

Chapter 491 - I Said I Would and I Will

The Spider Queen no longer smiled. There was shock, rage, as well as a hint of irrepressible fear.

This feeling had been with her from the day she gained intelligence until the day she broke through to Daemon Commander. After all these years, no one, nothing, had managed to make her feel fear again.

Have I been defeated? No, how can I be defeated?!

The Spider Queen began to struggle desperately. She grabbed his arms and lifted her leg, kicking him in the back.

Li Qingshan smiled viciously. He weighed heavily on the Spider Queen's snow-white body like a mountain. No matter how she struggled, she did not budge at all.

His arms became riddled with bloody marks, and his back ached from the kick. However, her attacks had ceased to be as sharp as they were in the beginning. They seemed rather powerless.

Having battled until now, the Spider Queen's daemon qi was on the verge of running out, and exhaustion filled her entire body. Her strength was no longer as great as when she first started off.

As for Li Qingshan's body, it had become stronger after breaking through to the fourth layer of the tiger demon. He had also used the power of belief to constantly replenish his daemon qi. Due to the Strength of the Earth, he felt no exhaustion at all. In particular, his strength grew further after digesting Strongboulder's daemon core.

As she grew weaker and he grew stronger, she was no longer able to maintain an upper hand in close combat.

The Spider Queen used her remaining daemon qi to tighten the web, trapping Li Qingshan and choking him by the neck. Her eight legs shot towards him rapidly.

Without even batting an eye, Li Qingshan threw a punch at her belly. It possessed his original strength from the ox demon, the power of tremors, as well as some strengthening from the power of belief.

In that instant, the Spider Queen became dyed with a layer of silvery-grey. The power of tremors was released wave after wave and cracks began to appear on her silvery-grey skin. Before she could even recover, a second punch fell.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

Li Qingshan completely ignored the tightening web and incoming legs. He simply hurled his fist at her again and again, venting his emotions viciously.

The web gradually slackened and the legs became powerless. Towards the end, they could not even pierce his Ox Demon Forges its Hide.

Ripples appeared on the Spider Queen's metallic skin, recovering some of the texture of skin. The silvery-grey colour gradually receded, turning back into snow-white.

Li Qingshan's punches had depleted the last shred of daemon qi in her. There was no longer enough to maintain the innate abilities.

Li Qingshan casually ripped off the web around him. Without the control of daemon qi, without the tugging of physical strength, the spider web was only an inanimate object no matter how tough it was.

Afterwards, he patted the Spider Queen's face. "How is it, ma'am Spider Queen? Haven't I served you well? You love this kind of service!"

"I'm going to kill you!" The Spider Queen's face twisted, sinking into hysterical anger. She opened her vermilion lips, wanting to spit out a strand of silk to pierce Li Qingshan's head.

Smack!

A crisp slap landed on the Spider Queen's face, throwing her face to one side. She suddenly turned back, only to be met with another slap.

Whenever she turned her head and tried to spit out silk, she would earn a slap. After over a dozen slaps, she finally gave up on this action that only invited humiliation. She kept her head turned to one side, staring at Li Qingshan with one eye. This scene was exactly the same as before, except hatred filled her eyes.

Boom!

Another fist landed on her abdomen. Li Qingshan had not done it in response to this resentful gaze, but rather, it was because he sensed signs of daemon qi beginning to gather in her body. Daemon Commanders gathered daemon qi far too quickly.

If she ends up escaping due to a moment of carelessness and flees blindly, catching her again will be difficult. I still have a lot of things I haven't done yet!

Li Qingshan thought of something. With a wave of his hand, pieces of the Spirit Turtle's Profound Shell scattered, forming a faint blue sphere that enveloped them perfectly. It immediately blocked out the spiritual qi of the world.

He was replicating Fu Qingjin's Green Ruins Illusion. Recovering daemon qi required absorbing the spiritual qi of the world. However, this move did not really have any value in battle, as he also would not be able to absorb the spiritual qi of the world once encased. Under normal circumstances, the Spider Queen could smash through this cage in a single move.

But now, this was perfect.

Li Qingshan eased up and let go of the Spider Queen's throat, caressing her face gently. He slid down to her clavicle and then to her plump, white chest.

Now, it was time for him to enjoy the spoils of battle.

To Li Qingshan's surprise, the Spider Queen did not put up any desperate resistance. Instead, she slowly turned her head back as if she was afraid of aggravating him. A hint of weakness that he had never seen appeared on her mesmerising face.

“You’ve won!”

“Really?” Li Qingshan was delighted, but also slightly disappointed. As he watched the extremely proud Spider Queen yield beneath him, he felt great excitement and joy, but he had yet to unleash his ruthless imaginations!

“In the past millennium, you are the first to defeat me, as well as the first to satisfy me to such a degree. I’m willing to become your woman, to birth a powerful child for you.”

The Spider Queen slowly propped herself up and embraced Li Qingshan. Her soft breasts pressed against his firm chest like they had melted as she gently kissed Li Qingshan’s shoulder with her scarlet lips, making her way up until she reached his neck.

During the intercourse earlier, she had kissed him countless times, but never had she been so gentle and docile.

Li Qingshan’s ruthless thoughts seemed to settle down too. He plunged his head into her hair, caressing it gently. He smiled faintly as if he enjoyed it very much.

The Spider Queen’s kisses became more and more intense, but her expression suddenly changed. She bit down viciously. Hidden behind her cherry lips were extremely sharp fangs, which contained the most potent venom.

As long as she injected it all into him in one go, it would spread to his head very quickly, and she would be able to turn the tables. At the very least, she could escape from this cage and recover some daemon qi for another battle.

“I knew your old habits would die hard. And, if you want to be my woman, you don’t even have that right!”

Li Qingshan only felt his neck prick slightly, but his smile remained. He grabbed the Spider Queen by her hair and tugged viciously.

The spirit turtle’s daemon core had given him a clear warning long before she had launched the attack. Li Qingshan had completely taken apart her scheme before she could even inject the venom. All she managed to leave behind were two faint, red specks.

“Northmoon, I will definitely kill you! I will skin you alive and feast on your flesh!”

“Hahahaha, I can understand your deviant thoughts a little. Hearing an opponent who’s in no shape to fight back speak such wishful words sure is fucking satisfying! We better change to a better position!”

Li Qingshan stood up and pressed the Spider Queen’s head against the ground, forcefully flipping her over. The sight made his eyes light up slightly.

Unlike her hideous original form, her human form was extremely beautiful. However, even after the countless times of intercourse they had gone through, he had never gotten the opportunity to admire her from this angle, probably due to the principle of never showing your back to the opponent!

Her round buttocks were extremely plump, perking up as she struggled. It wagged gloriously, but her figure would suddenly narrow at her waist, perfectly slender for grasping such that it even seemed slightly exaggerated. The curve along her back was extremely beautiful too.

Her breasts seemed extremely plump as well. There was basically no better description for her apart from a bewitching figure.

Li Qingshan let out a toothy grin. Now that's a prize I like!

"If you dare... I'll blow up my daemon core!" The Spider Queen turned her head desperately and threatened angrily.

"Forget it. You won't blow up your daemon core unless your life is threatened. Don't be like a human when you speak. Even if you actually plan on blowing it up, I never take back something I've said." Li Qingshan laughed wildly before suddenly bending over, whispering gently into her ear, "My dear, I'm here."

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Cobweb city was dead silent. The night roamers returned carefully like they were treading on thin ice. Only after confirming there were no auras or disturbances did they relax slightly, but they still refused to enter the city.

On the empty land below Cobweb city where the magma and water merged, the six clans assembled together, whispering and discussing among themselves.

"Did sir Northmoon really enter ma'am Spider Queen's chambers?"

"He didn't just enter. He seems... like he's done for."

"Looks like we're going to return to ma'am Spider Queen's direct command again. Northmoon? Heh, I think he's gotten ahead of himself with his arrogance. Does he really think he can escape with his life intact from a Daemon Commander as a mere Daemon General? He's probably become ma'am Spider Queen's food already."

"Hmph, master will never die. Do you really think that a group of foolish women like you are worthy of guessing master's strength?"

The night roamers all discussed with whispers as if they were afraid of breaking the silence of the city. However, this voice was loud and emotional, filled with unparalleled confidence like lightning that tore through the dark clouds.

Ye Liubo leapt forward, glancing past each night roamer sharply.

All the night roamers shut their mouths, gathering their eyes on Ye Liubo. Their gazes were filled with hostility.

"Ye Liubo you traitor! You just strut around with borrowed feathers, helping Northmoon in abusing us. We haven't even gotten to you yet, yet you're actually leaping out yourself. Be prepared to pay with death!"

A matriarch said sinisterly. The faces of the night roamers all sunk quietly. For a moment, who knew how many daggers and swords were drawn.

Black shadows faded in and out, ready to merge into the darkness at any time and carry out a fatal assassination.

Apart from being strong enough himself, the main reason why the night roamers were willing to obey Li Qingshan was because of the Spider Queen's orders.

The nature of these night roamers prevented them from truly yielding to anyone. Betrayal and slaughter was something as easy as breathing to them. Even Ye Liusu had her own pursuits and plans. Only Ye Liubo was absolutely loyal to him.

During the three years of secluded cultivation, the person behind why the night roamers had offered up so many spiritual herbs was not actually Ye Liusu, but Ye Liubo. She had frequently used Li Qingshan's name to force the six clans into collecting spiritual herbs. She received special attention from Li Qingshan too, which also incurred a lot of trouble stemming from envy and hatred.

Death was now certain for Li Qingshan—even if he managed to scrape by, all he could do was flee. He would never dare return underground again, making it even more impossible for him to continue ruling over them. As a result, the many conflicts erupted all of a sudden.

Ye Liubo became a target for all. Who knew how many powerful night roamers that had undergone a heavenly tribulation present only required a single breath to take Ye Liubo's life.

PS: Please call me the model Dream Teller! I'm softhearted and easily embarrassed, so I just hate it when people treat me well. Looking at how the monthly votes are going, I won't even be able to forgive myself if I don't maintain releases. Sure enough, new year, new outlook. It's only the first month of the year, but am I going to maintain my "unprecedented" rankings in the twenties until the end of the month? Alright, I don't mind. If you're bold enough to not vote, then I'm bold enough to release single chapters! As for why I'm afraid of a mass release, I can only say four words, "Spare me, great hero!" I miss releases every time I mass release, which is something I don't want either. Yep, this'll do.

Chapter 492 - To Kill or Not to Kill

Below Cobweb city, passing through the rock and soil to a depth of over around three thousand meters, a cavern.

The cavern had not been naturally formed. There were no craggy stalactites or stalagmites, only shattered rocks scattered about.

Within the loose rock pile was an azure sphere composed of countless hexagons.

The sphere was half-transparent, but it was hazy. As a result, it was impossible to make out what was going on inside as if a layer of mist had condensed on the inner layer.

There was a great thunk, and a hand pressed against the sphere. It was a woman's hand. Her fingers were slender, and her palm was very small. It was extremely beautiful.

However, the strength it unleashed was not small at all. There were a series of cracks like ice breaking apart, and the azure sphere became covered in fractures.

It was possible to imagine that she could probably shatter the sphere with only a few more strikes.

The mist dispersed slightly, making it possible to vaguely make out a woman's face. Probably any man who saw her would be left dumbfounded, sighing over her beauty. She had a mature, mesmerising face, possessing an extra hint of bewitching charm compared to pure maidens.

Although her face was filled with shame and anger, an aloof sense of pride was still clearly visible as if it had become part of her bearing, making her seem like a queen. It would have been impossible for her to develop this bearing unless she held great status and authority, but it only aroused a desire to conquer within men.

Her long, dark hair was a mess, but it was still possible to imagine how noble it seemed when styled.

Her cherry lips were frozen in a cold angle, definitely used for all the orders she issued regularly. But at this moment, they constantly opened and closed, exhaling white mists as if she was cursing but also as if she was moaning.

However, due to the sphere, not a single sound leaked out.

Looking deeper into the sphere, it only became even more blurry. A snow-white figure seemed to be wrapped in silk, laying in an extremely inelegant pose on the ground. Her body shook uncontrollably as the two snow-white mounds trembled violently. Below were two specks of brightly-coloured red, like two red cherries in a snowy landscape, shaking back and forth with the mounds.

It was enough for someone to fantasize various beautiful thoughts.

Thunk!

There was another sound. She used all the strength in her to deal a second palm strike while gritting her teeth, and the cracks became even larger and denser. As it seemed, she probably did not need many more strikes, just one more, to shatter the sphere and break out.

Suddenly, a pair of hands reached over from behind her hazy figure, grabbing her slender waist and dragging her away. She waved her hands around in vain, putting up a struggle but unable to rival the strength.

In the blink of an eye, the cracks on the sphere vanished, and the cavern fell silent again.

After who knew how long, the azure sphere suddenly vanished. A great cloud of white mist dispersed, and it became vaguely possible to make out a standing man inside. His scarlet hair drifted about like fire.

The mist dispersed completely, and Li Qingshan yawned and stretched, taking in a deep breath of the refreshing spiritual qi of the world. His thoughts were extremely clear as his heart felt exceedingly satisfied. If it were not for the insufficient spiritual qi, perhaps he would have broken through a few dozen cultivation realms already, enough to climb to the Nine Heavens.

