

Emperor 4481

Chapter 4481: Dark Street

Dark was the largest street in Golden and hosted the largest and busiest market. Unlike the other main streets that specialized in larger branches and franchises, Dark had many independent merchants and buyers.

Most importantly, it allowed for the selling of goods from dubious origins. Thus, it became the best place in perhaps all of Sky Border to dispose of stolen goods.

The thieves and bandits would come here while hiding their identities and selling the goods. Thus, the market had a negative reputation - a place for swindlers and criminals.

Of course, blatant crimes weren't allowed but trickeries and swindling were common. It was a chaotic place not in terms of laws and regulations. It's just that there was no guarantee for transactions, especially from independent merchants.

Thus, one could buy goods that eventually turned out to be stolen or inauthentic.

In a sense, this actually boosted business for the street. Rumor has it that with ample money, one can buy anything here.

This might be an exaggeration but it accurately reflected the prosperity of this market. Millions of goods flowed in and out of Dark Street on a daily basis.

Jian Ming came in order to find members of the Yu. They normally came to get rid of stolen goods.

When the group entered the street, they were greeted with a bustling atmosphere. People came from all over the world. Various races could be seen here - those with three heads and six hands, a demon with a snake head and a human body, ghastly beings, skullwalkers...

Some were notorious villains of their own regions. Nonetheless, they put on a good act here due to the safety laws. Therefore, the street was a safe place to observe the unsavory members of society.

Outside of the large and reputable stores, countless merchants displayed their goods along the street.

They either peddled their merchandise or simply placed them on the ground and slept, waiting for customers to come. Some had a board displaying their items then they would lean on the wall and rest.

Due to the complicated nature of the street, one could meet hidden masters anywhere as well. An inconspicuous old man could turn out to be an invincible ancestor. This was another reason why no one wanted to cause trouble here.

"Sir, please come take a look. This is a myriad tribulation pill that has just left the cauldron from our ancient clan." A young merchant immediately came over to the group.

"Go away." Jian Ming blocked his path and said: "Myriad tribulation pill? This is just a common anti-lightning pill with a layer of ash on top that you're trying to sell for ten times the price."

"Oh, one of us, my bad, my bad." The merchant wasn't embarrassed at all.

“One of us my ass!” Jian Ming said indignantly.

As they walked a bit farther, another came over and whispered: “Gentlemen, this lowly one will let you in on a little secret. I have an ancient scroll right now that I dug out from an ancient grave on Mount Tai’a. That grave had such wonderful visual phenomena...”

“Have you trained with it?” Jian Ming stared at him.

“I tried but I couldn’t read the ancient text. It must be some immemorial mantras beyond my reach, but I can see immortal energies floating around you three...”

“Who actually believes your bullshit?” Jian Ming glared and said: “Even birds don’t want to shit on Mount Tai’a, there’s no ancient grave there. Plus, even if there was, I would have dug it way before a useless asshole like you.”

“Ah, I see, a fellow brother.” The merchant laughed.

“Keep talking and I’ll dig up your family’s graves.” Jian Ming threatened.

The merchant laughed and didn’t mind the comment. He then ran off to look for another prey.

The same thing happened several times along the way. They were all chased away by Jian Ming.

It looked like the youth was a frequent visitor of Dark Street and has grown quite used to it. In fact, he seemed to have many friends here.

Some came over to say hi but Jian Ming chased them away while whispering: “Don’t pull this crap in front of my ancestor or he’ll eradicate your clan.”

He successfully scared them and made them scam.

“Brat, so this is how you spend all your time, just loitering in this place. Your ancestor will definitely break your legs.” Wise smiled wryly after seeing this.

“Hehe, Ancestor, please forgive me, I merely strolled around here to relax and haven’t done anything wrong, please don’t tell my old geezer.” Jian Ming chuckled.

The Jian considered themselves to be an aristocratic clan. Jian Ming didn’t quite fit this role, not even in the slightest. The Jian Ancestor naturally wouldn’t like this.

As for Li Qiye, he only smiled and didn’t comment.

Jian Ming was certainly familiar with Dark Street. He started asking a merchant for information: “Yo, have you seen the fat guy from the Yu recently?”

“How the hell do I know?” The merchant responded.

“Stop, I know that he sells stolen goods to your clan.” Jian Ming said.

“I really haven’t seen him recently...” The merchant coughed.

Jian Ming kept on asking around to no avail while Li Qiye spent his time looking at the waves of people with a smile.

“Great Immortal, Great Immortal.” A middle-aged man with a long mustache suddenly came closer and talked to Li Qiye.

He wore a wrinkly daoist robe with numerous patches. Shifty-looking would be the right word to describe him.

He had a cloth sign on his back with the character meaning “Calculation”. His small eyes flashed brightly, resembling the eyes of a mouse.

“Great Immortal, if you need any supreme treasure, just say the word and I will get it for you.” He enthusiastically suggested.

“What do you have?” Li Qiye smiled.

“Hah, I don’t have anything on me right now but if you have something in mind, I will bring it to you for a negotiable price.” The daoist said.

Jian Ming didn’t buy it and sneered: “There’s a limit to bullshitting. As if you can get any supreme treasure.”

“Of course I can, I stake my clan’s reputation on it as long as the buyer has enough money.” The merchant patted his chest and proudly declared.

Unfortunately, his shifty appearance didn’t instill confidence.

“So I can pick anything?” Jian Ming was looking for trouble.

“Yes, you name the item and I name the price.” The daoist agreed.

Jian Ming naturally didn’t expect this.

However, the daoist was more interested in Li Qiye: “Great Immortal, would you tell me your desire?”

“Only a few things pique my interest.” Li Qiye said: “Very well, the nine heavenly treasures then.”

Chapter 4482: Earthseer Daoist

“About that...” The daoist’s expression changed after hearing Li Qiye.

“Haha, who boasted earlier? What now?” Jian Ming immediately kicked the horse while it is down and sneered: “You talked as if you had all the treasures in the world. Now, our young noble has spoken, go get them.”

“Heavenly treasures are only legends.” The daoist rubbed his palms awkwardly and said: “I’m afraid no one has seen them before, so we don’t even know if they are real. Even an immortal can’t conjure them out of thin air.”

