the places I've been to are more than enough. I can use the surrounding spiritual qi and the 'print'. You can consider the print similar to a scent like how animals identify who or what is in the area, or how they mark an area to warn of others. It's something similar.

As cultivators the more powerful you are, you leave traces everywhere you are. The art uses those traces as conduits and provided the spiritual qi is sufficient, you can reproduce an imprint from it..."

"That's incredible!" muttered Yang Qing as his eyes shone in innocent wonder.

"It is, but at the moment its demands are too high that only someone at the domain realm can execute it, and because what is being produced is a domain's expert imprint, it needs a lot of spiritual qi in the area to support it, and the location needs to be a place the expert is intimately familiar with, but even then it has a few instabilities here and there.

With time, Dean Zhu Lao hopes to reduce those demands and the instabilities with our help.." Lei Weiyuan patiently explained as he stroked his beard out of habit even if it was only a corporeal spirit.

"I can't wait for him to refine it.." Yang Qing eagerly said before something Lei Weiyuan said struck a chord in him.

"Intimately familiar? The fact that he is here, does it mean? No, No.. How many times has he been here?"

One scary thought after another flooded Yang Qing's mind as his skin paled at the ominous implications he was thinking about.

Choosing the path of ignorance is bliss, Yang Qing quickly took his mind off of those thoughts as he asked Lei Weiyuan what he was doing there. Yang Qing had doubts about whether it was just to test the thought imprint cultivation art, or to scare him, which he had this intuitive feeling was one of the reasons, but other than that he felt Old Lei had to have another reason for appearing outside his abode a few hours from dawn.

"Well, I came for two reasons. One is to remind you, that you resume your duties today to avoid any mixups like that time.."Lei Weiyuan said as he narrowed his gaze on Yang Qing prompting the latter to lower his head in shame for having been caught at the time, and not for pulling the scheme in the first place.

"The other is about your first case, it is the Red Maple Empire, right?"

"Mmh.." Yang Qing said with a nod as he lifted his head.

"With the son of Li Guiren, one of the founders of the Golden Bamboo Pavilion, when it comes to handling his judgment, Domain inner court judge Hou Dehui will be present in the courtroom as will Li Guiren and quite possibly the other two founders.

Whatever conclusions you come to, let not their presence or what they represent, influence you. We already have a lot of enemies, adding one more to the pile won't matter. So don't hold back on account of trying to reduce troubles for the Order.

Let your verdict be a pure unadulterated reflection of what you believe suits him. That is all, take care, and don't be late.."

"I won't and thank you, Supervisor Lei Weiyuan.." Yang Qing said as he cupped his fists in deep gratitude.

Just as Lei Weiyuan's imprint was about to dissipate, it froze as Lei Weiyuan's gaze fell on Yang Qing.

"Yees?" Yang Qing hesitantly asked.

"Earlier, as I was forming my imprint, I seem to have overheard you mention my name and a morning curse ritual.."

"Supervisor Lei, I don't want to keep you, I have tonnes to prepare since it's my first day back in a while. Forgive me for my poor manners.." Yang Qing hurriedly said as he quickly bowed and fled to his abode, praying Lei Weiyuan would not reproduce another imprint within his abode.

"He can't get in, right? I have never invited him here, but then again.." A scary thought flashed in his mind as Yang Qing powered all his isolation arrays in overdrive, expenditure of spirit stones be damned.

Chapter 813 Shadow of the Red Maple Empire (1)

"Was that Yang Qing?" Ma Yuan confusedly asked his daughter.

"It looked like him," she answered.

They both quizzically looked toward the courtyard where they had seen a blurry figure disappear into.

"Maybe he was struck with a sudden burst of enlightenment, hence the hurry. Let's go Ling'er, we don't want to keep Miss Tan Jue waiting for long.."

"Mmh.."

As they were leaving, Ma Yuan couldn't help but throw one last look at the courtyard, bewilderment still evident in his eyes before finally sighing as he left with his daughters.

Over the past few months, he had come to discover Yang Qing was a particularly odd person, and he wasn't the only one. There was the bird up the green flame tree that lorded over him, which constantly ended up in verbal spats with Yang Qing that evolved into fights, almost always, he would occasionally see a cloud-swallowing kite with a terrifying cultivation base sneak around with a human-like look that was a mix of apprehension and excitement. Ma Yuan had once wondered what it sneaks around for but one threatening glare from it was all it took for him to abandon any such thoughts.

Then there was the white starlight crab that would constantly get into fights with the cloud-swallowing kite, and despite being vastly weaker and soundly defeated every time it attacked, it never stopped. And it didn't just attack the cloud-swallowing kite, anyone who wasn't Yang Qing, would be attacked by it provided he wasn't there to dissuade it.

Ma Yuan wasn't sure whether it was because it was a combat maniac, or just plain dumb, but it was horrible in those it chose to attack. Every single one of its targets vastly outpowered it, except for Ma Yuan, who was lucky enough to be saved by the cloud-swallowing kite, whom he later learned was called Ellie.

It was when Yang Qing first made the proposition for him to come work on his abode. When he came, Yang Qing had not been around but had already given him a token that would allow him entry into his abode.

He had assumed as long as he had the token he would be okay. The white starlight crab attacked him the instance he passed by the pond and despite trying to explain that he was acquainted with Yang Qing and even showing the token handed to him, the crab didn't halt its attacks and only seemed to grow more emboldened the longer the fight went on. Luckily, Ellie, who was sneaking in for something Ma Yuan didn't know what, intervened and slapped the crab unconscious.

After Ellie one-shotted the obstinate crab, Ma Yuan wasn't too sure if it was him seeing things, but there was a look she gave him after she had swatted the crab away. The look seemed to say,

"You owe me now..."

Whenever she snuck in, she would always throw him that same look the moment she came into the abode before covertly moving around the abode looking for whatever it is that made her sneak into the abode every single day.

"Will I turn odd to?" Ma Yuan fearfully thought.

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Yang Qing's study

Yang Qing frantically checked and rechecked his arrays confirming they were operating at full capacity. Even after seeing they were functioning well with no mishaps, he felt it wasn't enough as he took out a few top-tier monarch-grade natural treasures that were great at sensing hidden auras.

It was only after seeing a lack of reaction from those treasures did he let out a sigh of relief before looking suspiciously at those treasures.

"Old fi,.." Yang Qing hurriedly paused what he was about to say as he sneakily looked around him before quickly amending his statement, changing his expression to one of reverence as he did so.

"The illustrious and magnanimous Supervisor Lei Weiyuan is in the domain realm.." Yang Qing paused as he looked around him once more before his gaze fell on the monarch-grade treasures with a small frown on his face.

"These treasures as amazing as they are in their jobs, are still only in the monarch grade. I doubt they would be able to keep track of him. Do I need to upgrade my protection arrays to the gold grade?" Yang Qing warily thought, as his frown lines grew even deeper.