Though, the sensation earlier felt like he had already paid a trip to beyond the Nine Heavens. He looked at the ground again.

Hmph, you want to eat me? I'll let you feast to your heart's content!

The Spider Queen lay on the ground with her eyes shut as if she had fallen unconscious. Her snow-white body was dripping with sweat, all traces from some fun in bed.

Although she put up a very fierce struggle in the beginning, Li Qingshan served her in plenty of ways that she loved such that she no longer had the strength to resist anymore towards the end, allowing him to do what he wanted. She had even been extremely cooperative. She no longer tried to bite him with her venomous fangs as they embraced once another either.

Naturally, they never took any safe measures either. Of course, Li Qingshan had to admit that this was his favourite. Though, he was uncertain whether she was actually submerged in pleasure, or she still thought, Since I can't put up a struggle, I'll just enjoy it! Or perhaps it was a combination of the two.

"Oi, mother of my child, stop playing dead. If you keep playing dead, I'll actually kill you."

Li Qingshan crouched down and patted the Spider Queen's cheek. He obviously would not be fooled by this act, as in the moment he released the Spirit Turtle's Profound Shell, the surging spiritual qi of the world immediately began to gather towards her.

Originally, it was only an empty threat, but now that he mentioned it, he could not help but think of something, Do I kill her or not?

Right now, Lolth was in her weakest state, so it was the perfect opportunity to kill her. Once she fully recovered, it would be difficult to tell who would be killing who.

Li Qingshan's current strength was basically equivalent to having a foot planted in the Daemon Commander realm. He could annihilate almost anyone or anything that had not undergone the second heavenly tribulation. Right now, even if all the Foundation Establishment cultivators and Daemon Generals of the Clear River prefecture gathered together, he could still deal with them with composure. And, even if he encountered Daemon Commanders and Golden Core cultivators that had undergone two heavenly tribulations, staying alive was no longer an issue.

However, defeating them would be virtually impossible. The reason why Li Qingshan had managed to win this time was because he was rather lucky. Spider Queen Lolth had been too careless. Her vicious nature could be described as the very reason for her failure.

If it were not for the fact that she wanted to capture Li Qingshan alive, derive pleasure from torturing him and then have a raw feast, she would have never ended up in such a situation. Not to mention that there was a deeper reason behind all this. After becoming a Daemon Commander, it had already been many years since she last fought someone to the death.

Even the skills of a natural hunter would rust and regress if they never met an equivalent opponent, preventing them from unleashing their full strength. On the other hand, Li Qingshan had never stopped fighting since he first picked up a blade and killed someone.

In terms of actual strength, the disparity between Li Qingshan and the Spider Queen was anything but small. As a carapaced daemon, she was not weak even among Daemon Commanders.

Li Qingshan checked his Divine Talisman of Great Creation. He had directly used up thirty percent of the power of belief he had accumulated throughout the years, all used to replenish his daemon qi. Although he possessed the extraordinary cultivation method, the Spirit Turtle's Method of Sea Suppression, such

that the quality of his daemon qi did not pale too much in comparison to Daemon Commanders, he was nowhere close in terms of quantity. After all, it had only been a few years since he faced the heavenly tribulation. Even though he had consumed many pills, the foundation he accumulated over time was still extremely shallow.

It would be too much for him to bear with if he fought against her two more times, or even just one more time. If it were not for the Divine Talisman of Great Creation that could replenish his daemon qi, did he have any chances at victory at all? Even if he somehow managed to defeat her, he would struggle to keep her subdued like this.

Lolth would never be stupid enough to wait until her daemon qi ran out again. If a Daemon Commander wanted to flee, how could he stop her as a mere Daemon General? Only endless revenge would await him.

He was not deluded enough to think he would be able to get along peacefully with the Spider Queen in the future unless a certain hidden interest of hers had been revealed, where she liked to submerge herself in the delight of being conquered... wait, this isn't fucking smut!

This was truly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity...

"If you want to kill me, then I'll blow up my daemon core and take you down with me!"

Lolth suddenly opened her eyes and stared at Li Qingshan. To his surprise, there was no longer any hatred or resentment, only suffocating coldness and stillness.

Her voice was feeble, even slightly hoarse, but Li Qingshan instead became afraid to dismiss this threat of hers. He felt extremely surprised inside. He discovered that she had become slightly different from the Spider Queen Lolth in his memory.

Actually, Lolth was not playing dead. She was not naive enough to think she could fool Li Qingshan like this. Instead, she was tasting the lingering feeling of what she had just gone through, tidying her thoughts.

This entire matter had obviously utterly disgraced her, but she did not find disgrace in the matter itself. She had no concept of being defiled. It had nothing to do with love. Reproducing was the most ordinary matter in the natural world.

She felt disgraced because someone weaker than her had conquered her. If Li Qingshan were a Daemon King, she would not put on any resistance at all, as in the natural world, the strong obviously had the right to choose their partner.

The issue was that Li Qingshan was merely a Daemon General and her subordinate at that. He had gone against her and insulted her despite being nowhere near as powerful as her. Naturally, she was furious and completely refused to accept this.

Li Qingshan would have never thought that he had actually guessed correctly.

Although it was humiliating, Lolth did indeed experience unprecedented pleasure. The extreme pleasure that came from pain and powerlessness reawakened a certain part in her heart that had become numb from her easy and comfortable life.

She seemed to have returned to the past when she was still a spider. Hunger and danger were everywhere, and she had to abuse and slaughter every single day, or she would be abused and slaughtered by cruel nature instead.

The heavy darkness was no longer filled with emptiness and boredom. She had found the meaning of cultivation once more.

If Li Qingshan found out about how great of a significance his actions were to her, he would definitely be filled with complacency. Perhaps he really might hope he could conquer the proud Spider Queen.

Unfortunately, he had guessed the start incorrectly, but he was right with the end result.

Lolth was prepared to carry out a hunt, not for revenge, but to carry through with the instincts nature had endowed her with.

“How can I bring myself to? You’re the mother of my child!”

Li Qingshan let out a toothy grin as if he was backing down and afraid she would actually do that.

As a daemon who had spent her life fighting for survival the moment she was born, her will to survive was deeply embedded in her instincts. This was why even if she voiced a threat again during intercourse earlier, he did not take her seriously. However, once her life was being threatened, he would never underestimate her resolve.

A Daemon Commander blowing up their daemon core was not something to joke around about.

This was still due to the fact that Li Qingshan’s strength was insufficient. If he were a Daemon Commander too, he would have great confidence in staying alive, and Lolth would not be able to threaten him like this. As a result, forcing her to submit in order to survive would not necessarily be impossible.

However, the killing intent in Li Qingshan’s heart instead intensified. His hand slid down her face, grabbing her by her beautiful neck that was as slender as a swan’s.

I think she’ll turn into quite the trouble. Killing her before she blows up her daemon core is probably impossible, but if I use up the remaining seventy percent of my power of belief, I should have a chance at surviving considering the toughness of my body.

As if a thick layer of dust had been wiped away, the Spider Queen became extremely sensitive to danger. Her body immediately tensed up, and the daemon core in her body was on the verge of exploding.

This was an icy stalemate that appeared every day in the natural world. When a lion hunted a buffalo, it also had to worry about whether the buffalo's horns would kill it.

Should I feign submission for now? No, once I show any weakness, it’ll only consolidate his determination.

The natural world was filled with disguises and bluffs, but there was no such thing as feigning respect and sincerity. The weak would definitely be destroyed.

Chapter 493 - Where the Dream Lies

During the oppressive stalemate, spiritual qi of the world surged into Lolth's body violently. As her daemon qi recovered, her physical strength slowly recovered as well.

Li Qingshan's opportunity to kill her slipped by bit by bit.

Finally, Li Qingshan took action. He drew back his hand slowly.

Was he going to spare her, or was this the premonition of an attack?

Lolth dared not be careless, afraid that he was trying to toy around with her.

Li Qingshan had already made up his mind inside.

I even spared Fu Qingjin, yet I'm afraid of revenge from her? Yes, when a Daemon Commander loses her mind, she won't be something that can be compared to a Foundation Establishment cultivator who overly relies on his sword. Oh, so I'm supposed to spare those who pose a smaller threat and kill those who pose a larger threat? Isn't that just posing around, bullying the weak and fearing the strong?

Against someone like Fu Qingjin, even if they fought for another century, he would have never broken through to the fourth layer. The path leading to beyond the Nine Heavens would definitely be filled with twists and hardships. He could clearly imagine the horrific wounds on brother ox as if they were right before his eyes.

Compared to the enemies he would face in the future, Lolth was absolutely nothing. I'll just keep this little spider as a stepping stone for my advance!

However, Li Qingshan was reluctant to let Lolth off so easily. He sat down to the side and crossed his legs, smiling. "I know you refuse to accept this and think I won unconventionally. That's not exactly wrong. However, victory is victory and defeat is defeat. I've won this battle. Will you admit that?"

"I admit that," Lolth said coldly. This had always been the most basic principle of the natural world. Fairness and justice meant nothing. There was only a boundary between life or death.

"From today onwards, I no longer listen to your command. I possess the right to rule over half of the underground territory. The daemons will go to you, while the night roamers will go to me. That'll be my spoils of this battle. What do you think?"

"That'll work. However, not half, but all of it. From now onwards, your command is my command. You are welcome to enter my chambers as you please. In human terms, you are my husband."

Lolth said calmly before even revealing a chilling, enchanting smile at the end.

"You're planning to kill your husband!" Li Qingshan laughed aloud, revealing what she was thinking in a single sentence.

The thing that Lolth feared the most was Li Qingshan taking off after finishing up with this. With his ability to hide his aura, she really would not be able to find him, and with his powers, it would be very easy for him even if he wanted to go to another province. As a result, she cast out bait in an attempt to make him remain in this territory.

She believed that as long as they fought again, she would definitely be able to kill him. As a matter of fact, she had already become rather eager for that now. In a short while, she had already recovered a lot of her daemon qi.

“I’d advise you to only challenge me again when you have absolute confidence. Next time, I might not necessarily be so generous, mother of my child!” Li Qingshan smiled as he held Lolth by her chin, shaking her head around.

“Just in case you’ll become paranoid, constantly on edge, and just so I can find you, let’s agree on a time to meet for next time!”

Lolth smiled as she gently slid her hand across her chest as if she was afraid the bait she cast out was too little and he would not bite. At this moment, she had completely turned back into that calm predator.

“Now, as one of the rulers of this territory, tell me just what that thing in the magma is.” Li Qingshan asked the question that had been on his mind for a very long time.

Lolth’s face suddenly changed. She became uncertain as if she was wondering whether she should answer him and how she should answer him.

“What do you want to know about me?”

Before she had even spoken, Li Qingshan’s face changed too. An immature yet ancient voice directly rang out in his mind. This might have been a strange description, but that was truly what he felt. The voice was as immature as the first cry of an infant after being born, yet as ancient as the final words of an old man who had witnessed all of the changes of the world around him.

Li Qingshan shuddered. Was this the... they were several hundred kilometers from there at the very least!

However, he immediately calmed down and asked, “Who are you?”

“That’s not important. What is important is, who are you?”

Li Qingshan was stunned. He did not know how to answer.

The voice continued, “Forget it. That’s not important either.”

“Then what is important?”

“Where are you going?”

“Don’t tell me you’re going to ask me where I come from too!” Li Qingshan laughed. He had asked the three supreme questions of life right off the bat. Was this guy public security hidden deep underground?

The voice fell silent. Perhaps Li Qingshan had hit the mark.

Li Qingshan merely laughed. “My name is Northmoon. I come from whence I come and I go to whence I go!”

“That touches on some profound truths of chan.”

“Are you a human or a daemon?”

Actually, what Li Qingshan wanted to get to the bottom of the most was not this. He wanted to know whether he was friend or foe. Lolth clearly knew him, so by that logic, they should have been from the same side, yet even when Lolth faced death, she had never sought help from him. He could clearly sense everything happening here, but he chose to watch on from the side.

“Are you really called Northmoon? And what about you? Are you a human or a daemon?”

Li Qingshan continued to smile, but compared to his gaze, it became slightly forced. Had he realised something? His identity as half-human, half-daemon could be described as his greatest secret. Once it was divulged, the consequences would be unthinkable. If a regular person found out, Li Qingshan would even consider killing them to silence them, but the “infant” underground was clearly not someone he could silence.

Perhaps he’s not too certain either, which is why he asked. Perhaps he’s only probing me. I can’t let him trip me over!

“Forget it. This isn’t important either!”

Just as Li Qingshan considered how he was supposed to answer, the voice interrupted him again, which left him extremely dissatisfied.

“Then what is important?”

As Li Qingshan said that, he found that rather familiar. Sure enough, the voice immediately answered, “Haven’t I already asked it? Where are you going?”

“How is where I’m going relevant to you?”

“It is relevant to me, as we’re going to the same place.”

“Then tell me where I’m going.”

“Beyond the heavens.”

“How do you know?” Li Qingshan shuddered inside.

“I knew from the first time I saw you that your ambitions are anything but small. As frogs in a well, isn’t the purpose of our lifetime of cultivation to climb beyond the well and take a look at the world outside?” The voice that had remained calm and mild, without many fluctuations in tone, suddenly roused up, now filled with lofty sentiment.