“You don’t need an immortal for this, they’re only heavenly treasures.” Li Qiye teased.

The daoist shuddered and started thinking about the possibilities. He hurriedly regained his wits and smiled: “Young Noble, could you change your mind? There are many other wondrous artifacts around...”

“They can’t be that special if there are that many of them.” Li Qiye said: “True treasures are unique, one and only.”

“...” The daoist lost his confidence; his shifty eyes darted back and forth while trying to come up with a response.

“What is your name?” Li Qiye spared him by changing the topic.

“This little one is known as Earthseer Daoist.” The daoist introduced himself: “I can read the mysteries of the three worlds and the secrets of the future.”

“That’s a bold claim.” Li Qiye smiled: “I don’t think your ancestors would even dare to say the same thing if they were here.”

“Just like the rumors.” The daoist took a deep breath and said.

Jian Ming nearby continued: “Earthseer is your title yet you bragged about how you can steal anything earlier, isn’t this too much?”

“Of course not, this is just my side job to make some money. Plus, it is not stealing, call it the art of procurement instead. When the dao is right, the myriad items are up for grab...” The daoist said.

“I’m about to vomit.” Jian Ming said with disdain: “A lot of flowery words to hide the action of a thief. Side job? I believe it because your divining art is too inaccurate to make a living.”

“Nonsense!” The daoist finally became angry and turned red. He raised his voice: “My clan’s divining art is unmatched in all of Eight Desolaces. In fact, all divining arts are derived from our clan’s techniques. They are inadequate but we can even estimate the will of the heaven!”

He became emotional when bringing up his clan’s ability, clearly possessing full confidence.

Of course, this was indeed the case. It wouldn’t be an exaggeration to say that they could pry into the heaven’s mandate and the future.

Numerous big shots and dao lords have asked their clan for divination regarding the future. Unfortunately, the majority were turned away.

“I don’t know what heaven’s will you’re reading, but come, divine my fate, let’s see how good you are.” Jian Ming said.

The daoist flipped his palm and wanted to calculate with his fingers. Alas, he pulled back and uttered coldly: “No need to calculate to see your fate. Just one glance is enough.”

“Tell me what you saw then.” Jian Ming didn’t buy it.

“You are blessed with heavenly gifts but since your heart and mind are disorderly, you are destined for mediocrity. If this changes, then that’s another issue.” The daoist said.

“Bah!” Jian Ming only heard one thing from that sentence: “Mediocrity?! Bullshit, your entire clan is mediocre!”

“He's right.” Li Qiye interjected: “You need to learn self-control and restraint in order to not waste your good fortune.”

“Really?” Jian Ming listened carefully. Though they said the same thing, he believed Li Qiye far more.

Li Qiye chuckled and told the daoist: “Your heavengrasp art is not from your clan.”

The daoist was startled since Li Qiye knew everything. He said: “Great Immortal, your vision is impeccable. I came across it by accident and eventually became adept enough to keep wanting to try more.”

“Sounds like you're lucky too.” Jian Ming said.

The daoist seemed confident in his stealing ability as well. He arched his chest and said: “I can grasp anything in existence.”

“Are you sure?” Jian Ming said: “I heard that there is an extraordinary item hidden in True Immortal Sect. If you can grasp it, then I would have nothing but admiration for you.”

“True Immortal...” The daoist looked around, looking nervous.

“Have you learned nothing?” Wise Ancestor glared at Jian Ming.

This wasn't a joke. Wanting to steal something from True Immortal could have dire consequences if others found out.

Jian Ming was invested in this quarrel and laughed at the daoist: “Scared? That's fine, just stop bragging from now on.”

“Hah! True Immortal? I'm not scared of anything.” The daoist retorted: “That item has a heaven-defying origin and is kept deep in their sect. Few of their members have actually seen it.”

“You know about it too?” Jian Ming didn't expect this.

“It's not that big of a secret but even if it was, I can still calculate it.” The daoist boasted.

“As I said, stop talking about your swindling divining art. Just grab the item and I'll prostrate before you.” Jian Ming said.

“I don't care for your respect. If you can actually muster the payment, I will grasp the item.” The daoist wasn't a gentleman or a moralistic person. He had enough of being looked down upon.

“I don't have money but our clan has a lot.” Jian Ming retorted.

“I don't think your four clans together can come up with the sum.” The daoist sneered.

“You know about us?” Jian Ming became startled.

“Nothing can hide from my calculation.” The daoist boasted again.

“You probably obtained information about us before, it's understandable, our four clans are so prestigious and renowned to the rest of the world. You probably cowered after hearing our names.” Jian Ming said.

"I wouldn't be so proud since worthless descendants like you are not living up to your ancestors' prestige." The daoist barked back.

"As if you're any better." Jian Ming didn't hold back: "You talked about your prestigious divination clan earlier but all I see before me is a thief. You're a worthless descendant bringing shame to your ancestors too!"

"You!" The daoist became livid.

"Am I wrong here?" Jian Ming became complacent after seizing the upper hand.

"How foolish! Foolish beyond cure!" The daoist could only scold.

"Okay, our young noble only wants heavenly treasures. Since you can't get them, scram." Jian Ming tried to chase the daoist away.

The daoist ignored him this time and smiled at Li Qiye: "Great Immortal, are you interested in True Immortal's item?"

Chapter 4483: Seering Attempt

"Not interested." Li Qiye nonchalantly said.

"What is it that can interest you then, Great Immortal?" The daoist scratched his head.

"Are you senile? The young noble already said that he is interested in the nine heavenly treasures. Get him those artifacts and maybe he'll have a better opinion of you." Jian Ming chimed in.

"Ignorant brat, what do you know?" The daoist glanced at Jian Ming with disdain: "The heavenly treasures might not actually be treasures. They can be anything, a dimension or a world."

"Then I suppose you were mistaken about your peerless grasping skill. If it was actually as good as you claimed, then grasping dimensions and worlds shouldn't be a problem. Otherwise, don't use peerless to describe it." Jian Ming immediately responded.

"You-!" The daoist had a hard time dealing with the youth.