He had entertained the thought of elevating his arrays in the near future from the low-tier blue grade that they were, to maybe the top of the blue grade, but that was only after he had become core palace court judge.

As for installing a gold-grade array, he would only be able to do so when he was a domain court judge. He would never be able to afford it otherwise. Even if he liquidated everything he owned, including the gifts he received during his promotion ceremony, he would only be able to cover half the cost.

He had thought he wouldn't even need one, and would just settle for a top-tier blue-grade one and that was it. When he reached the domain realm and gained the qualifications to reside in the dark peak, which was where all domain experts of the Order resided, he would just use whatever protection mechanisms were available there.

From what he heard, the Order would abandon its stingy nature when one reached the domain realm. Domain experts were drowned in free resources, while Yang Qing had to scheme, and sacrifice his blood, sweat, and tears, to get some scraps from them.

Yang Qing couldn't help but clench his teeth in anger as he thought of the difference in treatment, especially when he considered his present predicament. He desperately needed a gold-grade array, not one year from now, one month from now, one week from now, he needed it immediately.

The thought imprint was definite proof Lei Weiyuan had been hanging around his courtyard for it to register as one of the places he was intimately familiar with. His blue-grade arrays might as well be a string of cobwebs in front of the old fiend, and he was certain the casual remarks Lei Weiyuan made about the thought imprint working in areas one was intimately familiar with, wasn't an accidental slip-up. He knew the man well enough to know he was never careless with his words.

He uttered those words intentionally to let Yang Qing know that he was always lurking about in his abode and Yang Qing would never know when and how which more or less confirmed what Yang Qing had always suspected considering the amount of losses he had suffered when facing off against the man. At one point he even assumed, Lei fully backed by the powers that be at the Order had been deducing his fate, karma, and future. It was why they always seemed one step ahead. Turns out he was being snooped on all this time.

Yang Qing warily looked around feeling Lei Weiyuan's gaze everywhere, more than likely the outcome the old fiend was after when he made that statement.

"Do I really have to go into debt for my piece of mind?" Yang Qing muttered with an unresigned look on his face.

The Order did offer credit. Using the credit, he could set up the gold-grade array he wanted, and pay back what he owed later. However, as sneaky as the Order was in their dealings, Yang Qing felt owing them was no more dangerous than Lei Weiyuan snooping on him.

Feeling himself stuck between a rock and a hard place, Yang Qing eventually shrugged in defeat as he said,

"I might as well take it a day at a time. There's nothing I can do now. Senior Mei was right, I really need to break through to the domain realm.."

Yang Qing paused before he smiled bitterly.

"If only it was that easy.." he added before lighting a few spirit-

calming incense sticks to calm his nerves long enough for him to start his meditation. He had three hours before he had to report for work and as much as he didn't like to admit it, he was slightly nervous about it.

Thanks to the incense sticks, his spirit calmed down long enough to submerge himself in meditation with no problem. He had set an internal clock of one and a half hours. The time quickly flew by and Yang Qing

got up, his entire essence filled with tranquility and energy for what the day held for him. The meditation washed away the fears of his first case back, or Lei Weiyuan possibly spying on him.

Feeling satisfied and refreshed, Yang Qing hurried to the Thousand Flavors Restaurant where he had a short breakfast of congee, century egg, and a few pork buns before finally heading to his study one hour before his appointed time. Along the way, he coincidentally met Lei Weiyuan who just happened to be in the hallway just as he was about to use the mimicry chaos portal to head to his study.

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Yang Qing's study.

"Senior Yu Gen, Senior Xia Ting, glad to see you both are well.." Yang Qing said to the two roaming inquisitors who had already been in his study by the time he arrived.

"Nice to see you, Yang Qing..." genially said Yu Gen while Xia Ting only spared a noncommittal nod as she was busy slurping eight treasures soup in one of the corners.

"Have you decided on how you want to handle the cases? Will it all be done together, or will you deal with them individually?" asked Yu Gen.

"Considering the number of charges against them, handling it all together will be a bit chaotic, better to handle each individually. We will do it by family and eventually finish it up with the royal family and the lad from the Golden Bamboo Pavilion.."

Chapter 814 Shadow Of The Red Maple Empire (2)

Yang Qing leaned back in his chair, already feeling the lingering fatigue of what was likely to be a tiresome case.

"What a mess.." he said.

"What a mess indeed..." Yu Gen said echoing his statement while Xia Ting was too absorbed in devouring the eight treasures soup to care about anything else.

"Which family do you want to start with?"

Yang Qing paused for a moment before he answered,

"Let's start with the Gui family, followed by the Zhang family, then the Cheng family, and finally the Mo family before finally finishing it off with the royal family and the Golden Bamboo Pavilion.

All the concerned parties are close by?"

"Yes, they are all in one of the hidden realms used for palace court cases. They can all be summoned at a moment's notice via the teleportation rune link between your courtroom and the realm.."

"Good. We still have one hour left to go before we start, I'd like to use that time to go through the information again. If you and Senior Xia Ting have any other matters to attend to before the appointed time you can do so.." Yang Qing said as he placed his medallion on a specific spot on his desk, revealing a compartment surrounded by countless complex silver runes that looked to be isolating something.

With the medallion acting as the key, the runes, flashed and disappeared, revealing the contents beneath. It was talismans, talismans that contained what Yu Gen, Xia Ting, and the Yellow Plains County had dug up on the Red Maple Empire.

Earlier, after his encounter with the scion of the Golden Bamboo Pavillion, where he and the former emperor of the Red Maple Empire, along with the branch manager of the pavilion who were trying to capture Ellie, he had them investigated, along with the Red Maple Empire as a whole when he found out that a blood refining cultivator had close contact with one of the noble families. When the Wang couple came back, they admitted to having had run-ins with a few more blood-refining cultivators as they were wiping out the gangs within Purple Grass City.

Yang Qing had expected the investigation to be standard, just another day, digging up some forms of oppression and arrogance born out of those in power, but what he ended up digging up was a massive rotting corpse filled with all sorts of maggots slowly devouring it and since he was the one to trigger that excavation, he had no option but to be the one to clean the corpse and dispose of it properly.

"I'll be at the Celestial Soup Herb Garden. Yu Gen, tell me when it's time and Yang Qing, thank you for taking care of this big sister.." Xia Ting said as she flashed Yang Qing a grin while her mind wandered off again as she started muttering all sorts of delicious soups she was going to have during that one-hour timeframe.lightsnovel

"I told you, you shouldn't have told her about the card. I'll go with her to try and keep it reasonable.." Yu Gen said as he followed Xia Ting leaving Yang Qing alone whose eyes kept twitching as he stared at Xia Ting's departing figure.

lightsNovel com "What did I do?" he muttered with worry.