He referred to himself modestly as a frog in a well, but Li Qingshan immediately knew he was anything but that. He viewed the nine provinces as a well, trapping him in there and bringing him discomfort. Was there anything he could say with an even loftier sentiment than that?

There was another side that Li Qingshan failed to consider. The frog might have been modest, but in this well, it could still lord over everyone else, an existence with no natural predator.

“You’re right. We do share the same path. I also want to venture beyond the Nine Heavens!” Li Qingshan developed some more respect and spoke much more politely, but he only recognised him as a

fellow traveller on the same path. Their statuses were no different, and he did not grovel at all. This was the pride the black ox had given him. He would never lower his head or submit before anyone.

Li Qingshan could roughly tell what the voice was saying. The so-called venturing “beyond the heavens” was the objective of all cultivators. They wanted to break free from the restraints of this world and venture to a higher, more distant world. That did not necessarily mean he knew about his promise with the black ox.

“I’m wrong.”

The voice fluctuated again, filled with shock this time.

“How are you wrong? Have I said something wrong?” Li Qingshan was confused.

“I still ended up underestimating you. Beyond the Nine Heavens. Sigh, even to me, this objective is far too distant, well beyond my reach, something that I won’t even consider.”

“Aren’t we talking about the same place? Beyond the Nine Heavens—is that very far?”

Li Qingshan had mentioned these four words many times, but he actually had no exact concept of it. He had only faced the first heavenly tribulation so far, so thinking about that was a little soon. Remaining down-to-earth and cultivating was more important.

However, having run into someone who knew the path coincidentally, he could not help but ask just where the destination of his dream led to.

“Far? Hehe, I only want to climb out of this well, but you want to fly through the sky!”

“Is it really that difficult?” Li Qingshan was tongue-tied. This comparison was not too exaggerated. Just how deep could the well be and how far could the ground be from the sky?

“No, no, no. This is a little too simple. If it’s just flying through the sky, then even I have some hope. As long as you continue, going from a frog to a bird is not completely impossible. However, you want to become a star! It truly is an impressively great ambition. You’re probably the only one with this dream across all nine provinces and the billions of lives that live here.”

Curiosity filled the voice as if it wondered how Li Qingshan had such an unrealistic dream.

I await you beyond the Nine Heavens, for the time when you stand beside me.

The black ox’s words when he left echoed through Li Qingshan’s mind. Only now did he realise just what it was implying.

Li Qingshan fell silent. He naively believed he was only carrying a mountain on his shoulders.

“What, have you become frightened? Seems like I’m just overthinking. Looks like you just added “Nine Heavens” by mistake! I’ve spoken too much. Let me ask you again. You also want to go beyond the heavens, right?”

The voice seemed relieved, yet also slightly disappointed.

Did brother ox add the two words by mistake? The answer was very obvious, No!

Li Qingshan's reply was the same. "No, I want to go beyond the Nine Heavens."

He raised his head and laughed wildly. His face was glorious.

"You..."

Once upon a time, there was a frog that leapt around at the bottom of a well. It trained its legs, anticipating the moment that it leapt out of the well. At this moment, a tiny tadpole swam over and said, "Frog, frog! I want to become a star!"

The frog told the tiny tadpole patiently, "Stars are very, very distant, and tadpoles can't become stars. I think you'll have a very good chance at becoming a frog."

The tadpole considered it. "Alright then. I'll become a frog first... then I'll become a star!"

The frog was left speechless.

The awe-inspiring bearing that Li Qingshan gave off suddenly crumbled. He scratched his head in distress. "But what kind of place is beyond the Nine Heavens? Hey, you look like you know a lot. Tell me about it. We can probably travel together."

"I don't know what kind of place that is. I've only heard that it's the centre of the trichiliocosm, the place where gods and buddhas roam freely."

"Looks like I can't get an answer out of you anyway. Though, as long as I make my way up step by step, I shouldn't get lost, right?"

Only after a very long time did Li Qingshan understand that the "nine" in the Nine Heavens was not a quantifier, but an adjective.

Nine was the limit of numbers, implying infinity!

"If you really want to go, I can lend you a hand. Though, you need to help me out with something small first!"

Chapter 494 - A Phoenix's Feather

"Help you out with what?"

Li Qingshan had basically determined that the infant had no hostility towards him. As for this "small help", it was probably the original reason why he had suddenly appeared.

"Do you know the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga?"

"Who doesn't know about that in the Green province?"

"The Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga has a cultivation method called the Chant of Deva-Nāga."

"Yeah. That's the special cultivation method of their sect. And then?"

"There's no and then. You just have to fetch me the Chant of Deva-Nāga."

"And you call that something small? You want me, a Daemon General, to enter the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga and steal their special cultivation method?"

Li Qingshan laughed. If I had that ability, why'd I still be mouthing off with you? I'd go for another hundred times with Spider Queen Lolth right now!

"This is much easier than venturing beyond the Nine Heavens. Don't turn me down so quickly. Why don't you hear me out about what I can help you with?"

"What?"

"A phoenix's feather."

Li Qingshan was taken aback. He had obtained the Phoenix's Scripture of Nirvāṇa a long time ago, but cultivation had never been smooth with it. If he could obtain a phoenix's feather, perhaps that was an opportunity. He might even be able to increase the Phoenix Transformation's power.

"How do I know if you're telling the truth or not?"

"You can verify with me after you obtain the Chant of Deva-Nāga!" The voice receded like the tide, growing distant.

"You want to exchange a bird's feather for the secret cultivation method of the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga. That is far too stingy of you. Since you want it so much, why don't you retrieve it yourself?"

"I have my struggles." The voice drifted off.

"Why don't you give me the phoenix's feather first so that I can increase my cultivation? I'll have a better chance too."

"I await your assistance, fellow traveller of the same path!" The voice echoed, gradually wearing away.

Lolth happened to be in the middle of a conversation with Li Qingshan when she suddenly saw him become dazed. She pulled away from Li Qingshan in a flash and waved her hand. All of the silk and web gathered towards her, layering and weaving together to form a tight suit that wrapped around her body.

Of course, this was not because of embarrassment or anything along those lines. Clothes woven from the tough silk served as the best armour.

"But I still don't know who you are."

A while later, Li Qingshan returned to his senses and opened his eyes. He still felt rather frustrated.

When he saw Lolth's attire, he could not help but smile. "What's this supposed to be? Fishnet lingerie? Do you want me to help you take it off again?"

The spider silk had always been slightly transparent, but as she layered it together, she seemed like she wore a thick veil, her skin vaguely visible. She wore the large web as her outer layer. Her attire made her seem even more mesmerising than when she was bare.

"You can try it." Lolth smiled. She had already recovered ten percent of her daemon qi, but this measly ten percent could not be underestimated. Even if Li Qingshan struck with his full strength right now, going as far as to expend all of his power of belief, it would be impossible for him to capture her again.

“I’ll have plenty of opportunities, mother of my child. I’ll be taking my leave first.” Li Qingshan smiled confidently and flapped his wings of wind, taking off.

Loth clenched her fist, but she felt her heart ease up slightly. Li Qingshan no longer asked about the identity of the “infant”, and she was more than willing to avoid answering him. Little did she know they had already had a conversation.

If she found out the “infant” had referred to Li Qingshan as a “fellow traveller of the same path” at the very end, she would definitely be so shocked that her mouth would be hanging agape. Afterwards, she would reconsider how she treated Li Qingshan.

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“Ye Laixiang, you’re bold enough to launch an attack, yet I’m supposed to be afraid of fighting back? Once master returns, he’ll definitely kill you all to avenge me.”

In Cobweb city, Ye Liubo remained calm and fearless under the glares of the night roamers, loudly mocking the matriarch of the Bat Shadow clan.

“Do you really believe he’ll be able to return? Hehe!” Ye Laixiang let out a nervous laugh.

The six clans had never gotten along, and the hatred between the Bat Shadow clan and Spider Shadow clan ran extremely deep. And, ever since Li Qingshan ascended to the top, the Spider Shadow clan had been the ones who benefited the most, while the status of the Bat Shadow clan constantly plummeted. They repressed their hatred to the bottom of their hearts, where it constantly brewed and fermented.

Ye Liubo said, “Hmph, even if the entire Bat Shadow clan dies, he won’t die!”

Ye Laixiang played around with a snake-shaped dagger in her hand and sneered. “Alright, then don’t hide. I’d like to see whether he’ll actually avenge you or not.”

“Does the Bat Shadow clan want to declare war?” Ye Liusu stepped forward from the crowd.

“So what if we want to declare war? You’re just a junior, yet you’re still bold enough to tell me what I can and can’t do? Do you really think I don’t know what you’re thinking? You just want to unite the night roamers and become the matriarch yourself. Why don’t you check yourself first? Without Northmoon’s support, you’re nothing!” Ye Laixiang barked.

Over the past few years, Ye Liusu had been constantly recruiting the night roamers who refused to take part in the internal strife among the clans, constantly shaking at the foundations of the clans. She had offended a few clans even more than Ye Liubo.

With Ye Laixiang stepping forward, the gazes of the other matriarchs became unfathomable too.

Ye Liusu frowned slightly. She could clearly feel ice-cold killing intent locking onto her from somewhere. The atmosphere fell apart all of a sudden, as if she had returned to the past when night roamers struggled against one another.

Ye Mingzhu stood forward and said, “I’d advise you all to calm down for now! Liusu has been working diligently for our entire race. You’ve all witnessed the fruits of her efforts from the past few years! By working together and letting go of conflict, all of us will benefit.”

“Benefit? Ye Mingzhu, you just want your daughter to rule over us! You better think about it carefully then! Ye Liusu and Ye Liubo are betraying ma’am Spider Queen and siding with the traitor Northmoon! Their crimes cannot be forgiven! If we work together right now and exterminate them, that’ll net us great merit! If you want to protect them, then your Spider Shadow clan will be exterminated too!”

As she said that, Ye Laixiang constantly exchanged glances with the other matriarchs. Through their secret conversations, they finally reached a temporary agreement, obviously not to demonstrate loyalty towards the Spider Queen, but for the large quantities of resources that Ye Liusu controlled.

Silently, several orders were passed down. The powerful night roamers of the five clans all surrounded Ye Liusu, Ye Liubo, and the others.

Ye Mingzhu considered it before also waving her hand. The elders and masters of the Spider Shadow clan became part of this encirclement, but they were the furthest away, only forming the outskirts.

The personal guards under Ye Liusu’s leadership formed a ring with their backs pointing to the centre. They gazed at the surroundings vigilantly, but they seemed rather hesitant, as they had originally come from these clans too.

“Apart from Ye Liusu and Ye Liubo, the others have just been misled. It’s not too late for you to return to your clans, or you’ll suffer the same fate as these two traitors!”

Ye Laixiang became more and more complacent. She believed that she only needed a single word and her daughters would return to her side again. The other matriarchs all issued summons too, calling back their princesses who had been sent over to serve as spies.

They all thought, Once she loses this force, the organisation that Ye Liusu worked so hard to manage will immediately crumble. It’s hilarious that she really thinks she’s still in charge.

But to everyone’s surprise, while quite a few people did waver, none of them immediately stepped forward and returned to their clans.

Before they knew it, Ye Liusu had managed to influence everyone around her with her ideal and true feelings.

The corner of Ye Liusu’s lips curled slightly as if she was rather relieved. She glanced back and said sincerely, “Thank you!”

“The situation is dangerous right now and master’s fate is unknown, but I believe he will definitely return. However, I don’t want to force anyone into risking their lives with me. No matter who wants to return to their clan, I won’t be stopping you. If you can protect your lives because of this, the time we spent as sisters would have been well worth it.”

A tall night roamer went up and placed her hand on Ye Liusu’s shoulder. She smiled. “To be honest, I’ve called Northmoon master, but he’s never satisfied me in bed, nor do I trust him. However, I do trust you, Ye Liusu!”

Another night roamer said, “If master doesn’t return, then we can found a clan together. You can be the matriarch, Liusu!”

“We followed Northmoon because of ma’am Spider Queen’s order. Whether he betrays anyone has nothing to do with us. I refuse to believe ma’am Spider Queen can’t tell the difference between right and wrong.”

“You all...” Ye Liusu’s heart warmed up. She was strangely touched and left speechless.

Ye Laixiang said furiously, “Ye Liusu, even with your silken tongue, you won’t be able to escape death today!”

‘If you want to take her life, you better kill me first!’

An icy voice rang out. The cool Ye Liuxing stood forward, leaving the encirclement. She gazed at Ye Liusu deeply, her eyes filled with indescribable emotions. Her voice became slightly gentler. “I will be leaving the Spider Shadow clan and serving under you.”

Ye Liubo witnessed all of this and felt happy for Ye Liusu from the bottom of her heart. She thought, Sister, this is where your charm lies. Master is right. You are special!

Not only did the inducement fail to collapse Ye Liusu’s organisation, but it instead assisted her in growing her influence. The matriarchs were all stunned. Were these really right roamers? Where had their cold, suspicious dispositions gone?

Following their surprise, they felt even more threatened. They secretly made up their minds. No, Ye Liusu must be eliminated, or she might actually unite the clans!

“Liuxing, I don’t think you need to leave the Spider Shadow clan, as from now onwards, Ye Liusu is the new matriarch of the Spider Shadow clan!”