Jian Ming mocked: "You what? I am merely telling the truth. You're singing a different song than the one earlier."

The daoist's chest puffed up and down from anger; his heavy breathing caused his beard to sway.

"You know quite a few things, a testament to your clan's ability." Li Qiye commented.

"Hehehe, you're too kind, Great Immortal." The daoist's mood instantly became better: "It's just trivial stuff, not worth mentioning."

He spoke humbly but his face said anything but. His face brimmed with smugness.

"Can you show us your clan's legendary divining ability then, calculate to see whether the nine treasures actually exist or not." Jian Ming taunted.

"Brat, have you seen any before?" The daoist glared.

“Well, no...” Jian Ming answered honestly.

“Then do you know how mysterious and inscrutable they are?” The daoist uttered coldly.

“...” Jian Ming couldn’t answer. The treasures only existed in a few legends and even then, they weren’t documented clearly at all.

“What does this have to do with your clan’s divining art?” He argued.

“Fool. How can anyone even start calculating if they have no idea what it is in the first place? Do you know A’hua from Sword Continent? Is it a person or a dog, pretty or ugly? When there is no initial basis, there’s nothing to do.” The daoist coldly explained.

Jian Ming was on the losing side this time and couldn’t bite back.

“Hmph, a perfect example of rotten wood cannot be carved.” The daoist gave it another push, feeling quite good about the reversal.

“Bah, all I hear are excuses regarding your lack of ability. A true seer can close his eyes and see everything after a hand wave. You are just an empty bucket trying to put up a front, unable to calculate on top of being too scared.” Jian Ming said.

“Brat, tell me, what am I too scared of to calculate?” The daoist didn’t appreciate the slander.

“Is that so? Then do you have the audacity to calculate our young noble, hehehe? I doubt you will.” Jian Ming taunted.

“Ridiculous!” Wise Ancestor got enough of this and smacked Jian Ming for the who-knows-how-many-times.

“Hmph.” Jian Ming snorted and didn’t say anything else.

“Well...” The daoist turned towards Li Qiye and became tempted. In fact, he wanted to do so the moment he saw Li Qiye for the first time.

“Great Immortal, would it be alright if I read your fortune. It’ll be my first today so no charge.” The daoist said.

Li Qiye chuckled and said: “The heaven’s will can’t be read, it is beyond your capability.”

The daoist didn’t accept. It was one thing for Jian Ming to make fun of him since he didn’t take the youth seriously. Alas, it was different when it came from Li Qiye.

It sounded as if Li Qiye didn’t have a high evaluation of their clan’s fortune-reading technique.

“Great Immortal, please don’t look down on our technique. Our ancestors have gazed into the heaven’s will and the future before. In fact, our forefathers even observed the river of time. We dare to claim to be the best in all of Eight Desolaces.” He arched his chest and requested again: “So if you don’t mind, let me read your fortune.”

“Fine, let us see how much you have learned and if your clan’s technique has improved or otherwise.” Li Qiye agreed.

“Thank you.” The daoist bowed deeply and then took a deep breath.

His shady expression turned dignified. This actually made him look the part of a capable daoist with an impressive aura.

“The trickster is putting up quite a show.” Jian Ming murmured after seeing this, clearly changing his view on the daoist.

The daoist took out a box battered by time with white and yellow spots. However, upon closer inspection, it turned out to be made from a bone.

With activated heavenly gaze, they saw the box being filled with grand dao power of a natural source originating from the essences of the world.

Inside was his calculating tool - three divinatory trigrams in the form of turtle shells. They had numerous vein lines that were there from the start, seemingly depicting the dao of the world.

They were ancient and heavy. One could sense a faint temporal power flowing through them.

“Incredible artifacts.” Jian Ming couldn’t help but praise.

“These trigrams can communicate with heaven and earth. They’re true treasures.” Wise felt the same way despite not knowing much about fortune-telling.

Chapter 4484: Incalculable

The daoist picked up one of the shells and raised it up. He then placed it between his palms and in front of his chest while chanting quietly.

“What are you doing?” Jian Ming asked.

The daoist ignored him and continued chanting. Once finished, he pointed the shell at Li Qiye and said: “Great Immortal, let me heat up my trigram.”

Having said that, he controlled the shell to spin around Li Qiye and chanted again. The whole process made everyone think that he was actually a master.

“A preparatory trigram is essential before the actual one.” He entered a ceremonial state.

“Activate!” He formed a seal then embedded it into his chest, causing it to become resplendent.

He turned his chest into a heart mirror with numerous ancient runes capable of deriving the mysteries of the dao.

Jian Ming was no longer in the mood to jeer. After all, he could see that this was an actual seering method capable of seeing the future.

“Trigram activated!” He raised his hand and his heart mirror illuminated the turtle shells.

The patterns on the shells became clear as day, seemingly coming back to life. They were no longer ashen like before. Rays started flowing through them.

The shells started shaking violently as if they were empowered by an incredible force. Alas, a suppressive power rendered them incapable of floating up. This made it impossible for the seering process to continue.

They were stuck in a struggle between their own empowerment and foreign suppression.

The daoist became startled since he lost control of his shells. This showed him the serious nature of the session.

“The trigrams can’t do it, will he try again?” Wise Ancestor murmured.

“Would that work?” Jian Ming was experienced enough to see the problem as well.

It seemed that Li Qiye’s future and past were difficult to gauge. It became a contest between the daoist’s seering ability and Li Qiye’s elusive fortune.

“Go!” The daoist didn’t give up and used all of his power. He activated his heavenly gaze and his chest became increasingly resplendent.

In this radiance seemed to be a new dao power capable of raising all affinities. This helped his eyes see the river of time, hoping to catch Li Qiye there.

As he traveled back on the river, the shells harmonized with him. They also wanted to fly into the river in order to assist their master. He started sweating profusely, enough to wet his entire robe. The shells trembled more and more while his eyes became brighter.

“Boom!” Eventually, the shells couldn’t handle the mysterious suppression. Large cracks appeared on the surface and they fell to the ground.

“Ugh...” The daoist vomited a mouthful of blood and staggered backward. His chest heaved up and down; his complexion became pale and his heart mirror dimmed down.