Toward the end of his vacation, he met up with Yu Gen and Xia Ting to discuss the Red Maple Empire case. Before he took on the post as Branch Chief of the Deer Mountain Branch, he had already decided once he was back, the first case he would handle would be the Red Maple one.

When he was close to the end of his vacation, he met up with Yu Gen and Xia Ting so they could feel him in on the progress they had made, and as usual, the meeting was held in their favorite spot, the Celestial Soup Herb Garden.

Yang Qing out of politeness, and a little bit of smugness, offered to pay for their dishes, and in the process of paying, he casually revealed the purple amethyst card he was given by the restaurant, denoting him as one of their VIP members.

That reveal turned out to be a huge blunder on his part. Since knowing he was a purple amethyst cardholder, Xia Ting has been leeching off his privileges despite her being a cardholder herself. Yang Qing could only hope for Yu Gen to restrain her. She had only been using it for four days now, but he already owed the restaurant 600 middle-grade stones, and that was with them giving him a discount on their prices as a cardholder.

"Am I cursed? Why do I always end up with the worst parasites? First was that ungrateful weaver, then Ellie, and now Senior Xia Ting. Who's next? No, it can't go on like this!" Yang Qing worriedly said as his voice cracked with emotion at his growing burdens.

Yang Qing decided to distract himself from his crises by focusing on the case at hand which promised to be another handful itself. If there was one thing he was thankful for was, despite all that had been dug up, it would not be another Ice Emerald Sect saga, though it was damn near close.

Clearing his mind off distracting thoughts, Yang Qing poured a sliver of his spiritual essence into one of the talismans on his desk.

The talisman contained the general background of the Red Maple Empire as it touched on the important bits that would be relevant to his case.

The Empire has been around for close to 75,000 years which was pretty commendable for a country of its abilities. If it was ranked amongst its peers, the Red Maple Empire would be considered just below average at best, and those that were within that bracket were mostly young kingdoms, empires, and organizations.

Surviving for 75,000 years with the strength that they had in a place where the strong constantly preyed on the weak was a testament to the astuteness of their leaders and how well they directed the empire with each succession, their endurance, and their ability to adapt to circumstance and the best of all, luck which was usually the deciding factor in these things, where the strength you have just isn't enough to hold you through.

Chapter 815 Shadow Of The Red Maple Empire (3)

Its current era could be said to be the most prosperous era of the Empire, with five palace realm experts, of which those belonging to the royal family were four, but before that, in every era, there would be maybe one or two, with the number being mostly one palace realm expert.

Before the Red Maple Empire was established, the territory was under a different ownership and it was vastly different to what it was now. Back then it was under the rule of a tree spirit that had reached the peak of the palace realm, the tree which came as no surprise to Yang Qing when he read about it was a red maple.

lightsNovel.com That tree gained sentience and managed to cultivate to the peak of the palace realm. The majority of what is now the Imperial Capital of the Red Maple Empire and roughly 40,000 kilometers around counted as the territory of that Red Maple Spirit whose territory was much smaller than the present-day Red Maple Empire that had more than tripled in size.

The capital and the territory under its control were filled with countless trees, herbs, and even spirit beasts with zero human population. The lack of human population was an enforcement of the red maple tree spirit that prevented human cultivators into its territory and with its strength, only those at the domain realm could ignore its warnings.

As valuable as that territory was, it was not valuable enough to incite the greed of domain realm experts, and it had also been rumored that the red maple tree spirit had a close relationship with one of the in-name disciples of the founder of the Medical Saint Garden Sect which was enough as a deterrent for human cultivators to not violate the rules set by the Red Maple Spirit lest they incur the wrath of said in-name disciple and those who owed said disciple a favor or two.

However, towards the end of its lifespan, that red maple tree became lax in its prohibitive rules. Normally spiritual herbs and trees that had awakened their spirits and become sentient usually had absurdly long lifespans. Take Meifeng for example, she was at the first stage of the palace realm, while Yang Qing was closely approaching the third stage.

In terms of overall abilities and insights into the dao, Yang Qing had her beat in every regard except lifespan. A standard human palace realm cultivator would automatically have 15,000 years of lifespan the instant they broke through to the palace realm with the value increasing with each minor breakthrough. 15,000 years was the bare minimum. Provided one had excellent foundations that base value grows.

When Yang Qing broke through, he could already tell his lifespan had hit 25,000 years which he guessed had to do with his peerless jade physique and achieving absolute perfection at every step of his breakthrough from perfect qi circulation, to purple-grade pillars, to purple core and finally using a major dao for his breakthrough to the palace realm.

Few could meet those standards and in the end, in terms of lifespan what he got was 25,000 years. For Meifeng, things were different. Even though her foundations were weaker than Yang Qing by a considerable margin, in terms of lifespan, she had him beat by a considerable level.

Because of his dao, and physique, Yang Qing was sensitive to the vitality and vigor of things. Provided they were weaker than him, he could more or less feel their life expectancy, which was how he could tell the changes in Ma Yuan's body, and when it came to Meifeng, he could already tell at the bare minimum, provided no accident befell her and things remained stagnant, she would live for at least 80,000 years and as she grew stronger, that number was likely to grow.

If Meifeng had 80,000 years lifespan, how much lifespan did the red maple tree spirit tree have with a cultivation base that was at the peak of the palace realm?

If he were to guess, Yang Qing estimated it would have reached at least 120,000 years, and considering what he knew, he felt it would have likely been more. Just like him, that tree had a natural aptitude for the vitality dao, and as such its life expectancy was bound to be way higher even when compared to other spiritual awakened trees.lightsnovel

Yang Qing would not find it strange if it was said it had a lifespan that had reached 200,000 years. It was that absurd lifespan that he somehow wished his ancestral root was tied to some spiritual tree, but as it stood, there was nothing like that in his lineage. All he had in his genealogical tree were fanatical lunatics who would decrease his lifespan rather than contribute to it.

However, as huge a lifespan as that red maple tree had, all of it was for naught as it never got to live the entirety of it and the reason for that was, that it failed its tribulation into the domain realm.

Breaking through to the domain realm was the ultimate test for cultivators and being called a genius wasn't enough to get one over the line and your background never mattered. You could be in a holy land, or a rogue cultivator, but the difficulty and uncertainty of breaking through to the domain realm was the same for you both.

In the palace realm, core formation realm, and foundation establishment realm, the powerful seniors can prepare you enough for them, and provided you had a sturdy enough foundation you could breeze through them.

Yang Qing slept through his tribulation for the core formation realm, and for the foundation establishment realm, because it was his first time experiencing a tribulation as one didn't get to experience one when breaking through to the qi refinement realm, he was so wound up, that when it finally fell, he didn't believe that was a tribulation.