Ye Mingzhu smiled, but she felt rather reluctant inside. This was an opportunity to strengthen the Spider Shadow clan. Once the two organizations merged together, the Spider Shadow clan would surpass the five other clans and even have an actual chance at uniting them.

They had gone from one against six to two against five. A difference still seemed to exist, but over the past few years, both Ye Liusu and the Spider Shadow clan had already built up a very substantial supply of resources through Li Qingshan’s trust and favour. They possessed countless talismans and puppets. If they actually began fighting, they would not necessarily lose.

Ye Liusu beamed with joy. “Yes, mother!”

“Liusu, this is all I can do to assist you!” Ye Mingzhu nodded slightly, but she smiled bitterly inside. She had no idea whether this daughter who was different from the rest was a blessing or a curse.

However, from a different perspective, if Ye Liusu had been just as heartless as the other night roamers, Ye Mingzhu would have never passed the position of matriarch to her so easily, even if she was her daughter by blood.

Now, the Spider Shadow clan was outside, while Ye Liusu and the others were inside. They had surrounded their enemies instead.

The two sides confronted one another. A great battle was about to erupt.

“Ye Mingzhu, have you made up your mind about betraying ma’am Spider Queen and supporting the remnants of the traitor Northmoon?” Ye Laixiang said coldly.

“Traitor Northmoon? Are you speaking about me?”

Everyone looked back. They saw a figure with drifting, scarlet hair standing in front of the city gates. His scarlet pupils shone like fire as he gazed down coldly.

Chapter 495 - Ye Liusu’s Choice

“Master!” Ye Liubo called out happily.

Ye Liusu was similarly relieved. Joy and ease that left even her rather surprised flooded heart, as if as long as he was here, anything, no matter how great, could be dealt with.

He actually managed to return alive. Though, the Spider Queen never changes her habits. He must have used some kind of trick and escaped alive. He definitely won’t be able to remain underground anymore, let alone continue to rule over us.

Ye Laixiang’s expression changed suddenly as she thought like that. Then, she said with composure, “So what if I’m talking about you? Northmoon, do you think you can still strut around like before? You’ve betrayed ma’am Spider Queen. You’re the enemy of all night roamers now.”

“Let’s work together and capture him. When ma’am Spider Queen returns, she’ll definitely reward us. Anyone who still dares to associate with him will truly be traitors. Once ma’am Spider Queen arrives, you’ll all die a horrible death!”

Ye Laixiang knew she had already offended Li Qingshan through and through. Afraid that he would kill her on the spot out of anger, she decided to strike first and draw all the night roamers to her side. No matter how powerful Li Qingshan was, it was impossible for him to openly take on several dozen night roamers who had undergone the first heavenly tribulation.

She changed the topic. “Ye Liusu, what do you have to say? Will you swear fealty to the Spider Queen, or will you swear fealty to this traitor?”

Ye Liusu’s eyebrows scrunched up as she became even more distressed. Earlier, it was possible to say that she had only submitted to him because of the Spider Queen’s orders. But with his reappearance, this excuse no longer worked anymore.

She had to make a choice!

Everyone’s gazes gathered on Ye Liusu again.

It had already been a while since Li Qingshan arrived. He noticed their dispute from afar, so he secretly eavesdropped on them. He wanted to see who was bold enough to speak ill of him behind his back. He had only appeared when the situation was worsening to pacify it.

Originally, he planned on killing Ye Laixiang right off the bat and making an example out of her, but with the current situation, there was instead no need for him to be so hasty. He was also very curious about what choice Ye Liusu would make.

Actually, he also understood that the best way to guarantee loyalty among subordinates was giving them no opportunity to betray him, but Ye Liusu was not merely a subordinate to him.

If she chose to betray him, Li Qingshan could understand her choice. After all, she had her dreams and ideals, so making a choice like that would not be strange. Of course, once he dealt with the situation, he would definitely give her some “punishment”. He could understand her decision, but that did not mean he could accept it.

Of course, he did not have to go as far as killing her. As a matter of fact, he could even let her keep her current position after he punished her, but she would become only a convenient tool.

The idea of the gift would obviously be thrown out the window too. Since she only treated him as a tool to achieve her objectives, then what did her ideals have to do with him? It was exactly because he had given her much more than that that he was looking forward to seeing what she would choose.

Ye Liusu’s delicate face was conflicted. She was unable to make a choice over this matter. If she continued to stand by his side, then she would no longer be able to remain in this territory anymore. She could only go into exile with him. Everything she had built up over the years would be wasted, and even her life might be in danger.

If she were a regular night roamer, perhaps this would have been a very easy choice to make. Basing a decision off the costs and benefits was commonplace. However, she could not, not to mention the figure with scarlet hair and scarlet eyes meant much more than that to her.

“Sister, we can’t betray master. Without master, would we even be standing here today?” Ye Liubo grabbed Ye Liusu’s hand and said anxiously.

“You bitch, shut your mouth! He’s no master! He’s a traitor!” Ye Liuxing said coldly.

Ye Liusu looked towards Ye Mingzhu with uncertainty, hoping to receive her mother’s wisdom as assistance.

Ye Mingzhu only said, “Liusu, I believe you will make the correct choice.”

Her words were highly ambiguous, as if she was persuading Ye Liusu to immediately betray Li Qingshan, yet also like she was objecting to that. That was because even she was rather uncertain too, not because she was actually loyal to Li Qingshan, but because she sensed how unusually relaxed Li Qingshan was.

Northmoon should be thinking about fleeing as far as he can right now, so why is he watching on in such a relaxed manner? Has the situation changed, and the Spider Queen decided to spare him? But that’s completely impossible. Even Ye Mingzhu was rather unsure about what was going on. She could only let Ye Liusu make her own decision.

Why aren’t you fleeing? Are you waiting for me? Ye Liusu looked at Li Qingshan from afar. His gaze seemed to be filled with anticipation. Ye Liusu touched her lips gently. The remaining warmth of that kiss reached the bottom of her heart.

Saying that love was blind and it made people irrational was not wrong at all! She let out a gentle sigh and said resolutely, “Looks like I’m just not suited to be a leader. I can’t carry the heavy burden of a matriarch, nor am I suited to lead my sisters. From now onwards, Ye Liusu is only Ye Liusu.”

As if a heavy burden had been lifted from her shoulders, she was unable to describe whether she was feeling relief or disappointment. She held Ye Liubo's hand and walked towards Li Qingshan, confronting his scarlet eyes calmly as she murmured to herself inside, Everything I gained because of you has been once again lost because of you. This is nothing to feel pity over!

Li Qingshan smiled back at her as he felt at great ease. He murmured, "You won't regret your choice today."

"Stop them!" Ye Laixiang ordered sternly. She had no confidence in being able to kill Northmoon, but she was extremely confident about killing them. Now that the situation was certain, she would possess the greatest merit once the Spider Queen returned.

Just when she was feeling complacent, she felt her throat tighten. Her eyes widened in disbelief as fright filled her face.

No one had managed to see what had happened, but Li Qingshan was already standing in front of Ye Laixiang, grabbing her by the neck and lifting her up gently.

Only then did the other night roamers return to their senses before all becoming stunned. Like Ye Laixiang, they became filled with disbelief.

Underground, everyone knew about Ye Laixiang's strength. Even among the six matriarchs, she ranked towards the top, or as humans divided the cultivation realms, she was at late Foundation Establishment. This was also what gave her the confidence to challenge Li Qingshan.

But now, Li Qingshan had subdued Ye Laixiang without any room for resistance. No one had grasped his movements. A heavy, cold feeling filled all of their hearts. If his target had been them, or anyone else present, no one would have been able to escape! If he wanted to carry out a massacre, who could stop him?

In this region, probably only the Spider Queen can move with the same speed. She's probably done for! Ye Mingzhu thought to herself.

"Mighty be master!" Ye Liubo cheered and threw herself into Li Qingshan's arms before crying out, "Be careful, master!"

A curved shadow swept past, slicing towards Li Qingshan's throat. It was the dagger that was curved like a snake in Ye Laixiang's hand. The weapon glistened with a dark sheen, clearly coated in poison. Her strike was well-hidden and vicious, truly an assassin's attack. At the same time, her figure gradually faded away as if she had turned into a shadow. She escaped from Li Qingshan's hand.

However, the struggle was destined to be futile. The dagger fell powerlessly half way along its trajectory, while Ye Laixiang returned to normal, her face filled with shock. The power of tremors filled her surroundings, resulting in a series of bone-shattering crick-cracks. Li Qingshan tossed her onto the ground, and she immediately crumbled and became completely incapacitated.

"Master, we better go!" Ye Liusu arrived beside Li Qingshan and advised softly. She was already prepared to flee with him. Perhaps this fate was not so bad.

“Go? Go where?” Li Qingshan wrapped his hand around Ye Liusu’s waist. The tenderness in his gaze made her somewhat glad about her choice for some reason. She also seemed to understand something, casting a questioning gaze back at him.

Li Qingshan announced loudly, “I’ve already defeated the Spider Queen. From today onwards, I am the only ruler of the night roamers!”

This announcement was even more shocking than the great strength he had demonstrated prior. It echoed through the cavern, silencing the surroundings.

“That’s impossible! How could the likes of you defeat ma’am Spider Queen?” Ye Laixiang shrieked.

She had spoken the minds of all the night roamers. To them, the Spider Queen was like a god—undefeatable and undefiable. Even Ye Liusu and Ye Liubo became stunned, staring at Li Qingshan like they no longer knew who he was.

Li Qingshan turned his head and listened carefully before smiling. “Seems like no one is refuting that!” Then he became serious. “Looks like I’m not the traitor, but you are!”

Before Ye Laixiang could say anything, he whistled with his fingers, and a stream of air turned and twisted, piercing her head and leaving behind a clear hole. Afterwards, he conveniently stowed her corpse away in his hundred treasures pouch.

Everyone gasped. A matriarch had been crushed like an insect.

Li Qingshan only had a foot planted in the Daemon Commander realm, but killing an opponent like that had already become extremely easy. The difference between major realms of cultivation had always been greater than the difference between people and insects. People might not necessarily be able to catch insects, but as long as an opponent like Ye Laixiang was within Li Qingshan’s range of vision, they were basically dead already.

At this moment, daemon qi appeared from underground, reaching the top of Cobweb city. Everyone was familiar with this daemon qi. The Spider Queen had returned!

But aside from that, she did not do anything else. She completely ignored what was going on in front of the city as if she was indirectly confirming Li Qingshan’s words.

“Do you still have any objections?”

“Our Spider Shadow clan is willing to serve sir Northmoon as our master. We are your servants. We will follow wherever you go, and your wish is our command.” Ye Mingzhu finally responded, stepping forward and bowing solemnly.

He had even managed to defeat ma’am Spider Queen. What kind of strength was that? Had he become a Daemon Commander already?

Although she had obeyed Li Qingshan in the past, she had never accepted that she was his servant. At most, she was a subordinate and he was her superior. But now, she led the entire clan to swear fealty to him, becoming his servants willingly.

The four other matriarchs followed close behind. None of them had even the slightest shred of discontent anymore, yielding to absolute power. The other night roamers were thrown into an uproar too, performing the most solemn bow to him. Even the Bat Shadow clan that had just lost their matriarch was no different.

However, Li Qingshan said, "You're wrong."

Ye Mingzhu asked, "Please enlighten me, sir. Where have I gone wrong?"

Li Qingshan said, "From today onwards, clans no longer exist among the night roamers. I am your only master. Ye Liusu, listen up!"

Although he spoke seriously, he had no intentions of letting Ye Liusu go. All she could do was reply in his arms, "Yes."

"From today onwards, you will be responsible for reorganising them! If anyone has any issues, tell her to come find me. I'll settle them!" Li Qingshan said with a smile. Obviously, what he would be settling would not be some issues.

Chapter 496 - Ru Xin's Story

In the past, Li Qingshan would have never been able to issue such an arbitrary order. He would have never been able to kill the clan matriarchs who possessed sensitive identities at a whim either. Causing a revolt among the night roamers would lead to nothing good.

However, he had the confidence now, as well as the right. This all came from his personal strength. Only with absolute strength was there absolute authority. There was no need for him to rack his brains with tricks and tactics.

Those who obey me will prosper. Those who defy me will die.

Brute force could not deal with everything, probably because the amount of force involved was insufficient.

In the past, the Spider Queen wanted them divided and at war with each other, so they were divided and at war with each other. Now, Li Qingshan wanted them united, so they had to unite together.

Ye Liusu's expression changed a few times. At first, there was joy and surprise—not only had she avoided the need to flee, but she had instead obtained even more. The great cause of unity she pursued had been easily achieved with a single word from him.

Only afterwards did she become filled with some lingering fear. If she really had followed the ancient, scheming principles of night roamers and betrayed him, then she would lose everything. Most importantly, she would lose his heart forever. She would never receive such warm protection again.

When she thought of that, she could not help but lean closer in his arms, showing her delicate side to Li Qingshan for once. Having gone through this together, they had become one step closer. However, if Li Qingshan did not possess absolute power, she would never behave like this with her pride and perseverance even if she was smitten with him.

“Thank you for your gift.” Ye Liusu raised her delicate face as her eyes that seemed like the night sky shone with light.

“This isn’t my gift.”

Even Li Qingshan himself had never imagined he would be able to defeat Lolth and force her to accept a treaty with him. Originally, he planned to use this opportunity to break through to the fourth layer of the tiger demon before taking off for good.