He actually managed to see Li Qiye on the river of time. Alas, all of his divine intents and senses were immediately severed from the river.

In other words, he couldn’t finish this fortune reading. First, his ability was not good enough but most importantly, Li Qiye seemed incalculable.

This made him think of another existence - the will of the heaven. If one had enough power and mastery in calculation, they might be able to forcefully see some details.

Alas, this required a heavy price, ranging from dying to cursing their descendants for eras. This was the reason why their clan refused numerous masters coming to ask for help.

Their ancestors were mighty but reading the heaven’s will was too risky. This was a warning repeated to them many times. The daoist realized that he had experienced something similar.

“Are you okay, old man?” Jian Ming became worried.

“My heirlooms...” The daoist regained his wits and crouched down to pick up the shells. He nearly destroyed his clan’s heirlooms with his recklessness.

These shells were unimaginably powerful in terms of fortune-telling. Normally, he didn't need to do much to read the fate of regular people. Now, they have suffered considerable damage.

"I was right to call you Great Immortal." The daoist bowed his head and said: "I have overestimated myself and shamed our ancestors."

"No, your divination ability was masterful." Li Qiye didn't mind.

"I'm afraid I have made a fool out of myself." The daoist said humbly after realizing his underestimation of Li Qiye. At this point, there was no need to know Li Qiye's actual background to realize that he was a monster.

"Uh, I'll go listen around." Jian Ming left in order to not make it awkward for the daoist.

"Your ancestors have done a great job improving the art." Li Qiye said.

"You know our ancestors?" The daoist became aware of this.

"Is your river plate still there?" Li Qiye asked.

"Yes, it's still there." The emotional daoist bowed again.

"Your clan owed me a reading, it's unfortunate that its descendants still can't do it." Li Qiye revealed.

Chapter 4485: I Was Not Me

"I see, you have asked for a reading in the past." The daoist blurted out.

"Yes, your ancestor talked about being able to reach the heaven and calculate anything. Did it work?" Li Qiye smiled.

The daoist became emotional because he recalled a legend from his clan, or rather, the last words and ancestral guidance.

Their forefather left behind this teaching after paying a great price. As a descendant, he didn't know the details because it was too long ago. Their clan had changed dramatically and experienced ups and downs.

Nonetheless, the ancestral guidance was successfully passed down.

"I was not me and can't be selfless." He murmured. [1]

Having said that, he asked Li Qiye: "I have many things I don't understand due to the time constraint. However, that's the phrase left behind by our forefather, his last words. The clan recorded and passed it down for eras now. We do not dare to forget or speculate. Now, since you have brought up the reading in the past, could this be your fortune, Great Immortal?"

"I was not me and can't be selfless." Li Qiye said softly. A while later, he nodded and said: "Your forefather has tried his best."

"Rumor has it that the forefather paid a great price during the previous epoch. He wished to seer the heaven itself but suffered a tribulation. He was fortunate to survive but ended up being on his last leg." The daoist took a deep breath.

In their historical records, their forefather was a heaven-defying cultivator known for his fortune-telling. Even the ancient emperors found his reading to be extremely accurate.

Peerless masters and monstrous existences viewed him with respect. They came to ask about their future. Thus, this was the apex of divining. No descendants have ever reached this height again.

Once he became older and at the prime of his art, he once performed a serious ceremony. The reason for this session remained unknown.

It was just that the forefather saw something forbidden, resulting in his death not long after. He left behind the cryptic phrase - I was not me and can't be selfless.

The descendants researched this phrase for the possible meaning. This went on for generations but they couldn't understand it. Thus, they decided to pass it down.

In time, their clan managed to produce another top diviner. This person said that the phrase was meant for a customer and had nothing to do with their clan.

Today, the daoist met Li Qiye and tried to give him a reading. What he saw in the river of time made him think that Li Qiye might be this customer. In other words, the fated one.

"The prophecy has indeed reached the heaven itself. But, your forefather didn't have enough power to suppress the heaven, so a tribulation was expected. The will of the heaven isn't to be known." Li Qiye aid.

The daoist bowed deeply and became curious: "Great Immortal, may I ask for the meaning of this phrase?"

His curiosity was understandable. After all, this has been the greatest puzzle of their clan. Given Li Qiye's comment, the guy might actually know the answer.

Li Qiye looked up at the sky with a profound gaze. Time came to a halt as he peered through time and space. His target was the farthest reach of the azure.

After a while, he told the daoist: "Fine, since your forefather paid the price, it is alright to tell you. At the very end, he saw a figure and only part of the whole thing. Unfortunately, this reading was too late."

Back in the previous epoch, this reading would have been meaningful to Li Qiye. Now, it was meaningless since Li Qiye already had a vivid idea of all the details and answers.

"A figure?" The daoist murmured. This only made him more confused. Nonetheless, his forefather must have seen something shocking. It might have been the greatest fortune-telling in history.

However, why did seeing the figure cause a tribulation? Was it taboo just to look at the existence?

"So who is it?" The daoist couldn't help but ask.

"That's not something for you to know, it is above your reach right now. If I were to reveal, ominous things will happen to you. A tribulation, for one." Li Qiye said.

This made him shudder. He absolutely couldn't handle the tribulation or the price suffered by his forefather, not his clan either.

"I understand." The daoist bowed.

At this time, Jian Ming who went to look for information ran back and excitedly told Li Qiye: "I got it! I know where those thieves went, come, let's go teach them a lesson!"

"That's great." Wise heaved a sigh of relief: "And watch your mouth, we're not teaching anyone a lesson. We are to take back our dao stone, that's all."

Wise was open-minded about this and could see the Yu not wanting to give back the dao stone. He didn't want to escalate the issue and made it more combative.

"Young Noble, are we going right now?" Wise asked for Li Qiye's instruction.

"Yes, let's take it back as soon as possible to avoid needless complication." Li Qiye said.

As the group was leaving, the daoist hesitated for a moment and then decided to call out: "Great Immortal!"

"Oh, don't want our young noble to leave? I'm sure you want to offer your service now. That's fine, we do need an errand boy." Jian Ming said.