The reason for that was because it felt like he had the most refreshing bath as the tribulation fell on him, soothing his entire body in the process. If it wasn't for the change in strength, and the glowing purple pillar produced after, he had thought he had failed it. What his grandfather and the rest put him through in the body refinement realm, especially his breakthrough to the peerless jade physique was a thousand times more terrifying than the foundation and the core formation tribulation.

The one for the palace realm was tough, but he smoothly went through it, and at no point in time did he ever feel like his life was in danger, but the domain realm was different. Countless died, and even the most talented wavered on whether to go through it despite reaching the bottleneck and having the necessary accumulations to trigger the tribulation. Many choose to suppress it and only go through it when they're close to the end of their lifespans.

The rate of failure to transcend the tribulation was 70% and the likelihood of death from those who failed was 95%.

The red maple tree spirit failed its tribulation but it managed to survive, which was a rare feat in and of itself, no doubt its natural traits had something to do with it, but it nonetheless paid a price, which was its lifespans. After failing the tribulation that absurd lifespan was slashed, and from what the records said, it only had less than a thousand years left to live after its failed ascension.

It used its remaining years to look for a successor amongst the spiritual plants that grew within its territory, moving even to the spirit beasts, but spiritual plants and animals had an absurd lifespan for a reason, which was they improved at a slower pace when compared to humans.

The red maple spirit failed to find a suitable successor among them and was forced to look for one among the humans.

Chapter 816 Shadow Of The Red Maple Empire (3)

Yang Qing wasn't sure about what criteria it used to search for its successors but he guessed with its dwindling lifespan the standards had to have been growing lower and lower by the year till finally, it found one in the founders of the Red Maple Empire.

Seven adventurers wandered into the territory of the red maple spirit in search of fortunes. Those seven people as denoted in the notes didn't seem to have anything outstanding about them other than the fact by the time they stumbled onto the territory of the red maple spirit they were just as desperate as it was.

Those seven cultivators had been members of the Odyssey Horizon Guild, they were seasoned explorers at the core formation realm who had formed a partnership with each other out of convenience.

The Odyssey Horizon Guild was one of the oldest organizations on the continent sharing that same reputation with the Dragon Meadow, with both these organizations rumored to be older than even the two holy lands.

When it came to renown, the Odyssey Horizon Guild was pretty well-known when compared to its counterpart in the Dragon Meadow. Other than people with significant connections, few knew about the Dragon Meadow, and even those who knew about it didn't know much.

Take Yang Qing for example, he knew for a fact that the Dragon Meadow was real, a bit of what it dealt with, and a little bit of history but he had no idea of how to get in contact with them let alone find where it was located. It was always stepped in a huge veil of mystery, but it was different for the Odyssey Horizon Guild. Everyone knew about it. Whether it was a cultivator or a mortal, someone in the villages or someone in the cities, a mother, a child, or a grasshopper chewing a blade of grass by the road, they all knew of it.

Novel Bards sang countless tales about it of the explorers who discovered wealth beyond their imagination, unraveled mysteries of the heavens, with the heavens and earth as their blanket and tent, there was no way they would not dare venture, slowly unveiling the secrets of the world to the rest.

With tales like that floating around it wasn't difficult for every child to be enamored by the prospect of being one of those explorers with nothing but the clothes on their back, the sword on their waist diving fearlessly into the mysteries of the world, drinking with dragons, dancing with phoenixes, drinking from the cup of wisdom offered by the most ancient of existences such as the long-lived parasol tree spirit, unearthing secrets that told a tale of a bygone era spanning millions and millions of years back.

Every single child dreamed of living such a life, being the heroic carefree figure, a glorious member of the Odyssey Horizon Guild, and Yang Qing had been no exception, that was up until he felt the fearsome pressure of a peak stage foundation establishment spirit beast when he was just a fledgling snort filled six-year-old body refinement cultivator. That terrifying experience sobered him up to the realities of the world, and how dangerous it was.

He could hardly breathe under the fearsome pressure of a radiant flaming comb chicken, how would he be able to dance with a phoenix or gamble with a dragon, if he couldn't handle even a chicken?lightsnovel

That day, he realized that being an explorer may not be for him. That realization was something that dawned on every single cultivator who becomes an explorer and they're in the thick of it. They realize that post isn't as glamorous as it was made out to be and it was fraught with dangers at every turn.

Being a cultivator was perilous and being an explorer was even more so. Explorers usually went by another name, it wasn't spoken of in the open but it was still known. They were called the living corpses.

From the moment you became an explorer, you should consider your life forfeit, and that statement rang true for the seven founders of the Red Maple Empire. In a scramble for a treasure they found while diving into some ruin, they ended up offending someone they should not have when they maimed the son of a rank 3 clan leader in the vie for the treasure.

In a ruin or mysterious realm, all's fair in the fight for a treasure, status and background matter little in there but that is only if you can ensure what happens in there never leaks out. The seven founders fought with that son over a treasure and won that bout and they were well on their way to killing him to avoid any mishaps when he used a secret technique to escape and eventually left the ruin.

The attempted murder was a reasonable choice on their part. They had already maimed and gravely injured that young master, it would be naive to assume that young master would let it go if they left him a path to life on account of his status. The best and surest way to avoid any troubles was to silence him, which they failed to do.

They immediately left the ruin using every means at their disposal to hide their tracks from that clan. The seven of them were only in the core formation realm and had angered a rank 3 clan, they could only flee and hide, and flee and hide they did until their paths led them to the doors of the red maple spirit.

There was no better place to hide than there. Unless one had a death wish, humans were prohibited from stepping foot in that place. It was the perfect place for those seven cultivators to hide. If the worst was to happen, for them, it was better to die at the hands of the red maple spirit than whatever fate awaited them if they fell into the clutches of that clan.

Their gamble proved worthwhile as they managed to not only guarantee their lives but also profit from disaster. The red maple spirit chose its successor from one of them.

Chapter 817 Shadow Of The Red Maple Empire (4)

How it chose its successor was not mentioned, but what was mentioned was one of those seven cultivators managed to gain its recognition and with it, its entire fortune including a life and soul essence baptism in which the red maple spirit poured everything that constituted it, into its successor, all the insights, all its traits, everything was poured into one of the seven cultivators, who had their entire body, spirit, essence and soul transformed by the baptism.

In every essence, it was like they had become a progeny of the red maple spirit, gaining the bloodline of the red maple spirit. Yang Qing wasn't sure of how factual it was but after the life soul baptism, less than three months later that cultivator broke through to the palace realm.

The name of that cultivator was Duan Qui, who eventually became the first Empress of the Red Maple Empire. As for the remaining six cultivators who accompanied her while they were not fortunate to be chosen by the red maple spirit as its successor, the red maple spirit in consideration of their relation to its chosen successor.

They received thirty percent of all the wealth and resources the red maple spirit had accumulated in its life which considering how long it had lived and the strength it had, the wealth and resources it shared were more than enough to support a young rank 3 family, be it in terms of quality and quantity.