By then, claiming a territory above ground and signing a non-aggression pact with the Academy of the Hundred Schools would not be particularly difficult with his strength. It would basically assist Ye Liusu in completing her dream of the night roamers returning to the surface.

Looking at Ye Liusu’s curious face, Li Qingshan only smiled. He planned on giving her this surprise later.

“Let’s return to the territory first. I’ll leave the rest up to you!”

Li Qingshan gently patted Ye Liusu’s perky buttocks and let her go. In the past, he would never do this, as it would only make her look down on him for no good reason. But now, it seemed extremely natural.

“Yes.”

Ye Liusu reddened, but she stiffened her face and behaved like nothing had happened at all. Li Qingshan found this to be extremely interesting. He would definitely tease her properly when he had the chance.

“Ma’am Spider Queen, Northmoon welcomes your challenges at any time. Hahahaha!”

Li Qingshan turned towards Cobweb city and said loudly before unfurling his wings of wind. Then he took off into the air with Ye Liubo without the slightest care.

“Will ma’am Spider Queen do something to my sister?”

The fierce gales whistled by as the caves twisted and changed so rapidly that even Ye Liubo struggled to see them clearly, so she stopped looking, focusing on his face instead. In his arms, all she could hear was the sound of wind, but she could not feel a single breeze. This feeling left her charmed, but upon further thought, she began to worry for Ye Liusu.

She still referred to Lolth respectfully as ma’am Spider Queen even when no one was around, which only demonstrated the extent of Lolth’s power and influence. Li Qingshan did not make her change the way she referred to her. She could never go wrong with maintaining a bit of respect towards the strong.

“Probably not. Right now, she’d much rather keep her around as something holding me back so that I stick around!”

Li Qingshan had already gained a rough understanding of Lolth’s mentality. After turning back into a predator, she placed all of her focus on him, biding her time and waiting to deal a lethal strike. She would not do something that was purely detrimental just to vent her anger.

A while later, they returned to the territory.

Ye Liubo continued to cling onto him like a koala, refusing to get down.

“Oh right, what reward would you like?” Li Qingshan smiled. Ye Liusu’s complete loyalty had left him surprised and overjoyed, but this girl’s performance had never left him disappointed before.

“What do you think?” Ye Liubo pouted her lips and nudged him.

“Maybe not today!” Li Qingshan smiled bitterly. Even if he had all the lust in the world, it would have been dispelled after the battle with Lolth. If he had not been completely satisfied, he would have never let Lolth go either. Right now, even without the Spirit Turtle’s Method of Sea Suppression, he felt a little like his mind was as still as water, without any worldly desires.

“Fine.”

Ye Liubo was immediately disappointed, but she had no intentions of disobeying him. She struggled to hide her lament.

“It’s a little too hasty right now. Let me make some preparations, then I’ll...”

Li Qingshan whispered into her ear, comforting this small, loyal pet that he adored. After that, he left behind his mirror clone and left the underground world in a hurry. He had been gone for so long. Who knew if anything had happened on the other side. Xiao An was probably anxious from waiting!

The Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga was indeed related to him to a certain degree. Wanting to steal their special cultivation method was virtually impossible. Even if he underwent another heavenly tribulation, he still would have no confidence in this. The task of obtaining the Chant of Deva-Nāga would probably fall onto Xiao An’s shoulders.

Did that strange infant underground, the “frog in the well”, sense the existence of an opportunity because of this?

Lolth’s challenge would arrive very soon. If she did not fight, then so be it, but once she struck, she would be striking to kill.

Right now, everything that Li Qingshan possessed was based on the victory he had achieved earlier. If he failed to match Lolth, then not only him, but even Ye Liubo and Ye Liusu who depended on him would suffer.

Only by obtaining the phoenix’s feather and reaching the first layer of the Phoenix Transformation could he increase his odds.

Sparing Lolth obviously left behind a huge problem. However, it also pressured him into constantly thinking of ways to increase his strength, afraid to slack off for even a second.

Just by looking at the results, this choice was relatively better. If he really decided to kill her, the strange infant underground probably would not simply stand by and watch on.

Not to mention that the death of a Daemon Commander was anything but trivial.

Maybe even the leader of the Daemon race in the Green province, the Dragon King of Ink Sea, would respond. After all, even after so many years, the Sword Collection palace was still clinging onto the Soaring Dragon Elder’s death, refusing to simply let the matter go.

Even the best result would be another Daemon Commander coming over and claiming this territory, adding countless new variables and making the situation even more unpredictable. Compared to that, he would be better off keeping the various variables within his control.

Li Qingshan slowly thought through the matter. He was filled with a grand ambition, showing no fear or intention to cower at all.

“Come! No matter how many times, I will defeat you viciously, and then go at it again!”

.....

Li Qingshan returned to the Chain mountain silently, but Xiao An was no longer in the dwelling.

Did she encounter something unexpected? However, the Eight Gates Formation of Golden Locks was in perfect condition, and with her current strength, the only one that could threaten her in the Clear River prefecture was the Spider Queen.

Just when he was rather confused, a neighbour visited. Li Qingshan opened the formation and invited Ru Xin into the dwelling.

“You’re finally back. How was your trip?” Ru Xin studied the extremely spacious dwelling, which only confirmed her thoughts further. If he were a regular cultivator, why would he make his dwelling so exaggeratedly large?

Perhaps left intentionally or otherwise, but there were even a few strangely large claw marks on the floor of the dwelling. And, the aspects that sparked doubt were much more than these.

It was no wonder why Xiao An refused to let the group of people inside. Otherwise, all of them would find this rather strange as long as they were human!

She only glanced past these parts hastily before turning her gaze back to the “mystery man” in front of her. At first glance, he seemed exactly the same as when they had first met. Even the aura he gave off was the same, However, his bearing had changed. It had become even more high-spirited and confident, filled with fighting will. It only gave her a single feeling. He had become even stronger.

“It was alright! Do you know where Xiao An went?”

Li Qingshan did not go out of his way to hide anything. Their relationship had already reached a state where they could understand one another without talking. Perhaps due to clearing out his desires, when Li Qingshan saw Ru Xin again, his passion had faded away. He cherished their friendship more than ever.

Even though he had a grand dream of taking all the beauties in the world as his wives, beauties were common, while confidants were rare.

“The Annihilum Light Chan Master of the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga came, yet she refused to let anyone enter her dwelling, so all they could do was go to the academy together.”

“The Annihilum Light Chan Master? Tell me exactly what happened.”

Li Qingshan's eyes lit up. The strange infant underground sure was capable. As the head monk of the Bodhi courtyard of the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga, he should know the Chant of Deva-Nāga. Couldn't Li Qingshan just get him to pass it onto Xiao An and then exchange it for the phoenix's feather?

"Sure. One spiritual stone per word. I already said thirty-two words earlier, but considering our friendship, I'll just give them to you as a freebie." Ru Xin extended her hand like she deserved it.

"Our friendship sure is worth a lot!"

To his surprise, Ru Xin furrowed her brows and began thinking as if she was seriously considering their friendship. Suddenly, her brows eased up again.

"Actually, we don't even really have a friendship. Hurry up and cough up the spiritual stones, or I'll refuse to answer any more questions."

"Am I the novelist or are you the novelist? Are your stories really worth that much?"

"Fifty-six spiritual stones! Oh wait, it should be fifty-nine spiritual stones. If I include that sentence, it's sixty-four spiritual stones! No, it's wrong again. It should be..."

"Damn woman, you're even including what you said at the very beginning! You're still counting! Even talking to yourself counts as words!?"

"You're welcome to not listen."

"Alright, talk!" Li Qingshan refused to pay a single spiritual stone to her.

"Please settle the bill first."

Li Qingshan exhaled in frustration and directly tossed out a great pile of spiritual stones.

Ru Xin did not hold back, accepting the spiritual stones with a smile. She said, "A long, long time ago..."

"It was just a few days at most!"

"You think you're so clever! Do you know what I'm going to say? Stop interrupting me. A long, long time ago, there was a child called Chu Tian. He was a Reincarnated Celestial and a clever, kind-hearted boy-wait, forget I said those four words. I'm not going to charge you for them. I've helped you save four spiritual stones. Hehe."

"Hehe my ass! You're charging me over that entire monologue, aren't you? It's already exceeded twenty words."

"That's right."

After learning all about Chu Tian's appearance, figure, background, and origins, Li Qingshan finally heard Ru Xin say he succeeded with Foundation Establishment and had come to the Chain mountains to challenge him. He could not help but begin paying attention too.

At this moment, the story came to a halt.

"Your spiritual stones have run out. If you wish to continue, please pay up."

Chapter 497 - The Chant of Deva-Nāga

Li Qingshan leapt to his feet as his eyes widened into a scowl. At this point, he even wanted to vent everything he had gone through with the Spider Queen at her.

The malice of the tiger demon had already merged with his bones. A sliver of it appeared. If regular people saw him right now, they would truly be frightened to death. Even cultivators would lurch inside and develop some fear.

However, Ru Xin merely drank her tea with composure, completely ignoring Li Qingshan's actions. The corner of her lips even seemed to curl up into a complacent smile. Whenever they clashed verbally, they would emerge victoriously if they could make the other lose their temper. Now, it was basically a victory for her, so she was delighted inside.

Li Qingshan ground his teeth, truly unable to do anything to her. Even vicious tigers could not extend their claws and teeth at friends.

And, while he said he was angry, he actually experienced a rare sense of peace inside. As he drank the tea and listened to the story that she rambled on about, the shadow from the underground world seemed to recede from his body bit by bit.

Before he knew it, he was no longer the moon demon, and he recovered some humane sensations. His tense heart loosened up. As a result, he played along with her. If any old person wanted to scam him out of his spiritual stones, they had better check whether they had enough lives to.

In order to hear the entire story, Li Qingshan could only pay up obediently.

"Thank you for your patronage! I won't be refunding any extra payments, but you do have to make up for it if you're short!"

Fortunately, after succeeding with her "scheme", Ru Xin had no intentions of purposefully extending the story any further. She gave him a simple explanation about what had happened, but even with that being the case, she had earned almost ten thousand spiritual stones.

"This bastard Chu Tian sure is clueless," Li Qingshan said casually. He did not take this too seriously. A trouble-making clown like Chu Tian was no longer worth his attention.

More importantly, the Annihilum Light Chan Master actually wanted to take Xiao An to the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga.

Although Li Qingshan did plan on visiting there with Xiao An, it was rather inappropriate right now.

A visit to the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga would definitely not take three or five days. It would be rather fast if it took three or five years. The issue was he had just set up some groundwork in the Clear River prefecture for himself. He had yet to reap the fruits of his labour. If he left now, it would be far too great of a pity.

Now that he had forcefully unified the night roamers, the spiritual herbs he collected would not be offered up like before. Instead, he could directly take it from them. His harvest would definitely be much, much greater than in the previous years.

And, he would be able to make full use of the underground resources. He could attempt to carry out long-term trades with the Academy of the Hundred Schools. The profits from that would definitely be impressive.

Even though regular pills were already useless to him, as long as he accumulated enough spiritual stones, he was more than able to visit the Ruyi commandery or even better places. He refused to believe he could not find and buy pills he could use.

He was like a farmer, toiling in the land laboriously and shedding who knew how many droplets of sweat. Finally, he reached autumn, the season of harvest he had been longing for all this time after so much difficulty. However, then he had to let go of the land and go start up a new field. No one would be willing to accept that.

And, he had yet to deal with the latent issue of the Spider Queen, which made it even more impossible for him to leave like this.

Of course, there was a way to deal with this, which was to have Xiao An cultivate in the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga alone while Li Qingshan remained in the Clear River prefecture, doing whatever he wanted.

However, Li Qingshan did not even consider this idea. Like the promise he had given in the past, only death could separate the two of them.

Li Qingshan sank into his thoughts. His expression changed several times before he suddenly stood up. "I'll go to the academy and take a look." If that old monk decided to act on his own and forcefully take Xiao An back to the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga, that would be horrible.

"You don't have to fret. A master from the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga won't resort to something so rude and unreasonable, as long as you don't insist on marrying their genius disciple." Ru Xin seemed to read his mind. As she spoke, she sounded like she was testing him.

"Why would I marry her for no good reason?"

"As long as you have no interest." Ru Xin eased up before pressing Li Qingshan back into his seat. Suddenly, she brought up something completely random. "Did you know, this world originally had gods."

"What?" Li Qingshan was taken aback. He had no idea why she had abruptly mentioned this.

"This is another story." Ru Xin smiled.

"You want to scam more spiritual stones from me?" Li Qingshan raised an eyebrow.

"Forget it. Considering how cooperative you were earlier, I'll tell you this story for free."

"Even if you want me to pay, I have to be willing first. Go on!"

"Your mind is elsewhere, so forget about it today. I'll tell you once your mind settles down. C'mon, let's go to the academy." Ru Xin stood up complacently and made her way out through the door. Her lips curled into a somewhat mysterious smile.

I'm not taking over ten thousand spiritual stones from you for nothing.

.....

In the great buddha's hall of the Anāsravā? temple, the monks were all silent as they stood around.

The rings of spiral incense fell bit by bit as curling smoke dispersed. The figure of buddha smiled with his head lowered.

An old man and a young girl sat in front of the buddha, discussing the dharma. One was as withered as wood, while the other was tender like a flower.