The daoist ignored him and said: "Great Immortal, Grotto Courtyard might have something fatefully connected to you."

"What is it? An immortal artifact or something left behind by an ancient emperor?!" Jian Ming answered before Li Qiye.

"A girl." The daoist's expression became serious.

"A girl?" This piqued Li Qiye's interest.

"Grotto Courtyard bought her from an external source. She was excavated from a dangerous location, encapsulated in a boulder yet still looking animated. They want to auction her." The daoist said.

"So like a fossil." Jian Ming became invested.

"I don't think so. I believe she is still alive." The daoist shook his head.

Chapter 4486: Living Person

"So a living person." Li Qiye's interest increased after hearing this.

"Yes, in my opinion, she has been sealed for many eras now." The daoist said.

"So what if she's still alive? Do you recognize her or something?" Jian Ming asked.

"I do not, but that is precisely the crux of the issue." The daoist said.

Jian Ming became confused and asked: "What does it reveal? Is there something special about this girl? Does she have three heads and six hands?"

"No." The daoist flatly answered.

Jian Ming shrugged and said: "Well, Grotto Courtyard is a big market and has auctioned countless items so far. This girl is no different and one shouldn't be surprised anymore at their offerings."

"No, there is something different about this girl, absolutely different." The daoist glanced at him and said.

"What is it?" Jian Ming could tell that the daoist was serious.

"Wait, my information network is impeccable. I should have heard something if there was a top item at Grotto Courtyard, there is no way that you know more than me." He added.

"Ah!" He clapped and continued: "I see, you've been keeping an eye out on Grotto Courtyard, wanting to get your grubby hands dirty and this girl is your target!"

"Eat shit all you want but don't spew bullshit!" The daoist said: "I am a man with a reputation, don't besmirch my name."

"What reputation?" Jian Ming said: "You want our young noble to go there and potentially cause a diversion for you to take advantage of!"

"He already tried before and failed." Li Qiye revealed.

"Did you hear that? Such a nice reputation you have." Jian Ming said.

"Shh! The daoist became startled and started shushing him: "Are you tired of living?! If the courtyard catches wind of this, they'll feed us to the fish!"

"That's your problem, I didn't try to steal from them so only you will be fish food." Jian Ming said.

The daoist's anger ignited towards Jian Ming again.

Jian Ming continued: "I recall how you bragged about your grasping art. How are you going to steal from True Immortal when you can't even get something from the courtyard? That's suicidal."

"You give it a shot then." The daoist said: "The Seal Ancestor's tentacles are everywhere in the courtyard and will know the moment you set foot in there. He'll put you in an aquatic illusion before you know it."

"Seal Ancestor might not be the strongest but he does have absolute control in Grotto Courtyard." Wise Ancestor nodded and interjected.

"I see, so you got caught before, haha!" Jian Ming gloated on someone else's misery.

"If it was you, you would be down in the pond right now instead of standing here." The daoist boasted about surviving.

After all, escaping from Seal Ancestor was indeed impressive. He escaped unscathed and the ancestor didn't see his identity in time either.

"The courtyard has no lack of peerless treasures, why do you pay so much attention to the fossil?" Jian Ming changed the topic. He has been to the courtyard before and knew about its wondrous treasury.

"From fortune-telling, of course." Li Qiye smiled.

The daoist smiled wryly and told the truth: “Nothing can hide from your eyes, Great Immortal.”

“What did it tell you?” Jian Ming no longer doubted the daoist’s fortune-telling ability. He saw the process earlier and knew how impressive it was. Thus, there must be a reason why the fossil was special.

“I’m not sure, it’s hard to say.” The daoist shook his head and then stared at Li Qiye: “The fortune was very chaotic and blindingly bright. The images weren’t sequential, they reversed and looped randomly. In my opinion, this girl might not be from this epoch.”

“To Grotto Courtyard then. We’re taking a look.” Li Qiye nodded.

“I will lead the way, Great Immortal.” The daoist excitedly said.

They were supposed to go to the Yu but Li Qiye chose to put that matter aside. Nonetheless, Jian Ming was happy to oblige.

He and the daoist led the way, standing to shoulder. Jian Ming smiled and said: “Tell me more about this girl, what does she look like? Any special visual phenomena?”

“No idea.” The daoist didn’t want to answer.

“Haha, Daoist, don’t be so difficult, maybe we’ll be working together later.” Jian Ming was very curious because of Li Qiye’s interest in the girl.

“Is that so?” The daoist glanced at him, acting superior since he had the advantage.

“Brother.” Jian Ming inched in even closer and whispered: “Let’s talk business, shall we?”

“Go on.” The daoist asked.

“You use fortune to find the next target, right?” Jian Ming whispered again and got straight to the point.

“And?” The daoist said.

Jian Ming smiled and went on: “Then you should expand your business.”

“What business?” The daoist was at a loss.

“Brother, think about it, stealing is so risky. Once caught, you’ll be pursued by thousands of cultivators. Some of your targets may be just as strong as True Immortal.” Jian Ming elaborated.

“What are you trying to say?” This piqued the daoist’s interest.

“Change it up, no more doing business with living people.” Jian Ming whispered.

Chapter 4487: Grotto Courtyard

“Then what do we do?” The daoist stared at Jian Ming.

“It’s simple, we do something even better, dealing with the dead.” Jian Ming looked around to see if anyone was listening and then whispered.

“Dealing with the dead?” The daoist furrowed his brows.

Jian Ming smiled and continued: "Brother, think about it, you use fortune telling to find treasures. Then what we do is team up, you calculate and find the right tomb, I'm the expert at architecture, keke, tell me how this isn't profitable."

The daoist's eyes lit up. He was aware of Jian Ming's implication - grave robbing.

What if he were to team up with Jian Ming to focus on the tombs instead of treasures? They could also focus on the tombs of abandoned or destroyed sects.

Countless sects have been destroyed in history. Thus, numerous invincible masters were buried underground. Grabbing the content of these tombs could be quite lucrative.

Alas, there was one problem which he indicated: "Well, it's a dangerous thing to do, terrible karma."

"Haha, seeing fortune amidst danger is the way to go. Plus, your divination will help us change our fate." Jian Ming was relentless.