Mo Li, Chen Fu, Gui Ling, Zhang Ren, Gong Zhi, and Deng Wei were the six cultivators. Five of them ended up creating families of their own which grew into the five noble clans of the Red Maple Empire, while the remaining one didn't form a clan of his own but instead married into one by marrying Duan Qui.

Mo Li, Chen Fu, Gui Ling, Zhang Ren, and Gong Zhi were the ones who ended up creating their own families which persist to date as the five noble clans while Deng Wei was the one who married Duan Qui, adopting her family name as his own.

Of all seven cultivators, Yang Qing found Deng Wei to be the most intriguing. When the history of the Red Maple Empire is talked about, little is mentioned about Deng Wei other than the fact he married Duan Qui. Other than that, nothing else is known, with some even saying he was unworthy of being considered as one of the founding seven. Countless historians believed that his consideration was out of face for their founding empress, Duan Qui.

lightsNovel He was nothing more than a live-in son-in-law who was lucky enough to hug the right thigh, elevating his status in life.

If he had any abilities, why did he not start his family like the others? Countless historians and scholars surmised that the only reason he did that was that he realized his inadequacies and Duan Qui having a tender heart, took him as her partner making Deng Wei an object of contradiction as he was both envied and mocked by most.

What intrigued Yang Qing wasn't that contradiction, but something else. With nothing but time during his vacation, Yang Qing dug into everything he could about those seven cultivators, pouring through countless accounts and pieces of information and one of them had a unique account compared to the rest.

That account gave a completely different tale when compared to the others and that difference was Deng Wei. That account said Deng Wei had been the pillar of that group. The reason they were able to survive long enough as explorers with no background to lean on was because of him, and when that rank three clan pursued them, the only reason they were able to survive long enough was because of him, even decided to venture into the territory of the red maple spirit was because of him.

From the way that account portrayed it, the other founding members did not want to go there and it was only because of his insistence that they did, and once inside, the person the red maple spirit chose as its successor, Duan Qui, it only chose her because of its admiration and awe of Deng Wei.

The author of that account said Deng Wei had the bloodline of the treefolk, it was unknown which, but he had one which was why he was so insistent of going into the territory of the red maple spirit. To others, that place was a death trap, but to him, thanks to his bloodline, that place was a sanctuary.lightsnovel

Treefolk just like dragons, and phoenixes, were descendants of the ancients. Their bloodline was just as noble and a treefolk would be treated as sovereign by spiritual plants that gained sentience, similar to how dragons and phoenix would be treated by other spirit beasts.

When Deng Wei entered its territory, the red maple spirit instantly recognized his treefolk bloodline which was why they were not kicked out when they came in and how it decided its successor so quickly. Even at its prime without the threat of death looming over it, the red maple spirit would still have welcomed that group gladly, as long as Deng Wei was within their midst.

When it came to spirit beasts and spiritual plants, they cultivated to achieve perfection in their states which they equated to achieving nobility, which was why to spirit beasts, the soul formation realm was known as the sovereign realm.

Their end goal was to achieve a bloodline or an essence that was similar to the dragons, and phoenixes, and in the case of the spiritual plants, their aim for the peak was to reach the standards of the treefolk.

To the red maple spirit, being around one with a treefolk bloodline was no different than meeting its ancestor who had reached the absolute peak of what it was aiming for. Even with a higher cultivation base, in front of Deng Wei, it was no different than a junior.

That account said the red maple spirit didn't choose who its successor would be, but instead left that choice to Deng Wei. As a treefolk, he didn't need it, so when asked to choose, he chose Duan Qui whom he felt would be the right fit as the successor among the six of them. Whether his feelings for her had anything to do with it was unknown, but Duan Qui became the red maple spirit's successor.

No matter how outlandish it seemed, with no other accounts matching it, Yang Qing was inclined to believe that story for a couple of reasons, the primary one being, from all stories of the Red Maple Empire, it was already clear, the red maple spirit didn't think highly of humans and as such even if it was close to death, there was little chance it would use the life soul essence baptism and transfer over everything it ever was to a human.

Leaving your entire inheritance down to the very essence of your being to a race you did not trust at all, was something Yang Qing struggled to believe it would do, even under fear of death. In its shoes, even on his deathbed, Yang Qing would not leave his wealth to those he distrusted, he would rather leave it to someone he trusted, even if they did not show much potential, he would rather risk it.

He had doubts the red maple spirit would act differently. Only one thing would make it react the way it did, and that was at the request of someone it revered, and to an awakened spiritual plant, it would deny the request if it was made by a dragon, but not a treefolk.

But if Deng Wei had such a powerful bloodline, how come he was never mentioned at all other than being the partner of the first empress and scorned by later generations because of it?

What happened to him? Sadly that account never mentioned it, and Yang Qing could never find anything related to him other than in that one account.

Chapter 818 Shadow Of The Red Maple Empire (5)

The accounts of what happened before the establishment of the Red Maple Empire with its founders, more specifically Deng Wei, was the only thing with contradiction, and one could argue it wasn't truly in contradiction as only one account from multitudes portrayed a tale that was different from the norm. Only those with wildly curious minds like Yang Qing would entertain some truth in that account, with most dismissing it as the mad ramblings of a scholar trying to get fame or some misinformation scheme by the enemies of the Red Maple Empire trying to muddy its history.

Other than the difference on what happened when those founders met with the red maple spirit, everything else when it concerned what happened after, was the same.

After gaining the red maple spirit's recognition those seven cultivators grew their abilities in leaps and bounds, with Duan Qui being ahead of the race when she stepped onto the palace realm a few months later.

With her already taking that jump, they no longer had to fear the rank three clan that was after them. Duan Qui was already a palace realm expert and even though she had just fleshly broken through, she had the insights of a peak palace stage expert within her, and not only that, she also had the resources that the expert had left behind.

Spiritual plants may not necessarily require the same resources as human cultivators but that did not mean there were not universal resources that worked across all species. The red maple spirit had accumulated a lot of resources in the duration of its long lifespan. It had expended quite the sum in its pursuit to break through to the palace realm, but it still had a lot left over.

This tidy sum was able to support a rank 3 organization several times over. Among the wealth that was left untouched, some were spoils of war it had taken off human cultivators that thought themselves powerful enough to break into its territory unimpeded. Duan Qui even as a new palace realm expert had a lot of foundation to rely on to guarantee her safety along with the rest, all due to the inheritance left to her by the red maple spirit.

Luckily, even with the newfound wealth and the change in their status, they did not make any flashy moves and opted to seclude themselves silently in the territory of the red maple spirit for hundreds of years bidding their time as they slowly grew their strength.

Even without a powerful enemy after them, Yang Qing felt that provided they had a good head above their shoulders, which he felt they had, they would have still done the same thing. They had just landed a windfall and they were too weak to own it. Birds die for food, and men die for treasures.