As they listened to them speak, the monks were all left at a loss. Even Mind Enlightenment was not too certain he understood everything.

Xiao An seemed to be absorbed in her thoughts, lowering her head and thinking hard from time to time. Often, it would only take her a short while before she raised her head and continued.

The joy on the Annihilum Light Chan Master's face that had been described as withered deepened. When he saw her several years ago, they had only agreed on their master-disciple relationship. They had not conversed too much. Today, he originally planned on giving her some guidance, but none of his difficult questions managed to stump her.

She developed her own style with buddhism, comprehending certain things by herself. Although her understanding for most things was still rather shallow, she did mention words of elegant wisdom from time to time, which instead made him feel like he was interacting with a senior.

And, it was only "shallow" in comparison to him, the head monk of the Bodhi courtyard who had spent several centuries on the buddhist dharma. There was probably no one among the internal disciples of the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga that could match her. He was only filled with praises for her inside.

The Path of White Bone and Great Beauty was not a simple cultivation method. It contained the life's work of an eminent monk of buddhism, which was equivalent to having a bodhisattva as a teacher, pointing out a path for her among the buddhist scriptures that were as vast as the sea. She used this as a foundation to read buddhist scriptures far and wide before coming back and practising the Path of White Bone and Great Beauty. The two processes supplemented each other, allowing her to advance step by step.

She felt like she had benefited quite a lot from the discussion with the Annihilum Light Chan Master. However, the bodhisattva was still the White Bone Bodhisattva after all, so Xiao An was unable to actually tell him what she had comprehended. Otherwise, he would not be approving and praising her. Instead, he would fly into a rage. With lightning speed, he would directly annihilate this heretic who blasphemed the buddha.

Most of Xiao An's attention was not on the discussion. Instead, she was thinking about Li Qingshan's safety. However, as she was always expressionless and her replies were clever and alert, even the Annihilum Light Chan Master failed to notice this. If he found out Xiao An had only been using minimal effort to deal with him, who knew whether he would become angered and displeased or even more delighted.

Xiao An's dark pupils were perfectly still. Through her eyes, the gloriously-adorned hall seemed to become a transparent black and white. The rich fragrance of sandalwood was light yet tasteless. The Annihilum Light Chan Master opened and closed his mouth, mentioning subtle buddhist dharma that only slipped through her mind. The sound of morning bells and evening drums were barely discernible and distant too.

This was not because her senses were not sharp, but rather she was close to a state of emptiness and formlessness as described by buddhism. Regular buddhist disciples could spend three years facing a wall, and a moment of this was enough to enlighten them and allow their cultivation to leap forward. She was in this state right now.

Thunk!

Xiao An heard a loud sound, and she turned around in delight. Li Qingshan stepped into the great buddha's hall. He formed an extremely distinct contrast to his surroundings. His bronze skin, shining eyes, and resonant laughter broke the silence.

Li Qingshan arrived beside Xiao An and bowed deeply. "I'm Li Qingshan. Greetings to the Annihilum Light Chan Master. I've heard how Xiao An had the pleasure to study under a renowned master like you. Having witnessed the solemnity of your bearing, you truly do live up to your name, Annihilum Light Chan Master."

The Annihilum Light Chan Master did not even glance at Li Qingshan, like he did not exist. All he could see was Xiao An. As the head monk of the Bodhi courtyard in the Annihilum Light Chan Master, he could be regarded as powerful even among cultivators who had undergone the second heavenly tribulation.

However, he was not looking down on Foundation Establishment cultivators like Li Qingshan. Instead, that was merely his nature. Prior to meeting Xiao An, he had already practised meditative silence for twenty years.

Meditative silence was extremely renowned among chan sects, which focused on letting go of the obsessions of speech. However, it was rumored in the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga that his meditative silence was not for cultivation at all but purely because he did not want to talk and waste time expounding the buddhist dharma to others.

During the half a day he had spent here, he had almost spoken more words to Xiao An than everything he had said in the past decade in the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga. If the disciples of the Bodhi courtyard found out about this, their jaws would definitely drop and begin suspecting whether their master was actually an imposter or not.

But clearly, the Annihilum Light Chan Master was not particularly fond of Li Qingshan who had just barged in.

Mind Enlightenment went up and tried to persuade him gently. "Junior brother, it's best if you leave for now!"

"In the past, the One Thought master said I had a destiny with the buddha. I'd like to listen to the Annihilum Light Chan Master's profound buddhist dharma and see whether I actually have a destiny or not." Li Qingshan smiled at Xiao An, finding himself a cushion to sit down on.

Xiao An smiled faintly. The moment of beauty left all the monks in the hall slightly stunned. Some who did not have self-restraint naturally developed some impure thoughts.

The Annihilum Light Chan Master frowned. He had no idea what the Aspect of Heavenly Fragrance and Beauty was, but he could not help but think of a legend. In the legend, when the buddha attained buddhahood under the bodhi tree, the demonic māra came to stop him, conjuring celestial maidens to delude his enlightened heart.

He had never seen celestial maidens, but her smile made her buddhist nature fade away, going from a buddhist genius to a celestial maiden conjured by demons. This was also the first time he truly took notice of her appearance before realising he had probably been over worrying. She was still a child after all, so having some impure thoughts was unavoidable. If she really was completely pure and stainless, then it would be unbelievable. She would resemble a demon more that way.

The Annihilum Light Chan Master turned his withered face, and his eyes recovered their turbidity, finally looking at Li Qingshan. His still heart suddenly rippled.

He was the only obstacle to her cultivation!

“As the buddha says, three pairs of listening ears may be too many for certain dharma. You want to listen to my sermons, but I wonder if you have that right, sir?”

TL: “Three pairs of listening ears may be too many” is a Chinese saying that describes something as top secret. Basically, you want to keep it between two people (two pairs of ears), without a third person knowing (the third pair of ears).

In contrast to the hoarseness when he gave sermons, the Annihilum Light Chan Master’s voice suddenly became mighty, grand, and magnanimous with a hint of a lingering dragon’s roar. It fell from above, pouring directly into Li Qingshan’s head.

Li Qingshan’s face changed and immediately dismissed his thoughts. His soul began to shake as he felt like electricity was running through his body.

Is this the Chant of Deva-Nāga!?

Chapter 498 - A Godless World

Li Qingshan experienced even more pain than when he endured Zhou Tong’s heavenly lightning. This was not because the Annihilum Light Chan Master wanted to kill him, but rather due to the intense reaction from the ox demon and the tiger demon to the Chant of Deva-Nāga. It was like pouring water into boiling oil, surging instantly.

Rumor has it that the Chant of Deva-Nāga possesses the ability to suppress all daemons, demons, ghosts, and monsters. Sure enough, it’s true. Has he discovered something? Which is why he’s purposefully testing me?

The Annihilum Light Chan Master had not realised Li Qingshan’s original form as a daemon. Instead, he had other thoughts in mind. Not only could the Chant of Deva-Nāga suppress all daemons, but it could also purge the evil thoughts and desires from a person’s heart.

If Li Qingshan truly had some inappropriate intentions towards Xiao An, he could use this to eliminate them, saving any unnecessary troubles that might have happened with his visit. If he refused to let them go, then he would suffer extreme agony.

However, Li Qingshan's face only changed slightly before recovering. As a matter of fact, he was even calmer and more composed than when he first arrived.

Is my judgement wrong? If that's the case, I don't have to make things too difficult for him. People are creatures of feelings, so it's unavoidable if you can't always let go. If I use force, I would be resorting to a lesser method of dealing with this. I'll develop ill will with my disciple. The Annihilum Light Chan Master stopped the Chant of Deva-Nāga.

Actually, Li Qingshan had used the Spirit Turtle's Method of Sea Suppression ability to suppress anything, pacifying the unsettled ox demon and tiger demon and becoming as calm as a meditating old monk. When the spirit turtle submerged in the sea, it was as still as a rock. Of course, this was also because the Annihilum Light Chan Master had never unleashed his true strength, or fleeing frantically would be the only thing Li Qingshan could do apart from transforming and fighting him.

"Is this the ultimate cultivation method of the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga, the Chant of Deva-Nāga?" Li Qingshan asked with a smile.

"Seeing how open-minded and level-headed you are, you do indeed have some destiny with the buddha, sir."

"What? The Chant of Deva-Nāga?" The monks were all stunned. Apart from Xiao An, no one else had sensed anything from the probing and clash earlier.

"Could you pass it onto Xiao An?" Li Qingshan tried his luck.

.....

Li Qingshan arrived on Benevolence island alone as he sighed inside, The phoenix's feather sure won't come easily!

"This special cultivation method is different from other cultivation methods. Only my senior brother, the abbot, has the right to pass it to other people. And she'll have to undertake a series of tests before that."

That was the Annihilum Light Chan Master's answer. As a revered monk of buddhism, he fully embraced the precept of telling no lies, not to mention how he would never lie about something so significant.

There was nothing Li Qingshan could do. He agreed to pay a visit to the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga with Xiao An once he dealt with the matters in the Clear River prefecture. That was what Xiao An had been planning in the first place too. The Annihilum Light Chan Master had nothing to say, so he continued giving sermons to Xiao An.

Li Qingshan made his way to the school of Medicine, thinking about the second story Ru Xin wanted to tell him. Back then, he was worried about Xiao An, so he was in no shape to think too much about it, but looking at it now, he felt that it bore great significance.

Ru Xin's mouth was unforgiving, but never did she actually try to scam him out of his spiritual stones. He could feel that even if he had given her the spiritual stones reluctantly, she would not have accepted them.

Asking around a little, Ru Xin was not on Benevolence island. She had gone to the library on Contention island.

Suddenly, a gaze filled with hatred was cast over. Li Qingshan raised his head and looked over. There was a twisted face behind a window upstairs that he found rather familiar. It was Chu Tian.

Li Qingshan waved his hand with a smile, and the face became even more twisted. At this moment, a woman arrived by the window, and surprisingly, it was Qian Rongzhi. She dropped her gaze and glanced at Li Qingshan. Her expression was rather strange as she quickly closed the curtains.

"Is she guarding her prey?"

.....

"Little Tian, stop looking. There will be a day when you become even more powerful than him." There was no pity in Qian Rongzhi's eyes. Instead, they were filled with trust and anticipation.

This was a gaze that no man could resist when they were in dejection. Chu Tian was no different. He shuddered before throwing himself into Qian Rongzhi's arms. He began sobbing.

"I don't have anything anymore!"

Qian Rongzhi rubbed his head gently with her gloved hands. Her gaze was gentle like a mother gazing at her own, dejected child.

However, the hell snake began to move, slithering around on her body reluctantly. She also comforted it like a mother.

Be patient. There'll be food very soon.

Chu Tian had indeed lost quite a lot of things. After Ru Xin brought him to Benevolence island, his symptoms of qi deviation stabilised miraculously. Afterwards, Qian Rongzhi rushed over, her eyes red as she stuttered.

Under Chu Tian's forceful questioning, she ended up telling him an extremely unfortunate piece of news. During the time he spent in secluded cultivation, the two girls who had joined the academy with him died in battle. He was childhood friends with the two girls, deeply attached to them.

Chu Tian was overcome with sorrow and experienced qi deviation again, almost dying.

Afterwards, a miracle occurred to him again, keeping his life intact as if fate really protected his life. However, his cultivation did regress drastically.

"You still have me!" Qian Rongzhi turned her head away as if seeing this broke her heart. She could not help herself as tears rolled down her cheek.

And, only me.

The venomous snake hissed.

.....

“Fubai, why are you here?”

Li Qingshan arrived at the library, but he ran into an acquaintance, Sun Fubai.

The sunlight poured in through the window as Sun Fubai sat back in a rocking chair leisurely, reading a book, just like when they had first met.

“Qingshan, you’ve come.”

Only after a conversation did Li Qingshan learn that the library originally belonged to the school of Novels. The structures on Contention island all came with obligations, which were mostly handled by people various schools sent over.

However, as the school of Novels had originally declined to the point where they almost lost Cloudwisp island, possessing no disciples and unable to support any instructors, the library had fallen under the obligations of the school of Confucianism. Now that the school of Novels was prospering again, it returned to the hands of the school of Novels.

Sun Fubai had reached a crucial moment for his breakthrough to Foundation Establishment, so he dropped his matters in the Cloudwisp association and returned to the library to cultivate himself. Under his management, a complete structure had already been set up in the Cloudwisp association, so there was no need for him to personally tend to everything.

Books filled the bookshelves. The smell of wood and books was refreshing. However, the vast building was mostly empty, without many people inside.

The chaos brought by war had yet to be pacified. The people who were in the mood to read books and the books regarding cultivation were all on higher floors. Most of the books downstairs were classics, or on history, philosophy, and literature, which were very difficult for cultivators to take note of.

“You’re talking about school leader Ru, right? She’s right over there. She came a long time ago. So she’s been waiting for you!”

“Yeah. I’ll go and take a look.”

Li Qingshan had already sensed her aura. Navigating his way through the mountainous bookcases and piles of books, he finally found her in a corner.

There were many books piled on the table, but she was not holding a single one. She crossed her legs high up on the table, smiling brightly while leaning on her hands.

There were two floor-to-ceiling windows. The sunlight was wonderful, dyeing her black hair golden.