As the group headed for Grotto Courtyard, these two spoke as if they were brothers despite prior animosity.

People would immediately think of one phrase after seeing this - birds of a feather flock together.

The courtyard was located in a corner of Dark Street. The place was bustling since it might be the largest auction house in Golden City. It received tens of thousands of wealthy customers each day.

Looking at the entrance would surprise first-time visitors. The largest auction didn't have golden gates and a magnificent appearance.

It had a simple arched door with no decoration, only an old plaque with the characters, Grotto Courtyard.

No one would take another look at a store like this at night. Its appearance stood in stark contrast to its actual reputation and countless customers.

"We're here." Jian Ming commented: "Sigh, it's always so busy."

Li Qiye looked up and found the characters' calligraphy to be awfully familiar. There was no signature anywhere on the plaque, only the symbol of a crimson fox. However, due to its age, the red paint has faded to the point of being barely discernible - truly a sad look. Few would even notice the symbol or care.

Li Qiye was an exception since it prompted him to sigh softly. "Grotto Courtyard."

There was a line for entry. Once it was their turn, Jian Ming greeted the workers and then jumped through the door.

It was dark looking in from the outside. However, everything became bright after entry since it was a gateway to another dimension.

Gentle breezes carried moistness and spirit energy embraced them with haste. They saw a lake with waves and fog with no end in sight.

It turned out that the auction house was built on top of a great lake. There were water pavilions and islands amidst the fogs. Treasures were also displayed on the water, ready for auction.

“Grotto Courtyard has been around so long for a reason, they have their own independent realm. Few great powers have this level of resource.” Jian Ming commented.

This was not his first time visiting the auction house but he was still impressed by their resources each time. Of course, he knew that money alone wasn’t enough.

After all, the world knew of their exceptional treasure and unmatched reputation of being able to satisfy their customers. The merchandise included unique artifacts, merit laws from dao lords, ancient weapons...

Therefore, wealth alone wasn’t enough to protect their business. If this was all they had, they would have been robbed or destroyed long ago.

Upon entering, Li Qiye closed his eyes and enjoyed the moist breeze.

“Your four clans and Grotto Courtyard has a strong relationship..” The daoist told Jian Ming.

“What do you mean by that? Our ancestors used to be brothers? Or is there an ongoing alliance? Do we get like twenty, no, forty percent off?” Jian Ming started salivating.

“Nonsense.” Wise elaborated with a smile: “During our prime, we did have an alliance with Grotto Courtyard, no discount though. We helped each other during the Chaotic Era, but the alliance eventually died after our decline.”

“Hmph, so they dropped us once we are no longer useful.” Jian Ming complained: “Just wait, we will rise again and they will want to latch themselves onto our thighs.”

“Pop!” The ancestor slapped his head again and said: “Watch your mouth, Seal Ancestor can hear you here.”

“So what, who doesn’t know that the big octopus’ tentacles are everywhere.” Jian Ming acted as if he wasn’t afraid.

“Your relationship predates the Chaotic Era.” The daoist said: “Long ago, your four clans and the courtyard are under the protection of the same being. Of course, they enjoy a greater level of love. In fact, in terms of seniority, your four clans are little brothers in comparison.” [1]

“Don’t be so vague.” Jian Ming said: “I know that the courtyard isn’t the same as the one in the past, they’re also a bunch of brats that snuck out just like the Yu, not accepted by their own ancestors. Hehe, their ancestors were great cultivators while they seem like money-grubbing merchants.”

“Your four clans aren’t any better, you’re not the main branch either.” The daoist didn’t hold back.

“Haha, not at all, our forefathers are all renowned.” Jian Ming proudly said.

Chapter 4488: Treasures Of Grotto Courtyard

While Jian Ming and the daoist argued, a worker came over and enthusiastically bowed: “Gentlemen, are you here to check out some treasures? Please get on a boat.”

There were boats by the dock with workers on them.

Normally, cultivators had no problem walking on water or simply flying over the lake. This wasn't the case here. They must ride the boats in order to check out the treasures.

Li Qiye's group followed him and boarded one.

The worker steered the boat forward while introducing: "Gentlemen, may I ask why you are here? Merit laws, treasures, or pills?"

"We want to buy many things. Perhaps some special pills." Jian Ming smiled.

"Our courtyard does not refine the pills but we do obtain them from the alchemy clans. For example, the renowned bronze pills of the Puresun, heavenraise pills from True Immortal, nine-cycles from Three Thousand Dao... we can get any of them." The worker brought up some famous pills.

Keep in mind that these pills were not available to outsiders. Their own disciples rarely had access. Only influential characters such as their elders and above had access. A few were only privy to ancestors.

Thus, it was nothing short of impressive that they were available for purchase here.

"How did you get the bronze pills?" Wise couldn't help but ask since the Puresun has been reclusive for many eras now. Their disciples no longer roamed the world.

The ancestor was well aware of the auction house's resourcefulness. Nonetheless, these pills were indeed rare.

"I'm afraid I can't speak on this matter but we do guarantee that we only sell authentic items with trustworthy origins. Please do not worry." The worker shook his head.

"Then do you have an immortal pill capable of immortality?" Jian Ming felt like teasing the worker: "Money is not a problem, our young noble can pay any price."

The worker glanced over at Li Qiye then answered: "Sir, please don't make it difficult for me. If you're talking about pills that some might call 'immortal', then we have several. For example, dragonsource from Divine Dragon Valley. But, for one to actually grant immortality? I don't think such a thing exists in the world. Our auction house, at the very least, has never sold one in our long history."

The worker answered firmly and didn't try hard to peddle the merchandise.

"Your knowledge is not bad at all, must be from good training." Li Qiye praised.

The worker appreciated the kind words and said: "Yes, we are honest while doing business, this is a key in maintaining our golden reputation."

Li Qiye chuckled then turned his sight towards the treasure.

The display method was rather interesting. There were blossoming lotus flowers above the water with a treasure box placed in the center. One of them propped up a divine sword. Though it was still sheathed, its pulsing light possessed the aura of a godking.