In the cultivation world, it was considered a sin for a cultivator to possess treasure that he or she could not protect. It was a sure way of dying early and that couldn't be more true for those seven cultivators. The red maple spirit was a peak palace stage cultivator known to have lived longer than even some domain experts, who knew how many treasures it had accumulated over the years.

That reason was why even with its territory sworn off humans, there were still some who risked getting in. The allure of getting their hands on the red maple spirit's fortune was just that tempting.

What would they do if they heard the red maple spirit had passed and left its fortune to seven no-name explorers with just one of them being in the palace stage?

If such news broke through, cultivators from the coast of Millionsfold Treasure Ocean to the coast of Celestial Ocean would already be swarming to loot the area of everything and those seven cultivators would hardly be spared in the plunder and would likely be made to spit out every single bone they consumed.

Keeping a low profile until they had the necessary strength to guarantee their lives and the treasures they were left with was the right choice and that they did. The records showed that for close to seven hundred to eight hundred years, not one of them took so much as a step outside the territory of the red maple spirit as they slowly improved their abilities.

During that period, three out of the seven cultivators were mentioned to have broken through to the palace realm bringing their total including Duan Qui, to four palace realm experts.

Of the three who broke through, one was Mo Li. Of the handouts handed to them by the red maple spirit, from the resources he got, one of them was a saber legacy called the dark falling stars saber art, which was rumored to be a middle-tier blue-grade art. Using that profound art, his talents with the saber, and a high-quality environment, he was able to breakthrough to the palace realm.

Other than him, Chen Fu and Zhang Ren were the other two to breakthrough to the palace realm. Both, just like Mo Li, made the best use of the resources and environment provided to make great strides in their cultivation.

As for the remaining three, though Gong Zhi and Gui Ling had not yet reached the palace realm, they were well on their way to it, having reached the quasi-palace stage and even though they were slightly lacking, that was only in terms of cultivation base. In terms of functionality, they were just as valuable to the group as the four palace realm experts. Gong Zhi was a blacksmith, who at the time was well on his way to becoming a blue grade blacksmith while Gui Ling was an alchemist well on her way to becoming a blue grade alchemist.

With such expertise, both would be highly valued wherever they went, even without a palace realm cultivation base.

As for Deng Wei, the records said he had the weakest cultivation base, still stuck at the late stage of the core formation realm, completely lacking in any talents other than being the dao partner of Duan Qui.

After exactly one thousand years, they finally let themselves be known, well all except Deng Wei. At that point in time, Duan Qui had already reached the fifth stage of the palace realm, leading the group, while the rest had already reached the palace stage, teetering at the first stage with Mo Li being the only person with the cultivation base that was closest to Duan Qui, at the second stage.

Seven palace realm experts appearing out of the blue caught a lot of eyes, especially when said experts, human experts, appeared in the territory of the red maple spirit. Their presence there drew a lot of questions about what happened to the red maple spirit and it wasn't long before news of its passing filtered through. [lightsnovel](#)

As was expected a few waves were created when such news broke through, with a few cultivators letting greed of what potentially the red maple spirit left behind, guide them. It wasn't long before violent confrontations broke through between those greedy cultivators and the seven founders.

A line-up of seven palace realm cultivators supported by the vast resources of a long-lived peak palace realm spiritual plant was nothing to scoff at. Those seven, more so Duan Qui, who was the most powerful of the group quickly stood out as she defeated opponent after opponent, and thanks to the insane vitality the baptism afforded her, and the attunement she had with the former grounds of the red maple spirit, she was able to face multiple opponents, and even if she couldn't defeat them, she could contain them long enough for the rest to act.

After the death of over a dozen palace realm experts, of which, amongst that number featured palace realm experts from the clan that was after them, few dared set their sights on whatever fortunes the red maple spirit may have left them, not unless an organization backed by a late stage palace realm expert decided to act, and to curb that potential threat, it's unknown how, but those seven managed to form a partnership with the Golden Bamboo Pavillion.

lightsnovel It wasn't long after that, they declared the territory of the red maple spirit as the Red Maple Empire, with Golden Bamboo Pavilion serving as witnesses to that declaration.

At the time, many wondered why they went with Red Maple Empire, and not Red Maple Kingdom. By all accounts, as per the norm, going with the Red Maple Kingdom first before they switched to Red Maple Empire, was the expected route. They were new, and other than the seven of them, they had no subjects, and when it came to territory, the territory of the red maple spirit covered about twenty-five thousand square kilometers which was roughly the size of some minor province in a rank 4 kingdom.

In terms of territory and population, they were severely lacking to even be considered a Kingdom, let alone an Empire. Among rank four nations, not one was an empire, and it was with reason. Those who would dub their nations as such, needed territory of a certain size and power, and the seven founders had one of those things, yes, but territory and population they were lacking.

Even calling themselves a kingdom was a huge stretch, but with time, it became clear why they went ahead and dubbed themselves an empire from the jump. They quickly revealed their fangs and their ambitions along with it as they subjugated all the land that was within a hundred thousand kilometer radius of the former territory of the red maple spirit.

Clans, sects, small kingdoms, and other organizations were forced to cede their territory either willingly or by force. Most of those organizations were not powerful with a bulk of them being rank four, so they surrendered immediately, with some even offering to be vassals.

But there were others that resisted, and those that did, one or two had once produced a palace realm expert, while some had one living palace realm expert to hold the helm. It ended badly for both these groups who were destroyed with extreme fanfare as a show of force and an example to the rest.

For the next hundred or so years after their declaration, they wantonly expanded their territory till it was veritably the size of a true empire.

It was from those records that Yang Qing learned where the feud between the Red Maple Empire and the Five Clovers Kingdom started as the former had been one of the kingdoms that had lost a part of its territory to them.

Of course back then, when it did, it didn't have a palace realm expert at the helm, nor did it have the backing of the Zou family. It had no option but to swallow the humiliation until it was at a better place to pay back that vengeance, and pay back it got with the war between the two sides still ongoing to date.

Its rise to an empire, or even becoming an empire itself was something that Yang Qing found puzzling. The red maple spirit seemed to be the reclusive sort. It may have denied entry to humans and even retaliated fiercely against those who infringed on its territory, but it couldn't be said to be domineering, considering how lax it was with its neighbors even if they were humans. If it was, they would not have settled so close to its territory.

As its inheritor, Yang Qing would have expected Duan Qui to at least adopt part of its nature as a form of acknowledgment and respect as its successor.

In the cultivation world, there were a lot of cultivators who continued certain acts that their masters did as a way to honor them after their passing with some even going to the extent of taking over in their master's place if it was something duty-

bound like protecting a certain place, a certain clan, a certain sect, a certain person because it was what their master used to do.

In Duan Qui's case, Yang Qing would have expected her to maintain the territory of the red maple spirit as it was, free of the chaos and explosion of expansion. Forming an empire was the last thing he would have expected.