“What are you doing here?” Li Qingshan sat down in front of her, casually picking up a book and flipping through it before tossing it back onto the table.

“To tell you the second story.”

“What story?”

“A story about gods.”

Ru Xin removed her legs from the table. With a wave of her hand, the curtains were drawn with a rattle, blocking out the sunlight. A shadow enveloped her face. She crossed her arms and placed them on the table, leaning forward and stifling her voice. “Did you know that the nine provinces originally had many gods? These gods obviously couldn’t be compared to the gods and buddhas in heaven. At most, they were only some minor gods, and the places they governed were not large either, such as a mountain or a river.”

“Most of them were mountain or water daemons. Perhaps they might not have been particularly powerful in the cultivation world, but in the eyes of regular people, they already possessed powers to summon clouds and rain at whim. They seemed all-powerful. And, as long as they remained in their territory, their strength would be greatly enhanced. They would possess quite the power.”

“What about now? Why aren’t there any more left?” Li Qingshan seemed to understand something, but he failed to grasp the main point of all this.

“After the founding emperor established the nine provinces, not a single god existed in the world.”

“And then?”

“And then there’s no and then. I’m done with my story.” Ru Xin waved her hand again, and the dazzling sunlight flooded in.

“Is this your story?” Li Qingshan stared at her with widened eyes.

“It’s not like you’ve paid anything, so why should I make it so long? If you want to know, read it for yourself!” Ru Xin patted the pile of books, filling the air with dust that drifted about in the sunlight.

She stood up, about to leave.

“Hold on.” Li Qingshan stopped Ru Xin, but he had no idea where he should start with his questions. Just a certain thought of his became clearer and clearer. He glanced past the tall pile of books. She must have spent quite the effort digging up these damned books from the musty selection here!

“If you have something to say, just spit it out.”

“If you had said ‘make it quick’ instead of that, it would be a little more pleasant to my ears.” Li Qingshan’s gaze swept past her perky bottom viciously. He was very tempted to deal a vicious slap there.

Immediately, he forgot about keeping her around for the rest of his life as a confidant. He only thought about how pressing her down over his legs and viciously spanking her would be the greatest enjoyment when she ran her mouth blindly.

“Will I receive spiritual stones if you feel pleasant?” Ru Xin found that rather inappropriate as soon as she mentioned it.

Sure enough, Li Qingshan sniggered. “That’ll depend on how you make me feel pleasant.”

Ru Xin turned around and left without saying anything more.

Li Qingshan suddenly remembered something. “Do you know what Qian Rongzhi is doing by Chu Tian’s side?”

“In the Mist province, interfering with a person’s hunt is even more severe of an offence than stealing their wife!” Ru Xin waved her hand without even looking back, passing through the corridor of floor-to-ceiling windows. She flickered in and out of the sunlight, disappearing at the end of the corridor.

“Hunting? She’s thinking the same thing as I am. It’s a pity that I have too many prey, or I wouldn’t mind having a hand in it.”

Li Qingshan murmured to himself before picking up the book he had tossed on the table again. He carefully studied the cover. The title of the book had already become blurred, and the words were in an extremely simple style. He only managed to make out two words, “on Gods”.

Unless they were left untouched in hundred treasures pouches, items like books could never withstand the passage of time no matter how proper the protection they received was.

For once, Li Qingshan settled down and began reading. Only then would he live up to the pain-staking efforts she had gone to in finding these books from the vast selection here.

Under the reflected sunlight, time passed bit by bit.

Just like what Ru Xin had said, gods did exist in the very beginning. They were primarily divided into mountain gods and water gods. Bodies of earth and bodies of water could be refined like spiritual and arcane artifacts, but unlike imprinting them with soul sense, the process involved drawing out a sliver of soul sense and condensing it into a god seal.

The founding emperor conquering the world was not as simple as defeating everyone in the world and then establishing the eight kings and ten Daemon Kings. Otherwise, the Great Xia empire would have immediately collapsed the moment he left, returning to the age of chaos.

Instead, he undertook a series of procedures to prevent this. The most important procedure was forging the great cauldrons of the nine provinces. The materials that went into forging these cauldrons were the god seals collected from throughout the world.

The nine cauldrons suppressed the nine provinces. From then onwards, even if daemons claimed mountains and bodies of rivers again, they would not be able to refine them.

Note: This is a reference to ancient Chinese mythology/history. If you’re wondering why Chinese webnovels frequently mention nine provinces and not eight or ten provinces, it’s because there were nine provinces/regions in the ancient Xia and Shang dynasties, which is basically another way to say China now. So yes, these “nine provinces” are very, very loosely based on ancient China. At the same time, cauldrons basically symbolize the power and authority of rulers in ancient China, with the emperor, the Son of Heaven, possessing nine. You can read more about this here:

Chapter 499 - Water God Seal

However, if the world is godless, why is Ru Xin telling me to read all of this?

Li Qingshan was not surprised by the fact that Ru Xin had managed to guess his identity as Northmoon. He was not Superman, who only needed to take off a pair of black-rimmed glasses and change into a set of tights with an "S" to fool the reporter that was the female protagonist forever.

Either there was something wrong with the female reporter's head, or she had never really taken a man like him seriously. As someone who liked her, Superman's tastes sure were not particularly impressive.

Li Qingshan personally believed his tastes were much better. Ru Xin's intelligence was quite rare in the world. She had purposefully made a fuss to lead him here, digging up a great pile of books for him to read. Surely she could not say something like:

Hey, I know who you are! Becoming a water god is so great, but it's just a pity you were born too late! You know about it now, but it's forever beyond your reach! Hehehehe.

Hold on!

Li Qingshan's expression suddenly became rather strange, as he imagined Ru Xin saying something like that complacently, he felt like she was actually capable of doing something like that.

He coughed gently and dismissed these random thoughts. He calmed down and continued flipping through the books.

By dusk, the sunlight had become an orangey-red, casting long shadows of him on the floor.

Li Qingshan finally reached the last book, and he became even more eager. If he could refine a body of water and turn it into his water dwelling, his cultivation speed would definitely increase drastically. And, with his geographic advantage, even if Golden Core cultivators came to make trouble, he could deal with them easily. He could go on the attack as opposed to being on the defence.

"Hmm? What's this?"

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"Oi, Ru Xin, what are you trying to do? Are you fooling with me?"

It was already late. Li Qingshan arrived on Benevolence island, looking for Ru Xin in her alchemy room to denounce her. Disappointment and anger filled his face from finding absolutely nothing.

"Ah, you've finally noticed! How clever!" Ru Xin chuckled as if she had succeeded with her scheme. However, she felt rather disappointed inside.

"So you already knew!" Li Qingshan flew into a rage before calming down again and smiling.

"Knew what?" Ru Xin asked in exasperation.

"I was..."

"An idiot." Ru Xin interrupted him.

"I'm going to go to the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga with Xiao An." Li Qingshan did not lose his temper. He only sighed gently.

“Why?” Ru Xin gazed at the cauldron before her and asked in an unconcerned manner, but her heart shuddered slightly.

“Actually, I wanted to tell you back then in the library. This is the best choice for Xiao An. Not to mention that I’ve offended my superior, so I kind of can’t remain in the Clear River prefecture anymore.”

“You read all the books I gave you?” Others might have had no idea which superior Li Qingshan had offended, but Ru Xin knew very well. She became rather flustered inside for some reason.

“I read some of them, but they seem to be useless, so I guessed you were playing a trick on me. Sigh, if only that were possible. That way, I would be able to hold off that superior of mine.”

“You idiot!” He was clearly just one step away.

“Forget it. I’m not going to get mad at you today. Actually, there’s something I want to tell you before I leave.” Li Qingshan’s gaze suddenly became filled with tenderness.

Ru Xin’s gaze met his before shifting away again. “What about those books?”

She would not make any attempt to persuade him to stay, but at the very least, she had to make him understand the current situation completely. This idiot!

“They’re still in the library!”

“That’s good then. Wait for me here. I’ll be right back.” Ru Xin had specially told Sun Fubai to stow the books away and prevent anyone else from touching them if Li Qingshan failed to read through all of them.

“Hahahaha, who’s the one being fooled now?” Li Qingshan suddenly laughed aloud and raised his right hand.

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An hour earlier, he noticed something thin inserted between the first page and the front cover the moment he opened the last book. It seemed like water or ice, completely transparent, and it was jagged, shaped like a dragon. It formed a simplistic but impressive glyph.

Li Qingshan could tell with a single glance that it was anything but ordinary. However, it did not even give off a sliver of spiritual qi, and it was extremely delicate. If he had not flipped to this page, he would not have discovered what the book was hiding.

“Don’t tell me this is?”

Li Qingshan’s eyes lit up. He looked around, and only after confirming that no one was around did he channel a sliver of spiritual qi into the ice glyph.

The ice glyph immediately began to move, raging like the rivers yet also coiling like dragons and snakes. Under the glow of the setting sun, it seemed to be alive.

Sure enough!

Li Qingshan picked up a book he had just read through and flipped to a certain page. There was a description on there.

“The Mountain God Seal is like metal, while the Water God Seal is like ice and jade. They are both shaped like dragons.”

Combining the information from so many books, a rough, blue image gradually appeared in Li Qingshan’s head.

After forging the cauldrons of the nine provinces, no one was able to condense god seals anymore. Afterwards, the world became godless.

However, this was not absolute. With how many mountains and bodies of water there were in the world, there would always be some god seals that managed to slip by. Because they came from the same origins as the cauldrons of the nine provinces, they could not be suppressed.

However, while they could not be suppressed, the nine cauldrons could sense these actions of stealing from their “network”. Once caught, the empire would definitely punish those people with an iron fist.

However, this led to another question. This god seal might not necessarily be condensed in the Clear River prefecture, so could it still be used here?

There was no answer to this question. He only gained a complete understanding of the history, rise, and fall of the existence of gods from all the books he had read, but they did not go into detail about the usage of god seals.

And, using a god seal in this day and age was clearly an act of treason. Even if books like that did exist, they would not be present in the library.

“Looks like the answer is right here!”

Li Qingshan cast his gaze onto the last book with the Water God Seal again. At first glance, the book seemed no different from the others, just having been soaked in water before, and the material of the paper was rather different. Through the decorative designs of the first page, he could tell that the book should not have come from the library, but from Ru Xin’s personal collection.

Li Qingshan calmed down and read through it page by page. He discovered calling it a book was rather inaccurate. More accurately, it was a series of notes. It was the notes of a Hawkwolf guard who carried out missions in the Mist province.

It contained records of how a few daemons, demons, and monsters in the Mist province used this remaining god seal to refine the treacherous terrain there, claiming themselves to be kings. They were extremely difficult to exterminate.

Sure enough, according to the information recorded in the notes, god seals were only divided into Mountain God Seals and Water God Seals, but they were not limited to certain regions. As long as they released the spiritual qi of the mountains and waters they had refined, they could just use them elsewhere.

The Hawkwolf guard had complained plenty about this.

Li Qingshan beamed with joy inside.

The notes should have been quite old. By now, the Mist province had already descended into chaos, and the Hawkwolf Guard had already withdrawn their organisation to the level of commanderies. It was no longer clear who was exterminating who.

In other words, offices of the Hawkwolf Guard on the same level as the Clear River prefecture no longer existed in the Mist province.

That was expected. After several years of war, the Clear River prefecture had already withdrawn its lowest level of Hawkwolf Guard offices too, concentrating their strength in all aspects. If the war developed further, such that even Daemon Commanders like Spider Queen Lolth ran amok freely, then it would also make perfect sense to withdraw offices like the Hawkwolf Guard in the Clear River prefecture.

After reading the final page of the notes, Li Qingshan gained an inkling about the origins of the god seal.

There were many Water God Seals throughout the Mist province. They had not been left behind from before the age when the founding emperor established the nine provinces.

There were territories outside the nine provinces that could completely avoid the suppression of the great cauldrons of the nine provinces. They could condense god seals outside and then bring them to the nine provinces.

However, this was anything but easy to achieve. Condensing god seals required extremely great time and effort, frequently calculated using decades. If it were just for the sake of sale, it was a horrible idea where the losses outweigh the gains.

The Hawkwolf guard even suspected a connection to the Merfolk of the South sea, as Merfolk were naturally born with the other ability of controlling water, so condensing Water God Seals was relatively easier for them. At the same time, they had lengthier lives too. As it seemed, the Hawkwolf guard's guess had been mostly correct.

Ru Xin happened to possess the bloodline of Merfolk.

Li Qingshan could also be regarded as a member of the Hawkwolf Guard, but never had he heard of something like this, probably because the Green province was a close neighbour of the Dragon province. If any daemon were bold enough to make trouble, probably even the Dragon King of Ink Sea would not allow it. However, now that the Treaty of Kings was falling apart and conflict sprung up everywhere with plenty of bloodshed, something like this was no longer a big deal.

He had even committed murder and arson, so why did he have to worry about stealing some resources?

"This sure is a great gift!"

If it were not for the fact that he was in the library, Li Qingshan was almost tempted to laugh out loud. If Ru Xin had been standing in front of him, perhaps he would have hugged her and kissed her a few times.

The spiritual stones he had given away, over ten thousand of them, were absolutely nothing in comparison to the value of the god seal. Even in the Mist province, a similar god seal could fetch an astronomical price, and they were probably even rarer in the Green province.