At the bottom of the lake was a large clam. Rays oozed out and ringing noises could be heard whenever it opened its mouth. Inside was a golden bell; its sound could reach the river of time.

Then there was a demon lantern floating on the surface. It occasionally opened its treasure box for spectators to let out a medicinal fragrance. Inside was a bottle of pills. Faint dragon roars could be heard. The demon lantern would also blow on it, seemingly setting the pills ablaze.

These treasures all had a sky-high starting price. Only ancestors from the great powers could think about buying them.

“Sir, are you interested in fire-dragon pills from Divine Dragon Valley?” The demon lantern asked the group.

“These pills contain dragonsource essences. Of course, they are no match for dragonsource pills, but eating one would grant someone the power of draconic flames.” It continued.

“Sir, this is Soarer, a sword made from a Divine Soaring Eagle’s dao bone. It could kill someone from three thousand miles away.” Another demon lantern came over and introduced its treasure.

None of them interested Li Qiye but Jian Ming entertained them instead: “You demons can speak but the clams and lotus flowers can’t, aren’t they at a severe disadvantage?”

“Our treasures need no introduction, I’m sure the esteemed guests know what they want.” The lantern had a perfect answer.

“Your courtyard is quite impressive.” Li Qiye commented after taking a look around.

“Our business was started by Saint Miao in the ancient era. What we have in the present is the accumulation of many ancestors’ efforts.” The worker said.

“Your business is only a branch from two saints, not the main branch.” The daoist interjected: “Its title is a wish to represent the ancient branch once more.”

“I’m not quite sure about this but the lake here does have an immemorial origin.” The worker chose his words carefully.

“Raa!” Suddenly, a dragon roar echoed across the entire lake. A massive figure frightened both the workers and visitors.

“A flood-dragon!” Everyone looked over and sure enough, it was a flood-dragon leaping out of the lake.

“You still haven’t sold the Azure Flood-dragon? Well, the price is insane.” Wise Ancestor said.

“Sir, the price is reasonable since it is worth that much. However, the seller must also gain the acceptance of the dragon before a successful transaction. Skybreak Monarch of Three Thousand Dao was willing to pay the price but the dragon didn’t want to follow him.” The worker said.

Grotto Courtyard also sold certain demons and beasts. Alas, they were even harder to purchase due to their price.

By this point, the boat came across a mountain in the middle of the lake. There existed two statues of two women.

One was in full armor and looked ready to fight the whole world. She had a tyrannical and destructive aura that wouldn't dissipate after the eras.

The other statue sat crossed-legged and held a book. Her aura was gentle and because she was looking down to read, her face was covered. She emitted peace and serenity. Time seemed to be stagnated around her. Next to her was a trident, seemingly an artifact from an immemorial period.

"They are?" They immediately caught Li Qiye's attention.

"Our two great saints." The worker said.

"To be exact, they're your clan's saints since your courtyard does not represent the clan. Alas, they haven't been seen in a long time now." The daoist elaborated.

Chapter 4489: Two Saints

"The two saints together make the heavenly dao a no bother." Jian Ming praised while looking at the statues.

"You're aware of this old children's rhyme?" The worker found this surprising.

"Yes, it is not from our epoch." Jian Ming nodded: "Nonetheless, Saint Miao and the martial saint's prestige remain. The two ladies and their legion swept through the realms and changed the landscape of the world."

The worker looked as if he had just found his best friend. He enthusiastically said: "Perfectly said, Sir. Our two saints are indeed from an immemorial period but their influence can still be felt. Saint Miao's strategy is unmatched. Her grand dao helped billions and billions. The martial saint was unstoppable, capable of crushing the stars with a single stomp. According to the legends, their legion represented justice."

"I can't disagree. Peerless dao and boundless power." Jian Ming continued: "Although your two saints weren't around after the calamity, their legion still dominated for a long period before eventually disappearing."

Having said that, he paused a bit before continuing: "Otherwise, your Grotto Courtyard would be doing more than just doing business to make money."

In the present day, only their members knew about the two saints, the majority of whom couldn't say much about the actual tales and achievements since so much time had passed.

Nonetheless, the two saints' influence helped their grotto have a strong foundation. Unfortunately, their wealth and power weren't enough to represent their actual clan. After all, their real branch might no longer be here in Eight Desolaces. Alas, they have toiled for generations now and still took pride in their history.

"Among the duo, Saint Miao is one step greater." The daoist suddenly said.

"What makes you say that, Sir?" The worker asked. In the grotto, they viewed both ancestors equally.

Jian Ming glanced at the daoist and argued again: "What the hell do you know? The martial saint led their legion, one that still dominated after the great calamity."

"That's a shallow perspective. Who was the strategist with perfect calculations? Who trained each general and soldier? This is why Saint Miao is spectacular. She had a sacred bloodline and most importantly, her wisdom and cultivation are superior to the martial saint." The daoist retorted.

The friendship between these two didn't last long. Nonetheless, Jian Ming couldn't come up with a response.

"Seems logical." The worker interjected.

"That's a one-sided statement, mere speculations." Jian Ming questioned.

"When Saint Miao was still in our world, she came to ask our forefather for a fortune." The daoist coldly uttered.

"Really?" Jian Ming didn't dare to underestimate the daoist's heaven-defying forefather.

"What question did she have?" He calmed down and asked.

The daoist was pleased to see the guy's curiosity. He said: "Regarding a person first and then the immortal dao."

"A person and the immortal dao?" Listeners took a deep breath.

How many in history dared to ask about the immortal dao? Just the heavenly dao was tough enough, let alone the next. The world simply didn't know if a dao to reach immortality was possible or not.

"Who is the person?" Jian Ming noticed the peculiarity: "If she asked about the person first... does that mean that this person is on the immortal path?"

"Does such a person exist?" The worker became startled.

Because of Saint Miao's wisdom, the need to ask another person for help showed that her question was above her own ability. Given her cultivation, asking about the immortal dao was understandable. This might just be the next step for her to reach the apex. However, she asked about a person first, meaning that this person was even more important to her.

"Sounds like she was asking about an immortal." Jian Ming became emotional.

Everyone's ears became bigger since they wanted to hear more about this topic.