Then again, maybe it was his bias spirit talking. In her shoes, he would have definitely chosen the path of a recluse and tucked away in the territory of the red maple spirit, enjoying the resources slowly, improving himself, selling a few treasures to eat out every now and then, and using some to buy resources that would help stop intruders. Creating an empire was the last thing he would ever think of doing.

Somehow he couldn't help but feel that the red maple spirit was rolling over in the afterlife in anger for what its territory had become, especially with the events that came to light.

Chapter 819 Shadow Of The Red Maple Empire (6)

"Was this something they decided on in the spur of the moment or was it something that had been stirring in them, specifically her?" Yang Qing muttered as his gaze lingered on the name Duan Qui.

"How did they manage to acquire the cooperation of the Golden Bamboo Pavilion? Though the coffers of the red maple spirit were likely to be substantial be it in terms of quality or quantity, could it be enough to draw the attention of the Golden Bamboo Pavilion or was there something else?" mused Yang Qing as he thought of a few possibilities.

There were a lot of questions surrounding the Red Maple Empire, especially when it concerned its formation during the early days.

When Yang Qing read through it, no matter how many accounts he read through, he always felt like the story had a lot of relevant missing gaps, and he didn't know whether that was deliberate or accidental.

After firmly establishing themselves as an empire, it wasn't long before the population problem resolved itself. They used the resources they got from the red maple spirit to quickly develop the territories they had swallowed up.

In a short two hundred years, it was finally worthy of its title as the Red Maple Empire with Duan Qui as the revered empress and Mo Li, Chen Fu, Gui Ling, Zhang Ren, and Gong Zhi rose alongside her as the heads of the five founding great clans of the Red Maple Empire. With the growing territory, more noble families were created but none could match up to the six families, something that continues to persist to the present.

But, even with the continued hegemony of the five noble families, from what Yang Qing read, back then they were all similar in foundations. When it came to power and accumulations there was not much distinction to one another, especially when they were starting up. Back then, so they were not swallowed up by the 'new nobles' they constantly supported one another as the founders of the Empire.

Their interests were intertwined with one another, and unlike Duan Qui who was a middle-stage palace realm expert and had nothing to worry about because of her strength, the same couldn't be said of the other five clan heads. They were still in the early stages of the palace realm, and while that put them

ahead of the rest, who knew how long it would take for the new nobles of the empire to catch up to them.

They therefore constantly built one another, supporting one another and ensuring not one family was left behind as they put up a united front, but somewhere along the way in their long history that camaraderie disappeared and it wasn't long before they bared their fangs against one another.

lightsNovel The reports gathered by the two roaming inquisitors and even the Yellow Plains County branch showed the constant power struggle between those families which even seemed to have extended to the royal family. They were constantly trying to undermine one another at every turn with both overt and covert schemes which were as bloody as it could get where greed and power were involved.

The scenes happening in Purple City were the clearest indication of it. Those families had gone to the extent of starting up gangs and even getting in bed with blood cultivators in their pursuits to either try and dominate, eliminate, or weaken the other party.

About the only thing stopping all-out war from amongst themselves was the threat posed by the Five Clovers Kingdom and the Duan royal family, and one could argue they were more wary of the royal family than the Five Clovers Kingdom.

In 75,000 years, the records showed Duan Qui didn't seem to have improved past the middle stages of the palace realm and the other heads were never able to catch up with her either, even with the resources of the red maple spirit as their support and the generations that succeeded them were unable to match up to them.

The Duan royal family was unable to produce another cultivator that was able to reach the same heights as Duan Qui, but with the resources she left to her by the red maple spirit which was greater than what the spirit had given the rest, the Duan family was always able to produce a palace realm expert in every generation which couldn't be said about the others.

When it came to the rest, some failed to produce even a single one after their founders passed. The Chen and the Gong family were prime examples of it, though it was easier for the latter to remain relevant even without a palace realm expert as they had the legacy of a blue-grade blacksmith to rely on. Their founder had managed to use the resources provided to him to create a refining legacy for his descendants that would continue to serve them long enough after his passing.

Thanks to his efforts, the Gong family didn't have to rely on the finite resources the red maple spirit had left them. The legacy he left behind created a path that would establish the continuity of his clan. While others tried to get into blacksmithing just like the Gong family, few could match their accumulation. This left the family in a unique position and it was also the only family that didn't seem to be involved much in the feuds happening amongst them.

But the same couldn't be said about the rest. The founder of the Chen family had proven his dao through martial comprehension, however, his descendants lacked his talents which caused them to veer off to another path. Because of the influence the red maple spirit had in its surroundings when it was alive, its territory was extremely conducive to the growth of spiritual plants which was something the founding families capitalized on greatly when they were establishing the foundations of their empire.

Each of the six founding clans had great reserves of spiritual herbs stored up over the years even if it wasn't their primary pursuit. The Gui family was one of the primary beneficiaries of the large supply of spiritual herbs and plants because of their founder, Gui Ling, who had been a blue-grade alchemist.lightsnovel

Just like the Gong family, the Gui family had been able to firmly establish its roots in alchemy growing to the point that it overtook the other founding clans, all except the Duan Clan.

When the Chen family failed to produce another gifted martial genius, they pivoted and decided to focus all their efforts on alchemy. They may not have had a blue-grade alchemist like the Gui family did, but with the vast resources they had when it came to spiritual herbs and plants, they did manage to produce top-tier orange-grade alchemists.

When it came to the Gui family, other than Gui Ling, they struggled to produce another blue-grade alchemist. They were well ahead of the other families when it came to alchemy, having the wisdom and accumulation of a blue-grade alchemist to rely on, but without a blue-grade alchemist, their gap from the rest was small, which was what emboldened the rest to try and replicate what the Gui family did and try and produce a blue grade alchemist of their own.

Whatever else might be said about the Red Maple Empire, they were lacking in many areas but that could not be said when it came to their reserves of spiritual plants, and the six founding clans had the highest reserves.

With such resources at their disposal, it could be understood why each of them felt that they could produce a blue-grade alchemist given enough time.

The feud among those families grew out of that ambition, the race to produce the first blue-grade alchemist, whoever did, would be the winner, and the price, it didn't take a genius to figure it was the entirety of the Red Maple Empire as for the loser, considering the vicious lengths that each of those families went to, it wouldn't be a stretch to think that the victor would seek the annihilation of the rest.

"Maybe this is the real reason they have not amounted to much in these 75,000 years, who knows in the next 1,000 years the Five Clovers Kingdom may completely overtake them, and then eventually there may not be a Red Maple Empire.." said Yang Qing with a sigh.