If Li Qingshan were to buy it, he would be more than willing to spend the sum even if it cost a hundred thousand or a million spiritual stones. Was there anything else that could increase his cultivation speed while ensuring his safety? Was there anything more important than that?

In hindsight, Li Qingshan realised that Ru Xin's tricks were actually more like a test.

If he did not have the patience to listen to her, or he turned her down because he was stingy with spiritual stones, he would not have even gotten through the first story, so there obviously would not be a second story. If he ignored and dismissed her efforts, refusing to read through them one by one, then he would have missed out on the priceless god seal.

It's right there. It'll just depend on whether you have the patience or not.

Was obtaining her heart the same?

Li Qingshan stowed the book and god seal away. Then he explained a few things to Sun Fubai before rushing over to Benevolence island.

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As Ru Xin gazed at the god seal in Li Qingshan's hand, she had no idea whether she should be angry or happy.

If he had not read through all the books, why did he only visit now? Normally, she never would have fallen for this, but his farewell managed to throw her mind into a mess.

"Looks like even without a test, there's still a prize for me! Lady Ru Xin sure is softhearted!" At this moment, Li Qingshan did not possess a single shred of might or malice that belonged to daemons. He was more like a child who had managed to steal some candy, extremely proud of himself.

"Since you've obtained it, you can hurry up and piss off. Stop interfering with my alchemy."

Ru Xin waved her hand impatiently, like she was shooing away a fly. The red glow of the setting sun stretched from her cheek to her slender neck.

"Thank you!" Li Qingshan pulled her into his arms and embraced her firmly as he said with great seriousness.

Medicinal fragrance filled his mind, and her feminine figure filled his arms.

"I won't leave the Clear River prefecture so casually. Even if I do leave, I will return. I have far too many attachments here."

Before Ru Xin could respond, Li Qingshan let go of her and made his way out the door.

"How impressive." Ru Xin snorted with disdain after being dazed for a moment.

At this moment, there was someone else on Benevolence island who had finally obtained her reward after a series of trials.

PS: Congratulations to "A Lifetime Following Fate, Fate Deciding a Lifetime" on becoming a new Sect Master. Dream Teller hereby gives you his best regards and endless thanks. I will definitely continue to

work hard so that I don't let you down. We're in the final juncture of this month, so I once again ask you for monthly votes!

Chapter 500 - The End to Mad and Arrogant

No one came to visit Chu Tian, whether it was his senior and junior brothers of the school of Confucianism or the women he had a relationship with in the past.

If Chu Tian had been an amiable person, even if his cultivation regressed drastically, he would not end up like this. At the very least, he would still have received some sympathy and respect.

However, he had never been a likable person. Normally, others were only polite with him because of his talent. They were probably all hiding deep envy aside from that.

Thoughts like "Even an idiot like him can cultivate so quickly, so why can't I? The heavens sure are unfair!" were unavoidable.

As a result, when they learned about his qi deviation, they all secretly rejoiced. "To think you would have today!" No one was willing to waste time on a cripple anymore.

There was only one person who cared for him without abandoning him—Qian Rongzhi.

However, seeing how concern alone would be useless, a sliver of pity suddenly appeared in her eyes. "Little Tian, even if you can't cultivate anymore, I'll look after you for the rest of your life."

Like a cat that had its tail trodden on, Chu Tian responded emotionally, "I still can cultivate! Those people who look down on me will definitely live to regret it!" However, Qian Rongzhi's pity only deepened. Suddenly, he fell silent, sinking into his thoughts before saying, "Rongzhi, there's a secret I want to tell you. I've never told anyone about this secret before."

"What?" Qian Rongzhi was uncertain.

"Watch carefully!" Chu Tian extended his right hand, and a verdant vine grew from the centre of his palm bit by bit. It was tiny, but it gave off a feeling of strength that came with age.

Qian Rongzhi experienced a strange feeling. The vine grew in Chu Tian's palm, but it led to another world.

"Little Tian, is this an arcane treasure?"

This had exceeded her expectations somewhat. In the past, she had plenty of chances to capture Chu Tian alive and then interrogate him through torture. However, she never did that because she had no idea what Chu Tian's trump card was and what powers he possessed. She acted as such just in case all of her efforts ended in vain and caused her more harm than good.

As a result, she bided her time, just for this moment.

"No. This is a Heaven Climbing Vine. Its seed was buried in my soul when I was born. As long as I have it, I'll definitely be able to recover my cultivation!"

"That's fantastic, little Tian!"

Qian Rongzhi's eyes sparkled as she thought, Thank you, Xiao An.

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It was late, in the middle of the night.

Chu Tian lay on his bed, motionless, with his eyes wide open and staring directly upwards. A colourful little snake slithered across his face, climbing onto a fair-skinned arm.

Qian Rongzhi opened her hand, and the tiny snake spat out a seed, falling onto her palm like a droplet of water before melting away.

She patted the tiny snake's head. "If I didn't have you, fetching the seed of the Heaven Climbing Vine sure would have been difficult."

Chu Tian had never been a particularly clever person. Since he had divulged his greatest secret, Qian Rongzhi learnt everything about the Heaven Climbing Vine very quickly too. She also finally understood the secret to why Chu Tian could cultivate so quickly.

Qian Rongzhi opened her hand, and the Heaven Climbing Vine grew slowly. The verdant stalk was so slender and fragile, yet it could clearly overcome the invisible obstacles between spatial realms, leading to another world.

Immediately, extremely pure spiritual qi flowed through the vine and into her body. Even for a blessed land like the academy that had been improved on for thousands of years, its spiritual qi was nowhere near as dense as the spiritual qi from the vine.

Probably because the Heaven Climbing Vine was still very young, there actually was not a lot of spiritual qi. It could not even rival the spiritual qi drawn from a spiritual stone. However, this was no longer merely a difference in quantity, but a difference in quality too.

As the spiritual qi circulated through her body and melded with her, she felt like she had returned to that night when she slaughtered the entire Qian family. She felt indescribable delight.

You had something so wondrous and it still took you so many years to establish a foundation! You really do have the brains of a pig!

Qian Rongzhi glanced at Chu Tian on the bed in disdain. Even regular people without any talent at all could cultivate relatively quickly as long as they had the Heaven Climbing Vine to constantly nurture their bodies.

And, the Heaven Climbing Vine had appeared on him from the moment he was born, yet it was still so feeble. This clearly meant that Chu Tian only knew to extract spiritual qi with it. He had not properly nurtured the vine itself.

From a certain perspective, the Heaven Climbing Vine and the tiny, colourful snake were extremely similar. If the tiny, colourful snake was a curse from hell, then the Heaven Climbing Vine would be a blessing from heaven.

This was also where her opportunity came from. If she had been anyone else, then she would not have been able to remove the Heaven Climbing Vine from Chu Tian's body so easily. The Heaven Climbing

Vine was an ethereal existence such that no others could even touch it apart from Chu Tian. They could only sense its existence.

At most, they would only be able to coerce Chu Tian into letting them make use of the spiritual qi extracted by the Heaven Climbing Vine. However, this would be completely different from right now. They could even be stabbed in the back if they were not careful. The Heaven Climbing Vine was not only for cultivation. It could also bypass all defences and directly penetrate the opponent's body, sucking away their spiritual qi or even life force. This was what Chu Tian had been relying on when he tried to challenge Li Qingshan as a Qi Practitioner the other day. And, if Chu Tian really ran out of choices, he could even directly destroy the Heaven Climbing Vine.

The tiny snake slithered along Qian Rongzhi's hand and entwined around the Heaven Climbing Vine, hissing and flickering its tongue.

One was brightly-coloured, while the other was subdued and elegant. One was lively, while the other was serene.

They were polar opposites, yet they contrasted perfectly off one another.

"Thank you, little Tian." Qian Rongzhi withdrew the snake and vine, gently caressing Chu Tian's face. The smile on her face became more and more sincere as the killing intent in her heart grew heavier and heavier.

She had many ways to deceive everyone up her sleeve. Although he could no longer pose any threat to her, only dead people were the safest, right?

Just when she was about to strike.

Thump, thump, thump. There were a few knocks on the door.

Qian Rongzhi's eyes, which were as cold as a snake's, shifted slightly.

"Senior sister Ru Xin, I was just about to go and look for you. Little Tian is experiencing qi deviation again."

The door opened. Qian Rongzhi's face was filled with panic and worry as the corner of her eyes glistened with the trace of tears.

"Really? Don't tell me he heard some good news from you again!" Ru Xin crossed her arms and ruminated.

"I shouldn't have told him! I shouldn't have told him!" Qian Rongzhi murmured to herself, her fist clenched in self-blame.

"If there's nothing else, you can go for now! It's so late. A lone man and woman spending a night together isn't a good idea."

"I'm not afraid! I want to take care of him!"

"I think you've already taken plenty of care of him. Let's hope you don't care for him to death and break the rules here." Ru Xin smiled faintly.

“This... alright...” Qian Rongzhi shivered inside and lowered her head. She felt a terrifying presence from Ru Xin.

She clenched her fist even more tightly before glancing back at Chu Tian on the bed. Having lost the Heaven Climbing Vine, he seemed to have become a vegetable. His eyes remained wide open and motionless such that specks of dust had already begun to gather on there.

In truth, his situation was much worse than a vegetable’s. It was said that vegetables still possessed a degree of consciousness, but having undergone the painful torture of the hell snake, his sea of consciousness had completely collapsed. All he did was continue breathing.

No matter how impressive Ru Xin’s medical skills were, she would not be able to cure him anymore.

Thinking up to there, Qian Rongzhi moved over to the side, brushing past Ru Xin.

The door to the ward closed again, separating the two of them.

“Is this the end to the mad and arrogant?” Ru Xin shook her head as she murmured softly to herself. Behind her, a hideous, terrifying figure, humanoid yet also not, vanished with a flash.

Qian Rongzhi loosened her hand. The Heaven Climbing Vine and hell snake returned to her body. She made her way towards the end of the corridor resolutely. She would not be returning.

From that moment onwards, a curse and blessing existed on her at the same time. No one knew which direction she would be heading in the future.

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After parting with Ru Xin, Li Qingshan discovered the sermon on Anāsraṃṃ island was still ongoing.

The Annihilum Light Chan Master wanted to pass on a few extra things to his disciple before he left and have a closer relationship to her.

As for Xiao An, she stopped worrying after learning about Li Qingshan’s safety, placing all of her focus on the discussion of dharma with the Annihilum Light Chan Master to increase her comprehension of the Path of White Bone and Great Beauty.

The Annihilum Light Chan Master could not help but become even more delighted. As it turned out, this disciple of his had not even unleashed her true “powers” earlier. He became even more afraid of becoming careless.

Just when Li Qingshan wanted to return to Cloudwisp island and slowly consider how he would use the Water God Seal, Wang Pushi sent him another message, telling him that he was waiting for him in the office in Clear River city.

When Li Qingshan had transformed into Northmoon, he had already ignored many messages. He had to go this time so he went.

Only when he arrived in the city did he discover that Wang Pushi was not the only one waiting for him.

In the large hall, Wang Pushi and Hua Chengzan sat in the centre. Behind them on the wall was a valiant hawk with its wings unfurled, forged from scarlet bronze. It gazed at Li Qingshan with shining eyes, which made him think of Gu Yanying.

Almost a hundred Hawkwolf guards stood to the left and right according to their positions and cultivations. This was basically all the Hawkwolf guards they could spare from the entire Clear River prefecture.

“Old Wang, don’t tell me you plan on denouncing and punishing me for what I’ve done with such a great group you’ve assembled!” Li Qingshan joked as the door behind him closed loudly.

“Li Qingshan, you deserted from the battle, hiding in your dwelling to cultivate. What crimes do you think you deserve?” Wang Pushi asked right in his face.

“I was at a critical juncture for cultivation, and I only broke through after so much difficulty. How can you call that deserting? Moreover, it’s not like I knew you would run into so much danger.”

Li Qingshan shrugged and shot a glance at Hua Chengzan. He asked secretly, “What the hell is old Wang doing?” Even if he missed a few messages, surely it did not warrant so much anger!

“You’ll know in a second.” Hua Chengzan studied Li Qingshan and noticed a sharp change in his bearing. He knew he was not lying. Who knew how difficult each breakthrough would be for a cultivator. No one was like him, entering seclusion almost every day for a breakthrough.

“How dare you talk back! Hell of Ice!” Wang Pushi leapt to his feet, and the temperature in the room plummeted.

Apart from Hua Chengzan, all of the Hawkwolf guards could not help but shiver, but they had only been indirectly affected. Wang Pushi’s true target, Li Qingshan, became covered in frost in the blink of an eye.

Li Qingshan felt bone-chilling coldness, freezing his flesh, blood, and skeleton such that he was immobilised. The coldness even penetrated his sea of qi, wanting to freeze it altogether.

Coupled with it was indescribable pain. The Ice hell was the same as the Venomous Snake hell, both one of the many minor hells. However, it was a fair bit off from the pain brought on by Qian Rongzhi’s true hell snake.

He became slightly irritated inside. He’s attacking me over the slightest dispute. Has he discovered my daemon form? No, that can’t be right. If that is the case, the line-up here is a little too weak. It’s not like Wang Pushi hasn’t witnessed the strength of the moon demon. Why would two Foundation Establishment cultivators bring a group of Qi Practitioners here to die?