"That I am not sure about since this was something from the previous epoch. There are no writings and the forefather didn't leave an explanation behind." The daoist shook his head.

"There's nothing about the fortune-telling session too?" Wise asked.

They couldn't help but be interested in this top-secret conversation regarding the immortal dao.

"Nothing." The daoist said: "Plus, there was no way anything from the session would be written down about this taboo matter."

“How frightening...” Jian Ming murmured and started fantasizing. Due to his previous experience with a certain place, he had seen many things unknown to the rest of the world. Alas, he knew to keep his mouth shut this time around.

“We might be talking about an immortal here.” Wise blurted.

At this time, Li Qiye finally stopped looking at the statues and joined in: “No, the world can’t withstand the weight of an immortal.”

The group agreed with him. It’s just that they were too curious about the person in this case. Alas, these secrets have been buried in the river of time. It was impossible to find the answer.

“Is your trident still around?” Li Qiye asked.

“Well...” The worker couldn’t answer: “I’m afraid a regular disciple such as myself doesn’t know the answer to your question.”

“Haha, you would have to ask Seal Ancestor.” Jian Ming laughed: “The old man knows everything here, he might be spying on us right now from the bottom of the lake.”

“Know when not to talk.” Wise scolded.

Jian Ming ignored him and continued: “It’s no secret that he has eyes everywhere in Grotto Courtyard. It wouldn’t be surprising in the slightest.”

Chapter 4490: Lotus Young Noble

Meanwhile, numerous boats floated around the lake so that the customers could view the treasures.

The guests consisted primarily of disciples and ancestors from the great powers. Though they tried to hide their identity, their aura said it all.

Even the ancestors were in awe after seeing the treasures on the lake. Their heart started beating faster as a result. They would be more than willing to buy everything if they had enough money.

The items here far exceeded their sect’s treasury. They included both properties of Grotto Courtyard and consignment auctions. Due to their golden reputation, others willingly let the auction house sell their items.

They would also ask the grotto to look for their desired treasures. Thus, there were many empty boxes with a note stating the desired items. Anyone could simply place the item in these boxes if they were happy with the price without needing to reveal their identity.

Auction dates were random as well. Normally, the items up for auctions were far more valuable than those on display with a fixed price. Due to the rarity and price of these auctions, all participants must be invited by the grotto first.

The worker on Li Qiye’s boat diligently took the group around and introduced many treasures to them. They also saw many other customers along the way.

Directly in front of them was a youth with several followers. He wore a white robe and had a pulsing glow, completely freed from a single speck of dust. His eyes were sharp with a yin affinity.

He stood in front of the boat, looking imperious and telling others that he was a noble - a crane among a flock of chickens.

Normally, he wouldn't give a damn about anyone else. Alas, his eyes stopped on the daoist.

"You again, still sneaking around?" He glared at the daoist.

The latter hid behind Li Qiye and only peeked out, acting as if he didn't know the youth.

"Come out here." The youth pointed at the daoist and commanded.

"Aren't you Lotus Young Noble, you traveled all the way from Three Thousand Dao?" Jian Ming spoke.

Those on the boats nearby couldn't help but stare at the young noble after hearing this.

At the start, no one gave a damn because they had a strong background as well. However, this all changed the moment they heard the name of his sect.

Three Thousand Dao was a behemoth in Sky Border, created by the supreme Dao Sanqian.

Three Thousand Dao, True Immortal Sect, Lion's Roar Kingdom, Divine Dragon Valley... These were the strongest lineages right now in Sky Border.

This so-called Lotus Young Noble was the direct successor of an elder in Three Thousand Dao. This was enough for him to be rather influential among the young generation.

"Who are you?" The youth glared at Jian Ming with disdain.

"Ah, I'm just a nobody." Jian Ming didn't mind at all: "But tell me, why are you singling out this swindling thief? What did he do to you?"

"You're the swindling thief, your whole family are thieves." The daoist felt the urge to kick Jian Ming off the boat.

"I saw you scurrying at the base of my sect that day when we lost an item, did you steal it? Hand it over now." The youth threatened.

It seemed that Three Thousand Dao or one of its branches has lost an important item. To steal from them was certainly suicidal.

"Baseless accusation." The daoist wasn't foolish enough to admit this: "What do I have to do with your sect's carelessness. I was only passing by. Do you blame the birds flying in the sky whenever you lose an item? In my opinion, your members didn't train hard enough and can't even protect an item so it got stolen. Now, you're just looking for a scapegoat to wash away your inability."

He wasn't afraid to ridicule the youth at all. This prompted the latter to turn red with rage.

On the other hand, the audience thought that this was a big deal. The wrath of Three Thousand Dao wasn't a joke.

"Haha, don't put it like that." Jian Ming said: "Three Thousand Dao is an eternal behemoth capable of shaking the world. Who would dare to steal something from there? In my opinion, they most likely lost it out of carelessness or... someone had a plan and one night, poof."

He started laughing after saying this, clearly joining the daoist against the youth.

Lotus Young Noble wasn't a big shot or a peerless genius at all. Nonetheless, as an elder's disciple, he had never experienced this contempt from outsiders before.

"You two are tired of living." His tone became aggressive.

"This has nothing to do with me." Jian Ming shook his head.

The daoist continued to hide behind Li Qiye and then said: "It has nothing to do with me either."

"It's not too late to hand it over. Otherwise, the consequences will be unimaginable." The youth's eyes flashed intimidatingly.

The daoist didn't respond and hid behind Li Qiye.

"Who are you?" The youth glared at Li Qiye, thinking that he was the mastermind behind this. Perhaps he commanded that daoist to steal their item.

"Just a passerby." Li Qiye chuckled and answered without looking at the youth.

"What is your relationship with them? Did you command them to steal our treasure?" The youth uttered coldly.

This made everyone else stare at Li Qiye. They thought that an average-looking guy like him wouldn't dare to mess with Three Thousand Dao.

"Are other disciples from Three Thousand Dao as dumb as you?" Li Qiye finally stared at the youth.

The dismissive remark caused him to become livid.

"Newborn calves do not fear tigers." A spectator spoke regarding Li Qiye, thinking that he wasn't afraid of Three Thousand Dao enough.