The Five Clovers Kingdom already had six palace realm experts while the Red Maple Empire had five. Despite the Five Clovers Kingdom having an extra palace realm expert when compared to the Red Maple Empire, as things stood the latter had an advantage over the former despite having fewer palace realm experts, and the reason for that was four of the palace realm experts of the Five Clovers Kingdom were all in the first stage of the palace realm and the one with the highest cultivation base only being in the second stage of the palace realm.

On the Red Maple Empire's side on the other hand, only one of their five palace realm experts was in the first stage of the palace stage while the highest had reached the third stage of the palace realm which gave them an advantage over the Five Clovers Kingdom.

But how long would that advantage last given how fragmented they were? of the five palace realm experts they had, three were from the royal family while the remaining two, one was from the Mo family and the remaining one, who was the weakest, was from the Zhang family.

If push really came to shove where they had to lay everything down on the line, could the royal family trust those two palace realm experts from the two families to have their backs? Or would they sooner drive a knife in their backs to give themselves an advantage?

The Five Clovers Kingdom on the other hand, didn't have such problems. They were united, fueled by the righteous ambition of reclaiming what they had lost which was why they worked tirelessly to achieve it and luck seemed to be on their side. They gained the attention of the Zou family, a rank two family, who supported them purely to spite the Golden Bamboo Pavilion that they had a feud with, but even still, whatever the reasons may be, the support they provided coupled with the efforts of the kingdom, they managed to catapult to where they are today.

A kingdom that didn't have a single palace realm expert now had six, and who knew what the situation would be in the next one thousand years?

Yang Qing may not know what will happen with the Five Clovers Kingdom in the future, but Yang Qing knew for a fact that the Red Maple Empire would be marginally weaker after the next few days.

"The Chen family it is.." Yang Qing said as he put one of the jade slips to the side, taking out his communication talisman to call Yu Gen to inform him of his choice on the first case to settle.

There were about twenty minutes before the appointed time which Yang Qing used to meditate slightly as he waited for Yu Gen to gather all the respected parties in his courtroom.

Chapter 820 Case Against The Chen Family (1)

Ten minutes in, Yang Qing cut off his meditation, making his way to the courtroom.

"Thankfully they are not here yet.." said Yang Qing as he took a seat in his podium and neatly arranged all the jade slips in order. Said jade slips contained all relevant and irrelevant information about the case.

lightsNovel com Once everything was in order, he looked up, seemingly gauging the size of the courtroom before coming to a decision a moment later. He took out his medallion and placed it at the center of the desk that had a grey faded-out drawing of a gold eagle whose size seemed to match perfectly with his medallion.

The instant the medallion and the drawing made contact, the color of the drawing changed as it vibrated with an ethereal white color which triggered a chain reaction as countless arrays started lighting up across different areas around the courtroom from the walls to the nebulous sky-looking roof, to the flow.

The arrays in these locations all lit up simultaneously and immediately after the courtroom expanded as it doubled in size. It was like the space itself had been expanded while the furniture and the design of the room seemed to remain in place.

Using his medallion as the controller, Yang Qing kept adjusting the size of the courtroom until he found the size that he found acceptable.

"This should be more than enough.." he said with a satisfied nod.

Not long after the courtroom doors opened slightly as Xia Ting briskly walked in leaking her lips in satisfaction.

"Little brother, Yang Qing, thank you. You're the most generous judge I've ever had the pleasure of working with. I am even thinking of switching my role as a roaming inquisitor and become a regular inquisitor under your court.." Xia Ting gingerly said as she held her chin in serious contemplation.

Yang Qing, who had been trying to find a comfortable sitting position in preparation for what was more than likely to be a long case, almost slipped and fell as a result of Xia Ting's statement.

Almost on reflex he wanted to yell, "DON'T DO THAT!!" but he quickly held himself back and instead adopted a softer approach.

"While I would love to have a gifted talented senior in yourself, senior sister Xia Ting, but would the roaming inquisitors allow it?" Yang Qing said feigning a look of concern, while deep down what he was saying was,

"Roaming inquisitors don't you dare let this glutton loose. I can't afford her, please, please, don't let her go. Order, I know I have always complained about how exploitative you are, but just this once, just this once, I will be your advent supporter.. Please! Please, I am begging you, exploit senior sister Xia Ting to the fullest. Don't give her any leave days, fill her schedule with cases that never stop, throw in a few of the unsolvable ones too for good measure, and maybe, if it's not too much trouble, open a couple of soup shops all over the continent, so she's not here all the time.

If you do this Order, I promise to work like a hor... I promise to work like a newborn colt for you.."

Yang Qing looked up after his short pious prayer and plea just in time to catch Xia Ting's response.

"You're right. If I made the request now, Deputy Rong Fen is liable to give me a beating and even add more cases to my otherwise bloating workpile.." Xia Ting said as she winced while touching the top of her head almost as if someone had just hit her there.

"I will need to at least log in 3,000 cases, and I am 1,700 cases shy of it, and I will need to train my replacement for them to even remotely consider my request. With how chaotic things are, meeting the case quota would be easy in a few short years, but training another roaming inquisitor..Those demons.." Xia Ting added as she vengefully clenched her fists.lightsnovel

Mirroring her emotions, Yang Qing wore a downcast look as he said, "It's a shame.."

while inwardly he was screaming in jubilation.

"I knew I could always count on your generous black-

hearted nature.." Yang Qing emotionally thought, almost moved to tears.

"You don't have to cry, little brother Yang Qing. 1,700 cases might seem a lot, but it is not, if Yu Gen and I work tirelessly, in two years we will be able to complete it, and as for training a replacement, I think if I go all out and call in some favors, three years should be more than enough time to complete it.

Please bear with it for five years, after that, even if I have to cause a scene, I will make sure to leave the roaming inquisitors.." said Xia Ting deeply touched by how distraught Yang Qing seemed to be that she wasn't joining her.

Yang Qing's eyes froze and his mind went blank as his future as a pauper swimming in debt while Xia Ting swam in delicious soup, flashed in his mind.

Luckily he was immediately pulled out of his stupor when the doors swung open again and in the lead was Yu Gen.

"What happened to him?" Yu Gen wondered when he saw Yang Qing's pallid face, moving his gaze over to Xia Ting who had a compassionate consoling look on her face as she nodded encouragingly to Yang Qing.

"What's happening here?"

Seeing that he couldn't figure it out in the short time it took him to reach the center of the courtroom, he decided to shelf the matter as he focused on the matter at hand.

Behind him, he was followed by a procession of over twenty cultivators who were of different cultivation bases, ages, genders, and from the look of things, organization. But despite the differences, they all had one thing in common, which was they looked absolutely pale, paler than Yang Qing was.

Seeing how terrified they were was the pick-me-up Yang Qing needed to free himself from his petrifying thoughts.

Once the last person had reached the center of the courtroom, which thanks to the expansion Yang Qing had done, fitted them perfectly, Yu Gen arranged them in a specific manner before moving to the side and joining Xia Ting.

With everything in place, it was now Yang Qing's show.